

# Nonverbal communication in the classroom/Neverbalna komunikacija u razredu

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Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskoga jezika i književnosti i  
mađarskog jezika i književnosti

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Završni rad

Mentorica: doc.dr.sc. Alma Vančura

Osijek, 2019.

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Supervisor: Alma Vančura, Ph.D. Assistant Professor

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## Abstract

When it comes to communication, language allows people to communicate with great precision as it represents an important tool of communication. However, it is not always the most important one and it is often said that how people act is more important than what they say. If our nonverbal communication is not aligned with the words we have spoken, our message will be misinterpreted. Majority of messages we exchange with people around us have a nonverbal component to them. We are often unaware of both our as well as of other people's nonverbal communication since it consists of numerous channels or subcodes, such as proxemics, haptics, physical appearance, kinesics, vocalics, and many other. When children reach school age, a whole new world of communication opens to them and they also learn how to express themselves. Therefore, teachers must be able to approach children on their level of communication, and one way to do it is via nonverbal communication. Every skillful teacher must be aware of his/her nonverbal communication. Despite the fact that it is not easily controlled, nonverbal behaviour plays an important role in teaching process. Bearing in mind the power of this type of communication, the aim of this thesis is to give an overview of the forms of possible teachers' nonverbal communication behaviours and the effects they have on students' success, especially in light of the fact that teachers play an important role in raising children, not just educating them.

## Key words

Nonverbal communication, Haptics, Kinesics, Proxemics, Teachers, Classroom, Students

## Sažetak

Kada je riječ o komunikaciji, jezik dozvoljava ljudima da komuniciraju s velikom preciznošću jer predstavlja važno sredstvo komunikacije. Međutim, ono nije uvijek najvažnije i često se može čuti da je način na koji se ljudi ponašaju važniji od onoga što govore. Ako naša neverbalna komunikacija nije usklađena s riječima koje smo izgovorili, naša će poruka biti pogrešno protumačena. Većina poruka koje razmjenjujemo s ljudima koji nas okružuju iza sebe krije neverbalnu komponentu. Često nismo svjesni, kako našeg, tako i neverbalnog ponašanja drugih ljudi, budući da se ono sastoji od brojnih kanala ili podkodova, kao što su proksemika, haptika, fizički izgled, geste, glas i mnoge druge. Kada djeca dosegnu školsku dob, otvara im se potpuno novi svijet komunikacije i ona uče kako se izraziti. Vrlo je važno da nastavnici mogu pristupiti djeci na njihovoj razini komunikacije, a jedan od načina kako to mogu učiniti je putem neverbalne komunikacije. Osim toga, svaki vješt nastavnik mora biti svjestan svoje neverbalne komunikacije. Unatoč činjenici da ga nije tako lako kontrolirati, neverbalno ponašanje ima važnu ulogu u nastavnom procesu. Imajući u vidu moć ove vrste komunikacije, cilj ovog rada je prikazati forme mogućeg neverbalnog ponašanja nastavnika i učinak koji ono ima na uspjeh učenika, s obzirom na činjenicu da nastavnici imaju važnu ulogu, ne samo u educiranju djece, već i njihovom odgoju.

## Ključne riječi

Neverbalna komunikacija, dodir, kinezika, proksemika, nastavnici, učionica, učenici



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## 1. Introduction

Communication is a dynamic, ongoing act of exchanging messages and thoughts between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior. In any type of communication, there is a person sending the message, the recipient who receives the message, and of course, the message itself along with its interpretation of meaning on both ends.

The transmission of the message from sender to the recipient can be affected by diverse factors which include our emotions, the cultural framework, the medium used to communicate, and even our location. Visual and auditory channels are usually used for communication and we communicate via verbal or non-verbal symbols. Nonverbal communication was the initial form of communication among people. It covers body language, gestures, vocalics, physical appearance, and numerous other aspects. Andersen (2008) asserts that nonverbal communication is a crucial, and often ignored, part of the communication process.

Being an integral part of human communication, nonverbal communication plays an important role in the teaching process. Therefore, every teacher should be aware of the nonverbal communication that takes place in the classroom. Effective classroom communication requires both the teacher and students to be able to send and receive messages accurately. Nonverbal signals are less easily controlled than words and thus, more likely offer valuable information that can potentially reveal communicators' true intentions. This paper gives an overview of nonverbal communication and illustrates its functions and codes present in the classroom, and targets the impact of the teachers' nonverbal communication on their students.

