

Non-verbal Communication and Writing: Exploring Writing Anxiety in the Writing Process through Kinesics

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ABSTRACT

The 4IR teaching and learning strategies motivate learners to construct new knowledge and skills by using their cognitive domain. The aim is to encourage learners to be competent and eligible for workplace. Hence, to successfully prepare learners for that purpose, one of the sought-after skills called writing skill should be equipped in them. Writing process actively involves verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication such as kinesics is important in a writing process. Kinesics provides additional messages obtained from writers' gesture, body movement and facial expression. This study explores the influence of kinesics on writing process and how it can be related to writing anxiety of ESL writers. Purposive sampling was conducted to obtain pertinent samples for this study. A Video of writer's writing process was recorded and transcribed. Results of this study provide useful implication towards teaching and learning of ESL academic writing.

Key Words: *Verbal and Non-verbal communication, Kinesics, Writing Process, ESL Writers, Writing Anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study

Language teaching and learning requires learners to communicate in order to receive and deliver information. To acquire a language, learners should have good communication skills besides knowing how to actively engage themselves in a communication process. Nigussie (2015) reports that non-verbal communication plays an important role in second language learning as English learners will incorporate this element into their learning process and conversation. Communication process is formed into two categories which are verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Although verbal communication has always been a focus in any communication, non-verbal communication has now become a practical tool for an effective communication. According to Basir and Ro'ifah (2018), non-verbal communication is a functional tool as it is used to clarify, confirm and complete verbal communication functions. Hence, both verbal and non-verbal communications are needed to complete each other. Having both categories will help learners to achieve the effectiveness in their communication as well as the language learning.

Writing Process

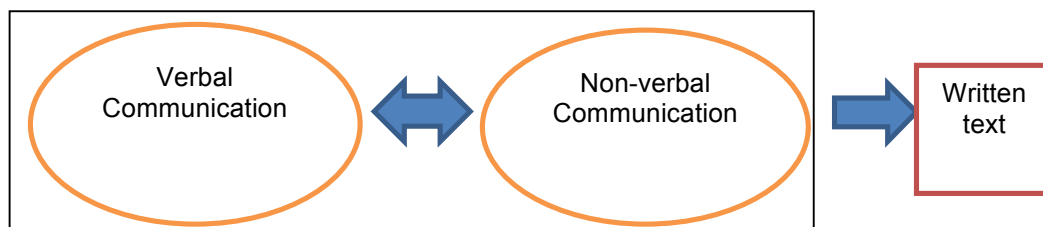


Figure 1 The relationship between verbal communication and non-verbal communication in a writing process

Figure 1 presents a direct relationship between verbal communication and non-verbal communication in a writing process of ESL writers. In the process, writers need both elements in order to produce a good essay. When they use both elements, all the information will be successfully conveyed. As mentioned by Birdwhistell (1970), 30% of the information is transferred from verbal communication, while the other 70% is conveyed through non-verbal communication including gesture, body movement and facial expression.

Although both elements are needed to convey messages, non-verbal communication has also been explored in various disciplines. Studies on kinesics that deals with body movement, gesture and facial expression have been conducted in many different angles such as to learn cultural elements, language, feelings, attitude, behaviours and others. Waiflein (2013) in her study verifies that non-verbal communication can be explored through various disciplines. Thus, the present study explores the use of kinesics including writers' gesture, body movements and facial expression to determine writers' language fear in writing.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In a writing process, writers use verbal communication and non-verbal communication to transform the ideas. During the process, writers will actively engage themselves to produce a good quality of written text. However, they do not realise that their messages or ideas are transferred by using both elements; verbal communication (written text) and non-verbal communication (body gestures or kinesics). According to Basir and Ro'ifah (2018), kinesics deals with body gestures, facial expression, hand waves, eyes gaze and others.

