

A CASE STUDY ON COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHER' S NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOURS UNDER THE SETTING OF MULTIMODALITY

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ABSTRACT: *In multimedia classroom teaching context, teacher's proper nonverbal communication plays a crucial role in the successful transmission of information and interaction between teachers and students. This paper, based on Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistic, adopts case study analysis of the teachers' non-verbal behaviours and visual modes in PPT courseware, aiming to explore how various modes cooperate to facilitate teacher-students interaction and realize three metafunctions in class. The author expects this study will be of help in elevating the teacher's awareness of non-verbal behaviours in teaching to optimize the teaching and learning effect in class.*

KEYWORDS: Teachers' non-verbal behaviours, Multimodal discourse analysis, Actional modes, Visual modes

INTRODUCTION

The rapid acceleration in the development of modern technology multimedia has contributed to the new form of multimedia language class teaching through which language teaching and learning could be optimized via the multi-application of various media and technologies. This new form of teaching presents significant challenges for teachers, where there are wider contexts, more learning resources that both students and teachers can use. Therefore, the language-focused teaching methodology and teacher-centred classes are facing great pressure now.

Meanwhile, traditional discourse analysis that only centres on the linguistic mode cannot cater to the needs of social and technological changes since it is noticed that language is not only the traditional mode of discourse, but also a wealth of semiotic resources like the images, sound, colour, flash, diagram, etc. which is coordinating to realize the meaning-making in communication. Just as Kress & van Leeuwen[5] stated, the meaning of discourse in the social communication isn't only realized by a single modality, but realized by a integrated use of a wide range of semiotic resources. Different from the traditional discourse analysis, the multimodal one is the dynamic process of communication, including auditory mode, visual mode and actional mode instead of only verbal ones.

In multimedia classroom, as a-two-way interaction of messages transmission, classroom teaching does impact and promote the teacher-student relationship in forms of information transmission. In the classroom teaching research, verbal mode has always been given much more prominence than the non-verbal ones, but in fact, teachers' non-verbal behaviours turn to become more important in digital age because teacher must integrate a variety of modes not merely linguistic one to usher students to take part in classroom activities and interactions, as Grant & Hennings [2] asserted that 82 percent of the motions used in a classroom by the teacher are non-verbal while only 18 percent are verbal. Nevertheless, a large number of English

teachers focus on the various kinds of verbal communication at the cost of habitually ignoring the nonverbal form in teacher-student communication.

Against such background, to facilitate and improve classroom language teaching and learning, this paper makes an attempt to analyze how various modes cooperate to facilitate teacher-students interaction and realize three metafunctions, hoping to help in elevating teacher's awareness of the non-verbal behaviours in multimedia classroom teaching.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Systemic-Functional Linguistic

Halliday [3] holds that, "language has had to be taken out of its glass case, dusted and put back in a living environment, into a context of situation and context of culture." An important starting point for a social semiotic is the recognition that meaning making occurs in social contexts and that language use is functional within those contexts. According to him, any use of language serves simultaneously to construe certain aspect of meanings, to construct relationship and to organize the language successfully so that it can transmit message, which can be briefly identified as three metafunctions: the ideational function, the interpersonal one and the textual. The ideational function refers to the function of representation of the world; the interpersonal function is the function that acting interaction with different people in specific relation for special purpose; and the textual one is relative with the process of ushering various communicative elements integrating into larger wholes, communicative events or text to realize social practices, for example, speech, presentations. Each of the three functions has a particular subsystem. The ideational function is realized by the system of transitivity, the interpersonal one is by mood and modality and the textual by theme.

For all Halliday has made great contributions to the establishment of social semiotics, he has focused only on language and neglected the importance of other semiotic modes co-deployed in human communications and various discourse types. Later, Kress & Van Leeuwen have extended Halliday's social semiotic approach to regard image as a resource for representation which displays culturally produced regularities.

Visual Grammar

Greatly influenced by Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, Kress & van Leeuwen established grammar for visual design in their *Reading Image: The Grammar of Visual Design* in 1996, which is acknowledged as the innovative theoretical comprehensive tool for many researches to adopt to investigate visual representations. This grammar sees image as a resource for representation which also represents three meta-functions, namely, representative function (equivalent for ideational function in SFG), interactive function (equivalent for interpersonal function in SFG) and compositional function (equivalent for textual function in SFG).

