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# The Impact Of Teachers' Non-Verbal Communication Strategies- Pakistani ELT Perspective

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## Abstract

Communication is needed to express ideas, emotions and feelings with verbal as well as non-verbal skills. Both these methods are pivotal in teaching-learning process. Teachers can avail verbal and non-verbal communication to help students for comprehending the difficult concepts. This study reflected the effect and use of non-verbal communication utilized by teachers in class room management at primary level. This study mirrored the importance of non-verbal communication in the subject of English to explore the effects of non-verbal communication on learning outcomes of students through observation of teachers and students in classrooms. The study found out that how this methodology could contribute to better learning outcomes of students. The research study tested the hypothesis that there is a crucial effect of non-verbal communication on the learning outcomes of students belonging to both rural and urban backgrounds. The population of the study comprised of 100 private school teachers around the area of Lahore. Questionnaire was selected as the research tool. Questionnaire was analyzed with percentage method.

### 1.1 Background

Communication is very important for the lives of human beings to communicate and express the thoughts, emotions, knowledge and skills. Communication is generally considered to be comprised of sounds and speech. Dileo (1977) expresses his views on non-verbal communication that "Language comprises all forms of communication: crying, facial expression, gestures, touching, yelling, and also speech and writing."

Although everything, physical objects and physical space, takes part in communication yet only speech sound are observed. Non-verbal communication raises the interest of the listener in the topic to give more meaning to the words spoken in the communication.

Non-verbal communication is used unconsciously without being noticed. When a person speaks something, he starts using his body language and gestures without noticing

that these gestures have transmitted the potent knowledge and messages. Tone and pitch of the language gives the hidden meaning to the listener as well. Non-verbal communication can be considered more reliable than the verbal communication as it provides some additional information to the listener.

Non-verbal communication is generally observed by children in their very early age just after their birth. Children become aware of the non-verbal communication through imitating. Wikipedia (n.d) states that “Non-verbal communication is usually understood as the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages. i.e. language is not the only source of communication, there are other means also. Non-verbal communication can be communicated through body movements, facial expressions, eye contact and gestures”. Givens (2002) says that non-verbal communication is the body movements, material artifacts or postures to encode a concept, mood or motivation. It is a signal or sign used to communicate with exception of words.

Eye contact of the teachers in the class room environment is one of the affective and vital teaching techniques to make students perform better in the learning atmosphere. It is a teaching tool to enhance the students’ knowledge and achievement. Mason (2003) states that eye contact is normally valued as engaging people in conversation. It is considered as indication of confidence, solidarity and sincerity. Smile is a facial expression which help in teaching making the students understand concepts better and in developing the students’ interest in learning outcomes. Anger is another facial expression which can be used in teaching techniques. If students lose attention, smile and anger can prove to be very powerful tools in hands of teachers to enhance students’ learning outcomes.

Teachers can use their facial expressions, pitch of voice, body movements, smile and anger as non-verbal communication to make students learn concepts in a better way. This non-verbal communication help in rapid learning for learning out comes to be performed in the healthier environment.

Learning outcomes are the product of learning activities being conducted in the class rooms. These learning activities include teaching methodology in which body movements play the vital part to make rapid learning outcomes.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The research study was titled as “The Effect and Use of Non Verbal Communication by the Teachers in the Classroom Management at Primary Level”. It discussed the use of non-verbal communication by the teachers to affect the learning outcomes of students in a class room setting. The experimental approach was utilized to experiment the non-verbal communication in a class of the subject English.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were observed for the research.

1. To find out the opinion of teachers about the non-verbal communication as an important teaching method.
2. To analyze the non-verbal communication in the learning process.
3. To explore the effective use of non-verbal communication that how it contributes in the better results of teaching-learning process.

#### 1.4 Significance of the Study

Experts have explored that almost 65 to 90% communication is based on body language. The study was conducted to evaluate the effect of nonverbal communication on the learning outcomes in the actual classroom atmosphere.

The purpose of the study was to promote acceptance and awareness about the non-verbal strategies. The recommendations could be helpful for teachers and curriculum planners to design syllabus according to the needs of students.

#### 1.5 Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis of the study could be made as

“The non-verbal communication affects the learning outcomes of students at primary.”

