

THE POWER OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' SMILES ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE

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Abstract:

Language is humans' first means of communication. Although words and sentences are people's approach to interconnection, it is not the only way to transfer discourse. People, more often than not, use their body gestures and facial expressions to transmit information to interlocutors. This signifies that each gesture can mean different things. Since smile is one of the most commonly used facial expressions, it has been selected as the core of the current investigation. With the purpose of scrutinizing the impact of teachers' smile on their learners, a questionnaire was distributed to 20 students. The prime key finding is the existence of a discernible link between teachers' smile and students' communicational ability. Students assumed that their teachers' smile helps them not only to communicate but also to overcome their fears of practicing the English language. At last, it tries to suggest some plausible techniques for making a genuine smile.

Key words: Teachers – Smile – Communication – Desire – Students.

1. Introduction:

Human beings have long been recognized for their peculiar ability to produce an infinite number of sentences and utter sundry words. This capacity that allows them to communicate with each other is simply referred to as "language". This latter facilitates conversations and better each other's understanding. Even if spoken language is one way to express meaning and convey a message, it is not the only interactional medium.

To put it clearly, people are, more often than not, believed to use gestures to communicate. The use of gestures, signs, and motions can be simply defined as "body language" (Morgan, 2002). Indeed, the chief ubiquitous fact found by scholars is that most of people's language is transmitted via their body gestures. Thus, it is of viable concern in people's daily life conversation.

Undeniably, a major general trend apparent today in the body language study area, which is believed to be a vital contributor to communication, is the "smile". This latter has positioned an important area of research in psychology and has gained momentum over the recent years. Truly, a plethora of related studies uncovered the nature of smile and assumed that it is a powerful tool to motivate people for communication (Swami, 2011).

2. Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication and body language are often used interchangeably; both of them signifies the use of gesture, facial expression, posture and unspoken language. Psychology experts viewed it as a different stand and an essential tool that permits communication. Besides, body language eases interpersonal relations (cited in Nick Morgan, 2002).

3. Definition, Purpose and Types of Smile

Researches on "Smile" offered a large blend of definitions and views on the role of smile in communication. Owing to LaFrance (2012) cited in (Wilson, 2012), a smile is not a word **"it's the facial expression; it's the tone of voice; it's all these other things that tell the tale."** . This means that a smile is that happy facial, non-verbal expression that shows warmth and friendship.

LaFrance and other psychologists have been emphasizing on smile since it is the most revealing and represents an important area of everybody's life. LaFrance (2012) advocates that the feasible aim of smile is: to form, sustain, and repair interpersonal relationships.

Social psychologists have offered two main types of smiles: the genuine and fabricated smile. The differences between the two genres exceeds negative and positive impetuses. It is more about the facial muscles.

4. Smile and Communication

It has been proved by non-genuine scientific work that a great smile encourages communication. For instance, if a child does something wrong, and the mother smiles at him, she indirectly pushes him to confess his misbehavior. Such kind of smiling usually shows plenty of warmth, and maintain a good connection (Barnard, 2011).

As a matter of fact, smiling is not limited only to parents with their children, but it can also be affective for teachers, in the sense that, it opens the space for students' communication, and breaks down barriers that impede their desire for interaction. This means that, a good smiling face is more likely to motivate students for speaking.

5. Objective of the Study

Though "smile" has materialized a large area of research in psychology, still, there is no evidence for the impact of teachers' smile. Henceforth, this paper responds to the calls for longitudinal investigation of the influence of smile on communication, basically, teachers' smile verses students' desire for language communication.

6. Methodology of the Study

To address the research problem and fulfil the study's objectives, a case study was selected as the most appropriate research design, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon under investigation.

6.1. Sample

Amid the myriad methods of sample selection, Simple Random Sampling seemed to be the appropriate method to be chosen. The population of the study embraces second year English language students. These are Algerian learners at the Djilali Liabes University, English department, coming from distinct towns. Their ages ranges between 18 to 20 years old. The total number of students is 20.

6.2. Tools of the Research

In order to conduct the present study effectively, a questionnaire was selected as the main research instrument for data collection. The questionnaire used is a structured instrument composed of closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. It is divided into three main sections.