## 2. Defining Nonverbal Communication

Human beings are linguistic creatures, speaking or writing continuously. Nevertheless, messages are meaningless if there is no one to interpret them. The same applies to nonverbal communication. One of the simplest definitions of nonverbal communication is “an elaborate code that is written nowhere, known to none, and understood by all” (Sapir, 1949, as cited in Hickson, Moore, and Stacks, 2004:9). Andersen (2008:4), on the other hand, states that “each method of communication derives from a different cognitive system, functions differently, and employs different codes”. In other words, nonverbal communication is any type of communication made through the use of body language, facial expressions, posture, touch, space and voice change. Therefore, nonverbal communication is a vital part of everyday human communication. People use nonverbal communication either consciously or unconsciously, when they want to display their emotions, reinforce or modify what is said, or even regulate the flow of communication without the use of words, written or spoken. A simple eye roll or head scratch allow us to say something, without uttering a single word. There are numerous studies examining different examples of exchanging nonverbal signals, since nonverbal signals are more ambiguous than words. Facial expressions, for example, are particularly hard to control, because we cannot see ourselves to know what we are doing, and they often include microexpressions that last only a fraction of a second. We are, therefore, more likely to complicate communication by trying to convey one message consciously, while at the same time we unconsciously convey something completely different. It may represent a barrier, as the recipient may not always interpret the nonverbal signals correctly. Verbal communication, on the other hand, is mostly intentional, since we choose words that are to be spoken. Bearing in mind the complexity of nonverbal communication, “the theory and research associated with nonverbal communication focus on three primary units: the environmental structures and conditions within which communication takes place, the physical appearance of the communicators themselves and the various behaviors manifested by the communicators” according to Hall, Horgan, and Knapp (2014:10). In their textbook *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications*, Hickson, Moore and Stacks (2004) introduce several approaches to clarify the concept of nonverbal communication. Overall nonverbal code consists of numerous subcodes or channels that involve kinesics, haptics, proxemics, physical appearance, vocalics, oculusics, chronemics and many other. These subcodes represent human communication through space, territory and physical appearance, and therefore constitute nonverbal communication. Kinesics, haptics and proxemics, along with physical appearance and

communication environment, will be discussed in more detail, as they represent some of the most important factors in teachers' nonverbal communication.

### 2.1. Kinesics

Each and every one of us uses body language to communicate with people. Various movements and positions, no matter how subtle, carry an important meaning. The term *kinesics* refers to all body movements including facial expressions, posture, stance and gestures. Nowadays, it is also known as body language. However, American anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell, who is considered to be the founder of the term *kinesics*, never used the expression 'body language'. In fact, he did not incline toward the term, insisting that our bodies do not convey what linguists define as 'language', because "no unit of motion carries meaning per se, meaning arises in context" (Birdwhistell, 1952:10). According to Poyatos (2002), kinesic activity is perceived through temporal dimension either visually, audibly (applauding, snapping the fingers), tactually (kissing, shaking hands), or kinesthetically (through direct contact, or an object that acts as a mediator). Since movement itself implies continuity, we could also say that kinesics shows the continuousness of nonverbal messages. Many people, when amused or frightened, show it in their face, posture, look or gestures, instead of using words to describe how they feel. These movements or expressions certainly dictate the flow of conversation. While the expressions used to convey fear, anger, sadness, and happiness are similar throughout the world, "there are many facial gestures which are independent of facial expressions of emotion, such as raising one brow, winking, etc., and these facial expressions may well be culturally variable" (Ekman, 1970:151). Moreover, "the way we move, and position of our bodies has a powerful, reciprocal relationship with power" according to Andersen (2008:321). He also states that dominance is reflected in kinesic behavior, i.e. kinesic behavior produces perceptions of dominance. He explained the differences in kinesic behavior between people of lower and higher status, claiming that higher-status individuals are more relaxed and occupy more space. For instance, when a person is being interviewed for a job, the person in charge would probably lean back, appearing relaxed, while the applicant would sit erect, appearing agitated. Posture and position are the two main communicators of dominance or submission. For the majority of time, the students are sitting while the teacher is standing in front of the class, which indicates the power the teacher has. The way in which teachers stand or move around the classroom, along with the way they use gestures to accompany, replace or clarify their verbal messages should reflect authority. When it comes to gestures, they usually include

