Reflections on the Use of Nonverbal communication in teaching Spanish to sino-speakers

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ABSTRACT

The increased interest in Spanish as a Foreign Language (FL) has meant that in China alone there are 25,000 university students taking Spanish courses (Instituto Cervantes, 2013). The demand for Spanish language and culture courses has yet to be met by adequate numbers of teachers with a good understanding of Chinese culture, especially if we question the uniformity of that culture over all regions of Sino-speakers (in particular China, Hong Kong and Taiwan). Traditionally Chinese values have been linked to the works of Confucius and are often reflected in nonverbal communication (NVC). In FL teaching the implications of nonverbal communication are often not properly understood, despite their importance to thinking (McNeill and Duncan, 2000), to creating immediacy with students (Mehrabian, 1972), and in ensuring that students of the FL are accepted by native speakers of the language (Neu, 1990). We argue that FL teachers should understand the importance of NVC in the classroom, although it is not usually included in textbooks, and be aware of cultural differences among Sino-speakers, and of how these affect NVC and so communication.

Keywords: nonverbal communication, classroom, Spanish, Sino-speaker, immediacy.

1. Introduction

The acquisition of certain communication skills is seen as the result of interaction with the environment, and interactions specific to the culture and society of the individual (Neuliep, 2006). But there is also a genetic element, not acquired but inherent (Burgoon, Buller and Woodall, 1994). We believe this applies to verbal and nonverbal skills, supporting the principles of linguistic relativity and expanded in the *thinking for speaking* hypothesis (Slobin, 1996). Language (given by the culture and society) defines the thought; however the thought (the inherent genetic element) also defines the language. We refer to language in its broadest sense, as a device to communicate, thus encompassing verbal and nonverbal elements.

Verbal output is so obviously different among cultures that a listener will usually account for the foreignness and compensate for it, but not so for nonverbal behavior. Often we think we recognize the behavior but it might not mean what we interpret it to mean. We would like to raise the awareness of the Spanish Foreign Language Teacher in this field and advance some ideas that might help her/him in the formal context of the Sino-speaking classroom.

Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) theories have changed much over the past several decades. One idea that has been advanced repeatedly, generating little contention and even less interest, is that of the importance of nonverbal behavior in communication. It is to be included in most FLT programs in formal contexts, and yet most FL professionals would agree that it is very relevant and necessary to their work. Nonverbal behavior (or communication, hence NVC) is known to differ from culture to culture. In Spain, thanks to immigration and tourism, Spaniards tend to be very aware of other European, North African and South American cultural traits but perhaps less so of Asian behaviors. This may be changing, due to an increase in the number of Chinese living in Spain from 19,000 in 2000 to over 167,000 in 2011 (INE, 2012). Spain and many other European countries have seen increasing Chinese interest, reflected in both tourism and investment. The study of Spanish by Chinese has also undergone an exponential growth in the last decade. The Instituto Cervantes (2013) (the equivalent of the British Council, the German Goethe Institut or the Alliance Française) reports a total of 25,000 students studying Spanish at tertiary level in

Mainland China in 2012, up from 1,500 in 2000. In addition there are over 100 registered private institutions also teaching the language. The number of Chinese students in Spanish tertiary institutions has also increased, with over 5,500 reported to be studying business and administration related courses alone in 2012 (Rigal, 2012). Yet very few institutions prepare teachers to deal specifically with the Chinese learner.

The question to be asked is "who is the Chinese learner?" The tendency has been to include Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese in the same cultural group and yet their histories and beliefs are quite different (Cheung and Chow, 1999; Lin and Ho, 2009) and so is their nonverbal behavior. We believe that a minimal understanding of Sino-speaking cultures and language could be of great benefit to educators, bearing in mind that: "during intercultural communication, the message sent usually is not the message received" (Neuliep, 2003, p. 28). Schneller (1992), in a study of the interpretation of nonverbal signals among a group of Israelis, found that out of all the interlocutors who believed their interpretations of the NV signals was correct, 30% to 50% were wrong. A study among a multiethnic group of Spanish FL students (García-García, 2001) also found that 14% of 92 emblematic gestures studied (those which can be used without words, such as the OK sign) meant different things for different cultural groups. It seems that we can't assume we all mean the same thing.