6.3. Questionnaire Structure and Measurement

The questionnaire aims to exhibit the influence does teachers' smile have on students' willingness for communication. As such, it is divided into three main parts. The first part "students' perception to a smiling teacher" is intended to discover students' views on their different teachers' character, basically a smiling one. The second part "teacher's smile power" has the intention to exhibit how can teachers impact their students' desire for communication. The last part "teachers' smile and students communication" targets students' feelings and attitudes toward a smiling teacher in class. After the questionnaire distribution, students' responses would be measured by percentage.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

7.1. Students' Perception To A Smiling Teacher

As previously indicated, this part is devoted for demonstrating students' regard to their smiling teacher face.

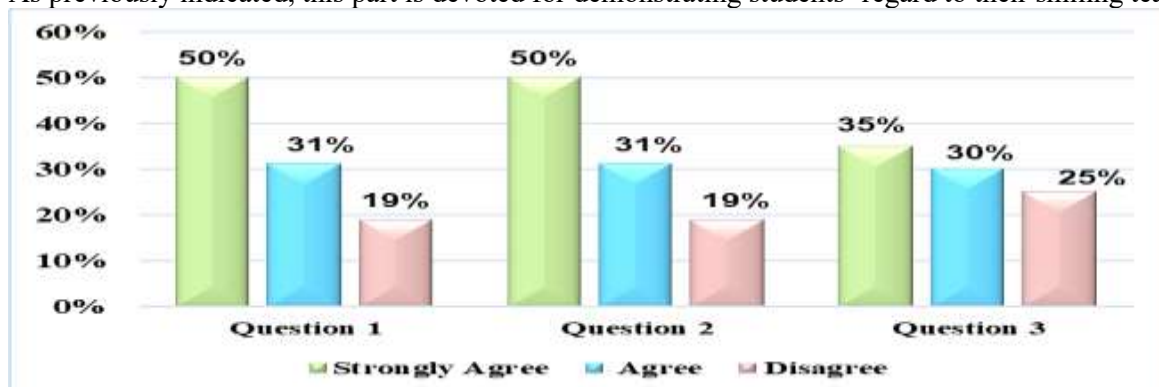


Figure 1: Students' Perception to A Smiling Teacher

The questions 1 and 2 are compatible. That is, the aim behind both of them is to figure out what kind of English language teachers' character do students prefer, and how do they feel if their teacher smiles at them. Thus, as

can be noticed, 50% of students strongly agree on teachers with a smiling face, similarly, 50% in question (2) expressed their strong agreement on their comfort and relaxation with such kind of teachers. The same category of students 35% strongly agree on that smiling teachers are influential.

On the same line, 31% who slightly agree in both questions (1/2) on having a smiling English language teacher. At the meantime, 30% who agree (to some extent) that a smiling teacher is influential. Contrary to 19% who disagree on being taught by a smiling teacher. Likewise, they 19% disagree that they feel comfortable and relaxed with a smiling teacher. Thus, 25% disagree on the idea that a smiling teacher is influential.

As a matter of fact, students' disagreement can be viewed as a fear of a fake smile. These students prefer a neutral teacher face as they believe that a neutral face teacher is an honest teacher. S/he is not obliged to pretend smiling to attract students' attention. Opposing to those students who like a smiling teacher argued that such teachers provide a relaxing atmosphere for communication. In other words, as English is a foreign language in Algeria, students more often than not feel anxious and stressed while interacting in the target language. Thus, if a teacher smiles at them, they will feel relaxed and encouraged for speaking the language.

7.2. Teachers' Smile Power

This part endeavors to examine how can teachers' smile influence students' desire for communication.

