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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Analysis Of Teachers' Nonverbal Communication In EFL Classroom Interaction

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Abstract: Nonverbal communication (NVC) serves a vital part within the instructing and learning process, especially in facilitating students' understanding and engagement. However, its use sometimes is overlooked by the teacher. Therefore, this study aimed to analyse the kinds of NVC used by teachers in classroom interaction. It used qualitative research. Two EFL lecturers were chosen as the subject of this study. It was held at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Makassar. Observation checklists and classroom observations were used to gather the data. The interactive model of data analysis technique, which includes data collecting, data display, data condensation, and conclusion-drawing or verification, was used to analyse the observational data. The findings showed that all kinds of NVC were utilized by the teachers. It included the use of gesture, movement, facial expression, eye contact, touch, and distance. It is intended that this study will help the teachers, especially English teacher in enhancing their communication abilities by utilizing nonverbal communication in classroom interaction.

Keywords: Nonverbal, Communication, EFL Classroom.

1. Introduction

In the field of education, particularly in English Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, the effectiveness of educational process largely relies on how well the teacher and students can communicate with one another. There are two media of communication which can be used by the teachers, which are verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication (VC) has long been the center of instructional interaction, and nonverbal communication (NVC) has gained increased academic consideration due to its significant impact on classroom dynamics, student comprehension, and emotional engagement. Information or messages exchanged without relying on spoken or written language is probably known as nonverbal communication (Maisarah et al., 2023). Facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, tone of voice, movement, paralinguistic signals, spatial distances, and touch are numerous behaviors and indicators that fall under this category. This NVC serves as an essential means for expressing the emotional aspect of verbal communication (VC). It can govern interactions, accent, repeat, compliment, or oppose the spoken word, or it can take the place of the spoken word.

NVC may lead to more efficient interaction in the classroom and creates a more conducive context to learning. The skill that aspiring and prospective teachers need to develop is nonverbal communication. Teachers that possess strong nonverbal communication skills can effectively engage students, convey information, and foster a positive learning environment (Maisarah et al., 2023a).



In EFL classroom, language sometimes becomes a barrier in understanding what the teacher is saying, nonverbal communication can then become a tool or media in conveying the information. NVC using by teachers during the classroom interaction was strongly correlated with its quality, quantity, and style (Megawati & Hartono, 2020). Nonverbal communication will help students understand teachers' verbal communication better, especially in English classes when students have a limited vocabulary of English. Teachers can support their instruction with instructional language by using NVC (Candra et al., 2023). It has a significant impact on students' comprehension, which eventually results in improved concept learning and understanding.

Even though nonverbal communication has been shown to be important, many EFL teachers might not be aware of or exhibit inconsistent nonverbal behaviors that impact student interaction and comprehension. It is often considered as supporting factor of verbal communication in communicating with others and is seen as a supplement to spoken communication (Candra et al., 2023). Furthermore, NVC's analysis necessitates a targeted and methodical approach because of its wide scope, which includes a multitude of modalities and interpretations influenced by cultural and contextual factors.

NVC covers a a broad field of areas, so, it is quite challenging to explore every facet of it. Thus, this paper intended to investigate the six types of nonverbal communication used by teachers in English classroom instruction which are gesture, eye contact, movement, facial expression, touch, and distance. By identifying and analyzing these specific categories, this research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how teachers utilize nonverbal communication to facilitate instruction and interaction. Additionally, it seeks to increase teachers' understanding of the educational benefits NVC and encourage more thoughtful and efficient application of NVC in EFL interaction.

2. Literature Review

Chaudry and Arif (2012:56) described nonverbal communication (NVC) to the unspoken exchange that naturally occurs throughout every face-to-face interaction with another person. It reveals a person's genuine emotions or feelings toward others and indicates how effectively our spoken messages are understood. Similarly, Adler and Rodman (2006: 154) defined NVC as messages whether spoken or unspoken that are conveyed through non-linguistic means. This definition excludes both written language and sign language, but includes vocal expressions such as sighs, laughter, and other sounds that do not rely on formal language. In addition, Negi (2009:101) assumed that when people speak or communicate, they do more than just produce words but is often accompanied by additional expressive behaviors such as gestures, movements, eye contact, smiles, bodily postures and symbolic actions. These non-linguistic signals in communication are probably called as nonverbal communication (NVC).

