THE PERSPECTIVES ON COMPONENTS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN NATIVE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

The article reports on a small-scale study that examined the impact of examining the indispensable role of nonverbal communication in the overall communicative process of the English language learning (L2), at the Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, for second year student on specialty "Foreign Languages: two foreign languages" over 7 weeks. Components of nonverbal communication play a key role, especially at the subconscious level, in speech discourse and an awareness of it and how it can vary from culture to culture. Moreover, it can be particularly important in helping students to develop their ability to understand in a real environment.

In the first theoretical part of our research we defined the mostly widely spread components of nonverbal communication such as eye contact, facial expression, proximity and gesture. Additionally the article begins with comparing and identifying differences in the foreign and target languages. In fact, Kazakhstan is multilingual and multicultural country, that's why we investigate different components of nonverbal communication in native and foreign languages.

Besides the features of nonverbal communication take a key role in L2 communicative competence, so more our attention has been given to practical teaching techniques that will help English language teachers incorporate this essential element into their multicultural classrooms. It considers the interplay of gesture, facial expression and gaze behaviour among interlocutors and gives special consideration to the second language learner and the obstacles that can be encountered in communicating cross culturally.

Thus, the second practical part of the study investigates how L2 learners use eye contact, facial expression, proximity and gesture to communicate in conversational settings, and whether their gesturing in these settings facilitates L2 acquisition beyond the immediate context. Subsequently, we conducted 7 lessons implementing specific activities through video, project work, digital storytelling, and interviews. Hence in producing our own classroom activities we stimulate creativity so that to raise students' awareness of implementing different gestures, signs, facial expressions and customs around them that significantly contributes to the successful dialogue of cultures.

Research suggests that listening activities are part of the comprehension experience and components of nonverbal communication form a large part of how we communicate our message, even if at times L2 students are unaware of it. Furthermore, comprehension of eye contact, facial expression, proximity and gesture may not help them when it comes to expressing themselves, but surprisingly just how much students understand without ever hearing a word.

The results reveal that components of nonverbal communication effectively facilitate all of the cognitive processes of L2 students and vividly promote foreign language learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that eye contact, facial expression, proximity and gesture can serve as productive intellectual aids for L2 learning in conversational and task-based settings.

Keywords: Foreign language learning and teaching, nonverbal communication, eye contact, facial expression, proximity, gesture, listening comprehension

1. INTRODUCTION

The actuality of this small-scale study is aimed at the knowledge on the nonverbal interaction and the use of its components in the Western and Asian cultural communication. In fact, one gesture may transmit opposite messages in two different cultures, or two opposite signals may mean the same thing in the two cultures.

The purpose of this work is to reveal the value of eye contact, facial expression, proximity, gesture in English and Kazakh communication and to identify their similarities and differences during performing specific activities of listening comprehension in the L2 classroom for second year student on specialty "Foreign Languages: two foreign languages" at the Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, during 7 weeks.

The finding of this research which proposes practical listening activities with interplay of components of nonverbal communication is useful in learning and teaching English both for students and teachers into their multicultural classrooms.

Nowadays we are teaching three languages from the first year at school. The Kazakhstani government has adopted the State Program of Development and Functioning in Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 by the Decree of the President of Kazakhstan No.110 dated June 29, 2011 and after released the cultural project «Trinity of languages». The official language is the Kazakh language. The Russian language is the language of our big neighbor and one of the six UN languages; we should know the Russian language. We need the English language to enter the global arena. Only Kazakhstan out of the entire post-Soviet space was able to maintain a culture of multiple languages.

In fact, learning the new language is not only good for carrier but also provides an opportunity to communicate with local people of different countries. Conversations complete the circle of communication: you listen, speak, give back feedback, and listen again. Components of nonverbal communication help you convey your meaning and ask for clarification, being able to stop the conversation and start again to get clarification or feedback is the reason that conversation is the most useful technique for acquiring a new language. An interesting aspect of getting to know somebody from another country, it's to learn about their culture.

2. THE COMPONENTS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

People use nonverbal communication in order to complete, accurate, and easier to express your thoughts, feelings, emotions.

Firstly, after analyzing many theoretical materials in a variety of methodological works, Abercombie (1968:55), Birdwhistell (1955), Wright (1976, 1989), Andersen (1999:2), Harmer Jeremy (2001), Ter-Minassova S.G. (2008:111), Nik Peachey (2015), and etc., we can conclude that, mostly, types of nonverbal communication consider as body language, facial expressions, body movements, posture, mimics, gestures, eye contact, touch, voice, and proximity.