any type of movement, especially of the hands or arms, which can express a variety of ideas, feelings or thoughts. Through gestures alone, one can construct elaborate messages. Researchers Ekman and Friesen (1969) established five essential ideas of these movements: emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators and adaptors (as cited in Ekman, 1970). *Emblems* refer to nonverbal signals that can be translated to words, *illustrators* complement verbal communication, describing what the speaker is saying, *affect displays* carry an emotional meaning, *regulators* accompany speech to regulate what one is saying, and finally, *adaptors* represent behaviors learned early in life, occurring at a low level of personal awareness.

## 2.2. Haptics

The sense of touch is crucial for human social development and allows people to experience various sensations, such as enjoyment, pain, love or even threat. Haptic communication is a branch of nonverbal communication that refers to how humans communicate and interact through physical contact, as it appears to be “the most intimate and the most powerful form of nonverbal communication” according to Andersen (2008:330). In fact, studies conducted by Adler and Towne (1978) show that newborns who lack a sense of touch have a lower chance of survival, as opposed to the absence of other senses. Heslin (1974) categorizes haptics into five types: *functional-professional*, *social-polite*, *friendship-warmth*, *love-intimacy* and *sexual-arousal*. Each touch communicates a unique message, and the intent of a touch is not always exclusive, which means that any type of touch can shift between each one of Heslin's categories. When it comes to *functional-professional* level, touch is related to a goal or part of a routine professional interaction, while at the *social-polite* level, socially sanctioned touching helps initiate interactions and shows that others are respected. A handshake and a pat on the arm or on the shoulder are examples of social-polite touching. For instance, haptics can be effectively used in “support, tenderness and encouragement”, improving students’ cohesion and engagement in the school environment (Lyons, Ford, and Slee, 2011:76). Teachers can use appropriate touching to communicate affection toward students, showing that they care about students' well-being, and to establish a caring classroom community (Hansen, 2010:40). Touch is more important and more ambiguous at the *friendship-warmth* and *love-intimacy* level, where it is typically only exchanged between significant others, best friends, close family members, and romantic partners. At this level, touch interactions are important as they serve a relational maintenance purpose and communicate closeness, concern, care and linking. Touch has the power to comfort, rebuff or excite.

However, “the positive power of touch is countered by the potential for touch to be threatening because of its connection to sex and violence” (Hans and Hans, 2015:48), which means that, besides positive, touch can also be negative or even unwanted. Touch avoidance or anxiety about touch, for example, implicates negative attitude towards touch, which has a negative impact on the individual’s personal relationships. The differences between cultures in the expectations on the amount of touch and its type do not cast doubt on the fact that the need for touch is an omnipresent aspect of human nature. Haptics is closely related to proxemics. Space and territory are included in both instances, since touch is usually the direct consequence of allowing someone into our intimate space.

### 2.3. Proxemics

Proxemics is the term conceived by cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall, that stands for “the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture” (Hall, 1969:1). Particularly, it is a study of human use of space while communicating, but also of how people arrange objects and themselves in relation to space. According to Hall (1969), there are four zones of the interpersonal distances of man: *intimate space* intended for kissing or hugging that is measured in zero-proxemics, *personal space* used for communication among friends and family, *social space* used among acquaintances and *public space* mostly used for public speaking, and the distances outlined are those deliberately chosen by individuals. The distance surrounding the speaker forms a space. Individual sense of space is a synthesis of numerous sensory inputs, including visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, and thermal. Communication that occurs within *social* and *public space* is mostly formal and the least intimate. Sommer (1979) introduced the term *personal space* to denote the area that separates people from others. *Personal space* is, naturally, highly variable because of cultural differences and personal preferences. While it is permissible to be in the *social zone* of another person, it is the nonverbal communication between the individuals that will make the situation acceptable or not. Most people are not comfortable with someone agitating their *personal space*, which is reserved for their family, significant others and close friends. Nevertheless, concepts such as these are not always easy to grasp, because “most of the distance-sensing process occurs outside awareness” (Hall, 1969:115). Hall (1969) also notes that diverse culture types maintain different standards of personal space. Realizing and recognizing these cultural differences improves cross-cultural understanding and helps eliminate discomfort people may experience if the interpersonal distance is too large or too intrusive. Andersen (2008:53), on the other hand,

