THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICE, STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION

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Abstract. This study was conducted in order to identify Arabic teachers’ Non Verbal Communication Practice (NVCP) and its relationship with the development of students’ attitude and motivation. This quantitative study was conducted through a survey using a questionnaire as the instrument. A total of 750 Form Four and Form Five students in National Religious Secondary Schools (NRSS) and Government-Aided Religious Schools (GARS) from all over Malaysia participated as the respondents. The sample selection was made using random stratified sampling method according to zones. The data analysis used was Pearson correlation and was conducted using SPSS software. Study showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between all the tested variables. Correlation between NVC and Attitude is positive (r=.42, p = < .05) at the significant level of 0.01. Correlation between NVC and students' motivation also indicated a positive significant relationship (r =.40, p = < .05) at the 0.01 significance level. This study showed that if teachers’ NVC practice is high and frequent, then students’ attitude and motivation will also improve. Findings of this study will help education administrators, especially Arabic teachers, to improve their NVC efficiency level.

Keywords: Nonverbal communication, attitude, motivation, Arabic language, teaching language.

Introduction. Studies on teaching communication have been carried out for centuries (Kendon, 1981). Very few studies, however, have been made on nonverbal communication practice (NVCP) in teaching and learning (Othman, 2007; Ahmad, CheAman, &Amzah, 2009). Human communication occurs in two main forms which is verbal communication and nonverbal communication (Floyd, 2009; Heun&Heun, 1975; Richmond &McCroskey, 2000).

Verbal communication refers to the language that is spoken (Omar, 1988;Daud, 1996; Mohamad Nor, 2001) whereas nonverbal communication (NVC) which is used as the main variable does not make use of any utterances and also provides all the sources that convey message other than what is expressed (Hassan, 1980; Heun&Heun, 1975; Floyd, 2009; Goodhal, Goodhal, &Schiefelbein, 2010; Kendon, 1981; Sperder& Wilson, 1999). Thus, for Knapp and Hall (2009), nonverbal communication includes communication effected by means other than words. Mohamad Nor (2001) stated that NVC is a form of basic and primitive human communication that could provide abundant communication messages.

NVC is noteworthy in effective communication because of the domination of the message. Researchers claimed that 80 percent of overall human communication can be grasped from NVC’s body language, 14 percent through NVC’s tone of voice, and only 6 percent through spoken expression (Nelson, 1997). Research also found that in one face to face communication, listeners will focus 55 percent of their conversation period to the speaker’s body language signals, 38 percent to the change in tone of voice and only 7 percent to the verbal content (Kaul, 2007). In addition, according to Floyd (2009), in a communication, as many as 65–70 percent of its message is derived from nonverbal cues, while 30–35 percent is obtained verbally. In the context of teaching, teachers’ NVC is able to enhance cognitive and affective learning outcomes (Witt &Wheeless, 2001).

NVC channels are numerous and are not tied to any special agreement on any classification of NVC channels (Ahmad, 2003; Abdullah, 1999). Nonetheless, ten NVC channels are frequently discussed and linked to teaching and learning, namely, (i) physical appearance, (ii) body movement, (iii) environment, (iv) facial expression, (v) eye contact, (vi) voice variation, (vii) personal distance space, (viii) the use of time, (ix) touch and (x) scent (Richmond &McCroskey, 2000).

Nonverbal Communication in Teachers’ Teaching. The effectiveness of communication is one of the key aspects that needs to be controlled by a quality teacher. Effective communication involves verbal and nonverbal communication (Syed Mustafa &Maskon, 2010). Richmond and McCroskey (2000) and Devito (2007) explained that a teacher must be aware, master and possess these two forms of communications in order to create effective teaching and to achieve optimal learning results. This is because in the communication of teaching, NVC affects the teacher’s oral communication effectiveness. Ten NVC channels are most often
associated with teaching, namely, 1) physical appearance, 2) kinesics, 3) chronemics, 4) Haptic, 5) facial expression, 6) Oculesics, 7) Proxemics, 8) Paralinguistic, 9) Environment, and 10) Olfactory (Richmond &McCroskey, 2000).

