

Presentation of Effective Non-Verbal Communication in a Classroom: A New Perspective

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Abstract

Communication is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values. It is successful when the speaker gives information clearly and precisely and when the listener interprets and understands the information correctly. Communication is a process of sending and receiving messages that enable humans to share knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Generally, communication is composed of two dimensions-verbal and nonverbal. This paper highlights how nonverbal communication is used in a classroom and how it conveys message effectively. Nonverbal communication has been defined as communication without words. It includes apparent behaviors such as facial expressions, eye contact, touch, and tones of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as dress, postures, and spatial distance between two or more people. It is often thought of as the ways in which we can create meaning through cues other than the words that we use. Nonverbal communication is an important aspect of communication. It takes a number of forms: how a person dresses, how class rooms are arranged, how far apart two people stand, who touches whom, and so on.

Keywords: communication, transmission, information, non-verbal, cues, behaviour

Introduction

Communication is a process of sharing information which involves informal conversation, discussion, meetings, presentations, Phone calls, chattings, public speakings, and Classroom teaching. It is one of the essential conditions of social interaction. Social interactions may not be possible without communication, because human interaction is essentially communicative interaction. It pervades the entire range of social and professional relationships, and plays a major role in our day today life. It is the reciprocal stimulation and response between individuals and makes social as well as professional interaction successful. Moreover, the communication process happened in two modes, namely, Verbal and Non-

Verbal communications. Non-Verbal communication is performed through body language. Body language is an integral part of oral communication. It includes facial expression, gestures and body movements, eye contacts, and mannerism. As non-verbal communication expresses individual emotions, social attitudes, and feelings, it can convey more meaning than spoken words.

Non-Verbal communication can roughly be divided into a non-verbal vocal message and non-verbal non-vocal message. The non-verbal vocal message contains vocalic and the non-verbal non-vocal message contains proxemics, haptics, kinesics, oculosics, objectives, and chronemics. Morton Wiener and Albert Mehrabian in their book, *Language Within Language: Immediacy, a Channel in Verbal Communication*, states “the influence of message transmission in interpersonal communication holds the nonverbal domain of 93% and the language domain of 7%. The non-Verbal and non-vocal domain occupies 58% such as an expression, gestures, dress, and so on, and the non-verbal and vocal domain has 35% in nonverbal domain” (162). Non-Verbal communication has a communicative function in accordance with a large explicit linguistic function, the function which actualizes an inner process and a meta-communication function. Body actions have the character which actualizes the meta-communication function, and mental representation attracts attention, and reveals the hidden intention and truth which cannot be read directly from a partner’s “words.”

Students of English can have benefit from learning about non-verbal communication. An understanding of non-verbal communication can improve the effectiveness of communication. Non-verbal messages are an essential component of communication in the teaching process. The intention between a teacher and a student or a student and a student is normally conveyed to each other by voice in the classroom. The analysis of a class is performed focusing on analysis of language communication in many cases. It is known that personal communication is also performed through the nonverbal communication.

Review of Literature

Jeff Butterfield in his essay “Understanding Non-Verbal Language” highlights the significant role of Non-Verbal communication in the spoken communication process. Body language and non-verbal signals add meaning to our message. It includes hand and arm gestures, eye contact, facial expression, the position of our body, and overall appearance. Our audience perceives non-verbal language as part of our message, and uses it to determine how to interpret our words. Being more aware of body language and non-verbal cues will help us be a more effective listener and speaker. Sean Neil, in his book, *Classroom Non-Verbal Communication*, states that it is important to clarify the features of nonverbal behaviour to

analyse the communication between teacher and student or student and student in the classroom.

Fatemen Banbaeroo and Nasrin Shokrpour in their article “The Impact of the Teacher’s Non-Verbal Communication on Success in Teaching” explore the relationship between quality of teaching and teachers’ use of non-verbal communication and its impact on success in teaching. Non-verbal communication skills can make a positive change in the future of a student’s life. It seems necessary for the teachers to practice and learn effective communication skills. He also states that non-verbal communication is often more subtle and more effective that it can convey meaning better than words. Conscious use of non-verbal communication is not a show; rather it adds to the effects of individuals words. Teachers who use non-verbal communication properly have a better relationship with their students.

