

Teaching Poetry: Impact of Teacher's Non-Verbal Communication on Students' Learning Outcomes

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Abstract

This experimental study considers the impact of non-verbal communication on the learning achievement of students of class 10th. This study highlights the importance of non-verbal communication in teaching of poetry in the subject of English. The study discusses the research questions of how teacher's notion of medium of instruction might enhance the teaching of English poetry and what type of learning is possible with the incorporation of prosodic features? Population of the study comprises the selected school in urban area of Peshawar (North-West of Pakistan). Experiment in the actual classroom setting was conducted in the sampled school. The significant difference between pre-and post-tests of the control and experimental groups was tested through paired t-test. Results revealed that teachers created active learning environment through their non-verbal gestures; whereby students were attentive in the classrooms and actively participated in the learning process, which consequently enhanced the level of their retention and understanding. Use of non-verbal communication helped the teacher to provide better understanding to the students in their learning achievement. On the contrary teacher who did not use non-verbal communication in the classroom could not motivate the students for effective learning.

Keywords: Body language; Eye Contact; Facial Expressions; Non-verbal Communication; Students' Achievement

Introduction

In a social set-up people exchange and share their ideas, feelings, emotions and thoughts through communication. Two facets are involved in this process: verbal and non-verbal and the later plays a pivotal and essential role in the process of communication. Many concepts of verbal communication are effectively transferred to the listener with the help of non-verbal gestures. The same is very true about the teaching-learning process. A teacher in classroom can enhance the learning of students with the help of non-verbal communication. Various non-verbal gestures, if used properly in the classroom, can supplement the routine teaching and result in the form of students' achievement.

Non-verbal communication involves body language, dress of teacher, facial expressions, pitch of voice, eye contact, distance between teachers and students, teachers' general habits, hand moments, postures etc. and according to Cutica and Bucciarelli, (2015) meaning of non-verbal gestures whether in consistent or in contrast with the verbal communication always got processed. During teaching learning process, non-verbal communication plays a very significant role towards the achievement of students' learning outcomes. The teaching learning process depends on the attainment of learning outcomes; therefore, the process of developing students' learning is very essential and needs subtle expertise.

Understanding of eye contact, facial expressions, body language, pitch of voice and spatial distance by teachers can change the learning environment of the classroom completely. Utilization of this skill can help teachers in the attainment of students' learning achievements. In addition, students' attention can be increased when teachers make regular use of this skill during the teaching-learning process. This study focuses on the use of non-verbal communication in the sampled school of Peshawar, North-West of Pakistan, and attempts to bring into limelight the use of non-verbal communication by the teachers and tries to address the questions: How might teacher' notion of medium of instruction enhance their teaching of English poetry? What type of learning is possible with the incorporation of prosodic features?

The study also assesses how teachers adopt and utilize this mechanism for better learning outcomes and evaluate the impact of non-verbal communication on the students' achievement with the help of an experiment in Govt. Secondary School of North-West of Pakistan. Details of the experiment are mentioned in the methodology section.

Literature Review

Locker (2004) states that communication does not solely comprise sounds but the way we communicate with other; the distance we keep with others, the size of the room or office, expression of happiness, anger or pleasure on the faces; how long we keep people waiting, and provide a base for further communication. Most of the time, interestingly, we remain unaware of the non-verbal gestures and signals as we are aware of while taking a breath or making sounds. It is pertinent to understand and learn about the non-verbal language as it helps us to present what we intend to communicate and augment our understanding about the non-verbal gestures and cues we are receiving from our counterparts. Nevertheless, within a single culture, a non-verbal cue might have various meanings and a presenter or receiver should understand the various meanings of a non-verbal cue to avoid any kind of misunderstanding.

Hopkins (2004) states that by just saying I hate you with the same tone may not convey your meaning to the listener; however, raising your voice on the word hate will immediately convey the intended meaning to the listener. The same argument is presented by Stanton (2004) and states that non-verbal gestures like frowning, cues, body movements, eye contact, space, head movements are occasionally referring to meta communication as it adds meaning to the verbal communication. The same argument is true in the cultural context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province in Pakistan, as many people express their feelings by raising the tone and pitch of their voices in addition to their physical cues. According to Chang (2015) non-verbal communication is staged in a specific context and cultural setting, and influenced by cultural norms and standards and these norms or standards suggest what one should do or not.

