Research Article

Paralinguistic Cues and EFL Learners' Speaking Fluency: A Study of First-Year Undergraduate Students of Gonabad University

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Abstract

Paralinguistic features are indispensable and crucial aspects of communication without which any utterance would lose its identity. On the other hand, confusion in cross-cultural communication is most often assigned to paralinguistic features. Despite the significant importance of paralinguistic clues in humans' communication, only limited studies have tackled this issue. More specifically, despite the fact that paralinguistic features are culturally different, no study has investigated the possible relationship between these features and speaking performance of Persian-speaking learners of English. Hence, with this existing gap in the literature, the present study was an attempt to scrutinize the impact of paralinguistic cues on Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency. To this end, we recruited 40 first-year undergraduate female students of Linguistics at the University of Gonabad, utilizing non-random sampling method. Their English proficiency level was determined as lower-intermediate via the administration of Quick Oxford Placement Test. In our quasi-experimental study with pre-test and post-test, we allocated a five-week span of instruction for the purpose of teaching paralinguistic clues to the experimental group to see whether it could have a significant positive impact upon their speaking performance. The instrument we utilized to evaluate speaking capability of our participants was a researcher-made speaking test. The results demonstrated that utilizing paralinguistic features boosted students' speaking capability. On the light of our finding, it could be concluded that paralinguistic features could be employed for the first-year undergraduate students to enhance their communicative performance. Future studies in diverse EFL settings could shed light on this conclusion.

*Keywords***:** paralinguistic clue, EFL learner, cross-cultural, communication, speaking fluency

Introduction

Although all four skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing are of paramount importance in the evaluation of any foreign language achievements, speaking has a more predominant position than other skills as the communicative competence of speakers is usually attributed to their speaking capability. Yet, mastering speaking skill is naturally a very challenging area, because it requires not only the satisfactory recruitment of linguistic knowledge, but also socio-cultural skills (Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan, & Soler, 2008; Tavil, 2010). Needless to say, variables like task rationale, methodology and the type of expectations that learners have regarding learning a foreign language may culminate in conflict and confusion among EFL learners, and negatively affect their speaking capability(Chen, 2018; Getie, 2020; Williams & Andrade, 2008). The illogical and implausible evaluation of students by teachers might also culminate in the learners' negative judgment of themselves which would create stress and anxiety among learners impeding their optimal linguistic performance. More importantly, this negative self-judgment would affect communicative competence (Getie, 2020).

Another aspect of speaking skill which would make it a challenging area is that we could observe a particular kind of dynamism in any oral communication. Because, individuals, not only use linguistic expressions for meaning exchange, but also, they resort to body language and non-verbal communication to express their feelings and intentions while communicating to each other (Schuller et al. 2013). Paralinguistic clues are consciously and intentionally recruited by speakers to impart their real thoughts and intentions concomitant with verbal message. These elements include facial expressions, gestures, proxemics, eye contact, posture, and etc. Moreover, these clues are envisaged as indispensable aspects of human social interactions (Anderson, 2004). It was estimated that more than 65 percent of meaning is expressed via non-verbal communication (Birdwhistell, 1970). It was shown that paralinguistic parameters could be indirectly involved in the construction of our emotions and feelings while interacting with each other. Body language drives social interaction context to shape emotion recognition (Abramson et al., 2021).

Noteworthy to mention , despite the fact that a lot of researches have concluded that variables like anxiety, stress, methodological problems, inaccurate feedback by teachers, improper time management and etc. could distort and negatively impact EFL learners' speaking performance (Azizifar, Faryadian, & Gowhary, 2014; Behnam, Jenani, & Ahangari, 2014; Hailu, 2012; Hanifa, 2018; Sun & Yang, 2021; Zarrinabadi & Saberi Dehkordi, 2021),

only limited studies have investigated the specific impacts that paralinguistic variables as socio-cultural components of speaking might have upon the ESL learners' communicative performance (Irgin, 2017; Sumekto & Setyawati, 2020; Uştuk & Aydın, 2018). For example, the crucial role of facial expression, and eye-contact on the second language acquisition, and the improvement of speaking skill has already been corroborated in one study (Sutrisna,2020). Also, in some qualitative studies, the facilitative effect of paralinguistic clues on learning process was emphasized (Azeez and Azeez, 2018; Haji-karim &Sotoudehnama, 2017).

