



## **USING BODY LANGUAGE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

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**ANNOTATION:** The article discusses the use of the bodylanguage in foreign language lessons. The types of body language are explained.

**Keywords:** young learners; body language; teacher, emotion, facial expressions.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Neither teachers nor students communicate exclusively verbally in class, but always also with the body, especially with our facial expressions and gestures. In the specialist literature, it is assumed that body language accounts for around 80 percent of what is happening in the classroom. A student contribution is confirmed or rejected with a nod of the head.

Our body language reveals a lot about our emotions and attitudes. Perceiving the signals of body language in class and interpreting them in the overall context is important for successful classes. A re-evaluation of body language in view of current teaching developments is indicated.

### **MAIN PART**

We understand facial expressions as changing facial expressions, for example smiling, eye contact, looking away, wrinkling the nose, raised eyebrows or blushing. Gesture includes the repertoire of our gestures, the handling of the index finger and the hands.

Facial expressions and gestures are always there. Students influence teachers with their body language and vice versa. Accordingly, an axiom of Watzlawick's communication theory is "One cannot not communicate."

Sometimes body language contrasts with verbal language and can cause confusion and aggression in the classroom. The completely bored look of a pubescent student who nevertheless takes part in class may represent a typical emotional chaos of puberty.

Our facial expressions and gestures are usually not always consciously controlled more than verbal communication. In important situations, for example in a conflict



discussion with a student, body language can be used consciously with appropriate practice to support a verbal statement.

The signals of a student's facial expressions are always to be seen in the overall context of a teaching situation and the knowledge of the individual situation of a student. If we ONLY see the facial expressions of a moment and ONLY the isolated situation, misinterpretations can easily occur. Considering the overall context is often even more important for understanding body language than for verbal communication.

Eye contact plays an important role in the classroom. When a student makes eye contact, it often means they are paying attention. Teachers, for their part, hardly take their eyes off their students in order to generate this attention. The variants of eye contact are interesting. If a student often avoids eye contact, there is a high probability that they are very insecure. If the eye contact is more insistent and long-lasting, it comes across as slightly provocative and aggressive. In a normal, friendly classroom discussion, looking and looking away alternate. This shows a student's willingness to work together.

Depending on the situation, if a student raises her eyebrows, she will be surprised, but she may also be horrified at something. The vertical crease between the eyebrows often expresses doubt, skepticism or anger.

Wrinkling of the nose indicates discomfort or dislike.

Almost everyone will interpret the open mouth of an elementary school child in certain situations as amazement and amazement. A wide open mouth can also represent fear or horror in another situation.

## **DISCUSSION**

If a student's lips are pressed together, this is more likely to indicate tension. If a schoolgirl chews her lips, the child is also tense or overwhelmed.

If a fidgeting elementary school child repeatedly rubs his eyes while working on a so-called conveyor belt, the child is overwhelmed. Individual support cannot be successful in this way and the child is dependent on a teacher noticing their body language and looking for alternatives for the student.

Unlike adults, the faces of schoolchildren rarely have strong wrinkles because they are still young. It is all the more important to take a closer look.



First of all, a teacher's body does not always "speak" correctly. Using facial expressions and gestures consciously at all times will hardly be possible for teachers.

However, it makes sense to be aware of the effect of facial expressions and gestures as a supplement to verbal communication and to use body language consciously, especially in difficult situations, in order to solve a situation constructively.

Only general guidelines for body language are possible.

The most important is that the message of body language should not conflict with verbal one. A teacher who rolls his eyes and looks out of the window often will not achieve much. If the situation is such that a teacher has to express all his authority, he will have to send out appropriate power signals (firm voice, appropriate gestures). It is worth getting to know and expanding your very personal body language repertoire in seminars so that you can call it up when you need it. A physically small teacher with a comparatively quiet voice, who repeatedly finds herself in grading discussions with unreasonable, tall "puberty snobs", will have a different focus in appropriate further training on body language in the classroom than a portly teacher with a strong physical presence, who may often use aggressive language situations is faced.

Above all, the body language competence of teachers includes seeing the body language signals of the students and reacting to them. In schools with a high proportion of pupils with a migration background, this also means knowing that gestures differ greatly depending on the culture. Even if students with a migration background speak German well, the gestures often remain in their mother tongue.

The important interpretation of facial expressions and gestures in school reality requires experienced teachers. For him, facial expressions and gestures are clear signals as to whether students need further explanations, whether a situation threatens to escalate, whether the receptiveness is still there and what changes are indicated in a teaching situation.

At this point it becomes particularly clear that a teacher can never be replaced by a computer, because no matter how well programmed computer software is, it cannot interpret the signals of body language. The more help students need to learn, the more important it is to keep this in mind. These are primarily elementary school children or pupils with special or general learning difficulties.



In modern e-learning concepts that rely on the possibilities of technology, the importance of the interpretation of body language by experienced educators for successful learning remains largely unconsidered. With these approaches, one does not see the faces or only to a limited extent, determined by the limitations of modern technology.

If you interpret body language signals in class, it helps to stop an unfavorable development in class at an early stage. The facial expressions on students' faces often unmistakably show something about their mental state and their attitude towards the lesson. For their part, students react to the body language of their teachers.

The famous pantomime Samy Molcho once summed it up: "Body language is like spoken language but it cannot lie."

## **CONCLUSION**

If body language and verbal language are to result in successful communication, the messages must be coherent. In my personal opinion, eyes and hands are particularly important instruments of body language in the classroom. Almost none of us fully exploit the possibilities of body language.

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