

STUDENTS' BODY LANGUAGE IN RESPONDING TO TEACHER TALK IN EFL CLASSROOM AT SMA ATHIRAH MAKASSAR

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the types and functions of students' body language in the classroom. The method of this research is case study. The instruments used in this research are observation and interview. Participant in this research is the tenth grade student of SMA Islam Athirah Makassar which consists of 28 students. The obtained data from three non participant observations and a session of semi-structured interview with the students and are analyzed using a qualitative analysis model in relation to the concerns of this study. The findings show that spontaneous laughing, body lean, hands shrug, head clamp, hand clapping, arms behind, arms in front of body, arm raise, chin support, holding veil, hair clasp, neck scratch, face cover, mouth clasp, expression of happiness, expression of boredom, expression of smile, eyebrows flash, eyes close, eyes stare, eyes raise, boredom posture, standing while clenching hands in lower position, standing while hand is gripping the wrist, blowing forefinger, and nodding head, are twenty six types of body language used by the students in responding to teacher talk in EFL classroom. The functions of the body language used by the students are also various. They are to strengthen, clear, and make their verbal language more communicative and effective, increase the level of confidence, and to help them minimize the level of anxiety. They can be categorized as complementing and regulating. These findings inform teachers, and future researcher to take possible actions on what to do next in order to enhance understanding about the students' body language in the Indonesian context and how to learn more about it.

KEYWORDS

Students' body language, teacher talk, types of body language, function of body language.

1. Introduction

Communication is important tool of interaction for human because it can help human to share their feeling and thought. Generally, communication is the process of sending and receiving messages that enable humans to share knowledge, attitudes and emotions (Alfatihi, 2006). This statement indicates that communication is important for human because without being communicated everybody cannot share anything to the other. People communicate in many different ways. One of the most important ways, of course, is through language. As commonly viewed, language use is the main distinction between animals and human beings. Without the existence of language therefore, the appearance of human society is then impossible. English, for instance, as a trend use of communication over the nations these days is used to link and connect people-to-people over the world.

The human language falls into two types of communication: verbal communication and nonverbal communication. For a long time, only the former one occurred to us immediately

when we discuss human communication, while the latter was neglected to a large extent. In fact, nonverbal communication also plays a very important role in human social activity. In addition, body language is regarded as cultural phenomena which may represent the identity of a community.

Thoreau (1980) has ever coined that in human intercourse, the tragedy begins when there is misunderstanding about words. The body language is therefore situated to clear what is being misunderstood. Due to its vital function to strengthen the meaning of spoken sentences, the practical use of body language or non-verbal communication shows an increasing demand over the years in many aspects of humans' interaction, not excluding in the classroom interaction among lecturers and students in English speaking lesson.

Cohently, Richard & Willy (2002) said "People may use non-verbal communication to describe things, to complain about people behavior, to make polite request, or even to entertain people with jokes and anecdotes."

Referring to an amount of information mentioned above, the researcher therefore is responsible to figure out sufficient information to explain the phenomena of mixing body language into oral language. Hence, this research expectedly will have a role to explain these phenomena by means of critical analysis. In this case, the researcher is aware about the importance to figure out the reasons of these phenomena in order to give valuably additional information for wide people especially teachers, at least to acknowledge them the trend of using body language in class.

Literature on body language in language teaching is not remarkably very new. This issue has been observed and researched by many studies with different aspects and models for sure. Hosu (2012), through his article entitled *the empire of body communication*, stated that body language has been theorized a lot in the last decades. Body itself has been considered not only in philosophy yet in some other disciplines. The body nowadays exists in our speech and everyday practice: wherever we turn there is something regarding the body that captures our attention such as diet, exercises, massage, dance, beauty, body-building, fitness, therapies and techniques that approach the body in fact. Hosu (2012) concluded that "the body language itself represents both the social status of the speakers but also the internalization of the social accepted beauty stereotype." Hrisca (2011) studied the consequences of technology on body language, as written in her article themed *Online Communication and Body Language*, by which she found that using body language and the particularities of online communication is sometimes destructive. Further, even with online communication, such as web cams, it has a great impact on real live and real body language. Following a narrative trend, this study therefore reports on the process identify the types and functions of body language utilized by the students in responding to teacher talk experienced by an EFL teacher in Indonesian context.

Jaskolka (2011), the term body language designates the vast array of physical movements that occur both consciously and unconsciously all over our body as we communicate. These may be subtle movements of the eyes, shifts in our posture, facial expressions, gestures with codified meanings (such as a shake of the head for 'no', a beckoning gesture for 'come here').

