

**Original Article**

## Iranian EFL Learners' Attitudes toward the Impact of Nonverbal Parameters upon their Learning Process

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### Abstract

Nonverbal cues include communicative markers like gestures, eye contact, nodding, tone of voice, and intonation among others which are associated and concomitant with language either consciously or unconsciously while playing significant roles in communication. The related literature demonstrates that nonverbal cues have great potential in foreign language learning. In this regard, it was predicted that EFL learners' attitudes toward nonverbal cues could affect their learning process significantly. This descriptive-analytical study was conducted to investigate students' attitudes toward their instructors' use of nonverbal cues in their communication and the extent to which using these elements could facilitate students' learning process. Utilizing a questionnaire as our instrument, we collected data from 50 undergraduate senior students of Linguistics at the University of Gonabad. Our rationale for choosing senior college students was to identify their attitudes toward their instructors' use of nonlinguistic cues since the beginning of their academic career at the university. Our findings revealed that our students had positive attitudes toward teachers' recruitment of nonlinguistic cues in their communication. Moreover, the parameter of gender was not found to affect students' attitudes with both males and females having positive attitudes toward the significance of nonverbal clues in communication. However, the parameter of learners' background experience of utilizing nonverbal clues in their native language was strongly related to their attitude toward EFL learning. Considering the predominant role of nonverbal communication in Iranian EFL settings, it was recommended that their recruitment in English teaching be taken more seriously.

**Keywords:** Attitude, EFL Learners, Paralinguistic Cues, Communication, Learning

## 1. Introduction

Mastering a foreign language is regarded as a multifaceted skill requiring the fulfillment of many variables among which living in a target community, eagerness and interest to be acquainted with a new culture, method of teaching, metacognitive knowledge, regulation, teachers' creativity, and so on could be enumerated (Arifani & Suryanti, 2019; Choudhury, 2013; Renandya, 2013; Teng, 2020). English is customarily learned and taught as a foreign language in Iran. Furthermore, the EFL learning setting in Iran is examination and text-book oriented while students are usually required to learn English in overpopulated classes.

As a result of the above-mentioned reasons, employing new techniques and strategies to motivate students to learn English efficiently would be of paramount importance. In this regard, crucial factors affecting the EFL learning process which could be recruited in diverse EFL techniques are paralinguistic or nonverbal cues. Paralinguistic elements could be manifested in diverse linguistic forms such as stress, intonation, pitch, and voice modifications well as non-linguistic or non-vocalic clues including gestures, eye contact, proximity, touching, interactional synchrony, facial expression, and even silence. Nonverbal and paralinguistic clues should be regarded as indispensable aspects of communicative competence (Pennycook, 1985). Proof of this claim is that face-to-face interaction while playing a crucial role in our daily face-to-face interaction, encompasses 65% to 70% of our social meaning (Birdwhistell, 1974). Furthermore, recruiting paralinguistic clues could affect our psychological states reducing anxiety among learners (Uştuk & Aydın, 2018), stimulating learners to be more interested in the learning process (Allen, 2000; Quinlisk, 2008), and boosting the teacher's relationship with her students (Cooper et al., 2013).

Theoretically, it has already been acknowledged that students' attitudes could influence how they behave, how they think, and how they react toward their learning process. It was emphasized that once a language learner aims to achieve better language proficiency, she is required to demonstrate a positive attitude toward the method recruited by her instructor as well as toward the learning process (Langat, 2015; Prastiwi, 2018). In this regard, EFL learners' mentality toward the significance of paralinguistic elements in their learning process would play a crucial role and, is of paramount importance. Because it has been theoretically corroborated that EFL learners' positive attitudes toward the

fruitfulness and efficiency of a particular technique and methodology could pave the way for them to improve their skills more satisfactorily. In doing so, their eagerness to participate in class activities and learn the target language increases automatically (Prastiwi, 2018). Furthermore, positive attitudes of the learner could have serious implications for the EFL learner, the teacher, the immediate social community with which the learner feels affinity, and the whole educational setting (Mensah et al., 2013).