The study was delimited to the body gestures and movements, eye contact and facial expressions, spatial distance and pitch of voice used by the teachers in a class room setting. It was further narrowed down to the primary classes.

#### Literature Review

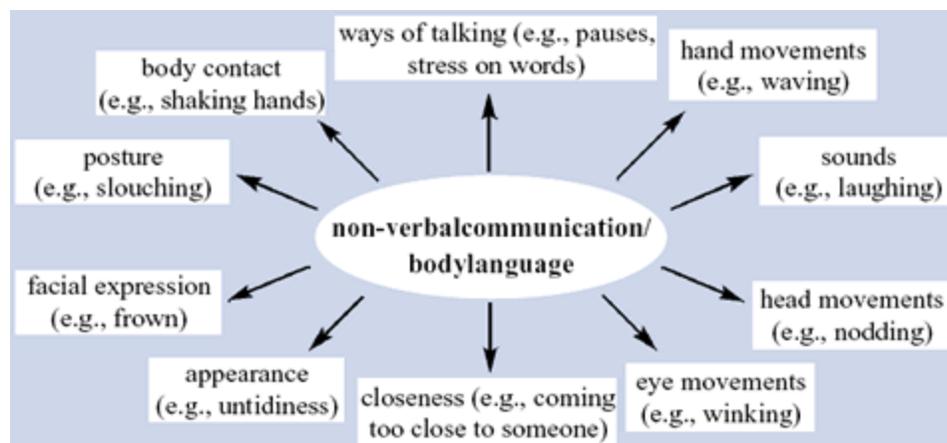
Thill and Bovee (1999) describe that the non-verbal communication is the most basic form of communication that uses all gestures, voice pitch, spatial relationship, body language that allows the speaker to communicate without words. Anthropologies have researched that long before human beings communicated with word, their ancestors used to communicate with one another through their body language. They smiled and touched one another to show solidarity and affection and show their anger through teeth gritting. Non-verbal communication is still used to show respect, likes, dislikes, feelings and emotions.

Half of the meaning of a communication can be understood through non-verbal communication. When a speaker talks, whether meaning is understood clearly or not, the listener is influenced by the way of talk employed by the speaker. Even if the speaker communicates when he is silent as deaf and dumb also communicate and make others understand their meaning through non-verbal communication (Carlin & Payne, 1995). Kroehnert (2006) states that nonverbal communication can reinforce and alter the meaning in any way a speaker wants. A speaker can communicate nonverbally through his way of dressing, his posture and expressions on his face, eye contact and the way hands are

used during a conversation. Non-verbal communication can be understood through the shrug of shoulders and inflection in the voice.

Some studies show that almost 65 % of the communication can be understood through nonverbal signals and actions. Some other studies rate this ranking up to 93%. Teacher should adopt non-verbal signal and should be expert in using the body language to make their meaning understood by students in a better way (Kroehnert, 2006).

Miller (1988) indicates that teachers should know and be well aware of non-verbal communication for two reason: (1) to receive messages of the learners in a better way and (2) to achieve the ability to send back the answers to students' signals to reinforce the learning process for better learning outcomes. Researchers recommend that a non-verbal expression adopted by a student serves as an important factor in making the teacher's impression(Bhatti, ZI, 2020). Being a good receiver requires the teacher to be good at receiving feelings, values and gestures used by the student while communicating his meaning through words.



Hybels and Weaver (2004) put forward four functions of non-verbal communication. These four functions are regulate, substitute, nonverbal gesture complement and accent. They further represent characteristics of non-verbal communication. They express that all types of non-verbal communication have their characteristics in common and they are unique to their culture where they belong to. These non-verbal communications can be in conflict with one another as they have different characteristics according to their own culture (Bhatti, ZI, 2020). Non-verbal communication often takes place at subconscious level as speakers generally are not aware of it while using it.

## 2.1 Various Functions of Nonverbal Communication

O'Rourke (2004) has given six major functions of non-verbal communication.

### **2.1.1 Accenting**

Non-verbal communication emphasizes some part of a verbal message. A raised eyebrow or wagging finger can convey surprise or disapproval respectively.

### **2.1.2 Complementing**

Non-verbal communication or body language adopted by the speaker often strengthens the tone or attitude of verbal communication. A downcast expression can follow words of discouragement. A smile or happy expressions can tell a story of success and promotion.

