



تأثير لغة الجسد على متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Body Language Effects on EFL Learners of English

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المستخلص

تلعب لغة الجسد دوراً حاسماً في التواصل اليومي، إلا أن أهميتها في الفصل الدراسي غالباً ما يتم تجاهلها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى زيادة الوعي بين الطلاب والتدريسين حول قوة لغة الجسد كتقنية تعليمية في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتبحث العلاقة بين إشارات لغة الجسد ودور التدريسين، وتحديد الإشارات الرئيسية مثل تعابير الوجه، وحركات العين، وحركات اليد، وقياس المسافات. وباستخدام كل من الأساليب الكمية وال النوعية، تم جمع البيانات من خلال الاستبيانات في جامعة الحدباء و ملاحظة أربعة تدريسين. تشير النتائج إلى أن التدريسين على دراية بلغة جسدهم، ويمكن للطلاب تفسير هذه الإشارات. وتشير النتائج إلى أن دمج لغة الجسد يمكن أن يعزز عملية التعلم في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. علاوة على ذلك، يوفر البحث رؤى قيمة للتدريسين ومصممي المناهج.

Abstract

In daily communication, body language plays a crucial role, yet its importance in the classroom is often overlooked. This study aims to increase awareness among students and teachers about the power of body





language as a learning technique in EFL classrooms. It explores the relationship between body language cues and the teacher's role, identifying key cues such as facial expressions, oculistics, hand movements, and proxemics. Employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study collected data through questionnaires at Al-Hadba University and observations of four teachers. Results indicate that teachers are aware of their body language, and students can interpret these cues. The findings suggest that integrating body language can enhance the learning process in English language teaching. Furthermore, the research provides valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers.

1. Introduction

Body language, also known as kinesics, is often considered the non-verbal communication conveyed through body cues, accounting for a significant portion of daily interactions. Furnham et al. (2010) describe it as communication without words, while Anderson (1999) claims that 60-70% of meaning is conveyed through nonverbal cues, surpassing verbal communication. Tai (2014) emphasises that body language encompasses gestures and movements rather than speech. Hornby (2006) adds that it expresses thoughts and feelings through body movement. Even if people are unaware, they convey messages through facial expressions and gestures. Kulkarni (2008) highlights its critical role in oral communication, showcasing its importance in effective interactions.

2. Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, the teaching and learning process requires the use of both verbal and nonverbal communication. Body language, which is a form of nonverbal communication, includes various types such as facial expressions, gestures, proxemics, and body movements. This study focuses primarily on these elements. Teachers' body language is particularly significant as it often conveys more meaning than words alone. In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, body language plays a crucial role in expressing feelings, emotions, and attitudes that influence students' perceptions and understanding. It is widely acknowledged that "enormous efforts have been undertaken in the past to understand the verbal channel, whereas the role of the nonverbal channel is less well understood" (Esposito, Faundez-Zanny, Keller & Marinaro, 2007, p. 1). Despite its importance, teachers' body language has not received adequate attention in academic institutions. Recognising this gap, the primary aim of this study is to observe and illustrate the different types of body language that can enhance students' communication skills, thereby improving their language learning. The research emphasises the



importance of integrating body language awareness into teaching strategies to create a more dynamic and responsive learning environment. Furthermore, this research proposes the use of positive body language as a teaching tool in the classroom since teaching involves not only pedagogical techniques but also psychological factors.

3. Aims of the Study

This study seeks to raise awareness among both students and teachers regarding the critical role and effectiveness of utilising body language cues as a valuable learning technique in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. By examining nonverbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and posture, the study demonstrates how these cues can significantly enhance the learning process and foster engagement. Also, it delves into the intricate relationship between body language cues and the teacher's role, highlighting how educators can effectively use these nonverbal signals to facilitate better understanding and interaction with students. Additionally, the study seeks to determine whether instructors at Al-Hadba University, Department of English, effectively utilise body language in their EFL teaching. Furthermore, the findings of this study aim to provide significant points for curriculum developers to create materials focused on incorporating body language in the classroom, particularly in language teaching. The researcher will also provide recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

4. Types of Body Language

4.1.1 Facial Expressions and Eye Contact

Facial expressions are movements of the face that express emotions. According to Ekman (1977), facial expressions are those muscles used to communicate or express mood. Studies exhibit that the most expressive way humans utilise to reveal emotions is through facial expressions. The face is the direct source of information after words because it is the most visible part of the body. Lesiker & Flatley (2005) remark, "the face and eyes are by far the most important features of body language. We look to the face and eyes to determine much of the meaning behind body language and non-verbal communication". According to physiologists, humans can make up to 2,000 various facial expressions. (Hall, 1980, pp. 26-45). Faces are rich in information and can express mood, mental state, intentions, internal feelings, and individual identity. In the classroom, both teachers and students employ different facial expressions. Teachers are constantly urged to notice how their students react to their interpretation through their facial expressions. For example, a smiling face indicates



satisfaction, while yawning during class indicates that students are bored or exhausted.

4.1.2 Eye Contact / Oculistics

The eyes are a substantial element of our faces. Maintaining persistent eye contact is crucial in the communication process. It is an effective way of developing a connection with interlocutors. Eye contact delivers signals of dominance and controls the conversation. It also helps in communicating successfully in oral communication. In many cultures, failing to make eye contact is demonstrated as having things to hide or lying. Human beings maintain eye contact to reflect listening and mutual understanding. Any person who wants to participate in a conversation will make an effort to catch the eyes of the person who is holding the floor to signify they want to interrupt. On the contrary, a person avoids eye contact if they no longer care to listen. According to Gregersen (2007, p.59), "eye behaviour has a higher probability of being noticed than any other bodily movements, so it is a much more prominent interaction signal". Tai (2014, p.1208) states that the "eye is the 'window' to the soul". The teacher can know from his students' eyes whether they understand or not. Lesiker and Flately (2005) regarded the face and eyes to be the most important parts of body language. This presumption has been supported by Miller (1988), who considered the eyes the most dependable element of nonverbal communication.

