



KINESICS IN ORAL PRESENTATION: EXPLORING SPEAKING ANXIETY THROUGH NARRATIVE ENQUIRY

Norhartini Aripin¹,
Maisarah Noorezam²,
Noor Hanim Rahmat³ⁱ

^{1,2}Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,
UiTM Pasir Gudang,
Jalan Purnama,
Persiaran Seri Alam, 81750,
Masai, Johor,
Malaysia

³Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,
UiTM Shah Alam,
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor,
Malaysia

Abstract:

Teachers and educators are responsible in promoting effective teaching and learning to ensure intellectual development of the students. For that reason, being able to communicate well is essential for the students' academic and employability purpose. Hence, it is important for every learner to be equipped with good speaking skill. However, it is common for ESL speakers to experience speaking anxiety which hinders them to communicate well. This study, therefore, explores speaking anxiety that occurs during oral presentation through kinesics. Kinesics provides meaningful information to the listener/audience, in which messages are conveyed through the speakers' gesture, body movement and facial expression. It was found that speaking anxiety was shown by the speaker through kinesics during an oral presentation. Videos of speakers' presentation were recorded and narrated to obtain the findings. Results of this study provide useful implication towards ESL teaching and learning.

Keywords: verbal and non-verbal communication, kinesics, oral presentation, ESL learners, speaking anxiety

ⁱ Correspondence: email hartiniaripin494@gmail.com, maisarah87noorezam@gmail.com, patanim@gmail.com

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The communication process is formed into two categories which are verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication such as speaking skill has been regarded as one of the crucial skills in language learning. Having good communication skills is essential as it is one of the important elements for employability. Although verbal communication has always been a focus on daily communication, non-verbal communication has now become a practical tool for a meaningful conversation. Non-verbal communication functions as a method that conveys emotions, feelings, and messages through actions and expression rather than words (Hans & Hans, 2015). Besides, non-verbal communication is a functional tool as it is used to clarify, confirm and complete verbal communication functions (Basir and Ro'ifah, 2018).

Kinesics is an example of non-verbal communication, which is also known as a communication tool that includes gestures, posture, body movements, and facial expressions to deliver messages. Thus, in second language learning, kinesics helps English learners to incorporate these elements in their daily conversations to convey messages besides having their spoken and written words.

An oral presentation is a useful method to deliver one's thoughts on any subject matter to the audience. In the oral presentation, several factors lead ESL speakers to have poor communication skills, and one of them is speaking anxiety. Miskam and Saidalvi (2019) state that speaking anxiety has a prominent influence on learners' communication skills. Therefore, there is a need to address this issue as it can lead ESL learners to form undeveloped proficiency in language learning. Hence, using kinesics in an oral presentation will provide details that help to address speakers' anxiety during the presentation.

1.2 Problem Statement

During the oral presentation, speakers need to ensure that the audiences receive the intended message successfully. They should be aware that, to convey the message to the audience, they at first need to actively engage themselves with the text. However, when ESL speakers do the talking in front of the audiences, it is common for them to experience speaking anxiety. According to Ozturk & Gurbuz (2013), speaking is the most challenging skill in second language learning that usually avoids learners to perform in the language classroom.

Although speaking anxiety is considered as one of the conspicuous problems in the language classroom, it is difficult to determine or identify the presence of anxiety during the oral presentation by only looking at the spoken words. Hence, analysing kinesics from their body gestures, facial expressions, hand and body movements are believed to provide useful data about speaking anxiety. Although there are many researchers have carried out studies on speaking anxiety in ESL classroom, only minor studies are conducted to purposely explore speaking anxiety through kinesics. There is a limited number of studies that use narrative enquiry and videotaping as the main

instruments in exploring speaking anxiety. Hence, the study will explore speaking anxiety by analysing speakers' kinesics through narrative enquiry during their oral presentation.

The study aims to explore ESL speakers' anxiety by analysing kinesics including their gesture, body movement and facial expression that are performed during an oral presentation. Besides, this study is conducted to identify how speaking anxiety is determined in the presentation via kinesics which is believed to influence speaking performance and investigates the types of kinesics that the students usually use in the presentation and how they can be associated with speaking anxiety.

Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- 1) What are the types of kinesics performed by the speaker that is associated with speaking anxiety?
- 2) How does kinesics affect the speaker's performance in an oral presentation?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Kinesics

The word kinesics comes from the root word *kinesis*, which means "movement," and refers to the study of hand, arm, body, and face movements (Hans & Hans, 2015). Kinesics is also known as non-verbal communication, in which the information is delivered through body language, movements and expressions. According to Rahmat et al. (2019), kinesics is a physical movement including body language, facial expression, eye contact, gestures, postures and appearance. Kinesics is considered as a tool that is used to convey messages nonverbally. Besides conveying information, kinesics is also used to express feelings (Najarzadegan and Dabaghi, 2014). Hence, through kinesics, speaking anxiety can be addressed via gestures, body movement and facial expression during the speaking process. Indah et al. (2018) state that students usually use facial expressions to express their feelings such as fear, surprise and shy.