Taken together, these results indicate a systematic overview of the main forms of nonverbal communication according to Carola Surkamp (2014: 30) which are graphically represented in the following Figure 1.
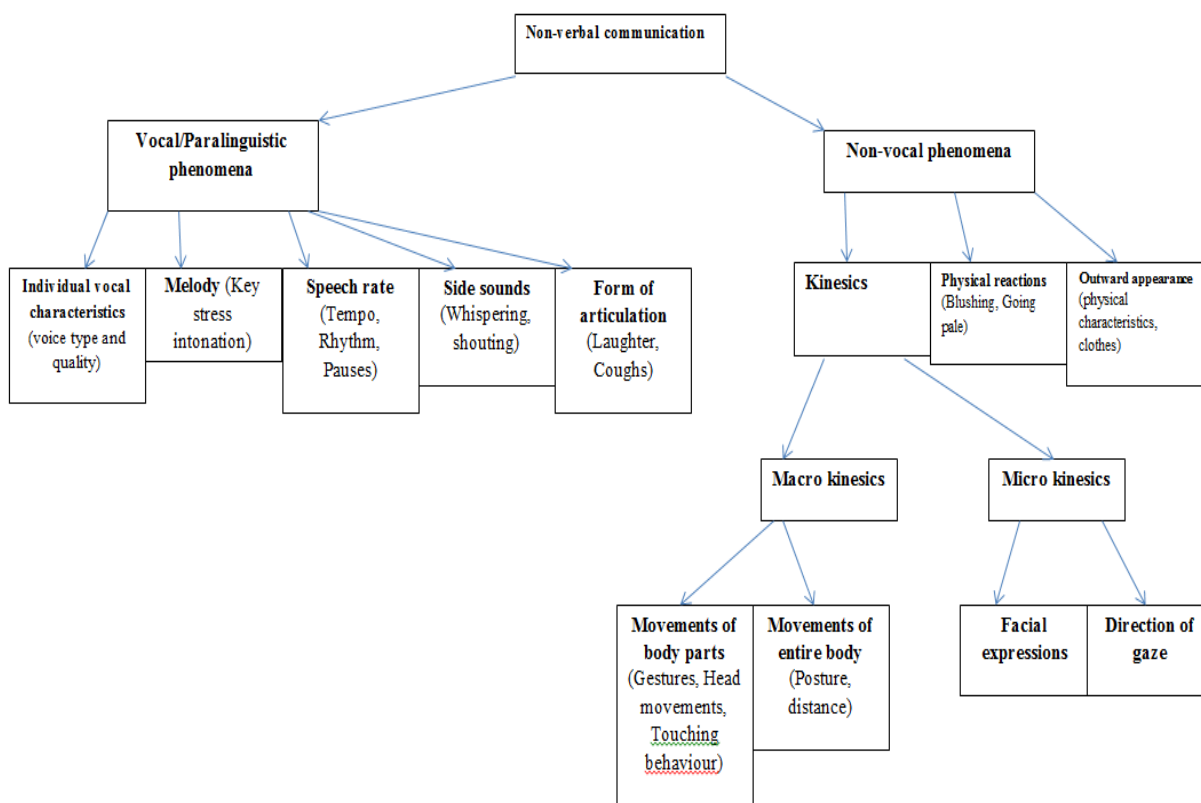
Figure 1: overview of the main forms of nonverbal communication

For this reason we investigate in our research the definite components of nonverbal communication in native and foreign languages. As it is known, body language is made up of a whole range of features many of which we combine together without ever thinking about what it is we are doing or what we are expressing. As Nick Peachey notes (2015), eye contact is a way of communicating attraction. He writes that facial expression is one of the most obvious and flexible forms of communication and can easily convey mood, attitude, understanding, confusion and a whole range of other things. Proximity is a far less obvious form of body language but can be equally as meaningful. It is also something that can easily be misinterpreted as it can vary so much from culture to culture. Posture can communicate a number of things. It can convey a whole range of attitudes, from interest or the lack of it, to degrees of respect or subordination. Speakers often use posture to punctuate what they are saying, shifting forward in their seat or leaning in towards their interlocutor to punctuate an important point, or slumping back to indicate that they have finished making a point. Besides he points out as British native speaker that gesture can be used to replace verbal communication, different finger, thumb or hand gestures can convey a range of meanings in different cultures, from insults to approval or even attraction. Many good speakers or storytellers use hand gestures to illustrate their stories. It can also form part of punctuation with head nods and hand movements, which relate to the stress, rhythm and tempo of their sentences. Speakers who use their hands a lot often let them drop at the end of a sentence. Heads often nod down when words in sentences are stressed.

