



Describing the teacher's gestures in an EFL classroom

Immanuel Kamlasi, Jefrianus Nepsa

English Lecturer at English Education Study Program of Timor University

English Student at English Education Study Program of Timor University

Email: ikamlasi@yahoo.com, jefrinepsa65@gmail.com

Abstract

Gesture is a key point in nonverbal communication. Gestures can help the teacher(s) to convey meaning(s) to the student(s) in the communication process in an EFL classroom. Gestures often occur during teacher's talks and they have an important role to play in EFL classrooms. This research intends to find out the types of gestures and describe the gestures which were used by the English teachers in an EFL classroom. Thus, the researchers used a descriptive qualitative methodology in the research. This research involved an English teacher who was chosen purposively as the participant. A tape video recording was used to record the teacher's talk and gestures during an EFL classroom lesson. Then, the researchers screened the pictures from the video to find out the teacher's gestures. Next, the researchers analyzed and described the types of gestures, which were used by the English teacher. The analyses focused on posture, facial expression, hand gestures and eye contact. The research results showed that a teacher's gestures can facilitate the teacher and the students' communication in an EFL classroom. The findings reported that there were 25 hand gestures, 13 gestures of facial expression, 23 gestures of posture and 8 gestures of eye contact. The research indicated that hand gestures were dominate in the EFL classroom. The English teacher seemed to use gestures as a strategy to convey meaning for students in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: *EFL classroom, gesture, teacher*



Introduction

Body language is involved in the communication process. Body language is a part interaction between speaker(s) and listener(s). Allan & Pease (2004: 11) noted that body language is an outward reflection of a person's emotional condition. Non-verbal communication presents the speaker's emotions, in which listeners must get the meaning through body movement. Furthermore; Allan & Pease (2004: 12) explained that the key to reading body language is being able to understand a person's emotional condition while listening to what they are saying and noting the circumstances under which they are saying it. The fundamental communication purpose is to convey meanings. Speakers feel comfortable if the listeners understand the meaning(s). In daily communication, both verbal and non-verbal communications cannot be separated.

Nonverbal communication is the way of the teachers to encourage students' willingness to learn language skills. Generally, verbal communication refers to words and sentences in utterances. While nonverbal communication refers to body movement or gestures. Gestures are movements of the hands, head, arms and body that convey a message through action. A gesture is a part of nonverbal communication in which body actions communicate particular meanings. As such, Gestures become a powerful tool of communication.

In daily communication, speakers tend to use lots of gestures in the communication process. The speakers believe that gesture actions are easily understandable by the listeners. With regards to the gestures and speech, they work together to make certain meanings. Gestures are important in daily life. Gestures are mostly found in the teaching and learning process. In teaching English as a foreign language, it is possible for teachers to use gestures during class. Gestures play an essential role in the English foreign language classroom, especially in developing students' communication skills. The communication between teachers and students is



improved if the teachers make effective usage of nonverbal communication. The teacher always uses the gestures to complement their talk when they address their students. Thus, gesture has a very important role in the EFL classroom. Gestures can help the teacher to make the talking atmosphere active. Gestures can help students understand main points more quickly. Teachers uses different gestures to express different points. Gestures can help teacher to talk fluently with the students. Since, most students cannot speak English very well, gestures can really help the teacher and students to make the conversation run smoothly.

Gesture is a key factor in an EFL classroom setting. An English teacher uses gestures to convey meaning(s) for his/her students during the classroom. Students understand the meaning(s) easily through gestures. Considering the importance of gesture in an EFL classroom; this research comes to the following objectives: to analyze and describe the types of gestures which are used by an English teacher in an EFL classroom.