Based on definitions above it can be inferred that NVC is the process of communicating and understanding meanings without using spoken language. This can be done using non-vocal cues including gestures, eye contact, touch, distance, and vocal tone, or through vocal aspects (paralanguage), and much more.

Since NVC covers a broad range of areas, it is not feasible to examine all of them. Therefore, this study focuses on investigating the types of teacher's nonverbal communication in English classroom interaction and tends to concentrate on four areas of NVC, they are: (1) kinesics which includes gesture, movement, and facial expression, (2) oculosics which includes eye contact, (3) haptics which includes touch, and (4) proxemics which includes distance. Here is the brief explanation of them:

(a). Gestures

Gestures are a fundamental element of communication and entail using certain bodily parts to convey meaning. Bunglowala & Bunglowala (2015) states that gesture is expressive action typically performed using the hands and arms, and also involves the head or the entire body.



(b). Movement

Movement, often known as proximity, refers to how teacher moves in the classroom to take ideal position. The teacher's proximity to learners can significantly influence student engagement, comprehension of material, and ability to stay focused. To ensure all students are within effective proximity, it is important for teacher to use movement throughout the classroom.

(c). Facial Expression

The human face is the most complex part of the body. It enables people to communicate ideas without using words. While the entire face contributes to facial expressions, the eyebrows and mouth typically convey the most significant cues such as surprise, anger, happiness, or confusion. In classroom interaction, teachers' facial expressions play a vital role in shaping the emotional atmosphere, clarifying instructions, and reinforcing verbal messages.

(d). Eye Contact

One of the most fundamental nonverbal behaviors and an essential component of communication is eye contact. According to Airasian (1994), teachers who maintain eye contact throughout class activities might benefit from a variety of factors, such as better student learning, heightened enthusiasm and interest, higher preparedness and abilities, as well as more positive attitudes and active participation in various educational tasks.

(e). Touch

Touch is a form of nonverbal communication that signifies closeness and connection. It plays a large part in how someone responds to others and to his or her environment, as it has the capacity to convey and communicate many messages (Adler & Rodman, 2006).

(f). Distance

The use of distance in classroom interaction holds any roles in affecting teaching and learning process. There are four commonly recognized types of distance: intimate distance, which involves close physical proximity and is rarely used in formal education settings; personal distance, suitable for one-on-one interactions such as individual guidance; social distance, is frequently employed during group projects or general classroom discussions; and public distance, usually utilized when the teacher addresses the entire class during lectures or presentations.

3. Research Method and Materials

This research used qualitative research design. It was to describe the kinds of nonverbal communication used by teachers in EFL classroom interaction. Two lecturers in English Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Makassar were chosen as the subject. They are professional and experienced lecturers who taught English more than many years. It also found that they were active and had good performance in the classroom.

The researcher used some instruments including field notes and an observation checklist, to collect the data. Four recordings total, representing four meetings, were taken from the observation. An interactive data analysis approach that includes data collection, data display, data condensation, and conclusion-drawing or verification was used to evaluate the data (Miles and Huberman, 2013). Negi's (2009) classification of NVC served as the basis for the analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

This section discussed the findings of nonverbal communication used by 2 teachers. After analysing the recording, it was found that six kinds of NVC appeared in this observation, they are:



4.1.1. *Gesture*

The observation and video recording showed that the teacher often used gesture in classroom interaction. There were two kinds of gesture which commonly used. Those were hand gesture and head gesture. It occurred 260 times in four meetings.