Among components of nonverbal communication in Kazakhstan the most significance has gestures that make explicit national characteristics and culture. In Kazakh culture, there are so-called emotional gestures, which are used in different situations. On the contrary, eye contact can have a very confusing influence when you are interacting with them. In Asian cultures it can play a key role in failing rapport as associated with being impudent, insolent, and many Kazakh people avoid gazing. Especially for women staring consider as bad-behaved manner. Eye contact also plays an important role in changing topic during conversation.

Some gestures of welcome came to us from the past. Welcome gestures can be divided into several groups: a handshake, a hug, a nod, a kiss.

First to greet handshake Kazakhs use two hands like many other cultures (in the Kazakh language, *кол алысу, амандасу*).

The next type of greeting is a hugging (in Kazakh*, тос кагысу*). Usually people who know each other well hug each other when they meet pressing the breast or the right shoulder together. This gesture shows that people are very glad to see each other.

Often people use not only the movement of the hands but also we can see the use of head's gesture (in Kazakh, *басию, сәлемберу*). This bow determines respect and reverence for all people in the meeting, mostly, in weeding party.

Nowadays the form of greeting as kissing hand, kissing the forehead *(in Kazakh, қолсүю, маңдайдансүю)* is still saved.

In comparison with British people who require a lot of 'private space' and will often stand much further away from people than other nationalities whilst talking to them. They seldom touch each other whilst speaking. Breaking these invisible boundaries can either make them very uncomfortable or signal attraction. On the contrary, in Kazakhstan proximity zone is slight visible, even sometimes, absent. While speaking the Asian people come closer to each other so that to demonstrate their trust.

So, as a result of this theoretical background we formulate the following conclusions:

a) the comparative analysis has revealed that the use of eye contact, facial expression, proximity and gesture in native and foreign languages is widely introduced in any conversation.

b) this comparison revealed typologically both as equal meaning of components of nonverbal communication and components which are specific to a particular culture.

c) many of these traits of communication can have different meanings or to be interpreted completely different ways in native and foreign languages.

Besides these features of nonverbal communication take a key role in L2 communicative competence, so more our attention has been given to practical teaching techniques that will help English language teachers incorporate this essential element into their multicultural classrooms. It considers the interplay of gesture, facial expression and gaze behaviour among interlocutors and gives special consideration to the second language learner and the obstacles that can be encountered in communicating cross culturally.

3. METHODS

3.1. Participants

This small-scale study involved 60 students majoring English teacher training at the Astana, L.N.Gumilyov ENU, one group of 30 students with the Russian language study and 30 students with the Kazakh language study. All recruited participants speak English at the intermediate level as they entered the University with highest point of English scored by the National Testing.

3.2. Procedure

They were taught for 7 weeks and during this time we conducted 14 lessons. To begin with, we informed them with the concept of nonverbal communication comparing and identifying differences in the foreign and target languages, in particular, the features as body language, gestures, facial expression, proximity, posture.

In the first two lessons students were asked to rate these definite features that they knew and gestured in a way that they represent in foreign and native country. They interpreted them perfectly and depicted many similarities in both cultures and some differences. Then we implemented specific listening activities at the next lessons through video, project work, digital storytelling, and interviews.

3.2.1. The project work

The project work was organized in the following way: students were encouraged to predict the story while watching particularly video without the sound. The project work lasted 3 lessons. Gradually we used films "Untouchable", "Sabinka - kelinka" and "Interstellar" in class and students imitated dialogue or action through at least once without the sound on first. Additionally we got students to speculate about the gestures, facial expressions, postures, and relationships of the people in the films:

Who is emotionally closest or involved with which other characters?

What's the relationship between characters?

Who is feeling angry/ sad/ happy/ alone? Describe why?

What is each person feeling or thinking?

After discussing it together with the whole group we accessed to students the script for the clip.

Next we got our students to try to act out the scene using the script before they heard it so that to determine the knowledge of culture specific nonverbal expressions. In general, we let them watch first and think about what the character they had to play was likely to be thinking or feeling that give students ability to recognize nonverbal behaviour in communicative situation in different cultures.

Moreover, this project work got the students attempting to interpret their body language and expressed it through the way they read the script.

3.2.2 The interview

The interview was introduced in a form of comparison two dialogues in the parallel fragmentariesfrom the French and Japan film 'Wassabi' and the Kazakh film "He and she" with the same situation about a group of friends in a café. The interview lasted 3 lessons and found it interesting to do cultural comparisons using a scene from the target culture with a similar scene on a video from our own culture. The students watched these films from the target culture and thought about how the scene would be different if it were in their country. Besides, we created some hints:

Do they touch when they meet?

