

Nonverbal Communication Channels used by Mass Communication Lecturers during classroom sessions with students.

¹Onyenekwe, Ogochukwu Nneka and ¹Egwuonwu, Jude

¹Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Email: on.onyenekwe@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

The art of communication encompasses both verbal and nonverbal communication. Classroom sessions between the lecturers and students are regarded as a vital social and learning interaction in which verbal and nonverbal expressions are component. The aim of this study was to identify the nonverbal communication channels expressed by the Mass Communication lecturers during classroom sessions. Two hundred and forty students (240) of Mass Communication Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University at various levels of study were randomly recruited for the study. A well-structured questionnaire highlighting the different channels of nonverbal communication was used for data collection. The findings showed that lecturers of Mass Communication Department use nonverbal communication channels during classroom sessions with students. The preponderant channel of nonverbal communication was kinesics. Since the evaluation of the lecturers' nonverbal communication expressions were identified by the students, it is important that the lecturers understand that their nonverbal expression may enhance their classroom sessions or impede the ability of the students to comprehend the learning outcome. The study recommends the need for an official curriculum in nonverbal communication.

Keywords: Communication, Kinesics, Lecturers, Nonverbal Communication, Teaching, Undergraduates

Introduction

Humans are social beings that do not live in isolation. Communication plays a vital role as it helps people interact with one another and convey ideas one with another. It has been widely accepted that classroom activities have both social and learning components. In such settings, communication is vital in achieving the purpose of classroom community. It is also established that effective communication using language that is well understood by the participants in the community is effective for knowledge impartation.

Since communication is an aspect of both verbal and nonverbal communication regarded as siamese twins that are difficult to separate, it is difficult to start verbal communication without ending such communication with nonverbal communication. The scenario is also the case vice versa. A classroom setting is like a microcosm community. In a community no matter how small, an effective means of communication is desired for proper coordination of activities and information. Classrooms are spaces created for conducive learning (Zeki, 2009). Though learning

can come in different ways, a constant has always been effective communication in the language of expression.

Onyenekwe and Ekwenchi (2021) in an earlier study have identified several nonverbal channels of communication within the community of antenatal care units of three Tertiary Health Institutions in South East Nigeria. This consists of healthcare providers and pregnant women. Onyenekwe, Ekwenchi and Ezebialu (2021) also identified that some art of practice of the healthcare providers are actually expressions of nonverbal communication. It is important to note that education has been regarded as a social learning community apart from the transfer of knowledge (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018). Effective knowledge transfer can only occur when the language of communication is well understood because language has been known to facilitate cognitive development (Luchkina & Waxman, 2021). It has also been observed that appropriate gestures can aid understanding complex issues (Yeo, Ledesma, Nathan, Alibali & Church, 2017) and improve attention (Wakefield, Novack, Congdon, Franconeri, & Goldin-Meadow, 2018) probably by improving confidence or relaxing the mind and muscles.

Reports exist to indicate that classroom sessions are littered with different channels of nonverbal communication (Kozic, Zunac & Bakic-Tomic, 2013; Li & Jiang, 2022; Kucuk, 2016). Some of the nonverbal communication channels observed include body language, facial expression, eye contact (Houston, 2001; Fatik, 2014). Nonverbal communication in teaching includes what type of clothes a lecturer wears, the way a lecturer stands or sits, the tone of voice the lecturer uses while teaching (Zeki, 2009) amongst other expressions earlier highlighted. These channels include the following: Kinesics, Haptics, Artifactual, Proxemics, Paralanguage and Chronemics.

Within the context of a classroom, nonverbal communication becomes very important as the teacher and student often have more confidence in the nonverbal than in the verbal message (Rawat, 2016; Bambaeroo & Shokrpour, 2017). This study therefore focused on the nonverbal aspects of the communication used by Lecturers during their course delivery.

Research Questions

The following research questions are set to direct the focus of the study;

- i. Do lecturers use nonverbal communication channels in teaching?
- ii. Which of these nonverbal communication channels do lecturers predominantly use?

Research Methodology

The research work was set in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Quantitative research approach was employed to find out if lecturers in Mass Communication Department of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka use nonverbal communication in the classroom. The adopted research design for this study was survey method. The population of the study consists of 240 undergraduate students of Mass Communication Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka drawn from all the levels of study in Mass Communication Department. Out of the 240 undergraduate students of mass communication, 195 returned their completed questionnaire. This was about 81.24% rate of recovery

of the questionnaire. The instrument used in collecting data from respondents was a questionnaire designed to collect information regarding the nonverbal communication channels of Mass Communication Lecturers during classroom lectures. The students were aged 18 to 29 years.

