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**INSTRUCTORS' AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ON USE OF NON-
VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN INSTRUCTION OF ENGLISH IN KENYA**



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**INSTRUCTORS' AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ON USE OF NON-VERBAL
COMMUNICATION IN INSTRUCTION OF ENGLISH IN KENYA; A CRITICAL
LITERATURE REVIEW**

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Abstract

Purpose: Non-verbal communication has strong impact on the behavior of both instructors and learners. As a result, both the learners' and instructors' success rely on the effective communication between them in the classroom. The purpose of our study therefore is to evaluate instructors' and learners' perceptions on use of non-verbal communication in instruction of English in Kenya.

Methodology: The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

Conclusion: From the findings of this study, one may conclude that non-verbal communication helped in effective teaching and learning of English language. The study also concluded that students understand better when their teachers use non-verbal cues in the class. Instructors' non-verbal communication is one of the best tools for classroom management and control.

Recommendations: The study recommended that the government should make provision for learning resources which can complement teachers' non-verbal usage in order to deliver content and knowledge effectively. Also, since classroom communication is a two-way process, teachers should better understand their students' non-verbal communication. This means that if there is any communication problem in the class, the teacher should be able to adopt better methods of teaching which should also be accompanied with non-verbal gestures.

Keywords: *instructors, learners, perception, non-verbal communication, instruction, English.*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Non-verbal communication has strong impact on the behavior of both instructors and learners (Negi, 2009). As a result, both the learners' and instructors' success rely on the effective communication between them in the classroom. The fact that instructors exert a profound influence on the behavior of learners, positively or negatively, is undeniable. Some studies show that an important part of instructors' influence is through non-verbal communication; hence, non-verbal communication operates an essential role in the field of teaching in the classroom. Ayot and Patel (2007) state that teaching as a profession is concerned with the transmission of knowledge, where the instructors use words to transmit to the learners' certain aspects of learning which include: facts, values, skills, knowledge and attitudes.

According to them, communication can be verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication is often used by teachers and pupils through talking to each other and its effects is greatly enhanced through the use of non-verbal communication in the form of gestures, sign and behavior. A teacher may also use non-verbal cues to emphasize a point or to reject a point. Antes (2006) argued that the role of gestures is in fact as old as spoken language itself and that gestures according to her are integral part of everyday communication while sometimes, gestures stand-alone yet they often go unnoticed when involves in teaching and communication.

Nonverbal Communication in the classroom includes the overall classroom environment as well as the instructor's display of non-verbal communication. Effective use of non-verbal communication in the classroom is an important and ever-present element that must be evaluated. Effective classroom non-verbal communication should support the learning curriculum and add to the overall quality of the reading education, all instructors send out nonverbal cues to students in every class. Neuliep (2013) has postulated that as much as 90% of all communication occurs through non-verbal communication. It makes sense therefore for teachers to not only use non-verbal communication to their advantage but also to understand its effect in the classroom. In the classroom, instructors create more permanent impressions through non-verbal communication

than they do using the knowledge of subject matter and verbal fluency. Bambaerou and Shokpour (2017) argued that in the field of teaching, certainly one of the main characteristics of good instructors is good communication skill. In addition, they noted that most of the observed stress in the classroom arises from a lack of proper communication.

There is evidence that the body language of instructors has a positive or negative impact based on the feedback they receive from their learners. Non-verbal communication can be an effective tool portraying attitude and reinforcements. Competent instructors will employ non-verbal communication frequently to keep the classroom under control and portray the importance of learning resources (Sleep, 2011). Studies on classroom learning environment also suggest that non-verbal cues on their own can send clear and distinct messages. These ‘non-verbal messages can be a more clear and honest means of determining intent than merely the spoken word alone’. Furthermore, Woolfolk and Brooks (2013) indicate that non-verbal communication often affects the behavior of instructors and learners. Zeki (2009) opined that the success of both the learner and instructor relies on the effective interaction between them in the class, but interaction becomes handicapped without the proper use of non-verbal cues.

Facial expression between instructors and learners is one of the most important types of non-verbal signals in the classroom. As a key aspect of facial expression Kinesics behavior is most among the powerful tools used by instructors to communicate effectively. Posture is also considered under kinesics. Postures such as gestures support and reinforce what is said verbally. Primarily, kinesics bits of behavior are body movements that are intended to express meaning (Pan, 2014).

A study by Kusanagi (2015) generalizes kinesics behavior under the heading of “gestures”. According to him gestures are the most common non-verbal behavior used by both instructors and learners. They use it to express emotions or actions used in the classroom communication, and are often defined by context because they usually help the instructors to express some ideas vividly. According to Sutiayatno (2015) gestures can be used to simplify complex grammar and hence assist learners to understand.

