



LEVERAGING BODY LANGUAGE: ENHANCING FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM.

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Abstract: *in this article, as we know, body language, an inseparable part of nonverbal communication, plays an important role in foreign language learning and teaching. Language teachers use body language in interpersonal communication in the classroom for a wide variety of reasons. This article investigates some of the reasons why language teachers use body language in the foreign language classroom.*

Key words: *interpersonal communication, paralinguistics, nonverbal communication, facial expressions, gestures, postures.*

It has already proved that people's communication and interaction with each other continue even when they are not talking. According to the statistics people communicate via actions in up to 90% of cases and nonverbal cues explain up to 80% of messages' meaning. Teachers, with their body language, are able to "talk" with students without saying a word.

However, lack of knowledge about nonverbal behavior poses difficulties in objectives of teachers to large extent or makes it impossible to achieve at all. It has been suggested that two-thirds of our communication is nonverbal. Between head nods, smiles, frowns, closed postures, head tilts, raised hands and excited pacing, teachers, and students send hundreds of non-verbal cues to one another daily. Positive body language in a classroom setting has the ability to motivate, inspire and engage. It can not only give you confidence you need to teach but can also reassure your students that you actually know what you are talking about. It can even make your students feel safe and confident enough to participate in the lesson more frequently.

Nonverbal communication cues can be various forms, such as kinesics (bodily postures made by head, hands, or facial expressions including smile), paralinguistics (intonation, pause, and tone) and proxemics (physical distance within people) [1].

There is saying: "Our minds change our bodies", but when it comes to body language "Our bodies can change our minds". It means that our body language can change other people's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about us. There are some distinctions of nonverbal language cues that are being used in classroom setting and outside of it. While personality traits and emotional states are often concentrated on



the latter one, facial expressions, proximity, eye contact, voice tone and posture are listed as main components of nonverbal communication in classroom setting. It is argued that teacher-student interaction plays a vital role in any classroom environment. The impact due to communication of the face is so powerful in interaction. Faces are rich in information about individual identity, and also about mood and mental state, being accessible windows into the mechanisms governing our emotions. Studies reveal that the most expressive way of humans display emotions is through facial expressions. Facial expressions are the primary source of information, next to words, in determining an individual's internal feelings. Unique character of facial expressions is that they are the same across cultures. Enthusiastic facial expressions of teacher facilitate a sympathetic atmosphere where students reply with positive attitude towards learning. Sometimes a darting glance on misbehaving students would be enough rather than verbal warning which interrupt attention of others [2].

In addition, "people tended to get closer to people they like, distance themselves from those they do not like". In all cultures smiling teachers are more adored and respected. Students generally perceive smiling teacher more approachable which is very important in teaching- learning process. All people thus certainly Lecturers and students use facial expressions to form impressions of another. A study had revealed that the facial expressions of the lecturers kept the students motivated and interested during the lectures. A Lecturer can also use student's facial expressions as valuable sources of feedback. While delivering a lecture, a Lecturer should use student's expressions to determine whether or not to slow down, speed up, or in some other way modify his presentation. The basic strategy of optimizing the classroom behavior is that the teachers must have the capability to feel student's minds changing; they must be good at observing student's facial expression, every action and movement. This helps the Lecturers to understand their own weakness and to change it. Lecturers should be highly skilled in understanding the emotions in order to identify the comprehension of the students from their facial expressions itself. If the Lecturers are not able to identify the significance in the facial expressions it will undermine the understanding of the students, thereby, create negative impact on student's learning. Momentary expressions that signal emotions include muscle movements such as raising the eyebrows, wrinkling the forehead, rolling the eyes or curling the lip. When students are feeling uncomfortable, they may have lowered brow, drawn together brow, horizontal or vertical forehead wrinkles, and have a hard time in maintaining eye contact. To be a good receiver of student messages, a lecturer must be familiar to many of the subtle nonverbal cues that their students send.

Teachers should use positive attitudes through creating suitable and relaxable atmosphere. It can be through teachers' body language which reflects positiveness to learners' motivation, for example the smile, it is known that the smile is the best medicine, and it is true. A smile can relieve stress, elevates mood, and enhances



motivation. It is good for teachers-learners relationships. The use of positive body language like a smile in the classroom, can play major role that builds up the relationships between teacher and learners rather than breaking it down. Teachers' body language can be the key that motivates and facilitates the learning process. It is better for teachers to sit in a place which is easily accessible to all learners when they are explaining in the middle of the classroom, to be available to get or to answer learners' questions, also they need to stand and move from time to time, to refresh the energy and motivation in the classroom. For example, standing is important when the teacher wants the attention of the whole class, for clarifying a point in the lesson or giving instructions, because learners are attracted to movements and brains are programmed to pay attention to what is active. Teachers need to create a communicative atmosphere through their body which is the source of the energy in the classroom.

Moreover, the way our body moves conveys information to the people around us about our confidence, character and authority. Sagging posture informs lack of self-assurance and a sign of weak leadership. Students conceive these teachers as uncertain, in turn, ignore them. Teacher leaders maintain erect body, straight shoulders, and tall walking which make students believe and accept what teacher say. In order students not to doubt credibility of teacher and start misbehaviour, teachers need to *“contract the muscles at the top of knees, grip the ground with all 10 of toes, and tuck tailbone”*. In addition, *hands should not be crossed on hips. When the wrists behind the back are clasped gently, it “pulls the shoulders slightly down and back”*, which conveys strength and confidence [3,4]. These postures also show openness of teacher which is very important in teacher-student relationship.

During the communication eye contact is used in great deal, probably more than any part of our body. Two kind of eye contact is used by teachers in classroom. First is looking around which facilitates classroom control, get attention of class, choosing a student for answering question. Attentive looking or gaze is second kind of eye contact used by teachers. For criticizing teachers need to look at triangle part of the face. Indifference, intimacy, and aloofness can be conveyed from avoiding eye sights of the teacher. Eye contact also inform teacher about boredom, enthusiasm and confusion of students and imply proper reactions [5]. Longer eye contact, the more leveraging qualities like trust, rapport and positive feelings will appear. However, eye contact can be delicate matter in different cultures. Some nations like Japanese, Koreans, West Indians, and Uzbeks avoid longer eye contact considering it as rudeness [6]. Females and young people in Uzbek culture do not make eye contact with people who are elder than them, particularly with males. Thus teachers need to find a golden balance in eye contact and keep on mind cultural heritage of shy local students. Teachers who want to adopt body language cues are advised to do it step by step. Integrating everything together will definitely confuse both teacher and student. It is good to be aware of meanings of certain body language cues, but truth is that, since most of our nonverbal



communication cues are produced unconsciously, unless those who want gain these skills feel truly confident and in charge of, it will not work [7-9].

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