

EFL Vocational School Teachers' Non-Verbal Behaviors in Teaching English

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ABSTRACT

This paper affirms that communication theory in nonverbal behaviour is critical in conveying messages in social relations. In EFL classroom contexts, non-verbal behaviours remain important as they can assist both teachers and students during the learning process. This paper explores the types of non-verbal behaviors utilized by EFL teachers in teaching English in a vocational school. This study was designed as an observational study. Data were collected from a classroom video segment of 29 minutes which was observed and the categorization of gesture forms was adopted from Wang and Loewen (2015). This study finds that non-verbal behaviors such as metaphoric, emblems, affect displays, deictic, beats, head movement, and iconic were produced by the teacher participant. The findings indicate that the use of non-verbal behaviors supports the natural role of learning in the classroom, which is crucial for helping students understand language in the classroom.

Keywords: Non-verbal behaviors, Observational study, Vocational school

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INTRODUCTION

Nonverbal behaviours such as gestures and facial expressions play a critical role in communication in the language classroom. They can clarify the meaning and facilitate students' understanding of the meaning conveyed in the language class. The aspect of comprehensible input is an aspect that must be applied to language learning in the classroom (Fajriah, 2020). Some EFL teachers experience problems with the language structure system, for example, in Indonesian, the grammatical structure is different from English (Rahayu, 2015). It has been recommended that instead of providing input in the first language, EFL teachers should provide input in the target language of the students (Urrohimah & Maharsi, 2022). In providing input to students, using gestures in L2 and EFL learners has a vast beneficial impact (Ranta & Harmawati, 2017). In sum, the comprehensible input made by teachers has a significant impact, and the use of input will make it very easy for learners to be involved in the learning process. Using gestures in input helps enhance learners' understanding and motivation in learning a foreign language. The results of previous research conducted by Sato (2018) on junior and high school teachers in Japan showed that the use of gestures by teachers increased language production, especially in L2.

The importance of language learning makes teachers need to be good facilitators, and in this case, the teacher can display non-verbal communication (Ranta & Harmawati, 2017). The important point is that people tend to display non-verbal movements to convey feelings rather than verbal movements, therefore it is very important to understand face-to-face non-verbal interactions and the words spoken by someone (Afdaliah, 2022).

Non-verbal behaviors can produce modifications that are easier for students to understand (Lazaraton, 2004). According to Kellog & Lawson (1993, cited in Allen, 2000), a

relatively high percentage of teachers provide input to learners. Based on the explanation, body movement has a positive impact and is crucial for learners to understand the teacher's intentions in learning. In one of the previous studies, Lazaraton (2004), researched the fact that NVBs can have an increased impact on vocabulary explanations carried out by teachers. The research analysis above shows that NVBs positively impact L2 learning input by modifying verbal input and making students better understand L2 learning.

Based on research conducted by Allen (2000) on students who learn foreign languages, they report that using NVBs helps them understand input in a foreign language. Gesture helps students understand the visual input given by the teacher when the teacher stands in front of the class. NVBs are highly recommended and have a good impact on foreign language learners. Gesture helps students understand foreign languages in class (Allen, 2000).

Additionally, research by Urrohimah & Maharsi (2022) has been conducted in the setting of EFL in Indonesian elementary schools. Research on gestures was also conducted in the EFL context featuring gestures in high school conducted by Afdaliah (2022). Previous research conducted by Lubis & Putri (2022) on gestures performed by teachers produces positive and negative side effects on students and teachers. Previous research by Harisnawati et al (2022) found that teachers used seven gestures in classroom learning. Research by Kamlasi & Nepesa (2019) used video as data and the results were analyzed to determine the type of gestures that teachers used in the classroom. This study aimed to analyze answers to the following questions. What gesture do vocational teachers in Yogyakarta use when teaching English in class?

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach in the form of an observational study. This research focuses specifically on analysing teachers' classroom gestures. The data collected through observation start at minute 29.51, which was selected due to a rich interaction of non-verbal behaviors that the teachers performed while teaching students in the classroom. This study uses analysis from McNeill (1992, cited in Wang & Lowen, 2015), which categorizes various types of gestures such as emblems, head movement, kinetographs, affect displays, and hand movement (Wang & Loewen, 2015).

Respondents

The respondent of this study was Ms. C, who has been teaching for 19 years. The researcher selected Ms. C for this study due to her extensive teaching experience, which contributes significantly to the class. This study will show a teacher teaching students in vocational schools where the majority of the students in that school are male. In this context, the input of non-verbal behaviors can differ significantly from those in classrooms with a more balanced gender ratio.