A survey of related literature demonstrated that previous scholars had emphasized the positive impacts of nonverbal cues on different aspects of EFL learning (Arifani & Suryanti, 2019; Choudhury, 2013; Renandya, 2013). However, there has been a gap in the literature because former researchers have not particularly scrutinized the EFL learners' attitudes toward the recruitment of these clues and the possible impacts that they could have on their learning process. Because the recruitment of these parameters would lose their efficacy unless EFL learners have positive attitudes toward them and feel that the recruitment of these elements by their instructors would boost their communicative competence (Prastiwi, 2018).

Furthermore, senior college students' attitudes concerning the efficacy of nonverbal clues have not yet been investigated in the context of Iran. Moreover, as nonverbal clues are culture-bound phenomena, their manifestations might have been different in different cultures (Esposito, 2007; Manusov, 2017). That is, the quality, as well as the quantity of diverse nonverbal clues employed by different EFL teachers from different countries, might vary. In light of the above reasons and considering the existing gap in the literature, this study was conducted to scrutinize the attitudes of Iranian senior college students of linguistics toward the role of paralinguistic parameters, and facilitative impacts that these variables might have upon the learning process of the students.

## **2. Literature Review**

The positive impacts of nonverbal cues on different aspects of EFL learning have been scrutinized in previous research. In a study conducted by Gregersen (2011), it was stressed that utilizing supra-segmental features could culminate in teachers' efficiency. Emphasizing the necessity of the inclusion of paralinguistic parameters in foreign language teaching, Ardila (2013) pointed out that these clues are specifically useful for business teaching Jaramillo, via the conduction of an exploratory study, investigated 17 EFL teachers' perception of the usefulness of paralinguistic cues

such as haptics (touching) and proxemics (space using) in their teaching. The results of their research corroborated the efficiency of these two important paralinguistic cues in teaching a foreign language (Jaramillo, 2013).

Moreover, in a separate study, conducted in 2014, the significant roles of major categories of non-verbal communication including proxemics (interpersonal distance and special orientation), posture participants of students, and the direction of movement and gaze were also emphasized. The researcher concluded that one of the main reasons why low efficiency in English language teaching was observed is that non-verbal communication is ignored in a daily classroom setting thereby suggesting that the recruitment of the above-mentioned categories could enhance students' non-verbal competence (Pan, 2014). In 2015, Yang asserted that academic staff members have lots of challenges in Australian universities due to delicate intercultural discrepancies, differences, and misunderstandings. According to his views, endowed with diverse universities having as many as 20 percent international students, Australia should be regarded as an internationally high-stake country which resulted in pedagogical complexity. The author recommended that intercultural nonverbal communication training should be incorporated into the educational curriculum to enhance the intercultural nonverbal communication competence of students. He also acknowledged that enriching international students' non-verbal communicative competence could internationalize the Australian higher education industry and promote its status at the global level (Yang, 2015).

In their study, Khalifa and Faddal (2017) have concluded that utilizing paralinguistic clues could be regarded as a crucial factor in language teaching, and improve EFL learners' performance. According to their views, paralinguistic strategies are useful in teaching efficient meanings. Researching freshman students at KPU University in India to analyze the significance of paralinguistic parameters, Chiêm (2018) demonstrated that speaking English was not a favorite subject for the students and it would be very difficult for the students to grasp the teachers' non-verbal behaviors like gestures or nodding. In 2018, Uştuk and his colleague analyzed the impacts of the use of paralinguistic parameters on foreign language anxiety concerning speaking ability (Uştuk & Aydın, 2018). The results of their research showed that utilizing paralinguistic parameters in the EFL setting significantly decreased foreign language anxiety specifically communication fear and negative evaluation while it increased text anxiety.