The representational metafunction refers to how images construct "conceptive" and "narrative" representation of what goes on in the world. Narrative images involve participants partaking in actional verbal or mental process through the use of vectors, thought clouds and speech balloons. Process can either be actional or reactional, which can, in turn be transactional (acting on something or someone), non transactional (not acting on something or someone), and can

further be subclassified as conceptual images which represent classificational(taxonomies), symbolic(suggestive and attributive) and analytical(part-whole) process. The interactive meaning focuses on the relations between the producer and the viewer, which includes contact (offer or demand dependent on gaze), attitude (levels of involvement depending on angle as oblique or frontal, and levels of power depending on low angle or high eye) and social distance (intimate social or impersonal classified by the view of depicted participants – long, medium or close shots). Interactive meaning is also realized through modality values, naturalistic, abstract or scientific. The compositional meaning involves the information value, salience and framing of the representational and social meaning. Information value deals with the lesser/greater of margin/central placement, the right/left placement of the given/new information; the vertical under/over polarisation of real/ideal value. Salience is construed by means such as distinctiveness, elemental prominence and contrast. Framing of elements by location and borders affects the elements of connection or disconnection from one another.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The term “multimodality” introduced by discourse analysts emphasized the importance of the semiotics besides language-in-use, such as image, music, gesture, and other means of communication. Since the Semiotics is becoming more and more popular mixed with social and cultural discourse analysis, language is losing its key role as the most favoured tool in making meanings. Multi-modality is not only a process but also a product. The process is a sense of continuous choices of semiotics, comprising a series of networks. During this process people make choices, receive feedback and make other choices all within a particular context. A developing idea originates from visual, written or multi-modal text, always within a context, with its modes or a combination of modes fitting the communicative event. With the development of the multi-modal approach, Kress and Van Leeuwen [5] were able to introduce it into communication, including discourse, design, production and distribution.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts qualitative analysis to investigate the following three questions:

- (1) How do various non-verbal modes cooperate to facilitate classroom interaction?
- (2) How do various modes realize the ideational, interpersonal and textual function?

The data collected in this study is based on classroom teaching video of Miss Liu Ling, the Champion of Integrated English teaching in the first SFLEP (Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press) National College English Teaching Contest which is held by SFLEP which is affiliated to Shanghai International Studies University. Each teacher is allowed to use 20 minutes to present the class and she gives a lecture on “The Virtual Life” in that competition.

This study adopts qualitative methods—case study and observation method to probe into the teacher’s non-verbal behaviours in English teaching context from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis. The focus will be laid on the teacher’s non-verbal behaviours (namely actional modes) and visual modes (namely the pictures and characters in PPT) will be analyzed in order to examine how actional and visual modes cooperate to construct meanings and facilitate classroom language teaching and interaction.

Multimodal Analysis of Teacher's Non-verbal Behaviors

Teacher's non-verbal behaviours, as a special register of language, are to facilitate teaching and realize good teacher-students interactions. Non-verbal behaviors on the part of teachers like gesture, gaze, proxemics and facial expression, etc. could all deliver meaning during classroom instruction as well. Especially in modern teaching context where multimedia instruments such as computers and PowerPoint courseware are becoming an indispensable method of language teaching, classroom interaction does not merely contain verbal communication.

Multimodal Analysis of Actional Modes

Kress and van Leeuwen[5] believe that the action is not limited but a broad concept that can embrace various modes, such as gesture, posture, proxemics, which could all serve as meaning-making resources.

Gesture

Gestures are usually related to the synthetical use of face, arms and hands in the body movement and they can express people's emotions and attitudes both covertly or obviously. Each gesture is not only a simple action, but also unique and beneficial, which can help teachers express their ideas so as to improve students' understanding of teaching objectives of the class.