Materials and Method

The recent studies on gestures in an EFL classroom were conducted by Cao & Chen (2017), Farlianti, Roslina, & Syam (2017), AlGhamdi & Alghamdi (2017) and Rahmat (2018). Cao & Chen (2017) reviewed the “*Role of Gesture in the Second Language Learning and Teaching*” which reported that gestures play a significant role in SL learning and teaching. The findings showed that gestures facilitate second language learners in listening comprehension and vocabulary learning. Thus; gesture is used as an effective teaching strategy in second language teaching and classroom management. Furthermore; Farlianti et al., (2017) analyzed the *Gestures Used by the Students in Speaking Class*. Farlianti found that there were 29 kinds gesture that were used by the students in the classroom interaction. There were various functions of gesture used by the students. The findings showed that gesture could be used to convey, the interest of



student in conversation, that the student is lacking in self-confidence, courtesy and a good attitude, disagreement, self-control, authority when arguing, the persons' habits, the persons' forgetfulness, the person's shy nature, the person's confident, the person's enthusiasm when respond something, courtesy, a disguise of nervousness, numbers, clarification, comments, confidence, nervousness and insecurity. AlGhamdi & AlGhamdi (2017) investigated a study on *Spontaneous Gesturing in the EFL Classroom*. The findings of the study reported that that gesture has a positive impact in classroom communication. Gesture has a significant impact on the EFL students' vocabulary. While; Rahmat (2018) conducted a study on "*Teachers' Gesture in Teaching EFL Classroom*". The research reported that the teacher used all of the types of gestures that were classified by Ekman & Friesen (1969). There were 18 pictures that were categorized as illustrators, 1 image was categorized as regulators and image for emblems, and 2 images were categorized as affect display. The gesture that was dominantly used was illustrator, dealing with the use of natural hand and body gestures that accompany speech.

Pease (1988: 3) explained that most of the basic communication gestures are the same all over the world. E.g. when someone is happy she/he smiles or laughs; when someone is sad she/he is frown. Nodding the head is almost universally used to indicate 'yes' or agreement. When a baby has had enough milk, she/he turns her/his head from side to side to reject his mother's breast. This means that gestures are similar around the world. The gesture has meaning when it is used in the context in which it occurs. Furthermore; Pease (1988-3-4) argued that verbal language differs from culture to culture, so the non-verbal language may also differ. On other hand; one gesture may be common in a particular culture and have a clear meaning, it may be meaningless in another culture.

Types of Gestures

Body language refers to the body movements of the speaker to transfer information. The body movement and oral sounds are in harmony and complete the task to express the emotions and ideas of the communicator. In an EFL classroom, teachers can use body language well to communicate with the students. Ekman & Friesen (1969), Pease (1988), Allan & Pease (2004) classified gestures into hand/palm gestures, eye contact, facial expression, head gesture and postures.

a) Hand/Palm Gesture

Hand/palm is the most common gesture. People tend to use hand/palm gestures in everyday communication. Pease (1988) mentioned three main palm command gestures: the palm-up position, the palm-down position and the palm-closed-finger-pointed position.

b) Eye contact

Eye contact is one of the most common types of nonverbal communication in an EFL classroom. Eye contact is key in reflecting the emotional communication. It is the most preferable nonverbal behavior in the classroom. The teachers “take care” of every student by using eye contact.

c) Facial expression

The face is the most noted part of our body. Pease (1988) explained that the face is used more often than any other part of the body to cover up lies. People smile, nod and wink in an attempt to cover up, but our body signals tell the truth and there is a lack of congruence between our body gestures and facial signals.

d) Head Gesture

Head gesture is a part of nonverbal communication. In general; people nod their head as a way of saying yes or to convey agreement.



e) Posture

Posture refers to body position, such as the back, shoulders and head while standing, lying, etc. The body position provides an important role in interpreting meanings in nonverbal communication.

Methodology

The aim of this research focused on analyzing and describing the gestures used by English teachers in an EFL classroom; thus, this research was categorized as descriptive qualitative research. The qualitative research was done by collecting, classifying and analyzing the data and then making a conclusion and report. Furthermore; Creswell (2014: 234) mentioned that the sources of data, in qualitative research, come in multiple forms, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual information rather than just relying on a single data source. A qualitative method was a suitable method to analyze and describe the data of gestures in an EFL classroom.

Participant

Creswell (2014) noted that, in qualitative research, it is beneficial to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. Thus; the researchers applied a purposive sample in this research. The researchers chose a senior English teacher as the research subject. She is an English teacher at SMK Katolik Kefamenanu, North Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.

Source of Data



The instrument is an important tool to be used in the research. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007: 79) noted that instrument cover questionnaires, interviews, observation, tests, field notes, accounts, documents, personal constructs and role-play. Thus, the source of data was the pictures of gesture. To obtain the pictures, the researchers used a Tape Video Recorder (TVR). The TVR was used to record the teacher's gestures during the teaching and learning process in the EFL classroom. The file was transferred onto a computer and the pictures were screened.