Factors which might affect foreign language learning, and achievement in speaking skill were investigated by previous researchers. A group of researchers emphasized the destructive impact of psychological states, and concluded that negative psychological states like communicative apprehension, test anxiety as a form of dynamic situation anxiety, trait anxiety as a fixed anxiety related to EFL learners' personality trait and fear of negative evaluation were all components of foreign language anxiety which impede foreign language achievement(Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin, & Rahman, 2013; Amengual-Pizarro, 2018).As Krashen, the pioneer scholar introducing affective filter hypothesis asserted, anxiety, stress and negative self-esteem could be regarded as psychological variables impeding the successful achievement in the EFL setting(Krashen, 1982). According to Krashen, it is of paramount importance to decrease these negative affective variables, by employing a comprehensive and well-adopted method that decreases the stress level among EFL students boosting their communicative performance.

More specifically, in a lot of researches, the diverse factors which might reinforce and trigger EFL learners' stress and, impeded their foreign language achievement have been proposed. These variables included emotional intelligence, diverse registers, not being prepared for the class, learning environment, the clumsy error correction by teachers, speaking in front of other classmates, the innate stress-generating nature of speaking compared to the other skills (Aguado-Jiménez, Pérez-Paredes, & Sánchez, 2012; Mutlu & Yıldırım, 2019; Vaezi & Fallah, 2012; Wang, Xie, & Cui, 2016)

Lennon (1990) asserted that speaking fluency could be elaborated utilizing broad and narrow definitions. In the broad definition, speaking fluency is regarded as the overall speaking proficiency, while fluency in the narrow definition is related to smoothness and comfort in the oral linguistic delivery. In other words, according to his stance, fluency is not related to inviting the listener to pay attention to the production of speaking, but to the listener or audience' attention to the speaker's

delivered message. Richards et al. (1985) defined fluency as the type of speech which is close to a native speaker's rhythm, pause, intonation and in EFL context is parallel to the level of communicative competence. On the other hand, the recruitment of different types of cognitive, affective, and behavioral strategies to enhance learning and speaking fluency has also been emphasized by some researchers (Bielak, 2018; Falout, 2012; Rouhani, 2008; Skelly & Estrada-Chichon, 2021). Meanwhile, other group of researchers emphasized the use of specific methods like Community Language Learning or local culture-based materials to overcome learners' psycholinguistic problems and enrich their confidence, and consequently boost their foreign language achievement(Alakrash et al., 2021; Goris, Denessen, & Verhoeven, 2019). Use of drama and oriented foreign language education has also been suggested by some researchers to tackle their psychological problems, and improve their communicative capability(Nurhayati, 2016; Sağlamel & Kayaoğlu, 2013).

The significance of the employment of paralinguistic parameters, not only in speaking to a foreign language, but also, in overall communication has been corroborated by many scholars (Crystal, 2019; Lieberman, 2011; Schandorf, 2013). Noteworthy to say, even though in many studies, the impact of the use of paralinguistic cues on the second language acquisition has been investigated (Irgin, 2017; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Uştuk & Aydın, 2018), only in a few studies, the possible impact of the recruitment of paralinguistic clues upon EFL learners' achievement has been investigated. For example, in one study conducted by Ustuk and Selami (2018), it has been divulged that utilizing paralinguistic clues could reduce foreign language anxiety among EFL learners, and improve their communicative competence.