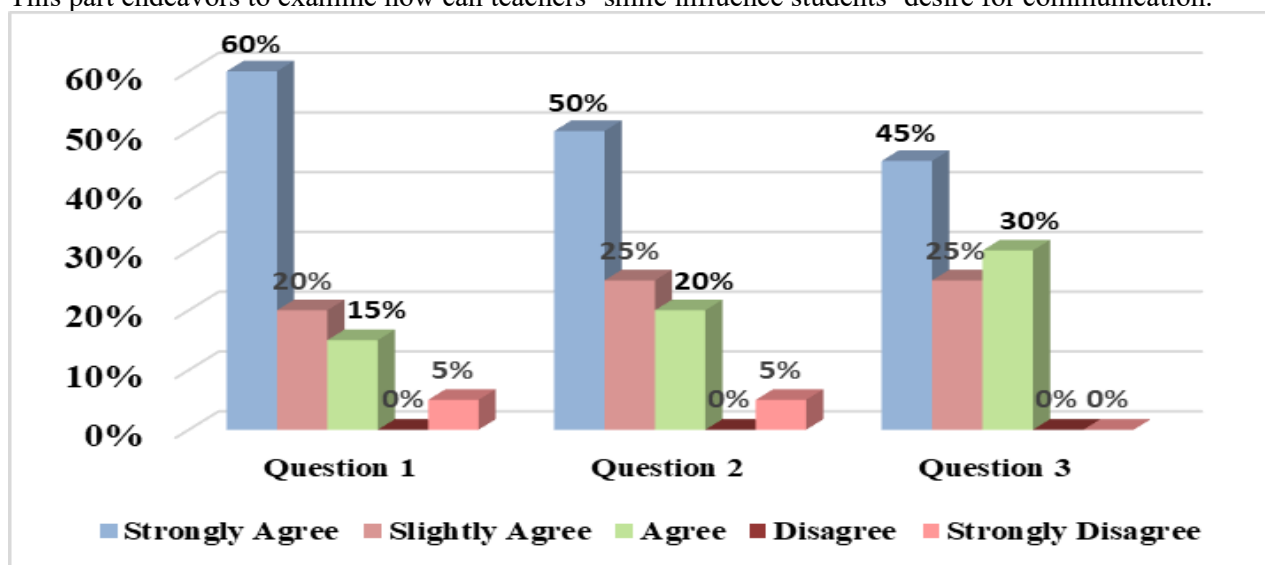


Figure 2 Teachers' Smile Power

The three questions are complementary. That is to say, these questions aim to discover if teachers' smile encourages students for communication. If so, it is easier to not only create a relaxing atmosphere where second language is at premium, but also gain students' contact. Henceforth, as can be depicted from the figure above, 60% of students assumed that a smiling teacher encourages them for communication while 20% slightly agree. When the teacher smiles at students, s/he is more likely to provide them with freedom and relaxation as 50% and 25% of them believe. These students, then, would feel at ease to communicate and speak the target language. Thus, such atmosphere allows to maintain a good contact and relationship with students, as expressed by 45% and 25% students.

Nevertheless, 15% of them disagree on that a smiling teacher can enhance students' communication. Likewise, 20% and 30% of students disagree not only with the fact that those teachers are apt to easily create a relaxing atmosphere, but also with maintaining a good relationship with students. As a matter of fact, such students are the same students who prefer a neutral face teacher. That is to say, these students believe that successful classroom atmosphere does not depend only on teacher's smile. Other aspects may contribute on developing students communication and creating a cool classroom where the target language practice is a priority.

