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Nonverbal Communication: The Language of Motivation for Pakistani Students

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Nonverbal Communication: The Language of Motivation for Pakistani Students

Malik Muhammad Tariq Hassan, PhD Candidate

Abstract

The role of nonverbal communication in pedagogic environment is not fully realized and exploited by the teachers and educationists in Pakistan. All energies are spent to improve the verbal part of classroom communication while the nonverbal part is usually taken for granted. However, different researches in the world have proven a fact that the second language teachers, who consciously control their nonverbal communication, enjoy a subtle but effective power in the class. Not only they enjoy more control over their classes but also spend less energy in talking. The students are also more involved and motivated in such classes and feel freedom to speak and participate in classroom discussion.

To investigate this issue in Pakistani pedagogic environment, a survey was conducted in a remote district of Pakistani Punjab (Muzaffargarh District). Two hundred and forty one college students (mostly fourth and fifth year students from both girls and boys colleges) were selected from six different colleges of Muzaffargarh to form a representative sample (taken from all three *tehsils*, an administrative unit under the larger unit called District, in South Asia). After recording their views the result was compiled.

The findings of the study clearly showed that our college students are not only conscious of teachers' nonverbal communication but are also biased (either positively or negatively) towards certain type of nonverbal cues and behaviours, thus suggesting the teachers to be more careful and conscious about their nonverbal communication inside the class.

At the same time the study also provides a kind of feedback to young Pakistani teachers who believe in innovation and reflective teaching. The study also has some implications for our policy makers (who design refresher courses and training programs for the English language teachers) to permanently include a component of nonverbal communication in teachers' training programs.

Why Nonverbal Communication?

Communication is basically a process of sharing meanings and this sharing of meaning involves many new kinds of interpretations. These interpretations sometimes become very risky; they become risky especially in the oral communication where we try to interpret the message by analysing the verbal part of the message only and ignore the nonverbal part. Because it is the nonverbal part, which sometimes carries the real meaning due to which serious problems arise. Many instances of such situations can be found in our classrooms. We often see that a teacher says "very good" in response to the student's reply in an ironic tone. On the surface, these

remarks seem to be appreciation but everyone understands that it is a kind of censure. It is basically the context (in which these words are spoken) and the accompanying nonverbal communication (of the teacher) which makes the meaning clear quite contrary to the real words uttered. So, the study of nonverbal communication in the classroom is as important as any other thing related to second language teaching in Pakistan.

This study aims to take first step in this direction and tries to discover the importance of our teachers' nonverbal communication in class by recording students' views.

Nonverbal Communication: A Major Part of Communication

Many researchers (in the fields of psychology, anthropology and linguistics) have stressed on the importance of nonverbal communication in human interaction. For example, Mehrabian (1972) and von Raffler-Engel (1976a) argued that language acquisition could not be fully understood unless it is observed within its context of socialization and unless the concomitant paralinguistic behaviors were also observed. Explaining the significance of nonverbal communication Abercrombie wrote: "We speak with our vocal organs, but we converse with our whole body" (1968:55).

Nonverbal Communication is Natural, Reliable and Spontaneous

Nonverbal communication is unique type of communication. It is usually natural, un-controllable and un-concealable and so usually does not misguide. The nonverbal messages, hidden in the nonverbal cues, are mostly immediate, continuous, natural and reliable. In most of the cases they convey the real message of the speaker. They play a very significant role in inter-personal communication and so are very important for the teachers who communicate directly with the students in their classrooms.

Many aspects of nonverbal communication are relatively applicable in most parts of the world. There is a tendency to convey similar messages through similar type of nonverbal signals and behaviours. The nonverbal cues should, therefore, be carefully read and understood as they provide information, which help in making initial judgments about the speaker especially in cases where the direct verbal questioning is inappropriate or misleading as it happens in our classrooms where the students cannot ask questions directly from the teachers and had to rely on the nonverbal communication of their teachers.

Nonverbal communication is also important as it gives us information about our relationships with others, particularly in regard to status, liking, and responsiveness and is particularly appropriate for conveying an emotion. And it is the emotions, which are responsible for motivating or depressing the students. This highlights the importance of nonverbal communication which arouses feeling of liking or disliking in the students and consequently prove to be a source of motivation or otherwise in the class.

A Part of Communicative Competence

If we see different models of communicative competence we can easily assess one thing and that is the significance of nonverbal communication. Dell Hymes, a famous linguist who introduced

the concept of communicative competence back in 1960's, believed that there were certain rules of use without which the linguistic or grammar rules were useless. Among many things, which he thought were needed for communicative competence, were also the rules of nonverbal communication (of the target language). Thus, he highlighted the rules of nonverbal communication as important as other grammar rules for learning a second language.

Canale and Swain, other famous linguists of twentieth century, gave a model of communicative competence in 1981 which consisted of four components namely (a) Grammatical Competence, (b) Socio-linguistic Competence, (c) Discourse Competence and (d) Strategic Competence. The strategic competence included the knowledge of nonverbal cues (of the target language) while the socio linguistic competence included the understanding of social norms and conventions of the society, which also included the nonverbal signal and symbols of a particular society with its distinct culture.

Narrating this fact Brown wrote, "Communicative competence also includes nonverbal competence-knowledge of all the varying nonverbal semantics of the second culture and an ability both to send and receive nonverbal signals unambiguously (1980:202)". Lyly Bachman, another famous linguist who is famous for his work in language testing, gave his own model of communicative competence in 1991 which also included Strategic competence in it and which had some underpinnings of non verbal communication as well.

An Important Goal in Learning a Second Language

From the above discussion it becomes clear that the aim of learning a second language is to achieve communicative competence in it. But to achieve communicative competence one needs to master non verbal communication and its mastery in the classroom context is very important as majority of the second language learning takes place in the classroom settings.

To explore the issue of nonverbal communication in Pakistani pedagogic was the main aim of this study. Other questions behind this study were as following:

- i. Is nonverbal communication playing a significant role in our classrooms as it is claimed internationally?
- ii. Are our students conscious of it?
- iii. If yes what type of nonverbal behaviour they like to see in our teachers?
- iv. What other implications there are for all the academicians involved?

