

In this article, attempts were made to highlight the importance of verbal communication for language teachers and learners, and to provide a brief explanation about how common hand gestures are usually interpreted in different parts of the world. It also illustrated how the ignorance of other people's culture and the wrong use of hand gestures can be misread, and as a result, generates different interpretations and cause unnecessary misunderstandings. However, future contrastive studies can be conducted on other types of nonverbal communications such as postures and facial expressions to reveal potential differences between our local understanding and Western interpretations of such communications.

Moreover, learning about the significance of nonverbal communication in intercultural interactions should be considered as a prerequisite to intercultural fluency. It seems further research are required to explore teaching ideas that stimulate nonverbal awareness among language learners. By using strategies and techniques that raise learners' consciousness about the integral role of body language and gestures in speaking and listening in a second or foreign language, we can take another important step in helping our students to develop a more native-like command of the target language.

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to what I am saying. I am your superior and I am warning you!" It is totally unacceptable in professional environments where it is typically interpreted as both rude and domineering.

The fig hand

This gesture is formed by a fist where the thumb pokes out of the index and middle fingers. Like the "thumbs up" it is interpreted as a positive hand gesture, as it indicates good luck and fertility. It is also considered as a way to ward off the evil eye. However, it is a very offensive gesture to Italians and Turks. Similarly, if this gesture is carried out by a person of Asian origin, it roughly translates as "I hate you".



The dog call

The "dog call" is where you curl your index finger move it forward and backward several times. In the US it translates into asking a person to step forward. In Asian countries like Iran and Japan, the dog call is considered a rude gesture. In the Philippines this hand gesture is considered very offensive and could get you arrested.



Stop

In the US and England, if you raise your hand up with the palm your hand facing towards the opposite person, it means

"to stop". It is often used by authoritative figures, and indicates that it is enough. If the fingers are pushing down, it indicates "sit down or settle". This gesture is not often a defensive sign and is used to take control over the person it is intended for.



Conclusion

In conclusion, during conversations, people use not only verbal language but also nonverbal communications consciously or unconsciously to express their intended meaning. It is clear that nonverbal communications are very important in our social interactions and take various forms, each of which accompanies or replaces a certain part of our verbal message. Nonverbal communications include many more elements than one might think at first, and could be easily misinterpreted even amongst close friends. Thus, it must be emphasized that as language teachers we should incorporate the interpretation of body language in our classroom instruction and keep our students informed of how various gestures are interpreted in different cultures, because lack of appropriate knowledge about nonverbal communication may result in inadvertent and unnecessary offences, while interacting with foreigners. Of course, mastering nonverbal communication is a very difficult task for language learners and it may take a lot of time and practice but it is definitely an important step in guaranteeing successful inter-cultural communication.

obviously means the opposite of “thumbs up”. It signals that something is bad, and you do not approve of.

It is also sometimes used as an arrogant way of showing failure and indicates that things are not going as expected. The “thumbs down” gesture is not as common as the “thumbs up” sign.



Fingers crossed

Generally, “fingers crossed” is a sign wishing for good luck or fortune. Another interpretation could be seen as imploring God for protection. Younger people also use this gesture to excuse their telling of a white lie. This is perhaps rooted in the belief that the power of the Christian Cross might save one from being sent to hell for telling a lie.



The horn fingers

This gesture is formed by extending the index and little fingers while holding the middle and ring fingers down with the thumb. The “horn fingers” has a variety of meanings and uses in various cultures. In the west, it is mostly used as a positive sign, indicating



approval. But in many Mediterranean and Latin countries, such as Spain, Italy, Portugal, Argentina, and Brazil showing this sign to someone is interpreted as you are telling them that their spouse is cheating on them. In many other cultures the “horn fingers” is considered as the symbol of the devil.

The “Ok sign”

This gesture is formed by curling the index finger over the thumb and the remaining fingers extended above them. It is widely used in north America (but not in England) to express that everything is OK. In Australia, it means zero, and in Germany it may mean “well done”. However, in Latin America, France and some Asian countries including Iran and Turkey it is considered insulting and has negative connotations attached to it.



Snapping fingers

In the US and UK, “Snapping fingers” often means that one is trying to remember something s/he has forgotten. In Latin America, snapping fingers means asking one to hurry up. However, in many countries, snapping fingers close to someone's face is considered an offensive gesture. Parents and instructors frequently use this hand gesture, and in general it expresses warning. If translated into verbal language it means “Stop doing that and pay attention



time to time and context to context. On this basis, language teachers are suggested to keep their students informed of the functions of various paralinguistic features. For instance, a particular change in one's tone of voice may imply that he shows uncertainty, or seeks agreement from the hearer. Emphasizing particular words can mean that a feedback is required.