Blount and Padgug, in 1977, have investigated the distribution of paralinguistic, prosodic, and interactional features in Spanish and English languages. Interestingly, their results demonstrated that English- speaking parents relied more on paralinguistic and affective features. On the other hand, Spanish-speaking parents utilized more interactional features while communicating to their children. This finding had two major implications. First, it vividly demonstrated that paralinguistic elements are culturally bound segments, as they might play a more robust and significant role in a specific foreign language. Second, in a parent to child communication, as a specific register of communication, paralinguistic elements could be utilized by parents to facilitate speaking skill of learners in particular, and their overall acquisition in general.

The crucial role of eye-contact, facial interaction, and proxemics on the second language acquisition has already been corroborated in previous

researches (Azeez and Azeez, 2018; Haji-karim&Sotoudehnam; 2017; Sutrisna, 2020). For example, in a separate study, it was found that utilizing non-verbal cues including eye-contact and proxemics could always be found in the communicative process of EFL teaching as well as learning activities, as they were very beneficial to assist students acquire the target language better and understand the meaning of utterances more easily (Sutrisna, 2020).

In their study, Haji-karim and Sotoudehnam (2017) investigated nonverbal communication including eye-contact, hand gesture, facial expression and tone of voice qualitatively from EFL learners' point of views. Their results corroborated the positive impacts of these clues on learning process, as they help them to get more benefit from the learning context, in general, and boost diverse aspects of foreign language including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation in particular. Furthermore, Azeez and his colleague in 2018, via designing a questionnaire, scrutinized the role of paralinguistic clues including eye-contact, facial expressions, and gestures in English teaching and learning. In this qualitative research, both teachers and students' viewpoints on the significance of paralinguistic elements were interrogated. They concluded that nonverbal elements could stimulate teachers' innovativeness in designing diverse classroom activities and movements, and better communicate nonverbally with their students. On the other hand, it could facilitate students' learning (Azeez and Azeez, 2018).

Nevertheless, while lots of researches have previously emphasized the determining role of culture in the foreign language studies (Byram, 2015; Canale, 2016; Yang & Chen), the number of researches conducted in a specific non-western culture for the purpose of analyzing the impact of paralinguistic elements upon foreign language acquisition was limited. As mentioned earlier considering the fact that paralinguistic elements are culturally bound elements manifested diversely in different cultures (Grawunder, Oertel & Schwarze, 2014), it is essential to conduct different researches in different cultural linguistic context to probe the probable impact of paralinguistic components upon foreign language learners' communicative achievement.

To summarize, many researchers have testified the detrimental impact of negative psychological elements including stress, lack of confidence, lack of self-esteem or to use Krashen's terminology, affective filters, upon the linguistic achievement of English as a second language learners. Also, a multitude of studies have proposed different types of strategies and methods to tackle negative psychological barriers, and enhance their learning process. Yet, considering the idiosyncrasy of paralinguistic components and its diverse manifestations in different cultures, no such study has yet quantitatively investigated the impact of paralinguistic elements upon EFL learners'

speaking performance in the Persian setting, though the significance of paralinguistic segments in the second language acquisition or SLA context has previously been emphasized by former researchers.

Considering the pivotal role of paralinguistic elements in humans' interactions, and their high frequency of occurrence in every day communication, no quantitative study and experimental research in the EFL context of Iran has yet tried to investigate the relationship between the recruitment of paralinguistic clues and EFL learners' speaking capability. Consequently, with this gap in the literature, in this quasi-experimental research, which was conducted in a specific cultural context and considering the fact that paralinguistic features like gestures and proxemics are inherent aspects of communication without which any utterance would lose its identity, our major objective in this study was to investigate the role of paralinguistic cues upon the speaking fluency of Persian-speaking under-graduate female students of Linguistics from the University of Gonabad, located in the southern area of Razavi Khorasan. Thus, in line with the objective of the study, the following question was formulated:

RQ. Does teaching paralinguistic parameters have positive impact upon the speaking fluency of Persian-speaking under-graduate female students of linguistics from the University of Gonabad?