Although many researchers agree on the significance of having both verbal and non-verbal communication in language learning, only little studies on kinesics are conducted to purposely explore the writing process and the writers' behaviour. In fact, there are very limited studies that relate kinesics to writing anxiety during the writing process. Hence, the study will explore writing anxiety through the appearance of kinesics presented by the writer during the writing process.

Writing Process

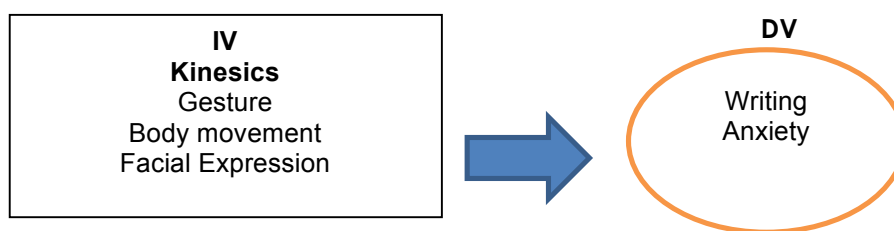


Figure 2 The Relationship between kinesics and writers' writing anxiety in a writing process

Figure 2 presents a relationship between kinesics that appear in ESL writers' writing process and their writing anxiety. Kinesics including gesture, body movement and facial expression are presented by the writers during the writing process in which can be also used to determine their writing anxiety. Hence, it shows that writing anxiety can be identified from kinesics presented by the writers during the writing process.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore the ESL writers' writing anxiety through the development of kinesics including gesture, body movement and facial expression during their writing process. Specifically, this study is conducted to identify how the kinesics in a writing process will be explored to identify writing anxiety that occurs along the process. This study also investigates how kinesics influences the writing process of ESL writers.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does kinesics present writing anxiety in the writing process?
2. What are the types of kinesics performed by the writer in the writing process that portray writing anxiety?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study will significantly help teachers and educators to more understand learners' writing anxiety during their writing process through body movement, gesture and facial expression. This could provide them with more insightful ideas to guide their students to improve their writing skill as well as to control their writing anxiety. The obtained information from this study will also be useful for curricular designers as they can come out with meaningful modules about the area of study so that it would be beneficial for a few parties. Moreover, the findings of the study will motivate future researchers to explore the field of area from different angles and perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The History and Theory of Kinesics (Ray Birdwhistell, 1952)

The term Kinesics is derived from the Greek word, *kinesis* which means motion. Kinesics is a part on non-verbal communication that includes gestures, posture and facial expression. This term was first coined by Ray Birdwhistell in 1952 when he was working on one of his masterpiece works on

kinesics, called *Introduction to Kinesics*. He is known as an American anthropologist and the first who studies kinesics by analysing how people interact in movies. According to Birdwhistell (1952), 70% of the context of a conversation was conveyed through non-verbal communication, while the other 30% was verbal communication either spoken words or written text. Recognising the important of having both elements in conveying information encourages Ray Birdwhistell to extensively explore non-verbal communication for an effective communication.

2.2 Types of Kinesics

Ekman (2004) categorises kinesics into five areas namely emblems, illustrators, manipulators, regulators and emotional expression. Markovic (2017) later in her study provides a detail definition for each type of these movements.

2.2.1 Emblems

Emblems is the only true 'body language' which can be performed with hand, head or facial movements, but most often emblems are performed with hand movements. Emblems are socially learned; thus, these movements are culturally variable. A similar movement or emblem may contain different meanings in different cultural setting. Emblems are used in four different functions; (1) to repeat a word as it is used, (2) replace a word in a flow of speech, (3) provide a separate comment related to the words spoken, and (4) occur as the sole reply.

2.2.2 Illustrators

Illustrators are used to illustrate meanings or in other words it is used to emphasize or explain the message that is being said verbally. This category of kinesics does not carry any stand-alone meaning compared to emblems. For example, when some wants to show disagreement, she or he might shake their head left-to right or roll their eyes. Another example of illustrators is brow raising and brow lowering. These two movements are the most obvious facial movements that are easy to perform. Brow raising represents 'easy', 'light' or 'good', while brow lowering is used to emphasize 'difficult', 'dark' and 'bad'. Brow lowering is commonly used to perform negative emotions such as anger, fear, distress and sadness (Ekman, 2004).