Non-verbal as a field of study seems to be underrated (Akinola, 2014). Good communication skills remain central in language learning classrooms. Verbal and non-verbal skills remain a key factor to effective learning in the classroom. Non-verbal communication as an aspect of communication is present in our classroom learning environments, but non-verbal communication as a field of study has not been given adequate attention in Kenya. Teaching of English in Kenya as a second language continues to pose challenges to instructors. Majority of these instructors rely on their non-verbal gestures to overcome such problems (Akinola, 2014).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Effective communication plays a pivotal role in English language learning. Teacher's communication styles are both verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal communication is relevant in English language teaching and learning. Non-verbal communication has many benefits for teachers. It helps in effective classroom communication, promote good understanding and also help in classroom management. In spite of this critical role that it can play to enhance learning effectiveness in English language, few teachers understand how good non-verbal behavior can benefit their learners.

Most of the English instructors in Kenya do not follow any rules, structure and formalities of non-verbal communication. This is because they have no adequate knowledge of the important functions of non-verbal cues in language teaching. This study seeks to explore their perceptions of non-verbal behavior used in English language classrooms. Kenyan government lack of formulating policy on the role of non-verbal communication aspects for general teaching is wanting in particular for teaching and learning of English Language. Aspects of non-verbal communication are not included in the curriculum in Kenya and so instructors and learners are not aware of the important role played by non-verbal communication as it relates to teaching and learning.

Although a large number of studies on non-verbal communication have been conducted across the globe in order to understand how it contributes to effective learning, very little attention has been given to the study of non-verbal communication as a complement to verbal language. Therefore,

this study anticipates to fill this knowledge gap by looking into the perceptions of instructors and learners on the use of non-verbal communication. This study addresses the following objectives. To establish the types of non-verbal communication cues used by instructors in the instruction of English language, to establish the perceptions of instructors and learners on the role of non-verbal communication in the instruction of English language, to establish the functions of non-verbal communication in the instruction of English language, to investigate the challenges experienced in the use of non-verbal communication in the instruction of English language.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to evaluate Instructors' and learners' perceptions on use of non-verbal communication in instruction of English in Kenya

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important because, understanding the use of non-verbal communication in teaching and learning is highly required and considered an academic field of study. Studies on non-verbal communication have not been given scholarly attention and there is limited literature in the area of non-verbal communication in Kenya. It means that thus there is a relatively poor communicative competence among students which can be attributed to ineffective non-verbal communication usage in teaching and learning of English language.

Non-verbal communication has contributed in a big way to the learning of the English language in Kenya. However, no serious study has been observed by the researcher on the perception of instructors and learners on the use of non-verbal communication in teaching and learning of English language in Kenya. There have been several serious and well-organized studies made on the working of non-verbal communication and many of such studies have been reviewed in the present study. Therefore, it has been strongly felt that a look into the types of non-verbal behavior of instructors in English language teaching should be studied. Proper use of non-verbal cues should be investigated. How instructors and learners perceive the non-verbal gestures used in the teaching and learning of English language is highly recommendable. How instructors used non-verbal cues

to teach English language was also looked into. Learners' awareness on the use and functions of non-verbal communication in English language classroom was highly desirable.

The school management stands to benefit as a result of the level of awareness on the important role of non-verbal cues will be discovered. Kenyan government will benefit also as it is hoped that this study will improve the standard of their educational policies formulation and implementation through training workshops for English language instructors on the use of non-verbal communication in English language teaching. The researcher also hoped that this study would benefit scholars who are interested in the area of non-verbal communication because the findings, recommendations and suggestions could be used by other researchers to conduct further studies on non-verbal communication.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Non-verbal Communication that occurs in Instruction of English Language

In non-verbal communication studies, Kinesics is a form of non-verbal communication which refers to all body movements used by a person to communicate. It includes hand movements, gestures, postures and head movement. In fact, gestures are part and parcel of the human non-verbal communication system. Sometimes they are referred to as the silent language. Apart from gestures, body movement and posture are considered effective means of communication that enhance interaction.

Kinesics cannot be avoided by any given language instructor. Instructors use kinesics to achieve the following: to complement verbal expression, to emphasize a point or even to substitute verbal talk. Proxemics deals with how people maintain space when involved in a social interaction. People maintain personal space due to the type of relationship they have. The space maintained is determined by a number of factors. The type, place and situation where the interaction takes place, the relationship between them, and the topic of discussion also determine the amount of space they maintain. In Nepalese context, Negi (2009) studied and identified four forms of nonverbal communication which teachers used in the ELT classroom. These include Kinesics, Oculesics, Haptic and Proxemics.