Image 1 One of the Gestures Used by Miss Liu

In Image 1, Miss Liu uses her two index fingers pointing to the screen while facing backwards to the PPT and forwards the students to make them concentrated on the word "Avatar" along with her explaining. Gestures used by her present as an act of demand in terms of the interpersonal meaning realization. Students are guided to be participated in classroom interaction and thus interpersonal function is achieved instead of using the verbal languages like "please pay attention to what I am talking about". Though this way, the gesture to minimize the authority of teacher and create a close relationship with students. Thus interaction is facilitated and the interpersonal and ideational functions are realized. It could also be observed that in asking questions, she stretches their palms as a sort of invitation instead of pointing to one student with index finger. It's a very kind gesture which eases students' anxiety. And in the part of asking students to listen to the recording again, she uses her index finger swung near the ear, guiding students to follow instructions. In line with the atmosphere and reaction of the students, these gestures work effectively and vividly in conveying teachers' information and smoothing the communication between the teacher and the students.

Gaze

Gaze is related to the organization, direction and movement of the eyes. Kress and van Leeuwen[4] assert that “interactive meaning can be conveyed through gaze: gaze at the viewer indicated an act of demand and absence gaze at the viewer indicates an act of offer”. The use horizontal eye used by Miss Liu in Image 1 reveal that she is gazing at no particular student but wants to attract the attention of the whole class, while she casts an oblique eye line to one certain male student who is answering the question attentively. In that case, the student becomes the center of the class and is demanded to react to the teacher’s requests, both linguistic and actional (namely, having eye contact with the teacher). In accordance with video observance, she also gazes at the judges sitting behind students from time to time in particular to indicate that they also pay attention to them and are respectful to them.

Facial Expression

A facial expression deliver the emotional state of one particular person to the other communicative participant. In language teaching context, teachers’ facial expressions may not be so salient compared with the verbal language. But facial expressions can reveal teachers’ attitudes towards students and their classroom performances. Therefore, the interpersonal function can be realized through facial expressions.



Image 2 Facial Expressions Used by Miss Liu

In Image 2, The teacher walks towards the student who may know what is “WOW” with a big smile and inquiring eyes on her face, showing her praiseful and encouraging attitude. When the student is encountered with the difficulty to fully express himself, she keeps a smiling, affirmative and encouraging facial expression, waiting for the answers with patience instead of cutting in with correct ones. When the student finishes his answer, she proposes some better answers for the questions. Her non-verbal behaviors like facial expressions still stand out though she mainly uses the linguistic mode to help and offer modification to the students. The teachers’ attentive and positive(smiling) expressions convey her attitude covertly, like approving or disapproving.

Praising and positive facial expression is beneficial to alleviating nervous atmosphere and shorten the distance between the teacher and the students. An approachable and harmonious teaching environment can be established by this tiny and habitual facial expression, which contributes to easing students’ learning anxiety. Thus, it avails the realization of the ideational and interpersonal function. Appropriate facial expressions are not only a kind of teachers’

intuitive reactions to the classroom situation, but also will help create an amiable and lively language teaching and learning environment.

Posture



Image 3 Posture Used by Miss Liu

Posture refers to the ways in which people position their bodies in the process of communication, including form of the body, such as open or closed arms and legs. Effective teachers usually lean slightly forward or comfortably upright with his or her whole body relaxed and face squarely at the students to show their enthusiasm and attention. If the teachers always bend forward into their textbooks and references books, or stand on the platform firmly without any approach to students during the elaboration or communication, they may not be attentive to the students.

In Image 3, she faces the students, using a posture with back upright and arms bent backward to be open. She employs this posture to let students to discuss “When and where did you first use the Internet?” and “What do you like about it?” in pairs. This posture combined with this gesture means “Discuss it in groups of two students”. In terms of interpersonal function realized, this posture is an act of demand to ask for a discussion among students. As a facilitation and extension to linguistic mode, the postures assist the construction of knowledge and thus interpersonal function can be realized.

Proximics

Proximics relates to the means that how people arrange and use their space, which is often conditioned by the culture, subculture, and even the environment in which the interaction takes place. Some novice teachers tend to stand still on the platform or just move a little around their desk. They rarely approach to the realm that belongs to students, only when they want to check the students’ classroom assignment. In fact, the distance between the teacher and students is a way of showing their relationships, either intimate or authoritarian. Thus through the moving around the classroom, the interpersonal function is realized.

