



The impact of the teachers' non-verbal communication on success in teaching

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Abstract

Introduction: Non-verbal communication skills, also called sign language or silent language, include all behaviors performed in the presence of others or perceived either consciously or unconsciously. The main aim of this review article was to determine the effect of the teachers' non-verbal communication on success in teaching using the findings of the studies conducted on the relationship between quality of teaching and the teachers' use of non-verbal communication and also its impact on success in teaching.

Methods: Considering the research method, i.e. a review article, we searched for all articles in this field using key words such as success in teaching, verbal communication and non-verbal communication. In this study, we did not encode the articles.

Results: The results of this revealed that there was a strong relationship among the quality, amount and the method of using non-verbal communication by teachers while teaching. Based on the findings of the studies reviewed, it was found that the more the teachers used verbal and non-verbal communication, the more efficacious their education and the students' academic progress were. Under non-verbal communication, some other patterns were used. For example, emotive, team work, supportive, imaginative, purposive, and balanced communication using speech, body, and pictures all have been effective in students' learning and academic success. The teachers' attention to the students' non-verbal reactions and arranging the syllabus considering the students' mood and readiness have been emphasized in the studies reviewed.

Conclusion: It was concluded that if this skill is practiced by teachers, it will have a positive and profound effect on the students' mood. Non-verbal communication is highly reliable in the communication process, so if the recipient of a message is between two contradictory verbal and nonverbal messages, logic dictates that we push him toward the non-verbal message and ask him to pay more attention to non-verbal than verbal messages because non-verbal cues frequently reveal the intention of the sender of the information and reflect his/her emotional reactions. Based on the obtained results of this study, it is recommended that attention to non-verbal communication skills can make a positive change in the future of a student's life. It seems necessary for the teachers to practice and learn effective communication skills, especially for those who always interact with a large group of students. One of the factors contributing to the success

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or failure of students is the quality of the relationship and how the teacher builds this relationship with students. Especially, it is more effective for students who are more responsive to human relations and communication skills. Finally, it is recommended that the teachers should improve their communication skills to have better communication with their audience. The authorities are recommended to help improve the teachers' level of communication skills through holding training courses.

Keywords: Communication; Teacher; Teaching

Introduction

Communication is one of the God's great gifts bestowed to human. God not only created speaking potential with diverse dialects in the human body, but also taught him how to use it through inspiration, his inner instinct, or external guidance. Among different forms of communication in human communities, education, or teaching, requires effective communication with the learner if it is to be successful. The person with a holy job as teaching should be competent in a variety of skills, one of the important of which is body language or non-verbal communication.

The main aim of this review article was to determine the effect of the teachers' non-verbal communication on success in teaching using the findings of the studies conducted on the relationship between quality of teaching and the teachers' use of non-verbal communication and its impact on success in teaching. In this study, we reviewed the related research on: Verbal and non-verbal communication concepts, Teaching concept and various communication skills used in teaching, The barriers to effective non-verbal communication during teaching and suggestions for teachers' success in effective non-verbal communication with the students.

Subsidiary questions: To deeply survey different aspects of the subject under the study, the following questions were posed: 1) What is non-verbal communication? 2) Does the use of non-verbal communication lead to success in teaching? 3) What are the efficacious methods of non-verbal communication during teaching?

Methods

In this study, we reviewed the available and related articles to the research subject and objectives.

Results

The findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. The correlation between the academic staff's communication skills and the students' academic success was 0.572, indicating the significant and positive relationship between the mentioned factors (1).

2. The correlation coefficient among the teachers' non-verbal communication skills, their verbal communication and the students' academic achievement was 0.81 which reveals the significant relationship among these factors (2).

