

Using Nonverbal Communication as a Strategy for Effective Classroom Management in Tertiary Education

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Date of Submission: 10-10-2020

Date of Acceptance: 27-10-2020

ABSTRACT—Nonverbal communication plays a pivotal role in interaction in face-to-face communication between teacher and students in the classroom. A gesture is a movement of part of the body, typically a hand, the head, eyes, or the facial expressions which are particularly used to illustrate spoken words and convey an idea or meaning of the context. Gestures are always carried with or without verbal communication which are happened to be seen or ignored by the teachers in the classroom during teaching-learning process. The ultimate goal of teaching is to promote learning and discipline among students. This will happen only when teachers are competent both in verbal and nonverbal communication skills, having a good quality of teaching skills and strategies for classroom management. Like, teachers are conscious of verbal communication (VC) they should also be conscious of using NVC in the classroom because of culture diversity, as person to person and culture to culture NVC differs. Thus, teachers need to be sensitive to such cultural diversity and use NVC appropriately without harming anyone's emotions and feelings in the classroom. Briefly describing NVC and its different features as a strategy can be used for managing classroom behaviour and discipline. That being the case, this paper mainly emphasis on the theoretical study of nonverbal communication which should be used in the classroom as a strategy for effective classroom management.

Keywords: communication, verbal, nonverbal, classroom management, eye contact, proxemics, vocal intonation

I. INTRODUCTION

An academic institution is a centre for learning which encourages and focuses more on academic achievement, scholastic sports events or other co-curricular activities and on discipline too. Tauber (2007) said “discipline is a real and biggest problem for almost four decades identified lack of discipline in schools” (p. 3). Maintaining classroom discipline is one of the toughest concerns among

teachers whether he is a beginner or having experience in teaching profession. In an educational system managing classroom discipline is not new phenomena but a matter of concern to deal with it with possible strategies. “Classroom management means the strategies used by a teacher to organise the classroom, the learning and the learners, such as seating arrangements, different types of activities, teacher roles and interaction patterns” (Huszt, 2013). In formal setting, learner begin to get the environment of education from a primary level to secondary then higher education and are up to adult education or it's a lifelong process. Therefore, the teacher teaching at tertiary level has to be good in both verbal as well as nonverbal communication for imparting knowledge to their learners because of different background and culture of the learners. On the contrary, the teacher faces the problem of maintaining the discipline in the classroom which is itself a serious problem among teachers with undisciplined students. The main focus of this theoretical paper is to overcome the problem of classroom management between teacher and students through some effective strategies of nonverbal communication which can be followed in the formal educational system to maintain discipline, rapport, and build a good environment for learning and developing education skills.

Role of Communication

Communication is a basic need to communicate with others. It is used to send and receive messages across through verbal and nonverbal medium. Verbal communication (VC) is orally or written way of communicating the information or messages. It is well structured and has grammar rules to follow while speaking or writing. On the other hand, non verbal communication (NVC) is sending of information without using words, it is wordless communication. Nonverbal communication (NVC) is “unspoken dialogue” all those messages that people exchange beyond the words themselves (Burgoon et al.,

2016, p. 1). It is a nonlinguistic way of communicating the messages. Intentionally or unintentionally we communicate through nonverbal cues. It includes not only body language but also the tone of voice (vocal cues), touch, proxemics, the environment, etc. In the classroom during teaching-learning process, most teachers are unaware of nonverbal cues. Some of the teachers use cues in the classroom but do not have prior knowledge about them. In this regard, the teacher can learn and makes use of different types of NVC along with VC to maintain discipline but need to be aware of cultural diversity as these NV cues are not same in every culture, they are culture-specific. Before applying these NV cues in the classroom let's get familiar with the areas of NVC that are as follows:

- Kinesics—it is an umbrella term which talk about body movements and posture which includes the following elements:
 - Gestures—it refers to hand and arm movements
 - Adaptors—these release physical or emotional tension (shaking of legs while sitting on a chair, scratching face, nose or head, clicking a pen or banging table with hand or fingers).
 - Emblems—these substitute for words and phrases (thumbs up to say 'OK,' waving a hand for 'hello,' or joining hands together for "Namaste").
 - Illustrators—these accompany, illustrate the verbal speech or to simplify or reinforce verbal messages. These help the listener understand comparison and contrast and to visualise the movement, direction, function, the size, shape and number of objects (tall-short, big-small, hot-cold, and many more).
 - Affect display—it shows emotional expressions (signal of sadness, fear, disgust, happiness, anger, shrug shoulder, crossing arm to chest, etc).
 - Regulators—these control the flow and pace of communication (head nods, uh-huh sounds)
 - Head movements and posture display—it is nodding of the head can indicate agreement or disagreement and showing interest. Similarly, body posture sends different meanings about the positioning of our body. Body posture indicates interest, positiveness, defensiveness, willingness, etc.
 - Eye contact (oculesics)—it refers to maintaining eye contact during face-to-face interaction. Looking at a person's face, head, and eye or looking away shows the person taking interest or disinterest while conversation.
 - Facial expressions—it refers to the use of facial muscles, eyebrows and forehead to convey meaning. It conveys fear, anger, happiness and other emotions.

- Paralanguage or vocals—it is a study of the tone of voice how one can modulate his/her voice. It includes vocal qualities of the verbal message that accompany it such as pitch, rate, quality, volume, and other verbal fillers positive or negative (um, ah, ah).

- Haptics or touch—it is behaviours that convey meaning through a sense of touch during the interaction. It communicates feelings and emotions and functions differently at various level, including functional-professional, social-polite, friendship-warmth, and love-intimacy.

- Proxemics—it is most important and refers to the way of learning and using space distance to interact in public, social, personal, and intimate zone.

- Chronemics or time—it refers to the importance of time in communication. Bruneau (2009, p.97), explained that "all forms of nonverbal communication messages have their temporalities, beginnings and endings, starting and stopping, zeros and ones, before and after, faster and slower, and so forth".

- Artefacts or personal presentation and environment—this refers to physical objects that communicate environment, arrangements of living and non-living things around us and in our surrounding. It also signifies personal and social beliefs and habits.

Effective communication skill is one of the most important skills in the classroom for interacting, engaging and maintaining discipline among the students. The teacher uses innumerable ways for teaching-learning of students and maintaining the decorum of the class. Among them, one of it is nonverbal cues which can be used in the class. But at times, as already mentioned above unintentionally or intentionally it is neglected and ignored by the teachers. In my view, in the classroom nonverbal cues are ignored because maximum time spends by students and teacher is looking into the books or the black/whiteboard as a teacher keeps on reading or writing the text and students are following their teacher. In a way, the major focus is to finish their syllabus in a stipulated period. It is also noticed in most of the classes teacher talk time is more than the students talk time. It is more of lecture method in tertiary level and students lose interest in listening lectures half way. During teaching-learning process, the teacher should make the most of use of positive nonverbal communication cues. Maintaining eye contact, facial expression-smiling and actively listening like gestures including nodding of head, helps students to develop interest and motivates to learn. Besides, teachers should avoid postures that are not appropriate or show opposing gestures in the

classroom for the reason that it might not allow students to feel free or may even hesitate to communicate.

Eye Contact in the Classroom

Our words communicate and pass on messages to others. Similarly, our nonverbal expressions also express different feelings and emotions. Tauber (2007, p.299) suggests “teacher who uses nonverbal cues in the classroom, in most cases it is less disruptive and is one of the methods of classroom management”. Eyes are one of the areas of nonverbal cues as a communicative tool and it can reveal all the hidden messages or secrets of the person. They are considered one of the most powerful tools with or without words for getting one’s message across. Eye contact is supposed to be very active during the listening process as it plays an important role in encoding and decoding messages and also build rapport and connection between listener and speaker. Schmitz (2012, p.201) describes “during an interaction between speaker and listener each other's eye regulates interaction, monitor interaction through nonverbal communication of sending information and receiving feedback, signal cognitive activity, express engagement, convey intimidation, express flirtation and establish rapport and connection”. And on the other hand, when we are at unease or lack in self-confidence we look downwards and when we develop and shows interest in others talk we open our eyes widely to make orator go on speaking as to make sure we are listening to him.

