

Analysis of Research on Nonverbal Communication in Language Education

Yuka Kusanagi
Rikkyu University

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This paper will provide an overview of 27 existing studies on nonverbal communication in language education. These studies investigate various areas of nonverbal behaviors or phenomena that correspond to general nonverbal communication not specifically concerned with second language study. In the range of nonverbal communication, gesture, an aspect of kinesics, has been found to be part of the main focus in the field. Because gesture is linked strongly to speech, the study of it can provide us with crucial information on language and its production. Observation of gestures in the 27 studies also gives us new insight into language acquisition and teaching. They can be categorized into three areas of interest: culture, pedagogy, and mediation and strategy. This paper further discusses the role of gestures in language education and urges the need for more empirically-oriented studies on the impact of gestures and related nonverbal behaviors.

本稿は言語教育における27の非言語コミュニケーション研究を概観する。これらの研究は非言語行動や現象に関する様々な分野を考察しているが、第2言語習得分野以外の一般的な非言語コミュニケーションの研究分野に呼応している。非言語コミュニケーションの中心的分野の一つに動作学、特に身振りがあげられる。身振りは言語と密接な関係を持つ為、その研究は言語とその産出に関して重要な示唆を与える。研究する27の研究における身振りの研究は、文化、教育、メディアーションとストラテジーの3つのテーマに大別され、言語習得と言語教育を新たな角度で洞察することを可能としている。本稿では、言語教育における身振りの役割を論じると共に、今後この分野における、より多くの立証的研究の必要性を主張する。

In countries like Japan, opportunities for exposure to the target language (TL) in English as foreign language (EFL) situation are limited. Therefore, the classroom is key in terms of raising learner's interest and skills and thus contributing to success in learning English. Teachers can provide good learning conditions through interactions both verbally and nonverbally. The importance of the verbal component in the classroom is obvious, but what about nonverbal influence? Birdwhistell (1970) estimated that 65% to 70% of social meaning between humans was conveyed with nonverbal cues, and Mehrabian and Ferris (1967) ranked it as high as 93%. Although great caution should be taken in accepting these assertions (Lapakko, 1997), most researchers admit that nonverbal behaviors play an important role in human interaction, and an extensive number of nonverbal communication (NVC) studies stress the importance of nonverbal behavior. In spite of this fact, there has been little discussion about the effect of NVC in language education, specifically when compared to the extent of research on the verbal aspect, and few systematic literature reviews exist in this field at present.

For the purpose of bridging this gap, this paper attempts to present an overview of the top 27 articles investigating NVC, especially gestures in the field of language education. It will begin with a short outline of the research areas and themes in NVC, followed by a summary of the literature. The paper will then explore ways that NVC might facilitate classroom interaction and language learning, and finally suggest areas for further research.

Background to the General Nonverbal Communication Research

Communication involves speech, non-speech exchange, and writing. Traditionally, studies of communication were conducted mainly on speech-related and written communication. It was not until Birdwhistell's (1952) introduction to kinesics and Hall's (1959) introduction to proxemics, that NVC was given serious consideration. Since then, NVC has been recognized as important part of communication, and a great number of research studies have been conducted on the subject. Researchers' focus on NVC varies according to their interests. This paper adopts Knapp and Hall's (2002) definition of NVC which refers to "communication effected by means of other than words" (p.5).

Reflecting the definition, the research areas of NVC are wide-ranging and can be classified broadly into three groups: (a) communication environment, (b) communicators, and (c) communicator's messages and behaviors (Knapp & Hall, 2002). Human beings are constantly under the influence of their surroundings. The communication environment involves not only the people in it, but also space (proxemics)

and time (chronemics), and other physical features such as the furniture, lighting, colors, sounds, temperature, and the like. Hall's (1959, 1966) warning that perceptions of space and time tend to differ across cultures should also be taken into account.

The communicator's message includes their appearance (artifacts/objectics) and smell (olfactics). The communicator's behavior includes paralanguage (vocalics) which is the transfer of meaning through vocal cues, body touch (haptics) which may be self-focused or other-focused, and body movement (kinesics) which includes facial expressions, eye behaviors, posture, and gestures.

