

Impacts of Using Paralanguage on Teaching and Learning English Language to Convey Effective Meaning

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Abstract

Paralanguage is considered as an influential factor in foreign language teaching and learning that plays an essential role in language teaching and enhancing language learners' performance. The paper states to explore the effect of using paralanguage on teaching and learning English language to EFL learners. It is going to investigate the relationship between learners' awareness of learning concept and teachers' paralanguage; the standardized testing relational aspect between students' learning and teachers' paralanguage; and the learners' credible teaching perceptions depend on the teachers' paralanguage. The participants in this research are teachers and students of English language in the College of Science and Arts, Almandaq Branch in Albaha University. The study has concluded that paralanguage strategies assist in communicating effective meanings. It is recommended that EFL teachers and learners should use paralanguage strategies in their teaching and learning processes to convey meaning effectively.

Keywords

paralanguage, non-verbal communication, signified, signifier, proxemics

1. Introduction

Paralanguage is the area of non-verbal communication that highlights body language and voice tones as means of expressing thoughts and feelings. There are several aspects of paralanguage such as posture, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone of voice. Vocal qualities such as volume and tempo are also part of non-verbal communication. The study of paralanguage is also known as paralinguistic. Paralinguistic phenomena occur alongside spoken language, interact with it, and produce together with it a total system of communication. The study of paralinguistic behavior is part of the study of conversation: "the conversational use of spoken language cannot be properly understood unless paralinguistic elements are taking into account" (David Abercrombie, Elements of General Phonetics, 1968).

In addition, Paralanguage is the exception to the definition of nonverbal communication. You may

recall that we defined nonverbal communication as not involving words, but paralanguage exists when we are speaking, using words. Paralanguage involves verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech that influence meaning, including tone, intensity, pausing, and even silence.

It is clear that communicating to other people in human society is inevitable. One of the main activities of communication is pedagogy. In the classroom, teacher uses verbal or non-verbal signs to convey message to learners. Many researchers note that people communicate nonverbally over 90% of the time, and the human voice or tool affects to one called paralanguage. Paralanguage has many forms such as facial expressions, gestures, and other body movements. In this review of literature, the researcher states 1) Teachers' paralanguage, 2) The relational concept of learners' awareness and teachers' paralanguage, 3) The relationship between the testing relational aspect of students and teachers' use of paralanguage, 4) Learners' credible teaching perceptions depend on the teachers' paralanguage.

2. Literature Review

Early work on paralanguage started in the 1950s with the original study of George Trager and Henry Lee Smith (Hall & Trager, 1953; Trager, 1958), who stated that body movements and voice quality and other aspects of the voice are part of the language system. Paralanguage, which is also considered to be a form of non-verbal communication, refers to non-verbal, vocal messages (Adler & Rodman, 2000).

The influence that paralanguage can have on communication is significant and Adler and Rodman (2000) argue that listeners' pay more attention to the way a spoken message is said than to the words themselves.

Communication is an inevitable, fundamental concept in human society. It is a tool through which people communicate and share meaning (Lusting et al., 1996, p. 29). In this definition, a symbol represents by word, action, or object to convey meaning. Yet, the communication process consists of verbal and non-verbal means. So, people need to understand that how to say things can be more important than what to say (Knapp, 2009, p. 528).

The paper aimed to provide teachers with evidence related to the effect of paralanguage on students' learning, and paralanguage and learner's awareness examined in areas such as nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication examined in a number of spoken messages along with verbal communication (Barnum & Wolniansky, 1909; Frnkin & Rodman, 1983). So, paralanguage has positive impact on students' learning. Movements and gestures reflect self-confidence, fatigue, energy, or status. Thus, students receive positively and with enthusiasm the body message (Miller, 1998, p. 18). In addition, Using paralanguage effectively can play significant role in conveying positive meaning of verbal communication. So, people have a specified tendency to interpret the message easily (Abereombic, 1995, p. 72).