### **2.1.3 Contradicting**

Sometimes non-verbal communication contradicts the verbal communication with expressions. Tears in eyes and quiver in voice sometimes tell the other story contradicting the verbal detail delivered by the speaker. While delivering something, a single wink of eye and a nod of head can tell the listener that whatever is being told to him/her is not right. People believe in facial expressions and non-verbal gestures more than the words spoken to them.

### **2.1.4 Regulating**

When a person wants the other one to speak up, he will face the other person, open the eyes with eyebrow positioned upward, open his arms with hands in extended posture and palms facing upward expecting the other person to speak. When a person wants the other person to stop speaking, he will turn slightly away from the speaking person and either will close his eyes or turn them away from the other ones.

### **2.1.5 Repeating**

Non-verbal gestures sometimes repeat what verbal messages convey. When a person intends to leave the place in few minutes, he will hold the car keys in hand, coat on one arm and hat in the other hand before saying "I'm leaving now".

### **2.1.6 Substituting**

Non-verbal communication can also alternate the verbal message if the message is simple or monosyllabic. For example, during the game a player looks at his supporters and they give a thumb up sign which can substitute the expression of praise and best of luck as voice might not be heard from such a distance.

## 2.2 Desisting Deviancy

Desisting deviancy means the teacher's behavior to stop the disturbance created by the disruptive students in the class. Teacher's mobility and awareness about the class behavior are very important factors to increase their effectiveness in the classroom management (Florida Coalition, 1983). Students need to be alert about the awareness of teachers about what they are doing all the time. Teachers should also move in the classroom among the students to sustain the disruptive students' behavior. Non-verbal communication can be used by the teacher to convey his/her message to the students in the classroom management (Seedfeldt, 1980). For example if some student creates disturbance through disruptive behavior, teacher's finger on the lips is more effective than yelling out to keep the class calm and to keep the confusion and disruption out of the class.

Physical cuing helps teacher student interaction more effectively that conveys personal messages for direct communication. Such non-verbal communication can be utilized to approve or disapprove the behaviors and to make students know the classroom management in a better way. Expressive non-verbal communication results in personal recognitions and concern and also helps students pay attention (Seefeldt, 1980).

Non-verbal communication teacher and student. Laslett and Smith (1984) indicate that an angry teacher can forget the negative effects of a nonverbal communication. A teacher can communicate a challenge nonverbally and if the student takes up that challenge, as a result, a confrontation occurs between teacher and student. The confrontation may grow if the teacher glares or points towards the student negatively (Laslett & Smith, 1984).

Snell (1980) pointed out confrontation with students and disciplinary measures should be taken under controlled and privately. Non-verbal communication can be uses positively at deviancy to avoid confrontation in very early stages.

## 2.4 The Needs of Students

Illiterate people often listen better than the literate because they pay more attention on non-verbal body cues. They turn to the entire person not just to words and understand the meanings effectively. They respond to facial expressions, body movements, voice pitch and tone. They are more expert at reading the body language than the literate ones.

The young children in early years of education develop from nonreaders to beginning readers. They depend on non-verbal communication and body language for understanding more than elder learners.

The facial expressions i.e. frowns, tears, smiles and tightly closed mouth of young learners are significant to note because their limited capacity is limited and they express themselves through their physical cues (Seefeldt,1980).Teaching through non-verbal communication to the handicapped students is very effective and significant as it enhances all the senses of handicapped students and makes them sharper. A successful teacher of the handicapped students utilizes non-verbal strategies and techniques to make their learning senses more efficient (Hillison & Crunkilton, 1983). The researchers affirm that children believe what they are shown rather what they are told. They can tell what they are feeling through non-verbal cues(Bhatti, ZI, 2021). A successful teacher can strive for harmony in classroom management verbally as well as nonverbally. Approval, trust and acceptance are transmitted when the listener gives a positive response through a nod, smile, eye contact and leaning closely towards the speaker (Breeme & Erickson, 1977).

Non-verbal cues differ from culture to culture for their meaning. One culture can interpret a physical movement different from the other culture because of traditional and cultural value systems. For example, black Americans, Native Americans and Puerto Ricans do not make their eye contact while showing respect and recognition to the people with authority. On the other hand, White people take absence of eye contact as a sign of guilt or disrespect (Wolfgang, 1977). Miscommunication, conflicts and misunderstandings occur when these physical cues do not match in different cultures (O'Donnell, 1981).

