

Non-verbal Communication in Supporting Oral Production in Kenyan Multilingual Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

In Kenyan multilingual classrooms, where English, Kiswahili, and regional languages coexist, teachers' non-verbal communication (NVC) is integral to promoting oral language production. Although global research establishes a link between gestures, facial expressions, and posture with enhanced learner engagement, there is limited empirical evidence on NVC's influence on speaking skills within African multilingual settings. This qualitative study examines (1) the types of NVC employed by teachers during speaking activities, (2) how these strategies are enacted, and (3) perceptions of their effectiveness among teachers and students. Data was collected from three upper-primary schools in Nairobi through classroom video recordings, observations, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires involving five teachers and twenty-five students. Employing Multimodal Interaction Analysis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, thematic analysis identified that smiles, nods, gaze direction, and iconic/deictic gestures function to scaffold meaning, manage turn-taking, and alleviate speaking anxiety. Students reported speaking confidence, comprehension, and participation willingness, while teachers emphasized NVC's role in rapport-building and instructional clarity, noting occasional cultural interpretation challenges. The findings emphasize the necessity of incorporating structured NVC training into teacher education programs to promote the intentional alignment of gestures, posture, and facial expressions with verbal Communication. This study re-conceptualizes NVC as a fundamental pedagogical resource essential for cultivating inclusive and interactive multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: *Non-verbal communication, Facial expressions, Gestures, Oral language production, Multilingual classrooms, Teacher education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In Multilingual Kenyan classrooms, verbal instruction alone often proves insufficient for supporting oral language development. Research shows that when people communicate, only 35% of information is conveyed verbally, while 65% is transmitted through non-verbal channels such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and posture (Mehrabian, 1971).

Although research on non-verbal communication (NVC) in second language acquisition has gained momentum globally, studies focusing on multilingual African contexts remain limited. First, most existing research emphasizes receptive language skills such as listening and reading, while the role of NVC in supporting oral production remains under-examined. Second,

although some studies link teacher gestures with reduced speaking anxiety, few have explored their connection to improved fluency or pronunciation. Third, many investigations lack a classroom-based, interactional perspective that reflects real communicative dynamics. To address these gaps, this study adopts a qualitative approach to explore how teachers and learners perceive and use non-verbal cues during speaking activities in Kenyan multilingual classrooms

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Non-verbal Communication Cues (NVC) in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)*

Human interaction is shaped by both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, with non-verbal communication (NVC) playing a central role in how individuals construct meaning and maintain social connection (Goffman, 1959; Burgoon et al., 2016). In classroom settings, teachers who effectively incorporate gestures, facial expressions, and good posture create more engaging and emotionally supportive classrooms (Burroughs, 2007; Wang, 2020). Despite extensive research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), much has focused on receptive skills such as reading and listening, while the role of NVC in supporting spoken language development in African multilingual classrooms remains underexplored (Moyo, 2023; Mthembu, 2021).

Non-verbal cues including body language facial expressions, gestures, and posture convey a substantial proportion of social meaning. Birdwhistell (1952) estimated that about 65% to 70% of communication is non-verbal, a view supported by Ferris (1967), who suggested it can account for up to 93%. These paralinguistic signals engage both cognitive and emotional domains, enhancing learner attention and comprehension by transforming abstract ideas into tangible experiences.

Fabri et al. (2015) define non-verbal communication as interactions beyond spoken or written language, involving cues such as gestures and facial expressions (Fatemeh et al., 2014). Studies have shown that non-verbal teacher behaviors can significantly influence learner motivation and engagement, producing both positive and negative effects (Njeri, 2019). According to McCornack (2013), non-verbal communication often operates unconsciously, reinforcing verbal messages and conveying emotional states.

Moreover, research by Kalyva and Agaliotis (2008) indicates that the frequency and intensity of non-verbal behaviors in classrooms depend more on interaction levels than on students' cognitive abilities, emphasizing the role of social context. Mehrabian (1972) categorized NVC into kinesics and facial expressions, highlighting gestures as vital in learning. Knapp and Hall (2010) further

emphasize that non-verbal cues manage behavior and foster effective learning environments. Boyd (2000) found that effective teachers utilize proximity, voice inflection, and eye contact to enhance engagement.