Many studies consider the positive effect of using paralanguage on teaching or learning English to convey effective meaning. The review of literature discussed in this section includes:

2.1 Paralanguage Impact on Students' Learning

Researchers reveal the importance of non-verbal communication to achieve successful communication. According to Miller (1988), 93% of the message sent through facial expressions and vocal intonation. Previous research on the role between the learners' awareness of learning and teachers' paralanguage started early in the 1970s (Teel, 2011; Frechette & Moreno, 2010; Anderman & Kaplan, 2008; Leathers & Evaness, 2008; Mackay, 2006; Sime, 2006; Powell & Harville, 1990; Richmond, 1990; Plax & Wendt-Wasco, 1985; Norton & Nussabaum, 1981; Anderson, 1979; Woolfolk, 1978). Mehrabian and Anderson are considering among the first researchers of education that begin the trend of non-verbal communication. In the class-room, students held their teacher's positive perception and class when teacher's immediacy presented. According to their studies' findings, paralanguage plays an essential role in the classroom setting (Anderson, 1979, pp. 543-559).

The previous studies observe not only how the paralinguistic elements found in literary texts which may influence the reader's awareness of the page and its various signaling system, but also how they affect the mutual comprehensibility of the target language (Benevides, 2005).

In the theory of language, Ferdinand de Saussure considers the word "sign" as the linguistic units which combines the concept and the sound image. According to the theory, the semantic term *signified* stands for the concept or an object in the real world, while the term *signifier* stands for the sound image. The sign is a result of this arbitrary connection between the concept and sound image. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is not direct especially via thought or reference (De Saussure, 1959, p. 66).

A distinction between different signs represented in the arbitrary connection between the signifier and signified. The motivated signs exemplify by the sequence of events that coin a story corresponds to the chronological sequence of events (Leech, 1981).

Burgoon and Hoobler (2002) found final significant of non-verbal communication—encoding and decoding skills—correspond to the power of attracting people. Nonverbal communicative signifiers are effective ways to influence other people (ibid, p. 240). Non-verbal encoding and decoding communicative skills relate to interpersonal communication: gender, occupation, training and age, but not to race, education, and intelligence.

Hybds (2004) delineated the functions of the non-verbal communicative skills, and, the incompatibility between the verbal and non-verbal communicative messages. Yet, it reflects the sender's feelings and attitudes of speakers better than spoken words (ibid, p. 175).

However, higher education teachers need to be mindful of the poor elements of using paralanguage. In common, there are five errors, related to paralanguage, are demonstrated by teachers; these are: poor personal habits, continually stiff, blocking or touching face, exaggerated hand gestures, and tapping or shaking legs and hands (Kroehert, 2006).

In many empirical studies, students' strong perception link to the teacher's nonverbal communication. There is strongly correlation between the teacher's effectiveness and his communicative style (Norton,

1977). The use of space (proxemics) and paralanguage positively affect teachers' non-verbal communication (Lesikar, 2005).

In his study, Lesikar considers paralanguage as a communicative effect of the speech, pitch, volume, and intonation.

Most of the advanced curriculum considered a supportive physical learning environment. To promote the development of the effective communication in the classroom,

Leathers and Eaves (2008) found that eliminating physical obstacle can positively affect communication and utilizing proxemics. This paper studies the effects of the non-verbal communication elements that pertain to the students' achievement. Teacher's paralanguage, smile, head nod, and eye contact associates to learners' awareness of the lectured topic (Myers & Knex, 2001).

2.2 Paralanguage's Effect on Learners' Perceptions

Some research in the field correlated teachers' immediacy of the non-verbal communication with constructing positive teacher and student relationship in the college environment (Andersen, 1981; Burroughs, 2007; Richmond, 1986; Rodriguez, 1996; Teel, 2011). Teachers, who build a strong relationship with their students, motivate them to spend more time in class tasks to expand their perception that they learn more (Rodrigeuz et al., 1966). Yet, the teachers' paralanguages reflect the amount of self-confidence and control over the classroom (Mackay, 2006).

