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Nonverbal Communication for Absolute Communicative Competence:

Language Teachers As Agents Of Social Change

Abstract

The younger generation believes that if students are given the necessary tools to succeed, they will succeed beyond their wildest dreams. These students expect the learning strategies should be practically oriented with worldly practices to learn the new concepts and their way of acquiring the knowledge is totally changed from the conventional method. Changing the whole system of education is a figment of the imagination. The real changes that can be possible through the changes in the way of teaching with unique art of captivate the students. The challenge in front of language teachers is more than the subject teachers as they are not teaching the facts but the language through the same language. Especially, the second language teachers must use a unique way of teaching style to impart the language with communicative competence. At this juncture, the ultimate way of teaching English through nonverbal will bring enough changes in social life.

Introduction

The language teachers are the authentic persons who can bring the necessary changes among students to think vibrantly on a view to attaining the expected success. Inculcation of this innovative approach lively among students is not a graceful or effortless task. Henceforth the teachers should treat themselves as agents and bring enough changes in teaching style to lead the way to positive social changes by teaching with positive nonverbal communication. This nonverbal communication is broadly classified into two categories as

- 1) Vocal phenomena (para-linguistic)
- 2) Non-Vocal phenomena (body language).

The vocal phenomena is future classified into individual vocal characteristic, speech rate, form of articulation and added sounds like laugh or cough or grunt. The non-vocal phenomena is classified as kinesics, physical reactions like blushing or going pale, outward appearance as characteristics clothes. The kinesics again divided into macro kinesics and

micro kinesics. The former one comprises of movements of the body with posture, head movements, touching behaviour, distance and gesture. The later one has facial expression and direction of gaze. These are all the important nonverbal communication for teachers of English to make use of it for effective teaching.

The role of the teacher at classroom

In Indian education system still, the teachers are in the active role and the students are passive listeners. Exceptions are there as the students work in communication laboratory they do active work for example in presentation, group discussion and in mock interview activities. As far as concern about the classroom teaching, teachers are yet to struggle to engross the attention of the students towards the language acquisition process. The language teachers have to concentrate not only on teaching but to attract the attention of the students by implementing certain strategies. First, let's see about the expected and traditional role of the language teacher in classroom teaching:

1. Teachers have to impart the language knowledge and skills with communicative competence.
2. They should be an expert linguist with the keen understanding of students' learning capacity.
3. They may be a capable teacher to adopt the different strategies according to the needs of the students of a particular portion of the language.
4. They may be expert advisors and mentors to the students whenever they feel frustrated towards leaning and bring them out demotivated.
5. They have to design projects that offer a multi-facet learning process.
6. They are responsible for setting up any assessment and students' grade of performance.
7. They are expected to upgrade their professional career too.

Language Teacher

The language teachers are performing their duties by fulfilling the needs of the students and the employer. The teachers will feel comfortable only when they use the appropriate nonverbal communication in the classroom and by that they can save their energy. Because they have to act as best learner, performer, manager, facilitator, mentor, evaluator and guide. All these roles can be done effectively by the teacher with the help of nonverbal communication. The following paragraphs describe the use of nonverbal communication in different roles a teacher.

Teacher as a learner

Teaching and learning is a significant role of a teacher. Learning means the understanding the students' state of mind, the capacity of doing things, grasping power and performing style. All these cognitive responses of the students can be better understood by

their nonverbal expressions and communication. The students who are interested in listening always have good eye contact. The graphing power of the student can be easily noticed by their positive sign of head nodding. The confident students are always performing the task or answering the question with positive posture with the loud voice and good eye contact. Meantime, it is also the responsibility of the teacher to watch the instinctive negative nonverbal communication of the students that is when there is lack of motivation or resistance to learning and little attention given to the students by nonverbal can make them to bring back to the learning process.

Teacher as a performer

Nonverbal communication speaks louder than words and especially in the language classroom, nonverbal rewards are more effective in emphasizing good behaviour than verbal instruction for example a simple thumbs up with motivating facial expression for small achievement can be more effective than the effusive praising word “Good job!”. Teachers have to use facial expressions which are needed to be more intense than usual and explain the new words in a dramatic way, for example, gesturing for the word “ants milling” using of brisk but teeny tiny finger strides in circle movement will help the students visually understand the word. Use of certain action for a particular word (or whatever gesture that pair it with) every time for that word will help students remember the translation mode. When they write test, they’ll recollect the action that teacher repeated will come to the mind’s eye and remember that word.

