

# Non-Verbal Communication to Enhance Learning: Strategies of Filipino Language Teachers

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**Abstract:** This phenomenological study examined how Filipino language teachers use non-verbal communication (NVC) in the classroom, as well as the difficulties they face when doing so. To gather meaningful insights, nine teachers from the Compostela West District were carefully chosen and interviewed. Thematic analysis of their responses revealed that facial expressions and hand gestures were the most commonly used non-verbal strategies. These methods helped boost student engagement, made lessons easier to understand, and supported classroom management. Despite these benefits, teachers also faced several barriers in using NVC effectively. A lack of formal training and the risk of students misinterpreting gestures were among the main concerns. To help address these issues, the study recommends establishing thorough training programs for teachers that focus on non-verbal strategies, along with creating culturally sensitive guidelines suited to the Philippine educational setting. The findings emphasize the need for strong institutional support to fully integrate NVC into teaching methods. By moving from informal use to more intentional, research-informed practice, teachers can make their instruction more inclusive and engaging. This study highlights the importance of non-verbal communication in language education and calls for improvements in teacher preparation and policy to better support its use in Filipino classrooms.

**Keywords:** Non-Verbal Communication, Enhance Learning, Filipino Language, Teachers.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Often overlooked, nonverbal communication significantly impacts student engagement and learning in education. Filipino language teachers, by mastering strategies like gestures, facial expressions, and proxemics, can bridge understanding gaps and foster dynamic classrooms. This study explores their use of nonverbal cues to enhance instruction, offering insights into culturally responsive teaching.

Nonverbal communication is vital in teaching and learning. Ghorzang et al. (2021) highlighted its essential role. Teachers benefit greatly by developing a strong ability to interpret student nonverbal cues. Instructors should actively listen not just to words, but also to nonverbal signals. A teacher's facial expressions, postures, gestures, touch, and eye contact are universally important in the classroom.

Globally, the significance of nonverbal communication in education is gaining recognition. Khuman (2024) in India affirmed that it's far more than a mere supplement to verbal interaction; it's a dynamic force that fundamentally shapes the

educational journey itself. Its impact resonates through classrooms, influencing student engagement, participation, and overall academic achievement. As educators heed this call, they embark on a transformative path towards cultivating vibrant, culturally sensitive, and profoundly impactful learning environments. Enhancing nonverbal communication thus paves the way for a more holistic and effective educational future.

In a similar vein, Ghafar and Mahmood (2023) underscored the critical role of nonverbal communication (NVC) within the classroom, highlighting its integral function in teaching and learning. Their research indicated that a teacher's body language, including gestures and posture, contributes to students feeling calm, confident, and at ease, fostering a positive emotional state that elevates their self-esteem. This sense of comfort subsequently increases student engagement and interest in lessons. Furthermore, the strategic use of silent nonverbal cues encourages students to interact with both their teacher and peers, thereby promoting active participation and collaboration during classroom activities.

Meanwhile, Ghorzang, et.al (2021) underscored the crucial role of nonverbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, in fostering a positive learning environment. When teachers utilize positive nonverbal signals, students tend to feel more comfortable, confident, and engaged, which in turn leads to greater participation and interaction. These nonverbal communication signals genuinely encourage students to engage and interact actively during their lectures.

On the national front, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) lays out the knowledge, skills, and values expected of Filipino educators. These guidelines, cited in Gepila (2019) from DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, specifically expect all teachers to demonstrate excellent practice in using effective verbal and nonverbal classroom communication strategies. This is all about supporting students' understanding, participation, engagement, and ultimately, their achievement.

Cabatac et al. (2023) highlighted that non-verbal cues like facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures are a huge help for teachers in delivering lessons effectively. These cues don't just clarify communication; they also encourage cooperation and positively impact student performance in the classroom. Similarly, Caybot et al. (2024) confirmed that using kinesics (body language) is really beneficial for teaching interns. Incorporating things like postures, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions has created a dynamic classroom atmosphere, boosting student engagement and improving the overall quality of instruction. This even positively influences students' academic performance, leading to better results and improved classroom behavior.

