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## THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' NONVERBAL PROPINQUITY ON STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING

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### **Abstract:**

This study explored teachers' nonverbal propinquity behaviors in relation to students' motivation for learning English. It explicitly gives the importance of body language in teaching English or any other language. It also points out that teachers' nonverbal nearness behaviors were correlated positively and significantly with students' motivation for learning English. In addition, multiple deterioration explanations reveal that five nonverbal behaviors are significant to students'. Findings of this study suggest that students' motivation for learning English is likely improved when the teacher employs the following behaviors: smile, gesture, has a peaceful body position, uses a variety of vocal expression, and uses a monotone voice while teaching. Finally, boundaries and suggestions for future research are addressed.

### **Introduction**

Communication can be made effective and impressive with the help of both verbal and non-verbal transmission. Children normally notice non-verbal gestures soon after their birth. A child learns non-verbal expression by observing, imitating, watching, and copying other persons of the family. Children can understand non-verbal gestures more than verbal communication and are more able to understand the non-verbal signals than adults. More often non-verbal communication occurs unconsciously. People are not aware of the fact that besides their verbal communication the nonverbal gestures also transmit a potent message.

The body language, eye contact, physical appearance, and tone of voice provide meaningful information to the audience. Non-verbal communication is deemed much reliable and effective in comparison to verbal communication as it gives additional support to the verbal communication. For example, a mother asks her child, 'Have you had your meal?' The child answers verbally 'Yes' but nods his head and gives a message of 'No'. The mother takes the non-verbal message of the child and ignores the verbal message. **O'Rourke (2004)** stated, "**Nonverbal communication is widely regarded as the transfer of meaning without the use of verbal symbols.** That is, *nonverbal communication* refers in a literal sense to those actions, objects, and contexts that either communicate directly or facilitate communication without using words. As communication professionals and casual observers alike will testify, though, separating the effects of verbal and nonverbal behaviour is never easy, largely because they tend to reinforce each other, contradict each other, or are in some

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way *about* each other”. Bovee, Thill and Barbara. (2003) stated, **“People’s actions often do speak louder than their words. In fact, most people can deceive others much more easily with words than they can with their bodies.**

Words are relatively easy to control; but not body language cues like facial expressions, and vocal characteristics. By paying attention to these nonverbal cues, you can detect deception or affirm a speaker's honesty. Because nonverbal communication is so reliable, people generally have more faith in nonverbal cues than they do in verbal messages. If a person says one thing but transmits a conflicting message nonverbally, listeners almost invariably believe the nonverbal signal. Chances are, if you can read other people nonverbal messages correctly, you can interpret their underlying attitudes and intentions and respond appropriately”. Wood (1976) stated, **“Body language can be defined as any reflexive or non-reflexive movement or position used to communicate an emotional, attitudinal, or informational message to someone else.** Body movements (for instance, waving, winking) and positions (for example, hunched shoulders and wide-open eyes) are the basic categories of body language. Although any movement or position during communication is capable of message value, not all the motion necessarily communicates.”

Teachers can use body movements as a teaching technique for the rapid learning of the students with minimum efforts. This teaching-learning process is based on learning objectives, which ultimately leads to learning outcomes of the students. These learning outcomes are the end product of teaching-learning process. Learning outcomes of the students and teaching-learning process depend on the learning activities. The end product of all learning activities is learning outcomes; therefore, these activities need great care in designing and executing in the classrooms. The better the learning activities; the best will be the learning outcomes.

### **Historical Review**

Givens (2002) stated, “Combined verbal and nonverbal IQs make hands our most expressive body parts. Hands have more to say even than faces, for not only do fingers show emotions, depicts ideas, and point to butterflies on the wing-they can also read Braille, speak in sign languages, and write poetry. Our hands are such incredibly gifted communicators that they always bear watching.” Thill and Bovee (1999) stated, “Non-verbal communication differs from verbal communication in fundamental ways.

