Effects of Non-verbal Communication on College English Classroom Teaching

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Communication with others in human society is inevitable. Classroom teaching, in essence, is an activity of communication. Teachers and students convey messages by both verbal and non-verbal cues. Since the teacher is put at the dominating role, the non-verbal cues he uses in the classroom have an influence on the teaching effects. Therefore, this paper mainly discusses about the effects of non-verbal communication on college English classroom teaching based on the results of a questionnaire conducted, in the hope that teachers can gain some enlightenment from the analysis.

Keywords: non-verbal communication, English teaching, effects

Introduction

Communication with others in human society is inevitable. Lustig and Koester (1996, p. 29) defined communication as “a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings”. A symbol in this definition refers to a word, action or object that represents a meaning. That is to say the communication process is composed of verbal and non-verbal means. Though the verbal means is a major and important way to communicate, this does not suggest that the non-verbal means is not significant for communication.

As a matter of fact, in face-to-face communication, non-verbal communication acts as an indispensable and significant means to convey the affective meaning of a verbal communication. As a result, people are inclined to interpret the implication of the verbal message on the non-verbal communication means of the sender. Just as Abererombic said, “We speak with our vocal organs, but we converse with our whole body” (as cited in BI, 1995, p. 72). Researches have revealed some fascinating facts about the importance of non-verbal communication in communication. Especially much more feelings and intentions are sent and received non-verbally than verbally. Miller (1988, p. 5) suggested “only 7% of a message is sent through words with the remaining 93% sent through facial expressions (55%) and vocal intonation (38%)”. Even if we choose silence, it is also kind of communication. “Silence cues may be interpreted as evidence of agreement, lack of interest, injured feelings, or contempt. Like olfactory and tactile cues, silence cues transcend the verbal channel, often revealing what speech conceals” (Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998, p. 171).

Classroom teaching, in essence, is an activity of communication between the teacher and students by means of information transmission. In other words, the teacher and students convey messages by both verbal and non-verbal
EFFECTS OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

cues in classroom teaching. As a result, teachers should be aware of non-verbal behaviors in the classroom.

Most researches have found that it is necessary for teachers to learn to use non-verbal behavior to enhance the quality of classroom teaching. It has been reported (Grant & Hennings, 1971) that 82% of the notions used in a classroom by the teacher are non-verbal, while only 18% are verbal. In order to convey the 18% verbal message better to students, teachers use a lot more non-verbal communication means in this information transmission process. It has been discovered that the teacher’s facial expression (through the use of smiles) is more effective than speech in drawing students’ attention and response (Wolfgang, 1979). So effective non-verbal communication can be a great asset to a teacher in managing classroom interaction through lessening the inhibitions which often plague students and reducing teachers’ talking time. Cooper (1988) remarked, “Non-verbal communication is quite important for teachers. Researches have shown that the relationship between teachers and students can be improved if teachers learn how to use non-verbal communication in classroom teaching” (p. 57).

As the teacher is put at the dominating role in classroom teaching, the non-verbal signals he/she uses in the classroom have great influence on the teaching effect. As a result, college English teachers should not only be aware of the role played by non-verbal communication means in classroom teaching, but also should set a good example for students in the application of non-verbal communication means.

Overview of Non-verbal Communication

The Definition of Non-verbal Communication

The definition of non-verbal communication is hard to give due to its complex and multidimensional features. Many scholars propose their own definition from different perspective. Samovar, Porter, and Stefani (1998) defined it as “non-verbal communication involves all those non-verbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his/her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver” (p. 149). Some scholars regarded non-verbal communication as “the process by which non-verbal behaviors are used, either singly or in combination with verbal behaviors, in the exchange and interpretation of messages within a given situation or context” (Malandro, L. L. Barker, & D. A. Barker, 1989, p. 5). Knapp and Hall (1997) defined non-verbal communication as “communication effected by means other than words (assuming words are the verbal element)” (p. 5). This definition is practically useful but it does not adequately account for the complexity of non-verbal communication.

Considering all these definitions given above, we can come to the conclusion that comparatively speaking, the definition offered by Samovar et al. (1998) is a comprehensive one. It not only marks the boundaries of non-verbal communication but also reflects how the process actually works. This definition involves unintentional as well as intentional behavior in the total communication event, which reveals the nature of non-verbal communication.