Mehrabian (2017), body language is a form of non-verbal communication that consists of body posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, voice intonation and more. Further, he outlines that body language is the oldest form of communication, but even nowadays, it is considered than up to 93% of our communication. Following this, body languages also defined as the process of stimulating meaning in the minds of others throughout non-verbal message, or messages that are non-linguistics or non-language based on Richmond, Smith Jr, Heisel, & McCroskey (2001). It means that body language is extremely important as it can be the main channel of communication. To prove this, Birdwhistell (2010) stated that the body language thus represents 65% of meaning conveyed.

Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, (2013) state that when people refer to body language communication, they are talking about the signal to which meaning was attributed, not the process of attributing meaning. Here we shall therefore select one definition that is consistent with current thinking in the field. Furthermore, Allen (2000) proposes that body language involves all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source of receiver.

2. Methods

This study employs case study as the research design. This research took place at SMA Islam Athirah Makassar. The participant of this research, in particular, was a group of students grade X. Generally, each class of SMA Islam Athirah Makassar consists of 28 students. To achieve the depth of case for this study, the researchers rely on observation, semi-structured interview as data collection procedure. This case study adopts four-step data analysis technique based on Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014) theory about qualitative data analysis.

3. Findings

Generally, many forms of body language which included actions, gestures, movements, postures, facial expressions, and eye contact were all found during the three-meetings observation. Interestingly, those forms were intended for specific purpose. It means that the form of actions and gestures which were seen by the researcher utilized by the students was intended for particular reasons. Following this, it was also figured out through interview session that the body language could make students better, clearer, and more confident which all were psychologically valuable in English class.

This part precisely discusses about the findings mentioned previously. The researcher discusses the interpretation and relates the theorist regarding the findings about the types of body language utilized by students in responding to the teacher talk in classroom as well as the function of body language utilized by students in responding to the teacher talk in classroom. On average, it was clearly found by the researcher that the existing students in fact did not only use one type of body language but most of the body language during the three-observed meetings. Additionally, based on the interview with the students, it was found that body language was used to emphasize their verbal language. In details, look at the explanation below based on three-observed meetings:

1) Types of Body Language Utilized by Students Utilized by the Students in Responding to the Teacher Talk in Classroom

This part discusses about body language forms employed by students in responding to their teacher talk in classroom. It varied from genetic, postures, gestures, facial expression, and eye contact.

a. Genetics

As exemplified in several figures from the first to the third meeting of observation, there was only one type of genetics that can be found that was spontaneous laugh.

A sudden laugh, according to Jaskolka (2011), is much commonly done if people respond to something funny. However, laughing can also be a sign that someone is being rude. Morris (1994) stated that in some places a loud laugh is considered rude. In this case, most students were not just doing a sudden laugh but also they did it loudly in responding to the teacher talk. Yet, the teacher did not seem to be bothered of what they did. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students did spontaneous laugh because they responded to the teacher talk that was considered funny.

b. Postures

It was also observed through three meetings that few students performed some postures in responding to teacher talk. According to Knapp and Hall (2006), postures vary from the use of legs, shoulders, hands or arms, head, and limbs. The first meeting, in particular, the posture of body lean was used by the two female students (image 2 and image 3) which according to Morris (1994) one of the types of postures that is used by a person when talking to his superior. In this case, the student was talking to the teacher that is considered as someone older at school and also has to be respected. The second posture was hands shrug, it was used by a female student (image 4) which according to Morris (1994) one of the types of postures that is used by a person to response a question. In this case, the student was responding to the teacher statement. The third posture was head clamp, it was used by a male student (image 5) which according to Morris (1994) one of the types of postures that is used by a person to reveals that someone feels no need to show eagerness or attention. In this case, the student was answering the teacher's question relaxed.

In the second and third meeting, it was found the students who were using their arms to perform a posture. The first one (image 18) was a male student who put both of his arms behind his back. Pease (1988), someone tends to stand and put the arms behind of the body when they feel quite relaxed. This student seemed to be fine reading a text in front of the class as he performed this posture before starting to read. In contrary, the students in image 19, image 27, image 28 and image 29 put their arms in front of their body. This according to Morris (1994) is a sign of anxiety. Performing this posture makes someone look like he wants to make a defensive barrier for himself because he does not seem to be relaxed and looked

anxious. In this case, the students did not feel like they enjoyed reading the text in front of the class because they always put their arms in front of their body.

In the third meeting, it was also found a posture showing that someone feels bored with something. As stated by Knapp and Hall (2013) a hand is also part of body that can form a posture. In image 26, it can be seen that the students performed a posture of boredom while listening to the teacher talk. It can be a sign that she did not feel enthusiast or felt tired as she support her head with her arms on the table. As claimed by Pease (1988), the extreme boredom and lack of interest can be seen when the head is fully supported by something like arms or hands.