2.2.3 Manipulators

'Adapters' is another word used to call this movement. Manipulators are known as touching movements to indicate internal states, positive or negative and can be directed to the self, other or objects. The most common touching behaviour performed are scratching, twirling hair, fidgeting with fingers or hands, coughing and throat clearing. These movements are normally subconscious, resulting from feelings of anxiety, nervousness and lack of control (Ekman, 2004). For example, in a public speaking, a speaker might use her or his smartphone as a manipulator to hide or to reduce anxiety or nervousness.

2.2.4 Regulators

Regulators are movements that regulate the flow of conversation between two or more participants. Ekman (2004) describes the movements as "listeners' response" as they tell the listeners to wait longer, hold the opinion, pay attention or to talk now. For example, the listener may lower their brow to signal a lack of understanding with message that has been delivered. These movements also tell the speakers to hurry up, to repeat, to justify, to be less boring or to give others chance to speak. The movements involved including nodding, eye-contact and the difference in body position.

2.2.5 Emotional Expression

Emotional expression or 'after display' are movements that reveal emotion to provide important information to others, usually subconsciously. The movements include facial expressions, gestures, hand and feet movements and posture. Facial expression is known as the major communicator as it is the most expressive part of the body. Facial expression is strong to express anger, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness, distress and enjoyment (Ekman, 2004). Common examples are the horizontal stretching of the lips in a quick movement shows fear, while raising upper lips refers disgust.

2.3 ESL Writing and ESL Writers

2.3.1 ESL Writing

ESL writing is a challenging process for non-native speakers. Rahmat (2016) mentions that writers are required to spend long hours planning for their writing. The process is far complicated than writing in one's native language due to its complexity to acquire the writing skill (Al- Sawalha et al, 2012). Guneyli (2016) defines writing as a transferring process that involves emotions, opinions, thoughts, dreams and experiences based on language rules and symbols called letters. Azizi, Nematy and Estahbanati (2017) on the other hand define writing as a thorough skill that helps learners to stimulate the other sources in themselves, such as vocabulary, grammar and text structure.

Researchers (Jennifer and Ponniah, 2017 and Mastan et.al, 2017) state that the process of writing or composing process that is always linked to cognitive process, cultural, motivational and social factors. Having said that, it is undeniable that writing in second language (ESL) is a demanding process that requires writers to incorporate specific skills, language ability and knowledge.

2.3.2 ESL Writers

In a composing process, writers' writing skills is said to determine their writing proficiency. Writers who excel at producing a good composition are labelled as skilled writers, for they manage to apply the writing strategies in their writing compared to the less-skilled writers. Raooft, Chan, Mukundan and Md Rashid (2014) found that, skilled writers manage to present the ideas in an organised way and then able to produce a review upon their final composition.

On the other hand, writers' writing skill can also be measured by the level of anxiety that they experience in writing. Kurniasih (2017) believes that when students feel anxious when writing, they tend to produce a poor composition which results in bad performance. This supports Hassan's (2001) finding that low anxious students will produce a better quality of composition than the students with high anxiety level. Razaei & Jafari (2014), apprehensive writers tend to produce a low-quality text with shorter and simpler structures due to their insufficient knowledge. This can be concluded that writers' characters and writing ability during a writing process can be related to their English language proficiency, language command and the level of fear that they feel.

2.4 ESL Writing Process and Theory

2.4.1 ESL Writing Process

A recent study by Sharp (2016) reviews Flower and Hayes's(1981) three major stages in ESL writing process namely planning, translating and reviewing. These three main stages have been broadly used by many writers. A study by Silin and Chan (2015) investigate the use of these three elements and prove that lecturers in polytechnic have adopted and adapted them in their writing process.

