

Role of Non-Verbal Communication as a Supplementary Tool to Verbal Communication in ESL Classrooms: A Case Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of non-verbal communication skills in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. These skills are used in teaching as well as learning. Non-verbal signs are of great significance for ESL learners and ESL teachers as they help cover the communication gap in form of gestures, eye-gaze, facial expressions, and body language. According to cognitive scientists, non-verbal signs assist teachers maintain attention level of the students that is important for successful teaching and learning. To achieve this goal, a field study was conducted in Lahore Liverpool Lingua. Two main instruments were used to collect data, namely questionnaire and observations. 100 students both male and female were chosen as samples who were observed to understand the importance of non-verbal communication skills in ESL classrooms. Besides observation of the students, 5 teachers at the same college were chosen to document their observations. These documents were used for content analysis. Apart from the documents, teachers' opinions were also gathered through close-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire data were analyzed quantitatively. Thus, the collected data were analyzed and interpreted according to the principles of both qualitative and quantitative research. The study reveals the significance of non-verbal communication skills for ESL teachers and ESL students.

Keywords: ESL learners, ESL teachers, non-verbal communication, facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures, cognitive sciences

Introduction

Communication is a tool to receive and send messages that enables human beings to share and transmit their knowledge. Communication is mainly of two types: verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication means to speak with the use of words while non-verbal communication is referred to the use of paralinguistic expressions and bodily movements such as body posture, gestures, eye contact, body contact, and facial expressions in daily interactions. If we observe closely, we will notice that a substantial portion of our communication is nonverbal. Every day we respond to thousands of non-verbal cues and behaviors including postures, facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures, and tone of voice. From our handshakes to our hair styles, non-verbal details reveal who we are and impact how we relate to other people. Non-verbal communication and behavior started to be observed and researched with publication of Charles Darwin's (1872) "The expression of the emotions in Man and Animals."

It is since that time, abundance of research has been conducted on the types, effects and expressions of unspoken communication and behavior. While the signals are so subtle that we are not consciously aware of them. Research has identified several different types of communication. More research is needed to know the significance of non-verbal signals. In education, non-verbal communication has long been neglected in the domain of teaching and learning. When the education became learner centered, communication became the most important focus of teaching process. More and more importance started to be given to interaction with the learners in the target language. Teaching to the junior students, when verbal communication is an obstacle in understanding, non-verbal signs prove helping hand.

The importance of non-verbal communication is widely accepted in ESL teaching and learning as well. Non-verbal signs are considered one of the best tools to administer classroom management and teach effectively. They help the teachers and the students to understand each other more conveniently without any communication barriers. According to Zeki (2009), the motivation level of the students can well be maintained using the non-verbal communication. It is the best tool to maintain attention level of the students. This is the reasons many studies have favored the employment of facial gesture, mimics, and eye contacts to teach effectively to the students of all age groups. The present study aims at exploring the significance of using non-verbal signs in forms of hand gestures, body movements, eye contact/gaze, and facial expressions in ESL classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Language is a tool of communication. What we communicate helps people to understand us. But communication has different forms: verbal and non-verbal. The study aims to explore the utility of non-verbal communication in ESL classroom. How the language is mirrored through non-verbal signs. The study intends to identify the significance of non-verbal signs in teaching ESL learners at college level. Moreover, it explores how facial expressions including eye gaze, frown, movement of lips convey meanings where other variables such as gestures, postures and tone of voice are working side by side in teaching and helping the learners to understand what is otherwise difficult to understand. This study has also tried to test if there are relationships between non-verbal signs and motivation, interest, and aptitude of ESL learners.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore the significance of non-verbal communication in ESL classroom,
- Find out teachers' opinions and perspectives about using non-verbal signs during teaching
- To discover how ESL students' motivation, interest, and attention are facilitated through non-verbal signs

Research Questions

Following research addresses the following research questions:

- 1) How does non-verbal communication play a significant role in ESL classroom?
- 2) What are the teachers' opinions and perceptions about using non-verbal signs during teaching?
- 3) To what extent, ESL students' motivation, interest, and attention are facilitated through non-verbal signs?