1) Hand gesture

Throughout the classroom interaction, both two teachers used a variety of hand gestures. They employed hand gestures for a number of reasons, which are:

a) Numbering

Observation and video recording revealed that 2 teachers usually used hand gesture to support students' understanding of linguistic concepts. For example, when introducing key elements that influence English consonant articulation, teacher 1 raised three fingers to visually represent the number of factors being explained. This kind of listing gesture, followed by verbal communication, helped students organize and remember the information more clearly. Gestures like raising fingers are also used by teacher 2 to visually represent the structure of a phrase, for instance when asking about the meaning of the phrase "right up to the sky". Teacher 2 raised one finger for each word while simultaneously articulating them aloud to make the students easily organize the meaning of the phrase. This gesture served to emphasize the number of words in the phrase and helped students break down the sentence into individual components.

b) Pointing

The next kind of hand gesture was used to point the students. The teachers used pointing gesture to manage the classroom and getting the students participation. For example, before conducting quiz, teacher 1 pointed to a student using her forefinger by asking "tadi sampai nomor berapa". This gesture was used to let student know that she is the ones whom being asked and to immediately answer it without taking too much time.

c) Illustrating

Hand gesture was also used to illustrate what the teacher wanted from the students. For example, when asking to the students about who wanted to be the first presenter to show their task and there was no reaction from them, the teacher 2 then clarified his willing "I don't want to point out you but I want you to raise your hand" by raising his forefinger. Raising forefinger was done by teacher 2 to make the students realize what he wanted.

d) Thumbs up

Thumbs up were used to appreciate the students' performance. It was usually done by teacher after the teacher asked the students to do something and the students did it well. To appreciate it, the students gave her thumbs.

2) Head gesture

The use of head gesture was also found in this observation and both of the teachers performed it in their teaching activities. Head gesture did not stand alone, but it was followed by verbal communication. There are three kinds of head gestures found in this observation, which are:

a) Nodding

Besides giving a thumbs up, nodding was also used by teacher to appreciate the students' performance. For example, when commanding the students to pronounce the phrase "own real word" and the students pronounced it correctly, teacher 1 then nodded her head followed by her utterance "good". So, nodding the head indicates that the teacher appreciated or praised the students because they pronounced the phrase correctly.

b) Shaking

The other kind of head gesture used by teacher is shaking. Shaking a head was usually used to provide feedback to the students' answer. If the teacher asked the students or commanded them to do something but the students did not answer or do it correctly, the teacher shook their head. It was too showed them that their response was incorrect. For example, during pronunciation practice, teacher 1 commanded the students to pronounce a phrase "the youth of today", but students mispronounce a word or phrase, the teacher shakes her head to indicate that the response was incorrect. The teacher shook her head by saying "bukan /ov/". Through this combination of verbal correction and nonverbal cues, the teacher reinforces accurate language use while helping students recognize and self-correct their mistakes.

c) Tilting

From the observation and video recording showed that teachers sometimes use of head gesture to get the students' attention. For example, when she requested the students pause their conversation and focus on her, but the students kept talking each other and made noises in the classroom, teacher 1 tilted her head and touched her cheek with her hand while repeating a verbal prompt. This combination of head gesture and verbal communication as a signal for students to be focus and to pay attention to her. Besides, the use of tilted gesture was also used by teacher 2 to accept the students' opinion. For example, after hearing the student' opinion about the definition of critical reading, teacher 2 tilted his head and repeated the student' word "understand or not, okay". The repetition as a key that he tried to digest the student' opinion, he then used the word "okay" to confirm that he accepted her opinion.

4.1.2. Movement

The researcher found that movements was done by the teachers in different meeting in their teaching activity. It occurred 26 times in four meetings. The use of movement around the classroom was used by both teachers as a form of nonverbal support to get the students' engagement and facilitate learning. When students got difficult to pronounce a specific sound, the teacher approached the students to provide closer guidance. By moving toward the students and offering verbal correction in close proximity, the teacher gave example of correct pronunciation. It was to ensure that the learning reaches the students who need additional support.

Movement can also use to a more interactive and inclusive learning environment. For example, when asking a question about the meaning of a phrase, teacher 2 moved from the front of the classroom to the middle area. This movement was intended to reduce distance between the teacher and the students, encouraging participation and signalling openness to student responses. By physically positioning himself closer to them, teacher 2 fostered a more engaging atmosphere in sharing opinion. So, the students could speak more confidently.