Significance of NVBC in Pedagogic Environment

Nonverbal communication is comparatively a neglected area in the educational research, although many articles have been written about it in the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology and psychiatry. This is probably because there is no system or language of nonverbal communication, and it is interpreted idiosyncratically rather than normatively. But this body of knowledge is complete in its own right and is worthy of being studied systematically.

The study of nonverbal communication indicates that the teacher brings more to the classroom than knowledge of subject matter and verbal fluency. Birdwhistell has tried to codify the "language of body expression." In his famous work on body language he stated, "There is a language of body expression and motion which is as ordered and structured as the language we speak. Like the language we speak it is made up in pieces of structure which can be assembled to form orderly sequences of message material which others trained in the same code can translate and respond to in kind."

Like Birdwhistell, almost all eminent linguists believe that the success of both the student and the teacher depend upon the effective communication between them in the class. Stevick (1982:6) points out that the body language of the teacher is the most important thing in the class. Addressing the teacher community he wrote, "it is the way you use your eyes, the distance you stand from your students, the way you touch or refrain from touching them-all of these unnoticeable things in the class carry important signals which create a profound effect on your students' feelings of welcome and comfort with you". Balzer, in his research on classroom communication, reported that approximately 75% of classroom management behavior was nonverbal. Similarly Smith noted that teachers' nonverbal behaviors are for students the signs of the psychological state of the teacher and so should not be taken lightly. V. Galloway (1980) and Loveday (1982) were also in favour of paralanguage and in their work on classroom communication they observed, "it is not so much linguistic errors as it is sociolinguistic and paralinguistic errors that lead to breakdowns in communication or cause serious offense or insult, for people are generally far less aware of these often subtle aspects of communication, which may nevertheless be the principal bearers of affective information." Galloway (1980) believed that the use of paralanguage in the classroom encourages the speakers and consequently the people in the classroom will show increased desire to transmit a message and will thereby hold the listeners' attention better.

In fact, the study of the nonverbal behaviour of the teacher is considered to be more important (in the classroom) due to three reasons.

First, the teacher acts as an artist whose performance on the dais is usually observed minutely by his audience (the students). If his/her body language is positive the students enjoy the lecture and consequently retain and remember most part of it. On the other hand if the body language of the teacher is negative the students do not enjoy the classroom experience and feel discomfort & unease and lose most of the lecture taught.

Secondly, the function of nonverbal communication is to supplement the verbal messages (of the speaker) by repetition, substitution, complementation and regulation. If the nonverbal signals of the resource person (the Teacher) are appropriate the student gets maximum benefit from the lecture but if the nonverbal cues are contradictory the students usually get confused and in some situations are completely lost. Thirdly, a teacher is a role model (of the target language) for many students and they try to copy his/her body language, as there is no native speaker model available in Pakistan. So the nonverbal communication of the teacher is more important as it can make or spoil hundreds of second language learners.

Research Methodology

For this research, survey method was adopted. For this purpose, a questionnaire was specially designed to assess the use of nonverbal communication of the English language teachers at the graduate and post-graduate level. This questionnaire was designed to include majority of nonverbal cues (used in the classrooms) and was altered according to the specification of worthy staff members with whom it was discussed in detail. Before its dispensation to the students it was carefully explained to all the teachers (of all the degree awarding colleges of Muzaffargarh) who helped the researcher in conducting this survey. They were also requested to translate each and every clause of the questionnaire in the class so that the students might understand it fully and answer it properly. Care was also taken to have maximum participation from the students and that every clause of the questionnaire was adequately attempted.

The properly filled questionnaires were then collected back from the teachers of all the colleges (of Muzaffargarh) so that the data could be analysed and the results could be compiled.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire composed of two parts. Both parts actually were about the nonverbal communication of the teachers but there were two main differences. First, in the first option there were four options; (a) Totally Agree, (b) True up to some extent, (c) Totally Disagree and (d) I don't know. The students have to select one of them and in this way have good number of choices available at their disposal.

Secondly, the first portion generally asked about the liking of the students which was directly linked to students' motivation and involvement in the class. In the second part of the questionnaire the queries were directly related to the retention and remembrance of lectures (the classroom material and lessons) with the nonverbal communication of their teachers. This part offered only two options of "Yes" and "No" and in this way was more categorical in nature. The samples of both parts of the questionnaire are given in "Appendix A" and "Appendix B" given at the end of this paper.

As far as the contents of the questionnaire are concerned, they consisted of almost all the major components of nonverbal communication used in the classrooms namely, the Kinesics (the study of body language), the Vocalics (the study of the use of tone, pitch and volume of the voice), the Chronemics (the study of the use of time), the Oculistics (the study of the use of eyes), the Proxemics (the study of the use of spatial distance), and the Haptics (the study of the use of touch).

The details of the nonverbal cues given in different clauses of the questionnaire are as follows:

- 1) The queries about Kinesics were asked in clause numbers "a2, a11, b2, b4, b8, b10 & b12".
- 2) The query about Silence was asked in clause number "b5".
- 3) The queries about Locomotion were asked in clause numbers "a9 & a10".
- 4) The queries about Adornment were asked in clause numbers "a3, b1 & b9".
- 5) The queries about Vocalics were asked in clause numbers "a4 & a8".

- 6) The queries about Chronemics were asked in clause numbers “a7 & b3”.
- 7) The queries about Oculistics were asked in clause numbers “a6, a13 & b7”.
- 8) The queries about Proxemics were asked in clause numbers “a14 & b6”.
- 9) The query about Haptics was asked in clause number “a15”.
- 10) The query about Facial Expression(smile etc) was asked in clause numbers“a1”.
- 11) The queries about Miscellaneous Features like general atmosphere in the class and the teacher’s level of motivation were asked in clause numbers “a5, a12, a16 & b11”.

Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

For the collection of data students from seven colleges of the district Muzaffargarh were selected. Care was taken to include colleges of both sexes (i.e. of male and female) so that an equal representation of both the genders would be there. Similarly the sample was taken from all the leading colleges of three *tehsils* of Muzaffargarh so that a true representative sample of this area could be achieved. The following degree awarding colleges were selected for data collection:

1. Government Post Graduate College, Muzaffargarh.
2. Government Degree College for Boys, Kot Addu.
3. Government Degree College for Girls, Kot Addu.
4. Government Degree College for Girls, Alipur.
5. Government Degree College for Boys, Alipur.
6. Government Degree College for Girls, Muzaffargarh.
7. Government Degree College for Boys, Jatoi.

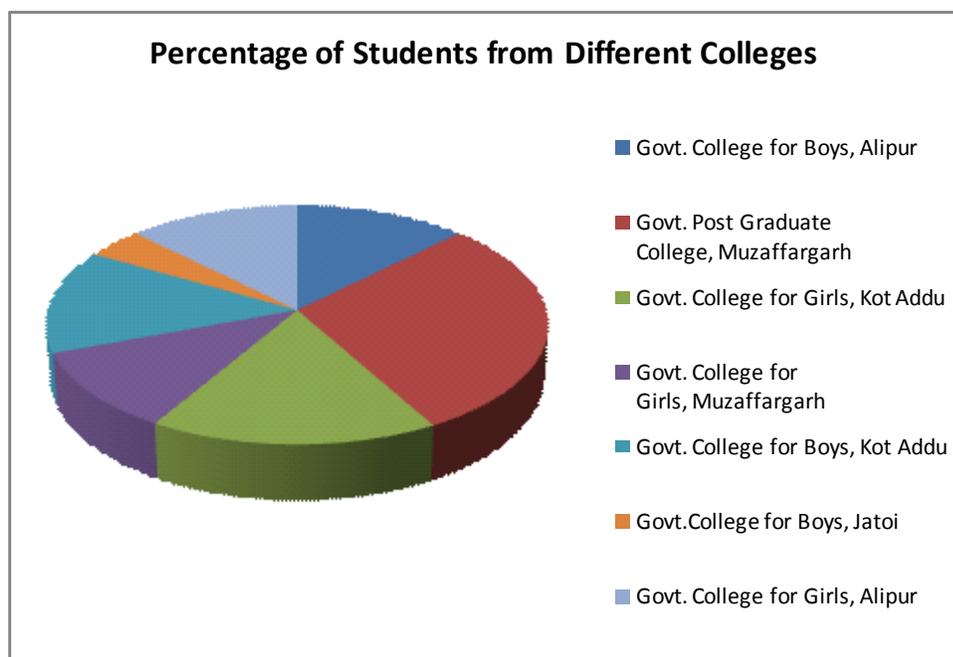
Two hundred and forty one students from these colleges participated in this study. Among them one hundred and sixteen were girls and one hundred and twenty five were boys. All of them were given a Questionnaire to fill in (given in Appendix A and B). This questionnaire contained queries regarding the nonverbal behaviour and nonverbal communication of their English language teachers. The students had to choose the right option from the four options given in the questionnaire in the first part and had to choose one option from the two options given in the second part. The properly filled questionnaires were then taken back and the results were compiled.

The number of students (who participated in this research) with their respective classes is as following:

Serial No.	Name of College	Class	No. of Students
1.	Govt. Degree College for Boys, Alipur	4 th Year	30
2.	Govt. Degree College for Girls, Alipur	4 th Year	30
3.	Govt. Degree College for Boys, Kot Addu	4 th Year	34
4.	Govt. Degree College for Girls, Kot Addu	4 th Year	40
5.	Govt. Degree College for Boys, Jatoi	4 th Year	10
6.	Govt. Degree College for Girls, Muzaffargarh	4 th Year	26

7.	Govt. Post Graduate College, Muzaffargarh	4 th Year	20 (all Boys)
8.	Govt. Post Graduate College, Muzaffargarh	5 th Year	51 (20 Girls 31Boys)

The graphical representation of the percentage of students who participated in this research from different colleges is as following:



Data Analysis / Interpretation:

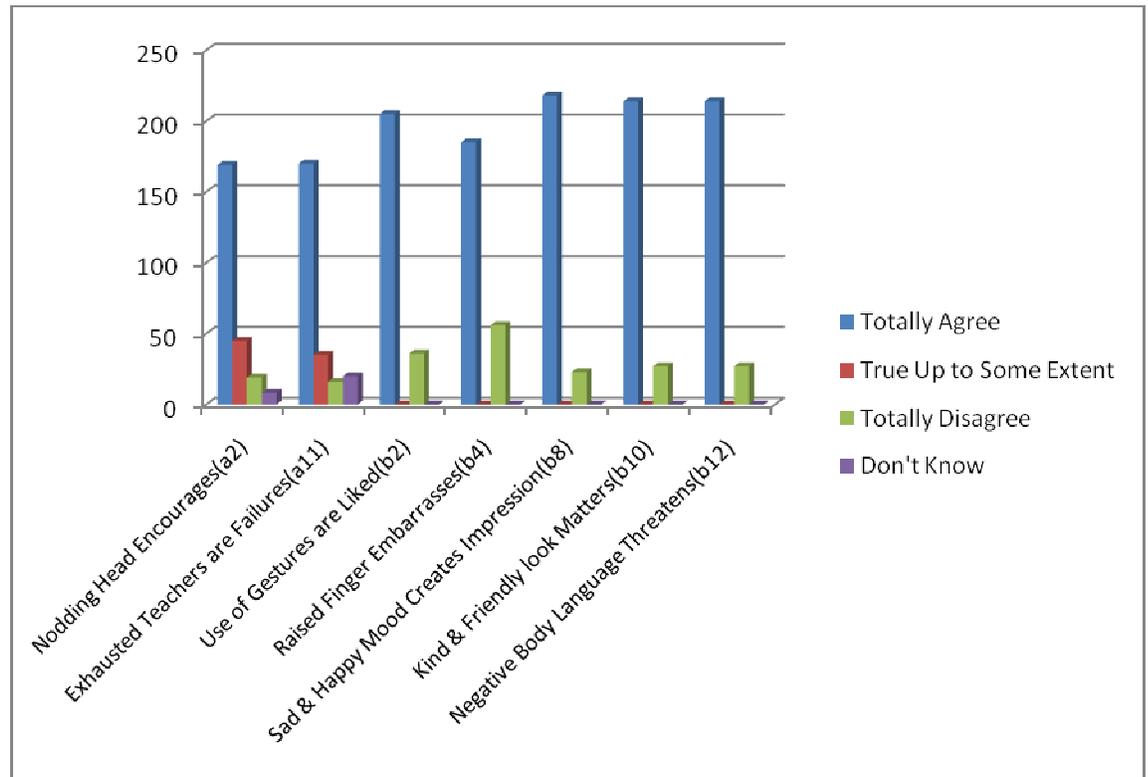
After the collection of the questionnaires the whole data was documented in a chart containing four columns and sixteen rows for part one (A), and twelve rows and two columns for part second (B). After writing answer of each and every clause of all the filled questionnaires in that chart the results was compiled by calculating all the responses in different categories. By keeping in mind the eleven categories of the nonverbal communication (defined earlier in the Questionnaire) new graphs were formed to show the liking or disliking of specific non verbal cue/signals of the teacher by majority of the participating students. These results were then translated into graphs and charts for the convenience of the reader.