Significance of the Study

The importance of non-verbal communication cannot be underestimated. This study aims to reveal the relationship between non-verbal communication and ESL teaching. In Lahore, there has been no ample empirical study that investigates the role of non-verbal communication in ESL teaching. Accordingly, research is needed to fill in this gap. This study is significant in numerous ways. At the narrow level this study may contribute to understanding that non-verbal communication is helpful in English language teaching as well as learning. It will be a gateway for ESL teachers and learners to understand meanings conveyed by nonverbal signs. At the broader level this research will be a step forward in illuminating the views of cognitive

scientists The psychiatrist will be able to understand the complex nature of his/her patients. It will be useful for everyone in his workplace and in common life as well

Literature Review

Language is a medium of communication that is employed by all the people equally to express themselves. Language is not confined to verbal speeches only. It goes beyond to words. Different people represent themselves through different language forms. Language shows the thought process of people. There are different forms of language: verbal language and non-verbal language. Verbal language is based on words whereas the non-verbal language consists of body language, signs, and different gestures of hands and eyes. These gestures help the people to communicate with others in a better and more convenient way when they have some language gaps as we come across many cases of Pakistanis when they have to communicate at a foreign platform and they are not fluent in a foreign language, use of non-verbal signs help them to mitigate the gap. one instance is Shah Mehmood Qureshi who is a Pakistani politician and the previous federal minister for foreign affairs. He delivered a speech in United Nations in Urdu language where his listeners were supposed to be unknown to Urdu. He used non-verbal signs to cover the gap and thus he represented Pakistani's viewpoint much more clearly in Urdu language which indicates his Pakistani culture and thinking process.

Non-verbal signs even help those who belong to different cultures and places. For example, two persons have to talk to each other, but their languages are different. One person is Pakistani Muslim and the second one is Chinese Non-Muslim. No matter their material culture like dresses, fashion, customs, behavior, rituals, faith, and language (way of speaking) is totally different and incompatible to each other but they have one thing in common that is the ability to understand and communicate through non-verbal signs like eye-gazes, hands gestures, body language. In the same way non-Muslim and the Muslim at least can understand each other at the basis level. According to Zeki (2009), ESL teachers often have issues of students' lack of attention during class and this problem can easily and effectively be solved using eye gestures and hand movements. Thus, speech is one form of communication, and the other is nonverbal that cannot be underestimated (Ledbury et al. 2004). The real communication starts when two members have eye contact. Their eye contact initiates their communication that successfully proceeds words and non-words. In this way, eye contacts and using gestures facilitate communication (Ergin & Birol 2005).

Parker (2006) states that non-verbal signs set the lesson tone and make it easy to analyze for the teachers if students are understanding the lesson or not and if the lesson is interesting or

not. Students are learning or not. Body language keeps motivation level of the ESL learners high and helps teacher to assess the merit and demerits of the lesson without violating the discipline and creating mess in the classroom.

Eye gazes and hand gestures are silent voice and messages and assist teachers convey powerful messages. Nonverbal signs not only help in discipline maintenance but help in boosting up confidence and motivation of the students. According to cognitive sciences, eye gestures and facial gestures help maintain the attention level of the students that is very much important to teach effectively (Santrock, 2001).

Pollitt (2006) says that the teachers who do not have direct eye contact with the students show lack of confidence. When there no eye contact between the speaker and the listener, it hinders smooth communication. Having eye contact helps teachers have more confidence and credibility. Use of overall non-verbal signs is good for teachers.

Language is utilized to talk about the things that we want to communicate to others. Speaking the language means speaking a mind. We tend to follow a speech pattern of the adopted language to communicate with others. It is through a language that we encounter others. Where a language is spoken. Non-linguistic codes are also employed to convey the messages like gesture and motions. Verbal and non-verbal codes are interwoven with each other and complement each other. Many researchers have substantially proved that nonverbal signs are equally important as verbal communication. Teachers and students are unified through language. The clothing can be changed, the speech styles can vary but the non-verbal codes are same that give them a communicative understanding (Ali, 2011). Communication occurs outside the word zone as well. Reduces teachers time, misunderstanding coves (Elfatihi, 2006). If Pakistani ESL environment is seen, there is multilingual environment and the students even at college level have poor listening and communication skills. Many students don't understand teachers' directions spoken in English. At that time, the facial gestures of the teachers help students understand them and the teachers also know about students' learning (Hanif at al. 2014). These gestures and movements help teachers to save their precious teaching time that is generally wasted in repeating many things repeatedly (Butt & Shafiq, 2013). Silent language determines quality of teaching there is a relationship between nonverbal codes and quality of teaching. (Shokrpour & Bambaeroo, 2017).