Research Areas of Nonverbal Communication in Language Education

Among the 27 literature studies reviewed, research areas of NVC in language education vary and correspond to the areas in general NVC studies: artifacts/objectics, chronemics, haptics, kinesics, proxemics, and vocalics (see Table 1). Many of the articles discuss these multiple classifications in NVC in the classroom by reviewing general NVC studies. Discussing multiple classifications on NVC was common because communication is a result of encoding and decoding various messages in different modes. The works by Barnett (1983), Pennington (1989), Pennycook (1985), Soudek and Soudek (1985) took this approach. Along the same lines as this approach, other researchers (Al-Shabbi, 1993; Carels, 1981; Neill, 1991; and Seaver, 1992) focused more on kinesic behaviors. They claimed the importance of including NVC in teaching by connecting the issues of communicative competence, teaching techniques, input, classroom

management, and discipline. Still other articles dealt with cross-cultural issues. Lawrence (2003) and Hassanain (1994) claimed the importance of teaching TL kinesic behavior to avoid possible misunderstanding and conflicts in ethnic or multi-cultural situations. The issue of ethnocentrism in NVC in the ESL classrooms (Wolfgang, 1979; Yamauchi & Tharp, 1995) was also reviewed.

More recently, researchers reported empirical studies. In the line of observational studies, Allen (2000), Hague (2000), and Kusanagi (2003) reported on teacher gesture. Other research (e.g. Gullberg, 1998; McCafferty, 1998; and Mohan & Helmer, 1988) investigated learner's gesture production. In contrast to the existence of qualitative approached research, a few experimental studies exist. Allen (1995) investigated the effect of gestures on learners' comprehension and memory retrieval and Cabrera and Martinez (2001) examined the effect of gestures on learners' listening comprehension. Jungheim (1991) tested the instruction effect on learners' gesture acquisition.

In the early 1970's, Green (1971) called for making cross-cultural gesture inventories for teaching languages. After many years, Jungheim (1995) developed two NVC tests for learners, the Gesture Test for assessing learners' comprehension of English gestures and the Nonverbal Ability Scales for assessing their nonverbal behaviors in a conversation.

In sum, among the 27 articles, kinesics, especially gesture, has been the main focus followed by vocalics and chronemics. All of the studies mentioned gestures to some degree and a half of them discussed other kinesic features such as gaze or eye contact, head nods and shakes,

body movement, facial expressions, handshakes, hugging or embracing, and kissing. In this paper, the term kinesic behaviors will refer to the above features, and the term "gestures" will refer to hand and arm motions including mime and speech-related gestures.

Roles of Gesture in the Classroom

As reviewed above, kinesic behaviors, especially gestures, are focused on by the researchers. An observational study by Kusanagi (2003) suggests that gestures used in the classroom may facilitate teaching and learning at different levels. Here I propose a model of classroom gesture that integrates the different aspects of teaching and learning based on my observation (see Figure 2). Teacher's nonverbal behavior, especially in the form of kinesic behavior, operate in five domains: (a) management, (b) instruction, (c) input, (d) regulation, and (e) affect. In the management domain, teacher's gestures are used for classroom control such as giving directions, controlling student's behaviors and interactions, and discipline. When the teacher accompanies speech with easily-interpreted gestures, learners decode the messages faster, leading to economy and efficiency of teaching.

In the instruction domain, a teacher uses mimes and representational gestures as classroom activities, and they are often perceived as enjoyable by students since these activities lead them to greater involvement in the activity and lower anxiety in the learning situation.

The input domain deals with teacher's compensatory behavior such as accommodation. A teacher can control the

Table 1. Research areas of nonverbal communication in language education

Author	A/O	Chro	Hap	K/G	K/O	Prox	Voc	Topic
Allen, 1995				-				A study on gesture effect on comprehension and memory
Allen, 2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	An observational study of a Spanish Language classroom
Al-Shabbi.				-	-			A review and discussion on teacher gesture/ teaching authentic gestures
Antes				-				A review and discussion on teacher gesture/ teaching authentic gestures
Barnett			-	-	-	-		A discussion on NVC in the classroom
Cabrera & Martinez				-				A study on instruction effect of gesture on listening comprehension
Carels				-				An introduction of gesture (pantomime) activities
Green				-				A discussion on the need of developing gesture inventories
Gullberg				-				A study on L2 learners' gestural strategies
Hauge				-	-			An observational study of teacher gesture in the ESL classrooms
Hassanain			-	-		-		A discussion on NVC in greeting rituals
Jenkins & Parra		-		-	-		-	A study on the influence of NV behaviors on an oral proficiency test
Jungheim, 1991				-				A study on instruction effect on gesture acquisition
Jungheim, 1995				-	-			A study on two tests of NVC ability
Kusanagi, 2003				-				An observational study of teacher gesture in the EFL classrooms
Lawrence				-	-			A cross-cultural analysis of kinesics and its implication to teaching
McCafferty				-	-			A study on the relationship between learner gesture and L2 private speech
McCafferty & Ahmed				-				A study on the effect of language exposure on gesture acquisition
Mohan & Helmer				-				A study on learners' gesture acquisition
Neill			-	-	-	-	-	An extensive review and discussion on NVC in the classroom
Pennington				-	-		-	A review and discussion on pronunciation instruction
Pennycook		-		-	-	-	-	A review on NVC, communicative competence and its implication
Schachter				-				An introduction of hand signal system for negative feedback
Seaver				-				A review and discussion on teacher gesture
Soudek & Soudek				-				A review on NVC and teaching suggestions
Wolfgang		-	-	-	-	-	-	A review on multicultural classrooms in North America
Yamauchi & Tharp		-		-	-		-	A review on Native American classrooms