Functions of Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication serves six primary functions: complementing, substituting for, accenting, contradicting, repeating, and regulating verbal messages (Malandro et al., 1989).

Complementing. Non-verbal behavior serves to complement or add to the verbal message. It can modify, or elaborate on verbal messages. Non-verbal behavior alone would not communicate the intended meaning. A
complementing non-verbal message changes the meaning of the verbal message by adding additional insights or information. So when clarity is of the most importance, one should be especially concerned with making verbal and non-verbal behaviors complement one another (Knapp & Hall, 1997).

**Substituting.** Non-verbal behavior can also substitute for verbal messages. Substitution often occurs when barriers to verbal communication exist in the environment and is used for emphasis (Dodd, 2006). For example, an experienced teacher might suddenly raise or lower his/her voice to attract the absent-minded students to focus on his/her speaking in class.

**Accenting.** The primary function of accenting is to emphasize a particular point in a verbal messages. It is much like underlining or italicizing written words to emphasize them. For instance, a skillful teacher would pause before or after an important point in his/her explanation. The pause would assist to highlight or accent the point that the teacher is about to make.

**Contradicting.** On some occasions, our non-verbal messages contradict our verbal messages. Think of a time when one’s student who has lied to him/her. The student may repeatedly stress that he/she has not told a lie, but at the same time he/she is biting his/her fingernails or breaking his/her eye contact with the teacher.

**Repeating.** People often use non-verbal messages to repeat a point in their verbal language. Repetition is used in order to emphasize or clarify the verbal message. Think of the moment when an English teacher is teaching children numbers. When he/she says “one” in English, meanwhile he/she puts up one of his/her fingers (usually the index finger) to clarify the verbal message.

**Regulating.** Regulations often serves to coordinate the verbal dialogue between people, to be exact, to manage the flow of communication interactions by form of non-verbal behavior (Malandro et al., 1989). In class, we can use the form of a head nod to indicate to the student that we agree with him/her and that he/she should continue talking; or we remain silent for a moment and let the silence send the message that we are ready to begin our speech. Or we have direct eye contact with some student to let him/her know that the channels are open. In short, these non-verbal messages help to regulate the flow of the communication interactions.

**Characteristics of Non-verbal Communication**

Since verbal and non-verbal means form the whole process of human communication, it is indispensable to separate non-verbal means from verbal means by examining characteristics of non-verbal communication. Malandro et al. (1989, pp. 7-10) discussed the characteristics that distinguish verbal from non-verbal communication from the following dimensions.

**Structure vs. non-structure.** Verbal communication is highly structured and has a strict set of grammatical rules. On the other hand, non-verbal communication is loosely-structured with little or no formal structure to guide communication. Most non-verbal communication occurs unconsciously or spontaneously without a predictable sequence of events. Because of its subconsciousness, non-verbal messages are difficult to identify and analyze. As a result, non-verbal behaviors can be quite ambiguous. The same non-verbal behavior can mean different things at different times in different cultures. For example, smile is the signal of happiness, satisfaction and friendliness in most cultures. While in Japanese culture, a woman might smile when she feels embarrassed or awkward.

**Linguistic vs. non-linguistic.** Since there is no specific structure for non-verbal communication, there are few assigned symbols in the system. A common example is the gestures of waving farewell. In Italy, the palm of
the hand is held toward the speaker and the fingers make the motion of drawing the departing person back. In Spain, the movement is the same, but the hand is held horizontally. In France, however, the palm is frequently held facing the departing person, and the movement of the hand appears to push the departing person on his/her way. Similarly, Americans are inclined to show the palm also and move the flattened hand from left to right. Although some researchers have attempted to assign specific meaning to particular facial movements (Birdwhistell, 1970), there exists no documented non-verbal language system. However, this is not the case in verbal communication. Verbal communication is a system of symbols to which we arbitrarily assign meanings.

Continuous vs. discontinuous. Non-verbal communication is continuous, whereas verbal communication is discontinuous. That is to say, verbal communication has definite beginning and ending points whereas non-verbal messages linger on. For instance, when a teacher enters a classroom, he/she starts non-verbal communication continuously until he/she leaves the room. Even when one keeps silent in class, it is also a kind of communication.