4.1.3 Smiling

A fact widely known is that a smile is a universal language. Everyone around the world can communicate with a smile. Smiling symbolises approval and satisfaction. Smiling in the faces of students can help alleviate anxiety and enhance motivation. Also, it builds up a good relationship with learners. Keith, Tomatzky & Pettigrew (1974) observed the importance of the teachers' smiles in influencing learners' positive perception of their teacher. For example, if a student commits a mistake or gives a wrong answer, the teacher should encourage the student with a smile rather than criticise him/her with an angry face or correct them by saying 'no wrong'. Teachers need to keep the students feeling positive and comfortable.

5. Head Movements

Head movements are rich conveyors of meaning during communication. They can be conscious or unconscious. Teachers can emphasise and support their speech by nodding their heads. While tilting their head is a stance to communicate interest. Sometimes, head movements can substitute speech and support what is being said. If the students tilted their heads, this signifies listening, curiosity, and a sign of willingness to learn





more. Tilting the head a little to one side demonstrates compassionate interest. (Miller, 2005). Nodding their heads can mean many things, such as attention, agreement, acceptance, understanding, and comprehension. Thompson (1973) claims that sometimes students integrate both nodding and avoiding eye contact with the teacher to signal they are not willing to answer.

6. Gestures and Hands

6.1. Gestures

Besides the facial expressions and eyes, other parts of the body move and communicate meaning. The physical movements of the head, arms, hands, and legs are known as gestures. Gestures are the movements of the body that express attitude and emotions. They are a complex type of body language that is used before people start to use verbal language. In the classroom, the teacher may employ gestures to convey the meaning of vocabulary. For example, the teacher can point to the ceiling or the window so that students link the word with the realia. Also, when teaching English pronouns, the teacher could point to himself while saying the "I" pronoun or point to a girl when saying the "she" pronoun, and so on. Using gestures makes the students more interested in the lessons, enhances the quality of their learning, allows them to be more communicative, and the teaching process will be good. According to Tai (2014, p.1207), natural gestures aid students in deepening their comprehension of English. Anderson & Myers (2010) found that classrooms are interactive social settings where teachers need to experience the curriculum through their bodies to engage students with what they are learning mentally and physically. Allen (1995, 1999) demonstrated that students who learn words with gestures learn faster than those who do not learn with gestures.

6.2. Hands

As for the hands, which are usually in front of our bodies, revealing our sentiments and attitudes. Using hand signals while talking brings vitality and emphasis to our speech. In many countries, the hands have taken the role of "punctuation marks" to control turn-taking in conversation. The hands-raised gesture has been borrowed from the French and Italians, who are the greatest users of "hand talking", but this is rarely seen in England, as it is seen as a poor style or inappropriate manner of communication. When teachers keep their hands showing in classrooms, not behind their backs or in their pockets, they earn the full attention of their students and get exceedingly more control.





7. Proxemics/ Space Language

Proxemics is a word derived from the word proximity, which represents closeness. The term “gestures” was first coined in 1963 by the American anthropologist Edward Twitchell Hall. Hall (1968) defines gestures as the study of human beings’ transactions as they perceive and use intimate, personal, social, and public space in different settings. De Vito (2009) argues that proxemics is a very significant factor in interpersonal communication, but oftentimes, we ignore it. Proxemics normally refers to the way humans manage space during interaction. Menninen and Kujunpaa (2002, p.3) name proxemics as “spatial behaviour”, which means the “physical distance we place between ourselves and others”. (Helmer and Eddy, 2003, p.43), and accordingly reveals the nature of the relationship between interlocutors, whether it is public, social, or private. The distance between the interlocutors conveys a lot about the nature of the relationship and communication. There are two sorts of proximity: “open” and “closed”. Both reflect a person's degree of receptivity to another person. Teachers' proximity to students can influence the teacher-student relationship. Approaching a student can reveal interest and vice versa.

8. Importance of Using Body Language in Foreign Language Teaching

The teaching process is not only a matter of transferring information. A teacher now is not only an individual with qualified knowledge but someone familiar with how to deal with students and manage academic conditioning. Effective teaching depends not merely on verbal communication but also on nonverbal messages. The body language of any teacher is a greatly essential thing in the classroom. It is the way the teacher uses his facial expressions and hands, and the distance that teachers stand from their students, that play a significant role in language communication. Using body language in language teaching can stimulate and motivate students' interest in English language learning. EFL teachers need to utilise body language to enable learners to understand more and communicate more effectively. According to Grazia (2015), body language can play a significant role in EFL classrooms, such as enriching comprehension, simplifying lexical disambiguation, and building a vigorous environment where learners remain active, motivated, and curious during the whole lesson.

Right from the beginning of a course study, teachers must study and analyse the textbook to see whether it contains elements of body language. If not, the teacher should provide students with what he sees as beneficial. The teachers will come to be expert receivers of their students'



needs. At the same time, the teacher's movements in the classroom should be spontaneous, natural, and effortless. The teacher should pay attention not to bring in a great deal of body language so as not to distract the students' attention and make them lose interest. The effective teacher is the one who stands in the middle of the class and walks around the classroom. Teachers who stay seated throughout the whole lesson create an unmotivated learning environment. Although some teachers have experience in holding classes of a large number of students when they are sitting. Nevertheless, it is better to stand and walk around from time to time. Marwijk (2007) states the reasons why language teachers must use the body in teaching FLT. First, the inadequacy of words means the teacher uses hand gestures to provide students with visual hints about the topic they are studying. Second, to designate natural communication in the classroom, for example, if a teacher becomes angry because of the behaviour of a student, he could simply gaze at the student with a special look and furrow his eyebrows. The student will directly know that the teacher is angry. The teacher delivered the message without saying a word. Miller (2005, p. 28) states that words have limitations, but nonverbal cues are influential and more authentic. Through nonverbal communication, people can communicate feelings so irritating to tell. While Tie (2014, p.1206) pointed out three aspects of body language. First, the limitations of students in memorising vocabulary in English. It is hard for students to get by heart all English vocabulary entities. Students understand and recall merely the words that are repeated frequently. Second, interest loss in the class. Learning a foreign language is exhausting for non-native learners. That's why teachers give a great impression by using body language to motivate students and make them interested in class. Third, preparing an appropriate atmosphere. The general atmosphere must be suitable. Otherwise, it will be depressing, monotonous, and students will lose interest.