3. The students undergoing inappropriate behaviors in class and school have learned such features as obedience, adaptation, lack of assertiveness, and avoidance from objections, all of which have deteriorated their tendency toward curiosity, creativity, self-esteem, and independence (3). Emphasis on the students' obedience in school will make the students learn dependence rather than freedom and independence, social discipline rather than personal respect, imitation of others' personality rather than self-development, and obedience of the rules set by others rather than self-discipline. Such students usually lack sufficient self-esteem and independence and have no favorable attitude toward their own personality. Such features are not consistent with educational aims and hinder proper education.

4. There was a significant relationship between non-verbal communication, as one of the communication skills, and the efficacy of educational departments ($p=0.54$). Also, there was a significant relationship between the lecturers' communication skills and increase in the students' motivation to learn and their academic success ($p=0.60$, $p=0.54$) (4).

5. In a study on the factors affecting improvement in educational communication, Mor-

tazavi (5) stated various effective communications in the educational fields including pictorial communication, the Internet and computer relations, relationship with the learning environment attention, etc., among which the latter and verbal and non-verbal communication are the most effective on both teacher and learner.

- **Synthesis of findings** : The synthesis of the results of the studies reviewed can be summarized as follows:

1. The concept of communication

Man needs to communicate with others in his daily life. Daily activities show that many activities cannot be performed without communicating with others. Many researchers and experts have defined communication. For example, Aristotle defined communication as the use of available resources to find a way to encourage others express their ideas and opinions. The aim of communication is to develop motivation in the addressee.

Communication means social development and the source of culture and spiritual development so that lack of communication leads to a relative static state in human life, which prevents any kind of social development (6). One of the characteristics of professional teachers is their ability to engage in effective, meaningful and purposeful relationship with educators. In case a teacher is scientifically competent but is not able to communicate effectively with the learners, he/she is not able to teach satisfactorily; thus, the teaching-learning process has not been fully implemented.

To this end, for more teachers' familiarity, scholars of the field of education should firstly acquire the information and skills which are required to communicate well with students. Various methods of communication suggest these skills as those of the relationship between voluntary and involuntary, formal and informal, one-sided and two-way, and verbal and non-verbal communication.

As this study aimed to evaluate the effect of educators' non-verbal communication on success in teaching, among the various methods, the authors were prompted to examine non-verbal communication method in teaching from different perspectives.

2. The concept of teaching

Safavi (7) points out in his research that

different definitions of teaching have been provided by different researchers, all of which have two characteristics in common:

- ✓ Interaction or relationship between teachers and learners
- ✓ objectivity of this activity on behalf of the teacher

Thus, teaching can be defined as teacher's planned activities to create an ever-lasting change in the learners' behavior which is done in the form of a mutual relationship. The stronger this relationship and the communication skills are, the deeper the outcome of this interaction will be, i.e. the stable and effective learning. Only in this way the teacher can develop and emerge the students' potentials. Therefore, before any action for teaching, the teacher's relationship with the students should be strengthened at the beginning.

3. Importance of non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is often more subtle and more effective than verbal communication and can convey meaning better than words. For example, perhaps a smile conveys our feeling much easier than words. Silent speech is of great importance in human's daily interactions and it influences one's chances of failure or success in personal and professional social encounters.

Also, the Holy Quran in several cases refers to this point, for example for the tolerant and poor people, it is stated: "You would know them by their appearance" and says about the hypocrites: "and you will know them by the tone of their speech". Also, Imam Ali (AS) believed that one's appearance is the indicator of his/her internal state. Whenever a person conceals something in his/her heart, it manifests itself in the expressions of his face. "No one can hide anything in the unseen since it is evident in his/her thoughtless words and his/her face".

According to the studies conducted, at each conversation only seven percent of the concepts are expressed in the form of spoken words. Most of the information is transferred through the complex combination of appearance, posture, limb movement, sight, and facial expressions. On the other hand, the effect of most body language acts lower than the addressee's awareness, i.e. the addressee receives the profound effects of the issue without being aware of it. So, the people who have the ability to use these skills have the

potential to guide others in a particular direction to achieve their goals, and precisely for this reason most of the human interactions involve non-verbal communication. Body language has the power to transfer the attitudes and feelings of people to others and in many cases can be even more effective than verbal messages (8).