2.2 Types of Kinesics

According to Hans & Hans (2015), kinesics can be categorised into several parts namely body gestures, head movements and postures, eye contact and facial expression.

2.2.1 Body Gestures

Body gestures can be divided into three (3) main groups, called adaptors, emblems and illustrators.

- (a) **Adaptors** are known as touching behaviours and movements that typically indicate feelings such as excitement or anxiety. In a social context, adaptors occur due to uneasiness, anxiety, or a general sense that is beyond our control. Some self-adaptors like scratching, twirling hair, or fidgeting with fingers or hands are also considered as common touching behaviours. These movements are normally subconscious, resulting from feelings of anxiety, nervousness and lack of control (Ekman, 2004).

- (b) **Emblems** are gestures that have a specific agreed-on meaning. It is the only true 'body language' which can be performed with hand, head or facial movements, but most often emblems are performed with hand movements. Emblems are used in four different functions; (1) to repeat a word as it is used, (2) replace a word in a flow of speech, (3) provide a separate comment related to the words spoken, and (4) occur as the sole reply. Sahid *et al.* (2018) reported in their study that a female participant repeatedly touched her head using both hands when she felt anxious during a seminar presentation.
- (c) **Illustrators** are the most common type of gesture and are used to illustrate the verbal message. For example, when some want to show disagreement, she or he might shake their head left-to-right or roll their eyes. Another example of illustrators is brow-raising and brow lowering. Brow raising represents 'easy', 'light' or 'good', while brow lowering is used to emphasize 'difficult', 'dark' and 'bad'. Brow lowering is commonly used to perform negative emotions such as anger, fear, distress and sadness (Ekman, 2004).

2.2.2 Head Movements and Postures

These nonverbal cues are often used to acknowledge others or audiences. Sometimes, people use these movements to communicate their interest. A head nod is a usual sign as everybody uses this signal begins at birth, even before a baby could know that it has a corresponding meaning. a common and universal head movement is the headshakes back and forth which signify 'no'. Meanwhile, there are four general human postures: standing, sitting, squatting, and lying down.

2.2.3 Eye Contact

Eye contact becomes a significant way to communicate with others as this cue serves various communications functions such as to regulate interaction, monitor interaction, deliver information and establish interpersonal connections. In communication, we use eye contact to signal others that we are ready to take turn to speak or even to cue others to speak (Rahmat *et al.*, 2019). Our eyes also provide us with useful information or details when we need to interpret people's movements, gestures, and eye contact, besides determining if an audience is engaged, confused, or bored during communication. Eye-contacts can provide a signal that the person is feeling anxious, fearful and nervous. Some learners cope with their anxiety by avoiding eye-contact just to reduce their tense or anxiety (Sulistyorini, 2018).

2.2.4 Facial Expressions

Our faces are the most expressive part of our bodies as they can portray happiness, sadness, fear, anger and disgust. Facial expression can be defined as a way to express feelings through facial expression like pouting to show sadness (Rahmat *et al.*, 2019). Facial expression is strong to express anger, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness, distress and enjoyment (Ekman, 2004). People can simply identify someone's feelings and emotions

through facial expressions. Learners usually use facial expressions as the way to express emotion and feelings like happiness, anger, surprise, fear and sadness (Caganaga, 2015).

2.3 Oral Presentation in ESL Classroom

Oral presentation is a method to deliver messages to persuade or inform the audiences of the subject matter that is being presented. This method is mostly used in higher learning to show the understanding of the students on the subject matter based on the knowledge that they have acquired. In a professional context, as stated by De Grez *et al.* (2012) oral presentation is mostly used to persuade the client. A good oral presentation requires the mastery of nonverbal cues. Nonverbal cues are important in oral presentations because nonverbal cues aid the presenter to be more engaged with the audience. Nonverbal cues have much variety of usage. According to Newman *et al.* (2016) with a slight change of nonverbal cues can immediately change the atmosphere of the presentation.

During the oral presentation, presenters use verbal and non-verbal cues. Burgoon *et al.* (2016) reported that nonverbal cues help an individual to deliver messages without using any verbal cues as this method is more efficient in voicing out emotions and feelings. However, presenters might not realize that nonverbal cues play a major part in having a successful oral presentation. Kinesics is a part of nonverbal cues that plays a significant role in communication including body gestures, head movements and postures, eye contact and facial expressions. These types of nonverbal communication are considered as important in oral presentation and it is important to know how to apply these nonverbal cues when doing a presentation.