Mraoui (2020) analyzed the impacts of utilizing paralinguistic cues by native speakers of English on EFL students' listening capability. The results of his research showed that the experimental group who simultaneously listened and watched the spoken discourse performed much better in the listening comprehension proficiency test (LCPT) than the control group who were just listening to the spoken discourse. Furthermore, it was concluded that paralinguistic parameters are not homogeneous elements as some elements are more efficient in learning than others. Therefore, using paralinguistic features could result in the comprehension rather than memorization of English-spoken discourse by EFL learners. Ultimately, employing a mixed method approach, Adli (2020) investigated middle school teachers' use of paralinguistic features including body and vocal clues, and their impact on students' vocabulary acquisition. The results showed that students' vocabulary learning improved and their attention and interaction were boosted when they employed paralinguistic features. Furthermore, they needed less time to acquire vocabulary when utilizing paralinguistic elements than when they did not utilize paralinguistic clues in their speaking.

In a nutshell, a glimpse of related literature demonstrates that even though these studies investigated the efficient and facilitative impact of non-verbal clues upon the acquisition process of EFL learners, they have not tapped the positive impact of EFL learners' attitudes toward the recruitment of non-linguistic parameters. To this end, this study was conducted to investigate the attitudes of Iranian senior college students of linguistics toward the role of paralinguistic parameters. Henceforth, specifically, our research questions were as follows:

1. What are the attitudes of Iranian senior college students of linguistics toward their instructors' recruitment of nonverbal cues as learning tools?
2. Are there any significant differences in students' attitudes toward their instructors' use of nonlinguistic clues as learning tools in terms of gender and experience of utilizing nonlinguistic clues?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Design and Context of the Study**

This study was of qualitative descriptive-analytical type. It was conducted on senior college students of linguistics at the University of Gonabad, a southern city of Khorasan-e-Razavi, the period of 6 January 2021 to 10 February 2022.

### 3.2. Participants

The study was conducted on 50 young 18-20 years old Iranian EFL learners. They were senior college students of linguistics in the final year of their four-year academic B.A career at the University of Gonabad. Based on the results of the Oxford Placement Test (Allen, 1992), our target selected students included 35 females and 25 males out of the whole 60 students who were classified as upper-intermediate participants regarding their English proficiency. Those students whose scores ranged from 60 to 79 were categorized as upper-intermediate students participating in our study as the target group. The number of our ultimate participants could be logical as the finding of the latest research have corroborated that the minimum sample size for a research study encompassing a language test should be 46 (Mustafa & Robillos, 2020).

The main logic behind the selection of senior college students was the fact that they had already passed diverse technical English courses, and could better express their attitudes toward the impact of non-verbal clues during the whole academic program. All our participants were in the same class standing in the same academic period. The rationale behind this selection was that as all these students were classmates, they shared the experience of being exposed to the same instructors. Henceforth, first, the impact of the period that they were exposed to teaching could be neutralized. Second, the probable impact of teachers' strategy for the selection of diverse non-verbal cues could be eliminated. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of all participants.

Table 1.

*Demographic Background of the Participants*

No. of Students	60 (senior college students)
Gender	35 Females & 25 Males
Native Language	Persian
Major	Linguistics
University	University of Gonabad
Academic Years	2020-2021

### 3.3. Instrument

#### 3.3.1. Self-Constructed Attitude Investigation Questionnaire (SAIQ)

A self-constructed attitude investigation questionnaire (SAIQ) was designed to elicit participants' attitudes concerning the efficiency of EFL teachers' paralinguistic clues through the lens of the students. This questionnaire was constructed based on some crucial properties of non-verbal communication including posture, eye contact, proximity, the loudness of voice, gestures, hand movement, and so on. It included 43 seven-point Likert scales from "strongly agree" to "strongly oppose it" was adopted. The Likert scale was coded as strongly agree (1), somewhat agree (2), agree (3), abstain (4), somewhat disagree (5), disagree (6), and strongly oppose it (7).

#### 3.3.2. Pilot Study of Attitude Evaluation

To normalize SAIQ, and show its reliability and validity, we conducted a pilot study in which we asked 50 young 18-20 years old Iranian L<sub>2</sub> learners to express their attitudes about the efficacy of instructors' use of paralinguistic clues on students' learning process. In doing so, the content validity of our questionnaire 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 questionnaire. For each of the paralinguistic elements, internal consistency reliabilities were computed. Cronbach's alpha and omega coefficients were both acceptable for these factors. Table 2 is a representation of the reliability of the piloted SAIQ. As shown below, the Alpha level of 0.912 indicated satisfactory reliability. As stated by George and Mallery (2003), when the value of coefficient alpha was ( $0.9 \leq \alpha$ ), we could acknowledge that excellent internal validity has been reached.