The literature review has thrown ample light on the significance of non-verbal signs like body language, hand gestures, eye gazes and facial expressions. These non-verbal codes are equally beneficial for the ESL teachers and learners. The current study is an attempt to contribute to

the existing literature by exploring the use and importance of non-verbal communication in Lahore Liverpool Lingua.

Research Methodology

This study has used both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the importance of non-verbal communication at college level in ESL classroom. The research was conducted by observations and questionnaires. The research instruments were 100 students selected from a college in Lahore and 5 teachers selected in the same college. To answer the proposed research questions, the subjects of this study are 100 college level students and 5 college teachers who have taught the same students' sample. Technique of direct elicitation was used to take students' and teachers' point of views. Students' views were collected through questionnaire. Besides questionnaire, there was observation for a specific duration. The students who were observed belonged to intermediate level. There were observed during their classroom's lessons. The teachers' opinions were gathered in form of documents after the observational period was over.

Two instruments were used: Questionnaires and Observation. Data were collected in the form of questionnaire. The technique of elicitation was used for collecting data because the data were taken directly from the students and the teachers. Along with the questionnaires, there was observation as well that was conducted by the teachers to make the data more authentic. The criteria, used, was Labov's qualitative approach that he proposed in "observer's paradox". Both the tools helped make the study more objective. The survey, through written questionnaires, was conducted via direct elicitation. 100 students at college level were selected for the questionnaires. And the teachers wrote documents after the observation had taken place. These documents were used for analysis. The data produced were analyzed partly statistically and partly descriptively. The data collected through questionnaires were analyzed statistically. It was then calculated and presented in percentage. The data were measured using Skills Measurement Scale developed by the researchers. The qualitative data were collected in form of documents written by teachers after they held the observation. Content analysis was used to analyze the opinions of the teachers. Documents were used as a source of authentic data. Documents provide real and authentic data (Creswell, 2003). Content analysis involved identification, coding, and categorization of emerging themes that were presented descriptively

Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role and application of non-verbal communication skills. This section deals with the presentation of analyzed data collected

through questionnaires and documentation. The data were collected to reveal the importance of the non-verbal communication skills. First the statistical analysis of the questionnaire has been presented that follows the content analysis of documents written after the observation.

Variable Gender of Respondents

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of the Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	60	60
Female	40	40
Total	100	100.0

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of the Gender Respondents (Teacher)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	02	40
Female	03	60
Total	05	100.0

Statistical Analysis of Questionnaires

The quantitative data were analyzed using the statistical figures and were measured using Skills Measurement Scale developed by the researchers. Following is the statistical analysis of the quantitative data:

Table 3

Nonverbal Communication Signs: Facial Expression

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	80	80%
Disagree	20	20%

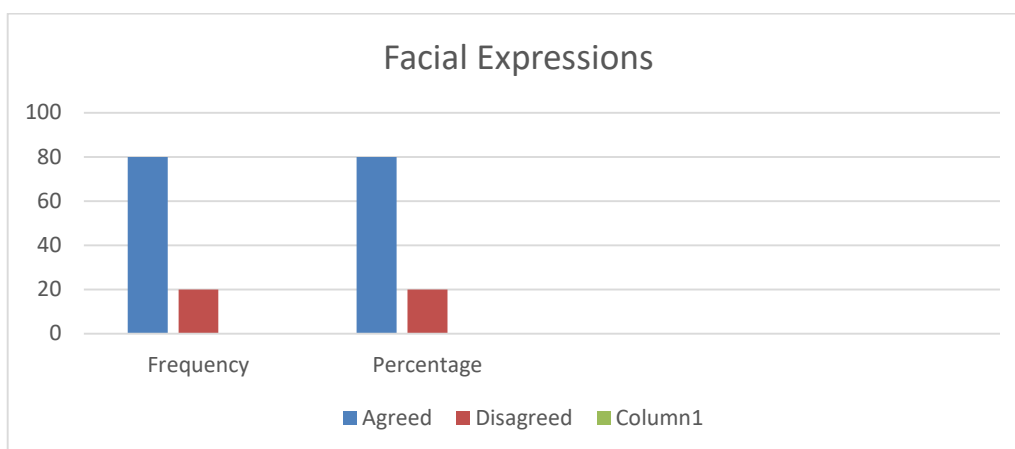


Figure 1: *Nonverbal Communication Signs: Facial Expression*

Table No.3 shows that 20.0% respondents disagreed that facial expressions are important in learning English easily while 80.0% respondents agreed on the importance of non-verbal communication skill of Facial Expression. It clearly illustrates that ESL learners understand the importance of facial expressions in learning and the data throws ample light on it.