Method

Participants

The participants of the present study included forty EFL learners in the Department of English at the state University of Gonabad, Iran. All the participants spoke Persian as their native language and were taking Speaking 1 course. Their age ranged from 18 to 21. The recruited method to select our participants was non-random convenience sampling. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their language proficiency level, Quick Oxford Placement Test (2001) (QOPT) was administered. Furthermore, only female students were selected to neutralize the impact of gender on the results of the research, and achieve homogeneity. Ultimately, forty female students out of 52 were selected for the main experiment. The rationale for the selection of female participants was that their total distribution and population were larger in the English Department in that there were only four male students receiving this course. At the next stage, these forty lower-intermediate students were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups, twenty in each group.

Instruments

Quick Oxford Placement Test (QOPT) was initially administered to achieve the homogeneity of our sample. The rationale behind choosing this test is that it is quick and easy to administer. Utilizing this test, we could grasp at what proficiency level our participants stood. This test, lasting for about 15 to 20 minutes, is composed of 60 multiple choice questions based on which those participants whose scores varied between 50 to 59 were regarded as lower-intermediate learners and were considered as the target group participating in this study. Ultimately, based on the above-mentioned criteria, 40students out of 52 were selected as the lower-intermediate learners to be included in our main experiment.

At the next stage, we performed a researcher-made speaking test. In doing so, the content validity of our test was corroborated by conducting a pilot study in which two professors of Linguistics as well as 4 EFL professors expressed their opinions regarding the contents of the test. Regarding each question, internal consistency reliabilities were computed. The Alpha level of 0.921 indicated satisfactory reliability. As stated by George and Mallery (2003), when the value of coefficient alpha was $(0.9 \leq \alpha)$, It could be acknowledged that excellent internal validity has been reached.

The rationale behind this decision was that we tried to choose some topics of discussion which were adoptable to our culture. Because, as cross-cultural discrepancy existed, some participants might refuse to answer some questions about topics which might be unintelligible to them. The five topics of discussion were selected among familiar topics including their habits, family, hometown, favorite activity and favorite job. The time needed to discuss each topic was 20 minutes. All group discussions were observed and tape-recorded twice. The first tape-recording took place before the paralinguistic training and the second one after the training.

Procedure

As a matter of fact, in our quasi-experimental research, a pre-test, post-test design was utilized. Our purpose was to see whether the recruitment of paralinguistic components boosted speaking performance among Iranian EFL learners. A five-week instruction of paralinguistic clues for the experimental group was conducted to see whether it could have a significant impact upon their performance. Needless to say, this short span of time could not have had an intruding and negative impact upon our subjects' performance. Furthermore, it could be evaluated whether this short span of paralinguistic teaching might have had any significant impact upon our participants' performance. Our participants' scores in fluency were determined by the

Discourse Management Criterion of the Assembling Speaking Performance (Ellis, 2004). In doing so, four factors including false starts, repetitions, reformation and replacement were analyzed to determine the fluency level of students (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Furthermore, following Huffman (2009), all dysfluency measures are subtracted from 20 to obtain fluency measures. Consequently, the range of fluency measure was between 0 and 20.

Pre-Test

As expressed earlier, initially, Researcher-Made Speaking Test was administered to our forty selected students. The reason why we administered a pre-test was to evaluate our students' English language proficiency without any instruction of paralinguistic components.

Practice

During the five sessions of practice, different types of paralinguistic components were administered to the experimental group. These components included facial expressions, gestures and postures, eye-contact, proxemics and non-verbal phonic productions including stress, intonation, pitch and loudness. As a matter of fact, our major objective was to investigate whether teaching paralinguistic elements could have positive impact upon the speaking fluency of Persian-speaking under-graduate female students of linguistics at the university of Gonabad. In other words, the purpose of this research was to clarify whether teaching paralinguistic cues as cultural-bound elements could boost the speaking fluency of the under-graduate female students of linguistics.