Procedures Collecting Data

In collecting the data, there were two steps, used by the researchers, namely observation and video recording.

a) Observation

Cohen et al. (2007: 396) said that observation can be of facts, such as the number of books in a classroom, the number of students in a class and/or the number of students who visit the school library in a given period. Furthermore; he adds observation also focuses on events as they happen in a classroom, for example, the amount of teacher and student talks, the amount of off-task conversation and the amount of group collaborative work. In this research; the researchers observed the English teacher who teaches English in an EFL classroom. During the observation; the researchers identified the teacher's gestures that she used in the EFL classroom.

b) Video Recording

Creswell (2014) explained that the data collection steps include setting the boundaries for the study; collecting information through unstructured or semi structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials, as well as establishing the protocol for

recording information. Thus; in collecting the data, the researchers took a video recording while the English teacher taught English in the EFL classroom.

Techniques of Data Analyses

As mentioned before, the study is qualitative research, to analyze and describe the types of gestures used by an English teacher in an EFL classroom. In this case the researchers applied the following steps:

a) Transcribing

The video files were transferred onto a computer in order to make it easier to transcribe the data. In this part, the researcher listened and watched the video carefully, then pictures of the teacher's gestures were captured.

b) Identifying

In this part; the researchers identified and selected each type of gestures which was used by the English teacher in the EFL classroom.

c) Classifying

In this section, the researchers classified the data into categories of gesture. The analyses focused on hand/palm gesture, eye contact, facial expression, head gesture and posture.

d) Analyzing

The researchers analyzed the types of gestures and the meanings of gestures which were used by the English teacher in the EFL classroom.

e) Describing

In this part, the researchers discussed and described the results of the findings. The discussions refers to aspects of the research, containing two parts, namely identifying and describing the gestures used by the English teacher in the EFL classroom.

Findings and Discussion

This study was conducted to find out and describe the teacher's gestures in an EFL classroom. This study involved a senior English teacher of SMK Katolik Kefamenanu, North Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The teacher taught English for 120 minutes. While she was teaching; the researchers took a video recording. Then; the video was transferred onto computer and screened out the pictures which related to gestures. The research findings and discussion are presented in the following section.

The data on the teacher's gestures showed that there were 4 types of gestures which were made by the English teacher, namely hand/palm gesture, facial expression, posture and eye contact. The data showed that the teacher make 25 hand gestures, 13 gestures of facial expression, 23 gestures of posture and 8 gestures of eye contact. This indicates that hand gestures are the most common gestures and eye contact is the least common gesture, in an EFL classroom. The following part presents the teacher's gestures in an EFL classroom based on the types of gestures.

Gesture 1 - The teacher stands in front of the class and she takes the prayer position. She makes her hand valve down as symbol of prayer. This gesture means that the teacher invites the students to pray together. In this situation, the teacher leads the prayer and she says: ***Let us pray***. In the 2013 Curriculum; prayer is an early activity in the classroom.

Gesture 2 – The teacher shows her right palm up to the students. The teacher asks her students ***How are you today?*** This question is a general question to know the whether the

students are in a good or bad condition. The teacher cares about the students' health therefore she asks the students while showing her palm for students. At the same time; she wants her students to speak. The teacher's face seems like she is expecting her students to answer or say something.

Gesture 3 - The teacher stands in front of the class, close to white board. She points to the whiteboard and talked to students. This gesture indicates that the teacher demans her students to look at the topic written on the whiteboard. Then, she asks her students to read the topic.

Gesture 4 - The teacher stands in front of the class and shows her palm down to the students. This gesture means that the teacher wants to tell her students to stop talking, to pause, to speak slowly, or the teacher may be stressing the important points for students.

Gesture 5 - The teacher stands in front of the students and shows her thump finger sideways. This gesture means that the teacher is stressing an important point or part related to the topic or material.

Gesture 6 - The teacher stands in front of the students and shows her right palm up and her fingers are up spaced. This gesture means that the teacher invites the students to be active in the classroom during the teaching and learning process.