argues that “proxemics is subdivided into territoriality, crowding and density, and personal space”. *Territoriality* is an innate drive to occupy and defend spaces, whereas *crowding* is a feeling that a space is overpopulated, which is mostly subjective. *Primary territories*, for instance, include territories that either belong to someone exclusively or that are under one’s control (Altman, and Chemers, 1984). Someone’s house, room, yard or desk are examples of a *primary territory*. In one of their researches, Eisenberg and Smith (1971) assert that the right to invade other individual’s personal space and the power to defend one’s territory is an indicator of dominance (as cited in Andersen, 2008:329). Also, occupying more space is linked to people of higher status and control as they tend to disregard one’s personal space, while inferior people usually choose a formal distance. Body orientation is another critical proxemic variable distinguishing two communicators. Consequently, powerful people have the prerogative to orient toward or away from other interactants. Teacher’s body orientation dictates the process of learning. It is recommended that when a teacher is giving instruction, it should be done in front of the class, as this space signals that there, up-front is where they engage the whole class’s attention to direct the class or engage for active teaching or class discussion (Rogers, 2012:194). The way in which teachers use each of these nonverbal channels is vital for successful classroom management and the overall process of learning.

### 3. Teachers' Nonverbal Communication

The effectiveness of classroom communication is often determined by nonverbal communication. Studies conducted by Bambaeroo and Shokrpour (2017) show that there is a strong connection between the quality, amount and the method of using non-verbal communication by teachers while teaching. Napan (1994, as cited in Kožić, Globočnik, and Bakić-Tomić, 2013:143) argues that one of the teacher’s primary tasks is to be able to estimate exactly what is happening in the classroom, and to do this the teacher must firstly be aware of his/her own abilities and non-verbal behavior which will ultimately “help to perceive and correctly interpret non-verbal signals of the students”. In other words, teachers must be good listeners. They should be able to distinguish and intercept the signals of interest, boredom, agreement and disagreement. Knowledge is transmitted through effective communication and nurtured using a variety of stimuli. The problem occurs when teachers lack the ability to encode or decode nonverbal signals. Good communicators practice the use of non-verbal behaviors, as

they know that these behaviors can have a substantial effect on their communicating skills, as well as on their interlocutors.

Teachers play fundamental roles in the lives of the students in their classrooms. They are best known for the role of educating the students that are placed into their care. Beyond that, teachers serve many other roles in the classroom, they have the formal authority over setting the tone of their classrooms, building a warm, friendly environment, mentoring students, and listening and looking for signs of trouble. The teaching-learning process essentially involves the transactions which take place between persons engaged either in instruction or reception of instruction (Kaye, 1979:1). This process is heavily determined by nonverbal communication of both students and teachers and the way they engage in discussion, use space and present themselves to each other. Getting students' attention is a critical first step for any lesson and any teacher. When children reach school age, they find themselves in a completely new world of communication, and it is crucial for them to distinguish the types of communication that occur around them. Among its numerous other purposes, communication enables humans to share knowledge, which means that "effective teaching depends on successful communication" (Johnson, 1999:4). Teaching is the coordinated sharing of knowledge and experience, which is usually organized within a discipline, particularly those of teachers or professors. There are numerous qualities a good teacher should possess. Teacher's immediacy behaviour, instructional clarity, credibility and feedback are one of the most important ones (Finn et al., 2009). Mehrabian (1971) asserts that people are usually drawn towards people and things they like and prefer, as they avoid people or things they dislike (as cited in Richmond, Mccroskey, and Mottet, 2015:170). A skilful teacher must be approachable, trustworthy, and ready to help at any time. Nonverbal immediacy involves behaviours like smiling, gesturing while talking to the class, making eye contact with students, and relaxed body language, which should eventually lead to removing barriers between students and teachers. Body position and movement often determine energy levels in the classroom. Namely, when teachers stand in front of the class, they are more likely to draw attention to them and to what they are talking about. Furthermore, when they are seated, they may appear less interested or motivational. An environment set by the teacher can be either positive or negative. *Impression management*, which is defined as "individuals making conscious efforts to control the impressions they make" (Hickson et al., 2004:383), is an important aspect of communicating nonverbally. If the teacher appears agitated, students may sense that and therefore learning can be impaired. When someone wishes to make a specific impression, that person must be in control of all the



nonverbal codes, including kinesics, haptics, proxemics, physical appearance, etc. After all, nonverbal communication “constitutes most of the communication that takes place between the teacher and the pupils in the classroom” (Muchemwa, 2013:1280). Some of the most important parts of nonverbal communication vital for successful learning, such as communication environment, teachers’ physical appearance and immediacy, will be further explained in the following chapters.