2.1.1 *Previous Studies on Non-verbal Communication in Multilingual classrooms*

Non-verbal communication (NVC) encompasses facial expressions, gestures, vocals, proxemics, and haptics, conveying meaning beyond spoken language (Knapp et al., 2014; Mehrabian, 2007). It facilitates comprehension of abstract ideas and regulates classroom interactions (Alibali & Nathan, 2024; Argyle, 1988). In multilingual classrooms, where verbal proficiency varies, body language including both intentional and spontaneous cues is integral for learner engagement and interactional competence (Birdwhistell, 1970; Kendon, 2004). Although gestures notably support vocabulary and syntactic development (Lazaraton, 2004; Goldin-Meadow, 2003), many studies neglect cultural variability in gesture interpretation, indicating a gap in contextualized research on NVC's instructional role.

Research on teacher immediacy behaviors, such as posture and facial expressions are important for promoting learner participation and rapport (Pan, 2014; Zhang & Lu, 2019). However, much of these studies often draw from Western or Asian contexts with limited consideration of sociocultural and age-related factors that influence interpretation. For instance, while teacher warmth promotes learner engagement (Burroughs, 2007), certain non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, may induce discomfort in specific cultural contexts (Ergin & Birol, 2005), highlighting the necessity of a nuanced approach to NVC, acknowledging its varied interpretations.

Research consistently highlights NVC as a sustaining force in multilingual classroom interaction when linguistic resources are limited. Gestures, posture and facial expressions facilitates continuity and compensate for verbal gaps (McCafferty, 2002; Gullberg, 2006; Salimi, 2014). Non-verbal immediacy behaviors further enhance perceptions of teacher warmth and encourage participation (Burroughs, 2007; Lee et al., 2021), whereas emotional distance and lack of affective presence can hinder learner engagement and oral production (Najafi, 2013).

Theoretical frameworks guiding NVC research in language education include Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Multimodal Interaction Analysis (MIA), and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. CLT emphasizes authentic interaction essential for oral production while MIA conceptualizes communication as integrating verbal and non-verbal modes such as gestures and posture (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010). Vygotsky's theory positions NVC as a semiotic resource mediating cognitive development within learners' zones of proximal development. These frameworks collectively provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how embodied teacher behaviors contribute to linguistic and cognitive processes in oral development.

Although growing recognition of NVC is important for multilingual learners, its role in improving oral production remains underexplored through systematic qualitative research. Existing studies by Ortega (2009) and Mthembu (2021) reveal that non-verbal strategies can mitigate speaking anxiety and encourage participation; however, there is still limited in-depth analysis of the micro-level analysis of teachers' NVC behaviors facilitate oral production. This gap is especially noticeable in Kenyan multilingual classrooms, where diverse languages and unique teaching challenges exist. Consequently, this study addresses this gap by qualitatively exploring how specific teacher NVC behaviors are utilized to support and shape learner oral production within this unique setting.

2.1.2 Types of Teachers' Non-verbal Communication (NVC)

Body language plays a critical role in second language acquisition (SLA), supplementing verbal expression and enhancing communication in multilingual classrooms. Ekman and Friesen (1969) conceptualized body language as comprising gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, and proximity. McNeill (1992) emphasized that these embodied forms serve cognitive, interactive, and pedagogical functions, especially when learners face linguistic challenges.

Gestures, among the most studied forms of NVC, are physical movements linked to speech that help illustrate, reinforce, or substitute verbal messages. McNeill (1992) classifies gestures into iconic, deictic, metaphoric, and beat types, each contributing uniquely to communication. Research shows that gestures facilitate vocabulary retrieval

and syntactic processing (Tellier, 2008; Gregersen, 2007). In Kenyan classrooms, teachers employ both culturally familiar and adapted gestures to support comprehension (Axtell, 1998; Kendon, 2004). Though effective, gesture interpretation remains culturally contingent (Morris, 1977).

Facial expressions convey affective states with immediacy. Ekman and Friesen (1975) argue that some expressions such as happiness or surprise are universally recognized, while Goleman (1995) highlights their role in emotional intelligence. For instance, a teacher's smile may encourage risk-taking, whereas a raised eyebrow might prompt reflection. Njoroge (2021) observes that students increasingly respond to subtle emotional cues, reflecting evolving classroom emotional dynamics.

Eye contact is a powerful tool for projecting confidence and building rapport. Teachers who avoid it may appear uncertain, negatively impacting classroom management (Gower & Walters, 1983; Pollitt, 2006). Ledbury et al. (2004) highlight eye contact's efficiency in reinforcing meaning, while Cruickshank et al. (2003) link it to teacher credibility as perceived by students.