Therefore, the researcher interprets from the findings that the students could be seen more using their arms to perform a posture, just like what Knapp and Hall (2013) mentioned above through their definition.

c. Gestures

It was specifically found that the students employed gestures during the observation of three meetings to respond the teacher talk. The first one was hand clapping (image 6) which was performed by most of the students after being asked by the teacher to give applause to their friends who have successfully performed their conversation in the class. As what have been mentioned in previous part of this chapter, hands can be used to perform a body language (Knapp and Hall (2013)). In this case, the students performed gesture that has been used since ancient Rome with the same purpose that was to give appreciation.

Other gestures that were found in the first meeting were arm raise (image 7), chin support (image 8) and face cover (image 9). As previously mentioned, Morris (1994) claims that when the arm is raised in the air, palms showing, and held there until the gesture acknowledge, then it means someone is trying to request for attention. The second one is when someone is trying to focus their attention on a speaker, he will support her chin with his hand (Morris, 1994). The third one is when someone genuinely shocked, or it may be used in a light-hearted way when pretending to be shocked. Therefore, it can be concluded that all gestures performed by the students in the first meeting were also a type of body language.

The second, the use of gesture in the second meeting was also found repeatedly. The gestures were found when the students were asked by the teacher to read the text that they have written in front of their classmates. There were three gestures captured in the second meeting of observation, the first one was holding veil (image 20), the second one was hair clasp (image 21), and the last one was neck scratch (image 22). All gestures were performed by the female students.

Holding a part of our clothes while talking in front of someone is one sample of gestures. According to Morris (1994), this gesture is sometimes performed when someone feels anxious. In some other cases, the man will hold the cuff of his shirt while the women will hold her handbag. In doing so, someone automatically creates a defensive 'barrier' across the front of the body. This 'body cross' shield gives someone an increased sense of security. Actions of

this kind are known as 'barrier signals' (Morris, 1994). As this female student did not wear a handbag, then she held her veil instead.

Hair clasp according to Morris (1994) is another sample of gestures. The female student in image 21 actually did not clasp her hair. Instead, she clasped her veil because she covered her hair with the veil. In this case, veil can have the same function as hair for someone who does not wear veil. This gesture means that someone needs to comfort himself (Morris, 1994) when doing something. At the point, the student was asked to read a text in front of the class. This might be a little bit uncomfortable for her so she performed this gesture unconsciously.

The three gestures in the second meeting (holding veil, hair clasp and neck scratch) showed that the wearing of veil for Moslem female effect their body language.

The last one was neck scratch that is also one sample of gesture. This gesture was performed by the student when she was talking to her teacher. Morris (1994) emphasizes that when someone scratches the side of the neck, just below the ear several times with the forefinger, it shows that someone feels uncertain. Moreover, he explains that this gesture is an unconscious gesture that is made by someone who is not sure of himself or who doubts what is being said, and he does not like to say so. In this case, the student appeared to be unconsciously performed this gesture as a signal that she was uncertain to what she said to the teacher.

In third meeting of observation, there were three gestures that were found. They were forefinger blow, head nod and mouth clasp. The first one was forefinger. This gesture was performed by a female student while standing in front of the class. The students in the class suddenly produced a lot noise so she brought her forefinger in front of her mouth and blew it. This according to Morris (1994) is one sample of gestures performed to request for silence.

The second one is head nod. This gesture was performed by a male student who appeared talking to his teacher. When performing this gesture, the teacher asked him a question and he answered by saying "yes" and the same time nodded his head several times. According to Morris (1994), nod head is a gesture performed repeatedly to show an agreement to listener.

The third one is mouth clasp. This gesture was performed by a female student who was asked to repeat the answer by the teacher. According to Morris (1994), mouth clasp is the action symbolically stops any more words being uttered.

d. Facial Expression

Based on the findings in this research, it was found that some students used facial expression in responding to teacher talk. Facial expression, according to Damnet (2008) has three functions which are to provide opening and closing, to complement, and to replace speeches. In all meetings, the sample of facial expressions that was always found was the expression of smile (Look at image 10, image 23, and image 34).

In details, the students were found several times responding the teacher talk by performing an expression of happiness. When someone happy or enjoy the talk or discussion, he will smile

as a response. Therefore, it could be said the facial expression of smile reflected either opening or closing channel of communication as stated by Knapp and Hall (2013).