Table 2.

*Case Processing Summary and Reliability Statistics for the SAIQ*

Cases	N	P-Value (%)	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items
Valid	20	100	0.912	43
Excluded	0	0		
Total	23	100		

### **3.3.3. Evaluation of Attitudes toward Native Language (EANL)**

Noteworthy to mention, before conducting the main experiment, that is, SAIQ, we also performed a preliminary study asking our participants how often they had used nonverbal clues during their conversation through their native language. The major rationale for the administration of EANL was to investigate whether there were any significant differences in students' attitudes toward their instructors' use of nonlinguistic clues as learning tools and their previous experience of utilizing nonlinguistic clues. A 6-point Likert scale in which the alternatives varied from "always", "almost always", "sometimes", "usually", "rarely", and " never" was designed. Before conducting the questionnaire, we presented it to two independent English professors to express their views about the quality of the content of the questionnaire. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha level of 0.92 demonstrated good internal consistency of our scale, henceforth, it could be acknowledged that excellent internal validity has been reached for EANL similar to SAIQ.

Spearman rank-order Correlation Coefficient statistics were conducted to investigate whether there was a significant relationship between our participants' previous experience of utilizing non-verbal cues in their daily conversation in their native language as elicited based on the results of our preliminary study and their attitude toward the impact of non-linguistic clues in their learning process, as elicited based on the results of our main experiment which was the test of attitude evaluation.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedure**

The required permissions to conduct the research were received from the head of the English department at Gonabad University. Before the administration of the instruments, the objectives of the study were explained to the students concisely. The homogeneity of our participants was reached via the selection of linguistic students whose proficiency in English was upper-intermediate. English proficiency of our participants was obtained via the conduction of the Oxford Placement Test. As mentioned, we selected our ultimate 50 upper-intermediate students from among those students whose scores varied from 60 to 79. Furthermore, to neutralize the intervening impact of a period that the students were exposed to teaching, we chose our participants from among those students who were classmates sharing the same instructors throughout their academic careers.



First of all, having ratified the reliability and validity of the test of Evaluation of Attitudes toward Native Language (EANL), we administered it to our target students. Our major rationale for the conduction of this test was to investigate students' experience of utilizing paralinguistic clues in their native language and receive their attitudes toward the efficacy of instructors' use of nonverbal clues in students' learning process. Afterward, with a time interval of one week, having ratified and normalized the self-constructed attitude investigation Questionnaire (SAIQ), we administered it to our target students. The major objective for the administration of this test was to elicit our participants' attitudes toward the role of non-verbal parameters, recruited by EFL instructors, in their learning process. The participants were required to answer some pre-designated questions about the role of paralinguistic components including posture, eye contact, proximity, the loudness of voice, gestures, and hand movement in their learning process. Furthermore, they were all explained about the required procedure to accomplish the experiment and asked to select an option among seven alternatives based on 6-point Likert scale.

### **3.5. Data Analysis Procedure**

Utilizing descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation, we evaluated our participants' performance in the test. Furthermore, to understand whether there were any significant differences in students' attitudes toward utilizing nonlinguistic clues as learning tools in terms of gender and experience of utilizing nonlinguistic clues, we conducted inferential statistics. In this respect, we employed non-parametric tests. Because, first, the distribution of our data was not normal. Secondly, our data were asymmetric. Our recruited non-parametric tests included U Man-Whitney as well as Spearman rank order Correlation Coefficient.

## **4. Results**

An attitude questionnaire was conducted to grasp the participants' attitudes toward the efficacy of nonverbal cues. In Table 3, different attitudes related to diverse aspects of nonverbal clues were presented. As Table 3 demonstrated, in almost all 43 items, the students thought that instructors' appropriate use of nonverbal clues could affect their learning process positively, and they would feel more comfortable and concentrated once their instructors used these clues in the class.