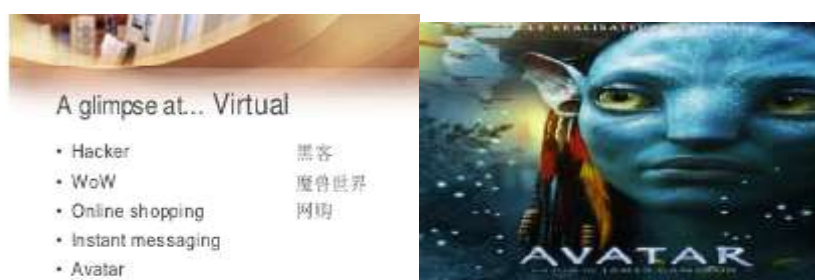
In this teaching contest video, Miss Liu is a frequent traveler in classroom. When it comes to expound key language or complicated ideas, she will return to their stages in front of the screen with a certain distance from the students so the whole class can concentrate on what she is explaining. When demanding students to discuss the topic in pairs, she walks around the whole classroom and are ready to help; when asking students to express their opinions, she walks to one side of the student and gazes at one particular student, as what has been shown in Image 2, presenting her attention to the student’s classroom performance. Therefore, the spatial arrangement, on one hand, helps the teacher shorten the distance from students when he or she

moves, on the other hand, draws students' attention to the teaching and establishes teacher's authority when the teacher stands at the stage in front of the whole class.

Visual Modes

PowerPoint (PPT) is a multimodal courseware that can integrate various modes, like print, visual and sound. It offers an easy way of putting text, graphics, sound, animations and even hyperlink together that allows for creating comprehensive texts that have the capacity of becoming multimodal discourse. Well-made presentation slides should cater to readers' (students) needs and can achieve the teaching objectives, meanwhile, contain a logical and usable information structure to together with user-friendly design, easily-read content.

Pictures



2 pages of PPT of Miss Liu

Picture Mode often goes with text, which has a great visual impact because it shows the real world to the students. The pictures sometimes are used to assist the text for better understanding. Miss Liu makes her PPT with a simple template with white background, warm-toned borders and black-colored character, which make the key points absolutely clear and the visual effect especially good. In lead-in part of her lecture, she puts forward some words regarding with the title "The Virtual World", and she adheres a picture to the certain word on the next page to deepen the students' memory, such as the movie poster of "Avatar" to leave a deeper impression on the students' mind.

Typography and Color

These two modes are frequently used by teachers to emphasize the important and difficult points in PPT courseware. They can attract the students' attention easily and tell students what information they should focus on.

contribution *n.*

② [C] *an amount of money or sth. else that helps to achieve sth. or to make it successful*

The earthquake-stricken region accepted a ¥40,000 **contribution** from the kids.



A page of PPT of Miss Liu

When Miss Liu explains the second level of meaning of word “contribution”, she gives an example sentence with the word “contribution” colored which is eye-catching. She also puts a related donation picture along with it to help students’ understanding. In terms the realization of textual meanings, different color and layout can make the important messages become salient. Without laying much stress on the content that needs to be interpreted by language, the color and the size of the pictures will tell the students which are key points and new information. The teachers makes the key points salient with some special means, among which the most commonly used way is changing the words’ color.

Layout in the PowerPoint courseware



A page of PPT of Miss Liu

When producing a PPT courseware, teachers should not only put effective messages into to achieve teaching objectives but also provide a systemic and comprehensive information structure that live up to readers’ expectations such as user-friendly design, skimmable content and so on. In every single page, the layout must clearly show the information structure: which is the Given information and which is the New. Kress and van Leeuwen [4] argue that “visual information is organized based on a horizontal structure which presents information as Given or New”. Generally speaking, left of the page is Given information, right of it is New. Moreover, some information must be prominent in the texts, i.e., having greater salience; only in this way can the reader capture the key points and command them easily. In terms of textual function, the video is New information and the question is Given information. Students need to think about the question to process and digest new information shown in the video in the right part of the PPT.

A synthesis analysis on the teacher’s non-verbal behaviors

Although actional modes and visual modes are examined separately in the above parts, every mode should not be treated in an isolated way. In fact, in the language teaching and learning environment, the actional and visual ones coordinate to facilitate classroom interactions to achieve better teaching and learning effects.