Nonverbally, teachers must convey positive attitude and communication while interacting with students. Positive nonverbal communication, according to Collis and Dalton (1997), can be done by smiling, nodding, winking, hand shaking, and hugging. Such behaviour shown by teachers can play roles in providing certain messages such as strengthening the efficiency of verbal communication, highlighting charisma, showing confidence interpreting and visualizing verbal messages (Devito, 2007). Thus, in order to understand verbal messages properly, all aspects of NVC must be mastered proficiently (Argyle, 1979). Jasmi and Tamuri (2007) explained the real NVC status in teaching:

"...In order to create an interesting teaching and learning, teachers must possess two effective communication skills which are verbal and nonverbal. Strong combination between these two types of communications will enhance classroom interaction between teachers and students..."

NVC helps to facilitate teaching methods by Zailani, 2007), attracting students’ attention (Burrough, 2007), and reducing communication barriers (Lau & Chan, 1972). These barriers, according to Lau and Chan (1972), occur during teaching communication because of a teacher’s lack of caution toward NVC elements such as style, dressing, and a teacher’s bad behaviour that is unfavourable to students during the learning process. In addition, a teachers’ NVC also has a direct impact on attitude formation (Burrough, 2007), motivation and learning outcomes (Macedonia &Knosche, 2011). Thus, Arabic language teachers should be aware of their NVC competency in order to optimise the effectiveness of Arabic language teaching.

Research Question

Generally, the purpose of this study was to look at the impact of Arabic language teachers’ NVC practice towards Arabic language students’ attitude and motivation in Malaysia. Therefore, the two research questions of this study are:

1) Is there any significant relationship between teachers’ NVC practice and students’ attitude?
2) Is there any significant relationship between teachers’ NVC practice and students’ motivation?

Research Methodology

This study applied quantitative methods that utilized survey research design. The instrument used in collecting data was a questionnaire; this was suitable to measure opinion, attitude and behaviour (Ary, Jacob, &Razavi, 1985; Fullan, 2001; Hsiao & Fisher, 2002) as well as portraying the real situation. This study involved National Religious Secondary Schools (NRSS) and Government Aided Religious Schools (GARS) schools from all regions of Malaysia including Sabah and Sarawak.

In order to increase the representativeness of the sampling, schools were divided into five zones. Division of schools according to zones and groups helped to facilitate fair and comprehensive sample selection. The population of this study was 84,841 students, which is the total number of Arabic language students in 55 NRSS and 143 GARS in Malaysia (BahagianPendidikan Islam, 2012). From that total number of students, 750 were chosen as the sample for this study. The sample was selected from among the randomly selected schools according to five zones with each zone represented by 150 students.

The questionnaire items were selected and modified by the researcher in order to fit the research objectives. Then, the chosen items were presented to a group of 12 experts to determine item suitability and validity. Changes were made to the chosen items according to experts’ views and the pilot study findings. The pilot test had been done to assess instrument reliability.

Table 1.0: Reliability of questionnaire items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach alpha</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NVCP</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.929</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.0 shows the number of items and reliability of the constructs. The number of items representing the constructs of teachers’ non-verbal communication practice (NVCP) was 50 items. All these items have been redeveloped by the researcher by adaptation from the questionnaire CARNIM (Culturally-Adapted Nonverbal Immediacy Measure Revised) (Hinkle, 2009), NIS-S (Nonverbal immediacy Scale- Self Report) (Richmond, McCroskey, & Jonson, 2003), A Questionnaire on Nonverbal Behavior in Interpersonal Relations (Richmond &McCroskey, 2000), Questionnaire Revised Nonverbal Immediacy Measure (Arnim) (McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond, & Barraclough, 1996), Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-Self Report (NIS-S) and Nonverbal Immediacy-Observer Report Scale (NIS-O) (Richmond et al., 2003). The Cronbach’s alpha value obtained for this construct was .937.
The number of items representing the construct of motivation was 10 items. Motivational constructs measured were intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Blair, Jones & Simpson, 1991; Nasution, 1995). All the motivational items constructs were assessed and adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 2004) questionnaire and students’ motivation towards science learning (SMTSL) (Hsiao-Lin, Chi-Chin, & Shyang-Horng, 2005). The Cronbach’s alpha value obtained for this construct was .876.