How close do they sit when they talk?

Do they make eye contact?

Do they come closer to each other?

Do they touch whilst talking?

Do they openly express any emotions?

It is obvious that such activities are aimed at students' awareness of the way body language is shaped by cultures and of differences between cultures.

3.2.3. The digital storytelling

The digital storytelling was the most long-lasting and time-consuming both for the students and us because we need to choose video for any global issues with meeting people from the target culture and mother culture. Over the course of the digital storytelling of 6 weeks, generally, we have covered the following topics:

Week 1:

Choosing a topic and purpose. To begin at the first lesson we created a visual   problem of the story or this global issue. Things like politicians speaking, televised debates, celebrities' shows where there are a number of people round a table discussing something can be really useful. Here we used Youtube resources.

In the first we got students to view silently before they listened to a scene to look for 'subtext'. We aimed our students to be attentive to body language gestures, zone and speaking manners so that to interpret the thoughts of people from native and foreign cultures. Then we wrote a narrative paragraph and chose the case that things were being implied which weren't stated in words.

What's more we prepared two 'false' scripts for a gesture, posture, facial expression, etc. and there were slight variations on the authentic one. We gave the three scripts to the students and got them to watch the clip silently and deduce which of the scripts was the correct one. Sometimes we paused and got students to predict what feature of body language would be using by this or that speaker next, or who was making it.

Week 2:

introduced to the basics of digital storytelling. Students identified the fundamental elements of a good digital story and reviewed examples, by the end of week 1, they chose a topic and define the purpose of the story they want to create for classroom. Getting students to focus on these factors can help to raise their awareness of the non-verbal communication which was happening.

Writing an effective script and creating a storyboard. We focused on scriptwriting as learning the steps in writing a script for a digital story. Students explored the basic elements of a script, such as introduction, character development, tension and resolution that are necessary in developing a useful script. By the end of this week, they began to understand the important steps and elements of scriptwriting. A point to note that they recognized the importance of selecting appropriate cultural images and the value of creating a storyboard. During Week 2, they explored several useful ways to choose images for digital story, including taking their own photos from real life with a digital camera, using software applications to create charts, graphs and other images, and finding and downloading images from the web based on size, quality, type and usage rights. A step-by-step approach was used to illustrate how these images support script and cultural differences between English and Kazakh communication and to identify their similarities and differences as a part of creating a digital story. By the end of this week students created their own story's script in a visually interesting and useful storyboard. One of the groups was the most advanced so we asked them to collect visual, audio and other sensory   materials to create a story in using Animoto and iMovie.

Week 3:

Recording audio narration. In week 3, we recorded audio narration using digital devices so that students' voice could be added to the digital story they created. They gained hands-on experience using some of the most common features of audio recording software to create high quality audio narration. In addition, students explored ways to improve audio recording with basic editing tools. Also   they learnt how to find and download appropriate music for digital story that is in the public domain or is free of copyright restrictions.

Week 4:

Using technology to build a digital story. In week 4, we learnt to use WeVideo, a free online video editing application to assemble all of the elements (text, images, narration, and music) to create the full version of students' digital story. In addition, they learnt to use basic editing techniques to improve their digital story so that all of the components of story fit together and look and sound good.

Week 5:

Revising, publishing and sharing the final digital story for use in the classroom In week 5,students revised the final version of their own digital story, published it online and discussed how it might be used in the classroom to support teaching and learning. Also they have an opportunity to reflect on the digital storytelling process and discussed the challenges they faced, how they dealt with these challenges, the most significant things they learned during the course and how they thought it might use digital storytelling in the classroom. Noteworthy, students revealed the value of eye contact, facial expression, proximity, gesture in their own endeavor and foreign one.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The effect of video context on listening and speaking comprehension ability of university students was determined participants with the questionnaire. It examined the impact of production of nonverbal components on communication in native and foreign languages and acquisition of a given video second language. The results showed that students produced gestures, facial expressions, and eye contacts more consciousness while communicating and developed a conceptual framework. Many students, especially when listening to a second language, focus so heavily on hearing and understanding 'the words' people are saying that they suffer from a form of cognitive overload. There is just too much incoming information for them to process and they miss many of these subtler messages. When we deal with listening in class, this is most commonly done with the use of recorded text on audio tape or CD, so these more visual factors in the communication are neglected in our students' second language development. Many of these traits of communication can have different meanings or be interpreted in completely different ways in different cultures.

More interestingly, however, the results of the current study provide that components of nonverbal communication effectively supplement information conveyed via speech, but cannot replace it. Last but not the least, the teaching language and culture is closely intertwined and shifts to teaching language in cultural interaction.

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