Table 3.

*Participants' Attitudes toward the Impact of Nonverbal Clues Employed by Instructors upon EFL Learning*

N	Point of view	SA	SOA	A	AB	SD	D	SO
1	Observing a disheveled and messy teacher is disgusting	32	5	12	1	0	0	0
2	As the teacher comes very close to me, I feel anxious and stressful	4	6	2	2	5	9	23
3	When the teacher pats my back, I'll lose my nerve	5	5	4	3	6	8	19
4	My teacher's use of gestures helps me to memorize material more efficiently	25	10	7	3	2	3	0
5	During a conversation with my teacher, as he distracts his face, I feel I'm neglected, so I will not be eager to learn the material	22	7	12	4	3	1	1
6	Sitting next to my teacher is pleasant to me and makes me feel I'm taken seriously, so I will learn better.	10	9	7	5	6	8	3
7	As the teacher utilizes a monotonous voice, I feel bore and sleepy.	21	9	13	4	2	0	0
8	As the teacher speaks very sadly, the class will be tedious and boring	22	8	15	2	3	0	0
9	A funny instructor triggers my interest in learning, and improves the quality of my learning.	18	7	13	3	4	3	2
10	Punctuality of my instructor is important for me. As I adore instructors with this personality trait, this will automatically arouse my eagerness in learning.	15	6	11	4	4	6	4
11	When my teacher smiles, I'll be more interested in learning.	16	9	11	5	5	2	2
12	When I see the passionate and kindly face of my teacher, I will feel relaxed to learn.	17	7	12	4	5	3	2
13	When the teacher gazes at me while teaching, I feel nervous	22	5	17	3	2	1	0
14	The teacher's gestures create a lively atmosphere in the class	18	6	21	1	2	1	1
15	The teacher's eye contact makes me concentrate more to the presented lessons	28	6	12	2	1	1	0
16	As the teacher spruces himself up, I will be more motivated to participate in the class activities	19	5	18	2	3	2	1
17	Funny teachers are a great source of inspiration for me to learn better as they create a lively and happy atmosphere in the class	19	6	16	3	2	3	1
18	I love those teachers who never shout at the students as well as those who use gentle voice while teaching	18	6	19	2	1	2	2
19	I'll be more fascinated to learn as my teacher wears perfume	16	4	19	3	3	2	3
20	It'll be disgusting to see my teacher leaning against the wall	11	5	13	7	4	5	5
21	The positive facial expression of my teacher makes me more motivated to learn. On the other hand, his negative facial expression makes me silent in the class	17	4	15	5	4	3	4
22	My teacher's admiring or criticizing facial expression lets me monitor my learning process better as I'll be aware of my strength or weakness	21	4	18	2	3	2	0
23	Using facial expression makes the class natural and exciting	20	3	16	4	5	1	1