Moreover, Yague (2023) posited a key insight for aspiring teachers: they must recognize the necessity of employing appropriate communication styles, both verbal and non-verbal, to cultivate a truly warm and inviting learning environment. As part of their preparation for the teaching profession, students need to grasp that their future practice teaching assignments will require them to communicate as professional educators do. This involves not only imparting ideas to foster subject understanding but also effectively conveying feelings and attitudes to their learners.

Right here in Davao City, Coscos and Buenaventura (2023) observed that nonverbal support can actually play a vital role in boosting students' emotions, academic progress, and motivation. They found that when teachers weave gestures into their teaching, they can connect with students more effectively, largely because research suggests students react more positively to nonverbal cues than to just words.

Unfortunately, in our own school, it seems many teachers tend to undervalue the significant impact nonverbal communication has on classroom learning engagement. This aligns with what Li and Jiang (2022) noted: many educators

simply don't realize the positive power nonverbal behaviors can have on teaching effectiveness, often relying on personal experience rather than formal training in this area.

In essence, this study uncovers the strategies Filipino Language teachers employ to boost classroom learning through non-verbal communication. By examining these techniques, we gain valuable insights that can help educators build more interactive and effective learning spaces. This is particularly important for language subjects, where strong communication is absolutely key.

## II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore Filipino language teachers' lived experiences with nonverbal communication in classroom settings. Phenomenology was specifically chosen to examine how teachers perceived, implemented, and adapted gestures, facial expressions, and vocal cues to enhance language instruction. Moreover, the data in phenomenology were gathered through in-depth interviews, enabling participants to share emotions, challenges, and cultural insights about NVC implementation, a method aligned with Denzin & Lincoln's (2000) emphasis, as cited in Dunwoodie et al., 2023, on capturing workplace phenomena through rich narrative exchange. This design ensured a comprehensive exploration of how teachers navigated diverse classroom dynamics, student responsiveness, and instructional goals through nonverbal strategies, highlighting the complexities of meaning-making in Filipino language education.

This study on Filipino language teachers' use of non-verbal communication prioritized ethical standards by securing approval from the appropriate research ethics committee. The protocol ensured protection of participants' rights, dignity, and welfare as they shared sensitive classroom experiences involving NVC implementation. These ethical safeguards according to Mirza et al. (2023), citing Cameron et al. (1994) and Judd et al. (1991), maintained that research integrity while exploring how NVC enhances Filipino language instruction.

Moreover, Nine (9) teacher-participants from Compostela West District were selected based on specific criteria: they had taught Filipino for at least three years, attended various pedagogy trainings, and represented three different schools to ensure environmental triangulation. The study employed purposive sampling, which Chun et al. (2019), as cited in Mwita (2022), identified as the preferred technique for selecting information-rich cases in qualitative research. This approach was particularly appropriate for capturing diverse yet focused perspectives on how gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal strategies function in actual Filipino language classrooms, allowing for deep exploration of this pedagogical phenomenon.

Further, in-depth interviews serve as the primary research instrument in this study, allowing for direct and meaningful conversations with Filipino language teachers about their use of non-verbal communication (NVC) in the classroom. This method is particularly valuable for capturing their lived experiences, emotions, and pedagogical insights, as it encourages reflective responses while maintaining depth and authenticity. Observations served as a supplementary instrument in this study, providing critical insights into how Filipino language teachers naturally employ non-verbal communication (NVC) in their teaching practice. Through systematic observation of unspoken behaviors, I captured real-time interactions that teachers might not explicitly describe in interviews.