The information regarding use of nonverbal communication by Mass Communication Lecturers was documented as the number of times it happened within four sessions of classroom interactions across the levels of study in the department. The frequencies were recorded in percentages.

Results of the Findings

Level of awareness of Nonverbal Communication

Out of the 195 respondents, 164 (84%) of the respondents are aware of nonverbal communication, 6(3%) are not aware of nonverbal communication while 25 (13%) are not sure of what nonverbal communication means.

Table 1: Level of Mass Communication students aware of Nonverbal Communication

Awareness of NVC	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	164	84%
No	6	3%
Not sure	25	13%
Total	195	100

Source: primary data collected for the study

Predominant numbers of the participants 135 (70%) acknowledged that Mass Communication lecturers used nonverbal communication channels in the classroom while 15 (8%) of the respondents did not notice any form of nonverbal communication by the Mass Communication lecturers. However, 44 (22%) of the respondents were not sure if they noticed any form of nonverbal communication by Mass Communication lecturers.

Table 2: Level of participants that indicated that Mass communication lecturers use Nonverbal Communication channels in the classroom

Use of NVC channels in classroom	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	136	70%
No	15	8%
Not sure	44	22%
Total	195	100

Source: primary data collected for the study

Facial expression (18%) was the most commonly used nonverbal communication channel by Mass Communication Lecturers. This was followed by tone of voice (16%), while hand gestures, eye

contact and body language are at 13% each. Next in line was smile (11%), physical appearance (8%), use of time (5%), touch (2%) and proximity (1%).

Table 3: Frequency of use of nonverbal communication channels by Mass Communication lecturers

Frequency of use of nonverbal communication	Frequency	Percentage
Use of time	20	5%
Hand	51	13%
Body Language	52	13%
Tone of voice	64	16%
Eye contact	54	13%
Touch	7	2%
Facial expression	72	18%
Proximity	6	1%
Physical appearance	4	8%
Smile	44	11%
Total	404	100

Source: primary data collected for the study

The most commonly used channels of nonverbal communication amongst Mass Communication Lecturers was Kinesics (68%), followed by Paralinguistics (16%), Artifactual (8%), Chronemics (5%), Haptics (2%) and Proxemics (1%).

Table 4: Computation of frequencies of use of nonverbal communication channels by the Mass Communication lecturers

Nonverbal communication channel	Type	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percentage	Individual percentage
Kinesics	Movement of hand	51	68%	13%
	Body language	52		13%
	Eye contact	54		13%
	Facial expression	72		18%
	Smile	44		11%
Haptics	Touch	7	2%	2%
Artifactual	Physical appearance	34	8%	8%
Proxemics	Proximity to students	6	1%	1%
Paralinguistic	Tone of voice	64	16%	16%
Chronemics	Use of time	20	5%	5%
Total		404	100%	100%

Source: primary data collected for the study

Discussion.

The present study used the students to evaluate the use of nonverbal communication by their lecturers. This will assist in evaluating the extent to which the students of Mass Communication department are exposed to nonverbal communication channels in the course of lectures. Findings showed that 8 out of 10 students were aware of nonverbal communication. Seven (7) out of 10 students agreed that Mass Communication lecturers use nonverbal communication channels in the course of lecture delivery in their classrooms. The students identified the following expressions of nonverbal communication during lecture delivery by their lecturers. These expressions of nonverbal communication include the use of time (being time conscious), hand gestures, body language, tone of voice, eye contact, touch, facial expressions, proximity, physical appearance, smile. These categories had various frequencies of use by the lecturers as identified by the students.

It was observed that a significant number of students are aware of the nonverbal features of communication. Therefore, lecturers should be careful not to engage in nonverbal communication that may impede the learning outcome expected of the students. Studies have also shown that nonverbal communication is associated with cognitive learning. It has been shown that nonverbal communication in the course of teaching helps students in comprehending different tasks (Kucuk, 2016; Li & Jiang, 2022; Kozic, Zunac & Bakic-Tomic, 2013). Conversely, it means that lecturers' inappropriate nonverbal communication can cause students to dislike certain courses. This can manifest in the tone of the lecturer to students when they have difficulty comprehending the discourse of a lecture.

