

Quadrant II - Notes

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Non Verbal Communication- Effective use of Body Language

Body language has long been seen by communication specialists as a key component of the way we interact with others, with researchers claiming that anything between 50% and 80% of all communication happens through non-verbal communication.

Concept of Body language-

When we speak, we use more than just words. We also communicate with our gestures, facial expressions including eye contact, posture and other movements of the body. This is referred to as body language. Merriam Webster dictionary defines body language as the gestures, movements and mannerisms by which a person or animal communicates with others. Body language has its own grammar and punctuation and it represents a very significant proportion of the meaning conveyed and interpreted by people.

What does Body Language comprise of?

A few of the commonly used features of body language are; Facial expressions, Eye contact, Gestures, Proximity, Posture, Body movements, Voice.

Effective use of Body Language in English Classrooms .

The role of non-verbal behaviour in English classroom plays an important role for teaching content and skills .Teacher's non-verbal behaviour plays a highly important role on learner's motivation in language classroom. (Negi J.S, 2009) Teachers are expected to use nonverbal communication in the classroom to give feedback, to motivate learners and have a good classroom management. Body language forms a key component of the way we interact with others

The objective of an ELT classroom interaction, between a teacher and student or between students, is learning a language, of which students have little or no

command yet. Body language also known as Silent language , has significant role to play in language acquisition as well as classroom interaction. All the aspects of body language can have a profound impact on the teacher's ability to build rapport, trust and a positive productive relationship with their students. Let us discuss various aspects and components of body language in detail;

Facial expressions .

They are probably the richest medium, given the wide variety of expressions that a person can produce through the configuration of the facial muscles. The affective aspect of language learning can be ascertained through it. The teacher's facial expressions should normally be encouraging for the students, since it is the effective way to make them learn. Just as the teacher detects his/her students' attitudes and mood through their faces and eyes, the students tend to do the same. This also implies that teachers should be aware of the effect of their facial expressions on their students. They can either make or mar their learning progress.

Eye Contact

The first thing that the teacher and students do before starting any lesson is to look at each other. This exchange of eye contact establishes a kind of background for later communication. A few major functions can be attributed to eye contact in the classroom;

- The first function is comprehension checking.
- Eye contact can also serve to motivate students and maintain their interest. Eye contact makes the students feel that the teacher is interested in their answers, and they also take it as a feedback from him.
- Class control- Eye contact can be used to tell a student that he is making too much noise, or make him stop behaving inappropriately. A stare combined with a frown would certainly do the job.

Gestures.

The teachers use a wide variety of gestures, but the ones used more consistently are the hand gestures and the head gestures The purpose of using gestures is, of course, to achieve an effective degree of communication. Specific objectives for using gestures in the ELT classroom ;

- i. Presenting language items,

- ii. Providing feedback to the students, and
- iii. Managing the classroom.

i) Gestures Presenting language items-

Gestures are very helpful in presenting language items such as vocabulary and grammar. An example of introducing vocabulary is the verb “fly” which can be presented by imitating a bird with one’s hands. More difficult words require the use of the whole body. The subtle differences in the verbs “jump, skip, hop ... etc can be presented by acting them out. Imagine how a teacher would present the subject pronouns I, you, he...etc without the use of gestures. Hand gestures could be used for denoting past, present and future tense and to instruct students to complete the sentence. The teacher’s gestures also help students to understand the content matter and the instructions given in a better way.

ii) Gestures for providing feedback for the students-

Feedback can be either positive like the “thumb up” for a correct answer, or negative in the form of correction. A set of gestures standing for grammatical mistakes, could be developed by the teacher in consultation with her students.

iii) Gestures for Classroom management.

Issuing instructions or commands to a large class becomes easier with gestures , such as asking students to pay attention, listen to a classmate who is giving an answer, or else signalling the ‘time over’ for an activity or task. Another gesture that is part and parcel of classroom management is pointing to students, either asking them to talk or designating individuals to take part in a task. Pointing to a student with a finger, not only downgrades them, but it shows that the teacher is bossy and arrogant. The open palm, however, gives the student more comfort and value. Apart from managing the teacher talking time, gestures can serve to create a warm and positive atmosphere where learning can take place.

Teachers body movements-

The teacher’s body movements and postures can communicate interest, fatigue, or encouragement. The teachers who use dynamic and lively body movements and postures, motivates learners, encourages them, and makes them involved in the classroom work. The teachers who use body movements

and postures in a rigid and stiff way, who would usually lean on their desk and cross their arm, or put their hands in their pockets for long time, make the students demotivated and bored. Teacher can analyse the students' attitudes and interests through their body movements and postures. A student who fidgets, slouches, or leans backwards usually shows signs of boredom and disinterest.

Posture

Changing posture may be used as a smooth transition between the different activities of a lesson. This means that when the teacher changes posture, the students, automatically, know that they are about to start a new task or activity. Postures can also be used to present vocabulary items such as: walk, stand, or haste. By and large, body movements and postures are potential means of communication that teachers need to use cautiously and cleverly to show interest in their students' learning and to motivate them.

Proxemics and seating arrangement in the classroom .

In a communicative language teaching classroom , a teacher is a kind of monitor, guide or counsellor .The change of the role of the teacher necessitates a change in his/her 'proxemic' position in the classroom. The two aspect of 'Classroom coverage' and 'Teacher visibility', of classroom management can be achieved through a good use of proxemics. The most important thing to remember here is that students usually like the teacher to be within reach but not too close to them.

Seating arrangement and student proximity

The seating arrangement and the distance between the students would depend on a number of variables such as;

- the nature of the activity to be carried out.
- the role that the students are supposed to play in the activity.
- the kind of students involved in the activity.

To sum it up , effective use of Body language in ELT classroom is essential as;

Teachers need to be made aware of the intricacies of nonverbal communication. They are expected to use nonverbal communication in the classroom to give feedback, to motivate learners, and have a good classroom

management. All these professional qualities can be fostered by the positive use on nonverbal communication. Finally it is by setting an example that teachers can teach students an important aspect of language –Non Verbal Communication