Vocalics, or paralinguistic features such as tone, pitch, and volume convey emotions and attitudes often more potently than words (Mehrabian, 1971). In linguistically diverse SLA classrooms, tone modulation supports comprehension and classroom dynamics. Conversely, monotone delivery can hinder participation (Pan, 2014).

Posture, referring to body alignment and orientation, cues intention and authority. Open posture indicates engagement, while closed posture may signal detachment (Pease & Pease, 2004). In Kenyan multilingual classrooms, relaxed and grounded postures foster inclusivity and encourage responsiveness (Munyua, 2022).

Finally, proxemics, the study of spatial relationships (Hall, 1959, 1966) affects interaction. Teacher-student proximity conveys authority and emotional comfort. Traditional Kenyan norms may favor distance as respect, while urban settings often prefer closer proximity reflecting engagement (Kinyua & Owino, 2021). Flexible movement around the classroom can reduce language anxiety and promote peer interaction (Ochieng & Karanja, 2020).

Collectively, the effective use of gestures, facial expressions, gaze, vocalics, posture, and spatial positioning enhances verbal communication, strengthens teacher-student rapport, and directly

supports oral language production. Teachers who are attuned to these non-verbal cues can more accurately assess student understanding, guide interactions, and foster meaningful learner participation, thereby promoting more effective oral language development in linguistically diverse classroom settings.

2.1.3 Functions of Teachers' Non-verbal Communication(NVC)

Research increasingly shows the significant role of teachers' non-verbal communication in multilingual classrooms. Gestures, facial expressions, and body posture are essential tools for enhancing instructional clarity. For example, co-speech gestures movements that accompany speech act as semiotic resources that facilitate meaning-making in multilingual interactions (Gullberg, 2006). Similarly, emblematic gestures, defined as hand or body movements with culturally shared meanings) have been shown to increase learner engagement and improve vocabulary retention among second language learners (Allen, 2020).

In African educational contexts, studies reveal how teachers' body language interacts with local linguistic dynamics. In Zambian classrooms, Banda (2018) found that teachers' strategic use of eye gaze and spatial positioning effectively directed students' attention and signaled transitions between languages. Similarly, Adika, Alidu, and Asante (2021) observed that Ghanaian teachers frequently employed pointing, nodding, and mimed actions to support learning where students had limited English proficiency. The authors argue that these embodied practices are not merely supplementary but constitute fundamental components of effective teaching, particularly when verbal instruction alone proves insufficient.

However, while these studies establish the value of body language, few examine the pedagogical intentionality the deliberate choices teachers make when using non-verbal cues. There is limited analysis of how teachers consciously adapt their non-verbal cues based on students' second language proficiency levels, especially in African education contexts. Moreover, few studies systematically compare the frequency and impact of these non-verbal behaviors across different teaching contexts. Existing research relies primarily on observation, with less attention to teachers' own views on their use of body language.

2.2 Research on Teacher NVC

The growing emphasis on learner-centered pedagogies and oral production in second language acquisition (SLA) has established non-verbal communication (NVC) as a vital element in teacher-student interactions. While verbal language remains central to classroom discourse, NVC manifested through gestures, facial expressions, and body orientation functions as a parallel channel that supports meaning-making, in speaking-focused activities (Ledbury et al., 2004). Scholars argue that non-verbal elements carry substantial emotional and attitudinal meaning, often surpassing verbal messages in interpersonal communication (Santrock, 2001)

Previous studies highlight the role of NVC in both classroom management and communicative effectiveness. Ledbury et al. (2004) emphasize that non-verbal signals are essential for establishing authority and clarity, in managing student attention and discipline. Santrock (2001) supports this by demonstrating that facial expressions and gestures often reveal a speaker's emotional intent more clearly than words alone. Extending this view, Altay Firat Ismail et al. (2018) argue that non-verbal cues in language classrooms not only aid comprehension but also promote intercultural competence by raising awareness of cross-cultural communication norms. In African education contexts, Kassim (2022) identifies that a culturally responsive use of non-verbal behaviors fosters a more inclusive and respectful environment, which in turn supports engagement and speaking development.