Furthermore, researchers (Rahmat, 2016; Sharp, 2016; Wang and Wen, 2002) clarify three major processes; planning, translating and reviewing in ESL writing process. They found that ESL writing process is a repeating or recursive process and the three elements should be fairly rearranged by the writers during their composing process.

2.4.2 The Cognitive Process Theory (Flower & Hayes, 1981)

Flower and Hayes (1981) have proposed that, in a writing process, a writer generally will involve in an active thinking process at the beginning of writing, during writing and after writing. During planning stage, writers will generate thoughts and ideas from their long-term memory and the surrounding. They will also set their goals besides organising a plan that could assist their writing process towards achieving these goals.

Once planning is complete, writers will progress to another process which is translating. Translating process can be interpreted in two ways; first, the writer translates the information that she or he has read from various sources; synthesises the information, and then rewrites the information into her or his writing. Next, the writer uses information that she or has read and translates the information into language that is understandable by the writer. During the translating process, writers are expected to compose complete sentences that are retrieved from the planning stage. The final process of writing is reviewing, as writers will read and edit their writing. At this stage, writers will identify and amend errors, as well as ensure that the written text meets the writing goals established during panning.

2.5 Kinesics and Writing anxiety

In a writing process, ESL writers are expected to experience unpleasant feelings such as anxious, nervous, tremble, worried due to the complexity in writing. Huwari & Abd Aziz (2015) define writing anxiety as a complex term and a critical problem which eventually affects the learners' learning process. It is believed that, in a writing process, writers use both verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication is conveyed through spoken or written words, while nonverbal communication is performed through body language or kinesics. Besides conveying information, nonverbal communication is also used to convey feelings (Najarzadegan and Dabaghi, 2014). Hence, writers' writing anxiety can be figured out via kinesics such as gestures, body movement and facial expression during the writing process. Indah et.al (2018) state that students usually use facial expressions to show fear, surprise and shy. In fact, repeated movement such as shaking leg and tapping a pen or pencil on the desk also another sign of nervousness (Najarzadegan and Dabaghi, 2014).

2.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

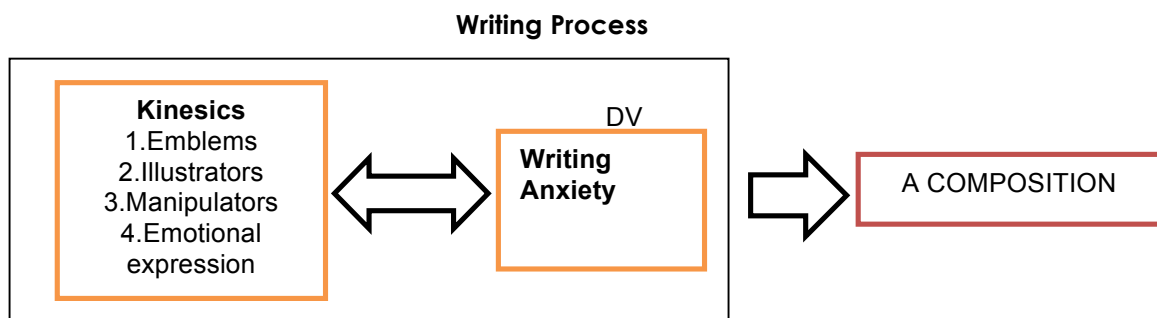


Figure 3 Theoretical framework of the Study

Figure 3 presents a relationship between kinesics and writing anxiety in a writing process of ESL writers. In the writing process of a good composition, both verbal and non-verbal communications are involved in conveying an effective communication. However, writers' fear in writing can also be measured by the occurrences of kinesics such as gesture, body movement and facial expression along the writing process.