## 2.5 The Physical Environment

Everything takes part in the learning process of a class room. Time, material objects, physical spaces and systems communicate to provide better learning outcomes (Hall & Hall, 1977). All aspects of the class room support the curriculum more effectively. Curriculum should be supported by the learning environment (Rosenfeld, 1977).

The physical environment and layout of the classroom is reflected by the teacher's philosophy and strategy. The arrangement of chairs and desks should be according to the learning goals. Social systems intertwine the physical arrangement because there is a connection between arrangement and behavior (Sommer, 1977). Chairs, desks, lighting, teacher's attire, students with special needs and desires depend on one another for a planned and effective classroom environment (Rosnefeld, 1977).

Thus non-verbal communication and physical cues not only include body language but also the whole equipment existed in the classroom environment to ensure the learning environment and to support the curriculum and its educational philosophy.

## Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Method and Design Chosen for the Project

The quantitative method was adopted to collect data and to analyze the results after eliciting the data on the effect and use of non verbal communication by teachers in the

classroom management at primary level. The quantitative method helped extracting different views of teachers on the use and authenticity of nonverbal communication in the classroom environment. The views were collected through a questionnaire that was designed from the review of the literature. Primary grade teachers were selected to collect the data.

Stratified-random sampling technique was used. The data was collected from an intact group comprised of primary teachers teaching in the surrounding of Lahore. The research tool was spread randomly in the intact group.

### 3.2 Research Questions

The research study might answer following questions:

1. What is non-verbal communication?
2. Is non-verbal communication effective for teaching at primary level?
3. Is non-verbal communication used by the teachers at primary level?
4. Do the students learn more through non-verbal communication?

### 3.3 Research Hypothesis

Non-verbal communication is effective in the learning environment of classroom management.

### 3.4 Research Instrument

Questionnaire was the best research instrument for a quantitative study. A questionnaire was a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of collecting data from respondents. It was designed for statistical analysis of the responses.

#### 3.4.1 Research Instruments (tools) Selected for the Research

For the quantitative purposes, a questionnaire was made from the review of the literature to acquire responses from the participants. The questions were divided into four sections: (1) desisting deviancy, (2) instructional procedures, (3) social, physical and emotional needs of students, (4) physical Classroom environment in this way, required information was elicited. The questionnaire was attached in appendix. Questionnaire was made in English and hundred questionnaires were distributed among teachers to get data from.

### 3.5 Participants

Participants belonged to teaching field living and teaching in different schools of Lahore who could understand the terms of non-verbal communication in the questionnaire.

### 3.6 Procedure of Data Collection

A consent form was given to the respondents in which brief introduction of the study was provided in plain words to the respondents. The confidentiality level was reserved for the participants and they were given assurance that the information elicited from them would not be made public. The researcher gave all the instructions orally to the participants to fill the questionnaire carefully.

### 3.7 Data analysis.

The data was further broken down according to the years of experience of teaching, qualification, the last year the teacher held any primary class, and the age and sex of the teacher.

The teachers were divided into three categories:

1. The teachers who use non-verbal communication and body language in the classroom environment on regular basis.
2. The teachers who use non-verbal techniques half of the time
3. The teachers who use non-verbal strategies in the classroom on seldom and rare basis.

Therefore, suggestions for the effective use of nonverbal techniques were provided for each of these types of teachers to utilize these strategies in the classroom management effectively.

### Findings

The research is based on a study of primary teachers whether they use nonverbal communication in class effectively. Eighty teachers teaching in Lahore were selected to fill out a self reporting questionnaire which was developed to complete the project.