The number of items representing the attitude construct was 15 items. Items for attitude construct were adapted from the questionnaire on attitudes towards English learning (Al Noursi, 2013) and affective learning measure (McCroskey, 1994). The Cronbach alpha value obtained for this construct was .929.

Whereas for instrument validation panel of 9 experts who have criteria in related fields have been involved. The necessary amendment of instrument has been made based on the comments and the views of experts.

Evaluate Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed on all items constructs tested using SPSS 18 for reading Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO). During EFA carried out, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) the factor loading, the eigenvalue and varimax rotation (Hair et al., 2006) have been taken into account. The value of loading factor in this test is set at 0.40 of the valuation on the minimum value set 0.30 (Hair et al., 2006) or 0.33 (Chua, 2009). KMO reading greater than 0.50 for EFA shows that data is accepted and had no problems multicollinearity (Chua, 2006, 2009) to construct a reading KMO for Nonverbal communication practice is .921, student construct motivation is .900 and student construct attitude is .899. Thus, based on reading the KMO test conducted EFA data were considered valid.

Discussion of Research Findings

The discussion is related to the relationship between teachers’ NVC practice and students’ attitude and secondly, the relationship between teachers’ NVC and students’ motivation.

Table 2.0: Correlation between teachers’ NVC and students’ attitude (N=750)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal Communication</td>
<td>.417</td>
<td><strong>.000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ Attitude

Note **. Significant level on confidence p < .01 (2 tailed).

Research findings displayed in Table 2.0 show a significant relationship between NVC and students’ attitude (r = .42, p = .005) at the significance level of .01. The finding signified that teachers’ NVC is related and has certain influence on forming Arabic language students’ attitude. The resulting form of relationship between these two constructs is positive. This form of relationship indicates that if teachers possess high or frequent score of NVC, the score of students’ attitude is high as well and vice versa. Therefore, the higher or more frequent teachers’ usage of NVC in teaching, the higher or better the attitude shown by these students toward Arabic language.

Although there was a positive relationship the strength of the relationship between teachers’ NVC and students’ attitude was moderate. The correlation coefficient between both variables was r = .42. According to Baba (1999) this value indicates a moderate relationship.

Table 3.0 shows the findings of the relationship between Arabic teachers’ NVC practice and students’ motivation:

Table 3.0 The correlation coefficient between NVC and Motivation (N=750)

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal Communication</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td><strong>.000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Students’ Motivation

Note **. Significant at p < .01 (2 tailed).

Findings in Table 3.0 show that there is a significant relationship between NVC and students’ motivation (r = .40, p = .001) at the significant level of .01. The relationship findings indicate that teachers’ NVC will influence and has a significant relationship or connection with students’ motivation. The resulting form of relationship between these two constructs is positive. This kind of relationship showed that if teachers have a high or frequent score of NVC, hence, students’ motivation score is high or good as well and vice versa. It would seem likely the higher or more frequent the teachers’ NVC usage during the teaching process, the higher or better level of motivation shown by students toward Arabic language.

Although the relationship was positive, the strength of the relationship between teachers’ NVC and students’ motivation is rather low. The correlation coefficient between both variables was r = .40. It is likely in order to create effective teaching, teachers should emphasise not only on the communication aspect, but also on nonverbal aspects as well during the teaching process as students’ motivation is associated with teachers’ NVC.
Findings of this study show an apparent positive relationship between teachers’ NVC and Arabic language students’ attitude and motivation. This finding coincides with the findings that explained that change in attitude acts as the catalyst of success as proven by the Japanese and English (Mukhtar, 2008). In order to create a more positive attitude, strategic use of NVC needs to be mastered and applied in the teaching of Arabic language. With regard to formation of the language students’ attitude, according to the study by Abdul Aziz, Idrus, and Mahamod (2008), on students’ behaviour pertaining to Malay language. 85.6 percent of respondents agreed that their Malay language teacher plays a big role in influencing their behaviour toward Malay language.