Results and Findings :

The result obtained from the collected data was as following:

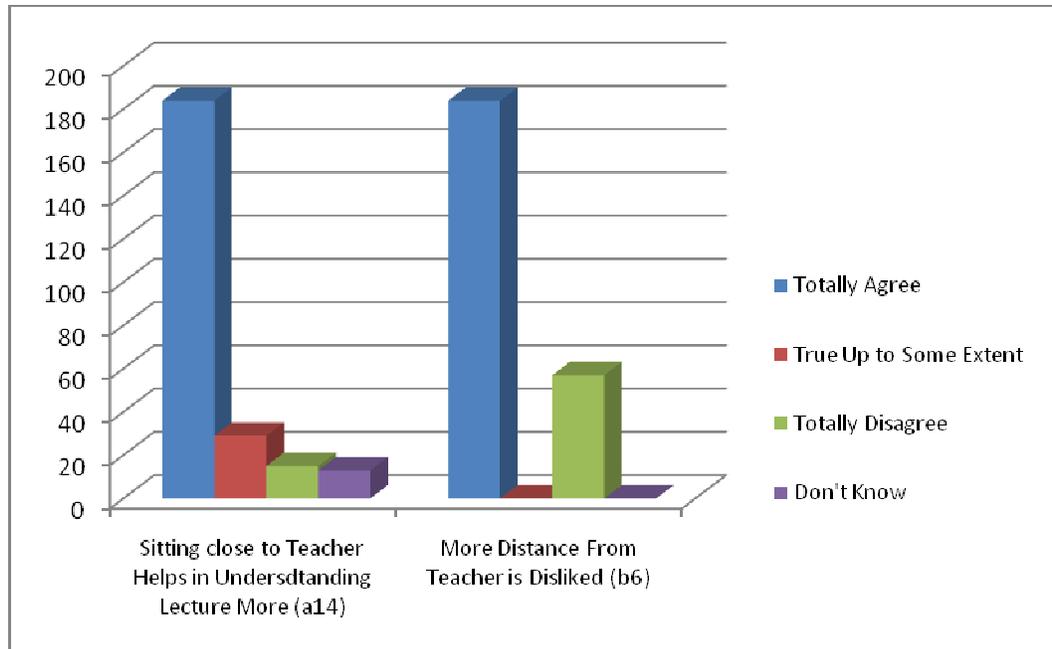
Kinesics

The students' response about the use of the body language and gestures of their teachers in a classroom was as following:



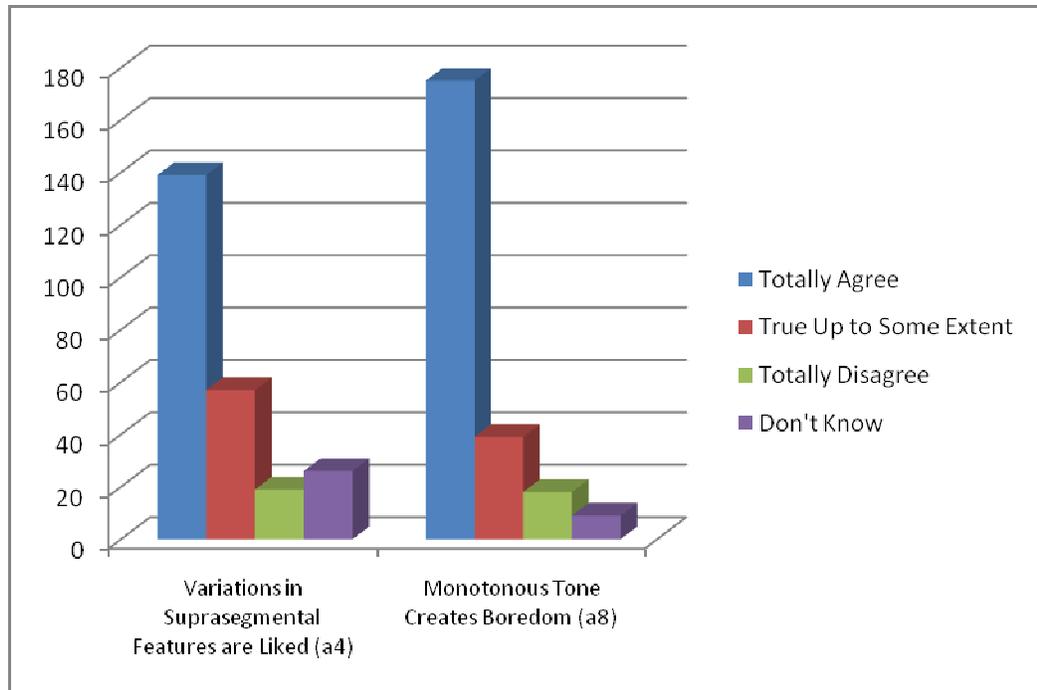
Proxemics

The students' response about the use of space between the teacher and the students was as following:



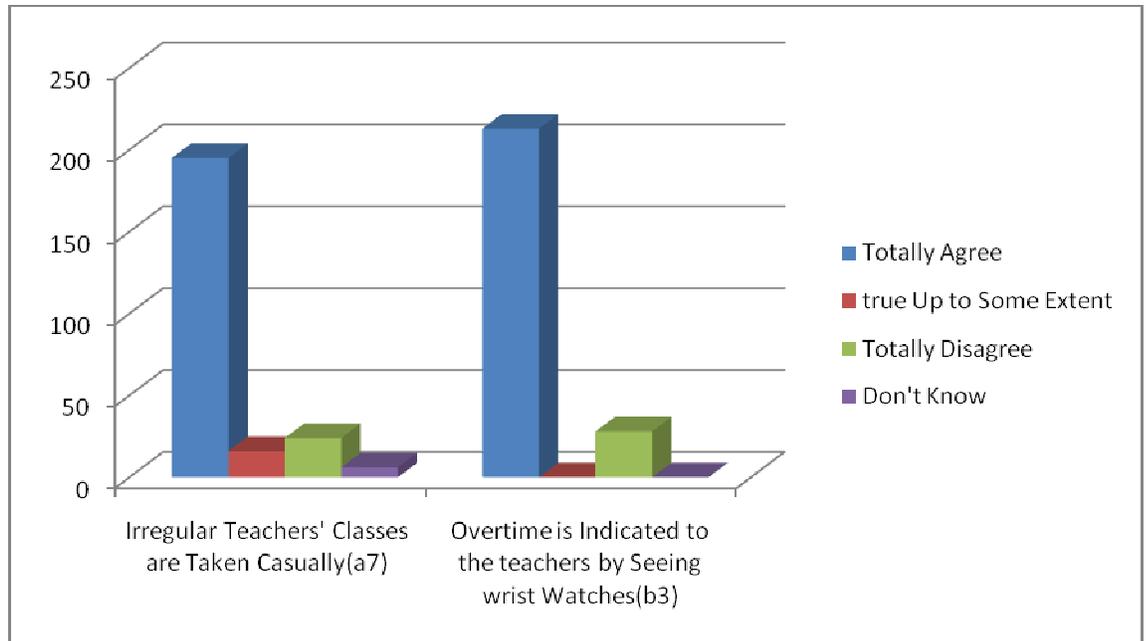
Vocalics

The students' response about the use of various supra segmental features of language (like pitch, tone, rhythm and volume) by their teacher was as following:



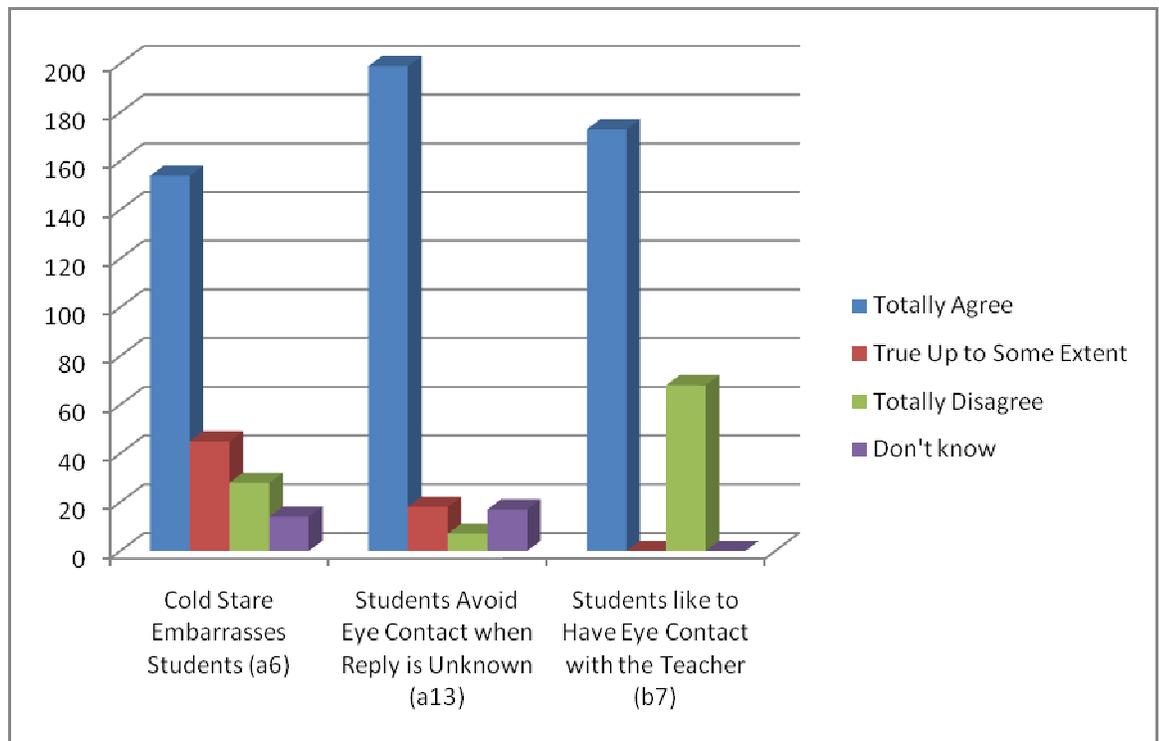
Chronemics

The students' response about the use of time by their teachers was as following:



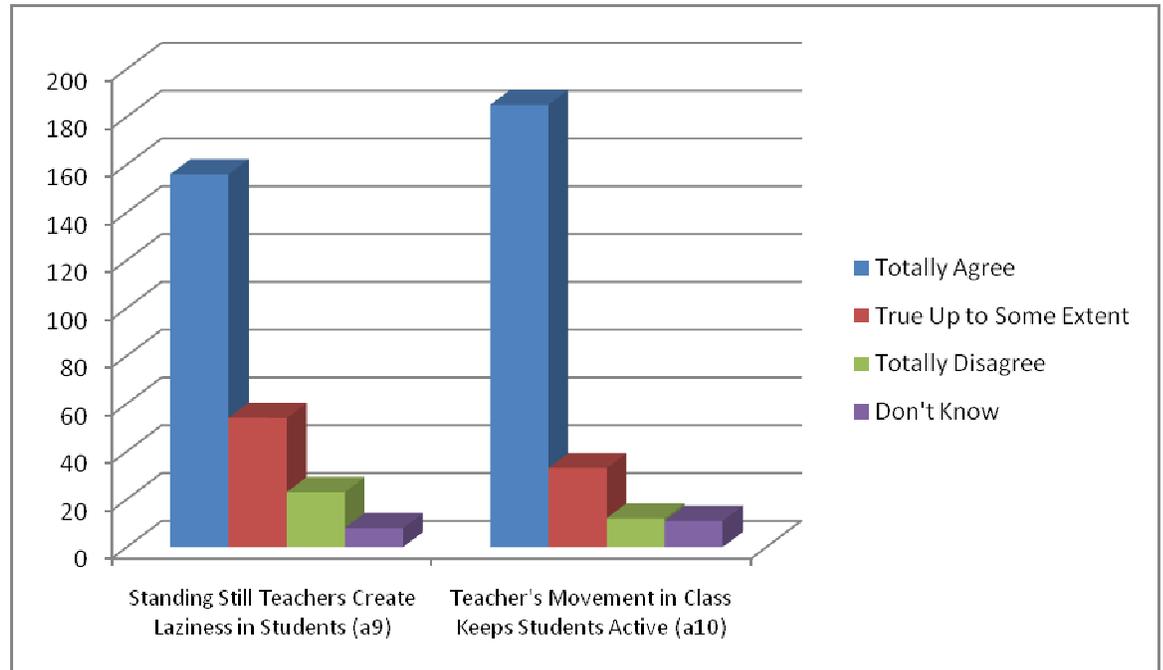
Oculesics

The students' response about the use of Eyes and Eye Contact of their teachers was as following:



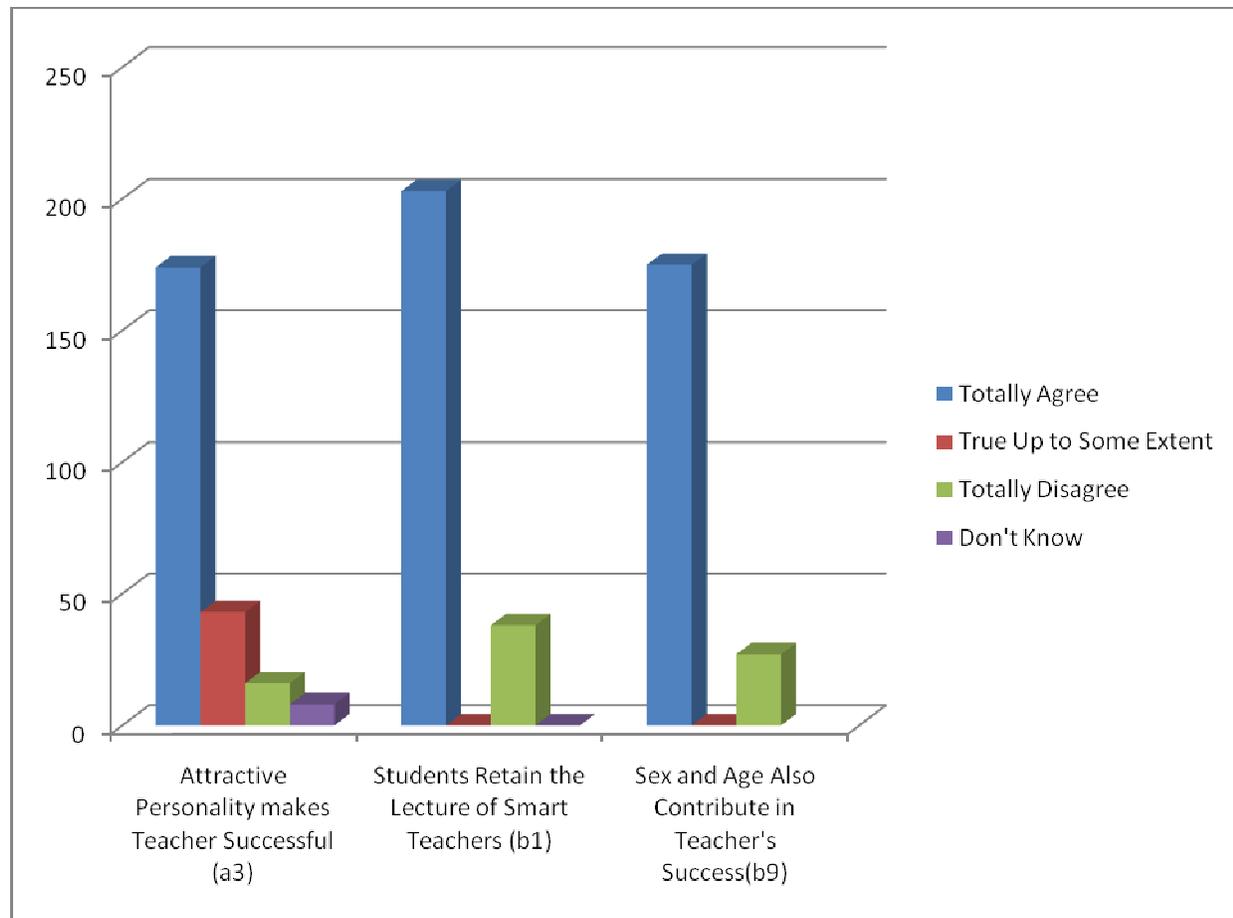
Locomotion

The students' response about the movement of their teachers in a classroom was as following:



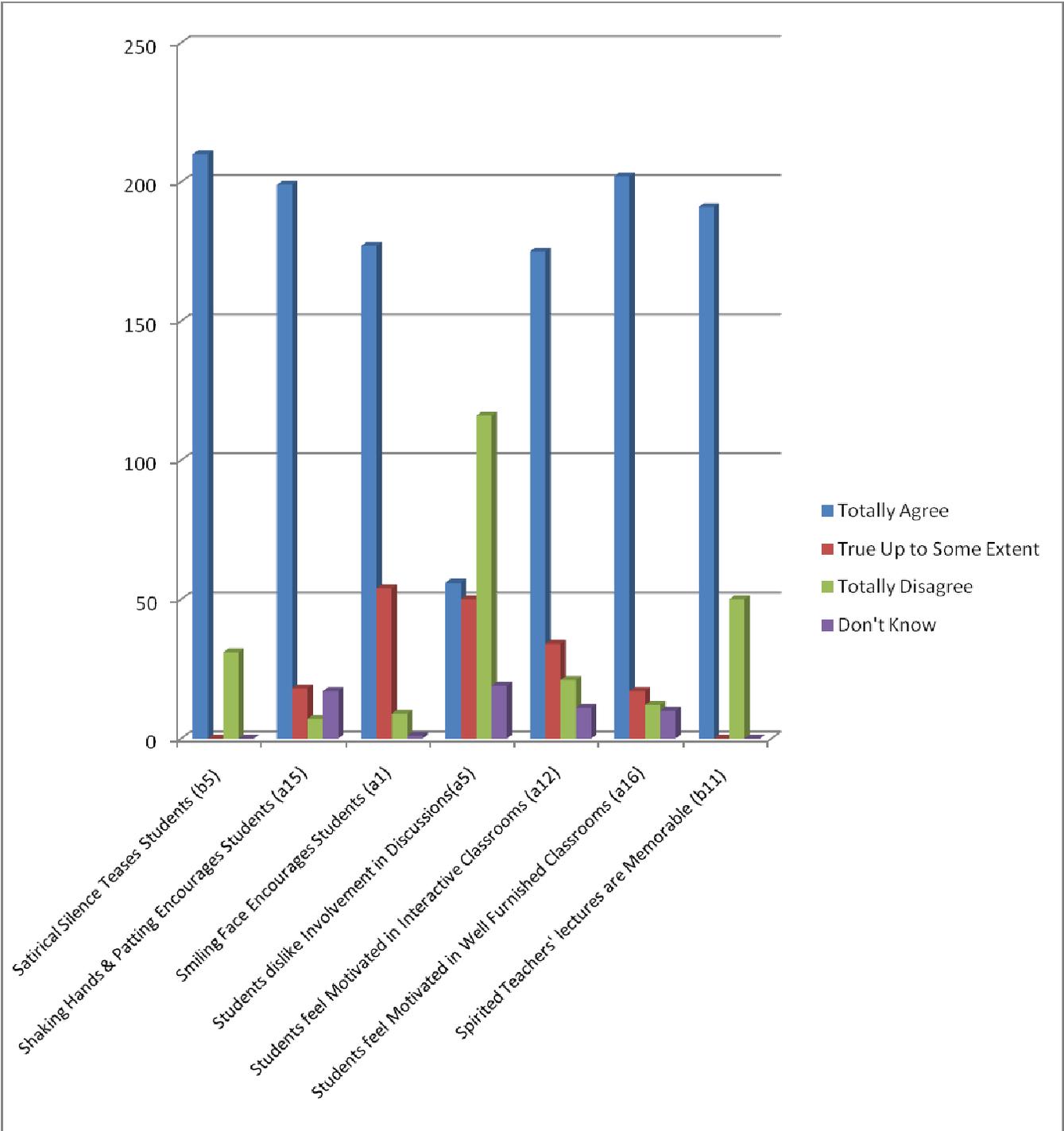
Adornment

The students' response about the impact of teachers' dressing, sex, age and smartness (which contribute in making one's personality) in their teaching was as following:



Silence, Haptics, Facial Expressions and Other Features

The students' response about the impact of silence, impact of touches (like handshakes and patting), impact of the facial expressions (like the smile), impact of involving students in discussions and the impact of classroom environments on students motivation were as following:



Conclusions

The findings of this study are given as following:

Nonverbal Communication has a role in retention of lectures.

From the above given data it becomes clear that our students are not only conscious of the nonverbal communication of their teachers but are also very critical about it.

The impact of teachers' nonverbal communication on majority of the students is very powerful and longer lasting. Majority of the students in this study claim that they retain and remember the lectures of those teachers more whose non verbal communication they like in the class as compared to those teachers whose non verbal communication they dislike. The liking and disliking of certain non verbal cues (of the teachers) by the students clearly depict that lot of emotions are involved in this un-noticed language of the class and so the affective filter (as narrated by Stephen Krashen 1987,1988) plays a great role in learning a second language by the appropriate or inappropriate use of non verbal communication by the teaching community in the class. Krashen believed that the learners who have high motivation, great self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition than those who lack these. Similarly learners with low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety are usually bad learners. It is because of the raising of the affective filter which form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition in the student and so those students are bad learners. In other words the language acquisition is blocked when the students are not at ease in the class due to negative non verbal communication (Krashen 1987, 1988)

Nonverbal Communication is a language of Relationship.

This study has also made this point clear that the nonverbal communication in the class acts as a language of relationship and this relationship motivates students much. The silent cues signal changes or continuity in the quality and direction of any interpersonal relationship between a student and the teacher and these cues, whether given by face, eyes, or gesture, can be the primary means of expressing attitudes of intimacy, aloofness, concern, or indifference. Teacher's attitudes can be inferred from the way a teacher looks at a student or ignores him/her, the way of his/her addressing, maintaining or avoiding eye contact, changes in pitch, tone and volume of his/her voice etc. Special positive cues may occur between a teacher and some of his/her students, implying favorable relationships, while the absence of such cues may be noted between the same teacher and all other students of the class. All such behaviours create great influence on the students because the desirable nonverbal cues express warmth, respect, concern, fairness, and a willingness to listen while the undesirable behaviour of the teachers convey coolness, superiority, disinterest, and disrespect in the students which, of course, play great role in making the classroom atmosphere either a heaven or hell for the students. Consequently this thing influences students' moods, their perception, their learning and eventually their attitudes towards knowledge and school in general to the deepest level and sometimes may create perpetual effects on their lives.