2.4 Speaking Anxiety in Oral Presentation

It was found that causes of speaking anxiety among foreign language learners differ in terms of the mode and context of speaking (Tercan and Dikilitas, 2015). Their findings indicate that learners at tertiary level suffer from speaking anxiety in English due to various factors such as preparedness, question-answer, testing, discussion, public speaking, error correction. Learners show high anxiety levels during speaking test and speaking with the teacher and in front of the classroom.

This resonates earlier study by Aydın & Zengin (2008) who categorize the reasons for speaking anxiety into groups including testing and teaching procedures. As second or foreign language learners, the fear of making mistakes during a presentation or any speaking skill activities or tests and apprehension about others' evaluation could be the key sources of speaking anxiety in English classes (Hammad & Abu Ghali, 2015).

Ahmed (2016) in his study summarises the reasons for speaking anxiety include, being afraid of other negative evaluation and being ridiculed by them, as well as being worry about making language mistakes. It has become clear that the reasons for speaking anxiety could come from the internal factors, the learners themselves and external factors, such as test, audience, setting and context. Thus, in delivering an oral presentation, students will experience a different level of speaking anxiety.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Sampling and Instrumentation

The method used in this research was qualitative descriptive research. This type of research was conducted to survey, describe and determine the way things were. Purposive sampling was used in the study as it involved a female student from a public university in Pasir Gudang, Johor. The selected participant was a semester three students who enrolled in one of the English courses namely Integrated Language Skill III (ELC231). This English course mainly focuses on four main skills including writing, listening, reading and speaking skill. In this course, there is an assessment called oral presentation, that requires learners to orally present their opinion and thoughts about their favourite movies.


There are two main instruments administered in this study to gather pertinent information. The first instrument conducted was video recording to record the students' movements during her oral presentation. Secondly, an interview was carried out to obtain additional details for the sake of the study.



3.2 Procedure







To meet the purpose of the study, a female student was selected to perform her oral presentation on any of her preferred movies. During her presentation, every single movement, gestures, expression were videotaped by the researcher to determine kinesics. After the process, a procedure called narrative enquiry was conducted to analyse all the movements made by the participants. The gathered information from the narrative enquiry was later transcribed and interpreted by the researcher to attain the findings for the study. A semi-structured interview was also conducted to get first-hand in-depth information. The student gets to share her experience and thought as a confirmation to produce evidence to confirm earlier findings.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 What are the types of kinesics performed by the speaker that is associated with speaking anxiety?

Categories of Kinesics	Videotaping/Narrative Enquiry (Nonverbal cues)	Description
1. Body Gestures (Emblem)	 <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 1</p>	Figure 1 shows how female student tried to decrease her anxiety by touching her veil several times without any reasons. This indicates that the female student tried to control her anxious especially when she was running out of ideas during the presentation. It was also found that the female student used emblems (hand

<p>(Adapters)</p>	<p>Picture A (00:42): The female student touched her scarf using both her hands when she could not get the ideas to talk.</p> <p>Picture B (02:37): The female student again touched her scarf with her left hand while thinking of some ideas.</p> <p>Picture C (06:35): The female student used her left hand to touch her scarf while presenting.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 2</p>	<p>movements) most of the time throughout the presentation.</p> <p>Sahid <i>et al.</i> (2018) reported in their study that a female participant repeatedly touched her scarf when she felt anxious during a seminar presentation. She tried to control and hide her nervousness by touching her head using both her hands.</p> <p>Figure 2 indicates that the female speaker used her fingers to scratch a few parts of her body while presenting her text.</p> <p>The most common touching behaviour performed are scratching, twirling hair, fidgeting with fingers or hands, coughing and throat clearing, resulting from feelings of anxiety, nervousness and lack of control (Ekman, 2004).</p>
<p>2. Head Movement and Posture</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 3</p> <p>Picture A (00:57): At the beginning of her presentation, the female speaker was seen changing her standing postures a few times.</p> <p>Picture B (04:48): The female student showed a slumped posture when she was desperately recalling for some ideas to say.</p> <p>Picture C (07:19): At the end of the presentation, the female presenter slightly crouched her body signing that she was a bit unsure about her speaking performance.</p>	<p>Based on figure 3, it shows that the female speaker performed head movements and changed her body postures several times whenever she felt uneasy during the presentation. The movements are said to indicate the speaking anxiety experienced by the speaker.</p> <p>Rigid body and slumped posture indicate defeat, nervous or depression (Indah <i>et al.</i>, 2018)</p>
<p>4. Eye Contact</p>		<p>Figure 4 indicates that the female speaker used eye contact during her presentation. Most of the time, she would prefer to look around and did not have a specific focus. This shows that the female speaker was trying</p>