If we look in Indian culture, avoiding eye contact with teachers in the classroom is a sign of showing respect. But in the classroom role of maintaining eye contact for both effective classroom management and teaching-learning is pivotal. Eye contact is important because it shows, attentiveness, physical and mental presence of students. Maintaining eye contact with every student is important as it makes teachers presence strong in the class and knows what all students are up to in the work or behaviour. Sometimes students hide by not making eye contact or lowering their eyelid when they are caught in teacher's eye for misbehaving, talking, or not listening to the teacher, or when students have not done their work, not brought things to the classroom which was asked by the teacher, or sometimes when learners do not know the answer they do not look towards the teacher. But if we compare to some parts of western culture maintaining eye contact shows sign of positiveness and sincerity. If someone fails to meet other person’s eye contact during speaking to each other it implies the person is disinterested in

the talk, it also shows a lack of confidence and insincerity. Even though, the teacher in the Indian context should maintain eye contact with every student in the classroom. It is helpful in effective classroom management and the teaching-learning of the students. If the teacher shows bias towards high-level learners and low-level learners than students will face difficulty in learning things, they feel secluded from the class and shows disinterest in those particular subjects, therefore, their grades can be seen decreasing. Eye contact helps the teacher to read students face when there is boredom in the class, not able to understand the lesson, or are not able to concentrate for hour-long lecture. Especially, when the teacher asks questions to students and shows dumb faces it is clear from their face and they are not maintaining eye contact which implies they are not with the teacher.

An act of maintaining eye contact with every student in the classroom establishes a bond of a good healthy relationship. Talking to every student and maintaining five to ten-seconds of eye contact whenever is possible will work as strength, encouragement and motivation for learning or developing skills among each student. For effective teaching-learning in the classroom, class needs to maintain discipline, therefore making frequent eye contact with students can be used to monitor the entire classroom which can be useful in reducing disturbance, misbehaviour, or other problems. Eyes are very communicative, they can send and receive messages instantly and effectively. Tauber (2007, p. 299) said that, “Eyes are equally capable of sending messages of approval, acceptance, and empathy”. It is always preferred not to take names of the students whenever they are disturbing the class it is better to make him/her aware through eye contact because taking name can humiliate students in front of the whole classroom. Teachers can make use of eye contact simultaneously with the hand gesture for indicating “to be quiet” by using the index finger to the lips, eye frowns to indicate anger or disapproval and many more can be useful for classroom management. Therefore, it is suggested that nonverbal cues are skills that can be perfected and practised for sending better and effective eye cues in the classroom.

Break the Proxemic zone

In my opinion, students who are sitting far away from the teacher’s physical reach are creators of problems in the classroom. Therefore, moving and utilising of space in the classroom need planning and reflection which can be a useful strategy in maintaining classroom discipline. According to Kounin as cited in Sternberg &

Williams (2010, p.397), “with-it-ness” means that the teacher is observant and attentive to everything going on around the teacher in the classroom. Thus, classroom space can be used effectively which can help in maintaining contact, better learning can be enhanced and monitoring behaviour of all the students will be easy. Hall (1966) stated “1ft to 4ft proxemic zone is generally acceptable for interaction between teachers and students”. On the other hand, moving in this zone can be used in a good way to control disruptive behaviour of the class. “It should be of no surprise to anyone that mischief-makers try to keep as much distance as possible between themselves and their students”(Tauber, 207, p.326). During classroom teaching-learning process teacher always faces trouble such as behavioural issue, talking or giggling in two’s or three’s, sleeping not attentive or sometimes busy in doing some other work and showing as if they are listening to the words. At this particular moment in the class teachers can break the proxemic zone by entering into students personal zone which sends a message automatically to the students that teacher is aware of their activities and stop them from misbehaving as it is not disturbing only the teacher but the whole class. Still, they have not stopped giggling at some private joke can be asked to share with the whole class and let the class also enjoy the same. Too much of misbehaving will affect students comprehending of content and academic achievement becomes low. In a way, classroom space can be used creatively by re-arranging physical setting of tables and chairs which can be effectively used in the classroom to move around and can reach to every student in the class. “Effective teachers know that the rapport and relationship they form with their students is key to a positive classroom atmosphere” (Dhaem, p.34). This can assist the teacher to play an important and effective role in maintaining discipline in the classroom.