Gesture 7 - The teacher asks a student to say something. After that the she gives reinforcement to the student. The teacher uses her thump and finger to give reinforcement to the student or to say "very good" to the student, because the student answered the question.

Gesture 8 - The teacher stands in front of the class and points her right hand to a student. This gesture means that the teacher directs to a student. At the same time the teacher smiles at her students. The teacher's smile expresses the teacher's happiness.



Gesture 9 - The teacher stands in front of the class and shows her palm up to the students directly. This means that the teacher asks the students to stand up or speak up.

Gesture 10 - The teacher points her hand to her watch. This is a time signal. The teacher reminds the students about the time, or the teacher wants to say to the students that the teaching and learning process is over. Her face shows that she is seriously telling the time for students.

Gesture 11 - The teacher stands in front of the students and explains the lesson. The teacher makes a gesture by showing her hand to the students to explain something special. This means that the teacher is explaining something special or giving an example to the students that is related to the material. This gesture is used to emphasize a small point or important point. Her face shows that something is important or special.

Gesture 12 - The teacher asks a student to stand in front of the class to demonstrate the task. The teacher gives applause to the student after the presentation. The gesture gives reinforcement, by clapping her hands, as a positive reward for the student. At the same time, the smile expresses her positive reinforcement.

Gesture 13 - The teacher stands among three students and explains about something. While the teacher is explaining; the students are listening what the teacher is saying. This gesture means that what the teacher explanation is understandable by the students. As the teacher stands very close to students and the legs are spaced and she opens her hand or palm. Beside that, her eyes focus on a student in front of her. This kind of gesture means that explaining something to do. The gesture 14 describes that the teacher stands in front of the white board and the teacher puts her hand or palm to her face and she laughs at something. This gesture in the picture above means that the teacher is laughing when there is funny thing happens in the classroom. Her posture shows her left leg is in front and shoulders are bent. This gesture means that something is very funny.



Gesture 15 shows that the teacher stands in front of the class and points at her chest. She makes a gesture by pointing her right hand to herself and her left hand holds a paper. The gesture brings hand toward the heart or chest. This gesture usually wants to indicate to ourselves. As in EFL classroom; the teacher gives an example about the material related to her. Gesture 16 shows two fingers held up with the palm facing out which means V for victory. In EFL classroom situation; the gesture means that the teacher gives numerical. This gesture is easily to remember the number that refers to two.

Gesture 17 – The teacher stands in front of the students. The teacher looks at the students while she keeps silent for a while. This gesture means that the teacher is listening to what the students are saying.

Gesture 18 - The teacher stands in front of the students and looks up; she is thinking about something. This gesture means that the teacher is thinking about something or has forgetting something and is trying to remember it.

Gesture 19 – The teacher stands in front of the students and puts her hand to her head. This gesture means that the teacher wants the students to think before doing something, or the teacher wants to tell the students to use positive thinking.

Gesture 20 - the teacher's facial gesture. She looks very serious. This means that the teacher is stressing on important material.

Gesture 21 - The teacher stands in front of the students, folds her hands and looks at her students. At the same time, the teacher stays silent. This gesture means that the teacher is focused on the students and that she is listening carefully to the students.

Gesture 22 - The teacher stands, showing her left side, seriously listening to her students talk. This kind of gesture shows that that the teacher must listen to her students.



Gesture 23 - The facial expression as the teacher is smiling. The teacher stands very close to her students and smiles at her students. This kind of gesture means that the teachers is build a close relationship with her students. The students feel familiar with the teacher.

Gesture 24 - The facial expression as the teacher stands very close to the students in a group. The teacher shows her confusion by not smiling and remaining very serious. The teacher is confused with the students' work.

Gesture 25 - The teacher stands in front of the class and holds a hand phone. The teacher tries to reply to a message from someone. At the same time, the teacher informs the students to wait for a while. The teacher is asking permission from her students.

Gesture 26 - The teacher stands in front of the students. The teacher is looking at the students and holding her hands in a palm up position. This gesture means that the teacher is explaining the material.