Further research explores more nuanced aspects of NVC. Balasubramanian and Menon (2021) observe that aligning instructional delivery with students' cultural expectations enhances language learning and oral production. Fidyk (2013) investigates silence as a form of NVC, demonstrating how different types of silences whether intentional or uncomfortable carry complex meanings that influence student interpretation and teacher perception. Collectively, these studies suggest that a teacher's awareness and strategic use of non-verbal behaviors can significantly affect student participation, motivation, and speaking outcomes.

Research across regions including Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America consistently emphasizes the central role of kinesics (body movements such as gestures, posture, and facial expressions) in

classroom communication and language learning (Mehrabian, 1972; Birdwhistell, 1970; Knapp & Hall, 2010; Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016). Kinesics conveys messages, supports interaction, and expresses emotions, thereby enhancing face-to-face communication effectiveness (Ekman, 1993; Knapp & Hall, 2010). Asian and African studies prioritize gestures as pedagogical tools that simplify complex grammar and improve learner comprehension (Kusanagi, 2015; Sutiyatno, 2015). In contrast, research in European contexts often focuses on body language's role in establishing teacher authority and shaping classroom climate (Najafi, 2013; Salimi, 2014).

Consequently, U.S.-based studies tend to highlight the affective dimension of kinesics, exploring how non-verbal cues reveal teachers' emotions and facilitate students' engagement and motivation (Ekman, 1993; Burgoon et al., 2016). These regional variations illustrate how cultural and educational contexts influence the use and interpretation of kinesics in language classrooms. Najafi (2013) and Salimi (2014) found that teachers' posture and movements affect students' perceptions of teacher confidence, approachability, and energy, thereby impacting classroom dynamics. Similarly, Kusanagi (2015) and Sutiyatno (2015) demonstrate that gestures enable instructors to vividly express ideas and foster understanding, reinforcing the functional role of kinesics in teaching.

2.2.1 *Non-verbal communication in Multilingual Classrooms*

Non-verbal communication (NVC) transmits meaning without spoken language. Saitz (1966) noted that people often remain unaware of their own gestures, yet these silent signals can convey meaning with striking clarity sometimes even more efficiently than words. Bunglowala (2015) reinforces this, arguing that non-verbal cues often provide a more reliable channel, supporting and enriching verbal interactions. Emotional states are also conveyed through non-verbal means: frowning may indicate anger, smiling typically signifies happiness, and aimless gazing often reflects boredom.

Conversely, eye contact as a form of non-verbal communication varies widely across cultures, influencing classroom dynamics in multilingual and multicultural settings globally. In many Western low-context cultures, direct eye contact signals attentiveness, confidence, and respect (Hall, 1976;

Gudykunst & Kim, 2017). By contrast, in many high-context cultures across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, prolonged eye contact may be seen as disrespectful or confrontational (Ting-Toomey, 1999; Kioko, 2015). Barati (2015) emphasizes that appropriate eye contact cultivates a "sense of connection," serving as the foundation for positive student-teacher relationships and deeper engagement.

NVC in the classroom extends beyond eye contact and gestures to include subtle cues that inform teachers about student comprehension and engagement. Angelo and Cross (1993) note that perceptive teachers observe students' body language and facial expressions to gauge learning and adjust their instructional methods accordingly. This evidence suggests that non-verbal observation is a globally relevant pedagogical tool for enhancing teaching effectiveness. In South African multilingual classrooms, Mokoena and Singh (2023) found that teachers responsive to students' non-verbal behaviors including facial expressions, posture, and gaze created a more inclusive atmosphere that encouraged greater verbal participation.

Research from diverse global contexts highlights the crucial role of NVC in enhancing engagement and inclusivity. Anderson (2023) in South Korea and Zhang et al. (2023) in China both highlighted how teachers' use of eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions build rapport and emotional connection, thereby improving student participation and perceived teacher effectiveness. In Europe, similar findings have been reported: Lappalainen (2022) in Finland demonstrated that gestures clarify complex topics, while Bianchi et al. (2020) in Italy found that body language created a more inclusive environment for immigrant learners. Furthermore, Harris and Varga (2018) in the United Kingdom observed that teachers attuned to students' non-verbal cues provided more individualized support, adapting teaching to meet diverse multilingual needs.