In the first week as our first session, we explained our participants what vital role paralinguistic elements play in our every-day interactions and that a bulky section of our conversation is composed of paralinguistic elements. In fact, having explained the significant communicative function of our bodily organs as well as our experimental design, we tried to create a comfortable atmosphere for our participants to get involved more freely in the experiment. In the second week as our second session, gestures and postures and their diverse socio-cultural manifestations in different cultures were taught to our students. Diverse scenes from original English movies were shown to our participants for the purpose of grasping how different gestures like raising or lowering hands and fingers, or manipulating our bodily organs could alter and modify the meaning. Then, at the end of the session, they were encouraged to imitate these gestures generated by the artists. In the third week as our third session, facial expressions were taught. In this session, the participants were told how different emotions in the native and target languages could have different meanings and functions. To this

end, authentic material from original English movies and clips were shown to our participants. Again, at the end of the session, the participants were told to imitate about the shown faces and discuss different mimics bearing different meanings in both source and target languages.

In the fourth week, as our fourth session, the participants were taught prosodic information in English including stress, intonation, pitch and loudness and were told how these non-verbal elements differed in the two languages, and that they could alter the meaning. For this purpose, different scenes from movies and stand-up comedies were chosen to address how characters utilize paralinguistic clues in their conversation.

Our fifth week, as our final session, was allocated to teaching proxemics and eye contact. As it has already been corroborated in many previous researches that these two parameters have had positive effect upon both teaching as well as learning foreign languages (Bouhadiba, 2013; Irgin, 2017; Sutrisna, 2020), we also taught and incorporated these two important paralinguistic components. To this end, again, authentic original materials from original lectures like TED or original group interviews were taught to our students. At the next stage, having paused each scene in the video, the teacher asked the students to imitate the particular scenes. Ultimately, at the end of the session, the students discussed how different paralinguistic elements could impart different meanings in English. To practice and testify whether our participants have learned the material, we selected diverse scenes from video clips, shows and lectures, and interrogated our students if they could express the function of each paralinguistic signal.

Post-test

After the training of paralinguistic elements for the experimental group had been finished, we administered a researcher-made speaking post-test to see whether our instruction had affected speaking fluency of our participants. Noteworthy to mention, the topics of questions in the post-test were equal to those of the pre-test.

Design

The study was a quasi-experimental one trying to shed some light on the effect of teaching paralinguistic elements on the speaking fluency among undergraduate female students of linguistics at the lower intermediate level. To this end, recruiting pre-test and post-test design, the quantitative data were obtained via the consideration of mean, number, and standard deviation as descriptive statistics, and one-way ANCOVA as inferential statistics.

Results

Conducting Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) Test, we testified the normality of our data. At the next stage, we performed descriptive statistics (Table 1) utilizing SPSS software, version 22.0. Ultimately, we utilized one-way ANCOVA in order to interpret the results and decide whether the accurate performance of paralinguistic components could have any impact upon the speaking performance of the participants. As the P-value of (K-S) was higher than .05, we concluded that the distribution of scores in the both pre-test and post-test was normal.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest Scores of EG and CG

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EG	13.7100	2.68416	20
CG	13.7800	1.43556	20
Total	13.745	2.76438	40

EG=experimental group, CG= control group

The mean scores of the two groups almost show that there is no difference between the EG and CG learners on the speaking fluency test. However, to investigate whether the difference between the mean scores of the two groups was statistically significant, a one-way ANCOVA was administered (Table 2).

Table 2
One-Way ANCOVA Results of the Pretest Scores of EG and CG

Groups	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Sig.	N
EG	15.58	1		20
CG	15.58	1	.056	20
Total	31.16	2		40

As the results in Table 2 show, the difference between the two groups regarding the pretest of speaking was not statistically significant (p=0.056>0.05), that is, the speaking fluency of the two groups, prior to the study, was almost at the same level. As the aim of our study was to investigate whether the administration of paralinguistic elements could have positive impacts upon the learners' speaking performance, we compared the results of the post-test of the two groups. To this end, one-way ANCOVA was

administered to control any probable previous differences between the two groups. In Table 3, the descriptive results of the post- test scores of the participants in the two groups are presented.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of the Post-test Scores of EG and CG