Instruments

This research adopts the theoretical framework of gesture classification as proposed by McNeill (1992, cited in Wang & Loewen, 2015), which examines the relationship between gesture functions and spoken language. The analysis is supported by the categorization from Wang and Loewen (2015), identifying various types of gestures such as emblems, head movements, kinetographs, affect displays, and hand movements. The study focuses on understanding how these gestures function in relation to speech and communication dynamics, emphasizing the role of non-verbal cues in conveying meaning beyond spoken words.

In this study, four main categories of non-verbal behaviors were analyzed. First, hand movements, which include: (a) iconic gestures, where hands/arms represent the physical shape or action of an object; (b) metaphoric gestures, where hands/arms express abstract ideas or thoughts; (c) deictic gestures, where fingers are used to point to both tangible and abstract referents; and (d) beat gestures, where hands are rhythmically pulsed to emphasize speech. Second, head movements, including nodding, shaking, and tilting the head. Third, emblems, which are culturally recognized non-verbal signs understood by members of a specific group.

Fourth, affect displays, where speakers express emotions through facial expressions or body language, such as showing happiness, sadness, fear, distraction, or interest.

Procedures

The data were analysed using the content analysis method. In this research, the gesture that Ms. C makes when teaching will be explained with the categorized various gesture as explained by McNeill (1992, cited in Wang & Lowen, 2015). The researcher will categorize the type of gesture, the minutes when the gesture is shown, the sentence spoken by the teacher, and the student according to the non-verbal behavior, and count the total number of gestures performed. The researcher will count how many gestures Ms. C makes and what gestures Ms. C makes most often. Calculating the number of gestures will use an adaptation of the table used by Sato (2019). The calculation will be carried out as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Gesture calculation

Types of gesture	Minutes	Description	Total of Gesture
Metaphoric			
Emblems			
Affect Displays			
Deictic			
Beat Gesture			
Head Movement			
Iconic			

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research created following Nakatsukasa and Loewen (2014), who classified L1 and L2. The researcher modified the research by classifying L1 and EFL to calculate the ratio of English and Indonesian used. In Table 2, an explanation of each category of words or sentences used based on research data will be displayed.

Table 2. Explanation and example of L1 and EFL utterances by category

Category	Example
Primarily L1	T: <i>Dari dialog ini kamu bisa memahaminya.</i> [from this dialogue you can understand it.]
Primarily EFL	T: Keep it ya...(call students) don't sleep (students name) get up.
Eqally L1 and EFL	T: May I have your register? <i>Gitu kan, yaa di sini</i> [it's like that here, right?] (pointing whiteboard)

The researcher analyzed the video recording of teachers' teaching in class, and based on the video that Ms. C doing when teaching in class, she used seven gestures: Metaphoric (ME), Emblems (EM), Affect displays (AF), Deictic (DE), Beat gesture (BG), Head movement (HM), and Iconic (IC). In Table 3, the total number of various gestures that Ms. C uses:

Table 3. Total calculation of gesture

Types of gesture	Total of gesture
Metaphoric	13 times
Emblems	6 times
Affect displays	2 times
Deictic	46 times
Beat gesture	4 times
Head movement	6 times
Iconic	3 times

As shown in Table 4 based on video observations of Ms. C, she uses primarily gestures for L1 47 times, Primarily EFL 5 times, and Equal L1 and EFL 28 times.

Table 4. Total calculation of gesture based on Language used

Type	DE	ME	AF	HM	EM	BG	IC
Primarily L1	26	7	1	3	5	2	3
Primarily EFL	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
L1 and EFL	15	5	1	4	1	2	0

The study showed that Ms. C's use of EFL would result in non-verbal moments, as shown in the example below.

Example 1

T: *Kira-kira* accept or refuse? Accept *menerima* [approximately accept or refuse?

Accept is accept]

(executing a metaphoric gesture in the sentence "accept") refuse *menolak* [refusing]

(executing a metaphoric gesture in the sentence "refuse").

This metaphoric gesture helps to make it easier for students to understand the EFL described by giving gestures to represent the words accept and refuse. This gesture visually describes abstract meaning in line with McNeill's (1992) gesture classification, where metaphoric gesture can represent abstract meaning. The use of this gesture was also found in research by Sato (2018), the teacher also uses metaphoric gestures when explaining a sentence to students; the teacher gives the gesture of extending a hand from one student to another student when saying "helping each other". In research conducted by Afdaliah (2022), the metaphoric gesture is known as "Illustrating." The function is the same as in this research, which is used to explain something so that students better understand the teacher's explanation. In Ms. C's classroom, metaphoric gestures can help students with limited English proficiency by providing visuals, which supports previous studies where metaphoric gestures are valuable in teaching meaning in a language classroom.