In the present study, a lot of nonverbal communication activity in the channel of Kinesics was used by the lecturers. These include use of hands, body language, eye contact, facial expression and use of smile. Sixty eight percent (68%) of the nonverbal expression of Mass Communication lecturers

was centered on this channel of nonverbal communication known as Kinesics. In the present study, other channels that showed prominence, include Paralanguage and Artifactual/Artifacts channels of nonverbal communication. The extent of expression of nonverbal communication as observed in this study is consistent with some reports (Houston, 2001; Fatik, 2014; Zeki, 2009). They independently observed body language, facial expression, eye contact, type of clothes, posture and tone of voice of lecturers as expressions commonly associated with lecturers in the classroom.

Evidently, there are individuals that are sensitive to one's tone of voice (paralanguage). This is how a lecturer's aggressive or hostile voice tone can impede understanding or the desire to ask questions in class when some concepts may not have been clearly delivered. A soft spoken tone, though assertive, might be perceived as more welcoming with the leverage to ask questions and the room to relax in the course of the lecture. Similarly, appearance of the lecturer (artifactual/artifacts) could attract/distract during lectures. One's choice of clothes is known to define one's personality or even the environment. Therefore an appropriate response by a lecturer may attract and keep the attention of students effectively, thereby promoting the learning outcome. The reverse is also the case. The appearance of a lecturer can also distract a student particularly if the body language of the lecturer concentrates on showing off what he/she is putting on.

It is known that lecturers that dress well also mentor students that dress well. This is with the resultant level of confidence it gives to the mentee and mentor within the classroom thereby effectively accomplishing stated goals. Eight percent(8%) of the mass communication lecturers could be adjudged as being particular about their physical appearance in terms of the neatness of the clothes and frequency with which they change clothes. In fact, they were seen not to repeat previous clothes worn within the period of study. Their physical appearance puts them at a high level of respect and portrays their type of personality. This finding agrees with the report of (Zeki, 2009) which states that the type of clothes a lecturer wears, the way a lecturer stands or sits and the tone of voice of the lecturer are part of nonverbal communication in teaching. Onyenekwe, Ekwonchi & Ezebialu (2021) had earlier reported that dress code amongst healthcare providers is a part of nonverbal communication during antenatal care of pregnant women.

This study highlights evidence of the use of nonverbal communication channels by Mass Communication lecturers and also highlights that a predominant number of students are aware of nonverbal communication. It is important to note that nonverbal communication is an integral part of effective communication skills required by stakeholders in communication. They should be seen to understand the arts of both verbal and nonverbal communication.

The low frequency of the use of proximity might be due to classroom congestion or unconscious adherence to the suspended physical distancing protocol occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. This might also explain the low frequency of touch in the course of lectures. It might also justify the high frequency of body language and tone of voice that was used to communicate the intentions of the lecturers in spite of the space restrictions. This means that such expressions are not constrained by distance or proximity. As regards eye contact, research shows that there is a strong

link between the amount of eye contact people receive and their degree of participation in communication (Zeki, 2009). This means that eye contact encourages students to easily take part in speech since teachers can nominate and invite responses by using their eyes.

In an earlier study among healthcare providers in three tertiary health institutions in South East Nigeria, (Onyenekwe, Ekwenchi & Ezebialu, 2021) observed a similar scenario among healthcare providers and pregnant women. In the findings, it was observed that most arts of the healthcare providers are aspects of nonverbal communication. Some were well understood by the pregnant women although some of the healthcare providers did not know that such arts are aspects of nonverbal communication. They were unaware that in the course of their practice, they were actually communicating with the pregnant women they are providing care for.

Okon (2011) recommends teachers should learn to use nonverbal communication in order to improve the quality of classroom teaching. In this study, teachers exhibited six channels of nonverbal communication in the course of their classroom lecture delivery. This shows that the mass communication lecturers are aware of the booster nonverbal communication channels give to learning outcome.

Conclusion

The study concludes that mass communication lecturers exhibited expressions of nonverbal communication channels such as kinesics, paralinguistics, artifactual, chronemics, haptics and proxemics. The predominant expression was kinesics.

Recommendation

Therefore, the present study would encourage development of a curriculum on nonverbal communication in the country because wherever people gather, they require communication to operate effectively. This communication includes nonverbal communication in congruence with verbal communication.

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