2. Nonverbal Communication (NVC)

The topic of nonverbal communication is a popular one – there are even downloadable apps for mobile devices on the subject. It is also a topic plagued with myths and misconceptions. The meaning of NVC will always depend on the context, the speaker, what is being said, what has been said and the listener. It is recognized that nonverbal communication can be as much as 60% of the message in face-to-face interactions among adults (Burgoon, Buller and Woodall, 1994), and some studies even rate the verbal element as contributing just 7% to the communication, the rest being nonverbal (Mehrabian and Ferris, 1967). At either estimate, it is clear that nonverbal communication contributes greatly to the message in face-to-face interactions. The definitions of nonverbal

communication vary widely from: "Those aspects of communication, such as gestures and facial expressions, that do not involve verbal communication but which may include nonverbal aspects of speech itself (accent, tone of voice, speed of speaking, etc.)" (Collins English Dictionary, 2009); to: "[...] messages people send to others that do not contain words, such as messages sent through body motions; vocal qualities; and the use of time, space, artifacts, dress, and even smell" (Neuliep, 2006, p. 235). NVC, to be regarded as such, needs to be part of a socially coded system (Burgoon, 1980). FL students learning outside the natural context of the language will find it very difficult to observe and assimilate these codes, and so to imitate them. It falls on the teacher to open the window into this, potentially different, world.

When thinking about nonverbal communication most people will think of body movements (arms, hands, head, face); however NVC encompasses much more than that. Poyatos (1992) lists an extensive array of elements that are studied today in different fields: oculesics (gaze and eye contact), haptics (touching), proxemics (physical distance between speakers), kinesics (gesture, posture, the body moving), kinetics (volume, sounds such as laughter, silences, intonation, etc.), appearance, chronemics (time management), dermal, thermal, chemical reactions and olfatics (smells). We ought to add to these the external environment: space, lighting, overall decoration and furniture arrangement. These are grouped by McCroskey and McCroskey (2006) into ten categories: physical appearance, gesture, movements of the body, the face, the eyes, haptics, vocal changes, space, context and time.

3. Functions of Nonverbal Communication

The use of NVC exceeds the linguistic setting. Earlier studies suggested that NV communication was secondary to verbal communication, with functions such as repetition, augmentation, elaboration, substitution and contradiction of the verbal message (Ekman and Freisen, 1969). But research has shown that there is much more to NV behavior than supporting the verbal message. It also helps manage turn taking in the conversation (Duncan, 1972). McNeill (2000, 2012) believes the gesture is the thought as much as is speech. Goldin-Meadow (2005) talks about gesture helping free cognitive resources (as in people who

need to walk up and down while speaking) and to promote development in children (infants who gesture early will be seen to have a wider vocabulary when they start talking). Feyereisen (1997) and Hadar (1992) link gestures with solving difficulties in production and aiding lexical retrieval (although among students of FL this is not always the case). Kita (2000) and Gullberg (2006) write about gesture helping to organise spatial information and clarify problems of co-reference (gestures are often used to position a noun in space in order to refer to it). In addition to these, NVC is essential for the teacher to create the right learning environment in the classroom, through what Mehrabian termed *immediacy* (1972). In the rest of this paper we would like to review the significance of nonverbal communication and expand on its use to achieve immediacy in the classroom.

4. Understanding the Western View on Nonverbal Communication

In the West some of the first written mentions of NVC are by the Greeks. Aristotle was well aware of its persuasive powers on an audience, but also considered it as detracting from the pureness of the word (Kendon, 2004). The Romans held it in higher regard. Quintilian in particular collected examples of good rhetoric, including those related to NVC, clearly believing in its importance: "All emotional appeals will inevitably fall flat, unless they are given the fire that voice, look, and the whole carriage of the body can give them" (Quintilian, 90AD/1920, XI, III, p. 245).

After the fall of the Roman Empire and the gradual loss of their culture, the art of rhetoric was limited to a handful, mostly churchmen, who used it to their own ends and extended the meaning NVC to rituals and signs used to assign roles to people in society. As most of the population was illiterate the reliance on these rituals and signs grew until they acquired meaning of their own. Even today many of the hand gestures we consider emblematic (understood without the need for speech) probably originated in the Middle Ages (like crossing the fingers - the sign of the cross, to ward off evil). Dress and gestures were probably the two most obvious representations of one's affiliation, class, profession and education (Schmitt, 1991).