Table 4

Nonverbal Communication Signs: Hand Gestures

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	70	70%
Disagree	30	30%

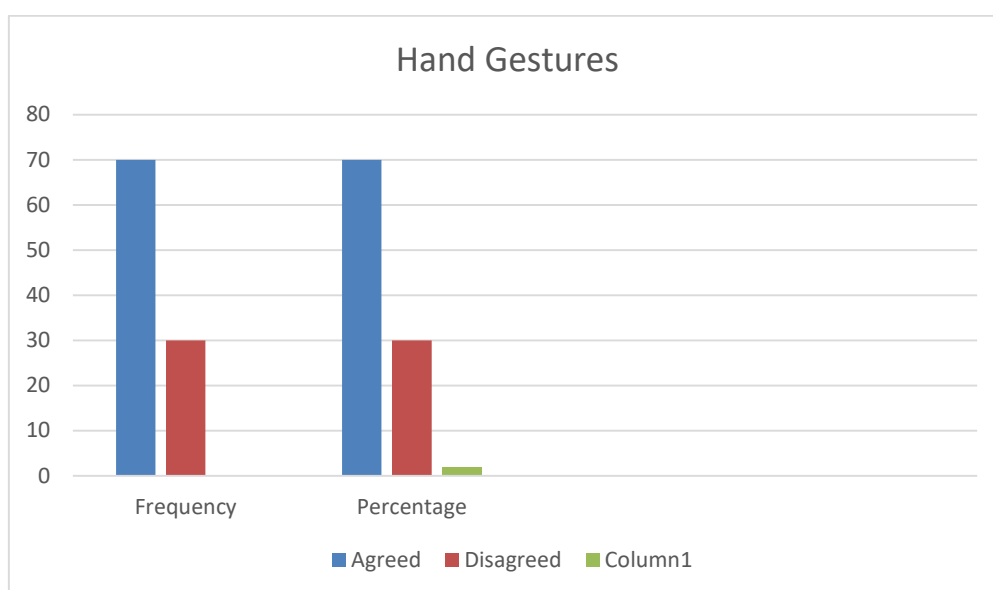


Figure 2: *Nonverbal Communication Signs: Hand Gestures*

Table No.4 also shows that 30.0% respondents disagreed with the importance of hand gestures in learning English whereas 70.0% respondents agreed on the utility of non-verbal communication skill of hand gestures. The movements of hands help the teacher communicate many things that are not sufficiently communicated through words.

Table 5

Nonverbal Communication Signs: Body Language

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	75	75%
Disagree	25	25%

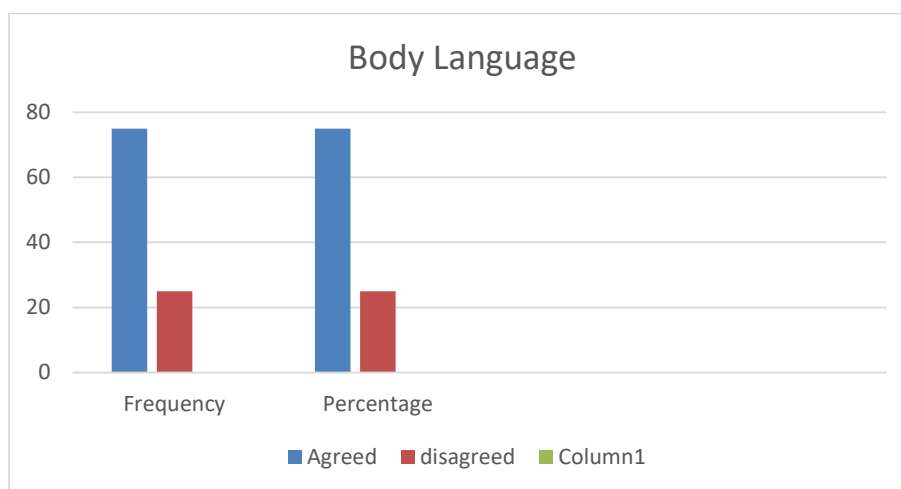


Figure 3: *Nonverbal Communication Signs: Body Language*

Table No. 5 shows that 25.0% respondents disagreed, and 75.0% respondents agreed with the significance of non-verbal communication skill in form of body language. Body language is a great tool of silent language that helps the teachers and students in ESL classrooms