In this regard, numerous studies have been conducted by Oskouhi et al. (1) on the role of non-verbal communication on educational performance of faculty members of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resource University in Sari; the results of the study showed a significant positive correlation between non-verbal communication skills and educational performance of Sari faculty members of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources University.

4. *Variety of communication skills in teaching*

As mentioned above, proper communication between the teacher and students is the most important skills in teaching. If this relationship is well established, educational goals will be more easily realized with a high quality.

In the process of communicating, three main factors play a role, including signaling (teacher), messages (instructional), receiver (student) (9). Accordingly, first of all, the teacher himself/herself or by teaching aids sends a message to the students as the receiver of the message. In the next step, the students respond to teacher's messages and send a new message to the teacher who is the receiver of the message this time. An important point in communication process is that the teacher-students relationship in the classroom is one of the complex human relationships, and certainly different ways are involved in how to establish this communication, e.g. two types of verbal and non-verbal communication.

Verbal communication in teaching

Such communication can be defined as total relationships that can be achieved through speaking and conversation. Teachers should use the words carefully to be successful in teaching. Each word provokes a feeling in people, specific emotions, and distinct function. If the words are applied in their proper place, it would affect the soul and body of the audience immediately. Therefore, it is appropriate that the teacher avoids using negative words in dealing with

the students, i.e. such words as "I can't, it's impossible, is not possible, never, etc...".

A successful educator in the field of teaching should be aware of the power of words and its impact on the audience and avoid using words habitually without thinking. Also, ordering is one of the conflicts which leads to failure in human interaction. The teacher should express his opinion with proper words and within the defined framework for his comments to be effective and penetrating. Therefore, the teacher, as the sender of the message, should first determine the framework of his message and then express his expectations of the students frankly with appropriate tone and words (3).

Expression of words clearly and eloquently by the educator causes the students to listen with dignity and willingness, sum up the facts, and think to solve the problem and supply the teacher's comment without any tension or boredom. But using biased phrases often raises a sense of stubbornness and humiliation in the trainee, puts him out of the cycle of learning and deep understanding of scientific content completely, and leaves irreparable psychological effects on the student.

In the selection of words, the intended concept must be exactly in the words of the educator. It is appropriate to use clear, concise, accurate, polite, correct and rich expression in oral communication with the audience to transmit the speaker's intentions to the audience properly (4).

Verbal skills are generally divided into four parts: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among these skills, speaking has the higher degree of importance and usefulness and has more decisive impact on oral communication with the audience (10).

It is worth noting that speaking skill requires non-verbal communication, or body language to complete its impact on the audience. In interactive communication which is based only on words and phrases, and the message sender does not use any non-verbal communication methods such as facial expressions, eye contact, and overall condition of the body and hands movement, we cannot not expect proper understanding of the message from the audience.

Non-verbal communication during teaching

More than half of our face to face

conversations are non-verbal and sign language, and gestures express our feelings and attitudes without saying a word. There was a significant correlation between the teacher's appropriate and timely verbal and non-verbal behaviors and students' achievement and good behavior (2). The results of the present study indicated that there was a correlation between the teachers' verbal and non-verbal communication skills and students' learning and motivation. Ambiguity in the teacher's speech is known as the main obstacle in the teachers and students' relationship, and in total, according to the teachers, most of the communication barriers in schools are related to human.

If the teacher has an encouraging manner tailored to the students' status, he/she can achieve effective results with his communication with students. Also, if the teacher uses humiliating speech, his relationship with the students will deteriorate (3).

Facial expression, eye contact, physical appearance, etc. ... express a message. Facial expression is more effective than other modes of non-verbal cues and gives us a lot of information about the emotional status of others to the extent that some theorists believe that facial expression is the most important source of information after language.