As the researcher, I personally documented all interviews, reinforcing audio recordings to preserve original narratives. These recordings were meticulously transcribed and coded to identify patterns in teachers' nonverbal practices. Through thematic analysis, I systematically examined how cultural norms, classroom dynamics, and instructional goals shaped NVC implementation. The data analysis in this study was meticulously conducted to align with my research objectives, theoretical framework, and methodological approach. This process adhered to Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, ensuring a systematic exploration of teachers' lived experiences. The phases included familiarization with interview data, initial coding of NVC strategies and challenges, theme development, theme review for consistency, definition of each theme's pedagogical significance, and a synthesized analysis linking findings to classroom implications.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study on how Filipino language teachers utilize non-verbal communication to enhance learning. It includes a detailed analysis of the data gathered, outlining the procedures used to classify emergent themes from in-depth interviews with the participants. On the strategies of using non-verbal communication to enhance learning in the classrooms, the following are the themes that emerged from the narrations of the participants:

#### ➤ *Integrating Facial Expressions*

The participants of this study had commonly integrated facial expressions as intentional non-verbal cues to emphasize emotions, clarify meaning, and maintain student engagement during language instruction. Their narrations revealed that facial expressions served multiple functions in enhancing learning, all of which align with the cultural and communicative context of Filipino language instruction. This strategy aligns with Khuman (2024), who attested that non-verbal cues play a pivotal role in shaping the classroom atmosphere, influencing engagement, and facilitating communication. A teacher's genuine smile communicates warmth, while a furrowed brow

may signal seriousness, nuances that enrich the emotional context of language learning.

#### ➤ *Employing Hand Gestures*

Another significant theme that emerged from the teachers' narratives is the strategic use of hand gestures as a form of non-verbal communication to enhance learning in Filipino language classrooms. The narratives revealed that teachers primarily employ hand gestures to enhance conceptual understanding, particularly for action verbs and spatial prepositions, where physical demonstrations help concretize abstract linguistic elements. These practices align with Afdaliah's (2022) observation that teachers' gestures effectively bridge abstract concepts with physical representation to support comprehension.

While these educators utilized diverse approaches, from facial expressions to hand gestures, to improve comprehension, engagement, and classroom management, their efforts were not without challenges. These obstacles often acted as roadblocks, hindering the full effectiveness of non-verbal techniques in the classroom. Through thematic content analysis of participant narrations, the following key challenges emerged in implementing non-verbal communication to optimize language learning:

#### ➤ *Insufficient Training in Nonverbal Communication*

The study participants identified a critical gap in teacher preparation regarding nonverbal communication (NVC) in Filipino language instruction. Despite recognizing NVC's pedagogical importance, educators reported a lack of structured training in nonverbal techniques during their pre-service education and professional development. This aligns with Kinanga's (2024) findings on teacher-trainees' struggles with appropriate facial expressions, gestures, and vocal tone. Dy and Sumayao's (2023) recommendation is for targeted pre-service training in communicative techniques, including nonverbal delivery.

#### ➤ *Fear of Misinterpretations*

The study participants revealed significant apprehensions regarding the potential for nonverbal communication (NVC) to be misconstrued in classroom settings. Multiple educators reported self-limiting their use of pedagogically valuable nonverbal techniques due to concerns about student misinterpretations that could undermine instructional effectiveness or teacher-student rapport. Participants described modifying vocal delivery techniques after students misinterpreted dramatic reading tones as expressions of anger and reported adjusting gestural intensity during storytelling when animated movements elicited unintended laughter rather than engagement. These experiences align with Kshetree's (2023) findings about the cultural specificity of nonverbal behaviors and their variable reception across different audiences. Meanwhile, Lubis and Putri (2022) cautioned the negative side of using too many movements as non-verbal

communication or being too serious when teaching would not create a comfortable classroom atmosphere.

Furthermore, the study suggests these practical insights to aid educational authorities in systematically promoting the use of Non-Verbal Communication (NVC) in Filipino language classrooms. Initially, implementing extensive NVC training for both pre-service and in-service teachers would furnish them with research-supported strategies. In addition, setting up clear NVC guidelines would standardize practices while addressing the diverse needs of learners. Such initiatives could convert NVC from a sporadic teaching aid into a purposeful, culturally sensitive method that enhances language acquisition and classroom engagement.

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