



Use of Non-Verbal Communication in Pedagogy: The Case of Teachers in Higher Education

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Abstract

This research was done to investigate language teachers' opinions on the use of Non-verbal communication in language teaching with the aim of figuring out the impact of this part of communication on pedagogy. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The results showed that the teachers believe that Non-verbal communication has a highly positive impact on the language teaching process. After knowing how NVC eases the language teaching process for both teachers and students, it is recommended to educational institutions to train teachers to use NVC effectively.

Keywords: non-verbal communication, pedagogy, teachers in higher education

INTRODUCTION

"We respond to gestures with an extreme alertness and, one might almost say, in accordance with an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all" (Sapir, 1927, p. 556). Non-verbal communication is a critical and fundamental part of communication, especially for people whom part of their aim is to reveal a message, elucidate or convey meaning such as teachers. Consequently, non-verbal communication can play an effective role in language teaching. In this research, the focal point will be a view on teachers' attitude on the use of non-verbal communication for pedagogy, to get an idea of the effect of this part of communication on language teaching.

Teaching is mainly revealing messages to the learners. It sometimes can be difficult to the teacher to successfully reveal their message, or it can be difficult for the learners themselves to process the messages they are being exposed to, especially in language teaching or pedagogy. In this case, non-verbal communication may play a major role in easing the process of teaching-learning for both teachers and learners.

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' attitude towards the use of non-verbal communication in language teaching, aiming to give an idea on how effective this part of communication may be.

- What is the attitude of teachers of higher education towards the use of non-verbal communication?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section gives an insight to the key concepts of this research and provides two previous studies that are related to this research.

Non-verbal communication refers to any system of communication other than speech or writing. For instance, sign language or visual language (Oxford Reference, 2019). Examples of NVC can be facial expressions such as smiling, eye contact and gestures of hands or body posture. The elements of Non-verbal communication that this research will focus on will be: hand gestures, body posture, eye-contact, facial expression and voice tone.

The first study was done by Bambeero and Shokrpour (2017). They conducted a research to determine the effect of non-verbal communication on teaching. Their research was a review article which was based on findings of other researches that studied the effect of non-verbal communication on the success of teaching. They concluded that if this technique was to be used by teachers, it would have an increasingly positive impact on the teaching process. The results showed that by improving this part of communication, students will find the teaching process a lot easier. The researchers implied that the authorities should work on improving this skill among teachers through holding training courses.

The other study was conducted by Zeki (2008) in which he revealed students' perceptions about the use of non-verbal communication in classroom management. 67 students were tested for two months where they had to reflect on any skill they noticed during the class and felt that they consider as a critical one. The researcher focused on the question that asked about what the students reported on the use of gestures and eye contact. The research adopted a qualitative research method, where he collected data from the reports written by students to answer the research question. The findings showed that the NVC can be an important source of motivation and concentration for students' learning and also a tool for maintaining students' attention. Zeki suggested that teachers should be more aware of NVC and use it in the favour of students to create a more comfortable and motivating atmosphere for a better classroom management.

The previous researches are different than this research in several ways. The first research studied the effect of the NVC on the success of the teaching process. The second study looked at the perceptions of the students on the use of NVC in teaching. Both of the studies focused on the use of NVC in teaching in general. This research however revealed teachers' opinion on the use of NVC in language pedagogy specifically and/or native language of participants, target language proficiency of the participants, and methodology.

METHOD

Research Design

This research was a mixed method research. The data was collected through a questionnaire

Participants

The participants were 10 highly practiced male teachers of English as a foreign language in YUC male campus at Yanbu Industrial City with their years of experience ranging from 20-30 years.

Instruments

A questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire included 12 statements with the responses on a Likert scale with five possible answers (Strongly Agree 5/Agree 4/Neutral 3 /Disagree 2/Strongly Disagree 1). In addition, there was an open question. The aim of the questionnaire was to know their opinion on the use of NVC on language learning.

Data Collection Procedure

A questionnaire was distributed among teachers to find out their opinion on the use of specific factors of NVC in language teaching. Then the results were collected and analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section displays and analyses the data collected through the questionnaire used in the research. The method used was a mixed method.