In the field of teaching, certainly one of the main characteristics of good teachers is good communication skill in classroom, and most of the observed stress in the classroom arises from the lack of proper communication (4). The classroom administration and constructive conflict resolution in the classroom require good communication skills, the most important of which is non-verbal skills. By using this skill, teachers can play a major role in the success of their students. Through the use of non-verbal language, teachers draw the student's attention to more understanding and motivate the students and even bring excitement to the bored students. The students unconsciously receive non-verbal signals sent from the teacher; they immediately notice that the one standing before them is teaching by all his/her will or is constantly waiting for the class to be ended.

Therefore, it should be mentioned that non-verbal communication can supplement or replace verbal communication; it is either a repetition of verbal messages, making verbal

communication more prominent and specific, or completes the verbal communication. Human beings use non-verbal behavior in order to complete their interpersonal interaction; they rely on non-verbal behavior to recognize when to speak, when to let others to speak, and how to speak.

Non-verbal communication often makes interactional concepts since communication always has two literal and conceptual levels of meaning, and this type of communication is associated with semantic level. It reflects cultural values. This claim implicitly indicates that most of the non-verbal behaviors are acquired during socialization and are totally variable, depending on culture and traditions (11).

An important point in non-verbal communication is the use of this relationship, especially when teaching correctly and timely (12). Teachers who had used non-verbal communication techniques in interacting with students with physical and motor impairment in Tehran province had played an effective role in increasing the students' self-esteem and reducing their shyness (13). An appropriate method of using non-verbal communication is that the teacher gives problem solving assignment to the student according to their intellectual ability. He shows them that he is aware of their abilities and creates motivation in them. Thus, he is willing to solve the problem; on the other hand, if the teacher indirectly tells the students that he doesn't think he is able to solve the problem, the student will be afraid as well. These mutual reactions are not important in school; rather, they are important in all human relationships, especially between parents and children (14).

The teacher's timely use of non-verbal communication can be done through a simple greeting with students which is the best way to start the class, and is of course impossible without non-verbal language (5). An experienced speaker begins his speech by talking directly to one of the listeners, tries to look at each student throughout the speech one by one, and changes the tone of his voice during a speech so that the students do not get tired.

Teachers' non-verbal language can be effective if students can see the teacher rather than the teacher was being hidden behind a desk or board or teaching while turning his back to students. The best place for the teacher in class is standing

near his/her table and all students see him. The teacher should not put his hands in his pockets, as this limits his activeness. It is best for the teacher to keep his/her hands free; this indicates the readiness of teachers to communicate with the students. The teacher must sometimes change his place, but if he/she always changes his/her place physically in class, the focus of learners will reduce and learning process will not proceed. Another important point is that the teacher must look at individual students. Otherwise, the students will have the impression that the teacher is ignoring them, so the effect of looking at the audience is undeniable.

The right way for addressing the student is that the teacher should not point to the student by his/her finger when asking question because the student feels fearful and anxious in this case. The best method is that the teacher assumes a space with the student looks at him/her directly and points to him/her with full hand (8).

Conscious use of non-verbal language is not a show, but rather it makes the effects of individual words better; the more natural the non-verbal language is, the more acceptable it is to the audience. Teachers who use non-verbal language properly have a better relationship with their students.

Often some barriers to effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, arise in the classroom. In order to communicate properly, especially in the case of non-verbal communication, it is necessary that the educator identifies the factors detrimental to effective communication and resolve them.

The main obstacles are as follows (9):

1- Teachers' lack of awareness of student's level of understanding: Experience has shown that if educational activities are not in the domain of the students' knowledge and level of understanding, learning and achieving educational goals are little or they do not happen at all. To prevent these problems, first of all educational message should be presented according to the students' level of understanding and then different methods should be used, especially non-verbal communication, for better understanding.