9. Literature Review

It is supposed that the publication of the American Anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell's book in 1952, titled "Introduction to Kinesics", marked the beginning of formal study into what is now known as "body language". Body language is an ancient science. It first came out as Physiognomy, which is the art of discovering temperament and character from outward appearance.

Pease (1988) suggested that body signals function as punctuation marks to regulate the communication process. Every single movement that teachers perform has a great impact on students' understanding.





Kroehnet (2006) viewed body language as non-verbal communication and regarded it as a comprehensive study of its own. Also, he pointed out that some studies demonstrate that nonverbal cues are used in 65% of the communication process.

Hişmanoğlu (2008), in his paper, intends to emphasise the importance of using body language and its fundamental components like proxemics, kinesics, and postures in foreign language learning. It outlines the definition of body language and the background of this concept. Also, it remarks on the primacy of employing body language in foreign language teaching and the teacher's role in body language education.

Akinola (2009), in his article, focuses on Nepalese content based on the observation by the author at different higher secondary schools in Nepal. The findings show that teachers' nonverbal communication plays a highly significant role in students' motivation in language classrooms.

Shi & Fan (2010), this paper examines the role of nonverbal communication in intercultural communication. The findings reveal that improper nonverbal behaviours may cause potential failure in intercultural communication. It also proposes that teachers should employ more nonverbal behaviours in language classrooms to enhance learners' study motivation.

Gulec and Temel (2015) studied whether there is a difference between elementary education mathematics teachers' candidates and social studies teachers' candidates in their use of body language. The results show that the teachers' usage of body language did not vary according to their gender. The social studies teachers found body language so important, while the mathematics education teachers felt suspicious.

Barbara & Cagananga (2015), this paper states the definition, factors and value of nonverbal in EFL classes. The results exhibit that nonverbal communication plays an approvingly substantial and essential role in a foreign language classroom for organising students' behaviour.

Çimenli (2015) studied the importance of semiotic elements in teaching pronunciation and suggested certain techniques to emphasise the importance of semiotic elements in pronunciation teaching and how to carry them out properly in language classrooms.

Bambaereroo & Shokrpour (2017), their main article was about the effect of teachers' nonverbal communication in teaching. The results revealed that there was a powerful relationship among amount, quality, and the method of employing nonverbal communication by teachers. In addition, it was found that the more the teachers utilise verbal and nonverbal communication, the more efficient their education and academic process.



Yang (2017) states the importance of body language and its usage in teaching atmospheres. In addition to the importance of nonverbal methods, and how they help teachers organise and adjust the teaching in class. Furthermore, he touched upon how teachers must simplify their teaching language with the assistance of facial expressions and body movements.

Hocine (2017) investigates how EFL students' comprehension can be improved using body language signals by teachers at the University of Biskara. The results showed that EFL students' comprehension can be improved through the proper use of body language cues. Also, the researcher proposes many pedagogical recommendations for both teachers and learners.

Meriem (2017), in her study, sheds light on the necessity of body language, the need to apply it in English classes, and the effect of body language on both teachers and learners. The findings exhibited that the teachers are aware of their body language, and they make use of this technique. In addition to that, body language does have a positive influence on teachers and learners.

Kumar (2018) reviewed a paper about body language and how it is important in EFL teaching. The researcher also added that if the teacher uses body language professionally and adequately, this would help the teaching process in the classroom. Consequently, this will draw the student's attention and enable them to develop an accurate awareness of language contents.

10. Methodology

10.1. Participants and Research Design

The participants in this study included students as well as instructors who were observed. Two types of tools were employed in this study: a questionnaire with various items for the students and observation. The collected data were anonymised, coded, and analysed according to the standards of both qualitative and quantitative research. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 100 students and observed four instructors. The data for this study were gathered at Al-Hadba University from second and third-year students enrolled in the College of Arts, Department of English Language. All students were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Consent was obtained, ensuring that participation was entirely voluntary and free from coercion. A proposal was submitted to the university for approval. The researcher coordinated with the instructors in the Department of English Language to attend their classes, observe their use of body language, and gather as much information as possible regarding body language cues.



11. Description and Analysis of the Questionnaire

The student's questionnaire aims to explore their ability to decode teachers' body language. In addition, to figure out if they apprehend the importance of body language in teaching English. The items in the questionnaire were constructed according to the information that has already been found about body language cues.

Question item 1. Do you have any knowledge about body language and its impact on teaching the English language?

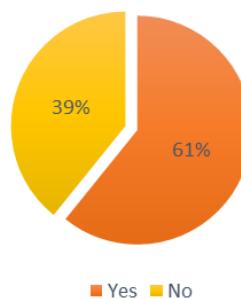


Figure 1 Show the results of item no.1

Almost 60.8% of students indicated that they are familiar with the teacher's body language and how it affects Language teaching. This is a promising indicator because it suggests that the majority of students are conscious of nonverbal cues. This awareness can enhance their comprehension, engagement and interaction during the lesson, particularly when they face language barriers or complex topics. However, 39.2 % of students reported they do not know about this topic. These students are missing out on an important aspect of communication, which can reinforce meaning. This suggests that there is a significant need for students to learn a lot of knowledge about body language cues.