In addition to this, in the third meeting of observation, it was found a student who did not pay attention to the teacher in the class (image 11). From the image, it can be seen that she supported her chin with her hand while listening to the teacher talk. According to Morris (1994), performing this gesture means boredom. In this case, the student might feel bored and she probably wants to listen to something else from the teacher so she unconsciously performed the gesture.

e. Eye Contacts

The students used eye contact to control, to show attention, interest, and it can also be used to respond the teacher during the learning activities. As showed previously in the findings, the image 13 and image 14 illustrated the eye contact between the students and the teacher. It appeared that the students kept their focus on their teacher when listening to something interesting. The same thing occurred in image 35 in the third meeting of observation. The difference is it was not performed by the students in a group but a male student who was talking with the teacher in front of the class. Another eye contact (image 36) was found performed by a female student which also appeared to be talking to the teacher in front of the class. When talking to the teacher, she kept her eye contact and leaned her body toward the teacher which according to Morris (1994) indicates eager attentiveness.

Overall, the use of eye contact as mentioned above is to show attention and interest to the teacher. It can be seen that it was strongly used during three-observed meetings. Therefore, the use of eye contact discussed above coherently relates to Malson (2003) who states that engage eye contact indicates authority.

To recapitulate, from all discussion mentioned above, it could fairly be judged that very various types of body language used by the students to respond to the teacher talk in every single observed meeting. Hence, the body language does not only exist in non-formal interaction but also in formal communication such what happened in the classroom activity observed by the researcher for three meetings. In addition, the researcher also found that the female students were more attractive in using body language to respond their teacher talk in the EFL classroom activity.

2) *The Functions of Body Language Utilized by Students in Responding to the Teacher Talk in Classroom*

This particularly discusses about the functions of body language stated by the students in responding to teacher talk. There were three students who were interviewed. The first one admitted that the use of body language is very important in the class because it can help her to tell something that cannot be delivered by using oral language. She also said that body language can be used to emphasize the message. This is in line with the functions of body

language stated by Straker (n.d.) that the use of body language cues to emphasize or strengthen the message delivered to the listener.

The second respondent was a male student. He admitted that he sometimes use body language especially when he was asked to explain something to the teacher. He said that he used body language to clear his message so the teacher could understand his message well. Moreover, he also admitted that he becomes more confident when delivering a message with the help of body language as he is sure that the message was understood well.

The last respondent was a female student who also thinks that the use of body language is important in responding to teacher talk. In her opinion, body language is used as an alternative to deliver a message. She further mentioned one sample of body language that is waving hands that can be used to call someone. In the classroom, she always uses body language to make interaction with the teacher for example by raising her arm. According to her, she always raises her hand before asking a question because it is considered politer. In addition, she also uses body language to help her remember the message that she wants to say for example by moving her hands. Another function of body language to her is to help her minimizing anxiety especially when she was asked to present her assignment in front of the class.

In sum, the main function of body language to the students at this context was to help them deliver the message to the teacher. The researcher then interprets that most students used body language in the intention of making their verbal speech much clearer and this is closely related to what Annisa (2013) stated that people use body language to make them speak interactive and to force the main channel of their communication.

4. Conclusion

This research provides ideas and values the body language which is repeatedly employed in the class in responding to teacher talk. The students performed five types of body language to respond to teacher talk which varied from genetics, postures, gestures, facial expression, and eye contact. In details, genetic could be tracked as some students suddenly laughed when listening to something funny. Gestures could also be tracked since some students used their hands and arms to form body language. Some gestures found were clapping hands, arm raise, chin support, face cover, holding veil, hair clasp, neck scratch, head nod, forefinger blow and mouth clasp. Three of gestures (holding veil, hair clasp and neck scratch) are special gestures that are used by female students who wear veil. Those gestures showed that the wearing of veil for Moslem female effect their body language. Likewise, postures such as body lean, hands shrug, head clamp, putting the arms behind the back and in front of the body, boredom posture, standing while clenching hands and standing while hand is gripping the wrist were also found. Facial expression, additionally, varied from smiling and bored expression. Eye contact, as observed, also included eyes close, eyes stare and eyes raise. The second, the function of body languages stated by three respondents of this research also could be identified. Even though it is known that there are some functions of body language, the respondents only mentioned a few of them that is to help them deliver their message well and to make the verbal message clear. Based on the research results mentioned previously, this

expectably brings several suggestions including; the first, in classroom setting, the teacher should understand that body language is a common thing used in line with the verbal language and it must be valued since the body language strongly aids people to make the verbal language more interesting and clearer. The second, the researcher hopes that this research can be developed by the next researchers. It is suggested to discuss more about the function of body language employed by the students not only in responding to teacher talk but also in general during the lesson. This can help to find out the students' need and make the interpretation of their body language so the teacher might be more understandable to the students' feeling.

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