● *Gestures*

Basically, gestures refer to various types of movements made with a limb, particularly the hands to express different meanings in different contexts. Gestures are often part of the way in which meaning is expressed and can be observed while people are speaking. Examples of gestures include the use of index and middle fingers together to show 'V' as a victory sign, waving goodbye, keeping fingers crossed and so on.

In systematic studies of gestures, a broad distinction is often made between iconic gestures and other types of gestures (non-iconic gestures). Iconic gestures, or illustrators, are closely related to speech and reflect the meaning of the spoken message. For example, when a person illustrates a physical item by tracing a shape in the air to indicate how big or small it is, she is showing an iconic gesture. Iconic gestures are different from non-iconic gestures in the sense that they are often used to show physical and concrete items. They are particularly important in our communication, because they can describe more details of our mental images when we are communicating (Yule, 2010).

Aside from the above distinction, it is believed that there are a few gestures that have more or less the same meaning across different cultures (e.g. keeping index finger upright in front of one's nose to say 'shush' = keep quiet). However the

meanings of most gestures are culturally conditioned and many of them do not have universal meanings. For example, the use of the zero shape made by the fingers is often perceived as 'everything is OK' in the United States. But in the Iranian context, the same gesture is normally read as 'I insult you in a very offensive way'. Therefore, it is important for language instructors to teach their students to avoid misinterpretation and not to get local gestures mixed up.

Within various types of gestures that accompany speech, hand gestures are the most prevalent. In the following, I will briefly present the meaning of some of the most frequently used hand gestures and attempt to clarify how they are normally interpreted in the Western countries. I hope that Iranian language teachers find this discussion useful and that they can use it in their classroom instruction.

Thumbs up

The "thumbs up" sign in most American and European cultures means things are going according to plans. It also means something you approve of. In most Islamic countries, and some European Countries such as Italy and Greece, however, this sign translates into a rude and offensive gesture. Citizens of these countries often nod their head up and down to send the same signal. In Australia, "thumbs up" means OK, but if you move it up and down, it is interpreted as an insult.



Thumbs down

In the west, the "thumbs down" sign

focus on hand gestures is because these gestures are most helpful when people with no common language are interacting. Hand gestures can also be effectively used as compensatory strategies by those language learners whose speaking proficiency is limited and their limitation of proficiency prevents them from getting their messages across, merely through verbal communication. Finally, hand gestures are different from other types of nonverbal communication in the sense that they tend to have a far greater association with speech and language.

Nonverbal communication

Just as the way verbal language is broken up into various categories, there are also different typologies for categorizing nonverbal communication. Among various classifications proposed by different experts, at the very least, distinctions are made among four types of nonverbal communications: facial expressions, posture, paralinguistic features, gestures.

● *Facial expressions*

The human face is extremely expressive, in the sense that countless emotions can be expressed without verbalization. Facial expressions account for a great proportion of our nonverbal communication. Consider, for instance, how much information can be conveyed with a simple smile or a frown. In our social interactions, the look on a person's face is often the first thing we see, even before we hear what they want to say. Unlike other forms of nonverbal communication, many facial expressions are the same across different cultures. So language learners may feel delighted as they do not have to struggle how to use facial expressions in the target language.

● *Posture*

Body posture refers to a rather stable

state or position of the speaker's body. Posture is different from body gesture in that the latter often includes movements of speaker's hands and body. Body posture is also a conduit through which various meanings can be communicated. Consider, for example, how your perceptions of people are influenced by the way they stand, sit, walk, or hold their head.

There are basically two types of postural signals: open and closed. People's postural signals may vary depending on their confidence, status, receptivity to other people, and so on. In an open posture you might expect to see a person directly facing you and showing interest and readiness to communicate with you. In a closed posture you can see discomfort or disinterest in the interlocutor's body position. Body postures are not often used to augment spoken language. But they normally serve a mirroring purpose, indicating people's interest and approval for initiating, maintaining and terminating social interactions.

● *Paralinguistic features*

Paralinguistic features of our communication consist of all aspects of our speech which are not part of the verbal message. They include, but are not limited to, the tone and pitch of our voice, speech melody, temporal aspects, manner of articulation, speed of communication, pauses and hesitations between words. Paralinguistic signals are often considered as a channel through which the speaker implicitly expresses his/her attitude and feelings about what is being said. For example, consider how someone's tone of voice can indicate sarcasm, confidence, anger, affection, etc.

Paralinguistic signals, however, are highly idiosyncratic and context-bound. They simply vary from person to person,

Introduction

Nonverbal communication makes up most of what we use to communicate in our face to face interactions. It consists of different messages that are generated by both the speaker and his/her use of the context that has potential message value for the listener (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2007).

Basically, nonverbal communication includes sending and receiving messages in a variety of wordless ways such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, etc.