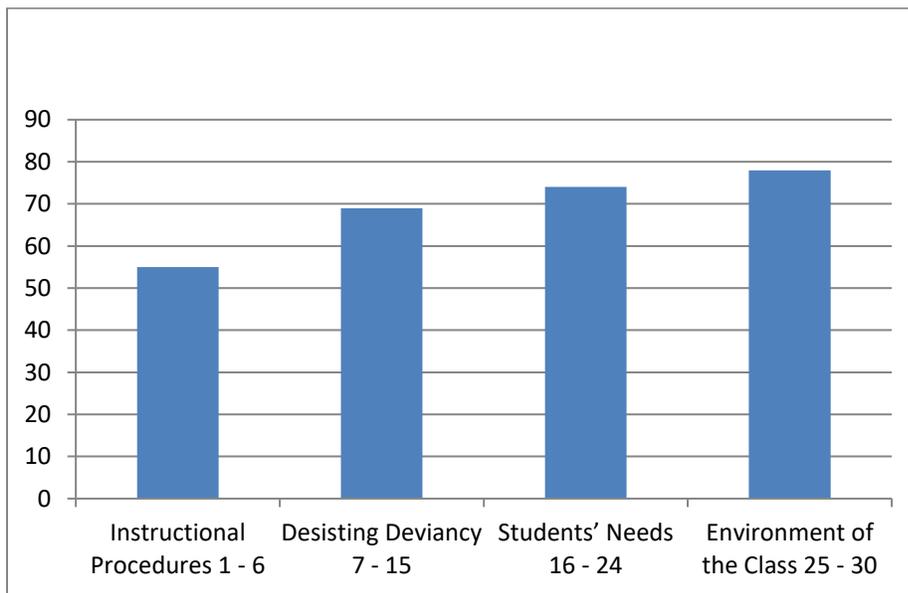
### 4.1 Data

The number of participants of questionnaire was eighty. The sample was comprised of primary teachers. Table no one to five dealt with different characteristics of sample

population. The table no one to five reported the average scores in the four questions about the characteristics of participants in the questionnaire. Table no 1 showed the average scores of all eighty participants reporting the “A”. The six questions about instructional procedures reported an average of 50 while the questions about desisting deviancy. On the other hand, the questions about classroom environment and students’ needs averaged very close to “usually response.

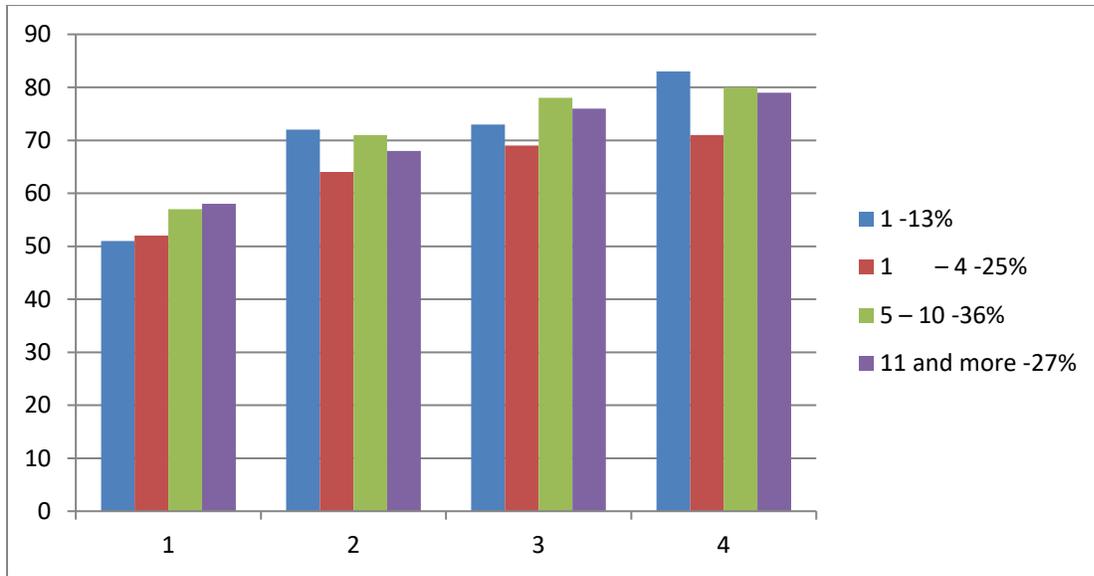
#### 4.1.1 Table 1

Scores of All Participants (Question Group)



Instructional Procedures 1 - 6	55
Desisting Deviancy 7 - 15	69
Students' Needs 16 - 24	74
Environment of the Class 25 - 30	78