Conclusion

Every English teacher is able to use gestures in an EFL classroom. It is believed that a teacher's gestures play an important role in communication. Teacher uses gestures to convey meaning to students. This research found that there were 26 gestures used by the English teacher in the EFL classroom. The findings reported that there were 25 hand gestures, 13 gestures of facial expression, 23 gestures of posture and 8 gestures of eye contact. This indicates that hand gesture were dominantly used in the EFL classroom.

Acknowledgements

We praise the God for the glory and blessing for completing this paper. We realize that, in the process of finishing this paper, we have got help from many people. Therefore, it is properly to address our gratitude and big appreciation to the following people.

1. Bpk. Ir. Arnold Klau Berek, M.P., Ph.D. as the rector of Timor University who supported the financial.
2. Ibu Melania Hania, S.Pd., the headmaster of SMK Katolik Kefamenanu who permitted the us to conduct the research at her school.
3. IbuMaria Y. Naisali, S.Pd., the English teacher of SMK Katolik Kefamenanu for her kindness so we can observe and take data in her class.

Table 1. Types of Gestures

No	Types of Gesture	Gesture	Total
1.	Hand/Palm Gesture	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26	25
2.	Facial Expression	8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26	13
3.	Posture	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26	23
4.	Eye Contact	13, 14, 21, 17, 23, 24, 25, 26	8



Figure 1. Gesture Hands Clenched in Lower Position and Posture



Figure 2. Gesture Palm Up and



Figure 3. Gesture Pointing



Figure 4. Gesture Palm Down



Figure 5. Gesture Thumb Sideways



Figure 6. Gesture Palm Up



Figure 7. Gesture Thumb Up



Figure 8. Gesture Pointing & Smiling



Figure 9. Gesture Palm Up



Figure 10. Gesture Showing Watch



Figure 11. Gesture A Tiny Bit



Figure 12. Gesture Clapping Hands



Figure 13. Gesture Teacher's Instruction

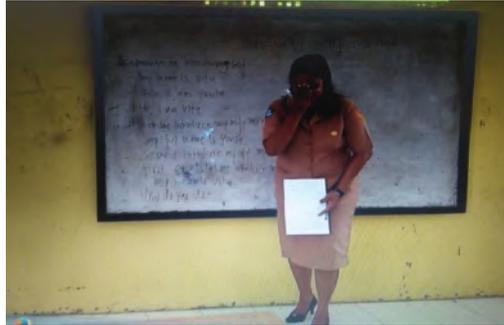


Figure 14. Gesture Closing Face



Figure 15. Gesture Pointing Me



Figure 16. Gesture Victory



Figure 17. Gesture Looking at



Figure 18. Gesture Thinking



Figure 19. Gesture Pointing Head



Figure 20. Gesture Facial Expression



Figure 21. Gesture Cross Arms on Chest



Figure 22. Gesture Posture



Figure 23. Gesture Smiling



Figure 24. Gesture Focusing



Figure 25. Gesture Hand Phone



Figure 26. Gesture Palm Up



References

- AlGhamdi, H. H., & Alghamdi, F. M. A. (n.d.). *Spontaneous Gesturing in the EFL Classroom and its Impact on Interaction and Learning: A Case Study*.
- Allan & Pease, B. (2004). *The Definitive Book of Body Language: How to Read Others' Thoughts by Their Gestures*. Pease International: Australia.
- Cao, N., & Chen, G. (2017). The Role of Gesture in the Second Language Learning and Teaching. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 14(12), 1070–1074.
<https://doi.org/10.3844/ajassp.2017.1070.1074>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. (Sixth Edit). Routledge: London-New York.
- Creswell, W. J. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Fourth Eds). Sage Publication Inc.: London.
- Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1969). The repertoire of nonverbal behavior: Categories, origins, usage, and coding. *Semiotica*, 1(1), 49–98.
- Farlianti, A. N., Roslina, R., & Syam, H. (2017). The Analysis Of Gesture Used By The Students Of English Study Program In The Classroom Interaction At The University Of Sembilanbelas November, Kolaka. *EDUCATIO: Journal of Education*, 2(2).
<https://doi.org/10.29138/educatio.v2i2.181>
- Pease Allan. (1988). *Body Language, How to read others' thoughts by their gestures*. Sheldon Press: London.
- Rahmat, A. (2018). Teachers' Gesture in Teaching EFL Classroom of Makassar State University. *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 2(2), 236–252.