Question item 2. How do you assess the body language of your teachers in the classroom?

a. good
excellent

b. bad

c. neutral

d.

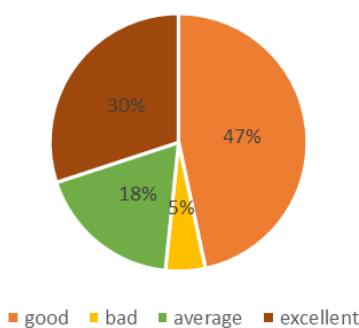


Figure 2 Show the results of item no.2



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This question aims to gather student' opinions on their teachers' body language in the classroom. Combining the percentages of students who rated their teachers' body language as "Excellent", 30%, and "Good", 47% shows that a significant 77% perceive it positively. This suggests that most teachers effectively use non-verbal cues, such as gestures, posture, eye contact, and facial expressions, to engage students and communicate. The 18% of students who rated their teachers' body language as "Average" indicate that while these teachers are somewhat expressive, they may not be consistent or dynamic enough to maintain interest and clarity. A small minority of students, 5% rated their teachers' body language as "Bad" or "Poor." This perception may stem from a lack of engagement, closed body posture, or insufficient eye contact, which can lead to a less effective and less inviting learning environment.

Question item 3. In your opinion, which type of body language is most used by your teachers?

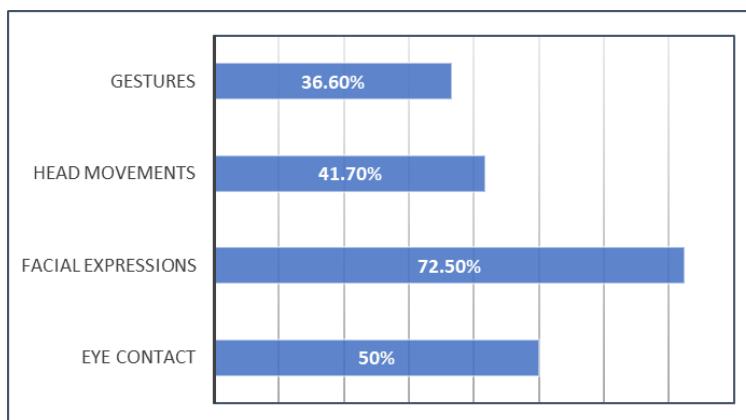


Figure 3 Show the results of item no.3

According to the students who answered the questionnaire, 72.50% answered that "facial expressions" are most used, especially furrowing the brows and smiling. While 50% answered "eye contact", and 41.70% answered "head movement", such as nodding and tilting the head. Only 36.60% answered "gestures".

Question item 4. Do the teacher's gestures assist you in understanding the material more effectively?

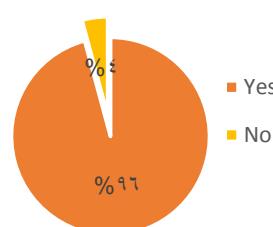


Figure 4 Show the results of item no.4



Most respondents 95.8% reported that the teacher's gestures significantly aided their understanding of the material. This finding suggests that gestures play a crucial role in enhancing verbal instruction, particularly in language learning or when dealing with abstract concepts. It highlights the importance of non-verbal communication in improving comprehension. Respondents specifically noted that gestures help them grasp new vocabulary and abstract ideas. This indicates that gestures can serve as visual cues or contextual signals that bridge the gap between unfamiliar terms and their meanings. For instance, a gesture that mimics an action verb can provide a quick and intuitive understanding of that verb. Additionally, abstract ideas may be clarified through symbolic or illustrative hand movements. A small fraction of students, 4.2% indicated that gestures did not assist them. This lack of effectiveness could be attributed to a preference for learning through textual or auditory input rather than visual or kinesthetic methods, or it may be due to distractions caused by excessive or unclear gestures.

Question item 5. What part of the teacher's body do you focus on most during the lesson

The Facial expressions are the most focused-on part of a teacher's body during lessons. This suggests that students heavily rely on visual cues for understanding emotions, emphasis, and pronunciation. Eyes and brows help convey intensity, surprise, or engagement. Wide-open eyes and raised brows likely signal importance or urgency, grabbing the student's attention. Mouth movements are crucial for pronunciation, especially in language learning or subjects where terminology matters. This highlights how non-verbal articulation supports comprehension. Hands come in a very close second. This implies that hand gestures are vital for clarifying concepts, managing classroom behaviour, and directing attention. Pointing to the board or students serves as a behavioural cue. Hand motions during explanations make abstract ideas more tangible and dynamic. While nodding and other head movements are noticed, they rank significantly lower. This might be because these movements are subtle and context-specific, mainly used during feedback or assessment moments, such as confirming correct answers. Still, they play a role in student-teacher interaction, especially in building rapport and encouragement. As for gestures, they tend to be the least noticeable since they are too integrated with other movements, making them difficult to isolate.



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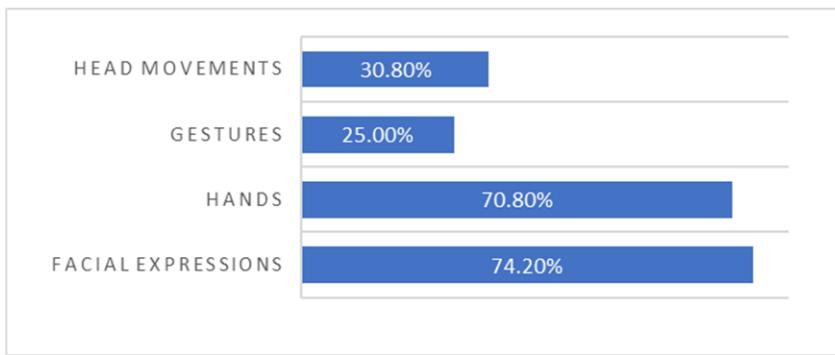


Figure 5 Show the results of item no.5

Question item 6. Do you prefer your teacher to ...?