Learned vs. innate. Agreement has been reached that verbal communication is learned while non-verbal communication is both instinctive and learned. Malandro et al. (1989) believed that individual are born with basic non-verbal instincts. For example, no one teaches babies to smile; however, when infants are happy, they do smile to indicate contentment. On the other hand, some non-verbal means are acquired through learning such as some gestures, postures stance, paralanguage, clothing, and the use of time and space. A case in point is that though quite identical in appearance, we can still tell a Chinese from a Japanese just by observing their walking behavior from behind.

The Classification of Non-verbal Communication

When it comes to the classification of non-verbal communication, many different versions of descriptions are discussed and no one uniform description is agreed on.

Classification of non-verbal communication by western scholars. Scholars have identified and categorized literally hundreds of objects, behaviors, vocal characteristics, and events as forms of non-verbal communication. They describe non-verbal communication on different dimensions, so there is no agreement on the classification of non-verbal communication. Here are some of the well-acknowledged classifications proposed by some linguists.

Ruesch and Kees (1956) presented the earliest classification about non-verbal behavior based on foundational components of non-verbal communication: sign language, action language and object language (as cited in BI, 1999, p. 5). This classification is so rough and general that it is difficult to apply it into practice.

Knapp and Hall (1997, pp. 12-20) proposed seven categories of non-verbal communication: body motion and kinesics behavior, physical characteristics, touching behavior, paralanguage, proxemics, artifacts, and environmental factors.

Malandro et al. (1989) identified the specific classes of non-verbal communication as follows: (1) body types, shapes and sizes, (2) clothing and personal artifacts, (3) body movement and gestures, (4) facial expression and eye behavior, (5) environment, (6) personal space, territory and crowding, (7) voice characteristics and qualities, (8) taste and smell, and (9) culture and time.

Anderson (2007, pp. 239-240) discussed non-verbal communication from an utterly different perspective: (1) physical appearance, (2) proxemics, (3) chronemics, (4) kinesics, including some aspects of facial expressions,
body movements, gestures, and conversational regulators, (5) haptics, (6) oculesics, (7) vocalics or paralanguage, and (8) olfactics.

**Classification of non-verbal communication by Chinese scholars.** According to HE Dao-kuan (1988), non-verbal communication concerns the following categories as: (1) time language: punctuality, promptness, time orientation, what is early or late, long or short; (2) space language: body touch and personal distance; (3) body language: posture, stance, gestures, facial expressions, eye behavior and any other movement of any part of the body and appearance; (4) voice modulation: speed, pitch, volume, pause, etc.; and (5) environment: location, decoration, temperature, light, etc..

The Chinese scholar BI Ji-wan (1999, p. 6) put forward the following classifications of non-verbal communication: (1) body language, including basic posture, gesture, basic manners and movements of any part of the body; (2) paralanguage, referring to these elements such as pitch, speed, volume, tone, rhythm, silence and pause; (3) object language, consisting of smell, complexion, clothing, cosmetics, furniture, etc.; and (4) environmental language, including time, space, colors, city planning and any human effect on nature. And he pointed out that the former two are considered to be “Non-verbal Behavior”, and the latter two “Non-verbal Means”.

The classification of non-verbal communication in English classroom teaching. To discuss the classification of non-verbal communication in English classroom teaching, the author of this paper prefers the classification of non-verbal communication which was concluded by Malandro et al. (1989, pp. 16-23): (1) body types, shapes and sizes; (2) clothing and personal artifacts; (3) kinesics (body movement and gestures and posture); (4) facial expression and eye behavior; (5) environment; (6) proxemics including human territory, personal space and body contact; (7) paralanguage (voice characteristics and qualities); (8) olfactics (taste and smell); and (9) chronemics, including schedule of each course and time that teachers give to students to prepare for the questions.

Since the study of non-verbal communication covers a wide range of areas, it is impossible to cover every aspect of it. Therefore, this paper intends to do some research on the effects of non-verbal communication on college English classroom teaching and tends to probe into the areas of the following non-verbal communication based on the classification by BI Ji-wan (1999): (1) body language, (2) paralanguage, (3) object language, and (4) environmental language. Actually, BI Ji-wan’s classification is a comprehensive one and has covered most fields of non-verbal communication. Besides, his classification has a prominent effect on classroom teaching.