Table 6

Nonverbal Communication Signs: Standing Postures

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	80	80%
Disagree	20	20%

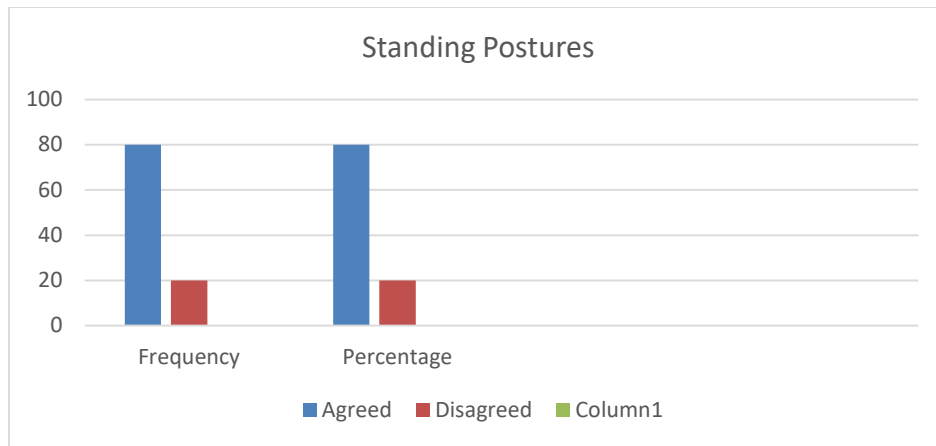


Figure 4: *Nonverbal Communication Signs: Standing Postures*

No.4.6 shows that 20.0% respondents disagreed, and 80.0% respondents agreed on non-verbal communication skill of standing postures. The way teachers stand in the class with different postures help students understand about their moods and intentions. Thus, they understand the silent language of the teachers.

Table 7

Nonverbal Communication Signs: Eye Gaze

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	75	75%
Disagree	25	25%

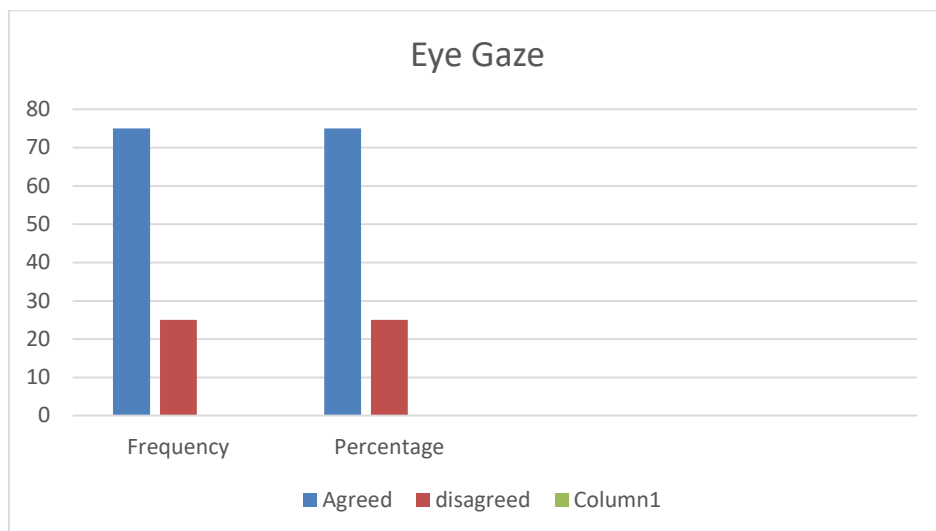


Figure 5: *Nonverbal Communication Signs: Eye Gaze*

Table No.4.7 shows that 25% respondents disagreed, and 75% respondents agreed on non-verbal communication skill of Eye gaze. Majority of the students favored the importance of eye gaze to understand the lesson and be attentive during the class.