2- Long oral arguments: When teachers teach just orally for a long time, students gradually get discouraged from pursuing the teacher's discussions. This indicates that human

beings automatically listen to the favorite sounds at first, and then they block their sense of hearing on inappropriate content. To resolve this problem, a variety of teaching methods, ways of communicating, etc. can be useful.

3- Boring message: When the educational activities in the classroom are not interesting to the students, they pay less attention to it, so good communication will not take place during learning. To generate interest and motivate the students, teachers can use different communication methods.

4- Dreaming: Another factor impacting effective communication is the student's daydreaming during teaching, which makes them temporarily out of the classroom and into their personal experience and their dream. According to the principles of psychology, personal experiences can be more attractive for individuals and they can replace and set aside materials which are less attractive for students. Experienced and knowledgeable teachers can identify such students, and use more interesting methods to communicate with them. Of course, in such cases the use of non-verbal communication methods will be very effective.

5- Inappropriate physical factors: Inappropriate physical condition can disconnect the learners from their teachers. So, the suitability of light and color in the class setting, comfortable seats, etc. ... can be effective to prevent the occurrence of these factors.

Differences and similarities between verbal and non-verbal skills

Verbal and non-verbal communications have differences and similarities (14):

In these cases, the following differences can be noted:

1- Non-verbal communication is more reliable: One of the main differences in the two kinds of communication is that non-verbal communication is more reliable for the audience, especially when verbal and non-verbal messages are inconsistent.

2- Non-verbal communication is multi-faceted: The second difference between the two systems of communication is that non-verbal communication is often established simultaneously in two or more channels.

3- Non-verbal communication is continuous: Compared to verbal communication that is less

continual, non-verbal one is.

Moreover, the similarities include:

- Both are symbolic: Non-verbal communication as well as verbal communication is symbolic. Shrug of the shoulders, drop-down eyes, and distance or closeness to others ... are each a symbol of a message at that moment and condition.
- Both are formulated: According to the culture and traditions of the society, community members know which non-verbal behavior is appropriate for every situation and in that situation, what it means.

Summary answers to research questions

1. What is non-verbal communication?

The ability to speak and talk is one of the most important characteristics of human that makes him/her superior to other creatures. He/She can use words and sentences to express his/her feelings and make others aware of them. On the other hand, willingly or unwillingly, in an environment with silence and no verbal language where only body language is used, he/she can transfer his/her feeling or exchange the meaning of words. For example, a person's interest or friendship is not acceptable with frowning. Therefore, by the use of this language, interests, emotions, and feeling could be expressed well. In other words, there are other eloquent languages in the silent and quiet world, the knowledge of which is very helpful in effective communication.

Non-verbal communication includes all aspects of communication except the use of words. In other words, non-verbal communication includes not only gestures and movements of the body but also the way that the words are expressed, such as the music of the words, interruptions, loudness and accents; these non-verbal features affect the meaning of words (12).

2. Does the use of non-verbal communication lead to success in teaching?

In this regard, numerous studies have been conducted by Oskouhi et al. (1) on the role of non-verbal communication on educational performance of faculty members of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resource University in Sari; the results showed a significant positive correlation between non-verbal communication skills and educational performance of Sari faculty members of Agricultural Sciences and

Natural Resources University.

The students' attitude about English vocabulary and their comprehension with non-verbal communication indicated that they had a positive attitude toward the use of non-verbal communication in learning the second language (12).

Moreover, Mortazavi (5) conducted a study on meta-analysis of communication patterns in mathematics journals' articles. The results of the study revealed that supportive, collaborative and emotive methods in the form of body language, both audio and video, are effective for learners to enhance the performance in learning mathematics.

Najafi (4) in his study on "the relationship between communication skills and educational effectiveness of teachers of girls in Valiasr Technical College in Tehran" showed that as teachers' communication skills get further strengthened, the effectiveness of scientific groups, students' learning motivation, and academic achievement as well as verbal and non-verbal communication skills increases.

