

Oral Communication Behaviour of University Teachers : A Study

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1. Introduction

In thousand of places every day, millions of people are being judged by others on how express themselves. We judge others by their dress, appearance, language, voice etc. Very often we may not consciously judge on all these points, but unconsciously we include them all. Do you not daily judge the intelligence of your associates by the manner in which they express themselves? True, often you got to know them, you may learn to respect certain specialized talents and abilities that manifest themselves, inspite of awkward speech and your latest impressions never omit it.

Teaching is considered as the noblest of all professions. It implies specialized knowledge and high ethical standards by the practitioners. Proficiency is a must for teachers. A teacher, who is efficient in speech making, has a sound knowledge of how to design and develop the lesson plan based on the need and knowledge level of students, including organization of the subject, sentence structure, language, voice, pitch, body movement, gesture, use of instructional aids and feed back etc.

Robinson and Becker (1970), focussed on need for improved oral communication in teaching. They discussed the importance of oral language, speaking voice, articulation, pronunciation and physical behaviour. Delmar (1981), gave techniques for improving verbal communication. Four elements of thought of transfer he found, the speaker, the clarity and appropriateness of language, the climate, and the respectivity of the listener. Montgomery (1979), reported that the ability to speak effectively adds to an individual's confidence and naturalness. Realizing the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication in the individuals in general and teachers in particular, the study aimed at finding the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of teachers in the class room together with the students reaction on the same.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in G.B Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar. All the B. Sc. Ag. and A. H. third year students of College of Agriculture (batch 1992) were selected (N = 101) and those teachers who had and/or were teaching to these students were selected as respondents (N=28). Variables viz: language, vocabulary, pronunciation, voice, pitch, recapitulation, introduction, summarization, transition and humour as verbal behaviour and eye contact, body movement, gestures and appearance were studied as non-verbal behaviour of teachers. Data were collected with the help of structured schedule.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Characteristics of Teachers and Students

Teachers mostly belonged to the middle age group and were in the cadre of Assistant Professor/Junior Research Officer. All the teachers possessed Ph. D. degree. Majority of them had low teaching

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experience, no in service training of any kind, moderate job satisfaction and had neutral attitude towards teaching profession (Table 1)

Table 1 Characteristic of Teachers

Characteristic	Categories	No. of teachers And % ge
Age	Young	05(17.85)
	Middle	17(60.72)
	Old	06(4.43)
Rank	Assistant Professor/Junior Research Officer	16(57.14)
	Associate Professor/Senior Research Officer	06(21.43)
	Professor/Chief Scientist	06(21.43)
Educational qualification	Ph. D. Degree	28(100.00)
Teaching experience	Low	15(53.58)
	Medium	11(39.28)
	High	02(7.14)
In service training in use of audio visual Educational technology	No training	15(53.57)
	Adequate training	11(39.28)
Job-satisfaction	High	02(7.14)
	Moderate	21(75)
	Low	05(17.86)
Attitude towards teaching profession	Negative	02(7.14)
	Neutral	22(78.57)
	Positive	04(14.29)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

Table 2 Characteristic of Students

Characteristic	Categories	No. of teachers And % ge
Age	15-20 years	29(28.71)
	21-25 years	72(71.29)
Family background	Rural	36(35.64)
	Urban	85(64.36)
Medium of education	English	71(70.30)
	Hindi	30(29.70)
Student's residence	Hosteller	69(68.32)
	Day scholar	32(31.68)
Attitude towards teachers	Negative	09(9.00)
	Neutral	83(82.00)
	Positive	09(9.00)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

On the other hand student respondents mostly belonged to the age group of 21-25 years. Majority of them belonged to urban background and their medium of instruction was English. They were mostly hosteller and had neutral attitude towards the teachers (Table 2).

3.2. Verbal Behaviour

On the verbal behavior, teachers were asked on different aspects and students responses were also taken on some of these aspects to see the areas of support and contradiction.

Most of the teachers adopted bilingual approach in the teaching i.e. Hindi and English, infact, student wanted the same for better comprehension and understanding. Majority of teachers favoured use of good vocabulary irrespective of the knowledge level of the student. Students mostly found vocabulary easily understandable. Teachers mostly paid attention to the pronunciation as they reported, but students contradict this contention of teachers and expressed that pronunciation was not well (40.60%), however, 29.70 per cent student respondents found pronunciation too difficult to understand. As far as volume or loudness (voice) of teachers is concerned, teacher respondents were equally divided on 'loud enough' (50.50%) and not loud enough (49.5%). Student do not agree to the teachers (92.86%) responses on pitch behaviour, as majority of the students (58.42%) found teachers maintaining constant pitch during delivery of lecture.

Recapitulation of lecture leads to better learning outcomes, (Kuppuswamy and Natrajan, 1989) but students (54.46%) found teachers not recapitulating lecture as against teachers (82.15%) reported that they recapitulating lecture. Both student and teachers generally agreed that recapitulation was done to make continuity and 'for revision' of the last lecture.

Almost all the teachers (96.42%) introduced the new topic in the class room, which was agreed by the majority (65.35%) of students. Teachers (85.71%), while giving reason for introducing new topic reported for ascertaining student knowledge, which was disputed by majority of students (55.45%). Summarization is an important component of lesson planning (Tony, 1991). But summarization of the lecture was not done according to the students (70.30%), while teachers (53.58%) expressed that they summarize in the end. This is an other disputed point.