Hess, Blaison, and Kafetsios, (2015) state that self-understanding refers to one's culturally contingent thoughts, ideas, feelings, emotions, and actions, which are linked to one's understanding of self as associated with or distinct from others. Baylor, et al. (2009) present the argument that content is affected by non-verbal cues, especially facial expressions. This statement is relevant in the teaching context of urban and rural population of this study. Teachers, representing both genders, if complement facial expression with knowledge would end up in a successful attainment of students' learning.

According to Zwozdiak-Myers and Capel (2005) teachers-student communication largely depends upon non-verbal gestures that include physical appearance, postures, distance between the teacher and the taught, body movements and traits. These gestures simultaneously augment or deviate from verbal communication depending upon whether or not both facets of communication overlap; e.g. if you are praising someone and your body language is welcoming, and you wear a smile on your face; it correlates with what you are saying. On the other hand, if you are smiling to someone but the way you are talking is harsh and dreary, it will create confusion and misunderstanding. It is of prime importance for the teachers to possess the knowledge and understanding of non-verbal gestures in order to effectively impart the material they are teaching in order to achieve the desired students' learning.

Kroehnert (2006) emphasises on five common faults in the body cues of teachers: individual bad behaviours: mostly behaving rigidly, itching and rubbing body and indecent hands' jerks. These general errors are noticed among teachers of every society and are spot-on in the context of the present study. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers may avoid these habits in the classroom to shun negative impression of the learning process and non-verbal communication be used to have a greater impact on teaching-learning process. According to Nayak

(2004) learning is not always the outcome of teaching. Many students in the class understand less than we think they have understood due to good teaching. Many times, the understanding of the students gets limited and incomprehensive if not completely wrong; therefore, it is very essential to have precision in the development of educational goals and objectives so that quality of understanding could be achieved as a learning outcome.

According to Damnet (2008) English native speakers show more positive attitude towards non-verbal communication than non-natives. Furthermore, English native speakers understand a higher level of non-verbal communication. It is also elicited that students of both the groups feel affirmative and point out that English language films and role plays enhance their ability in the acquisition of intercultural non-verbal competence for communicating with native speakers.

Devito (2009) mentions the importance of physical space during communication process and especially in the classroom. He briefly mentions four different types of space namely intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance under the umbrella of proxemics. The explanation of distance by Devito plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process in the context of the present study. The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa value proximity to the maximum while talking to others and reach to a higher level of sensitivity when communicating with opposite gender. Although teachers and taught of the present study share the same gender even then the spatial distance plays a crucial role. Having the argument of Devito it is substantial for the teachers to be aware of the required space between the teachers and taught for ensuring the smooth teaching-learning process and attainment of students' learning goals.

METHODOLOGY

This experimental study observes students and teachers engaged in teaching-learning process through non-verbal communication in addition to routine teaching in actual classroom setting. Students of high school (class 10th) are divided into two groups: experimental and control. The group whose performance is evaluated on the basis of the new approach is called experimental as compared to the control group that does not employ non-verbal communication skill.

Population and Sample

Population of the study comprise teachers and students of class 10th in the sampled Govt. Boys Secondary School No. 10 Peshawar (Pseudo name) in urban area of district Peshawar, North-West of Pakistan where the experiment was conducted. Selection of the school was made by employing cluster sequential sampling technique. According to Kish (1965) cluster sequential sampling

technique initially makes the clusters and then element from the cluster is taken one by one unless the desired result is achieved. Based on nature of the study, cluster sequential sampling technique was applied for the selection of the sampled school for experiment.

Selection of Sampled Groups

Random assignment is considered as a balance and ideal way for creating control and experimental groups. The same procedure was followed in the selection of groups for the current study. Students of class 10th were randomly assigned the groups and their marks, class positions, teachers' views about students, their participation level; their seating positions did not affect the assignment of the groups. Total strength of the actual class was 100; hence each group comprised 50 students.

Delimitation of the Study

The scope of the study was delimited to body movements, facial expressions, eye contact, pitch of voice, and spatial distance between teacher and students. The scope was further narrowed down to class 10th in Govt. Boys Secondary Schools, mentioned above, in district Peshawar, North-West, Pakistan. The experiment could not be conducted in the Girl's school due to cultural restriction. The subject selected was English.