For one thing, it's less structured, so it's more difficult to study. It also differs in terms of intent and spontaneity. We generally plan our words. When we say, “Please get back to me on that order by Friday,” we have a conscious purpose. We think about the message, if only for a moment. However, when we communicate non-verbally, we sometimes do so unconsciously. We don't mean to raise an eyebrow or blush. Those actions come naturally without our consent”. Carlin and Payne (1995) stated, “Some researcher suggest that less than ten percent of a message’s impact from verbal communication. While you listen to speaker’s words, whether you realize it or not, you’re also influenced by the way the speaker talks as well as by the speaker’s actions. The fact that nonverbal communication has such a

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strong influence on the way people interpret messages emphasizes an important rule about communication-it is impossible *not* to communicate. Even when you're silent, you're communicating.

Before you begin to speak, when you pause, or when you leave the speaker's stand, you're still sending messages to your audience." Ross (1977) stated, "We use body actions constantly in our everyday conversation. It is a definite part of our communication system. The way a person walks at a given movement may demonstrate that person's mood more adequately than his/her words do." Nierenberg and Calero (2001) stated, "We attempt to discourage individuals from jumping to immediate conclusions based on the observation and comprehension of isolated gestures. Understanding of congruence of gestures in harmony with one another is far more important. A static gesture lasting several seconds might be contradicted by a prior body movement (incongruence), which in turn might be further repudiated by a subsequent gesture."

Wikipedia (2009) mentioned, "Body language is a form of non-verbal communication, which consists of body postures, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements. Humans send and interpret such signals subconsciously. Body language may provide clues as to the attitude or state of mind of a person. For example it may indicate aggression, attentiveness, boredom, relax state, pleasure, and amusement among many other cues." Lesikar and Flatley (2005) stated, "Gestures are another way we sent non word messages through our body parts. Gestures are physical movements of our arms, legs, hands, torsos and heads. Through the movement of each of these body parts, we can accent and reinforce our verbal messages. And we can observe how others punctuate their verbal effects with gestures. For example, observe the hand movements of another person while he or she is talking. As you observe gestures, you will get a good picture of the internal emotional state of the person.

Moreover, speaking and gestures appear to be linked. In general, the louder someone speaks, the more emphatic gesture used, and vice versa." Kroehnert (2006) highlighted five most general errors in the body language of the teachers: having nasty personal habits; always being too stiff; blocking or touching face; including pointless hand gestures; and tapping or shaking legs and hands. It is suggested to the teachers that these habits should be avoided in the classroom and proper use of nonverbal communication be used in order to have greater impact on the teaching learning process. Miller (1998) stated, "Body postures and movements are frequently indicators of self confidence, energy, fatigue, or status.

In the classroom, students keen to receive body messages of enthusiasm and boredom about the subject matter being taught can sense confidence or frustration from the unconscious behaviour of the teachers. Observant teachers can also tell when students understand the content presented or when they have trouble grasping the major concepts. A student slouching sends a very different message from one leaning forward or sitting erect. Body movements and postures alone have no exact meaning, but they can greatly support or

reject the spoken words. If these two means of communication are dichotomized and contradict each other, the result will be a distorted image and most often the nonverbal will dominate.” Pease (1998), stated, “One of the easiest way to uncover a disguised objection when dealing with others is to watch if the person uses the headshake gestures while verbalizing his agreement with you.” Fast (1991) stated, “The head nod is tremendously important in communication. I tell you something and you nod as I say it. That nod sends a subtext of ‘Yes, I understand.’ You talk back to me and I nod again, sending the ‘Yes, I understand’ signal along with ‘I agree.’ These gestures, along with the negative head shake, usually accompany all conversations and vital to communicate.”

Understanding of head movements is one of the smart tools in the hands of a teacher. A teacher through this technique can understand the level of interest in the students about a certain topic or content. Teachers can also assess their own teaching style or methodology through this technique. Knowledge of head movements, among teachers, plays a very essential role in the actual classroom situation; therefore, teachers should equip themselves with this technology. Gronlund (1970) commented that there was a relationship between learning process and learning outcomes.