The teacher asks questions about the material being presented to the students, followed by a head movement gesture. This can be assumed to indicate that the teacher wants students to express their opinions and respond to the questions.

Example 2

T: *Paham dialog ini tentang apa?* [do you understand what this dialog is about?]

S: *Paham* [understand]

T: *Tentang apa?* [what is it about?]

(in this sentence the teacher executing a head movement gesture)

The movement of tilting the head to one side during classroom interaction hints at confusion in the student's statement (Sato, 2018). Different from Sato (2018), in example 2, the teacher tilts the head to one side to ask about the student's understanding. Ms. C's gesture emphasizes the movement to encourage student response and expects an answer to the question being asked, and through this gesture, students show a response by answering the teacher's question. The head movement was found in research by Urrohimah and Maharsi (2022), where the teacher gave a nodding gesture to the student to confirm the student's answer. Head movement is also found in research by Afdaliah (2022) but in different movements, namely nodding as management, regulation, instruction, and affection in learning, and head movement in shaking the head, which teachers use to explain learning materials. In conclusion, the head movement plays an important role in giving language a clearer meaning.

In this research, teachers use PowerPoint slides to explain the material to students and clarify instructions. Teachers often point to the target object, such as the material on the whiteboard and students.

Example 3

T: *Kalo forgot itu* [if forgot that is]

(Pointing at the whiteboard), *pernah dengar forgot?* Nah ini (pointing at whiteboard) (in the form) *lampauanya*. [ever heard of forgot? Well this is the form of past tense]

The use of deictic gestures is confirmed in research by Sato (2018). In this research, the teacher provides deictics to indicate abstract concepts. In the example sentence "the past," the teacher gives a gesture by pointing back with her finger. The use of this gesture in example 3 makes students understand the specific part that Ms.C is referring which makes them connect with the material being explained. Similarly with research conducted by Ranta and Harmawati (2017) found that the teacher used deictic by pointing with the index finger at the title of the reading intended by the teacher. Teachers also use deictic gestures in research conducted by Kamlasi and Nepesa (2019), which shows that the teacher asks students to look at what the teacher is pointing at this aligns with this example that Ms.C using deictic gesture by points to the whiteboard object. In contrast to the research conducted by Lubis and Putri (2022), the use of deictic is also found but in a different use, namely pointing to students to give praise to the students; the teacher does this as a way of interacting with students. Although they have different purposes, each study indicates that deictic gestures is useful in language classroom management.

The use of affect displays is used to convey emotions in the form of happy, sad, afraid, disturbed, and interested.

Example 4

T: *Dari semua ini ada yang kamu tidak tau? kata-katanya? Vocabulary-nya?* [out of all this, is there anything you don't know? about the words, the vocabulary?].

S: *Nggak tau* [I don't know]

T: *Yang mana?* [which one?]

S: *Semuanya* [all of this]

T: (affect displays feeling sad) *jangan bilang semuanya..* [don't all of this..]

In this example, the teacher used affect displays in the emotion of sadness because she felt sad when the students did not understand the learning content that she explained. In this example, Ms.C uses a sad expression to show disappointment. In contrast with research by Sato (2018), the teacher uses affect display in the emotion of happiness because of the teacher's admiration for a sentence made by the student. Different from the use of affect display in research conducted by Harisnawati et al. (2022), teachers smiled at students, but this gesture indicates that the teacher does not believe that the students did not knew the answer to what the teacher asked. In research by Kamlasi and Nepesa (2019), teachers provide gesture affect displays when giving emotions. In this research, teachers give happy emotions by smiling. The use of affect display is also found in research conducted by Lubis and Putri (2022). The teacher makes a gesture of opening wide eyes when saying "Amazing" or "Awesome" sentences, giving a deep impression and imagination to the sentences spoken by the teacher. According to this finding, teachers' emotions can help develop teacher-student connections. Ms.C's sad expression shows her care and empathy, which encourages students to try and become better.

The iconic gesture is when Speakers use the hands and/or arms to represent the actual forms of objects and/or actions, as shown in the following examples.