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N	Point of view	SA	SOA	A	AB	SD	D	SO
24	The teacher's eye contact contributes to a more efficient words learning	21	4	14	4	2	3	2
25	The teachers' hand movement helps me to learn the grammar better	17	9	13	4	3	2	2
26	My teachers' eye contact assists me to be more interested in the grammar, and learn grammatical points more easily	21	8	14	3	2	1	1
27	My teacher's tone of voice makes me learn the grammar better	19	10	13	3	2	2	1
28	My teacher's neutral or negative facial expression makes me be silent and less responsive in the class	21	11	10	4	1	2	0
29	As the teacher lower or raises her head, I could easily understand if my speaking is OK or not	17	8	10	5	3	4	3
30	My teacher helps me to be aware of my mistakes via moving her head from side to side	18	5	12	6	4	2	3
31	If my teacher does not have eye-contact, I can't recognize if my answer was correct or wrong	23	8	15	2	1	1	0
32	Our teacher's facial expression encourages us to participate in the class activities	19	9	12	5	2	2	1
33	The teacher's hand gesture is an important source of coordination making the class disciplined and fresh, so we could learn English better	18	6	14	4	4	2	2
34	Hand gestures make us more attentive in the class, so the quality of our learning increases.	17	7	13	3	4	3	3
35	The teacher's eye contact could make the class quiet, so we could concentrate better to learn	29	6	12	2	1	0	0
36	My teacher's happy face and smile could promote self-confidence and enthusiasm in the students	18	6	16	5	2	2	1
37	As the teacher gazes at me while I'm speaking, I'll lose my concentration and forget what I have learned so far.	24	5	11	6	2	1	1
38	My teacher's eye-contact makes me feel that I'm important to her and at the center of her attention	18	9	10	7	3	2	1
39	As I answer the question, and my teacher claps, I'll be encouraged to participate more in the class activities	28	5	15	1	1	0	0
40	The enthusiastic head nodding as feedback to confirm students' responses increases students' confidence in the classroom	23	6	16	2	2	0	1
41	The teacher's change in tone of voice not only could facilitate learning new material but also it could alter the class mood making the class more enjoyable	17	9	21	6	4	2	1
42	When the teacher's voice is boring, it will be transferred to the students and will influence their mentality	20	3	22	2	1	0	2
43	The teacher's frowning and sad face discourage the students to learn demolishing their self-confidence.	21	5	18	3	2	1	0

Abbreviations: SA= strongly agree, SOA=somewhat agree, A= agree, AB= abstain, SD= somewhat disagree, D= disagree, SO= strongly opposes it.

Furthermore, as Table 4 indicates, we utilized descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation to analyze our students' performance in each alternative.

Table 4.

*Descriptive Analysis Regarding Students' Attitudes toward the Role of Nonverbal Cues in EFL Learning*

Alternative	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SA	25.8500	43	4.27529	1.17204
SOA	14.5300	43	3.44971	.89499
A	20.3500	43	1.87516	.28817
AB	9.2500	43	2.53788	.46323
SD	4.7500	43	2.44672	.31434
D	3.3000	43	1.7541	.37052
SO	2.7000	43	2.84324	.61025

As the results of the above table demonstrate, the mean score of 11.53 is indicative of the strong positive attitude of our participants regarding the use of nonverbal clues in EFL teaching.

Our results showed those 27 female students out of 35, and 19 male students out of 25 either chose the alternative "agree" or "strongly agree". As gender was a nominal variable and their positive performance in the questionnaire was an ordinal variable, we utilized U-Mann-Whitney statistics. Our goal was to investigate whether the difference between the two genders was significant. The results demonstrated that the difference between means was not significant ( $\text{sig} = 0.308 > 0.05$ ) meaning both genders exhibited rather similar attitudes toward the positive impact of nonverbal clues upon EFL learning.

As regards our preliminary study which interrogated our students on how often they utilized nonverbal clues in their conversation, it was observed that the mean average of 92% of our students chose either "always" or "almost always" alternatives which demonstrated that they had strong positive attitudes toward the role of nonverbal clues during a daily conversation via their native language.

Furthermore, as one of our objectives was to investigate whether there was a relationship between our participants' experience of utilizing nonverbal clues in their native language and their attitudes toward the impact of nonverbal clues upon their English learning, we conducted Spearman rank-order Correlation Coefficient statistics. The rationale behind the selection of this type of statistics was that our data were not normal and also we faced two ordinal variables. The results of the Spearman Correlation

Coefficient demonstrated that there was a strong positive relationship between students' performance in the preliminary study and their performance in the main experiment ( $r_s=0/557$ ,  $P=0/022<0/05$ ) meaning those students choosing "always" or "almost always" alternatives in the preliminary test interrogating their use of nonverbal clues in their native language, in the majority of circumstances, also chose "agree" or "strongly agree" alternatives in the main experiment interrogating students' attitudes toward the efficacy of nonverbal clues recruited by teachers in EFL learning.