Quintilian's work was rediscovered at the end of the 15th century, together with other Roman treatises. This, coupled with the development of rhetoric and an expansion of the role of the priest to that of teacher and preacher, seemed to revive the interest in gestures in the 16th century. During the 17th century gesture in particular was studied both in writing and in painting and its value in eloquence taught both inside and out of performing circles. At the same time philosophers began to ponder the origins of language and gesture - gesture as a precursor to language - and their connection in deaf sign language began to be explored. During the 19th century the understanding of gesture and its importance in communication continued to grow until the 1870s when gesture lost its appeal (Kendon, 2004). This probably had its roots in the Renaissance (14th to 17th centuries). As the arts developed, so did the idea that men were different and superior to animals. It was thought that gestures were a reflection of our animal side, as opposed to word and thought, which showed us to be unique creations of God. And so a movement to suppress gestures emerged, inspired in part by Erasmus' work *On Good Manners* (1530/2003), which was reprinted twelve times in 1530 alone and translated into English, French German and Czech (Rummel, 2003). When the importance of gestures in ethnology began to be considered, their 'non-divine' nature resulted in a ban on the speculation on the origins of language, first in France and later in other countries. This seemed to put a cap on the study of gesture. However other aspects of NVC continued to be studied. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Darwin, 1872/1998) marked the turning point. In this treatise, the first systematic study of NVC, Darwin wrote about the similarities in NV behavior between humans and animals when expressing emotions (Knapp, 2006).

As the study of linguistics developed into an independent field at the beginning of the twentieth century, behavior other than the verbal was accepted as being part of communication. But it wasn't until after the Second World War, when new fields of study began to develop, that NVC, and with it gestures, became a field of regular systematic study. Knapp (2006) suggests that the study of NVC really took off in 1955, thanks to the collaborations led by the *Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences* at Stanford University. Gestures were looked at as tools to express emotions and personality. Birdwhistle systematized and classified gestures, Condon and Ogston showed patterns of synchronization

of body movement with speech, Kendon deepened the studies by looking at the role of gestures in social interactions, Hall studied proxemics, and Ekman and Friesen analyzed facial gestures (c.f. Kendon, 2004; Knapp, 2006; Feyereisen and Lannoy, 1991). From the mid 50's a new field evolved: cognitive science. For the first time there was something linking the fields of philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, neuroscience, artificial intelligence and psychology (Gardner, 1985). With increased funding this field developed dramatically, including studies in emotional and personal expressions. But these studies were mostly separate from the developments in linguistics, partly because NVC was seen as *performance* rather than *competence* (Kendon, 2004). Current FL textbooks seem to reflect these Chomskyan views of NVC as performance, relegating it to a secondary plane, if mentioning it at all.

It is necessary to recognize that many of these studies took place in Anglo-Saxon environments with subjects who were often university students, and therefore of largely similar socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The role of women then was very different to now and so their behaviors may be assumed to have also been very different. Most significantly for our purposes, China was closed to the outside world, so these studies would not have included Chinese subjects (although they did include Japanese and other Asian cultures).

5. Cultural Values and Linguistic Differences Shaping Sino Nonverbal Communication

Chinese NVC is deeply shaped by the culture. NVC was already considered an important part of the message in 500BC by Confucius, who warned at length about the importance of rituals, including appearance, behavior in private and official life and the use of gestures (Confucius & Waley, 1938). Confucian values emphasize ethics rather than scientific truth as does the West. These are based on sense and sensibility and attaining harmonious relationships. There are two maxims, benevolence and decorum. The latter includes control of the body and its actions, which is reflected in everyday norms and rites (Lin and Ho, 2009). We still associate the Sino-speaking student with these Confucian values. Traditionally the Chinese student is respectful towards teachers, to the point of not daring to contradict them, with responsibility being shared among

individuals, which means they might not be forthcoming with individual comments. He or she tends to be good at rote learning and is likely to prefer non-individual activities (Li, 2009; Zhang, 2006). These values might be changing, but slowly. Lei and Chen (2011) point out that as the number of Chinese academic exchanges increases, Western classroom practices could be used to complement Chinese methods, such as encouraging student participation and enhancing the use of space in the classroom.