**Effects of Non-verbal Communication on College Classroom Teaching**

In order to find out whether non-verbal communication can affect the college English classroom teaching, the author conducted a survey among his students. The subjects of this investigation consist of college students who are randomly chosen from freshmen, majoring in Chemistry and Computer Science and Physics. Moreover, all of the students investigated are taking the course of College English. What is more, they have already had certain language and cultural background knowledge in English.

The survey is supposed to find out the college students’ opinions about non-verbal communication in college English classroom teaching, which is also conducted to obtain more authentic and accurate classroom data. Hence, the effects of non-verbal communication on college English classroom teaching can be revealed.
In order to get the authentic data, all the subjects were not informed in advance of the purpose of this survey. The survey was conducted under the surveillance of the author. The data of the survey was collected to make a table for quantitative and qualitative analysis by calculating the percentage and summarizing the trend in the answers. The author will discuss the data in detail in the following sections.

The Effects of Teachers’ Physical Attractiveness on Classroom Teaching

While it is common to hear people contemplate about inner beauty being the only thing that really counts, research suggests that physical attractiveness plays an influential role in interpersonal encounters. Appearance also affects communication in the classroom either positively or negatively. And scholars have also found some very interesting relationships between attractiveness and student-teacher interaction. Wax (as cited in Neil, 1991) argued that teachers, whether they have realized it or not, act more positively toward children who are better dressed and that they tend to treat “good looking” children both verbally and non-verbally than unattractive children. Attractive students have actually been found to receive higher grades than their unattractive peers. And “Attractive women receive higher grades in both high school and college courses” (Malandro et al., 1989, p. 30).

At the same time, the negative effect has been known as well. It was reported several years ago that a young female English teacher at a Chengdu foreign language school inclined to wear heavy cosmetics and midriff in class. Consequently, when she was giving a class, all of the students could not direct their concentration from her attractive appearance and focus on her speaking. As a result, her students could hardly learn anything from her class. The improper use of object language of this teacher incurred a great trouble to herself. Many parents of her students made complaint to the principal about her inappropriate use of non-verbal communication means in classroom teaching.

In order to find out the effects of teacher’s appearance on college classroom teaching, a questionnaire was conducted among the author’s students (see Appendix A).

For Q1, of 50 students, 23 pick up C and 21, D. As we know, both C and D belong to the category of non-verbal communication, which means the majority of the students feel a teacher’s like or dislike through non-verbal communication means. As for Q2, 48% of the students picked up E and 24% chose A, which means in the first class, students pay more attention to all the non-verbal communication means of a new teacher, especially his/her body language. Students try to get more information about the teacher by observing his/her non-verbal communication means. Undoubtedly, this choice may give an implication for teachers on how to communicate non-verbally with the students in the first class.

The Effects of Teachers’ Use of Cosmetics on Classroom Teaching

Cosmetics also send countless messages about the wearer. Depending on the situation, however, the presence of makeup may lead to stronger attributions to femininity, sexiness and attractiveness, and it may also strengthen sex-role stereotypes, particularly when cosmetics are used by women holding traditionally feminine jobs, for example, a secretary or a nurse. Heavy users in these jobs may be seen more as ornaments than as performers. Surprisingly, this relationship was not found for women in non-gender-typed positions. It can be concluded that women in gender-typed roles should be sparing with makeup, particularly if they wish to be more upwardly mobile. For these women, “cosmetics use may enhance physical appearance, but it also may detract from perceived competence on the job” (Malandro et al., 1989, p. 83).
On campus both female students and teachers should be cautious of the use of cosmetics. Female students who use heavy cosmetics may mistakenly impress on teachers that they are not attentive learners, because they have devoted their full attention to the art of making themselves more attractive, sexy and feminine. Female teachers are warned not to use heavy cosmetics for they are not holding a gender-typed position. So they do not need strengthen their sexiness, femininity and attractiveness on the job. Otherwise, students will doubt about their capability, knowledge, skill, personality and even morality. And female teachers of heavy makeup are less likely to be promoted.

For Q3 (see Appendix A), the number of the students who expresses their total unacceptance and unacceptance amounts to 25. From this result we can see that more than half of the college students disapprove of female teachers’ heavy wear of cosmetics. In conclusion, as mentioned above, a female teacher had better keep plain and clean. And in case of need, light use of cosmetics is a popular choice for female teachers.