Teaching-learning process was not an end in itself but a means to an end. Different teaching methods and A.V. aids used in the teaching are considered as a tool to achieve desired learning outcomes. Learning outcomes also contribute to instructional process in the sense that it gives direction to the teachers in selecting their teaching methods and materials in the classrooms. The learning activities of the students can be improved inside and outside the school if learning outcomes are properly communicated to them. Wood (1976) commented, “Verbal language can be used to communicate almost anything. In contrast, the nonverbal language of body movements appears to have a more limited range. Body language communicates feelings, emotions, preferences, and selected bits of information concerning gender, time, relationship, and so forth. Generally, body language either reinforces or contradicts the feelings and information conveyed in the verbal channels. Body language includes movements

Here is a study which I conducted in private schools as well as Government schools in Prakasam and it is entirely in descriptive in nature and focused on the teachers’ perception about the significance of body language as an effectual teaching technique. The data were collected and measured on Likert’s scale and further elaborated in the form of table, data were explained in the form of percentages.

R.No	OBJECTS		FEED BACK					
			SA	A	N	DA	SD	Total
1	Body movements of the teacher help the students in understanding the lesson		<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>.....</b>	40
		%	50	37	7.5	5.0	—	

2	Students comprehend the lesson more effectively when I use my hands during teaching to give them additional visual information about the topic.		<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>....</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>.....</b>	40
		%	72.5	25.0	.....	2.5	---	
3	Students enjoy teaching learning process when I use my hands, shoulders, and head to make the lesson more interesting and informative.		<b>25</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>.....</b>	40
		%	62.5	20.0	10.0	7.5	---	
4	Students lose the interest and motivation when teacher sits in the chair during teaching learning process		<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>....</b>	40
		%	72.5	25.0	---	2.5	----	
5	Due to the body movements of the teacher, the classroom environment becomes more conducive to the learning.		<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>----</b>	40
		%	30.0	62.5	2.5	5.0	---	
6	I use my body movements to teach stories in a better way to the students.		<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>---</b>	40
		%	37.5	52.5	5.0	5.0	---	
7	Body movements of the students during class show their interest in the lesson.		<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>---</b>	40
		%	40.0	32.5	12.5	15.0	---	

**Conclusions:**

On the basis of data collection and analysis, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Importance of the body gestures in classroom teaching was found coherent from the responses of the respondents who endorsed the importance of the body movements during teaching learning process.
2. Proper use of hands, shoulders, and head by a teacher developed the understanding of the story lessons taught during the study, it also provided supplementary information to the students and made the learning environment beneficial to learning.
3. Proper use of eye contact also useful to comprehend the attitude of the students whether the students are understanding the lesson or they feel bore about the subject. Moreover it is beneficial to the teacher bring back the students to the lesson by narrating funny incident which is relevant to the topic.
4. Body movements also provided a strong foundation to the teachers to teach effectively and their proper use supplied additional information to the students especially in the teaching of stories. Thereby teacher can motivate them to come forward in order to ask the questions related to the story. Thus students will try to speak something in English then teacher corrects the student to learn appropriate language
5. It was also inferred from the study that proper use of body language as non-verbal

communication depicted the professional attitude and interest of the teachers towards teaching as a profession. Due to intentional use of non-verbal communication; not only teachers but students developed a level of motivation and interest in teaching-learning process that eventually turned into the attainment of desired learning outcomes of the students.

### **Recommendations**

Based on data interpretation and conclusions of the study the following recommendations have been made:

1. Teachers at all levels should be given an orientation in non-verbal communication and the skills thus acquired should be utilized in their teaching methodologies.
2. Body movements of the teachers create interest and attentiveness among the students and especially in the teaching of stories; therefore, teachers should purposefully use their body movements in their teaching.
3. Teachers should be aware of the fact that body movements are used where and when required because excess of body movements can spoil the purpose of its utilization.
4. Provincial institute like IERs, PITE and RITE should train the teachers in the technology of non-verbal communication in their In-service and Pre-service teacher education programs.

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