## **5. Discussion**

This study had two main objectives. First, it attempted to observe whether the participants had positive attitudes toward the impact of nonverbal clues recruited by their instructors upon EFL learning. Second, we attempted to scrutinize whether our participants' gender and experience of utilizing nonverbal clues in their native language could be related to the specific attitudes that they had concerning the impact of nonlinguistic cues employed by instructors while teaching English.

Our findings demonstrated that our participants had strong positive attitudes toward the efficacy of nonverbal clues in EFL teaching. Moreover, it was observed that the variable of gender did not have any significant influence on our students' attitudes toward the efficacy of nonverbal discourse employed by their teachers meaning both male and female students had rather positive attitudes toward the efficacy of these nonverbal parameters. It was also shown that there was a relationship between our participants' frequency of using nonverbal communication in their native language and their attitudes toward the efficacy of nonverbal clues employed by instructors in EFL learning.

Our findings corroborated those of other researchers who had emphasized the crucial role of nonverbal clues employed by EFL teachers throughout their learning process. Some of these researches include the study conducted by Adli (2020) analyzing the impact of the use of body and vocal cues employed by middle-school teachers, the study administered by Wang (2009) emphasizing the significant role of paralanguage, body language, object language and environmental language in EFL learning and teaching, the study performed by Gregersen (2011) emphasizing the predominant role of supra -segmental features in EFL teaching, the study accomplished by Jaramillo (2013) stressing out the crucial role of haptics and proxemics in EFL learning, the study conducted by Ustul and Aydin (2018)

emphasizing the role of nonverbal clues in the elimination of students' anxiety and in the enhancement of their speaking performance, the research administered by Khalifa and Feddal (2017) emphasizing the outstanding role of nonverbal communication in teaching efficient meaning, and ultimately the study conducted by Mraoui (2020) who had emphasized the crucial role of nonverbal clues in the comprehension of spoken discourse.

In contrast, our findings contradicted the results of other researchers who emphasized that teachers' nonverbal behaviors like gestures or nodding were not interesting topics for freshman students of KPU University in India (Chiem, 2018). Moreover, our findings were in sharp contrast with those of young who had asserted that academic staff members had lots of challenges teaching English efficiently due to intercultural discrepancies originating from different nonverbal parameters embedded in the daily communication of international students of Australian Universities (Yang, 2015).

## **6. Conclusion**

In summary, this paper argued that nonverbal communication plays a paramount role in EFL learning and teaching, so their use in teaching English in the universities of Iran should be taken seriously. The significance and importance of nonverbal communication within the context of Iranian universities and schools becomes more critical and vital as most EFL classes are overpopulated and access to modern technological facility in some cities are limited. As the facilitative impact of nonverbal clues was corroborated in our study, in the future, educational curriculum and syllable designers should incorporate and address teaching nonlinguistic elements in their designated programs to pave the way for more efficient EFL learning of Iranian university students.

However, some caveats should be taken into consideration. First, if the sample size were larger, our conclusion could be more satisfactory and reliable. Second, the use of other instrumental devices like a semi-structured interview and direct or indirect observation could shed more light on the issue. Meanwhile, considering a rather different syllable design of other English-related majors like English literature, future researchers could investigate the impact of nonverbal clues on the learning process of other groups of English students.

Furthermore, as it has been highly acknowledged in previous research that nonverbal clues are extremely culturally bound elements possessing different identities in diverse

cultures (Esposito, 2007; Manusov, 2017), the conduction of more research in diverse languages of the world could illuminate more the impact of nonverbal clues upon EFL students. Meanwhile, it could be investigated which components of nonverbal clues in diverse majors of English including English teaching, linguistics, translation, and literature play a more determining role in the students' learning process.

Ultimately, provided that all the above-mentioned criteria were met accurately, we would stand in the position to depict a more realistic and logical insight toward the nature and role of nonverbal clues in EFL learning in the context of Iran. As the notorious scholar, Cooper and his colleagues asserted once the teacher knows how to execute non-verbal parameters efficiently, her relationship with students will be boosted. As a result, the cognitive capability, as well as the learning efficiency of the students, will automatically be enriched (Cooper et al., 2013).

### **Acknowledgment**

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### **Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest existed in this study.

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