7.3. Teachers' Smile and Students' Communication

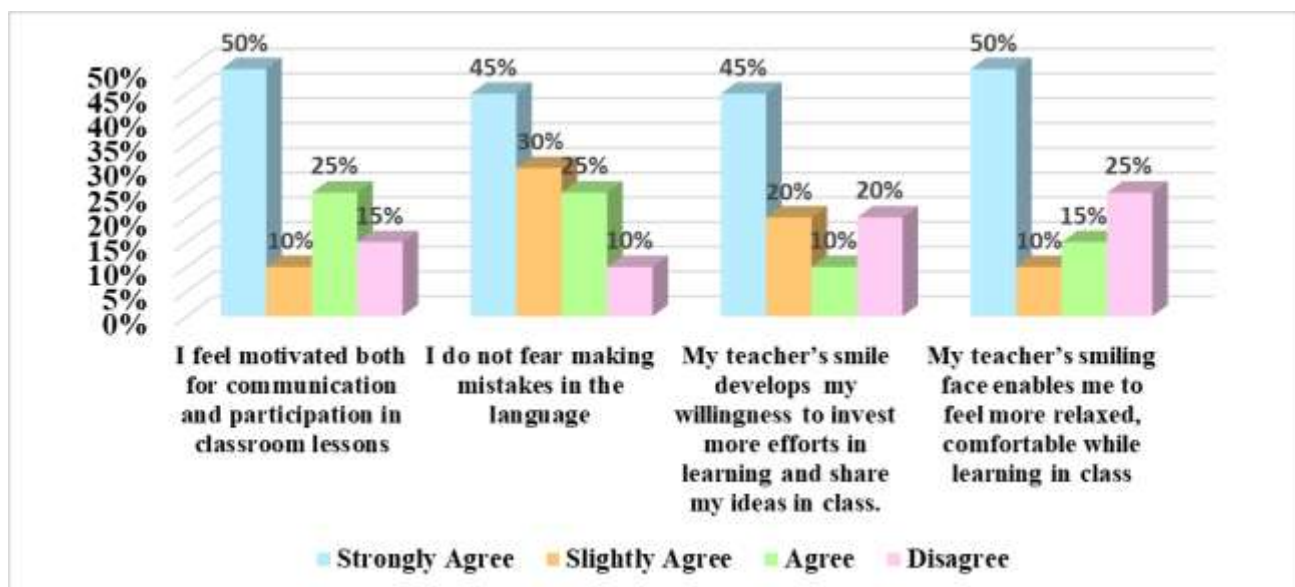


Figure 3: Teachers' Smile and Students' Communication

This part includes four questions that discuss students' communication desire in relation to teachers' smile. Hence, as can be depicted, a high number of students share the same view and agreed to different extent on that teachers' smile develop their motivation and willingness for communication. That is, 50% of students strongly agree, 10% slightly agree whilst 25% agree that they feel motivated to contribute in class and speak the target language when the teacher smiles at them. This way, they feel comfortable in class

Likewise, these students' opinions are matching in question 2. In other words, 45% of students strongly agree, 30% slightly agree and 25% agree that they are encouraged to participate in class thanks to their teachers' smile. It pushes them to speak the target language and consider making mistakes as the first and foremost step for communication skills development.

On the same line, these students keep the same sight to different extremes. This means, 45% strongly agree, 20% slightly agree and 10% agree that their teacher's smile pushes them to further work. For them, when the teacher smiles, it means that they did a good job. Thus, they invest much more efforts not only to get a plus (+) but also to see their teacher smiles at them, which expresses his affection.

More the point, the same category of students diverged in their agreement in the fourth question about their feelings. To put it clear, 50% of them strongly agree, 10% slightly agree, and 15% agree that their teacher's smile enables them to feel at ease in classroom. They argued that teachers' smile hides so many emotions and expression. When the teacher smiles at students, it is a sign of peace and smoothness.

Nevertheless, the last group of students expressed their disagreement to the four questions. To put it simple, 15%, 10%, 25% and 20% of students all disagreed on the previous questions, i.e. they stated that teachers' smile is neither the only way to motivate students' for communication, encouraging them to make mistakes in the language, nor the only way to make them relaxed. As a matter of fact, students' disagreement is obvious, i.e. students who disagreed to be taught by a smiling teacher are expected to disagree on these ideas. Their fear from a fake smile drives them to judge teachers as dishonest.

8. Interpretation and Suggestions

By now, it can be assumed that teacher's smile can help (to some extent) in developing students' desire for communication. Indeed, as previously seen in the figures, students' willingness to contribute in classroom is improved especially if their teacher smiles at them. Teachers' warm and affectionate smile can lead to students' active engagement in classroom lessons. Yet, this does not mean that the teacher should keep smiling for 1h30! Indeed, as previously explained, there exist two main types of smile: a genuine and a fake smile. That is to say, if the teacher smiles for two hours or may be three, and students' do not feel at ease in class, they are more likely to feel or think that s/he is dishonest. Such kind of smile can be viewed as a fake one. Contrary to the genuine smile that attracts students from day one. Learners (particularly non-native speakers) are much more interested in teachers with a genuine smile. Such kind of teachers are distinct. Indeed, a research has proved that a genuine

smile is usually the outcome of happiness, optimism, positiveness and comfort. Notwithstanding the fact that these students are unable to know if their teacher is happy, positive, and optimistic or not, they can feel it or depict it through his/her behaviors.