Abbreviations: A/O = Artifacts/Objectics; Chro =Chronemics; Hap =Haptics, K/G = Kinesics/Gesture, K/O =Kinesics/Others, Prox = Proxemics, Voc = Vocalics

level and amount of input to learners by gesture. Gestures provide more redundant or complimentary input to the speech when explaining vocabulary and grammar. When a gestural explanation succeeds, students understand the new language well, and as a result their better understanding may increase their motivation and learning. Another strength is that these gestures can replace teacher explanation in learner's L1, thus maximizing the amount of L2 in the classroom.

In the regulation domain, a teacher regulates a conversation by using gesture to show who will hold the floor in the classroom. This especially makes for more efficient chorus or pattern practice and teacher-directed talk. Teacher's gestures also encourage learners to speak up or participate in the task and is also a good teaching strategy when making corrections and giving feedback to the learner.

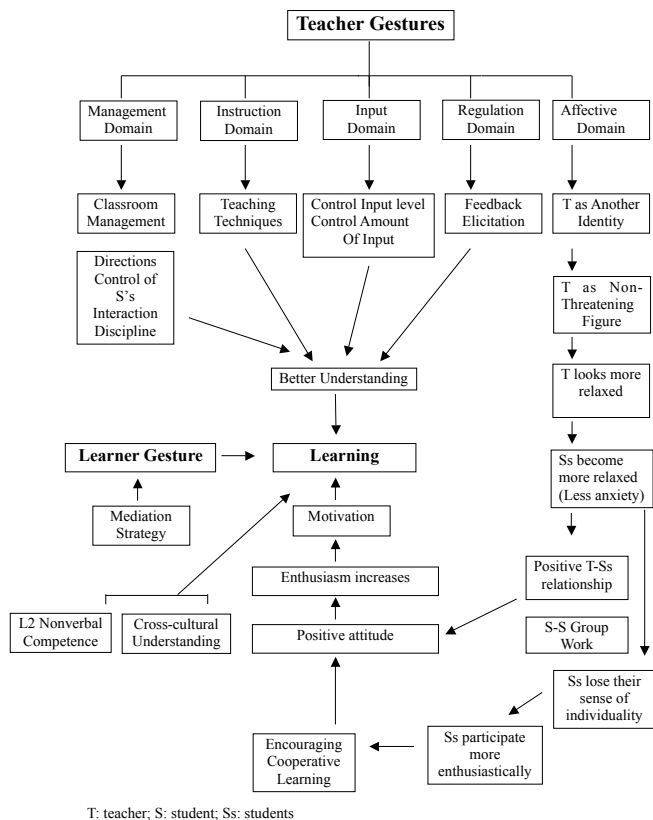
In the affect domain, gestures promote teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom. Traditionally, a teacher-centered classroom required a teacher to control the class, and thus the teacher was seen as an authority figure. However, the recent trend has shifted to more student-centered instruction, and the teacher is seen as a facilitator rather than an authority. According to Seaver (1992), with the more animated use of gesture, a teacher's presence can feel less threatening. A more relaxed teacher puts students more at ease, and can build a positive teacher-student relationship in the classroom.

Seaver (1992) also claims that students may lose some degree of self-consciousness when using gestures in group work and this encourages cooperative learning. In an atmosphere of solidarity and empathy amongst class

members and with teacher's mediation, even weak students can participate more enthusiastically in the group activity. The more students feel relaxed, the better a classroom community becomes. As a consequence, they will be more willing to communicate to others in this kind of environment.