### 3.1. Communication environment

People are constantly under the influence of their physical surroundings or areas they attempt to structure, in which they attempt to create a certain mood or a response. Those surroundings can affect one’s thoughts, emotions and behaviour in various ways. Andersen (2008: 335) states that “they can also regulate the quality and quantity of interpersonal or group communication”. In order to achieve their teaching objectives more easily, teachers should also act as effective classroom managers. Teachers who establish classrooms that are supportive, challenging and academically strong build positive learning environments. Seating arrangements, environmental structuring, temperature, colour, lighting and sound are the factors determining a desirable communication environment. Sommer (1969) conducted studies on the impact of size and shape of classrooms on students’ behaviour. For instance, both teachers and students dislike windowless classrooms or laboratories (as cited in Hickson et al., 2014:104). In straight-row-seating classrooms, students seated across the teacher, within the range of eye contact, tend to participate more. The students in the back tend to interact less and pay less attention to the class in general. In addition to that, Sommer found that participation decreased as class size was increased, and more participation came from students seated near the front or directly in front of the instructor. Schwebel and Cherlin (1972), in their investigation of the reasons why teachers assign pupils to certain seats in classrooms, discovered that all teachers in their sample used seat assignment procedures as a means of achieving classroom control. Moreover, these authors point to the need for teachers to be "trained" in assessing the extent to which their psychological distancing of pupils affects their ability to communicate with and manage a group of learners. The classroom is a dynamic space of constant communication between teachers and students, as it is primarily a learning space where children can learn uninterrupted by the external factors. Todd-Mancillas (1982) concluded that brighter and warmer colours expedite the sole process of learning in elementary school classrooms (as cited in Andersen, 2008:63). Accordingly, bright lights have positive effects in work environments as they appear to be stimulating. It is necessary for class to be undisturbed. Thus,

quiet elementary school environments are crucial for good student performance. A classic *box classroom*, for example, offers teachers a well-defined territory, which they shape to promote their own ideas through choice of equipment and wall displays. Territoriality, as an aspect of proxemic nonverbal behaviour, is also common in the classroom, especially a phenomenon of *secondary territories*. *Secondary territories* are those that are associated with someone, although they do not exclusively belong to them, according to Altman and Chemers (1984). Students typically sit in the same desk or at least same general area as they did on the first day of class. Teachers also use nonverbal communication to convey dominance and status, which helps define and negotiate power and roles within relationships, since they represent an authority within the classroom. Nevertheless, a positive, productive learning and teaching environment in the classroom is essential to academic, emotional and social success and progress of the students.

### 3.2. Physical appearance

The decisions people make to maintain or alter their physical appearance reveal a great deal about their personality, as much as physical appearance of other people impacts our perception of them, the way we communicate with them, how approachable they are, etc. Prior to any form of communication, physical appearance is the first communicator that speaks for one's status, wealth, fashion consciousness, and many other characteristics. Physical appearance does not only include facial features, but also dimensions such as body shape, physical attractiveness, clothing, hair and accessories. The problem that usually arises is the fact that these impressions occur quickly and mostly "form the basis of rather strong cultural stereotypes or prejudices" (Andersen, 2008:83). The interpretation of beauty varies from person to person, from culture to culture. What is considered acceptable to one culture, or beautiful to one person, may not be acceptable or beautiful to another. Communicator's physical characteristics "remain relatively unchanged during the period of interaction" (Hall et al., 2014:12), which allows people to interpret their nonverbal messages more easily, and this also happens in the classroom. People in certain occupations are "expected to dress in certain ways; thus, we establish an expectation of a uniform as normative, allowing little deviance" (Hickson et al., 2004:380), which is true of the teachers as well. Physical appearance plays an important part in teachers' nonverbal communication. The moment they set foot in the classroom they are perceived by their students based on their physical appearance. Some teachers dress more formally, others dress more casually, and some are dressed according to what subject they teach