Table 1. Response frequencies for questionnaire items

Statements	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean Responses
NVC increases degree of perceived psychological closeness between teacher and student.	6	4	0	0	0	4.6
Eye-contact helps me know how students feel about the lesson.	8	2	0	0	0	4.8
Eye-contact helps me grasp students' attention and prevent them from losing focus.	9	0	1	0	0	4.8
Eye-contact helps students feel appreciated and enthusiastic to hear what I'm saying.	5	3	2	0	0	4.3
Smiling makes students feel comfortable in class.	8	2	0	0	0	4.8
I think smiling with students is very essential to ease the process of teaching.	6	4	0	0	0	4.6
Hand gestures helps me control students and grasp their attention.	5	4	1	0	0	4.4
Hand gestures helps me with the language teaching process.	5	2	3	0	0	4.2
Voice tone is necessary to emphasize on what information is important.	7	3	0	0	0	4.7
Voice tone can help students understand what I'm saying in the target language.	7	2	1	0	0	4.6

Voice tone helps in keeping students focused.	4	6	0	0	0	4.4
My posture (the way I'm standing and moving in class) is a very important factor which builds the connection between me and my students.	6	4	0	0	0	4.6

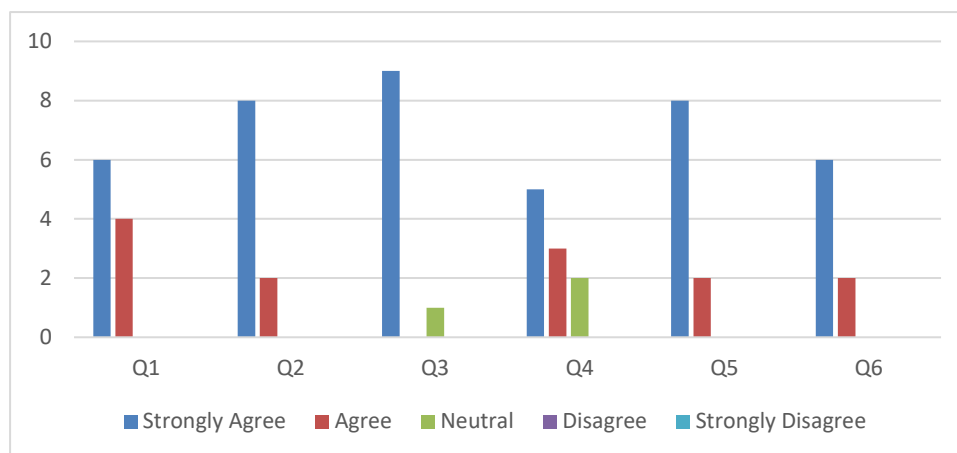


Figure 1. Questionnaire items 1-6

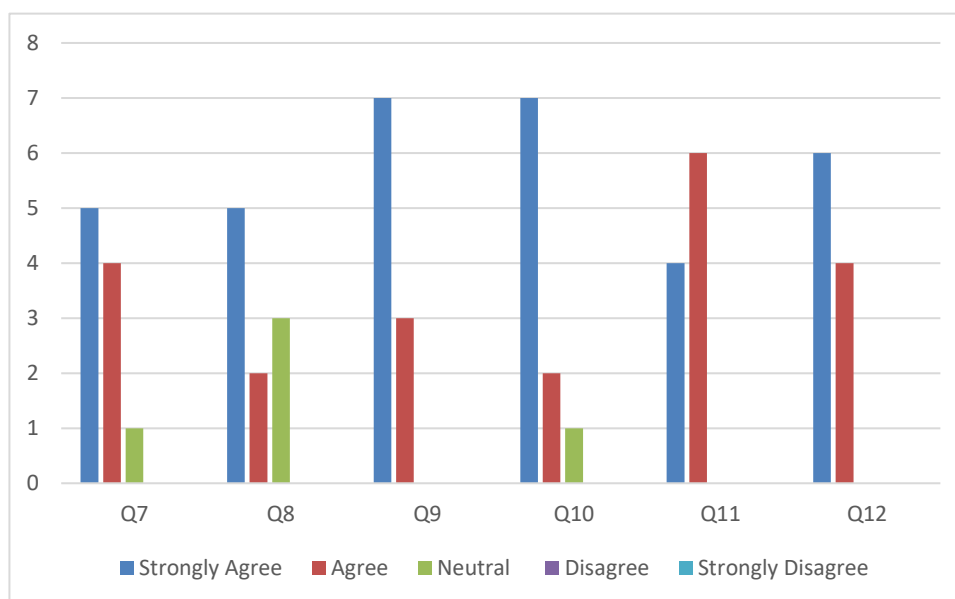


Figure 2. Questionnaire items 7-12

Table 1 displays opinions of highly practiced language teachers on the use of NVC in language learning. Statement number 1 with the mean response of 4.6 shows that the majority of the participants agree that NVC increases the degree of the perceived psychological closeness between the teacher and the students. In the second statement with 4.8 being the mean response, the majority of the participants think that eye-contact helps the teachers know how students feel about the lesson.

In statement number three with the mean response of 4.8 most of the participants agreed that eye-contact helps the teachers grasp students' attention and prevents them from losing focus. Statement number four holds the mean of 4.3 by which it showed that most of the participants think that eye-contact helps students feel appreciated and enthusiastic

to hear what the teacher is saying. In statement number five which was 'smiling makes students feel comfortable in class', the mean response was 4.8 showing that the majority of the participants agreed with the statement. The mean response of statement number six which said that 'I think smiling with students is very essential to ease the process of teaching' was 4.8 which showed that almost all the participants agreed on this statement.