Research Design of the Study

The design of this study was pre-test, post-test Equivalent Groups Design. In this design same lessons were assigned to both the groups: experimental and control.

Sekaran (2000) mentioned the following pre-test and post-test experimental and control group design:

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental	O1	X	O2
Control	O3	---	O4

Treatment effect= $[(O2 - O1) - (O4 - O3)]$

Where: O = Observation, X = Non-verbal Communication

One-week training was given to teacher of experimental group before the experiment. During the training different sessions were arranged with the teacher to create rapport and comfort level with him. He was explained the concept and importance of non-verbal communication in teaching-learning process and how to make use of various non-verbal gestures could help teachers to achieve the desired outcomes. Since the idea was to introduce non-verbal gestures in the teaching of poetry, therefore, use of different non-verbal

gestures was shared with him counting intonation, use of hands and facial expressions along with some videos presenting use of non-verbal communication in the teaching of poetry. After 6 working days, the teacher started teaching to the experimental group in the light of the training. The time period for the experiment was 02 weeks. Meanwhile the control group was taught by a teacher who was not given any training and was left to teach as he used to do during normal days.

Technique of the Study

In order to secure data, pre-test was administered to the control group as well as to experimental group. A teacher-made pre-test was administered to both groups just before the experiment. The function of the pre-test was to assess learning achievement of the students and to secure the equivalence of the groups by equating the students of both the groups on the variable of pre-test scores. To assess the learning outcomes of the students, two different teachers of almost same qualification and experience taught poems during the experiment to both the groups. After two (02) weeks of experiment, the post-test was administered to both the groups. During the experiment duration both the teachers used their natural way of teaching as they used to teach in their regular classes, only the non-verbal communication was used by the teacher of experimental group as a supplementary strategy. In order to see the effectiveness of treatment (teaching), teacher-made test was administered to both the groups as post-test after 2-week experiment. The objective of the test was to evaluate the learning outcomes of the groups on the basis of the teaching during the period of experiment. The difference between pre-test and post-test scores was compared through paired t- test.

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{\sqrt{s^2/n}}$$

Where \bar{d} is the mean difference between the two samples, s^2 is the sample variance, n is the sample size and t is a paired sample t-test with $n-1$ degrees of freedom.

Construction of Pre-Post Tests

The researchers in consultation with both English teachers constructed a pre-test comprising a poem (They Have Cut Down the Pines) of class 10th English textbook, which had already been taught to both the groups before the experimentation in their routine time table. Pre-test was based on both the objective and subjective type questions containing fill in the blanks, short questions and answers, theme of the poems, appreciation of different stanzas, vocabulary development and oral activities. The post-test was based on two

poems: “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” written by Robert Frost and “It’s Plain Hard Work That Does It” written by Charles Edison, which were also taught to both the groups during experimentation. The only difference was the treatment given to the teacher of experimental group. Post-test was also based on both the objective and subjective type questions containing fill in the blanks, short questions and answers, theme of the poem, appreciation of different stanzas, vocabulary development and oral activities.

Data Interpretation

Analysis of the experimental data is given in the tables below. First two tables highlight the analysis of control group whereas last two tables elicit the investigation of experimental group.

Table-I: Descriptive Statistics

Group	Mean	Sample Size	Std. Deviation	95% C. I
Control Pre-test	15.12	50	2.520	14.40 to 15.84
Control Post-test	15.40	50	2.365	14.73 to 16.07

The data presented in Table-1 explain the mean score of class 10th in control group i.e.15.12 with standard deviation of 2.520. The 95% confidence interval reveals the level of confidence on the average of the population of class 10th in the control group that ranged from 14.40 to 15.84 in the pre-test. In post-test mean score is 15.40 along with standard deviation of 2.365 in the control group. The 95% confidence interval shows the level of confidence in the average of the population of 10th class in the control group that ranged from 14.73 to 16.07 in the post-test.