Teacher as a manager

The classroom teaching always interrelated with the discipline of the students. Neill (1991) also claims that nonverbal ability of the teachers helps them to augment the monitoring of students’ understanding by controlling classroom interaction and discipline. The teacher’s appropriate and timely nonverbal behaviours always direct the students to do their work properly and finish the task within the stipulated time to excel in their endeavour. The “positive force field” is a technique which has a collection of positive body language cues. This list of nonverbal cues will help the teacher to lower the students’ anxiety and enhance motivation. It makes students feel secure and engaged in the lessons. The body language cues which include smiling, nodding, leaning in and employing open palms. It has long been known that nonverbal cues like these have powerful effects on learning. Making a sound to create discipline is also possible as tap the board; clap the hands or finger popping/ snapping fingers and making a pause in between the sentence in classroom catch the attention immediately.

Teacher as a facilitator

Ritts and Stein in 2001 state that “it is not what you say in the classroom that is important, but it’s how you say it that can make the difference to students”. The language teachers whose shoulders are slumped, arms are hanging limply, the head is not upright and eyes carry a glum expression never make a good impression then engross the attention of the students will be a hardship attempt. Moskowitz in 1976 asserts that outstanding teachers and instructors exhibit more nonverbal behaviours than ordinary teachers do but they use the only positive and appropriate one. Teachers can facilitate the activities of the students by using eye contact, facial expressions, and head nodding and gestures i.e. to show directions, far or near seating, sit and stand postures, motivating the event and accepting or denying the request. The use of nonverbal communication is numerous in the classroom and proper use of it will make the teacher as effective facilitator.

Teacher as a mentor

Barnett in 1983 depicted that “teacher’s nonverbal signals augmented student talk and put into practice in the target language, drew students’ attention to the teaching purpose, eliminating the demand for excessive verbal explanation and directed student involvement”. Whenever students feel demotivated on the difficulties of understanding the learning process, the teachers can act as mentor and pat on their back to encourage them or featuring them that they can do or nodding head to continue etc. These are the few examples of positive nonverbal cues to motivate the students and by that teacher can prove their mentor ability in an effective manner. The teacher can provide enough resources to refer for their studies and can provide the right strategies i.e., skimming and scanning to extract the information with stipulated time. Teacher can give practice for eye gazing exercise too.

Teacher as an evaluator

The teachers’ success is measured by the crucial process of evaluation. When the teacher works as an evaluator, they have to concentrate on the performance of the students as a whole. This final role of a teacher is an essential step to evaluate the teacher efficiency i.e. it allows the teachers to discover the worth of their work and the students’ capability. The teacher can use more nonverbal communication to improve the performance of the students and at the same time, they can appreciate them by nonverbal for the excellent grade.

Teacher as a guide

The language teachers should keep in mind that the students have a broad range of learning possibilities by their committed mistakes. Hence, teachers can guide the students to reach the ultimate level by correcting their mistakes with positive nonverbal communication. It is also the prime duty of the teachers that students have to be familiar with the deliverance of speech with nonverbal cues. The students can excel than the native

speaker by their welcoming and motivating nonverbal communication and excellent usage of paralinguistic components. The student should be focused on the areas of communicative competence and make them to hold fast on to positive expectations.

Conclusion

Albert Mehrabian developed a communication model, in which he demonstrated that only seven percentage of what people communicate consists of the literal content of the message. The use of one's voice, like tone, intonation and volume, take up thirty eight percentage and the maximum amount as much of fifty five percentage communication consists of silent or nonverbal communication. The students can acquire only seven percentage of the meaning of the words and rest of the ninety three of the real meaning can be done through the guidance of the teacher. In other words, without nonverbal communication, the mere words never help to express the original thinking of a person. The language teacher can bring a drastic change in teaching style to impart the real learning of the language through nonverbal communication. Learning the language with nonverbal communication improve the communicative competence and provide the confidence to the students to face the world bravely.