The model I propose here focuses primarily on gestures used for pedagogical purposes. In the next section, I will present wider perspectives on how gestures are incorporated in language teaching and learning.

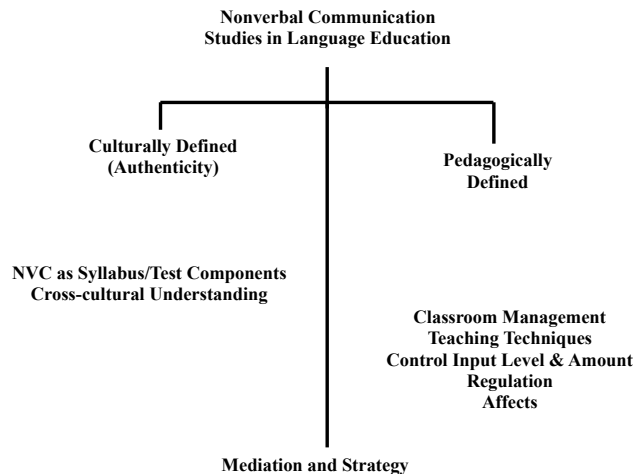
Figure 1. Roles of Gesture in the Classroom



A Summary of the Literature on Gesture

The interests of NVC research, gesture studies more specifically, fall into three categories: culture, pedagogy, and mediation and strategy (see Figure 1). The culturally-defined studies focus on authenticity of the TL, the main interests being the inclusion of nonverbal competency in course syllabi and tests, and cross-cultural understanding. The pedagogically-defined studies consider input and instruction with the primary focus on gestures used for management, input, regulation, and affect. The third category considers gestures as a strategy in mediation and communication by learners. The detailed information of the studies in the three categories will be introduced in the following sections.

Figure 2. Nonverbal Communication Studies in Language Education



Gesture as Culture

Gestures as Communicative Competence Component

The literature has focused predominantly on teaching emblems, the gestures understood within the language or culture system (Seaver, 1992). In the framework of communicative competence models, gestures and other nonverbal behaviors are considered as a part of communicative competence (Brown, 1980; Canale & Swain, 1980; Rivers, 1983; also see Al-Shabbi, 1993; Pennycook, 1985 for reviews).

Before the emergence of communicative competence theories, Green (1971) claimed that it was essential to identify key gestures of the TL, teach them to learners, and also include them in teacher training. To fulfill these requirements, he stressed the importance of developing gesture inventories and incorporating their kinesic data into teaching materials. Jungheim (1991, 1995) developed a gesture inventory test called the Gesture Test which consisted of emblems that native speaking English teachers feel are important for learners in Japan. He also developed the Nonverbal Ability Scales to assess learners' nonverbal behaviors in a conversation within the framework of Bachman's (1990) communicative competence model.

Teaching Authentic Gestures

The need for explicit instruction of authentic gestures in TL is stressed because they are used in everyday life (Antes, 1996; Carels, 1981; Pennycook, 1985). Hassanain (1994) argued for the importance of kinesic behaviors especially in greeting rituals in Arabic and pointed out the risk of communicative

conflict in the TL community. Violation of the local rituals could have serious consequences. Lawrence (2003) also emphasized the need for teaching cross-cultural kinesics to students who would be encountering cross-cultural differences in the current multi-ethnic/lingual business world.

Research revealed that nonverbal behaviors had great influence on native speakers' judgment of learners' overall language proficiency. For instance, nonnative speakers' nonverbal behavior influence the evaluation of their oral test results. Gullberg (1998) reported that native-speaking evaluators assessed learner's oral communication strategies negatively but some learners' gestural communication strategies positively. Jenkins & Parra (2003) investigated the role of nonverbal behaviors (kinesic behaviors and paralinguistic features) in a conversational interview as an assessment of nonnative speaker's oral proficiency. The study revealed that the test takers' nonverbal behaviors worked as important evaluation signals both positively and negatively. The test takers who could present appropriate NV cues were judged to be proficient. The findings imply a need of raising awareness of NVC to students.

For the sake of learners' needs and benefits, some teaching suggestions were made in second and foreign languages (L2/FL) education. Showing videos are recommended to aid in teaching authentic gestures, (Al-Shabbi, 1993; Antes, 1996; Soudek & Soudek, 1985). Al-Shabbi (1993) suggested that a teacher observe and correct student's gestural production in pair or group work and consolidate it by demonstrating authentic gestures in the group as a whole when debriefing the activity. Jungheim (1991) further investigated the effect of explicit gesture instruction on acquisition of English emblems

among Japanese learners. The results suggest that deductive teaching works better than inductive teaching for the learners' understanding of TL gestures.