**The Effects of Teachers’ Clothing on Classroom Teaching**

Clothes can be a statement, a style or a definition of who you are. Clothing is a form of non-verbal communication that carries numerous messages to its audience. “It is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting social signals”, claimed the human behaviorist Desmond Morris (as cited in Malandro et al., 1989, p. 65). “Every costume tells a story, often a very subtle one, about its wearer”, which includes those people who claim they pay no attention to their clothing with regard to its communicative value (Malandro et al., 1989, p. 65).

Our clothing has a communicative value that permeates all realms of society. So we should be careful in selecting clothing that conveys the image we wish to project.

Due to the full implications of clothing, the communicative value of clothing operates in the academic world. If a teacher is concerned with how he/she is perceived by the students, he/she must choose his/her clothing carefully. Results of experiment uncovered some interesting findings. Teachers who dressed informally were seen as friendly, flexible, more sympathetic, fair and enthusiastic when compared with the other modes of dress. The other extreme in dress, that of formal attire, communicated that the teacher was organized, knowledgeable and better prepared. So if one wants to show his/her is a responsible and strict teacher, he/she had better put on formal clothes. The result of the author’s questionnaire also confirms this conclusion (see Appendix A).

The results of the survey is very interesting and constructive. When it comes to Q4, 46 students pick up B and four choose A. Nobody picks up the other choices. This result suggests that students expect that teachers can dress professionally in classroom. For Q5, the number of the students who choose A and B totalizes to 42 and no one picks up E, which indicates that no student can totally accept a female teacher to show her sex-gender attractiveness in class. As to Q6, more than 70% pick up C and 20% prefer B.

From these statistics, we can see the majority of the students think that teachers should dress professionally and properly. And college students can accept teachers wearing informal clothes in classroom, such as jeans, T-shirt or sweater. Surprisingly, the students do not like teachers in suits. It may be that suits are too formal and serious, while informal clothes can easily create a lively teaching atmosphere and close relationship between the college students and teachers. That can best explain why student-teachers can easily create a friendly and close relationship with their students.
The Effects of Smell on Classroom Teaching

Every day we use our sense of smell as a medium for communication. Although much taken for granted, our sense of smell can and does communicate many different messages that provide valuable information about our environment and impact on our emotional response to people and situations. The smells affecting our human communication is mainly body odors and environmental odors. Apart from the body odors, smells in the environment do communicate much. They communicate positive messages as well as negative messages. It is pointed out that people easily recognize odors from memory. In fact, even over time, sensory recognition is extremely stable.

According to the study conducted at the Research Center for Mental Health at New York University, a link between odors and learning is found to have been established. Researchers found that when words and smells were presented together and were related (for example, cheese and the odor of cheese), students retained word lists of substantial length for indefinite amounts of time (Malandro et al., 1989, p. 265).

As olfaction constitutes the principal information channel, teachers should pay more attention to their body odors and environment odors. It has been confirmed that people can discriminate between male and female odors, and consistently describe male odors as “musky” and female odors as “sweet”. Therefore, in classroom, teachers should be careful with selecting cosmetics. If a male teacher smells “sweet”, he will be considered to be feminine by his students and vice versa. Besides, in classroom, male teachers should not smell alcohol or cigarette, and female teachers strong perfume. Otherwise, these smells can evoke unfavorable comments of the students on the teachers. In brief, teachers should avoid smelling unpleasantly in classroom. The author’s questionnaire also makes confirmation to this study (see Appendix A).

As for Q7, 20 students pick up B but nobody chooses E. This indicates the fact that teachers’ odors affect students’ study cannot be denied. But the influence is not that serious. However, as for Q8, the answers focus on A and B, totaling 43 students, more than 86% of the students do think that the smell of the environment has an impact on their study.

The Effects of Furnishing and Decoration on Classroom Teaching

Our environment has influenced our growing, because environment stimulates curiosity and shapes our personality, communication and performance. Among all the factors, seating arrangement and lighting have more effects on classroom teaching.