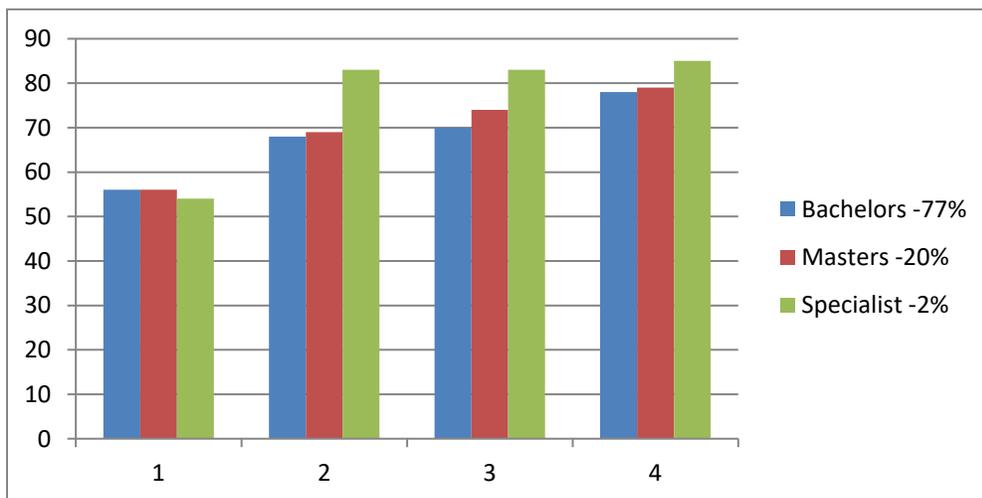
#### 4.1.2 Table 2 Average Scores of the Years Taught by the Teachers:



	1 (13%)	2 - 4 (25%)	5 - 10 (36%)	11 and more (27%)
1	51	52	57	58
2	72	64	71	68
3	73	69	78	76
4	83	71	80	79

In table no 2, eleven participants taught one year, nineteen had taught two to four years, twenty eight had taught five to ten years and twenty two teachers had taught eleven or more years.

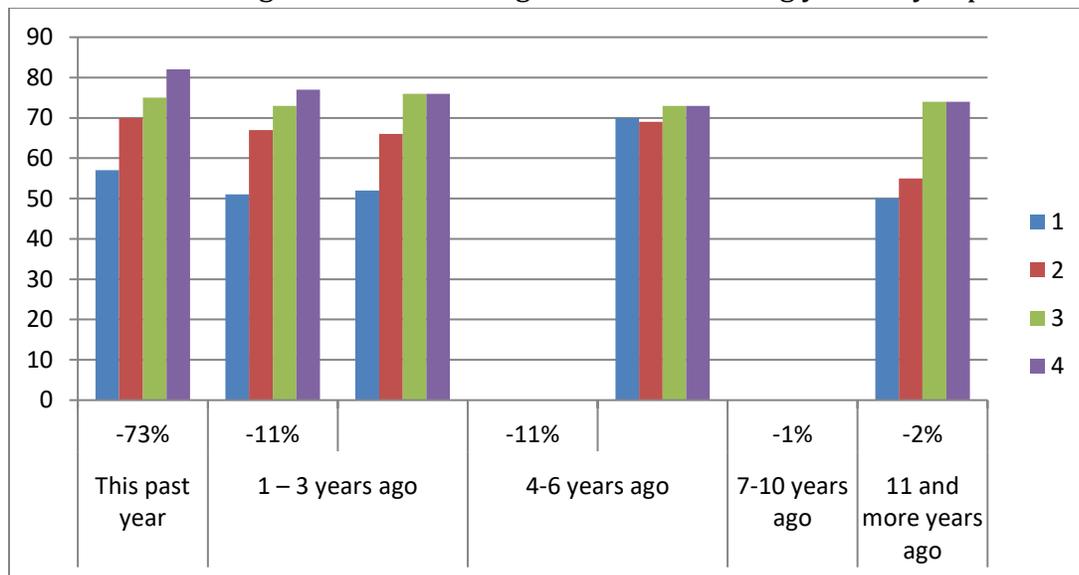
4.1.3 Table no 3 Average Scores of the Qualification of the Teachers:



	Bachelors (77%)	Masters (20%)	Specialist (2%)
1	56	56	54
2	68	69	83
3	70	74	83
4	78	79	85

Table no three talked about the qualification and degree held by the teachers. Sixty one teachers had bachelors degree, seventeen teachers held a master and two held a specialist degree.