Vocal Intonation

In the classroom, having good communication skills have become one of the pivotal parts of the successful teaching and learning. Teachers with good communication skills usher, support and foster students to develop study skills, thinking skills and also manages classroom behaviour. Most of the time spent by the teacher in the classroom is teaching verbally but intentionally or unintentionally they communicate nonverbally also. Body language, gesture and expressions, and tone of voice, all contribute to what we want to say and it means. To identify the real message behind

what is said in words is part of communication skill. Therefore, in the classroom behind words tone of voice (low-pitch, high-pitch, modulation, monotonous, rough, orotund, pleasant, appealing, and many more) also plays a very important and powerful role in teaching-learning and managing classroom discipline. To my way of thinking, students dislike teachers who keep on screaming and shouting in the class and feel easy dealing with them as it seems becomes a habit of teacher and for students also. Besides, a teacher who maintains silence after entering in a noisy classroom utters no voice out of his mouth and shows angry facial expression, frown eyebrows and standing body posture with arms crossed to the chest gives nonverbal cues of the warning to the class. Rues (2015) said according to Carolyn Ellis, “When used with intention and purpose, silence is a communication superpower.” It seems to me that students get bored when Teacher Talk Time (TTT) is more than Student Talk Time(STT) and in between the class students cannot focus and get lost in their thinking. And when these students are caught teacher refer them by saying orally with sarcastic tone “physically here, mentally where” or that student is called out by his name and asked to read from where he has stopped or retell what he was explaining , etc. All this makes student embarrass in front of the whole class, the student cannot make eye contact looks downward, and asked to pay attention, wash face or given a punishment to leave the class. On that account, the teacher can use the strategy of silence in a polite way to get the attention of the students who’s the mind has started to wander. All of a sudden when the teacher stops talking students pay attention to figure out why he has stopped. Every student will take a note of this act and will gain their attention. This will not make anyone embarrass or harm physically or mentally but will make aware and attentive for the rest of the class. On the whole, using this strategy of silence as a nonverbal cue can be used effectively in the classroom for teaching and learning as well as maintaining the discipline of the classroom.

Teachers are always supportive and have a lot of expectations from their students for achieving the best out of his/her teachings with good grades and achievements. Teachers boost their students with their encouraging words accompany gestures having positive and negative reaction without hurting their feelings and emotions such as saying well done and a pat on their shoulder, you are doing good with the sign of thumbs up, that's quite an improvement with clapping hands and more. Canter as cited in Sternberg & Williams (2010,

p.415) elucidate that, “Assertive discipline approach used in the classroom deals with the misbehaviour of the students”. Students are learners and teachers are educators. In the tertiary level, the teacher still teaches students how to respect, behave and work together as a team. The teacher can assign some responsibility with instruction to be followed especially to those students who seem to be most misbehaved students of the class—monitor of the class, who monitor the class in absence of the teacher and more such responsibility, can be asked to perform. Teachers should assign activities to the students by forming groups naming them (Group A, B, C or they can be asked to name their group) in the classroom over the week students can work collectively and on a particular fixed day they can perform or share in the class where the teacher should provide positive feedback. This gives students motivation and strength of doing much better. It appears that teacher being assertive, confident and positive with every student without any bias will maintain classroom behaviour, will get to know each other and get familiar to their cultures and students will lead to success.

On the contrary, a hostile teacher uses a harsh tone of voice and words in the classroom. Even they behave uncooperative and aggressive and uses sarcasm and threats to the students whom all are not listening or doing as per teachers command. Tauber (2007, p. 100) explains “hostile teacher, and the behaviour they use, hurt students’ feelings, provoke disrespect (odd given that hostile teacher are desperately trying to gain respect) and a desire to retaliate, and undermine students’ needs for security, safety, and belonging. It is hard to imagine any positive and lasting learning taking place in such a hostile environment.” Therefore, this type of teacher behaviour and environment of the classroom seems to be very harmful to students as it can let down students performance and level in achievement. The point is substantiated by Sternberg & Williams (2010, p.415) who are in the view that explains “hostility can be communicated nonverbally as well as verbally—a hostile teacher can communicate through body language and other means that a student is inept or stupid without ever saying these words. Examples of such nonverbal cues include smirking, shaking one’s head in an as dissatisfied, sarcastic manner, rolling ones’ eyes, or making a dismissive hand gesture.” A teacher using flat or monotonous tone, rough tone or very high or low pitch tone for teaching should change to develop interesting tone variation, orotund (loud and clear), or some other kind of modulation should be their which develops attentiveness,

interest among students and there will be no chance for misbehaving or disturbing other too.