Table 1 Summary of modes used by Miss Liu in lead-in

Time	Linguistic modes	Actional modes	Visual modes
00'55"	Would you please read the words on the big screen?	Face forward to class, Pointing to the screen	A relative background picture with the title
01'04	Thank you very much, you have very good pronunciation.	Palm upward pointing To the whole class	The same as above
01'27"	Where can we find the "virtual world"? This wonderful lady please?	Pointing a girl as an invitation Bent her body forward to the girl	Two lead-in questions: "When and where did you first use the Internet? What do you like about it?"
01'40"	On the Internet! Yes, you are very smart!	Big smile on the teacher's face	The same as above
02'09"	Share your experiences with your partner about your first experience on the Internet.	Pointing two students randomly, telling them to work in pairs	The same as above
02'40"	Have you ever try Internet before? Very good!	Walk around, Bent her body to ask some questions	The same as above
03'26"	When and where did she first use the Internet?	Pointing the girl besides the answerer. Smile on the teacher's face	Back to the lead-in questions
03'40"	I think you are qualified as one of the "netizen". Tell me you know the meaning!	Write the word "Netizen" in the blackboard	The same as above
04'15	What do you like about it? Oh, I see!	Gaze at the boy, nodding	Some words as reference
05'23	a very good talk! Let's take a glance at the virtual world.	Move to the other side the classroom	A glimpse at... Virtual

From table 1, we can see actional modes and visual modes all play an important role in classroom interaction, although in this extract linguistic mode is dominant. Other than standing on the platform firmly or just in front of the classroom, she always stands near to the front row of the students, so this posture can shorten the distance between the teacher and students and reduce the teacher's authority. She often bends herself forward to a certain student and sometimes walks around the classroom to see to if students are really involved in classroom activities, especially those who sit in the back. When someone is expressing his or her idea, she will look at him or her. This continuous eye contact shows the teacher's attention and signifies a harmonious teacher-student relation. When giving feedback, the most commonly used expressions by her are "very good!", "yes, you are very smart". This kind of positive feedback that accompanied with big smile is much more meaningful than merely verbal praise. Here, linguistic mode cooperates with the facial expression or posture facilitating the realization of ideational function.

Table 2 Summary of Metafunctions realized by modes

Meta-function	Linguistic modes	Actional modes	Visual modes
Ideational function	Commentary instruction	Writing a word in the blackboard	Handwriting of "Netizen" on the blackboard
Interpersonal function	Verbal positive feedback	Smile, nodding, travel in the classroom	Some reference words
Textual function	A glimpse at... "Virtual"		White background, black word, capital letters

As shown in Table 2, in terms of the metafunction realized, the linguistic modes like referential questions (for example, "When and where did you first use the internet"), actional modes like writing the word "Netizen" in the blackboard (afterwards, she explains it in Chinese) and visual modes like handwriting words on blackboard construct the material process and mental process of the ideational function. Interpersonally, the teacher's verbal positive feedback and actional modes like smile, nodding, travel in the classroom can construe the effective classroom teaching and show intimate relationship between the teacher and students. Miss Liu designs the PPT in a logical and clear way with simple template with white background and black-coloured character, so that the New information is significant and visual salience and textual function is realized.

CONCLUSION

As what have been illustrated above, it can be found that teachers' non-verbal behaviors plays a significant role in classroom teaching and classroom interaction. Classroom language teaching is no longer a monomodal process. Teachers' actional modes and application of various visual modes cooperate to construe three metafunctions and optimize the best language instruction environment. Besides, the combination of mode is not arbitrary but must be in accordance with the theme of one certain class. Each mode that the teachers choose is crucial in transmitting of information and how students are learned, digested or practiced. Moreover, every mode, no matter the actional or the visual, will influence students' reaction to the language acquisition and the interaction with the teacher. Therefore, teachers must be careful in choosing each mode that they will use in teaching.

Through this study, the author expects to be of help in elevating teacher' awareness of the non-verbal behaviors since use of positive nonverbal communication helps to create a sound classroom atmosphere, can encourage students' participation, and improve the development of students' cognitive abilities.

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