Non-Verbal Communication in the Classroom

Non-verbal communication is a critical aspect of interpersonal classroom. The most credible messages teachers generate as communication source are non-verbal. It is multi-sensory organisms’ works on only occasional talks. Nonverbal behaviours are for students signs of the psychological state of the teacher. From our own experience, as a student and as a teacher, we know that there are varieties of non-verbal signals emitted from teachers in classroom which to deepest levels influence classroom atmosphere, students’ moods, perception, learning, and eventually, attitudes towards knowledge and college generally. On the other hand, the teacher has a powerful tool to identify what is actually going on with his class in general and each individual, in particular without any word. Yet, non-verbal signals are much more difficult to capture, describe, and rationally explain because we believe that are necessarily have to use words to do that, and non-verbal cues are not enough and precise tool for this. Therefore, one who wants to learn how to control non-verbal signals and behaviors to teach more effectively.

Body Movement in the Classroom

The variety of ways in which a teacher and students walk and stand, or sit can all affect interpersonal perception. The teacher who slouches or twitches when talking to students is not likely to be perceived as a composed person. Conversely, the teacher who always appears unruffled regardless of the circumstances is likely to be perceived as cold and withdrawn. Body movement is frequently an indicator of self- confidence, energy, or status. In the classroom, students keen to receive body message of enthusiasm or boredom about the subject matter being taught can sense confidence or frustration from the unconscious behaviors of teachers. Observant teachers can also tell when they have trouble in grasping

the major concepts. A student who is slouching in his seat sends a very different message than the student who leans forward or sits erect. Body movements can also serve an important function with regard to regulating the flow of conversation. For example, if a student is talking in a class, single nod of the head from the teacher will likely cause that student can stop to make a noise in the classroom.

Facial Expression in the Classroom

Facial expression normally shows how we feel about others. It refers to the use of eyes, eyebrows, forehead, and mouth expression. Human smile is a powerful cue that transmits messages including friendliness, happiness, warmth, and acceptance. For example, if someone has offended a person, his/her face will express it. Also if you smile frequently when you are speaking with others, they perceive you as approachable, appealing, and friendly person. The listener or audience is likely to react positively to our message and remember what we say. A frown or grimace also sends a powerful message, though it is usually negative. Normally, our face easily reveals our emotions.

All teachers and students use facial expressions to form impressions of one another. A cold hard stare has long been in the repertoire of teacher's weapons. Similarly, a simile can be a useful tool in reinforcing the students' desired behaviors. Facial expression is a valuable source of feedback. For example, when delivering a lecture, a teacher should use students' expression to determine whether or not to slow down, speed up, or in some other way modify his/her persuasion. Facial expression involves some of the smallest body movement, but its impact in the classroom may be greater than any other body language the teacher exhibits. The teacher probably communicates more accidentally by his or her facial expression than by any other means.

Eye Contact in the Classroom

Eye contacts usually mirror our truest and innermost feelings. It is probably the most accurate predictor of our feelings and attitudes. Usually, we know how to use good or positive eye contact. Eye contacts send signals that help regulate the flow of information between people. Our eyes can show interests, understandings, happiness, confusion, anxiety, and fear. We use eye contact to establish credibility and show we are engaged without attention of audience. It seems to be of particular importance and it is generally used to indicate whether one is open to communication. This can be observed when a teacher asks questions in the class: students who think they know the answer will generally look at the teacher, while students who do not will usually try to avoid eye contact. Eye contact is often used to control an interpersonal interaction when people do not wish to be interrupted; they

will often glance away and continue talking. When they wish the other person to speak, they will pause, making direct eye contact. Teachers often use eye contact in the classroom to decide who is prepared to answer a question, or who has completed a homework assignment. Eye contact is often used as an indicant of whether or not a person is lying. The stereotype is that a dishonest person will not look you in the eye. Many teachers, who suspect a student is cheating on a test may, in the absence of their evidence, decide the student is lying because the student fails to look them in the eye when answering a direct question about the test. Teachers can have individual eye contact with every student in the classroom. Attitudes of intimacy, aloofness, or indifference can be inferred by the way a teacher looks or avoids looking at a student. Students are constantly looking at the wall clock rather than watching and listening to the teacher may be indicating the need for a break, the dullness of contact, or a lack of teacher motivation and preparation.