According to Bunglowala and Bunglowala (2015) study in Indore in Pakistan, it was revealed that non-verbal communication is an integral part of teaching and learning process. Results show that communication in teaching and learning is very important and that classroom communication should be in verbal and non-verbal form. The study in Pakistan observed and experimented on non-verbal techniques in teaching. Kinesics and paralanguages are the basic non-verbal cues used by the teachers. The findings concluded that, teachers should be given an orientation on NVC. For active participation of learners to happen, a great deal of eye contact should be maintained. Teachers should also use facial expression to transmit the emotions of anger and happiness to learners.

2.2 Instructors' and Learners' Perception on the Use of Non-verbal Communication in Teaching and Learning of English Language

On the use of non-verbal communication, Haneef et al (2015) collected data through a focus group discussion with the teachers in Pakistan. All the teachers agreed that their non-verbal gestures had a significant effect on their students. In Zaida's words: *"The students focused more on the symbols, gestures rather than words. These gestures and symbols help to motivate the students in the class during the lectures"*. Whenever they go out from the lectures, teachers engaged them in conversation by using the non-verbal communication. French (2014), there are a number of techniques in the body language. Most common in practice are body movement, body gestures, facial expression and eye contact. The teachers use at least one, mentioned above. As a male Pakistani teacher said *"I always used my body movement, I think it creates more motivation and attention toward lecture"* He added, *"I believe that teaching is acting where you change your acting from place to place"*.

French (2015) stressed that body language or non-verbal communications are deeply linked to the communication and especially in the field of teaching where the communication skills play a more important role. Teachers believe that without effective body language, it is impossible to communicate in the class. As a teacher in Pakistan said *"in the field of teaching, we should be more conscious about our body language, the student notice more of our body gestures and they try to imitate us"*. And same thought of another female teacher *"whenever we worked with the*

students, they understand the meaning of our gestures and body movement but there should be conscious planning for this type of the movement. It means that symbols and gestures are more effective for the communication.”

In a study in Cyprus, Barbara & Caganaga (2015) findings showed that teachers believed that NVC is a major aspect of classroom management, because it facilitated teaching and learning process in EFL classrooms. The two teacher participants in Cyprus agreed that non-verbal cues are very beneficial to teachers because they solve problems of attention among students. They also added that non-verbal cues have effective place in EFL classrooms.

2.3 Challenges experienced in the Use of Non-verbal Communication in English Classroom

Pan (2014) it is quite challenging as a teacher to stand in front of the classroom maintains a far distance from the learners. Interaction is less between teacher and learners in such a situation. Sitting arrangement as part of proxemics has its own advantage and disadvantage on learners' participation. Pan (2014) explained that the direction and movement of gaze was another useful non-verbal cue in good classroom communication. The study has shown that when the teacher fixed his gaze on the learners, they withdrew their gaze away from the teacher due to shyness.

The study in Nepal by Negi (2009) revealed that students found it difficult to deal with a teacher who stared at them coldly. In the same study, it was also discovered that students got bored with a teacher who taught them in a monotonous tone and they did not like a teacher who used only one aspect of vocalic. Students advised that teachers should use a demonstrative act with different vocal qualities. In Pakistan study by Haneef et al. (2014), a student complained about their teacher's use of nonverbal gestures. As a female student pointed out some teachers have a habit, where their bodily gesture does not connect with the word they uttered. In the same vain Pakistani students encountered another challenge when their teacher used a wrong facial expression, because this according to the students delivered the wrong message.

2.4 Empirical review

Kerubo (2017) conducted a research study to examine the modes of instruction and their effect on academic performance in English among learners with hearing impairments in special Primary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used. The target population of the study constituted two head teachers, twenty-two subject teachers and two hundred and forty pupils with hearing impairments from special primary schools. From that population, a 10% sample of pupils was selected using stratified random sampling. A 55% sample of twelve teachers and two head teachers were also selected using purposive sampling. The questionnaires, interview guides and documentary analysis schedules were used in the collection of data. The key findings of this study revealed that teachers could not understand all the pupils' responses during the teaching activity. The use of manual modes of instruction was perceived moderately useful. Comprehending passages and communication difficulty was a challenge to teachers. Demonstrating and translating new words and vocabulary to hearing impaired learners was a challenge. The major conclusion is that the use of manual modes of instruction in English contributed to poor academic performance. Learners to be equipped with digital hearing aids and cochlear implants. Adaptation of the syllabus, refresher courses for the teachers, skilled staff to teach in pre-primary for laying a good foundation and teachers of English to embrace the use of intervention measurers. The major recommendation is the use of Signed Exact English in the teaching of English at all levels. Teacher training colleges therefore to be inclusive of oral skills.