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EG	17.2100	2.68416	20
CG	10.6000	1.43556	20
Total	13.905	2.76438	40

EG=experimental group, CG= control group

As the results in Table 3 shows, the post-test mean score of the experimental group (M=17.2100) was larger than the post-test mean score of the control group (M=10.6000). To attest whether this difference was of statistical significance, we conducted one-way ANCOVA, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
One-Way ANCOVA Results of the Post-test Scores of the EG and CG

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	138.420ª	3	56.890	12.728	.000	.486
Intercept	123.249	1	123.249	22.192	.000	.379
Pretest	15.583	1	15.583	4.312	.056	.068
Groups	142.865	1	142.865	26.218	.000	.45.3
Error	156.825	35	3.812			
Total	5431.000	40				
Corrected Total	278.789	38				

a. R Squared=.528 (Adjusted R Squared=. 487)

As indicated in Table 4, the difference between the two groups regarding the post-test of speaking was significant (p=0.000<0.05). The interpretation of this finding is that the recruitment of the paralinguistic clues boosted the speaking performance of our experimental group.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the total effect of the size value which is shown under the Partial Eta Squared Column (Table 4) in front of groups equals .45.3, meaning that our treatment (teaching paralinguistic

clues) could be accounted for 45 percent of the difference between the control and experimental groups.

Discussion

Our aim in this study was to examine the impact of paralinguistic components upon the speaking performance of Iranian lower-intermediate EFL students. Having analyzed the data, we observed that the performance of both control and experimental groups were approximately the same in the pretest. However, the results of our post-test demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed our control group. As a matter of fact, those participants receiving the paralinguistic treatment techniques performed much better and obtained better scores. Hence, it could be concluded that teaching paralinguistic techniques had positive impacts upon EFL learners' speaking capability.

The results of this study are in pro with those of Irgin (2017),McNulty and Lazarevic (2012) and Uştuk and Aydın (2018)who have emphasized the positive role of paralinguistic components upon the communicative performance of patients. More specifically, our results corroborated those of Uştuk and Aydın (2018) who acknowledged the predominant role of paralinguistic cues in reducing negative judgment among Turkish EFL learners. According to the above-mentioned researchers, paralinguistic clues, via alleviating anxiety and stress among EFL learners, could culminate in the communicative success of EFL students. Noteworthy to say, in this study, unlike the above research, although we have selected our participants from lower-intermediate students, they performed much better when integrating paralinguistic techniques in their speaking. Furthermore, we utilized two more crucial paralinguistic clues including proxemics and eye-contact in our practice design. Considering the vital roles of these two paralinguistic components in the authentic communication, the integration of them in speech even resulted in a more enrichment of the speaking fluency of our experimental group.

On the other hand, our results extended the proposal asserted by Gholamshahi and his colleague who have concluded that intermediate-level EFL students are capable of recruiting paralinguistic components satisfactorily (Gholamshahi & Pazhakh, 2016), a skill which most novice EFL learners are bereft of. It should be emphasized that in the above-mentioned study, the age range of the participants and their English proficiency were different from those employed in our study. In addition, they only utilized audiovisual, aural as well as cell-phone to investigate the impact of paralinguistic cues upon the participants' speaking performance. Meanwhile, in our study, we integrated more paralinguistic clues, for example, the proxemics and eye-contact in order to analyze more scrupulously the impact of paralinguistic clues upon EFL performance. The

results of our study are in line with those of previous researches in which the crucial role of paralinguistic elements of eye-contact, facial interaction, and proxemics upon the second language acquisition has been corroborated (e.g., Azeez & Azeez, 2018; Haji-karim & Sotoudehnam, 2017; Sutrisna,2020).