Nine Curt, a famous researcher, rightly said, "Paralanguage is not a frill but a must, which will greatly enrich our classrooms and increase our communicative competence. Teachers who are aware of paralanguage, of the multi-channeled nature of communication-kinesics, proxemics, and para-verbal features should be better teachers. They will always try to increase their skills as

directors of classroom behavior and will be better equipped to interpret student messages, which is especially significant when the students come from different cultural backgrounds; they will help their students become more culturally aware; and they will be more able to facilitate the acquisition of L2 in their students and will enjoy more command” (Nine-Curt 1976a).

So it can be safely said that the nonverbal communication in our classrooms is basically a language of motivation for Pakistani students and its appropriate use not only motivates them to learn English language more but also makes it a friendly venture. On the other hand, the inappropriate use of nonverbal communication causes a threatening environment in the class and most of the students get depressed and fail in their examination. As a result many of them start abhorring English language and consequently never ever learn it in their whole life. That is why the wrong use of nonverbal communication should be strictly prohibited in the class and our teachers should be properly trained in appropriate use of non verbal communication.

Among other implications, the study also stresses the need for inculcating positive non verbal behaviours in our teachers. And because the nonverbal behaviors are learned, the teachers should be given training to control and change their subtle nonverbal cues in the class whenever a need arises. Teachers should also be trained to make conscious efforts to observe the nonverbal behaviors of their students and should check their own responses to such nonverbal cues. Students' responses should be taken as a gauge of success and new techniques should be introduced to enhance teachers' nonverbal communication in the class.

All this will ultimately help in improving English Language Teaching (ELT) in Pakistan and will encourage our students to enjoy the learning process of English language, which, at present, is taken as menace by majority of them.

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<http://www.fhsu.edu/~zhrepic/Teaching/GenEducation/nonverbcom/nonverbcom.htm>

Appendix A

Non-Verbal Communication Part One

Name: _____ College/University: _____
Class: _____ Mother Tongue: _____ Gender: _____ Contact No. _____

Dear Student,

My name is Malik Tariq Hassan and I am a PhD scholar, registered at Bahaudin Zakariya University, Multan. Currently, I am doing research in the field of *linguistics* and my topic is related to the acquisition of communicative competence in the spoken English of advanced language learners of Pakistan. For this research, I need to collect some information about the students' reaction towards the nonverbal communication of their English language teachers. So, I would be grateful if you could spare some time and answer the following questions.

In the following statements you will have to tell us about your feelings regarding the nonverbal messages of your language teachers as you observe them in the classroom. Please choose one of the four options (**A**, **B**, **C** and **D**) to tell us about your views regarding nonverbal communication. Here it should be kept in mind that

- a) 'A' stands for 'Totally Agree',
- b) 'B' for 'True up to some extent',
- c) 'C' for 'Totally Disagree' and
- d) 'D' for 'I don't know'.

- a1) Smiling teachers teach more effectively than those who are always serious _____
- a2) It is easy to speak in front of teachers who usually encourage students by nodding their head _____
- a3) The attractive personality and friendly style also contributes in teacher's success _____
- a4) Those teachers who vary the tone, pitch, volume and rhythm of their lecture are more successful _____
- a5) Students like those teachers who never ask question or involve students in discussions _____
- a6) It is hard for the students to speak in front of those teachers who stare their students coldly _____
- a7) Students never take those classes seriously whose teachers are irregular or unpunctual _____

- a8) Students feel boredom in those classes whose teacher teaches in a monotonous tone /style____
- 9) Students get lazy if the teacher delivers the whole lecture by standing still behind the rostrum_____
- a10) The teacher's movement in the classroom keeps the students active and agile_____
- a11) Students lose interest in the lecture when the teacher appears to be fatigued and exhausted_____
- a12) Students become motivated if they are asked questions or involved in discussions_____
- a13) Students avoid eye contact when they don't know the answer of the question asked_____
- a14) Sitting close to teacher in the front row helps students in understanding the lecture more____
- a15) Shaking hands with students & patting on their back encourages them to work hard_____
- a16) Students feel motivated in well furnished, properly lit, spacious classroom & get depressed in poor classrooms_____
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Appendix B

Nonverbal Communication Part Two

Dear Student, the following statements are also related to the non verbal communication which takes place in our language classroom. Please feel free to express your views about your teachers' nonverbal communication in the class but be careful as the options here are limited. You have to answer either in affirmative (**Yes**) or in negative (**No**) only.

- b1) Do you retain the lecture of those teachers more who are physically smart, attractive and well-dressed _____
- b2) Do you retain the lecture of those teachers more who use eyes, forehead and hands frequently to explain a point_____
- b3) Do you see your wrist watches when the teacher takes over-time in the class_____
- b4) Do you feel embarrassed when the teacher points towards you with a raised finger_____
- b5) Do you feel embarrassed by the satirical silence/smile or grunt of your teacher in the class_____
- b6) Do you feel handicapped when you get a place far away from the teacher in the class_____
- b7) Do you like to have eye contact with your teacher most of the time in the class_____
- b8) Do you feel that the sad mood of the teacher can make class burdensome and happy mood a lively experience_____
- b9) Do you feel that the sex and age of the teacher also matters in making a lecture more memorable_____
- b10) Do you retain the lecture of those teachers more who looks kind and friendly in the class_____
- b11) Do you retain the lecture of those teachers more who teaches emotionally/enthusiastically_____
- b12) Do you feel threatened when the body language of the teacher is not positive_____

Thanks for your cooperation

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