In one study, these Confucian values were ranked in order of importance by Chinese social scientists (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987). The most important values were: filial piety, hard work, tolerance of others, harmony, humbleness, loyalty to superiors and observation of rites and social rituals. All the factors listed (40 in total) were grouped into four principles (integration, work dynamism, human-heartedness and moral discipline). The study went on to test how people in other cultures viewed these, including people in Taiwan and Hong Kong, showing that there are significant differences between Chinese speaking regions, with human-heartedness (kindness, patience, courtesy, righteousness and patriotism) showing the biggest variation. These differences in values also shape behaviors, verbal and nonverbal, such as waiting for others to finish speaking. However, it should be noted that China is changing, with "younger people appear[ing] very different to their parents in numerous ethical and cultural characteristics" (Lin and Ho, 2009, p. 2411), while Taiwan and, to a lesser extent Hong Kong, retain their traditional values.

Differences in thought and so in verbal and nonverbal language are also due in part to personal idiosyncrasies, but we believe that an understanding of cultural characteristics will explain much NV behavior. One classification of cultures is into high and low contact and context cultures and collective vs. individualistic (Knapp and Hall, 2010). Spanish, from Spain, could be described as an individualistic high contact culture while Chinese, at least Mainland Chinese, would be high context and collective (Neuliep, 2006). Low/high contact refers to the use of haptics or proxemics by members of the cultural group; Hong Kong people would be low contact (there is an aversion to physical touch, even among family members), while this is not the case in China, at least not among family members and friends. High context cultures refer to those that give more importance to the nonverbal message, valuing rituals, space and context - these cultures value silence more. Collectivism refers to the importance

of group harmony, focusing on family and ancestry. In Hofstede's study of values in 53 different cultures (including individualism, power distance and masculinity) Hong Kong and Taiwan are shown to be culturally different when it comes to these values (Mainland China was not included in the study). In individualism Hong Kong ranks 37th and Taiwan 44th, both tending towards collectivism; in the masculinity index Hong Kong ranks 18th and Taiwan 32nd; power distance perceptions (how the distribution of power is accepted and expected) also shows considerable differences between Taiwan and Hong Kong respondents, 15th and 29th respectively, suggesting that Taiwanese will have more submissive traits than Hong Kong people (Hofstede, 1991). Recent studies, following the same methodology and studying perception of long/short term orientation (how one looks to the future), only refer to China, which is shown to have long-term orientation (there is no reference to Taiwan or Hong Kong). European countries scored in the middle and Anglophone countries are shown to be short-term oriented (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). These values shape individuals, and are expressed in traits such as those mentioned above for the Chinese student.

Languages themselves also vary in their formation, such as: Subject-Verb-Object in English or Verb-Object-Subject in Japanese, or the way in which the manner or the path of the action is expressed. Talmy (2009) differentiates between languages like English and Mandarin, and Spanish. The former encode information about the mode (how the action is taking place) within the verb, and information about the trajectory or path is given outside the verb (satellite-framed); the latter need to add information to the verb to specify the mode while the path is coded within it (verb-framed). In English we can say: 'She **tiptoed** out of the room'. In Spanish the same sentence will need a series of complements to specify how she left the room: 'Salió de la habitación **de puntillas';** but the verb 'salió' also indicates the path (Gullberg, 2011). Although in recent years a third category, the equipollently-framed type, of which Mandarin would be an example, has been advanced by Slobin (1996), and supported by Guo and Chen (2009), Talmy (2009) believes this third category is not necessary. These are languages where more than one verb might be used, all having equal status and expressing manner or/and path. This classification is relevant in that these language differences are also observable in the gesture that accompanies the utterances, suggesting that the development of the thought

varies. In different languages we might observe the speaker mimicking the act of tiptoeing, but this is likely to be done with the parts in boldface above the verb in English, but with the complement in Spanish. The speaker could also give additional information through gestures, indicating a backwards walk, for instance, a feature not contained in the speech. However if the gesture is not performed when expected, say by a student, a native speaker will pick up on the oddness of the message, probably without being aware of it, and may even see the gesture as a redundant flourish used by the speaker. Natives perceive fluency in a non-native as being higher if the non-native is also using appropriate and synchronized gestures when talking (Neu, 1990). If in FL teaching the educator is aware of these differences he/she might be able to help students by pointing out likely differences in gesturing, and also by being able to interpret the message better when there is a lack of verbal information.