Seating arrangement. The arrangement of certain objects in our environment can help shape communication. Spacing of desks or seats also affects communication behavior in the classroom, because the arrangement of desks or seats reflects the differences in status between teachers and students. As far as preferences for particular seating arrangements, the semicircle (the modular arrangement) and U-shape (the horseshoe arrangement) are highly preferred over traditional arrangement (straight rows) and circles (Malandro et al., 1989, p. 170). This implies a student preference for a seating arrangement that allows the most interaction. The straight-row seating, the traditional arrangement in the classroom, seems to be inadequate because it does not allow students to interact most with other members of the class. And the investigation made by BI Ji-wan (1999, p. 153) has reinforced this point. Students prefer the traditional arrangement when taking compulsory courses, because this seating arrangement is beneficial to the communication between teachers and students. Besides, it is also convenient for the teacher to take control of the whole class. While the semicircle and U-shape are much
helpful to communication between students. So students tend to choose them when having elective courses. The response of the author’s students has also confirmed this study result (see Appendix B).

As for Q9, there is no distinctive line between the three choices, which implies the students do not care much about the seating arrangement when having a lecture or attending a class. However, Q10, 22 picks up B and 24, C, that is to say, 92% of the students agree that the seating arrangement for a discussion should be either in the U-shape or in the modular shape which are much helpful for interaction.

Unfortunately, nowadays the desks and seats in classroom are all fixed to the ground, which makes them immovable. As a result, the traditional arrangement is quite popular in China, which contributes to the dullness of our classroom.

**Lighting.** Lighting also has a pronounced effect on our behavior. If we enter a dimly lit or candlelit room, we may talk more softly, sit closer together and presume that more personal communication will take place. When the dim lights are brightened, however, the environment tends to invite less intimate interaction.

The effects of colored lighting on performance are interesting. Evidence suggests that human reactions are 12% faster than average under red lighting conditions. Green lights, on the other hand, seem to generate reactions that are slower than normal. Colored lighting also seems to influence judgments of time, length and weight. With red lighting, these judgments tend to be overestimated, while a green or blue light appears to generate underestimation.

It is self-evident that fatigue rates rise in direct proportion to the dimming of the visual field because much of student’s work depends on visual scanning and identification. Thus, lowered light levels will decrease his/her efficiency dramatically, thereby decreasing the quality and quantity of his/her work (Malandro et al., 1989, p. 160). In the author’s questionnaire (see Appendix A), as for Q11, 21 choose A and 21, B, and no one picks up E, which indicates that college students themselves have realized the marvelous effects of lighting on their study. And Q12, 33 focus on B and 13 on A. More than 92% of the subjects, if possible, will choose to sit closer to the source of lighting seats in order to improve their efficiency and concentration.

As a result, in decorating a classroom, the following three guidelines must be kept in mind:

1. Maintain high levels of illumination. When students must expend energy just to see, they will have little left to understand what is being said. That is why students would like to choose the seats under the light;

2. All areas of the room should be balanced in brightness. Evidence from industry that eye fatigue plays havoc with production schedules. To avoid sharp contrast, the visual field around the task should be only one third as bright as the work area. No part of the visual field should be brighter than the immediate vicinity of the task. In classroom furnishing of lights, the students’ areas are well-lighted while in the teacher’s area the light is comparatively dim;

3. Avoid glare either from direct light sources or from reflecting surfaces. Either case is a distraction from study. So the lights in a classroom should be installed on the ceilings instead of on the front wall facing the students.

**The Effects of Vocal Characteristics on Classroom Teaching**

Vocal phenomena, also called paralanguage, is the study of such non-semantic aspects of speech as tone, volume, pitch, speed and pause, and the silence as voice is one of the most important elements affecting our image. So to some degree, it is not what one says but how he/she says it that really counts.
First of all, the voice conveys emotional cues accurately although it is hard to discover the exact voice features that transmit certain emotions. But it is generally acknowledged that pitch level influences evaluative judgments and that volume influences perceptions about the strength of the emotion. Vocal cues also play an important role in managing the interactions—that is, who speaks, when, to whom, and for how long. In communication process, we adopt different categories of turn-taking behavior to control the flow of communication. For instance, sometimes we raise the pitch at the end of our comment to signal that we will finish soon and the other person can start talking. More often we use pauses and silence to indicate a turn denial.