Culture Meaning of NVC

There are a lot of people who always dreamt of becoming educators and are teaching successfully. These educators are always found to be excited and interested in their work. Teachers teach their students through different approaches and methods in the classroom. Nowadays classrooms are multilingual and students coming from various cultures to gain an education. The teacher should be aware of not only verbal but also nonverbal communication even at the cultural level also. It is the most important form of communication that is an unspoken form of messages which expresses meanings through body language. In every culture, NV cues may be similar but meaning to that cues is very different, it can be meaningless or even have an opposite meaning to others. It varies from one culture to another. Due to this difference teachers should know the background of every student so that there is no misunderstanding in understanding NV cues. In NVC, facial expressions are mostly similar in all cultures such as smile, joy, happiness, cry, and anger. Therefore, teachers should practice using NVC appropriately in the classroom. In the same way, should be conscious of the cultural diversity as in every culture maintaining eye contact which can symbolise differently, nodding of the head for yes or no, hand gesture pointing index finger can be offensive, touching with or without permission can be unacceptable and so on. Be sensitive to such cultural diversity. “If there is poor NV communication in the class teachers can be a disadvantage with students as communication will breakdown and destroy relationship bond between them” (Grubaugh, 1989, p.37). Hence, teachers need to be conscious of using NVC in the class to build a bridge rather than a barrier between students and teachers relationship.

Punishment for Discipline

Teacher deals with many students in every classroom. Apart from daily subjective knowledge teacher also teaches behaviour-social behaviour, mannerism, etiquette to all students even at tertiary level. Some students are still found to be disobedient, misbehaved, and disruptive in the classroom. Therefore students must be taught how to behave from the beginning of the session they should be made clear about acceptable behaviour and unacceptable behaviour of the classroom. “Whereas classroom management is the responsibility of the teacher, discipline is the

responsibility of the student” (Sellors, 2016). Therefore, students should be made aware of “self-control” to maintain discipline and should allow them to practice it. Punishments can take place only to realise what they did was wrong-by teaching a lesson of not doing again. There should be no corporal punishment. Sometimes, “seen” misbehaviour of students can be made “unseen” by simply ignoring it, giving them a chance of not repeating the same. At the same time, the teacher should not take the names of the students who are troublemaking or rowdy in the class as “Names do hurt!” This type of disruptive activities in the classroom can be handled through nonverbal cues easily. “A quick nonverbal reminder allows a teacher to respond immediately to inappropriate behaviour, while they maintain both positive relationships with the students and pace of instruction for rest of the class” (Dhaem, 2012, p.34). Nonverbal cues do not let students feel humiliated, embarrassed, and fear from the class students and teacher but silently make them conscious of not doing or behaving manner less in the classroom. The poem “Stick And Stone” cited as in Tauber (2007, p.79-80) explains very well.

Sticks And Stones

Sticks and stones may break my bones, But words can also hurt me. Sticks and stones break only my skin, While words are a ghost that haunts me. Slant and curved the word-swords fall To pierce and stick inside me. Bats and bricks may ache through bones, But words can mortify me. Pain from words has left its scar On mind and heart that's tender. Cuts and bruises now have healed; It's words that I remember.
(Author unknown)

On the whole, it is good to teach students to be well behaved, to show good manners rather than feeling shame or humiliation in front of the whole class.