As it was seen, the speaking capability of our students has improved via learning these paralinguistic techniques. This observation could be explained via the nature of learning strategies employed by novice EFL learners, because the majority of EFL students are incapable of monitoring their learning process and are barely aware of the significance of paralinguistic clues in the enrichment of communicative capability. This means that even though all EFL learners utilize learning strategies, to some extent, only skillful learners could employ them more consciously and systematically. Thus, paralinguistic components should be regarded as the significant aspects of communicative competence in the EFL setting (Qiang, 2013).

In our research, as we integrated paralinguistic teaching in our methodology, EFL students' awareness of the significance of these parameters in communication increased and in doing so, they performed much better. It is noteworthy to mention that our findings might have different implications. The fact that EFL students' speaking proficiency level improved when they had learned how to utilize them appropriately in the communicative context demonstrates that more attention should be geared toward teaching paralinguistic clues in Iran, where it seems to have been overlooked. The importance of this issue becomes more transparent as it was emphasized earlier, when most researches emphasize that speaking fluency should be envisaged and regarded as the most important skill in the communicative competence of EFL learners (Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan, & Soler, 2008), because speaking is the most frequent and influential medium of communication employed by EFL learners.

Furthermore, considering the predominant and vital role of teachers in the educational career, pre-and-in-service teacher training programs in Iran should incorporate various technical courses designed specifically to teach teachers how EFL learners could employ paralinguistic clues in their communication and become more successful EFL speakers. As a result, EFL teachers could be taught how to teach diverse paralinguistic components to their novice learners Furthermore, teaching cross-cultural variations of paralinguistic elements, and their idiosyncratic communicative functions could be incorporated in teacher training programs. Because, the same positive, or neutral paralinguistic function in the native language might have negative connotations in a foreign language, sometimes culminating in communicative misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Undoubtedly, EFL teachers' conscious awareness of and familiarity with the significance and

usefulness of paralinguistic elements in the nourishment of speaking capability of EFL learners could assist young learners of English to boost their speaking capability more efficiently and quickly.

Moreover, as it has already been attested in many previous researches that the conduction of paralinguistic clues would decrease negative filters (e.g., Irgin, 2017; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Uştuk & Aydın, 2018), material developers as well as curriculum designers need to incorporate these components in English text-books and in doing so, they could assist Iranian EFL learners to acquire English more easily. It should also not be forgotten that our teachers should familiarize our students with the cross-cultural differences in the recruitment of both source and target language. As a matter of fact, Iranian EFL students need to grasp how these paralinguistic differences in the two languages could sometimes distort the meaning thoroughly.

Nevertheless, it should be stressed as we mentioned earlier, none of the studies mentioned above specifically analyzed the impact of paralinguistic clues on the improvement of EFL learners' speaking competence. Furthermore, most studies about the importance of paralinguistic clues were conducted in the ESL (English in the Second Language) context while in our study we emphasized the role of paralinguistic clues in the EFL context.

However, had a different sample group performed in a different context, the results might have been different. For example, if all our participants had stood in either advanced or elementary level, the results might have been different. Needless to say, the conduction of different methodologies to teach paralinguistic components could have distorted the results. Furthermore, paralinguistic components are idiosyncratic cultural elements, their manifestations might be different in diverse cultures. As a result, more researches in the languages of the world with different typologies could shed more light on the significance of paralinguistic parameters in EFL learners' communicative achievement.

In addition, the distorting and intervening effect of time upon the results of the research could also be taken into consideration. This means that the five-week span of time we allocated for the integration of paralinguistic clues might have distorted the results. Nevertheless, the familiarity of topics in the pre-test and post-test might have influenced the speaking performance of our participants. As a result, when observing similarity between topics of discussion in the pre-test and post-test, they might have demonstrated less challenges in speaking, and were more comfortable to express their ideas about a particular topic. Last but not least, future studies whose major mission is to analyze the impact of the recruitment of diverse paralinguistic components upon the improvement of other language skills, including writing, reading, and listening could illuminate more the significance of paralinguistics in English learning and teaching.

Declaration of Interest: none

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