(e.g. it is perfectly acceptable for PE teacher to wear sportswear). Those who dress more formally are usually perceived to be organized and knowledgeable, whilst those who dress more casually appear more outgoing and flexible, according to Sebastian and Bristowe, 2008 (as cited in Lightstone, Francis, and Kocum, 2011). Physical appearance of both students and teachers should reflect alertness and focus. Fashion, however, is not particularly important, but clothes should be respectful of their professional role and age group within the school. When we consider accessories and artifacts, which are objects used by people to adorn their bodies and surroundings (e.g. makeup, jewellery, tattoos or body piercings), Molloy (1978) asserts that they should be kept to a minimum, as they “may present a distraction” to many (as cited in Hickson et al., 2004:382). The most important function of physical appearance is identification and self-presentation. Body alterations and coverings, like tattoos and piercings, also constitute the overall physical appearance, and greatly influence the way people perceive others as individuals. They may also represent a barrier when taking some jobs into consideration. Teaching is one of them. In employee selections, appearance plays a significant role and studies show that “attention grabbing appearance was seen as a negative factor, and subsequently body modifications were often seen as additional negative traits, as they usually attract attention” (Ikonen, 2017:21).

It is also important to distinguish between attraction and attractiveness. Attraction refers to how people are drawn to others emotionally, physically, professionally or interpersonally. In contrast, attractiveness is a perception of beauty that is culturally derived. The attractiveness stereotype is the tendency to assume that physically attractive people possess more positive personality traits. Physical attractiveness may or may not be influential in the case of teachers. According to Westfall (2015), when a teacher or a professor is considered physically attractive, students attend their classes more often and tend to participate more. Nonetheless, teachers’ ability to impart knowledge is not determined by the extent of their attractiveness.

#### 4. Impact of Teacher Nonverbal Communication on Students’ Learning Outcome

Nonverbal behaviors are proven to enhance student mannerism, actions, and characteristics. Using a variety of communication enhancers, such as active listening or eye contact, can make the classroom a dynamic place to learn. Supportive, imaginative, purposive, and balanced communication using speech, gestures, and visual stimuli have a constructive

effect on students' learning and academic success. Another important factor contributing to the accomplishments or failure of students is the quality of the relationship and how the teacher builds this relationship with students. This means that the teacher is competent to assist students with motivation and goal setting, and students can turn to them for advice and guidance. Hamre and Pianta's (2001) study emphasises that students who have positive relationships with their teachers are more willing to take on academic challenges and work on their social-emotional development (as cited in Gablinske, 2014:5). Among other nonverbal signals, teacher's voice pitch and proper use of intonation clarify the concepts to their students. On the contrary, "if the teacher were unable to communicate on the students' level, then that teacher would be unsuccessful in transporting that student to any level of proficiency" (Johnson, 1999:13). In addition to that, all of teachers' emotions can be transferred to students. When teachers are stressed and feel overworked or overwhelmed, they have less time to focus on the students and the lessons. In this case, shortage transmits itself to the classroom and leads to feelings of insecurity, indifference and even anxiety among students. Although it is tempting to always be available for students, and certainly preferable to neglecting them, there is a need for a balance in terms of the attention they receive, and this can be achieved by positioning themselves according to the requirements of the activity. It would be completely unethical for the teacher to, e.g. pay more attention to those students who are more willing to learn, than to those who are less interested in class and participation. Nonverbal cues are powerful tools for both lesson delivery and for class management and they should be skilfully used to enhance classroom teaching. Instructors in general generate more positive students' perception of credibility when being more nonverbally immediate and using explicit caring messages and support (Malachowski, Martin, 2011:146). Regardless of the fact that teachers play a vital role in their students' education, nonverbal responsiveness of the students in the overall process of learning and communicating within the classroom is also very important. However, what is also communicated via nonverbal behavior and has a huge impact on classroom communication is stress.