4.1.3. Facial Expression

Facial expression occurred 74 times in four meetings. The researcher found that there were four kinds of facial expression used by teachers, they are:

(a).Smile

Observation and video recording showed that the use of facial expressions, particularly smiling, was to provide emotional support to students. Teacher 1 offered motivational words by smiling warmly to the students to ease their tension after doing a quiz, because teacher 1 realizing that some of the students anxious or disappointed with their performance. This smiling allowed students to feel more relaxed and motivated to continue learning without thinking what happened before. This nonverbal communication was also used to engage with the student in a friendly and non-threatening way, and it was done by teacher 2 also. When teacher 2 wanted to get honesty answer from the students, teacher 2 smiled to them to maintain a positive and open classroom atmosphere during dialogue.

(b). Laughing

This kind of facial expression only found in teacher 2 in his teaching activities. It was also used to support learning environment, same with smiling. For example, when a student responded an incorrect or unexpected answer, the teacher laughs gently. This moment of shared laughter, joined by the students, meant to allow them to recognize their mistakes in a non-threatening way.

(c). Mocking

This mocking expression only found in teacher 1 in her teaching activities. It was used as a humor in the classroom. Teacher 1 used this mocking expression to capture students' attention and highlight their errors during pronunciation practice. For example, when the students struggled to articulate the /ʒ/ sound correctly. Although the teacher had explained the correct pronunciation, some students still mispronounced it. In response, the teacher pointed to the sound, waited for the students' response, and when hearing the incorrect pronunciation, she mimicked their error by mocking face followed by a firm "no." Her facial expression, combined with the verbal cue, conveyed disapproval in a humorous way. The students, then, laughed at the moment. It indicated that they perceived the mocking as humor and understood it as a signal to correct their pronunciation.

(d). Frowning

Frowned expression was also found in classroom observation. It was only found in teacher 1 and used as the indication for repetition. For example, when students pronounce a word during a pronunciation activity, the teacher frowned and responded with a verbal word "hah". This expression and verbal cue as a signal that something was incorrect and prompted the students to repeat their pronunciation by correcting it. They then repeated their pronunciation because they realized that the teacher wanted them to pronounce it again from her verbal and nonverbal cues. So, without saying "repeat it again" the students knew what they have to do.

4.1.4. Eye Contact

Based on the classroom recording, it was found that both teachers used eye contact followed by verbal communication in classroom interaction. It occurred 52 times in four meetings. Eye contact is used as a nonverbal strategy to monitor the students' participation and provide individual attention during teaching and learning activity. For example, when no students responded to the teacher's invitation to ask a question to the presenter, the teacher did eye contact with one female student while addressing her verbally. This intentional eye contact served to draw the student's attention and gently encourage her to engage in the activity. As a result, the student responded by asking a question to the presenter. This demonstrates how eye contact can be used effectively to facilitate interaction and promote active learning in the classroom.

4.1.5. Touch

In classroom recording, it was found that only teacher 1 did this kind of NVC. Teacher 2 never did it in his teaching activities. It occurred 11 times in four meetings. One of the main reasons for using touch is the material learned. At the time, teacher 1 was giving material about pronunciation practice. Teacher 1 used touch to guide the students in pronunciation practice. She touched the students' chin and hand to give them guidance and support in pronouncing the words. For example, when she noticed that one student struggled to pronounce the sound correctly, the teacher approached her and provided direct verbal instruction by touching her chin to illustrate how the articulatory organs should move. The use of touch is to facilitate clearer comprehension of abstract phonetic concepts, enhance clarity of instruction, provide emotional support, and improve student engagement in learning.

4.1.6. *Distance*

Based on classroom recording, it was found that the teachers performed two kinds of distance from four kinds of distance. Those are public distance and personal distance. The distance occurred 47 times in four meetings. Public distance used by two teachers in explaining the material to the students in front of the classroom. Public distance is the use of distance for the farthest zone, running outward from twelve feet. Observation and video recording showed that the teachers maintained a public distance while delivering the material. It allowed the teacher to speak in front of the entire class effectively and ensure that all students can pay attention to the material. While personal distance used to approach the students. For example, when giving suggestion and asking the question to them. It was to create a more focused and encouraging more participation from the students in the classroom.

