

Meaning Coordination Between Gestures, Facial Expressions and Scaffolding Language During English Language Teaching

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Introduction

Several studies indicate that teachers can improve the effectiveness of second or foreign language teaching when they use non-verbal symbols such as gestures and facial expressions (Jakonen & Evnitskaya, 2020). Moreover, the scaffolding language refers to discourses used by teachers to help students complete tasks in accordance with their zone of proximal development, including both verbal and non-verbal symbols (Tharp, Gallimore, 1988), which has been warmly discussed in the field of English language teaching. Taking the systemic functional multiodal discourse analysis as the analytical framework, this study explores how gestures, facial expressions and language work together to generate meaning, serving as scaffolding. It is expected to provide implications for college English teachers on how to coordinate verbal and non-verbal resources to achieve effective classroom communication.

Research Methods & Analytical Framework

Research Method: qualitative analysis

Analytical Framework: Based on the theory of system-functional linguistics (Halliday, 1987), Lim (2017) proved the systemic functional multiodal discourse analysis framework, elaborating teachers' gestures from ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. Based on the framework, this study discusses the process of meaning coordination between language, gestures and facial expressions.

The multimodal discourse analytical framework of teachers' language, gestures and facial expressions in English language teaching

Modal		Ideational Meanings	Interpersonal Meanings	Textual Meanings
Gestures	Language	Transitivity: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, existential process	Mood: declarative, exclamative, interrogative and imperative Modality: should, can	Thematic Structure: grammatical person
	Symbolic	specific information	Attitude: positive, negative	Wavelength: size, rhyme Directionality
	Indexical	importance, receptivity, relation	Graduation: fast, medium, slow	
Facial Expressions			Mood: happy, sad, serious Eye Contact: gaze	

Research Questions

- What gestures and facial expressions do teachers use to coordinate with language to scaffold students' discourse output?
- How teachers' gestures and facial expressions and scaffolding language work together to generate meaning?

Research Contexts

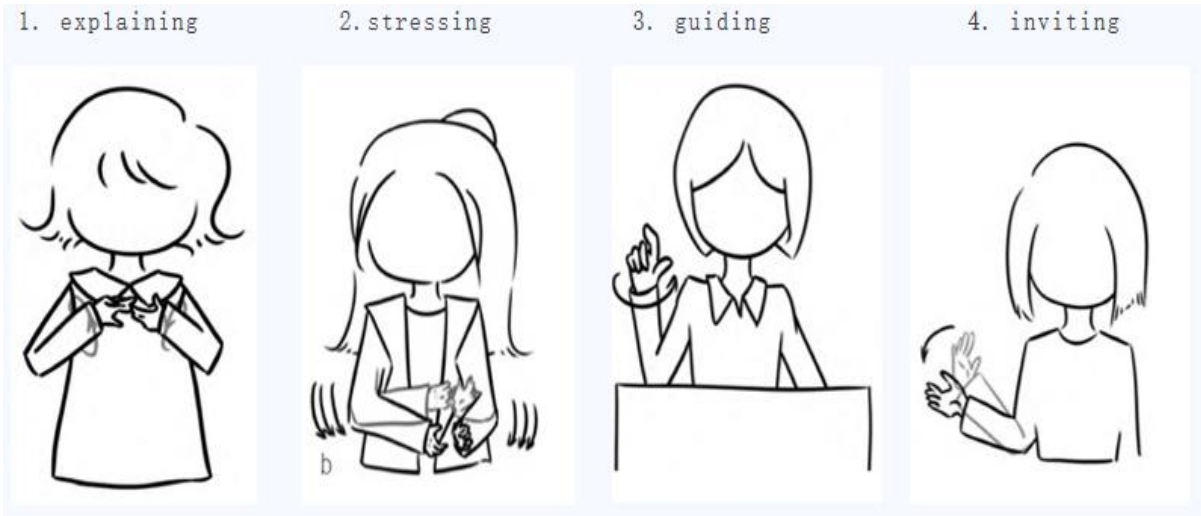
- 10 teachers in the comprehensive English course group of a university in China will be chosen as subjects
- Videos (about 800mins) from subjects will be collected as the study's data
- Teachers are required to teach all in English and teaching content is related to textual explanation

Data Analysis

Corpus Processing: Screening the dialogue segments of teacher-student interaction→Extracting the sequences of successful scaffolding discourse→Using ELAN software to multimodal and multilevel annotation of teachers' scaffolding strategies, gestures, and facial expressions in the video→Exporting the text format for data

Date Analysis: the frequency counts of the 6 types of scaffolding strategies that have been annotated→the frequency counts of gestures and facial expression types→the analysis of meaning coordination between gestures and expressions and scaffolding strategies based on the multimodal discourse analysis framework.

Discussion 1--Gestures & Scaffolding Language



Discussion 2--Facial Expressions & Scaffolding Language

- Questioning or Modeling: seriousness+gaze
- Explaining: smile

Research Results (assumptions)

- Teachers use the language modality the most frequently, with language scaffolding strategies including questioning, explanation, modeling, and feedback.
- As for non-verbal modality, gesture is the most frequently used by teachers, combined with language functioning as explanation, emphasis, guidance and invitation.
- Teachers have less variation in facial expressions, which usually is associated with explanation strategies to create a harmonious classroom atmosphere.

Conclusion (Assumptions)

This poster shows the latest findings that how do college English teachers coordinate verbal and non-verbal resources to achieve the effectiveness of classroom communication. Moreover, due to the fact that gestures are second only to language in expressing connotative meanings (Muller, 2004), they are the most frequently used non-verbal modality, while non-verbal symbols such as facial expressions are easily overlooked. Finally, if teachers use gestures and facial expressions appropriately in the classroom, they achieve multimodal meaning coordination with language. Thus, they can successfully scaffold students, which is important for improving classroom efficiency.

Reference

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