Research suggests that nonverbal communication plays an important role in the process of communication by accompanying our speech and contributing to the overall meaning of our statements. Birdwhistell (1970) estimates that in our social and interpersonal communications up to 65% of what is transmitted is conveyed nonverbally. This suggests that a considerable part of any social message that we send and receive is communicated nonverbally. Regarding the significance of nonverbal communication, Abercrombie asserts: "We speak with our vocal organs, but we converse with our entire bodies" (1968, p. 55). Therefore, even if we do not speak, our nonverbal behaviors constantly communicate information that can be meaningful (Surkamp, 2014).

When people communicate in a foreign language the significance of nonverbal communication may be even greater than normal, because the verbal content may not be as clear as it is in an intra-cultural interaction (Singelis, 1994). The numerous cases of compensation strategies employed by second language learners to augment their verbal reference support this. Language learners, and teachers alike, often depend heavily on nonverbal

communication, and regularly make use of gestures and facial expressions to negotiate their interactions (Gregersen, 2007).

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Nonverbal communication is also important in the process of language teaching, because teachers' nonverbal communication can create a fluctuating range of children's engagement or disengagement in the process of teaching. When teachers are aware of their nonverbal behaviors, they increase students' classroom engagement (Park, 2013). Furthermore, a variety of teaching techniques requires extensive use of nonverbal forms of communication in language classes. Psycholinguistic studies have shown that the combination of verbal and nonverbal communication makes it easier for students to learn and remember new vocabulary and structures. Studies also suggest that students can recall vocabulary and language patterns for a longer period of time if the instruction is accompanied with nonverbal signs (Mehrani, 2014).

In this article I present a short overview of different types of nonverbal communications. Then, I will discuss the meaning of various types of hand gestures that are commonly used by native speakers of English speakers in communicating with others. My choice of

Nonverbal Communication as Part of Language Instruction

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چکیده

ارتباطات غیرکلامی سهم بسیار گسترده‌ای در ارتباطات اجتماعی و روزمره ما دارد. یافته‌های پژوهشی مؤید آن است که حدود ۶۵ درصد از تمامی مفاهیم، معانی و پیام‌هایی که در مکالمات ما رد و بدل می‌شود از طریق ارتباطات غیرکلامی صورت می‌گیرد. علاوه بر این، ارتباطات غیرکلامی در فرآیند آموزش و تدریس زبان خارجی نیز اهمیت شایانی دارد، چراکه معلمان زبان با استفاده از زبان اشاره و حرکات بدنی می‌توانند با زبان‌آموزان ارتباط برقرار کنند و از این طریق به انتقال و تبادل معانی و مفاهیم بپردازند. همچنین بسیاری از روش‌ها، فنون و شیوه‌های تدریس زبان مستلزم به کارگیری گسترده ارتباطات کلامی توسط معلمان زبان است. پژوهش‌های روان‌شناسی نشان می‌دهد که هنگامی که در تدریس زبان از علایم غیرکلامی و زبان اشاره استفاده می‌شود فرآیند یادگیری تسهیل می‌شود و دانش‌آموزان واژگان و ساختارهای گرامری را بهتر به خاطر می‌سپارند. با در نظر گرفتن اهمیت بالای این مقوله، پژوهش حاضر به بررسی گونه‌های مختلف ارتباطات غیرکلامی می‌پردازد. سپس مفاهیم و معانی برخی از رایج‌ترین علایم زبان اشاره مورد بحث قرار می‌گیرد و تفاسیر مختلفی که از این گونه علایم در کشور ما و کشورهای انگلیسی‌زبان وجود دارد توضیح داده خواهد شد. امید می‌رود بررسی و مشخص نمودن این تفاوت‌ها باعث توجه بیشتر معلمان به علایم غیرکلامی در فرآیند آموزش زبان شود.

کلیدواژه‌ها: ارتباطات غیرکلامی، زبان اشاره، علایم اشاره

Abstract

Nonverbal communication makes up most of what we use to communicate in our face to face interactions. Research findings show that in our social and interpersonal communications up to 65% of what is transmitted is conveyed non-verbally. Nonverbal communication is also important in the process of language teaching, because teachers' nonverbal communication can create a fluctuating range of students' engagement or disengagement in the process of teaching. In addition, a variety of teaching techniques requires extensive use of nonverbal forms of communication in language classes. Psycholinguistic studies also suggest that students can recall vocabulary and language patterns for a longer period of time if the instruction is accompanied with nonverbal signs. In this article, an overview of different types of nonverbal communication and body language is presented. The paper then discusses the meaning of commonly used hand gestures and attempts to clarify how they are normally interpreted in the Western countries. It is hoped that Iranian language teachers find this discussion useful and they can incorporate it in their classroom instruction.

Key Words : body language, hand gestures, nonverbal communication