## 5. Nonverbal Communication and Stress

Some studies show that teacher stress is mostly caused by student behaviour, time management and performance assessment (Khan, Shah, Khan, and Gul, 2012). Growing class sizes and increasing levels of student stress, which are mostly associated with behavioral

problems, contribute to classroom management problems for today's teachers. Consequently, stress can also negatively impact job satisfaction and overall quality of life for many teaching professionals, which may result in anxiety or even quitting their job. New educators are especially affected by inexperience and even unrealistic expectations, considering the fact that they are usually expected to perform as well as some of their more experienced colleagues. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be in complete control over the classroom, their students and their daily challenges, as much as possible, detect problems early and successfully manage their paperwork and responsibilities. Teachers' work is probably never done, but for their own good, they must learn how to disjoint their private life from the professional one.

Teachers' stress particularly means a situation where the teachers are exposed to certain unwanted environmental factors, which either exists within the educational institution (internal factors) or exists outside the educational institution (external factors), these factors hamper the normal routine life of teachers by negatively affecting their performance at work (Khan et al., 2012:22). Teachers under stress cannot perform well, just like anyone else. Primary source of human emotional state develops from their interactions with other people. Every single emotion can be communicated nonverbally, since nonverbal communication is the principal mechanism through which emotions are expressed. Andersen (2008) explains that display rules that dictate emotional expression include simulating non-existent emotions, intensifying mild emotions, diminishing strong emotions, masking one's felt emotion with the display of another one and suppressing emotions that are inappropriate to express. One must find and maintain "a balance between understimulation and overstimulation, which is the key to personal sanity and interpersonal harmony" (Andersen, 2008:167). Nowadays, people thrive on performance, competition and perfection and it often leads to an insidious increase in stress and anxiety. The senses are overwhelmed by people, media and the competing demands for one's job, family and self. There are two types of anxiety that result from communication, social and communication anxiety. Social anxiety is more common in today's society and researches show that people are likely to experience social anxiety when they are observed nonverbally, particularly when they want to make a good impression. It is also common when someone is being evaluated, or in novel situations such as the first day of a new job. Anxiety and apprehension are mostly visible in the face, posture and gestures of a nervous speaker. Several other changes in nonverbal behavior, such as blushing, cold hands, rapid breathing and higher vocal pitch, occur because of the tension experienced by those who suffer from social anxiety. Withdrawal is a typical response to such situations.

## 6. Students' Nonverbal Communication

Teachers are not the only ones who communicate nonverbally within the classroom. Angelo and Cross (1993) state that teachers can learn much about how students learn and how they respond to certain teaching approaches simply through close observation of students in the process of learning, which, of course, includes their nonverbal communication (as cited in Brock, 2011:5). Neill (1991) suggests that the teacher and students often have more confidence in the nonverbal than in the verbal messages (as cited in Kožić et al., 2013:142). Nonverbal signals are usually more ambiguous than words, and therefore may be misinterpreted. It is crucial for the students to learn how to interpret nonverbal signals of each other and the teacher. When children enrol at school, they learn that there are different languages, cultural differences and gender differences in communication. These differences also appear in nonverbal communication. What adds to the difficulty of identifying nonverbal cues is the awareness that students have about their own nonverbal projection. Without fully realizing it, students proactively seek to mask their nonverbal cues. This is particularly true of cues that would suggest lack of understanding. Students tend to choose positions in the classroom to match their own characteristics. Students who wish to dominate the discussion choose more visible seats, particularly in the front. One of the factors impacting effective communication is the students' daydreaming during the lesson, which makes them temporarily "out of the classroom" and unaware of their surroundings. Students who appear more dominant tend to be the center of attention of the group. Students' nonverbal misbehavior does not only impact the student alone and his/her learning process, but also their surroundings. For example, if a student misbehaves, it affects students around him, as they are being disturbed. Also, if a student leans back with the hands behind the back, it is seen as dominant and relaxed behavior. Like yawning, it is a behavior generally avoided by adults, since it could offend the speaker. If students are not interested in participation, the amount of time they spend "daydreaming" increases, and they "step up the use of signals such as fiddling with objects or yawning" (Neill, 1991:50). Older children, for instance, are able to manipulate advertence by avoiding eye contact with the teacher. When the teacher asks the group a certain question, students who do not know the answers will certainly avoid eye contact to avoid being called. On the other hand, when they only want to appear interested, they may make eye contact, but it does not mean that they are concentrated on what the teacher is saying.