- a. Stare at your teacher b. distribute his sight c. both

Question item 7. If the teacher's eyes are on you. Do you feel ...?

- a. relaxed b. Nervous

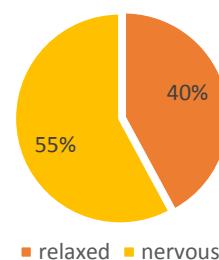
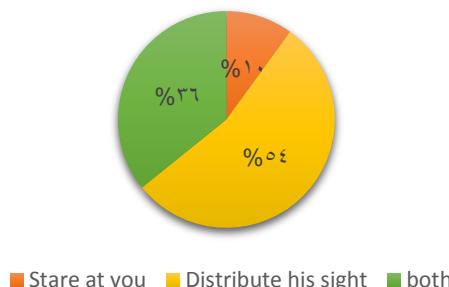


Figure 6 Show the results of item no.6 Figure 7 Show the results of item no.7

A majority, 54.2% of students, prefer the teachers to distribute their sight rather than focusing on a single student. 35.8% are comfortable with both staring and distributing sight, indicating some flexibility but still suggesting that constant direct eye contact is not universally appreciated. Only 10% prefer being stared at by the teacher, showing that strong, continuous eye contact is generally unpopular. Students tend to feel more comfortable and engaged when the teacher shares attention among the class rather than focusing heavily on one person. This preference highlights the importance of making all students feel included without creating pressure or anxiety. The data suggest that prolonged direct gaze may lead to feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, or pressure rather than positive emotions like reassurance or encouragement. Strong eye contact may unintentionally make students feel judged or singled out, rather than supported. This emotional reaction can negatively impact classroom participation, especially for students who are already shy or anxious.





Teachers should practice scanning the classroom evenly and giving brief eye contact to everyone without lingering too long on any single student.

Question item 8. Do you prefer that your teacher employ their hands to facilitate ideas?

- a. Yes** **b. No**

Question item 9. Do you look at your teacher's hands while he/she is explaining the lecture?

The results from question item 8 strongly indicate that most students 97% prefer teachers who use their hands to facilitate ideas during lectures. This suggests that gestures are seen as an important tool for communication in the classroom. Hand movements likely help to visualise abstract concepts, emphasise important points, and maintain students' attention. For question item 9, the responses show a more nuanced picture: 42% of students said they always look at the teacher's hands, implying that for nearly half of the students, gestures are a major focus of attention and contribute significantly to their comprehension. The rest 58% who answered "sometimes" or "never" may still benefit from hand movements, but they may not consciously focus on them all the time. Teachers should correspond their hands with their words. Likewise, one should be aware that this will encourage students and make them understand more. At the same time, teachers should be cautious not to overuse their hands so that students do not get distracted or lose concentration.



Figure 8 Show the results of item no.8
item no.9

Question item 10. What do you feel when you see your teacher smiling at you?



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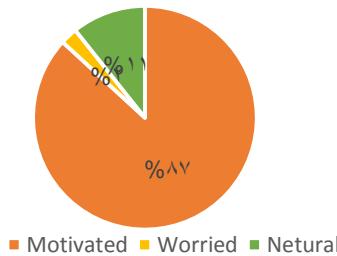


Figure 10 Show the results of item no.10

A large majority of students 87% feel motivated and happy when their teacher smiles at them. This indicates that teacher behaviour, particularly non-verbal cues like smiling, plays a significant role in creating a positive and supportive classroom environment. When students perceive their teacher as approachable and kind, it can boost their confidence, reduce their fear of making mistakes, and encourage active participation. Such a warm classroom climate can directly lead to higher engagement, improved academic performance, and better student-teacher relationships. A smaller, but notable percentage of students 11% feel anxious even when their teacher smiles. This could stem from factors such as personal insecurities, fear of being singled out, previous negative school experiences, or misunderstandings of the teacher's intentions. It suggests that while most students respond positively, it is important for teachers to be aware that not all students interpret non-verbal communication in the same way. These students may need more reassurance, consistency, and perhaps different types of encouragement to feel safe and motivated. A very small portion of students, 2% feel neutral or indifferent. This could indicate a lack of emotional connection with the teacher or a general disinterest in the learning environment.

Question item 11. How do you prefer the teacher to correct your mistakes?

a. Eye contact

b. Head movement

c. The tone of the voice

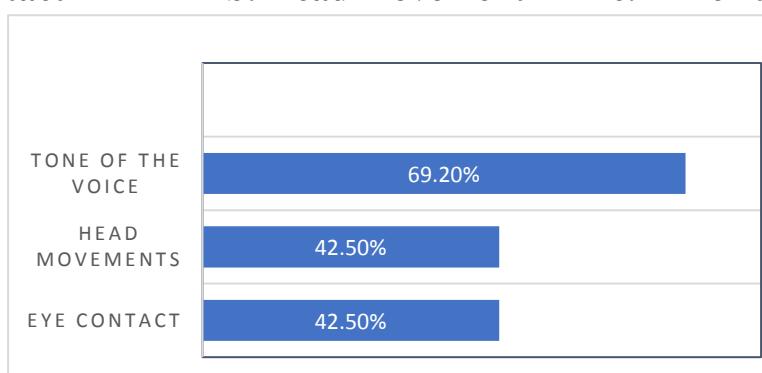


Figure 11 Show the results of item no.11





A clear majority of students 70% favour tone of voice as the preferred method for correction. This suggests that students are particularly sensitive to how something is said rather than what is physically expressed (like gestures or eye contact). It indicates that verbal cues are seen as more effective, possibly because they are direct yet can be delivered gently or encouragingly. Interestingly, head movements and eye contact received the same percentage, 42.50%. This shows that nearly half the students are also receptive to non-verbal communication when being corrected. It highlights that while tone is crucial, supporting it with non-verbal cues might reinforce the correction and make it more effective. Since the percentages for head movement and eye contact are both 42.50%, and the tone of voice is 69.20%, many students likely selected more than one option. This suggests that students may appreciate a combination of methods rather than relying solely on one.