In their study, Houser and Frymier (2009) focus on the students' personal feeling when presented with an effective and poor nonverbal communication. The study reveals that the students' self-confidence toward the classroom environment increases the perceptions of their own learning. If students feel confident to the subject matter, they will strongly form a connection with the teacher (House, 2009).

2.3 Paralanguage Strategies

The objective of paralanguage is to attract the attention of the learners which includes pitch and rhythm.

2.3.1 Communication Strategies

This includes representative, communicative, informative, and regulative symbolic strategies.

2.3.2 Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication language includes kinetics, proxemics, and semiotic strategies of paralanguage.

2.3.3 Nonverbal Signs

This includes regulators, qualifiers, characterizers, characterizers, affect displayers, and Illustrators.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The target participants, in this study, represent third level English Department students in Albaha University. The sample selected randomly to include a total of 33 students and 16 teachers to answer 12 and 16 statements respectively.

3.2 Tools of Data Collection

The main tools of this study are students and teachers' questionnaire.

As a basic tool in collecting data, a structured questionnaire was designed and written for this study (Appendix A). The students' questionnaire investigates the effect of using paralanguage on learning English to EFL learners. The questionnaire uses 5 Likerts Scales, which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

4. Results and Discussion

In descriptive analysis and discussion of the teachers' questionnaire, basic numerical summary of data is presented as follows.

1) "Smiling teachers teach more effectively than serious ones". The aim of the statement is to examine that smiling has a positive effect in teaching. The responses of the statement summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result points to 16.7% Strongly Agree and 50% Agree, while 16.7% are Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Thus, it indicates that 66.7% agree of the smiling in teaching, and 23.4% are disagree.

2) "It is easy to communicate with the teacher who usually encourage students by nodding their head". This statement is to check that nodding head as paralanguage which encourages the students to speak easily. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result summarizes that 16.7% are strongly agree, 66.7% are agree, and 16.7% are disagree. Thus, 83.4% agree that nodding their head while teaching encourages the students to communicate easily. Yet, 16.7% are disagree.

3) "The attractive personality and friendly style also contribute in teacher's success". This statement is to examine that attractive personality and friendly style contribute in teacher's success. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result summarizes that 83.3% are strongly agree, and 16.7% disagree.

4) "Teachers who vary the tone, pitch, volume and rhythm of their lecture are more successful". This statement indicates that Teachers who use different paralanguage achieve success in their lecture. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result summarizes that 66.7% of are strongly agree, 16.7% are not sure, and 16.7% are strongly disagree. Thus, there is strongly agree that teachers who vary the tone, pitch, volume and rhythm of their lecture are more successful.

5) "Students like teachers who never ask questions or involve students to discussions". The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result summarizes that 33.3% are strongly agree, 33.3% of them are neither, 16.7% are disagree, and 16.7% are strongly disagree. The result explains that teachers are not agree in that students like teachers who never ask questions or involve them to discussions.

6) "It is hard for the students to communicate with their teacher who stare their students coldly". The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). This result of the statement shows that 16.7% are strongly agree, 50% are agree, and 33.3% are not sure. Thus, there is a strongly agree of the students' difficulty to communicate with their teachers who stare them coldly.