4.1.4 Table 4 Average Scores According to the last teaching year they experienced:

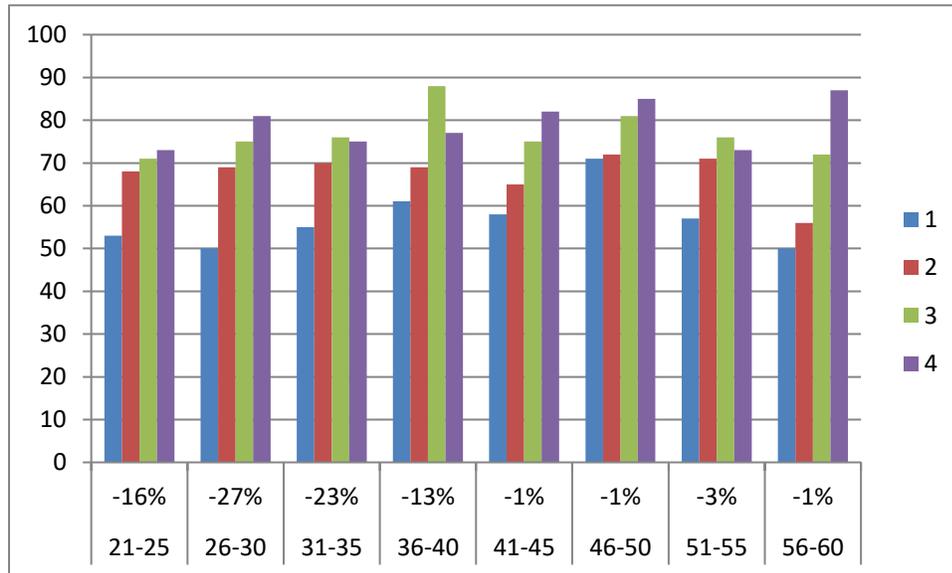


	This past year (73%)	1 – 3 years ago (11%)	4-6years ago (11%)	7-10 years ago (1%)	11 and more years ago (2%)
1	57	51	52	70	50
2	70	67	66	69	55
3	75	73	76	73	74
4	82	77	76	73	74

Table no four talked about the teachers when they taught the primary grade for last time. Fifty nine teachers taught the primary grade in the last past year. Nine respondents taught

it one to three years back, nine more had taught four to six years previously. One had taught it seven to ten years ago and for two, it was more than ten years when they taught the primary grade for the last time.

#### 4.1.5 Table 5 Average Scores According to the Age of Participants



	21-25 (16%)	26-30 (27%)	31-35 (23%)	36-40 (13%)	41-45 (1%)	46-50 (1%)	51-55 (3%)	56-60 (1%)
1	53	50	55	61	58	71	57	50
2	68	69	70	69	65	72	71	56
3	71	75	76	88	75	81	76	72
4	73	81	75	77	82	85	73	87

Table no five talks about the ages of the participant teachers. Thirteen teachers were of twenty to twenty five years of age. Twenty two teachers' age ranged from twenty six to thirty years. Nineteen fell into thirty to thirty five years. Eleven teachers were of thirty six to forty years of age. Age of ten teachers ranged from forty one to forty five years. Only one participant was forty six years. Three were fifty one to fifty five and one was of fifty six to sixty years of age.

The data was summarized and demonstrated in tables to show the average scores, age, qualification and the years taught by the teachers. Only two respondents were male and seventy eight were female teachers. Female group scored average of fifty nine for question group one, sixty nine for question group two, seventy five for group three and seventy eight

for group four. Male demonstrated average of fifty in question group one, sixty five in group two, sixty for group three and sixty eight for group four.

#### 4.2 Discussion and Suggestions

All the results of questionnaire showed that the teachers surveyed usually use non-verbal communication effectively in class room management except the results of question group one 'instructional procedures' which indicated the option 'about half the time' as most selected option.

4.2.1 Instructional Procedure

1. A teacher should try to make the students understand through pointing to something instead of telling directly. In the classroom, if a student asks from the teacher where to put his completed work, the teacher should point to the area where he or she wants the work to be compiled. If a child asks to leave the room, the teacher can point to the doorway. A teacher should raise his or her hand to indicate the student that he or she is coming to help.