2.7 Past Studies

A recent study on nonverbal communication in studying English Language has been conducted by Indah et.al (2018). The study investigates the kinds of nonverbal communication used by second semester students when they are studying English Language. The results of the study found that there are several types of nonverbal communication applied by these students such as gestures, posture, facial expression and eye-contact. At the end of the study, the researchers suggest educators to explore more on nonverbal area so that that will understand their students' feeling better especially during English language lesson.

Another study by Azeez and Azeez (2018) investigates the significance of incorporating body language or kinesics in teaching and learning process. The body language are gestures, facial expression and eye-contact behaviour between teachers and students. The findings of the study reveal that there are a few benefits of applying body language in classroom such as it facilitates students to learn besides stimulating teachers' creativity and innovativeness in planning for classroom activities. Hence, teachers are suggested to use body language in class whenever they teach English language so that they will understand the students' behaviour and feelings more.

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Sampling and Instrumentation

Purposive sampling is used in the study as it involves a male student from a public university in Pasir Gudang, Johor. The selected participant is a semester three student who enrolled in one of the English courses namely Integrated Language Skill III(ELC231). This English course mainly focuses on writing skill whereas students were exposed to the writing for about 14 weeks and they are expected to demonstrate writing ability at the end of the course. Moreover, there are a few instruments used in the study for the sake of answering the research objectives including videotaping, think aloud protocol and narrative inquiry.

3.1 Procedure

To meet the purpose of the study, a male writer has been selected to perform a writing process. The whole writing process will be videotaped by the researcher. For this procedure, think aloud protocol (TAP) is conducted to investigate how the writer expresses his feelings and performs his writing behaviour and attitude. During the writing process of TAP, the writer will perform kinesics; body movement, gestures and facial expression. The obtained video later narrated by the researcher to narrate the whole process including writer's spoken words, behaviour, attitude as well as kinesics. The gathered information from narrative inquiry is transcribed and interpreted by the researcher to attain the findings for the study.

FINDINGS

Based on the narrative enquiry of the writer's writing process, the findings of the study were presented in the table 1. From the table, it shows that there are four types of kinesics presented by the writer during the writing process. the types of kinesics were emblems, illustrators, manipulators and emotion expression. However, from the analysis, it was found that the writer did not perform

regulators type of kinesics during the process as this type does not meet the requirement of the study. From the narrative enquiry analysis, it was found that the writer used more hand gestures, head and facial movements during the writing process which was known as emblems. These movements were perceived as anxious and nervous feelings that were experienced by the writer. Besides that, the writer also presented illustrators when he shook his head, rolled his eyes and raised his eyebrows during the writing process. It was also found that the writer used manipulators and emotion expression which interpreted as writing anxiety. Hence, the study shows that writing anxiety could be explored during the writing process through the transcription of the narrative enquiry.