Question item 12. Do you feel comfortable when your teacher comes near you?

Question item 13. When your teacher goes around the class, what do you feel?



Figure 12 Show the results of item no.12
item no.13

Figure 13 Show the results of

As for question twelve, almost 75% of students feel comfortable when the teacher comes near them, suggesting that most students associate the teacher's physical presence with support, attention, or positive reinforcement. While 25% feel pressure, which could stem from anxiety about being evaluated, fear of mistakes, or discomfort with authority figures being physically close. The 18% of female students feeling stressed points to gender dynamics: perhaps female students feel more self-conscious or judged, especially depending on the gender and behaviour of the teacher. This could be linked to social norms or personal



experiences around authority and personal space. As for question thirteen, almost 73% feel good and concentrated when the teacher moves around, which implies that teacher mobility is largely positive for classroom engagement. The teacher's movement may make students feel monitored in a supportive way, keeping them alert and involved. Also, 15% experience tension, meaning some students interpret teacher mobility as surveillance or pressure, increasing their anxiety levels rather than concentration. Only 12% are neutral, showing that for a small group, the teacher's movement has little emotional or cognitive effect.

Question item 14. In your opinion, how do you prefer the teacher to explain the material? while he/she

- a. sitting behind the desk
- b. standing in the front of the class.
- c. walking around the class

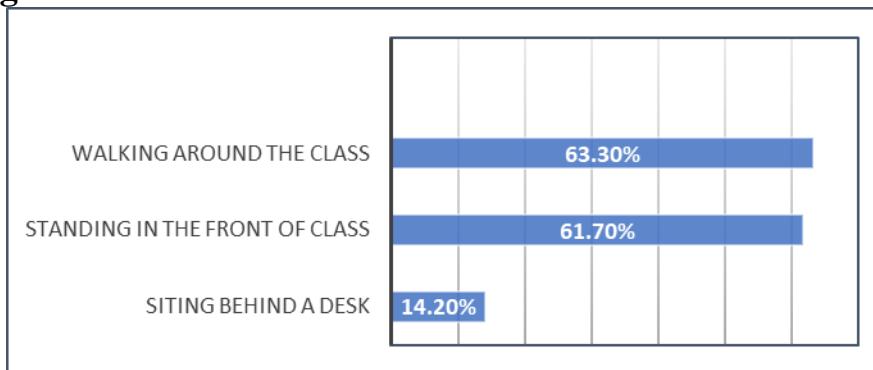


Figure 14 Show the results of item no.14

As for the results of question fourteen, a significant majority, 63.30% preferred the teacher to walk around the classroom. This suggests that students feel more engaged, connected, and perhaps more supported when the teacher is physically mobile. Walking around may help the teacher better monitor student understanding, maintain student attention, and foster a dynamic learning environment. Meanwhile, 61.70% of the students indicated that they also appreciate when the teacher stands in front of the class, particularly near the board. This position allows for clear visibility and focuses during explanations, especially when visual aids like board writing or diagrams are used. It reflects the importance students place on structured and easily visible instruction. Interestingly, only 14% preferred the teacher to sit behind the desk while explaining. This relatively low percentage suggests that students perceive sitting while teaching as less engaging or perhaps even as a sign of detachment or lack of energy. Sitting might create a physical and psychological distance between the teacher and the students, reducing interactivity and attentiveness.



Question item 15. In your opinion, what must the teacher use often in explaining the lesson and why?

a. Gestures

b. speech

c. both

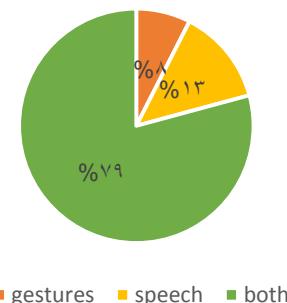


Figure 15 Show the results of item no.15

The results of question item fifteen reveal that a significant majority of students 79% prefer their teachers to use both gestures and speech when explaining lessons. This preference suggests that students find multimodal communication combining verbal explanation with physical movement more effective than relying on speech alone. Gestures play a crucial role in reinforcing spoken language. As they provide a clarification of ideas, such as abstract concepts, especially in subjects like literature and comprehension, it can be hard to visualise. Gestures act as visual cues, making it easier for students to connect words with meanings. It also enhanced engagement as gestures make the lesson more dynamic and livelier, capturing students' attention and keeping them focused. It also supports Memory since research shows that information accompanied by gestures tends to be remembered better because it engages both auditory and visual memory. But speech remains fundamental because it structures the content and delivers the necessary detail and depth. The strong preference for the combination of gestures and speech indicates that students benefit most when these two modes are integrated. In literature and comprehension lessons, where interpretation and nuance are critical, gestures can emphasise tone, mood, character actions, and emotions, thereby enriching students' understanding almost instantly.

Question item 16. In your opinion, why do teachers use body language?