Findings from the Caribbean, Indonesia, and Latin America further reinforce this global pattern. Brown and Williams (2021) found that teachers' use of gestures, eye contact, and physical proximity helped bridge communication gaps in multilingual Caribbean classrooms. Wulandari et al. (2023) in Indonesia highlighted how gestures increased student engagement and comprehension, a finding echoed by Fernandez et al. (2022) in Latin America, who noted the critical role of teacher body posture

and eye contact in strengthening student–teacher interactions. This research indicates that while non-verbal cues serve similar communicative purposes across settings, their form is shaped by the cultural and instructional contexts in which they are used.

2.2.2 *Studies on NVC in Kenyan Context*

Non-verbal communication (NVC) is foundational to effective teaching in multilingual classrooms, as in Kenya, where learners navigate English, Kiswahili, and various regional languages. A defining characteristic of body language in this context is contextual flexibility, with teachers adjusting gestures, facial expressions, and spatial behavior to align with regional sociocultural expectations. Research by Kioko (2015) and Kamene (2022) shows that such culturally attuned adaptations strengthen classroom rapport and enhance clarity. Ochieng (2021) adds that teachers who demonstrate high contextual flexibility are better able to harmonize student-teacher interactions when learners' linguistic repertoires often differ across urban and rural settings.

Recent research links teacher body language, including open posture and facial warmth, with increased verbal participation among primary learners (Achieng, 2020; Mutua, 2021). These non-verbal cues not only clarify linguistic input but also model prosody and intonation, thereby supporting learners' oral production. This pedagogical significance is further highlighted by ethnographic research. Kioko and Muthwii (2001) reported that teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms use gestures and facial expressions to reinforce meaning and motivate students to participate verbally. Similarly, Wandera (2013) found that positive non-verbal cues such as nodding, smiling, and eye contact help create a supportive environment, consistent with Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis. Were (2017) further noted that relaxed posture and hand gestures facilitate turn-taking and group interaction, helping students overcome fear and reduce speaking anxiety.

A notable feature of non-verbal communication is the use of an adaptive repertoire, in which teachers modify body movements to reflect students' comprehension levels. Otundo (2023) describes this as a dynamic process, with non-verbal cues shifting in response to real-time classroom needs. These adaptations support speaking performance when learners face challenges with lexical access or grammatical

forms, aligning with Gullberg (2006) and Morett (2014) on gestures and L2 production. Multimodal teaching, combining body language with visuals and classroom tools, is also characteristic of NVC in Kenya's resource-constrained schools. Nganga and Karanja (2021) found that using hand gestures alongside blackboard sketches or textbook illustrations increases student attention and reduces confusion.

Despite these findings, a clear research gap remains. Studies in Kenya have largely focused on reading and writing, leaving the intentional use of NVC to support oral proficiency underexplored (Barasa, 2005; Bunyi, 2008). This gap is amplified by the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) (KICD, 2017), which, although emphasizing communicative competence, provides limited guidance on NVC in teacher training and classroom practice (Mutisya, 2020). Kenya's language-in-education policy, with English as the primary medium of instruction, highlights a context where NVC could play a pivotal role in enhancing speaking skills, yet its application remains largely unexamined (Republic of Kenya, 2010; KICD, 2022). Examining how teachers' non-verbal behaviors shape students' oral performance offers practical insight into strengthening speaking skills in multilingual classrooms under the CBC.

3. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study, conducted in three public primary schools in Nairobi, investigated how teachers' non-verbal communication (gestures, facial expressions, and posture) supports oral production in multilingual classrooms. Data was gathered through video recordings, classroom observations, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with teachers and pupils. Purposive sampling targeted English lessons with active oral production tasks. Analysis followed Multimodal Interaction Analysis (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010) to examine how verbal and non-verbal modes interact in meaning-making.

3.1 *Research Questions and Participants*

This study investigates teachers' use of non-verbal communication to support oral production in Kenyan multilingual classrooms, guided by the following questions:

- What types of non-verbal communication do teachers employ during speaking activities in multilingual classrooms?

- How do teachers implement non-verbal communication strategies to enhance learners' oral production?
- What are teachers' and students' perceptions of the role and impact of body language in second language speaking activities?

Participants were purposively selected from three middle schools public, private, and international in Nairobi County, representing diverse multilingual settings. Classroom observations were based on video recordings of five English teachers during speaking lessons, with each teacher observed across three sessions (15 lessons total). Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with these teachers and 75 students from Grades 6 and 7, selected for their active oral participation and willingness to share insights. This purposive sampling ensured rich, relevant data aligned with the research aims.