Verah (2017) carried out a study to identify the factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in English amongst secondary students in Turkana East District, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was employed to gather information on the factors that affected students' acquisition of speaking skills in English. The sample size comprised 3 randomly and purposively selected public secondary schools, 137 form three students, 6 form three teachers of English out of whom were 3 were heads of the English department making a total of 145 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule, observed schedule and a checklist. The findings indicated that English course books, literary texts and the chalk board were the most available and accessible instructional resources in the schools. Teachers used few learner-centered teaching methods that enhanced students to speak English in the classroom. It was concluded that schools lacked variety of instructional resources. Age of enrolment in school affected acquisition of speaking skills.

Teachers did not employ enough teaching methods that could give students opportunities to practice speaking good English. This would minimize the errors they made while speaking English. The researcher recommended provision of a variety of instructional resources and teachers to vary the teaching methods that enable students to acquire speaking skills in English successfully. Children should start school at the right age.

Wamakobe (2015) in his study sought to establish the non-verbal cues used by the Abasamia community of Busia County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted in the study. The study employed purposive and simple random sampling technique to sample 48 respondents who participated in the study. Data collection instruments used were photographs, interview schedule and questionnaires, using a drop-and-pick-later procedure for questionnaire and note-taking for interview guides. The findings revealed that a variety of nonverbal signs were frequently used within the Abasamia community. The respondents of the study were found to engage in nonverbal cues to communicate, repeat, complement, duplicate, assent, regulate, contradict, indicate relational standing, demonstrate and maintain cultural norms and communicate emotions. The study concludes that indeed nonverbal signals are used in communication among the Abasamia. The nonverbal cues are complemented by verbal cues to enhance reinforcement and clarity and that the choice of non-verbal signals is motivated by certain factors such as culture, norms, occasion, mood and intimacy. The study recommends among other issues documenting the use of nonverbal cues among local communities such as Abasamia as part of enhancing and preserving culture and national heritage.

2.5 Research Gaps

A knowledge gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the issue discussed. For instance, Verah (2017) carried out a study to identify the factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in English amongst secondary students in Turkana East District, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was employed to gather information on the factors that affected students' acquisition of speaking skills in English. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule, observed schedule and a checklist. The findings indicated that English course books, literary texts and the chalk board were the most available and accessible

instructional resources in the schools. Teachers did not employ enough teaching methods that could give students opportunities to practice speaking good English. However, our study focused on instructors' and learners' perceptions on use of non-verbal communication in instruction of English in Kenya.

Secondly, a methodological gap can be identified from the research, for example, Wamakobe (2015) in his study sought to establish the non-verbal cues used by the Abasamia community of Busia County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted in the study. The study employed purposive and simple random sampling technique to sample 48 respondents who participated in the study. Data collection instruments used were photographs, interview schedule and questionnaires, using a drop-and-pick-later procedure for questionnaire and note-taking for interview guides. The findings revealed that a variety of nonverbal signs were frequently used within the Abasamia community. On the other hand, our study employed desk study review methodology.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to Instructors' and learners' perceptions on use of non-verbal communication in instruction of English in Kenya. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on Instructors' and learners' perceptions on use of non-verbal communication in instruction of English in Kenya. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject on Instructors' and learners' perceptions on use of non-verbal communication in instruction of English in Kenya. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to the Instructors' and learners' perceptions on use of non-verbal communication in instruction of English in Kenya which was split into top key words. After an in- depth search into the top key

words (instructors, learners, perception, non-verbal communication, instruction, English), the researcher arrived at 3 articles that were suitable for analysis.

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interview guides. The findings revealed that a variety of nonverbal signs were frequently used within the Abasamia community. The study recommends among other issues documenting the use of nonverbal cues among local communities such as Abasamia as part of enhancing and preserving culture and national heritage.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

First, the study established that teachers used four categories of non-verbal communication while teaching English language. These are kinesics, proxemics, oculusics and vocalics. Second, from the findings of this study, one may conclude that non-verbal communication helped in effective teaching and learning of English language. Thirdly the study concluded that students understand better when their teachers use non-verbal cues in the class. Teachers use non-verbal communication to motivate, create and arouse the student's interest to learn English language. Instructors' non-verbal communication is one of the best tools for classroom management and control. Lastly, it is concluded that both students and teachers do not experience much difficulties or challenges when non-verbal communication is used in teaching and learning English language.

4.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that the government should make provision for learning resources which can complement teachers' non-verbal usage in order to deliver content and knowledge effectively. Also, since classroom communication is a two-way process, teachers should better understand their students' non-verbal communication. This means that if there is any communication problem in the class, the teacher should be able to adopt better methods of teaching which should also be accompanied with non-verbal gestures. In addition, non-verbal communication as a course of study should be introduced in teacher training institutions. This is to enable the teachers to apply the concepts of using non-verbal communication effectively in classroom effectively.

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