Table 1 Kinesics Model of Writing Anxiety in a Writing Process

| Categories | Transcription (Narrative enquiry) Videotaping | Interpretation |
|--|---|---|
| Emblems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hand, head and facial movements | <p>[00:22] While reading the instruction, the writer rubs his face and chin using his fingers. He also touches his lips and grins at himself when he is uncertain about the meaning of 'youth'. [04:05] He gives a long glance at the ceiling and he even looks hesitate to write the following sentence. [48:15] He puts down the pencil and rubs his hands together</p> | <p>-Learners usually use facial expressions as the way to express emotion and feelings like happiness, anger, surprise, fear and sadness (Caganaga, 2015)</p> |
| Illustrators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shake head left-to right - Roll eyes. - Brow raising and brow lowering | <p>[00:46] While reading the instruction, he raises his brow, trying to digest the question. [01:51] In the process of thinking, his eyes are looking upward at the ceiling. [04:25] He shakes his head over uncertainty of the written sentence. [06:06] He slightly raises his left eyebrow and gives a long sigh before continuing. [10:23] He shakes his read over the poor written sentence before erasing it.</p> | <p>-Facial expression such as raising and lowering brows is strong to express anger, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness, distress and enjoyment (Ekman, 2004)</p> |
| Manipulators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scratching, twirling hair, fidgeting with fingers or hands. - coughing and throat clearing | <p>[00:44] While talking to himself, he fidgets the pen around his fingers. [04:26] He taps the table a few times before continuing to his writing. [26:37] While thinking, the writer touches his nose with his fingers. He spins the pencil around his fingers too. [46:53] While concluding his essay, the writer touches his eyebrow and slowly strokes his hair.</p> | <p>-A writer uses manipulators and produces subconscious movements like fidgeting with fingers or hands resulting from feelings of anxiety, nervousness and lack of control (Ekman, 2004). -Learners use manipulators to reduce their stress (Markovic, 2017).</p> |
| Emotion Expression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facial expressions, gestures, hand and feet movements - Posture. | <p>[01:15] He makes a slightly movement to adjust his posture and sitting position. [01:55] The writer slightly shakes his leg when he feels unsure about his word choice. [08:01] When he feels uncertain, he touches his chin with his fingers. [08:32] While thinking of the ideas, he slightly shakes his leg and puts her fingers close to his mouth, playing with his lips. [31:31] He slightly shakes his body while thinking. He is also seen moving his body back and forth. [36:18] He adjusts his body posture while muttering the words. [36:19] He constantly shakes his left leg.</p> | <p>-Horizontal stretching of the lips in a quick movement shows fear. -Rigid body and slumped posture indicate defeat, nervous or depression (Indah et.al,2018)</p> |

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Q1 How does kinesics present writing anxiety in the writing process?

Writing is a non-verbal communication that carries information to the readers. During a writing process, a writer uses kinesics or body language to express different types of expressions and feelings including worried, anger, nervous or depression. From the narrative enquiry analysis, writer's writing anxiety could be identified through kinesics. During the writing process, writer presented some writing behaviour that are perceived as anxious and nervous especially when they have a limited time to complete the task. According to Rezaei and Jafari (2014) writing anxiety occurs when writers have a very limited time to plan, compose and review. Whenever a writer is assigned to a writing task with a limited time frame, he or she will usually experience writing anxiety. Thus, kinesics becomes a significant method in the writing process as kinesics is considered as a practical tool to clarify, confirm and complete verbal communication functions to produce an effective communication.

4.1.2 Q2 What are the types of kinesics performed by the writer in the writing process that portray writing anxiety?

Along the writing process, the writers were believed to perform kinesics or body language that represented worries and anxious feelings. From the narrative enquiry transcription, there were four types of kinesics performed by the writer in the writing process which portrayed writing anxiety. The types of kinesics that identified writing anxiety were emblems, illustrators, manipulators and emotion expression. From each type of kinesics, writing anxiety was identified from the writer's writing behaviour. A writer uses manipulators and produces subconscious movements like fidgeting with fingers or hands resulting from feelings of anxiety, nervousness and lack of control (Ekman, 2004). Hence, the study proves that writing anxiety does occur during the writing process obtained from the writer's writing behaviours gained from the narrative enquiry.

4.2 Summary of the Study

In a writing process, writers use both verbal through spoken and written words and nonverbal communication through kinesics to deliver a good message to the readers. Besides conveying information, nonverbal communication is also used to convey feelings (Najarzadegan and Dabaghi, 2014). Hence, it is believed that, writers' writing anxiety can be figured out via kinesics such as gestures, body movement and facial expression during the writing process. Indah et.al (2018) state that students usually use facial expressions to show fear, surprise and shy. This can be summarised that kinesics is a useful way that can be used in a writing process to obtain additional information of their writing behaviour and emotional.

4.3 Pedagogical Implication

Just like verbal communication, non-verbal communication which is kinesics need to be introduced and taught explicitly to students so they (the students) can focus on applying this practical tool as a part of their learning process.

4.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should explore a more thorough investigation of the implications of using kinesics on the writing behaviour of writers. The use of other instruments such as observation, interview and Think Aloud Protocol would help researchers to probe deeper on writers' use of kinesics in the composing process.

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