Unlike general NVC research, little was found about L2/FL learners' NVC acquisition process. Mohan and Helmer's (1988) experimental study showed that native-speaking children's comprehension of emblematic gestures was better than English as a second language (ESL) child learner's comprehension. In addition to this finding, for both first language (L1) and L2 children, older children (5 years) understood better than younger children (4 years). Furthermore, McCafferty & Ahmed (2000) investigated whether exposure to different L2 conditions influenced adult learner's appropriate use of gestures and other nonverbal behaviors in the TL. Results indicated that learners who had natural exposure to a L2 in the ESL situation acquired and used more appropriate American forms of gestures than instruction-only learners in the EFL situation.

Understanding Learners' Nonverbal Behaviors in L1

Raising awareness of cross-cultural understanding is not required among learners only. Wolfgang's (1979) and Yamauchi & Tharp's (1995) articles called attention to educators. They reported that serious problems such as class participation and academic under-achievement are in part caused by teacher ignorance of learners' verbal and nonverbal norms and expectations in their mother tongue. Often teachers, inadvertently or otherwise, exert pressure on students to observe the norms of behavior of the TL. Both studies found that understanding and respecting the learner's culture worked positively in their learning.

Wolfgang's (1979) work is not recent but is still relevant and important to current education. It suggested three important points for success in a cross-cultural teaching situation; (a) students need to understand the TL social and cultural milieu and how to participate in the TL community including the language classroom (b) students need to appreciate their own culture, and (c) the teacher must be careful not to practice "nonverbal ethnocentrism" in the classroom. With regards to the nonverbal component, Wolfgang also stressed the need to develop a nonverbal inventory (kinesic behaviors, touch, and space) and to focus on NVC issues in teacher training.

Gesture for Pedagogy

Teacher Gesture and Teacher Talk

Teacher gesture and teacher talk are considered to be twin strategies (Hague, 2000). Moskowitz (1976) reported that outstanding teachers exhibited more nonverbal behaviors than ordinary teachers did. Language teachers' nonverbal accommodation is their attempt to make language more understandable to the students (Allen, 2000; Hague, 2000; Kusanagi, 2003). According to Antes (1996), gestures are effective "paraphrasing" devices to help clarify complex or ambiguous language. A teacher can also illustrate both concrete and abstract words with gestures, thus avoiding the use of the student's L1, props, or difficult explanations. In other words, the use of gestures works as a teacher strategy for clarity and efficiency (Carels, 1981).

Teacher Gesture for Input and Memory Retrieval

Gestures may work as a memory retrieval device to some extent. Carels (1981) explained one effective teaching technique in which the teacher first narrates a story using gestures to illustrate new vocabulary. At the end of the activity, the gestures are performed again to reinforce the newly-learned words for the students.

Allen (1995) examined the effect of teacher's gestures on students' recall of French sentences elaborated with emblematic gestures. The results indicated that when target expressions were presented with gestures, and then those gestures were used by the students themselves, the students showed greater recall on a post-test within the lesson. They also showed better results on a recall test given eleven weeks after the treatment, but actually all groups including the experimental group made little progress on recall of the expressions. It helped learners understand new expressions within the lesson, but not necessarily after several weeks. Thus these results imply that visual input of gestures has some effect on learners' memory retrieval.

Cabrera & Martinez (2001) investigated the effect of interactional modifications, including verbal repetitions, comprehension checks, and gestures, on EFL 4th graders' listening comprehension. The results showed that significant differences were found between a group with linguistic adjustments only and a group with both linguistic and interactional adjustments. They concluded that linguistic adjustments, providing comprehensible input did not enhance FL learning when it was not accompanied by interactional adjustments including gestures which illustrated some words in the story. Furthermore, they argued for the

support of gestures in learning, especially in terms of helping pupils grasp the meaning of words and following the main story line.

Teacher Gesture for Directions, Management, and Regulation

Teacher gesture is also used for giving directions and controlling student interaction. Barnett (1983) reported that teacher's directive nonverbal signals (a) drew students attention to the teaching point, (b) increased student talk and practice in the TL, (c) eliminated the need for excessive verbal explanation, and (d) directed student participation. In other words, NVC may lead to more efficient interaction in the classroom thus creating a context more conducive to learning. Neill (1991) also claimed that teacher's nonverbal ability enhanced the monitoring of students' understanding by controlling classroom interaction and discipline.