- 7) “Students never take classes seriously whose teachers are irregular or unpunctual”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 88.3% are strongly agree, and 16.7% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure. This result manifests that majority agree that students never take classes seriously when their teachers are irregular or unpunctual.
- 8) “Students feel boredom in classes whose teacher teaches in a monotonous tone/style”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 66.7% are strongly agree, 16.7% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure. This result explains that most of them agree in students’ boredom in classes when teachers use monotonous tone or style.
- 9) “Students get lazy if the teacher delivers the whole lecture by standing still behind the rostrum”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 33.3% are strongly agree, 50% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure.
- 10) “Teacher’s movement in the classroom keeps students active”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 33.3% are strongly agree, 50% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure. This result explains that majority agree of the importance of the teachers’ movement that keeps the students active and agile.
- 11) “Students lose lecture interest when the teacher fatigued and exhausted”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 50% are strongly agree, 33.3% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure.
- 12) “Students become motivated if they are asked questions or involved in discussions”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 33.3% are strongly agree, 50% are agree, and 16.7% are disagree.
- 13) “Students avoid eye contact when they don’t know the response of the question asked”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 50% are strongly agree, 33.3% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure. This result manifests that majority agree that students avoid eye contact when they do not know the response of the question asked.
- 14) “Sitting close to teacher helps students in understanding the lecture more”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 50% are strongly agree, 33.3% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure.
- 15) “To shake hands with the students and pat on their back encourages them to work hard”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result of the statement shows that 16.7% are strongly agree, 33.3% are agree, 33.3% are not sure, and 16.7% disagree.
- 16) “Students feel motivated in well furnished, properly lit, spacious classroom & get depressed in poor classrooms”. The responses summarize in the table (Appendix A). The result summarizes that 33.3% of are strongly agree, 50% are agree, and 16.7% are not sure. This result manifests that majority agree that students feel motivated in well furnished, properly lit, spacious classroom and get depressed in poor classrooms.

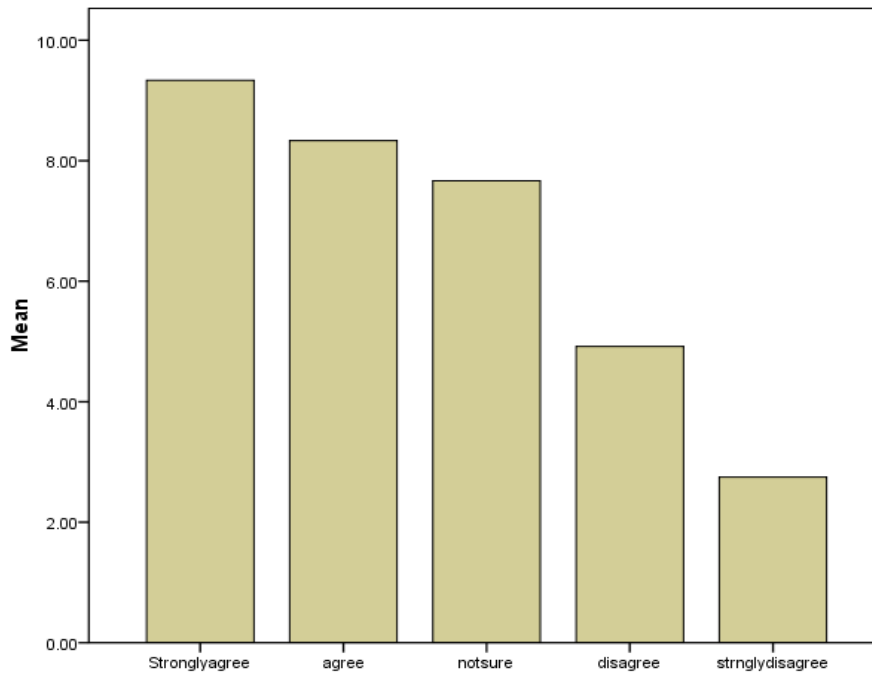


Figure 1. Teachers' Questionnaire Results

As Figure 1 shows about 29% are strongly agree of the positive effect of paralanguage, 26% agree, and 23% not sure of the effect of paralanguage. Interestingly, only 15% disagrees and 8.33% show strong disagreement. Discussion will take place in the next section.