Teachers with a genuine smile exhibits sets of traits and a particular character than a teacher with a fake smile. His/ her strong personality and distinct features are what create his/her beautiful smile. Indeed, Dr. Ibrahim Al Fekki (p, 7) in his book (Control Your Life) advocates that the way you see yourself, people will see you; when someone sees himself as unhappy, pessimist, so will people too. He added that such feelings or images gradually destroy personality and, thus, lead the person to avoid smiling, as s/he perceive only the dark side of it. This implies teachers too. That is, if teachers perceive themselves as incompetent, unhappy with their enjoyable job, and even stressed, they tend to slowly lose their beautiful smile.

Henceforth, a smile can be considered as a powerful tool to encourage not only students for communication, but to keep oneself up too. Teachers who smile are more often than not communicating that smile to their students. The fact that would improve their desire for not only learning but also communicating the target language. A fake smile can be easily depicted, whereas a genuine smile is affectionate. It not only demonstrates but expressed warm, respect and friendship. If teachers keep smiling at their students, they will be perceived as friendly and approachable. Students will not be afraid neither of the teacher himself, not to ask or communicate. Smile can indeed diminish students' fears and anxiousness.

9. Techniques to Learn Smiling

A beautiful, warm and friendly smile should not be viewed as a hard thing to make. These are some strategies that can help developing a genuine honest smile.

9.1. Self- Esteem

Self-esteem is simply defined as the image that someone provides for himself / herself based on different personality aspects. Self-confidence and self-efficacy represent an integral part of self-esteem development. Thus, teachers need to promote their self-esteem by creating a positive self-image. This way, they will be able to smile at life and students as well!

9.2. Self-Confidence

Possessing a good level of self-confidence can develop a nice smile. Teachers need to believe in their skills and capacities. Experience and students' feedback can be a good promoter of self-confidence.

9.3. Stick To Time

It may sound a little bit strange to say that time can create a nice smile, but in fact it does. It can be simply explained in the sense that teachers in time usually give a nice impression to students. Such impression will lead students to have a positive image about their teacher. This positive image is more likely to improve teachers' self-esteem.



Figure 4. Techniques to Learn Smiling

9.4. Respect and Relationship

Respect and friendship are essential for everyone. In case of teachers, sharing respect with students, at the meantime, creating and maintaining a nice relationship would definitely foster teachers' self-image. Then, teachers will have a nice smiling face.

10. Conclusion

To conclude with, and with regard to what has been mentioned above, teachers' smile can be an efficient means for developing students' communication willingness. Indeed, studies in psychology have shown that smiling people are happy and optimistic. For teachers, smiling can be beneficial for themselves and students as well. A nice smile can help students to overcome barriers and be actively engaged in lessons, at the same times, it can promote teachers' positiveness. It is also worth mentioning that smiling can be learnt. Thus, it is not so that hard to smile, why not to start smiling!

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Appendices

Smile and Communication; Teachers Smile One Way to Encourage Student for communication

Questionnaire

The aim of the following questionnaire is to discover students' perceptions to their teachers' character and the impact of tutors' charisma on their students. It intends to demonstrate that foreign language teachers' nonverbal communication influences students' desire for communication.

		Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students' Perception to A Smiling Teacher						
1) I like teachers of English with a	Smiling Face					
	Neutral Face					
	Scowling Face					
2) I feel at ease, comfortable and enjoy learning English with a	Smiling Face					
	Neutral Face					
	Scowling Face					
you agree that smiling teachers are influential?						
Realities Behind Teachers' Smile						
1) Smiling teachers encourage students to be engaged in communication.						
2) Smiling teachers can easily create a relaxing atmosphere that puts second language learning at premium.						
3) Teachers with smiling face easily gain students' contacts than others.						
Teachers' Smile and Student Motivation						
1) I feel motivated both for communication and participation in classroom lessons especially when my teacher smiles at me.						
2) Thanks to my teacher smile, I do not fear making mistakes in the language.						
3) My teacher's smile develops not only my desire to learn and communicate in English, but also my willingness to invest more efforts in learning and share my ideas in class.						
4) My teacher's smiling face enables me to feel more relaxed, comfortable while learning in class.						