4. 2. *Discussions*

Observation revealed that the teachers applied and performed a variety of nonverbal communication during teaching and learning process. It covered gesture, body movement, facial expression, eye contact, touch, and distance. The most dominant kind of nonverbal communication used by two teachers was gesture. It occurred 260 times in four meetings. Based on the findings, it showed that teacher 1 and teacher 2 used gestures, both hand and head gesture, in their teaching activities. Those kinds of gesture were the dominant and consistent kind of gesture found in this observation. The hand gestures were numbering, pointing, illustrating, and thumbs up, while the head gestures were nodding, shaking, and tilting. These gestures were used by the teacher for many reasons, which are to support verbal instructions, emphasize key points, clarify concepts, and manage classroom interactions. It helps in creating the learning environment more engaging and understandable. Gestures help the students in visualizing ideas or concepts and strengthen their comprehension of the subject matter (Chikiwa, 2021; Maisarah et al., 2023). In addition, gestures such as thumbs up and nods provide positive reinforcement and encouragement, which contribute to build student's confidence and participation in the classroom. Gestures are frequently used to show teachers' appreciation for the students' contributions and to increase their focus during the lesson (Chikiwa, 2021; Holandyah et al., 2024).

The second dominant kind was facial expression which occurred 74 times in four meetings. It involved smiling, laughing, mocking, and frowning. It was used to express the teachers' emotion in conveying something to the students and sometimes used as the teacher's response after the students uttered something. These facial expressions performed by the teachers was to express their feeling to the students (Maisarah et al., 2023). These were also provided as the emotional support to the students to do something.

The next kind of nonverbal communication used by the teachers was eye contact. It occurred 52 times in four meetings. Teacher 1 mostly used eye contact to control the students' behavior, while teacher 2 used it to seek information from the students. Eye contact is one of teachers' strategies or ways to ensure their students are attentive and involved in the classroom (Candra et al., 2023; Holandyah et al., 2024). Through eye contact, students can determine and know when they need to respond or reply to their teachers (Candra et al., 2023)

The other kind of nonverbal communication was distance. It occurred 47 times in four meetings. There were two kinds of distance which were found in this observation. They are public distance and personal distance. Public distance was usually used in explaining the material, while personal distance was used in engaging the students to do something. Public distance was the dominant kind occurred in this observation. The physical distance between teacher and students was observed as public distance level appeared as much as 41% while the personal distance level about 20% (Kale, 2008).

The next kind was movement which occurred 26 times in four meetings. Based on observation, this movement was done by two teachers. They were very active to move in the

classroom, especially teacher 2. Teacher 2 moved in the classroom to make the students active to express their opinion. It was influenced because in his teaching activity, he usually invited the students to speak. The teacher movement makes the teaching and learning process more active and attractive (Wulandari et al., 2024).

The last kind of nonverbal communication was touch. It only occurred 11 times in four meetings. This NVC was the rare kind of nonverbal communication which was appeared in the observation. Haptics are not as frequently used by teachers in EFL classroom as other types of nonverbal communication (Candra et al., 2023). This category was just performed by teacher 1 in first meeting. In the next meeting, she did not do it, while for teacher 2, he never did it. Teacher 1 touched the students to correct their pronunciation. By doing it, the students could pronounce the word correctly, although it was very difficult for them at first. The use of touch can be a very useful in motivating students in learning (Holandyah et al., 2024). It served as a way for the teacher to show their affection and attention toward the students. But, the use of touch tends to serve as the last option for the teachers to help re-engage students who have become distracted or disinterested in learning (Candra et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion

Both two teachers applied and employed various kinds of nonverbal communication. This observation revealed six kinds of nonverbal communication. Those are gesture, movement, facial expression, eye contact, touch, and distance. The nonverbal communication appeared to be followed by certain verbal communication. The dominant kind of NVC is gesture. There are two kinds of gestures that consistently and dominantly appeared in this observation, they are hand and head gestures. Those gestures occurred 260 times in four meetings. The rare kind is touch. It occurred only 11 times in four meetings, and it was just used by teacher 1. Teacher 2 never did it in their teaching activities.

The dominance of NVC; gesture emphasizes their importance in enhancing students' understanding. Meanwhile, the minimal use of NVC; touch indicates that certain kinds of nonverbal communication are applied selectively, depending on the teacher's style and the classroom context.

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