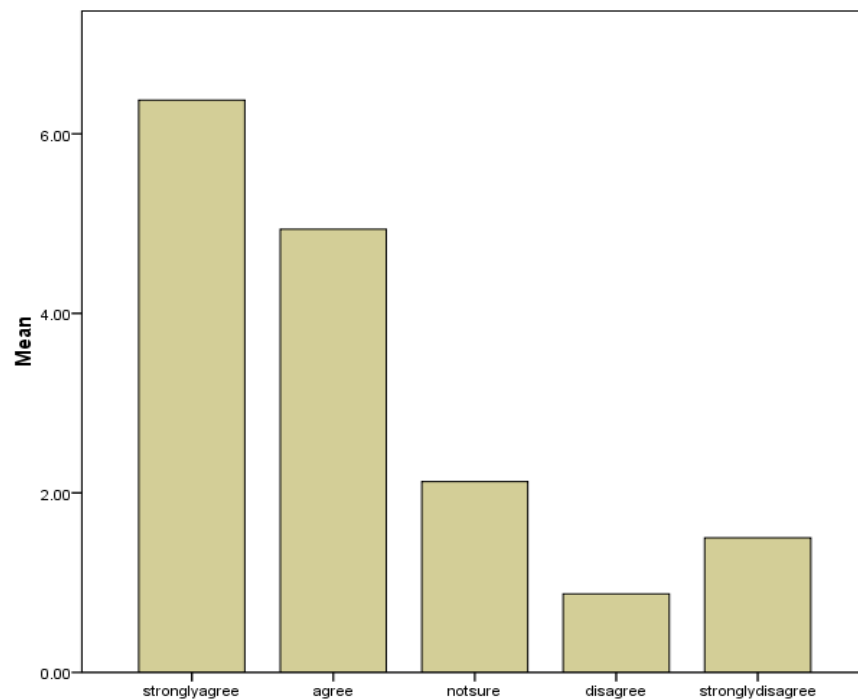


Figure 2. Students' Results

As Figure 2 shows about 40% of students strongly agree of the positive effect of paralinguistic, 31% agree, and 13% not sure of the effect of paralinguistic. Interestingly, only 6% disagrees and 10% show strong disagreement. Discussion will take place in the next section.

Both results suggest positive impression about the effect of paralinguistic in teaching/learning process of the English as a foreign language. According to the findings of the study students are more hopeful and confident than teachers. Because the use of paralinguistic, such as body movement, gestures, and facial expression, makes them more active.

5. Conclusions

The paper has concluded that paralinguistic has great impact on teaching and learning English as the second or foreign language. The relationship between learners' awareness of learning concept and teachers' paralinguistic was found. The findings of the study show that, there is standardized testing relational aspect between students' learning and teachers' paralinguistic. Yet, the learners' credible teaching perceptions depend on the teachers' paralinguistic. It concluded that paralinguistic strategy helps to convey effective meaning and provide teachers with past evidence concerning the effect of paralinguistic has in students' learning.

6. Recommendations

This study has recommended that:

- 1) Teachers should use paralinguistic to teach English language.
- 2) Paralinguistic should use effectively to activate students.
- 3) The findings of this thesis should be applied in female section.
- 4) Teachers should aware of using paralinguistic strategies in their teaching and learning processes to convey meaning effectively.