Example 5

T: *Apakah kamu mau memakai..* [do you want to wear]

S: *Jaketku..* [my jacket]

T: *Jaket saya..* [my jacket...] (used iconic gesture for the sentence "jacket")

In this Iconic gesture, the teacher gives a gesture like wearing a jacket when saying, My jacket. The teacher uses Iconic research by Sato (2018) as a gesture indication that makes it easier for the student to understand what the teacher is explaining. Through her hands with

an iconic gesture, the teacher gives a visual example of what the word means. As in research by Urrohimah and Maharsi (2022), the teacher gives an Iconic gesture of making a square to represent the sentence "tablet". In research conducted by Afdaliah (2022), the use of iconic gestures is referred to as "giving example" the teacher gives a gesture in a sentence to represent the sentence that the teacher means; for example, in the sentence "I have a pen" the teacher holds a marker and raises her hand to represent a pen. In this case, the gesture used by Ms.C facilitated the student to connect the spoken word "jacket" with its meaning. Based on the research and what Ms.C did, it can be summarized that using iconic gestures makes it easier for students to understand the meaning of the teacher's sentence.

The following example is about the emblem gesture. The emblem gesture is used when speakers use nonverbal cues that everyone in the same cultural group can understand.

Example 6

T: Keep it, *di tahan* [keep it] (moving the hand to the head which means keeping it on the head)

This emblem gesture can be assumed to mean that the teacher wants students to keep the material that has been taught in their heads. According to Sato (2018), the teacher gives gesture emblems by raising the index finger while saying "no," which can be understood by Japanese people as a negation marker. The use of the emblems by Ranta and Harmawati (2022) was also found when the teacher approached the student's desk while her right hand handled the book and marker, and asked the student to read a paragraph of writing with her left hand. In research by Kamlasi and Nepsa (2019), emblems occur when the teacher shows the palm of her hand to students as a signal to tell students to stop talking, speak slowly, or when the teacher wants to emphasize an essential point to students. Similar to research conducted by Urrohimah and Maharsi (2022), the teacher gives emblems by opening the palm and facing the student, aiming to stress the word "wait". In general, emblem gestures develop communication and facilitate students to comprehend key concepts in the language classroom.

The beat gesture is used when speakers pulse their hands constantly.

Example 7

T : Discount, *ya..kita pingin discount, kemudian customer service-nya? Boleh ga dikasih dicount? Boleh ga?* [discount, ya.. we want discount, then the customer service? Can give a discount? Can?] (displays beat gesture in sentences "boleh ga?" repeatedly and produce a beat).

In this beat gesture, the teacher moves the hand up and down repeatedly and produces a beat. In research by Sato (2018), the teacher uses beat gestures by moving her palm up and down quickly to regulate the flow of her speech while saying a sentence. This is similar to research conducted by Urrohimah and Maharsi (2022), where the teacher gives hand gestures up and down to the rhythm when giving a sentence to students. In summary, by using beat gesture, students remember the message from the teacher because there is a beat shown, and beat gesture makes classroom conversation easier to understand.

In using each gesture, the majority showed that the teacher made the gesture to students to make students better understand the meaning of what the teacher was explaining.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights that in the learning process, the teacher displays many gestures, and that is recorded that the teacher displays all seven gestures proposed by Wang and Loewen (2016), which are iconic, emblem, metaphoric, deictic, beat, affect display, and head movement.

This study concludes that the most frequently used gesture was the deictic gesture, carried out by the teacher 46 times. The use of deictic in this study to connect students with

the material explained by the teacher, which helps students know the specific part that the teacher explained. Besides deictic, metaphoric also frequently used by the teacher since the students have limited English proficiency, the teachers provide metaphoric gestures that can help interpret the abstract meaning in the language classroom. The slightest gesture the teacher used was an affect display two times. In example 4, the teacher is trying to encourage and motivate students with affect display. In this example, affect display is used with sadness, where affect display is the revealed emotion from speakers such as happiness, fear, sadness, anger, distraction, and interest (Allen, 2000). Most of the use of gestures shows that teachers use gestures to provide more understanding, so that students can understand learning English more deeply.

This study has its limitations, which the author will describe. This study only has 1 participant, whose use of gestures and in future studies is expected to be compared with the use of gestures from more than one teacher. This study only provides data in the form of a video recording that is analyzed. Hopefully, in the next research, interviews can be used to confirm the gestures that teachers have done in the classroom. Additionally, this study was only conducted once class session, and it would be beneficial for future research to observe multiple class sessions, which allows the teacher to give examples of gestures in different sentences. This study is written according to the Vocational students, and future research is expected to consider the contexts of senior public high schools.

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