Gesture is also used for regulating speech and giving feedback to students. Kusanagi's study (2003) reported that teacher gestures were used for controlling the floor and responding to student's utterance such as evaluation, confirmation, and feedback, and that the students noticed and received such gestures positively. Gullberg (1998) also reported that native listeners used gestures to encourage learners to speak more, and to correct their speech. Schachter (1981) developed a hand signal system for providing corrective feedback when a student produced grammatical errors orally. Her study showed that hand signals enhanced their ability to notice their errors and self-correct without the flow of conversational communication being disrupted.

Teacher Gesture for Affect in the Classroom

The teacher's attempt to communicate with learners may influence the learners' affective state. In Kusanagi's study (2003), 19 of 35 learners responded that teacher's gestures made them relax. Both Allen (2000) and Kusanagi reported that the learners said the teacher's gestures were stimulating and fun. Toyama (1993) and Kita (2000) similarly concluded that one key function of gestures is to build positive relationships between the interlocutors.

Gesture as Mediation and Strategy

Learner gesture works as mediation and strategy in learning that a learner often depends on. According to McCafferty (1998), in L1 narrative, gestures often occur with forms of private speech which is the use of speech for the sake of mediating difficulties, and so would also occur in L2 narrative. When a learner has difficulty in producing speech or expressing one's thoughts in L2, gestures that accompany private speech enable him or her to become self-regulated, or less dependent on others for mediation in the task or the language.

Gullberg (1998) claims that learner's use of gestures work as a communication strategy, in compensation for limited command of the language. Her empirical study revealed that L2 learners used more gestures in L2 than in L1, and the gestures were mostly complimentary to speech rather than substitutive. These complimentary strategic gestures were used for eliciting responses from listeners and providing redundancy.

Conclusion

The present literature review has shown that nonverbal behaviors, especially gestures, play an important role in teaching and learning a TL in many different ways. As the review suggests, the field of language educational would benefit from more discussion on nonverbal communicative competence; on what it is, and what, how, and why it should be taught. Although there are great benefits, educating learners in the norms of the TL requires great care. Promotion of cross-cultural awareness should not promote ethnocentrism because the learner's language choice and styles in the ethnic/lingual world reflect their societal positions and identities.

Caution must be also given to teacher gesture. Seaver (1992) advised that a teacher use comprehensible gestures, use exaggerated gestures for the sake of clarity, but be flexible in the use of gesture. A teacher should observe students closely and make gesture decisions on what to present and how to present it according to the students' reactions and understanding. Al-Shabbi (1993) further cautioned that while gesture can be an effective teaching tool and may help students build their repertoire of L2 gestures, it can be artificial and exaggerated. Therefore, a teacher needs to be careful about the use of gestures in terms of authenticity.

It should also be noted that most of the studies reviewed above focused on lower-level students or classes in their discussions. Concerning teacher's gestural accommodation, the studies of teacher talk reported that teachers accommodated their speech and gestures more in lower-level classes (Hatch, 1983). Findings of classroom observation by

Hague (2000) and Kusanagi (2003) imply that lower-level students benefit from both nonverbal and verbal modified input. The number of studies that exist concerning gesture as mediation and strategy is not large but future research in this area may give us new insight into the psychological mechanism of L2 learning.

Giving an overview of the literature and discussing pedagogical implications, there is no doubt that NVC plays an important role in teaching and learning. McNeill (1992) states “gestures are an integral part of language as much as are words, phrases, and sentences – gesture and language are one system” (p.2). This is not the case only in regular human interaction. This phenomenon occurs in the classroom context at all times and communicators (the teacher and students) use the power of gestures and other nonverbal behaviors consciously and unconsciously. It is impossible to separate them.

Since NVC, especially gesture, is an integral part of language, the study of it presents us with crucial information at the linguistic, semantic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic levels in learner communication. When we limit ourselves to the existing NVC research, of which only half is empirical, and this fact suggests that the field need more empirical research to examine the roles and effect of NVC in language education.

For a closer examination of NVC in L2 education, the findings from wider NVC research and other educational contexts such as science and mathematics teaching may be helpful. By attempting to mitigate this wider knowledge and speech studies in SLA, we may attain a more holistic picture of language teaching and learning.

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