Most of the participants agreed with statement number seven which said that hand gestures help teachers control students and grasp their attention, with the mean response of 4.4. Statement number eight with the mean response of 4.2 showed that more participants thought that hand gestures would help them with the language teaching process. The mean response of statement number nine 4.7 shows that most of the teachers think that voice tone is necessary to emphasize on what information is important. Statement number ten which was that 'voice tone can help students understand what I'm saying in the target language' had the mean response of 4.6 by which it showed that the majority of the participants agreed with the statement.

Statement number eleven which implied that voice tone helps in keeping students focused held the mean response of 4.4 showing that most of the participants agreed with the statement. The final statement which said that the body posture of the teachers is a very important factor which builds the connection between teachers and their students had the mean response of 4.6 in which it showed that the majority of the participants agreed with the statement. The results of this study agreed with Bambeero and Shokpour (2017) as well as Zeki (2018) that NVC has a positive impact on language teaching.

The answers of the open-ended question 'on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most important, which factor of NVC do you think is the most important in language learning' varied. Each participant arranged each criterion as follows:

Participant A: 5) voice tone 4) body posture 3) eye-contact 2) facial expression 1) hand gesture.

Participant B: 5) body posture 4) voice tone 3) facial expression 2) hand gesture and eye contact same level of importance.

Participant C: 5) eye-contact, facial expression and body posture 4) hand gesture, and voice tone.

Participant D: gave same level of importance to all the five factors.

Participant E: 5) voice tone 4) eye-contact and facial expression 3) body posture and hand gesture.

Participant F: 5) eye-contact, facial expression, voice tone, and hand gesture 4) body posture.

Participant G: 5) eye-contact 4) facial expression 3) voice tone 2) body posture 1) hand gesture.

Participant H: 5) eye-contact and facial 4) voice tone, body posture, and hand gesture.

Participant I: 5) eye-contact, hand gestures, body posture and facial expression 4) voice tone.

Participant J: 5) facial expression, voice tone and eye contact 4) hand gesture 3) body posture.

The result of this question is in line with Zeki (2018) on the point that these specific elements of NVC are fundamental for the teaching process, but the level of importance varied from a teacher to another.

CONCLUSION

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said." Peter F. Drucker. The purpose of this research was to investigate the teachers' attitude towards the use of NVC communication in language teaching. The results of the data showed that there is a highly positive impact of the use of NVC in language teaching. Finally, after knowing how NVC eases the language teaching process for both teachers and students it is recommended to educational institutions to train teachers to use NVC effectively.

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