In college classroom teaching, teachers may find that sometimes when we ask a student to answer a question, that student may keep silence after standing up, which indicates that he/she is not well-informed or not clear about what the teacher says, or he is unwilling to answer the question or he/she has no idea about the question.

As the example for students to imitate and learn from, college English teachers should pay more attention to the aspects of non-verbal sounds. Skilled and experienced English teachers are more likely to vary their voice to convey different messages for different purposes. Otherwise, students might quickly get bored and lose interest in teacher’s speaking. The author’s questionnaire shows the same tendency of the students (see Appendix B). For Q13, the choices of the students focus on B and C, amount for 96%, which suggests that students hope that teachers can modulate their voice in order to attract their attention. Consequently, if teachers want to communicate effectively with their students, they had better learn how to modulate their voice.

Conclusions

Non-verbal communication in classroom is as important as verbal communication. According to Grant and Hennings (1971), most of the notions used in a classroom by the teacher are non-verbal, while only less are verbal. Wolfgang (1979) also stated that the teacher’s facial expressiveness (through the use of smile) is more effective than speech in drawing students’ attention and responsiveness. Effective non-verbal communication can be a great asset to a teacher in managing classroom interaction. In order to make classroom teaching more manageable, more effective and more interesting, both teachers and students should be fully aware of the importance of non-verbal communication and improve the ability of non-verbal communication.

Classroom non-verbal behaviors can be classified into two categories: positive and learning-inductive, negative and learning-hampering. Positive and learning-inductive non-verbal behaviors arrive at better teaching and learning while negative ones lead to its worse impact on classroom teaching.

However, most of teachers are not aware of the fact and ignore the role of their non-verbal behaviors in class. Foreign language teachers in China only pay attention to teaching in verbal communication, seldom touching non-verbal communication field. Through this research on the effects of non-verbal communication in college English classroom teaching, we can safely draw the conclusion: First of all, teachers should learn how to use non-verbal communication to impress upon their students, especially in the first class so as to create a friendly relationship between the teacher and students. Secondly, teachers should exploit non-verbal communication so as to create a lively teaching atmosphere and good studying environment. Thirdly, teachers should take advantage of non-verbal communication to assist and complement classroom teaching to achieve the best effect and high efficiency.
EFFECTS OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

References


Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. Through ________ you feel the teacher’s like or dislike of you?
   A. Language  B. Gestures  C. Eye-contact  D. Facial expressions

2. In the first class would you pay attention to a teacher’s ________?
   A. Behavior  B. Attire  C. Appearance  D. Voice  E. All

3. Can you accept the heavy use of cosmetics of female teachers?
   A. Total unacceptance  B. Unacceptance  C. No opinion  D. Acceptance  E. Total acceptance

4. How do you expect teachers to wear ________ in classroom?
   A. Fashionable  B. Professional  C. No opinion  D. Informal  E. Casual

5. Can you accept female teachers wear bare midriff, miniskirt and male teachers wear shorts or slippers?
   A. Total unacceptance  B. Unacceptance  C. No opinion  D. Acceptance  E. Total acceptance

6. What do you think is the proper clothing for a teacher ________?
   A. Professional suits  B. Informal clothes (like jeans, T-shirt, sweater)  C. Any clean and tidy clothes  D. No opinion

7. Do you think that teachers’ physical odor can affect your study?
   A. Much effect  B. General effect  C. No opinion  D. No effect  E. No effect at all

8. Do you think that the smell in the classroom or the environment can affect your study?
   A. Much effect  B. General effect  C. No opinion  D. No effect  E. No effect at all
9. Which seating arrangement do you prefer while having lectures.
A. Straight row  B. U-shape  C. Module

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10. Which seating arrangement do you think is beneficial to discussion?
A. Straight row  B. U-shape  C. Module

11. Do you think that lighting in a classroom can affect your study?
A. Much effect  B. General effect  C. No opinion  D. No effect  E. No effect at all

12. If given the chance to choose, where would you prefer to sit?
A. Under the light  B. Near the light  C. Far from the light  D. No opinion

13. When a teacher speaks, which of the following tone can draw your attention:
A. Soft and monotonous  B. Soft but rhythmical  C. Loud and rhythmical  D. Loud but monotonous

### Appendix B: Percentage Distribution of the Answers

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