So that students ...

a.understands more b. be comfortable c.be motivated d. build a relationship

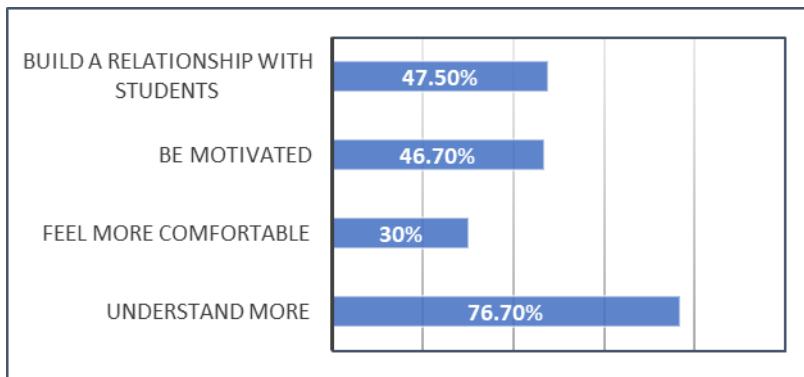


Figure 16 Show the results of item no.16

The highest percentage, 76.70% indicates that most students view body language as primarily a tool to enhance understanding. This shows strong recognition that non-verbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and posture are used by teachers to clarify meanings, emphasise important points, and make explanations more accessible. Nearly half of the students, 47.50% also believe that body language is used to build relationships. This reflects an awareness that non-verbal communication (such as smiling, nodding, and maintaining an open posture) can make teachers seem more approachable and foster a positive, trusting classroom environment. Similarly, 46.70% see body language as a means to motivate students. Energetic gestures, encouraging nods, and expressive movements can inspire engagement and enthusiasm in learners, which students seem to recognise. Only 30% thought it was mainly to make students feel more comfortable. While lower compared to other options, it still shows that a significant minority associate body language with creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere. It could suggest that comfort is seen as a consequence of understanding and relationship-building, rather than a primary goal. The fact that students selected multiple purposes shows that students recognise body language as multifunctional, not limited to a single role.

12. Description and Analysis of the Classroom Observation

As a complement to the questionnaire, and for more research on science credibility, the researcher has used observation as an additional tool to gather more data from authentic learning environments at different times and with diverse teachers' genders. Classroom observation benefits not only in observing teachers' body language cues but also the reactions of the students. The researcher made a structured table divided into quality and quantity criteria to assess and observe teachers' body language cues according to the body language types mentioned earlier. Also, the researcher made previous arrangements with the instructors to attend their classes. The observation was performed during the first semester in





October 2023 at Al-Hadba University. The researcher chooses four teachers from the Department of English Language who teach the second and third years. Two of the teachers specialise in linguistics (grammar and comprehension), and the other two are specialised in literature (drama and novel).

In general, all the teachers who were observed entered the class with smiles and warm greetings, creating an immediate sense of psychological safety and belonging. Asking about students' well-being and other lessons indicates personal interest, which builds rapport and increases student motivation.

Concerning eye contact and facial expressions, teachers skilfully use eye contact to read students' understanding nonverbally. Students often nod or say "yes" out of politeness or fear when asked directly if they understood. Eye contact allows teachers to detect hesitation, confusion, or confidence without verbal responses. Raising eyebrows combined with eye contact is used as an additional cue, encouraging students to think and respond more attentively. When teachers maintain direct eye contact while explaining, students often feel intensely focused, leading to reactions like anxiety, nervousness, or feeling "frozen". This suggests that while eye contact can maintain attention, overuse or over-intensity might create pressure, especially for shy or less confident students. Also, teachers use wide-open eyes when pointing out mistakes, which serves as a nonverbal signal of seriousness. This can heighten students' awareness of errors, but if not balanced with a supportive tone, it might also contribute to fear of failure or public embarrassment. When teachers turn their backs (e.g., to write on the board) and eye contact is broken, students tend to lose focus and start talking. This shows that continuous visual engagement is critical for maintaining order and keeping students attentive. Students might perceive the teacher's back as a "break" from the lesson, signalling an opportunity to relax and discipline. Some teachers often glance back while writing, or position themselves sideways to maintain partial visual contact, preventing noise and disruption. Eye contact in this context functions almost like a silent classroom management tool.

Concerning hand movements, it is the second most used body language cue by teachers. The intriguing issue about teachers' hands is that every one of the observed teachers has a repertoire of hand movements. Teachers employed their hands spontaneously and unconsciously while presenting the material. This shows their high frequency and natural integration into teaching communication. Hand gestures are essential for non-verbal communication in education, helping to reinforce meaning and manage classroom dynamics. Hand gestures are deeply ingrained



behaviours, not necessarily planned or calculated. Because they are unconscious, hand gestures reflect genuine emotion and clarity of thought. Teachers point to the board when explaining the content and to Students when inviting participation. Using index finger pointing is perceived as threatening or aggressive, while open palm pointing is perceived as friendly and welcoming. Students prefer open-palm gestures and respond positively, often nodding continuously. An index finger is often associated with scolding or commanding. An open palm conveys openness, honesty, and inclusion, creating a more supportive atmosphere. The observed drama teacher uses hands and fingers to describe characters, enhance storytelling, and illustrate movement. This supports the dramatic visualisation of the story or role. As for comprehension teacher uses hands to explain vocabulary, often overusing gestures. Also, a Thumbs-up gesture is a form of positive reinforcement, but overuse might sometimes distract students; however, it shows enthusiasm and encouragement. While the grammar teacher uses his hands to explain tenses, likely using spatial metaphors such as left for the past, centre for the present, and right for the future. So, the hand points both to students and the whiteboard, maintaining attention and clarity. Thus, hand gestures by teachers serve multiple functions, namely cognitive, since they help teachers organise ideas clearly. Pedagogical, as it helps students visualise concepts. Effective as it creates a positive emotional connection with students. Also, classroom management since using pointing and gestures to control attention and regulate interaction. It was also noticed that the overuse of hand gestures, especially by the comprehension teacher, might overstimulate students or distract them from verbal explanations if not balanced carefully. Furthermore, pointing with an index finger could increase anxiety among students and lead to decreased participation.