6. Nonverbal Communication in Spanish Foreign Language Teaching of Sino-Speakers

When we think about language, its analysis and teaching, we tend to think of phonological, lexical and semantic parts, the fourth element being that of the pragmatics associated with nonverbal communication, including prosody (intonation, volume, tone, etc.). Most teachers of a foreign language, and all travelers, will agree that nonverbal communication is just as important as the verbal part. If a native Spanish speaker used the words 'Vamos – a – casa', in this order, to utter sentences with different pragmatic meanings, he/she would most likely use prosody, specially intonation, but also hand and facial gestures, head and eye movements and maybe even body movements to convey the different messages: 'Let's go home' (a suggestion); 'go home' (an order); 'are we going home?' (a question); 'we are going home' (a statement). Many textbooks do include the teaching of certain prosodic elements, mainly intonation, by relying on audio material. Other aspects covered include emblematic gestures (those not requiring speech, like the 'thumbs up'), some proxemics and understanding of time, but not in great detail. In a recent study Monterubbianesi analyzed the NV content of 107 textbooks of Spanish as a Foreign Language. Her results show that only 19% of the textbooks provide exercises focused

solely on explicit NVC; 33% of textbooks provide exercises involving NVC (often referring to emotional states or emblematic gestures such as the ones used in greetings). Textbooks following a communicative approach seem to lack in-depth exercises on NVC, and few textbooks with a business focus consider NVC explicitly (Monterubbianesi, 2013). To this we would add that very few textbooks contain audiovisual material, although there seems to have been an improvement over the past decade as, in a similar study carried out in 2001 (García-García), only two textbooks were found to contain specific nonverbal communication content.

Apart from these aspects which are beginning to appear in textbooks there are also a number of contributions to nonverbal communication in the classroom. Nonverbal communication is important not just in the expression of emotions but also in face-to-face conversation. Conversations are negotiated by a series of unspoken rules that allow speakers to manage turns accurately and respond to interruptions and self-repair adequately (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). Turn management in Spanish is different from turn management in English; it is also very different between students of a FL and among natives. In a study by López-Ozieblo (2012) with Hong Kong tertiary level students learning Spanish, it was seen that students seldom used nonverbal cues in turn management, apart from eye-contact. Among themselves they were able to maintain successful turns but this success was not replicated when talking to native speakers. This was interpreted as a clear sign of social belonging to a particular group, where certain behaviors were shared and understood, but a breakdown in communication with a different social group that didn't share those behaviors.

Very little has been written (at least outside China) about the nonverbal communication characteristics of Sino-speakers (including Chinese from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as the diaspora communities who keep their cultural roots). Some exceptions are Wu (2004), who describes gaze avoidance in Chinese speakers, Duncan (2006) and McNeill (2009) who studied use of gesture with various verbs, Zhao (n.d.) and So (2010) who talk about facial gestures and body movements in the Chinese speaker and Cortés-Moreno (2004) who studies prosodic features such as intonation. We believe there are some significant differences in local nonverbal communication. Some might be attributed to personal identity and others to context but a certain number are

cultural differences. Informal observations of Spanish FL students in Hong Kong, China and Taiwan tertiary level classrooms indicate that the NV behavior displayed by students is different. Chinese show more arm and hand gestures than Hong Kong and Taiwanese students, their proxemics are also different, showing closer positioning and more touching (research in progress). All Sino-speakers students recognize that Spanish NV is different from theirs, observing more contact, prosody and hand gestures in native Spanish speakers compared to themselves.

Ekman and Friesen (1969) believed in six emotions that were universal in the way they were communicated and perceived through facial gestures. Since then various studies have questioned their assertions. Aviezer, Trope and Todorov (2012), have shown that facial expressions are not enough to read extreme emotions, but body expressions are. In a study specifically targeting Chinese speakers, Jack, Caldara and Schyns (2012), found that Chinese process and express emotions differently from Western Caucasians, using the eyes instead of the eyebrows and mouth.

7. Immediacy in the Classroom

NVC has another function, which is essential to the FL teacher (and any speaker): that of creating immediacy. Immediacy is a term coined by Mehrabian (1972). It refers to the perceived degree of physical or psychological distance between two (or more) people. We tend to distance ourselves from people we don't like and get closer to those we do like, or for whom we have positive feelings. We distance ourselves or get closer by a combination of verbal and nonverbal behavior. However it is not clear whether, in the first instance, it is the behavior that creates the immediacy or if the immediacy attracts certain types of behavior (McCroskey and McCroskey, 2006). Studies of NVC in the classroom originate from the work done by James McCroskey at West Virginia University, where he developed the first courses of communication in instructional contexts. It is there that his students began to expand on the studies of NVC for use in the classroom (McCroskey and McCroskey, 2006).

McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond and Barraclough (1996) propose that the NV message is produced at the same time as the verbal message, but their

functions differ. The verbal message activates cognitive responses while the NV one activates emotional responses. Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1994) suggest that the verbal message helps with abstract terms while the nonverbal is used to communicate more social and interpersonal messages. Either way, one of the undisputed functions of NVC can be to create immediacy. Mehrabian (1972) suggests that immediacy is developed though behaviors such as closer proximity to the listener, more eye gaze, openness of arms and body, positive facial expressions and forward lean. The more of these are used the more powerful the message. Andersen, Andersen and Jensen (1979) also highlight the importance of getting close to students and touching them, establishing visual contact with them, moving the body, hands and head and smiling. McCroskey and McCroskey (2006) talk about the importance of clear enunciation. Knapp and Hall (2010) add to this the importance of appearance, dress and hair.

If we take these insights to the Sino-speaking classroom (a FL classroom with a Western teacher) we need to be aware of the cultural differences that might influence immediacy. The use of the smile, especially by women, is different from Western use in certain areas; the proverbial covering of the mouth when smiling and using a smile to cover lack of knowledge or understanding are not myths but a reality. Intense eye contact can be seen as threatening and violent. Proximity and touching can be seen as signs of a familiarity that contradicts the Confucian respect a student ought to show towards teachers. How then to use nonverbal communication in a formal context where the student is not in contact with native speakers? The most obvious answer has to be by explaining the differences first, introducing them from the very beginning and making the students aware of their existence. But if familiarity with these NV behaviors are only known and not acquired they might not help to establish immediacy. Certain behaviors, such as moving and using gestures, might be seen at first as a quirk of the teacher, an idiosyncrasy that will help to capture student's attention. These do not need to be explained but can be used to create immediacy.

Even if the culture the students belong to is one of low immediacy, such as that of China (low rate of gestures, facial expressions, contact, eye contact), it has been shown that students respond well to high immediacy, improving students' cognitive learning. However the reverse is not true: a low immediacy teacher in a high immediacy culture seems to be detrimental to cognitive learning

due to the lack of nonverbal communication (McCroskey et al., 1996). Culturally the Chinese teacher is less likely to create immediacy. This was tested by Wang (2008) in a study that followed both Chinese and Western teachers with Chinese students. The results showed that the Western teachers used nonverbal behavior to create immediacy more than their Chinese counterparts, with younger Chinese teachers being more nonverbal than older ones. Although Zhang (2005) reported on teacher immediacy not affecting student communication apprehension in Mainland China classrooms, our hypothesis (to be tested) is that it does have an impact in the Hong Kong context, but less so in Taiwan. Most Spanish FL teachers in Chinese speaking regions make good use of NVC to create immediacy, they usually consider themselves also as 'performers' (personal communication with Hong Kong teachers) - teaching requires acting. This is necessary to keep students' interest, to communicate and to teach. Our argument is that through these acts teachers are exaggerating the nonverbal elements of the communication and creating immediacy. It is thus hardly surprising that students consistently give positive evaluations to these teachers (from personal communication with teachers, no independent verification of students' evaluations was carried out). Not only is cognitive learning enhanced but also the student's perception of the teacher, the content and the course improves (Andersen, Norton and Nussbaum, 1981).

8. Conclusions

As we hope is clear by now, it is imperative that students should have access to nonverbal cues used by native speakers in an informal context. Due to cultural values, among other things, the Sino-speaker will use NVC in a different way than a native of the FL. By being able to imitate native NVC the student is more likely to be perceived as part of the group of native speakers. In addition NVC can be used to manage the conversation, show emotions and also to help the student from a cognitive point of view to retrieve words, make references to what has been said and even to think. The native teacher will always use a certain amount of NV behavior but this will be adapted to the context of the classroom, and often used to create immediacy. Therefore a third source of NV behaviors is very welcome in the FL classroom. The internet has already

improved the situation, specifically sites like Youtube, that provide real life examples of informal, natural-context situations, but countries such as China do not have legal access to some of them. We are not the first to endorse the importance of NVC in the classroom and it is hoped that with time more publishers will add audiovisual material to textbooks, and in their virtual platforms.

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