Vocal Cues in the Classroom

This powerful non-verbal tool can readily affect student participation. Generally, to correct answers, the teacher responds with positive verbal reinforcement enhanced by vocal pitch or tone, expressing the acceptance. Vocal behaviour is capable of arousing stereotypes about either a teacher or a student. For example, a teacher who has a very nasal speaking voice is often perceived as having a variety of undesirable personal and physical characteristics. Female teachers with very tense voice are often perceived as being younger, feminine, more emotional, easily upset, and less intelligent. Male teachers with the same vocal characteristics are often perceived as being older, more unyielding, and cantankerous. Of course, vocal characteristics affect teachers' perception of students as well and the stereotypes noted above can be applied again. Fortunately, as students and teachers get to know each other better, they are able to overcome some of these stereotypes. However, in the upper grades and colleges, students and teachers may never interact frequently enough to overcome stereotypic responses based on vocal behavior.

Gestures in the Classroom

A gesture is a visible body action that may express implicit meaning. It refers to the use of figures, hands, and arms for expression. In the class, Gesture may reveal the mindset of the teacher and convey thoughts through voluntary or involuntary physical movements. It varies from culture to culture. It may be meaningful in one country, may not be in another. Generally, most of the teachers want to deliver effective communications. In the classroom, the teacher uses physical gestures to emphasize important points. It can enliven and animate a dull classroom. When a person is very much upset and nervous, his/her hands may tremble.

Although most of the gestures that we make are voluntary, we may sometimes send out negative signals by making some inappropriate involuntary gestures. Using positive physical gestures requires conscious effort and practice but it will definitely be worth it. Positive and appropriate gestures can make us better oral communicators.

Postures in the Classroom

Posture is our body's position when we are sitting, standing, or walking and it communicates our mood, attitude, and interest in a topic. When communicating with others sitting or standing with an erect postures, sends a message of confidence and competence. A teacher can lean slightly towards his/her students to show we are receptive and interested in what they have to say. Therefore, we have to avoid speaking when their back is turned or we are distracted with another task, because this signals disinterest and insincerity. Appropriate posture may reflect positive personality traits such as maturity, confidence, alertness, and physical stamina and fitness. Generally, our posture talks about personality. It may indicate whether we are a bold, confident, and dynamic person or submissive, and servile fellow. Similarly, teachers' body movements in the classroom give important signals about his/her personality.

Proximity in the Classroom

Proximity may be a sign of discomfort for our listener. It includes looking away, stepping backwards, turning their body at an angle to the speaker or folding their arms over their chest. In the classroom, proximity is how teachers are physically close to their students. Maintaining appropriate proximity is an important part of verbal communication. Generally, students expect from teachers to respect their personal space and feel uncomfortable. If we intrude on it, appropriate proximity is affected by the relationship that we have with the listener. If a teacher notices signs of discomfort of the students that suggest he/she has moved into their student's space, immediately he or she must increase the distance between them.

Conclusion

To communicate effectively in the classroom, we need to use skills for speaking as well as listening. The communication is a success when the teacher gives the information clearly and precisely, and when a student interprets and understands the information correctly. The information may be conveyed through different forms including mode of Non-Verbal communication. Words are accented and punctuated by body movements, gestures, while the face shows a myriad of expression. If there is disagreement between verbal and non-verbal message, the non-verbal will win. Also, the validity and reliability of verbal messages are checked by non-verbal actions. If discrepancy exists, the nonverbal will dictate.

Therefore, non-verbal messages as more honest reflections of what one is really thinking or feeling.

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