As for proxemics, teachers stand in proximity to students to build an inviting teaching setting. The teacher's proximity keeps students active in the classroom and plays a vital role in classroom management and the teaching-learning process. Female students appear to be more sensitive to teacher proximity than male students. This aligns with some research findings. Studies suggest that females, on average, might be more attuned to nonverbal cues like spatial dynamics and teacher presence. Consequently, female students may respond more noticeably positively or negatively to changes in teacher proximity. This makes gender a significant variable when considering classroom spatial management; teachers might need to subtly adjust their movements and positions depending on their audience to maximise comfort and engagement. The grammar teacher is rarely moving, and staying near the whiteboard



suggests a more traditional, lecture-based teaching style, where the teacher is seen as the primary source of knowledge. This might maintain authority but could potentially limit interactive engagement unless carefully balanced with other techniques. While comprehending, the teacher is actively moving around the classroom, this indicates a more student-centred, interactive approach. By walking among the rows and varying her position (sometimes even standing at the back), she maintains a physical and psychological presence that keeps students alert and connected. Her strategy likely reduces distractions, promotes active participation, and subtly enforces discipline without overt confrontation. Proximity helps classroom management as teacher movement is not random but purposeful. It is observed that it reduces noise levels as students tend to quiet down when the teacher approaches. It encourages engagement because students are more likely to ask questions and participate when the teacher is nearby. Also, it is proven that moving around allows teachers to subtly monitor behaviour and address disruptions before they escalate.

In the observed classrooms, gesture use emerged as a natural and highly effective instructional tool across different subjects. Teachers, often unconsciously, incorporated body language and movements to reinforce verbal explanations, thus creating a multi-sensory learning environment that enhanced student comprehension and engagement. In the grammar class, the teacher used deictic gestures (pointing movements) to provide immediate visual references for abstract pronouns. For instance, pointing to himself when saying “I” and to a female student when saying “she” helped students concretise the abstract relationship between pronouns and their referents. This strategy made the grammatical concepts more relatable and less abstract, aiding in quicker and deeper understanding, especially for visual and kinaesthetic learners. In the comprehension class, the teacher employed iconic gestures, where body movements resembled the actions described by the vocabulary words. Acting out verbs like “fly” by flapping hands like wings or “run” by mimicking running actions allowed students to map words onto real-world experiences. This not only aided immediate understanding but also helped in long-term memory retention by linking linguistic elements to physical enactments, a technique often emphasised in embodied cognition theories. Drama and novel teachers extended the use of gestures into full pantomime, embodying characters and events through expressive body movements and facial expressions. This immersive approach bridged the gap between textual descriptions and visual imagination. By physically acting out parts of the story, teachers facilitated students’ emotional engagement and



empathy with characters, enhancing both comprehension and critical appreciation of the texts. This method also activated students' imagination, making the learning experience dynamic rather than passive. Across all subjects, students appeared more attentive, active and engaged when gesture-supported instruction was used. The combination of verbal and non-verbal communication likely reduced cognitive load, making complex ideas easier to grasp. Moreover, the physicality of the teaching method fostered a lively classroom atmosphere, encouraging interaction, participation, and even mimicry, which are important for language acquisition and cognitive development.

13. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the students' questionnaire responses and the classroom observations, the researcher identified strong evidence emphasising the critical role of body language in the EFL learning environment. The findings reveal that when teachers skilfully incorporate body language such as gestures, facial expressions, posture, and eye contact into their instruction, it significantly enriches the students' comprehension and engagement. Body language serves not merely as an accessory to verbal instruction but as a powerful communicative tool that bridges linguistic gaps, especially for learners still developing their English proficiency. Moreover, the results suggest that effective use of body language by teachers does more than clarify meaning; it also fosters a supportive and dynamic classroom atmosphere. Positive non-verbal behaviours, such as smiling, open gestures, and attentive posture, help lower students' affective filters, reducing anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and feelings of isolation. This emotional safety encourages greater participation and risk-taking and ultimately accelerates language acquisition. In certain instances, body language alone can replace or reinforce verbal explanations, making complex concepts more accessible without overwhelming learners with unfamiliar vocabulary. Teachers who are conscious of their non-verbal communication are better equipped to sustain students' attention, manage classroom behaviour subtly, and convey enthusiasm for the material, which in turn motivates students and nurtures a more enjoyable and productive learning experience. Furthermore, students themselves use non-verbal cues, like nodding and eye contact, to show understanding and engagement. Overall, the evidence highlights that body language is not merely a supplement to teaching but an essential, strategic component of effective EFL instruction, fundamentally shaping both the cognitive and emotional aspects of student learning.



14. Pedagogical Significations for Teachers

- 1) Teachers should take into consideration their body language cues so that the class becomes full of positivity and elicits students' enthusiasm and satisfaction.
- 2) There must be a policy to train teachers on how to utilise their body language cues in ELT classrooms for better learning efficiency.
- 3) Teachers can get students' attention and interest in the class by using their body language, such as facial expressions, eye contact, and body movements.
- 4) Teachers are recommended to distribute their sight around the class without neglecting any part and never to stare at a particular student.
- 5) By using body language cues, teachers can reduce student anxiety and motivate them. By doing this teacher will finish the material with less effort.
- 6) Teachers are recommended to encourage students not only by speech but also by nodding their heads, clapping, eye contact, and raising eyebrows.
- 7) Try to use an open palm while pointing to students who want to participate.
- 8) It is better for teachers not to sit a lot or at all during the lesson so that he/she does not lose control over the classroom and students stay engaged with him/her.
- 9) Show optimistic facial expressions and smiling.
- 10) Teachers are recommended to use movements of the body and gestures to simplify the meaning of words, concepts, and to develop students' comprehension skills.
- 11) Curriculum and textbook developers should formulate an applicable syllabus for both verbal and nonverbal. In addition, to acquaint teachers with how to apply these methods adequately.

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