Anecdotes I have heard from other teachers, elucidate the role of nonverbal communication can play an important role in classroom management. An anecdote illustrating gestures body movements-arms and hands help in arranging the seating patterns of the students in the classroom. He said, “If seating arrangements are done properly than attendance can be judged”. Some students are involved in taking proxy of others and sometimes unable to judge this kind of misbehaviour. This can be taken in action only if seating arrangements are done appropriately, teachers are good in multiplying and calculating the number of students quickly, maintaining eye

contact is simultaneously important in this way proxy will not take place and improvement in attendance of students will be seen. He also shared that in every class we have students who misbehave and disturb whole class some time we need to ignore or take it lightly by asking them if it good kindly share with all but there is no punishment.

Another teacher teaching in ITI said, maintaining a relationship with every student is important there should be no discrimination, inequality or bias among students. The tone of voice needs to be changed frequently because students sleep during the lecture. If a teacher is self-discipline it is observed that class is manageable, peer learning and responsibilities also help in classroom management.

Few points that can be useful for teachers for classroom management are as follows:

- The physical setting of the classroom
 - Neat and clean, and orderly classrooms
 - Tables and chairs arranged accordingly
 - Spacious and proximity to the teacher
- Artefacts in the classroom
 - Bulletin board display
 - Display charts/maps on the walls
 - Colour of the walls, lighting in the room
 - Paintings, models created by students,
- The environment and atmosphere
 - The class filled with positive energy
 - A big 'No' to prejudice and discrimination towards students
 - Unity is strength and unity in diversity
 - Absence of tension, fear or anxiety
 - Free from sound pollution (playground noise, loudspeaker noise, vendor noise, etc.)
 - Free from foul odour (foul breath, washroom foul odour, laboratory foul odour, etc.)
- Positive behaviour helps children (Sellors, 2016) points as follows:
 - Calm down
 - Learn to solve problems
 - Manage their anger
 - Self-control their emotions
 - Learn what behaviour is expected of them
 - Regular eye contact will increase attentiveness, interested and no boredom; builds strong relationship; builds positive reinforcement.
 - Increase proximity will decrease disruptive behaviour;
 - Positive and assertive feedback will motivate the student to do more and better

- Student responsibility—list up, describe and assign (opportunity should be given to all students)
- Rewards—reinforce to boost, supplement, praise and rewards positively to all students
- Culture awareness is must

II. CONCLUSION

Nonverbal features of communication can be used as effective strategies to initiate and reinforce classroom management by the teachers. Nonverbal cues are meant to be powerful tools used by teachers in the classroom that assist to maintain classroom discipline by sending NV messages across and easily read by students. So, teachers need to be made aware of using appropriate nonverbal cues and conscious of cultural diversity in the classroom for the betterment of both the teacher and students. Using effective strategies of NVC improves teaching style in the classroom and students could be motivated to learn, develops an interest in participating in the classroom activities. This shall also improve students behaviour in the class, the class seems to be more disciplined and focused on the work activities. By maintaining eye contact—tells student whatever is happening in around the class the teacher is aware of it; proxemic distance—there should be no likes and dislikes towards students because of their superior or inferior status, no favourite student should be because of ranking always top in academics, teachers are free to break the proxemic zone to make aware of activities, misbehaviour, and teachers can move into personal space of all students equally without any discrimination; and modulating the tone of voice—it affects students positively as well as negatively; so, teachers should be encouraged everyone using verbal and nonverbal cues in the class whether students are high or low-level learners. There should be no favouritism, no prejudice or bias towards any of the students in the classroom. All should be supported, motivated, encouraged, and reinforced with additional learning. All students should be treated equally, should be felt secured and with a comfortable feeling, and some time should be given for privacy and individuality. Teaching and learning are better when the environment and atmosphere are quiet. There should be no tolerance as well as no punishment for irritating behaviour but a lesson to teach, nonsense activities or any kind of misbehaviour but must be managed very well with the silence or nonverbal cues that do not offend the doer's as well as others in the class. "When teachers ignore, shout at, or humiliate disruptive students, everyone suffers. The

students feel protected instead of accused when misconduct is redirected nonverbally" (Dhaem, 2012, p.34). In this way, teachers and students will get both environment and atmosphere as well as the bond of relationship will also be built, students will be more active and attentive and gain more knowledge and develop learning. Innumerable ways of teaching-learning students make student physically and mentally present in the class, shows attentiveness, and generate interest in effective classroom management and teaching-learning.

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