## 6.1. Nonverbal responsiveness

Students' nonverbal responsiveness is certainly a desired behaviour in the classroom. Students that participate, make eye contact, raise hands to answer the questions, and listen to the teacher are more likely to sit in the front. The children's signals of interest are very important, they act as an immediately accessible form of feedback which the teacher uses to ensure that the class is progressing well. Adherence or attention involves the comparison between the level of attention which is expected in certain circumstances, and the level that actually exists. Students' nonverbal signals that appear less clear than those of the teachers pose a problem when it comes to dealing with signals for comprehension. By middle school, "children are becoming aware of how signals can be manipulated, and skilful at doing so" (Neill, 1991:47). By manipulating the course of the lesson itself, they disrupt the teacher's control. Student responsiveness could also affect instructors' subjective evaluations of student work, as responsive behaviors may function to satisfy instructors' needs for affirmation and confirmation in the classroom.

The most expressive way students display emotions is through facial expressions. Next to words, facial expressions are the primary source of information in determining the individual's internal feelings. When students feel uncomfortable, they may have lowered or drawn together brow, horizontal or vertical forehead wrinkles, and have a hard time in maintaining eye contact. To be a good receiver of student messages, the lecturer must be familiar with many of the subtle nonverbal cues that their students send. According to Brooks and Woolfolk (1987) nonverbal responsiveness acts as an important source in the formation of teachers' impressions, attitudes, beliefs, etc. (as cited in Boyd, 2000). Responsive instructors should, therefore, be more likely to have responsive students. It is important to note that student nonverbal responsiveness has a greater effect on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction than verbal responsiveness (Mottet et al., 2007).

## 7. Components for Successful Communication in the Classroom

It is important for the classroom to provide stimuli to both students and teachers. Motivation is the first step towards effective learning, and different stimuli can be efficiently used to provide interest. Visual stimuli, such as illustrations, photographs, concept maps and videos, may have a relaxing effect on the student, but to some students, they may appear overwhelming. According to Johnson (1999) some of the components helpful for the efficiency

of nonverbal communication in the classroom are children being taught the concept of personal space at an early age, but also the concept of facial expression and their hidden meaning. Dandy (1991) explains that “the first step in understanding an individual is understanding one’s culture” (as cited in Johnson, 1999:7). Therefore, teachers should be conscious of the growth of today’s multicultural society, since dialectal and attitudinal differences are proposing major educational problems. Any type of communication requires a two-way path; a path to a giver and a path to a receiver. Merritt (1982) points to the fact that teachers’ time is scarce but “must be equitably distributed between their students” (as cited in Neill, 1991:49). Therefore, for the evaluation of content interpretation, teachers must largely rely on nonverbal behavior of the students. Undoubtedly, there is a need to redefine competencies especially in relation to classroom communication and management. Darn (2005) explains that using effective nonverbal communication in classroom should add an extra language, namely: reducing the time of speaking, increasing the participation of students, building confidence among the students, reducing fear for the rest, giving clear instructions, efficient classroom management, creating an atmosphere in the classroom, improving listening skills, improving performance activities in pairs or groups, mutual friends and self-correction, avoiding misunderstandings, and enhancing intercultural competence (as cited in Wahyuni, 2018). All of these factors are fundamental and should eventually lead to successful teaching.

## 8. Conclusion

The human body is fascinating in its ability to communicate nonverbally. Nonverbal communication has a significant effect on what is communicated. People use nonverbal communication to substitute or repeat what is said, communicate emotions or even contradict and mask verbal communication.

The goal of bringing the students to a level of proficiency can only be achieved through effective communication. The identification of nonverbal communication imposes taking into consideration its codes, models and aims. Teacher must firstly be aware of his/her own abilities and non-verbal behaviour that will influence the perception and correct interpretation of signals by the students. Verbal and nonverbal communication are intertwined in successful conveying of the message. Therefore, the teachers must be able to combine these two types of communication when carrying out the learning process.



As the needs of students and the needs of society change constantly, teachers must be ready to accept and meet these changes. Nonverbal communication greatly depends on the environment, students' behavior and responsiveness. By understanding and correctly interpreting nonverbal signals of students, teachers can easily adapt to certain situations, increase participation and build confidence among their students, which is crucial for their future success.

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