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Appendix A

Teachers' Questionnaire

The statement		1	2	3	4	5	Total
1. Smiling teachers teach more effectively than serious ones.	Frequency	1	3	1	1		6
	Percentage	16.7	50	16.7	16.7		100
2. It is easy to communicate with teachers who usually encourage students by nodding their head.	Frequency	1	4		1		6
	Percentage	16.7	66.7		16.7		100
3. The attractive personality and friendly style also contributes in teacher's success.	Frequency	5			1		6
	Percentage	83.3			16.7		100
4. Teachers who vary the tone, pitch, volume and rhythm of their lecture are more successful.	Frequency	4		1		1	6
	Percentage	66.7		16.7		16.7	100
5. Students like teachers who never ask questions or involve students to discussions.	Frequency	2		2	1	1	6
	Percentage	33.3		33.3	16.7	16.7	100
6. It is hard for the students to communicate with the teachers who stare their students coldly.	Frequency	1	3	2			6
	Percentage	16.7	50	33.3			100
7. Students never take classes seriously whose teachers are irregular or unpunctual.	Frequency	5	1	1			6
	Percentage	83.3	16.7	16.7			100
8. Students feel boredom in classes whose teacher teaches in a monotonous tone/style.	Frequency	4	1	1			6
	Percentage	66.7	16.7	16.7			100
9. Students get lazy if the teacher delivers the whole lecture by standing still behind the rostrum.	Frequency	2	3	1			6
	Percentage	33.3	50	16.7			100
10. The teacher's movement keeps the students active and agile.	Frequency	2	3	1			6
	Percentage	33.3	50	16.7			100
11. Students lose lecture interest when the teacher fatigued and exhausted.	Frequency	3	2	1			6
	Percentage	50	33.3	16.7			100
12. Students become motivated if they are asked questions or involved in discussions.	Frequency	2	3		1		6
	Percentage	33.3	50		16.7		100
13. Students avoid eye contact when they don't know the response of the question asked.	Frequency	3	2	1			6
	Percentage	50	33.3	16.7			100
14. Sitting close to teacher helps students in understanding the lecture more.	Frequency	3	2	1			6
	Percentage	50	33.3	16.7			100
15. To shake hands with the students and pat on their back encourages them to work hard.	Frequency	1	2	2	1		6
	Percentage	16.7	33.3	33.3	16.7		100
16. Students feel motivated in well furnished, properly lit, spacious classroom & get depressed in poor classrooms.	Frequency	2	3	1			6
	Percentage	33.3	50	16.7			100

Appendix B

Students' Questionnaire

The statement		1	2	3	4	5	Total
1. Do you retain the lecture that teachers are physically smart, attractive and well-dressed.	Frequency	15	11	3	2	2	33
	Percentage	45.5	33.3	9.1	6.1	6.1	100
2. Do you retain the lecture that teachers use eyes, forehead and hands frequently to explain a point.	Frequency	10	12	7	2	2	33
	Percentage	30.3	36.4	21.2	6.1	6.1	100
3. Do you see your wrist watches when the teacher takes over-time in the class.	Frequency	9	9	8	4	3	33
	Percentage	27.3	27.3	24.3	12.1	9.1	100
4. Do you feel embarrassed when the teacher points towards you with a raised finger.	Frequency	8	2	9	8	6	33
	Percentage	24.3	6.1	27.3	24.3	18.2	100
5. Do you feel embarrassed by the satirical silence/smile or grunt of your teacher in the class.	Frequency	8	8	10	3	4	33
	Percentage	24.3	24.3	30.3	9.1	12.1	100
6. Do you feel handicapped when a place far away from the teacher in the class.	Frequency	6	6	12	8	1	33
	Percentage	18.2	18.2	36.4	24.3	3	100
7. Do you like to have eye contact with your teacher all the time in the class.	Frequency	11	9	4	7	2	33
	Percentage	33.3	27.3	12.1	21.2	6.1	100
8. Do you feel that teacher's sad mood can make class burdensome and happy mood a lively experience.	Frequency	11	11	5	3	3	33
	Percentage	33.3	33.3	15.2	9.1	9.1	100
9. Do you feel that teacher's age also matters in making a lecture more memorable.	Frequency	3	8	10	7	5	33
	Percentage	9.1	24.3	30.3	21.2	15.2	100
10. Do you retain the lecture that teachers looks kind and friendly in the class.	Frequency	13	6	10	2	2	33
	Percentage	39.4	18.2	30.3	6.1	6.1	100
11. Do you retain the lecture that teachers teaches emotionally/enthusiastically.	Frequency	12	10	9		2	33
	Percentage	36.4	30.3	27.3		6.1	100
12. Do you feel threatened when teacher's body language is not positive.	Frequency	6	8	5	13	1	33
	Percentage	18.2	24.3	15.2	39.4	3	100