Table-II Paired Samples Test

Group difference	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error of Means	T	df	Sig
C.Post-C.Pre	0.280	2.295	0.325	0.863	49	.393

The results in Table-II elicit that there is a slight increase in post-test score, however two tailed significance value reveals that the increase is statistically insignificant. This clearly indicates that due to the absence of treatment, students could not improve well in the post-test score. The minor increase might be possible due to the fact that students knew in advance about a test after the completion of experiment.

Table-III: Descriptive Statistics

Group	Mean	Sample Size	Std. Deviation	95% C. I
Exp. Pre-test	13.76	50	2.471	13.06 to 14.46
Exp. Post-test	17.86	50	2.148	17.25 to 18.47

The results of the data in Table-III describe mean score of pre-test for experimental group class 10th i.e.13.76 with standard deviation of 2.471. The

95% confidence interval illustrates level of confidence on the average of the population of 10th class in the experimental group that ranged from 13.06 to 14.46 in the pre-test. In post-test of the experimental group the average marks are 17.86 along with standard deviation of 2.148. The 95% confidence interval suggests the level of confidence in the average of the population of class 10th in the experimental group, which ranged from 17.25 to 18.47 in the post-test.

Table-IV Paired Samples Test

Group difference	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Means	T	df	Sig
E.Post-EPre	4.100	2.750	0.389	10.543	49	.000

The data in Table-IV demonstrates the overall result of the experimental group of class 10th. The difference between pre-test and post-test score is tested through *paired t-test*. The *t value* and *two tailed* significance values indicate that there is significant increase in the post-test scores. It clearly suggests that the average marks of post-test are higher than the pre-test marks. The increase is tested for statistical significance and the test value suggests that the average marks of post-test are significantly higher than the average marks of pre-test. The increase in the marks of post-test lucidly communicates the significance of treatment on the achievement of learning outcomes of students.

Conclusions

It is concluded from the results that the medium of instruction plays a pivotal role in teaching-learning process, especially in the teaching of poetry and prosodic features like body movements, facial expressions, eye contact, pitch of voice, and spatial distance. When incorporated in the teaching process, all these will bring effective and efficient students' learning outcomes. These prosodic features enhanced students understanding about poetry and its appreciation.

Findings

1. Facial expressions of the teacher helped the students in understanding the difficult concepts contained in the poems and their facial expressions made the environment more conducive to learning process.
2. Teacher motivated the students through eye contact whereby students felt alert in the classrooms and took active participation in the learning process, which consequently enhanced the level of their retention and understanding.
3. Body movements also provided a strong foundation to the teacher to teach effectively and his proper use supplied additional information to the students especially while explaining the stanzas. Proper use of head, shoulders, and hands facilitated the students in better understanding of lesson and the use of this technique by teachers also reflected their expertise in the field of teaching.

4. The study found that pitch or rise and fall in the tone of teachers' voice also helped the students in the proper understanding of poetry. Teacher's intonation, articulation, and pronunciation also caught the attention of the students and increased their interest level.
5. Spatial distance was also used as an effective non-verbal technique in the classroom, which was used properly and efficiently by the teacher in order to grab the desired learning outcomes.
6. It is also inferred that proper use of non-verbal communication depicts the professional attitude and interest of the teachers towards teaching as a profession. Due to intentional use of non-verbal communication not only teachers but also students developed a level of motivation and interest in teaching-learning process that eventually turned into the attainment of desired learning outcomes of the students.
7. Contrary to this, the teacher who did not use non-verbal communication in the classroom teaching could not motivate the students towards classroom teaching and could not achieve desired learning outcomes.

Recommendations

1. Teachers may want to achieve the expertise in the effective use of facial expressions for conveying the messages of appreciation, tenderness or anger to the students to improve their learning process.
2. Teachers may ensure proper use of eye contact to make the students attentive and alert during learning process in the classroom.
3. Proper use of body movements by the teachers during teaching of poems and stories create interest and attentiveness among the students; therefore, it is highly recommended. However, teachers should know excessive use body movements may spoil its academic purpose.
4. Teachers may exercise proper use of intonation while explaining the theme, setting, and beauty of the poems.
5. Appropriate distance between teachers and students in the classroom is very important and it places a psychological effect on the students and their learning; hence teachers may adopt the spatial distance to ensure students' learning outcomes.
6. Curriculum planners and policy makers may also include proper training mechanism of non-verbal communication in the training manual for in-service and pre-service teachers.

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