Teachers deny abrupt jumping from one to the other topic where as majority of students found abrupt jumping. Use of humour in the lecturer was found necessary by both teachers and student as in directs the attention of students (Table 3).

3.3. Non-verbal Behaviour

Eye contact as an important non-verbal behaviour was found necessary by the teachers and students both and the most important reason for maintaining eye contact was directing attention of students. Similarly, gesture was found to be important by the teachers for emphasizing important terms and topic. These findings confirm the findings of Delmar (1981), who reported that eye contact and gesture are important elements of a good speech. Body movement was also found as an important behaviour.

Table 3 Verbal Behaviour of Teacher in the Classroom

Item	Categories	Teacher	Student
Language	Mono linguistic	11(39.29)	06(5.94)
	Bilinguistic	17(60.71)	95(94.0)
Vocabulary	Must use good vocabulary in the lecture	15(53.58)	—
	Good vocabulary not necessary during lecture	13(46.42)	—
	Should be simple to comprehend	—	17(16.83)
	Should be easily understandable	—	77(76.24)
	Difficult to comprehend	—	07(6.93)
Attention towards pronunciation	Almost attention	23(82.14)	—
	A little attention	04(14.28)	—
	No attention	01(3.58)	—
	Pronunciation not well	—	41(40.60)
	Pronunciation well	—	30(29.70)
Voice and pitch	Pronunciation too to understand	—	30(29.70)
	Loud enough	—	51(50.50)
	Constant pitch	02(7.14)	59(58.42)
Recapitulation	Variation in pitch	26(92.86)	42(41.56)
	Recapitulate last lecture	23(82.15)	46(45.54)
Response to Recapitulate	Not recapitulate last lecture	05(17.85)	55(54.46)
	To make continuity	10(43.48)	25(54.35)
	For revision	08(34.78)	21(45.65)
	For retention in memory	03(13.04)	—
Introduction and summarization	To solve out problems	02(8.70)	—
	Introduce new topic	27(96.42)	66(65.35)
	To ascertain student's knowledge	24(85.71)	45(44.55)
Transition	Summarize the lecture	15(53.58)	30(29.70)
	Aburt jump from one to other topic	—	52(51.50)
Method of transition	Smooth transition	28(100.0)	49(48.50)
	Supporting ideas	09(32.14)	—
Humour	Examples	08(28.57)	—
	Instructional materials	03(10.72)	—
	Discussion	08(28.57)	—
	Humour is necessary	21(75.0)	56(55.45)
	Humour can direct attention	—	66(65.35)

((Figure in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

Appearance and manner of teachers matter very much in the class room as expressed by students (78.22%). This finding supports the findings of Commellan (1982), where he found that physical appearance can affect the content of the subject. On the non-verbal feed back, findings revealed that at least 50 per cent teachers could not observed reaction of students through non verbal

communication behaviour, however, students, were of the opinion that teachers could observed non verbal feed back (Table 4)

Table 4 Non-verbal Behaviour of Teachers In the Class Room

Item	Categories	Teacher	Student
Eye contact	Eye contact is necessary	28(100.0)	87(86.14)
	Eye contact not necessary	-	14(13.86)
	Eye contact for direct attention	-	83(95.4)
	Eye contact shows teacher's presence	-	02(2.30)
	Eye contact makes the student nervous	-	02(2.30)
Body movement	Body movement is necessary	27(96.42)	69(59.41)
	Body movement is not necessary	01(3.58)	41(40.59)
Purpose of body movement means	Moving to the board to use it	25(89.28)	-
	To look at student's work	16(57.15)	-
	Moving forward to student	15(53.51)	-
Gesture purpose of using gesture	Gesture is important	28(100.0)	-
	Gesture for directing attention of student	18(64.28)	-
	For emphasizing important terms and topics	19(67.85)	-
	For expressing emotions and feelings	07(25.0)	-
Appearance and manners	For adding variety in lecture	06(21.42)	-
	Appearance and manners did matter	-	79(78.22)
Non-verbal feed back	Did not matter	14(50.0)	22(21.78)
	Can observe non verbal feed back	14(50.0)	56(55.45)
	Can not observe non verbal feed back	14(50.00)	45(44.55)

4. Conclusion

Assistant Professor / Junior Research Officer who constituted major part in the teaching had no in service training of any kind in the area of Audio visual /instructional technology. Both teacher and students had neutral attitude towards each other. Students were of English medium with urban background differed on statements of teachers on various parameters of verbal and non-verbal behaviour viz. recapitulation of lecture, ascertaining knowledge level of students, summarization, variation in pitch, transition etc. At the same time, students also supported the contention of teachers, viz; lesson organization, introduction of new topic, use of humour, use of two languages, maintaining eye contact and observing non-verbal feed back of the student.

Along with the knowledge of subject matter, inter-personal skills are important for the teachers in the class-room. Use of verbal skills together with non-verbal is important for effective communication. It is because of unawareness and ignorance about these skills, the contradiction has surfaced between teachers and students on different parameters of inter-personal skills. Since, teachers had no training of any kind during their carrier, therefore, training of teachers for effective communication is important including verbal and non verbal skills.

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