#### 4.2.2 Desisting Deviancy

A smile, nod, wink, head shake or frown used by a teacher can keep control over the class (Seefeldt, 1980)

1. A teacher pauses and stops all body movements to bring to an end all activities going on in the class until the students rejoin him or her emotionally and attentively.
2. Teachers can use nonverbal techniques to make the shy students confident and to give them freedom to remove their hesitation through active participation.
3. A teacher can control the mischievous children through a nonverbal means of desisting deviancy instead of using a verbal reprimand. A non-verbal gesture such as shaking head with eye contact or a hand on the shoulder can show a magical effect to control the classroom disruption (Hennings & Grant, 1971).
4. Raising a forefinger in the air can be used as a controlling gesture to make the students quiet in the class. As a response to this gesture, students also raise their fingers in the air and soon the classroom atmosphere will be peaceful (Shepardson, 1980). If there is too much noise and disruption in the class, instead of yelling, the teacher can switch the tube light on and off or ring a bell to divert the students' attention.

#### 4.2.3 Needs of Students

4. Children can read the expressions on teacher's face. Teacher's expressions can set the climate for the day and students can set their behavior in the class after reading teacher's

face expressions. Bad mood of a teacher can be translated to keep quiet in the class (Grant & Hennings, 1971).

5. Bodily stance of standing can communicate interest, concern and enthusiasm. Relaxation, friendliness and excitement can be communicated through the way the teacher and the class are sitting.

6. A teacher should tolerate the pauses a younger child shows in the question answer session. A teacher should be slower in body movements and speaking with younger children (Wolfgang, 1977).

7. Physical closeness with children can communicate a great learning environment. If a teacher sits on the floor with children and hugs them while reading a story, it distinguishes the communication gap between teacher and the students and shows the closeness between teacher and student. Touching the children with affection when desired is very natural and powerful nonverbal posture for close relationship between teacher and students. Sometimes it is the only way of reaction to the children.

8. A teacher's listening posture can communicate attentiveness. Wait before speaking and pauses in the conversation can initiate students' attention towards the teacher and they think that teacher is listening to them carefully and thinking about their ideas.

9. Some non-verbal postures like shining eyes, smiles, quiet and relaxed voice and easy and relaxed postures can communicate positive and easy environment while some expressions like narrowed eyes, tight faces, tense shoulders, sitting on the edge of seats can communicate uneasiness and emotional tensions in the classroom.

#### 4.2.4 Physical Environment of the Class

1. An informal environment can affect the learning process in better way. A teacher can create informal atmosphere by introducing pillows, stools, rocking chairs and rugs instead of desks in the classroom (Rosenfeld, 1977).

2. A teacher should allow students to participate in creating the environment of a classroom so that it could suit their needs and comforts. A traditional classroom setting suits the teacher's personality not according to students' wishes because a teacher feels comfort and secure in such setting. It should be according to the individual and private needs of students. Every student should have his or her own space according to needs.

3. The seating arrangement of students should not be same. Sometimes students should sit on desks, sometimes in work groups. Sometimes students should share desks and sometimes not (Sommer, 1977).

4. Students' dressing style should be impressive and colorful because bright colours reflect respect and joyfulness for students. Children mostly like bright stylish and colorful dresses.
5. Time of the class should not be focused very strictly rather it should be noticed that how long it takes to make students understand something in a better way.
6. Different type of music can be used in the classroom for producing calming effect. The temperature of the classroom affects the learning process and it should be cooler and moderate to provide better results in learning (Rosenfeld, 1977).
7. Bright and warm colors like peach, red, yellow and orange are very stimulating in encouraging the students to participate actively in learning process. These colors should be used in the paint and decoration of walls and boards (Rosenfeld, 1977)

## Conclusion

It was found through the results of the research study that mostly the primary teacher uses and communicates non-verbal communication in classroom management. The basic purpose of the study was to investigate whether teacher do use non-verbal communication for better learning process or not. It was not purposed to pinpoint or manipulate the specific area of teachers.

As a suggestion, observations could be made for further studies for the beginning teachers that how to use nonverbal communication according to its four basic competency areas in the classroom and to what extent and to what percentages; it should be used in the learning process.

It is further recommended that classes should be arranged for new and experienced practicing teachers to incorporate specific and fresh instruction and knowledge on effective use of nonverbal communication in class management. Beginning teachers should demonstrate four basic competencies through nonverbal way of communicating instructions.

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