To clarify the point and considering the study results, it can be mentioned that there is a kind of interaction in all human communications, such as multiple forms of non-verbal communication, exchange of information and meaning through facial expressions, gestures or body movements. And this interaction is so useful that we can say, when a person learns to interpret the body language, no words would be as clear as it is.

3. What are the efficacious methods of non-verbal communication during teaching?

- Body Language: Non-verbal communication is an important part of human interaction.

For example, tone, facial expressions and gestures can transfer the people's attitudes and feelings to others and the actions in many cases can be even more effective than verbal messages.

- Language of Space: When we talk with someone, we tend to keep up personal space with him unconsciously. This space depends on the culture and positions. For example, friends stand closer compared to strangers. Language of space can be divided into intimate space, personal space, social space, and public space.

- Language of Touch: Touch is the first sense of our body that a child learns after birth, and the first experience of his relationships with others arises through touching.

- Language of Objects: Clothing and appearance are often the basis for initial judgments about people and have a significant impact on the others' judgment about us. In fact, the language of objects ranges from the clothes we wear to the food we put on the table for our guests.
- Language of Time: By considering the concept of time in different cultures, our relationship with others develops and becomes effective.
- Language of Signs and Password: The password is a group of signs and symbols that can be made in a manner that is meaningful to some people.
- Language of Phonetics: Language of phonetics distinguishes our emotions from each other and affects our judgment about people's personality and social characters. The sound of every human being is unique and is a combination of the qualities that are exclusively his or hers.

Discussion

The present study aimed to review the research articles to determine the impact of the teachers' use of non-verbal communication on success in teaching. The available research articles conducted in this area were reviewed. From the results of the reviewed articles, it was found that:

- a. There should be an attempt to attract and guide the learner's attention through verbal and non-verbal communication during teaching.
- b. Humor, fun and coordination of sound and picture are effective in the promotion of the learners' audiovisual communication.
- c. The teachers' challenging, and destructive relationship with the students leads to failure in learning.
- d. Peace, security, and mutual respectful relationship among the students are influential in comprehending the educational materials.
- e. Teachers' multi-faceted relationship with students through various communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, leads to maximum efficacy of the educational materials.
- f. Supportive non-verbal communication with isolated and non-assertive students will help them to enter team work activities. Through the teachers and other learners' support, they will attain the mental peace to learn.
- g. During the use of verbal communication for students' encouragement, the teachers are recommended to use the corresponding non-

verbal communication patterns.

h. The teachers are suggested to pay attention to the students' attitudes and ask their questions in a way that the learners feel the question is designed for them and participate in the discussions.

i. The teachers' non-verbal communication during the students' speech signifies their acceptability and avoidance of self-centeredness.

j. Teachers' attention to the students' non-verbal behaviors in the classroom, e.g. eye contact, signs of tiredness, etc. are of importance, showing the teachers' coordination with the students' mental and physical status.

Limitations of the review

This study, like any other research, had some limitations as follows:

- Lack of sufficient studies focusing on the effect and dimensions of non-verbal communication; hence, we could not generalize their methods and results. It seems that this lies in the lack of awareness about the positive impact of non-verbal communication as used by the instructors.
- Lack of enough research on the non-verbal communication skills and practice in teaching.

Recommendations for further research

Considering the results of this study, future studies are recommended to research non-verbal communication skill and its effects on teaching and learning more deeply and specifically. Also, it is suggested that educational programs and workshops should be held on efficacious relationship among the learners and teachers so that the students get practically familiar with non-verbal communication skills to solve their problems and mental disorders by their counselors.

Conclusions

This article reviewed had some limitations. First, most of the studies had focused on other types of communication rather than purely on non-verbal communication. Moreover, in most of the studies, little attention had been paid to non-verbal communication. Also, due to lack of studies in the field of educational communication, there was no access to recent studies in this regard.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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