The statistical data indicates that majority of the students agreed with the significance of Nonverbal communication skills like facial expressions, Eye gaze, hand gestures, standing postures, and body language in an ESL class. Regarding all non-verbal codes, majority of the agreed the importance of non-verbal skills. The findings of the study are in relation and correspondence with the existing literature that has explored the importance of non-verbal signs in ESL class.

Content Analysis of Documents (Observation)

During observation, conducted by the teachers, the teachers kept on documenting the importance of non-verbal communication skills. They used the following non-verbal codes:

- Aye-gazes
- Hand-gestures
- Standing postures
- Body language
- Facial expressions

They keenly observed the significance of these codes and skills and found their importance in ESL teaching and learning. After the observation had taken place, they completed documentation of all what they observed. The approach of content analysis was used to analyze documents. In the content analysis, the data of the documents were coded, and themes were emerged from them that are as follow:

- Motivation
- Concentration
- Attention
- Understanding
- Sense of confidence
- Emphatic value of lesson

These themes signified the value of non-verbal signs to teach effectively. Different non-verbal skills like facial expressions, Eye gaze, hand gestures, standing postures, and body language play a great role in an ESL class. The observation shows that the nonverbal communication skills are undoubtedly a helping hand in for ESL teachers and learners. These skills mitigate the listening burden in a sense that they equally supplement the verbal communication in ESL class.

Discussion

The study mainly explored the importance of non-verbal communication skills. The significance of nonverbal communication skills of teachers at college level were measured using Skills Measurement Scale developed by the researchers. For this, the data were collected through questionnaires, filled by the students. The chapter includes discussion, interpretations, and recommendations for further studies.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role and application of non-verbal communication skills like facial expressions, hand gestures, eye gazes, standing postures and body language. The study also explored how these non-verbal signs help ESL teachers maintain motivation and attention level of the students. The study discussed the level of their nonverbal communication skills whether it is excellent, satisfactory, or poor. Nonverbal communication Skills Measurement Scale was administered on sampled teachers in the college situation by the researchers in the presence of the teachers. The total scores and frequencies were calculated for determining and comparing the various levels of nonverbal communication skills. The findings drawn based on analysis and interpretation of data are presented in the following sections.

The results indicated that there is a strong relationship between non-verbal communication signs and the level of motivation and attention. They enhance the quality of learning and teaching and cover the gap where the students are unable to understand verbal communication of the teachers. Based on the findings of the study, it was found that the effectiveness of teaching and the development of students' academics depend on more and more use of non-verbal signs. Thus, the study proposes the abundant use of nonverbal signs by the ESL teachers. The frequent use of non-verbal signs makes learning engaging, supportive, interesting, and purposive. They help running the lesson at a considerable pace. All non-verbal signs 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.

Keeping the findings in view, this study proposes pedagogically significant recommendations. The importance of nonverbal communication has been acknowledged so far. Not only at school level but equally at college level. The use of non-verbal signs pave way for the effective teaching. So, the teachers should incorporate them in their lesson planning for better results. In rural areas, the teachers should make the use of nonverbal signs a necessary part of their teaching methodologies where the language skills of the students are not developed enough to understand the verbal communication thoroughly. The teachers should provide ease to the

students also by allowing them to use nonverbal signs where they themselves are not able to communicate with the teachers. The addition of nonverbal communication skills in the methodologies and techniques will be a welcoming element in successful ESL teaching and learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings indicated that teachers made the learning environment active through their non-verbal communication whereby students felt alert in the classrooms and participated in the learning process, which consequently enhanced the level of their retention and understanding. Proper use of facial expressions, body movements, eye contact, pitch of voice, and spatial distance helped the teachers to provide better understanding to the students in the attainment of their learning outcomes. To the contrary the teachers who did not properly use non-verbal communication in the classroom could not motivate the students for effective learning. It is concluded that the use of non-verbal skills is effectively practiced by the teachers and help students understand the teachers in a better way. These signs have a positive impact on students' moods and motivation. Non-verbal communication is considerably reliable in the communication process. These signs make the students more attentive, and they show more and more interest in their studies. They cover the gap of verbal communication. The results of the study indicate that if the attention is paid to the non-verbal communication signs in the ESL class by the teachers, they can bring positive change in the students' life. The students will be able to understand the teachers in a better way and thus it will greatly help them in their academic matters as well. These signs help the students to build a strong relationship with the teachers and vice versa. They contribute a lot in the quality teaching and learning.

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