	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>A</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>B</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>C</p>  </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 4</p> <p>Picture A (00:57): At the beginning of her presentation, the female speaker was trying to recall the plot of the movie and at that time she looked upward whenever she got stuck.</p> <p>Picture B (02:58): When explaining the story to the audiences, she preferred to look everywhere instead of making eye contact with the audiences.</p> <p>Picture C (04:48): She took a pause when she no longer had ideas to talk about. When she wanted to continue, she still avoided herself from having any eye contact.</p>	<p>to avoid herself from having any direct eye contact with the audiences.</p> <p>Students who are coping with anxiety will avoid any eye-contact to reduce the tense (Sulistyorini, 2018)</p>
<p>4. Facial Expressions</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>A</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>B</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>C</p>  </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 5</p> <p>Picture A (03:19): She made faces when she had to struggle to recall and explain the characters of the movie.</p> <p>Picture B (06:35): She made a ‘confusing’ expression when she seemed unsure about the points she talked about.</p> <p>Picture C (07:20): At the end of the presentation, she showed her ‘unsure and panic’ expressions as she was worried if the audiences did not understand the whole story that she shared from the beginning.</p>	<p>Figure 5 explains that the presenter used various facial expressions and some of them can be related to speaking anxiety especially when she had problems to recall the plots and struggle to use the language. She had made faces, lowered and raised her brows that also indicate the presence of anxiety.</p> <p>A facial expression such as raising and lowering brows is strong to express anger, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness, distress and enjoyment (Ekman, 2004)</p> <p>Learners usually use facial expressions as the way to express emotion and feelings like happiness, anger, surprise, fear and sadness (Caganaga, 2015).</p>

4.2 How does kinesics affect the speaker’s performance in an oral presentation?

Kinesics affects the speaker’s performance in oral presentation positively as it has been proven from the interview session.

Questions	Semi-structured Interview	Description
1. Do you feel anxious when it comes to speaking in front of others?	Yes, because I will get nervous thinking that my speaking or presentation would not be understood by audience.	The presenter worried that her presentation would not reach the audience because of her nervousness. This condition is expected as majority undergraduates have experienced a language speaking anxiety at a moderate level. Miskam and Saidalvi (2019)
2. What are the normal habits that you do to reduce your speaking anxiety?	If I have notes in my hand, I will roll it up, and sometimes I will move my hands while talking.	From the response, it is clear that the presenter tried to reduce her anxiety by channelling it to hand movements. According to Hans&Hans (2015), hand movement is the most often emblem performed by speaker. Thus, it is not unusual for the presenter to move her hand when get frightened when she speaks.
3. Does moving your body help you in reducing speaking anxiety?	Yes, it helps me in hiding my nervous and build my confident to talk.	Having confidence to speak is one of the key factors to learn speaking skills. This correlates a finding in the study by Raja (2017) that shows 50% of the students felt that lack of confidence was the reason for them to be anxious during public speaking. The body movements by the presenter are normally subconscious, resulting from feelings of anxiety, nervousness and lack of control (Ekman, 2004).
4. Which part of your body that you use the most when you feel anxious during oral presentation?	My hands, I love moving it during oral presentation because it helps me to explain better.	Hand movements are the typical anxiety gestures to aid the message conveys during verbal communication process. As mentioned by the presenter, this act helps her to replace a word in flow of speech Hans & Hans (2015).

4.3 Discussion

From the findings, it is proved that kinesics helps English learners to incorporate elements of physical movement such as body language, facial expression, eye contact, gestures, postures and appearance in an oral presentation to convey messages besides having the spoken words. The participant of this research used many body gestures especially hand movements when she felt anxious during her oral presentation. The uneasiness and fear that the audience may not understand her is the factor to her non-verbal cues. She also stated that the gestures help in her confidence level and to explain her content better.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

Teachers and educators should be aware and understand that learners do have speaking anxiety and it is performed during an oral presentation or any speaking activity. Thus, they could direct learners to do more speaking practice in small groups among peers and then introduce to larger audiences. This will increase their confidence and help them reduce their anxiety level to control unnecessary gestures that may hinder them from performing better.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should explore a more thorough investigation of the implications of using kinesics during any speaking activity in the classroom. Data from different gender of speakers could be an insightful comparison to understand kinesics better. Besides, findings from the audience could also be beneficial to know if kinesics affect them to understand speeches from speakers.

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