Arabic language teachers need to be proactive in developing students’ positive attitude toward the subject through nonverbal gestures such as warmth, concern, and sincerity. For this reason students’ evaluation on their teachers should include not only the teaching methods, but also relationship and interaction aspects between the teacher and students; a teacher with a positive attitude towards students will attract student attention and further enable them to concentrate on what is taught (Abdul Aziz, Idrus, and Mahamod, 2008). Abdulah et al. (2008) and MohdSolah et al. (2008) stated that a positive attitude toward a language will inspire learning, facilitate learning and affect achievement in the target language.

Other than behaviour, students’ motivation can also be enhanced with the use and practice of Arabic language teachers’ NVC. MohdSolah et al. (2008) explained that attitude will affect their achievement and motivation; positive attitude motivates students and gives them a high momentum to learn and study Malay language with diligence in order to achieve good results. In contrast, students with a negative attitude will study lazily without any motivation. The findings of this study confirm those in Yusi, Nik Yusoff, and M. Shah (2010) stating that a significant relationship exists between attitude and Arabic language learning.

Motivation will trigger behaviour aimed at achieving objectives (Munjir&Redzuwan, 1993). This statement is aligned with Siraj, Ishak, and Mokhtar (1996) that claimed motivation directly impacts an individual’s desire and longing for success or achievement. Therefore, motivation is the strongest aspect because it drives behaviour toward the intended goals (Desa, 2009; Redzuwan&Abdullah, 2004).

Motivation is created through proper guidance and continuous encouragement (Mat 2005). Studies show that a significant relationship exists between teachers’ nonverbal communication and students’ motivation (McCroskey, Richmond, & Bennet, 2006; Pogue &Ahyun, 2006); students’ motivation will increase if the teachers’ nonverbal communication also increases and vice versa. Su (1998) who studied Arabic language students also found a similar phenomenon; students in the study were more motivated to attend classes, finish tasks, and participate in language activities after being influenced by the teachers’ behaviour.

That teacher factor as the catalyst of students’ motivation is undeniable. Idris (2005) stated that teachers’ effective relationship and teaching method has an indirect influence on students’ motivation. According to Idris (2005), the size of a teachers behavioural factor is not only expressed in words but also in determination, diversification of teaching methods, having a positive relationship with students such as knowing how to attract students, show concern, being attentive to students’ problems and always giving support in creating a warm relationship, being positive and motivating students. Jantan and Razali (2004) stated that teachers were responsible in generating students’ motivation in order to foster effective learning.

Teachers who actively use NVC directly serve as motivators of learning. This is because the task of a teacher is not only to spread knowledge but it is also compulsory for them to nurture students’ interest in the subject learned (MohdRejub, 1992). Furthermore, motivation to learn serves as a momentum that drives energetic and purposeful behaviour (Lope Pihie, 2001).  

Research Conclusion. Findings of this study prove that there is a relationship between Arabic teachers’ NVC with the development of students’ attitude and motivation. A teacher should practice all the NVC channels such as 1) physical appearance, 2) kinesics, 3) chronemics, 4) Haptic, 5) Facial expression, 6) Oculessics, 7) Proxemics, 8) Paralinguistic, 9) Environment, and 10) Offactory. Teachers who possess all those NVC attributes will have more advantage to succeed in their teaching practice. Teachers who practice NVC skills will be better able to stimulate the development of positive attitude toward the learning of Arabic language. Teachers’ NVC will also help to motivate students to learn. Positive attitude and high levels of motivation as the outcome of teachers’ NVC will cause students to strive eagerly and diligently to achieve the vision and mission as desired in learning Arabic language.

References