3.2 Instruments

This study employed classroom observations, video recordings, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Observations and recordings captured teachers' non-verbal behaviors during lessons. Questionnaires gathered students' and teachers' perceptions of non-verbal communication's role in oral production. Semi-structured interviews with selected teachers explored their awareness and use of non-verbal strategies in class.

3.3 Data Collection

This study employed a multi-method qualitative design, triangulating data from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and brief questionnaires to provide an in-depth account of the phenomenon. Teachers' non-verbal communication was captured via video and segmented into 5–8-second intervals a duration chosen to balance capturing discrete behaviors while maintaining the context of classroom interaction. To ensure coding consistency, the videos were independently analyzed by two researchers, achieving high inter-rater reliability (Cohen's Kappa = 0.85).

Interviews were conducted with five teachers and seventy students from public, private, and international middle schools in Nairobi County. The students, in Grades 6 and 7, were selected based on active engagement in oral activities. Questionnaires were also administered to capture

perceptions of non-verbal communication and contextual information, which were used to validate and enrich findings from the interviews and observations.

All qualitative data were transcribed and thematically analyzed using NVivo software to identify patterns in teachers' non-verbal communication in supporting oral production.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Major Findings

Grounded in Multimodal Interaction Analysis and Vygotskian sociocultural theory, this study explored how teachers use non-verbal communication facial expressions, posture, and gestures to scaffold oral participation in multilingual upper-primary classrooms in Nairobi, Kenya. Through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student questionnaires, the findings highlight the crucial pedagogical role non-verbal cues play in enhancing comprehension, engagement, and spoken English use in linguistically diverse contexts. Teachers employed a wide array of multimodal behaviors including smiles, nods, eyebrow movements, gaze direction, and hand gestures (iconic, deictic, and beat) to scaffold meaning, signal key vocabulary, and manage interaction. They pointed to visual aids, mimed unfamiliar verbs, and enacted abstract concepts to reinforce understanding.

Posture shifts marked transitions, while strategic eye contact, eyebrow raises, and pauses with gaze direction helped regulate turn-taking. Open-handed gestures conveyed encouragement, and proximity was used to support anxious learners. Occasional self-touch (e.g., placing a hand on the chest or head) helped externalize emotional or cognitive states. These embodied practices not only complemented speech but also modeled communicative norms and sustained classroom dynamics in ways that verbal instruction alone could not achieve. Students reported increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and greater willingness to participate in English through exposure to such cues.

Teachers echoed this, emphasizing the role of non-verbal communication in managing classroom rapport and supporting language acquisition, while noting occasional ambiguity due to cultural interpretations. Given these findings, this study

recommends the integration of structured non-verbal communication modules into teacher training programs. Such modules should include at least six to eight hours of hands-on practice in gesture use, gaze coordination, and posture alignment with verbal input, adapted for both in-person and online environments. As learning spaces increasingly shift toward hybrid models, attention to multimodal pedagogy remains essential to fostering inclusive, participatory, and linguistically responsive classrooms.

4.2 *Implications of the Study*

The findings provide actionable guidance for pedagogy in linguistically diverse classrooms. Teachers should intentionally integrate non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, posture, and gestures to foster oral production in settings where language diversity limits spontaneous speech. This supports the affective filter hypothesis, emphasizing that a low-anxiety environment fosters language acquisition. Warm expressions, nods, and open posture can invite quieter learners into discussion, while gestures signaling “your turn” or “please continue” ensure balanced speaking opportunities and a sense of inclusion. Posture adjustments and guiding gestures help regulate turn-taking without verbal interruption, preserving the flow of thought and maintaining learner focus. Positive expressions, supportive posture, and encouraging gestures signal acceptance of mistakes as part of the learning process. Minimizing negative cues such as frowning or folded arms helps maintain motivation and trust within the classroom community.

4.3 *Limitations and Future Research*

This study was based on a small sample of teachers in selected Kenyan multilingual classrooms and drew from short-term observational data. Consequently, findings may not be generalization to all educational settings. Future research could examine the long-term impact of facial expressions, posture, and gestures on learner confidence and oral proficiency. Additionally, how these strategies function across different cultural or linguistic contexts deserves further exploration. Investigating students’ perceptions of non-verbal cues and their effects on participation would also deepen understanding and inform pedagogy.

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