

# Exploring the Role of Body Language in the Speech Delivery of EFL Learners at the English Department of Helmand University

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**Abstract:** This study explores body language's role in enhancing the speech delivery of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at the English Department of Helmand University. Effective communication in a foreign language involves verbal skills and non-verbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and posture, significantly influencing speech clarity and confidence. By examining the perceptions and experiences of EFL learners regarding body language during presentations and classroom interactions, this research seeks to highlight how non-verbal communication impacts fluency, audience engagement, and overall speech performance. The findings offer insights for improving speech training strategies in EFL curricula, emphasizing the integration of body language as a vital component of communicative competence. The research was conducted at Helmand University, English Department. A quantitative descriptive survey research design was utilized to gather the data from the respondents. 60 EFL learners were randomly selected from three different classes in the English Department. The data was analyzed and described using Microsoft Excel for finding frequency and percentage. The findings showed that body language is crucial in students' speech delivery. It helps students to overcome their fear and increase their confidence and courage. It helps them in understanding speech, make them attentive, adds meaning to their speech, catch more attention of audience and convey their messages in an effective way.

**Key Words:** Body Language, Role & Impacts, Speech Delivery/EFL Students/English Department

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Actions speak louder than words (Mark Twain). Body language conveys what you feel or think by how you place and move your body rather than words. Body language is the process of communicating what you are feeling or thinking by how you place and move your body rather than words, which is the definition of body language (Oxford English Dictionary, 2005).

Nonverbal communication is an essential component of conveying messages and significance successfully. In personal branding, your capacity to articulate and communicate your value is intimately linked to your nonverbal communication strategies. Contemplate how you wish to be regarded by others and examine the implications of your body language. The alignment of your verbal and nonverbal interactions significantly influences how you are perceived by those you aim to affect. Monitor actions that may convey ambiguous or erroneous signals and, crucially, endeavour to act in manners that bolster the image and reputation you aspire to (Lida Citron 2022).

Danijela Kozic's research (2013) identifies the predominant techniques of nonverbal communication as eye contact, gestures, touch, facial emotions, vocal tone, posture or movement, and voice loudness. Nonverbal communication skills frequently emerge "automatically" in humans throughout the birthing process and the initial phases of childhood development. This skill is not formally taught; the ability to "read people" develops more subtly over time. Allocate time to observe neonates to ascertain their proficiency in engaging in the "dance" of social interaction. They can rapidly capture their careers' attention using nonverbal communication, vocal tone, and facial expressions. They can respond to the facial expressions and vocal intonations of others, and they may begin to exert influence over their surroundings as a result. They maintain their sense of security and contentment due to their innate communication skills, which render the world an inviting environment (Bell, 2003). The paragraphs emphasize the importance of nonverbal communication in conveying hidden emotions and intentions, such as fear, sincerity, and confidence, through subtle behaviours like posture and glance (Kinsey and Dumas 2008). Miller highlights that nonverbal cues can be both conscious

and unconscious, while Zoric et al. argue that some nonverbal behaviours, such as winks, are learned, and others, like shame, are innate (Zoric et al. 2007). Gender, culture, age, and background influence nonverbal communication. Since Darwin's 1872 work, nonverbal communication has been studied extensively, encompassing bodily characteristics, vocal tone, and environmental elements (Knapp et al. 2014). Nonverbal cues play roles in mate selection (Rikowski and Grammer 1999), emotional expression (Scherer 1995), and personality evaluation through environmental factors (Gosling et al. 2002). Numerous studies have been published on visible nonverbal behaviours, such as posture, personal space, and facial expressions.

The paragraphs highlight the issue of nonverbal communication being misrepresented by self-help experts who downplay the value of empirical research, promoting misconceptions. However, peer-reviewed studies offer evidence-based approaches to real-world challenges (Burgoon et al. 2010; Knapp et al. 2014; Moore et al. 2014), and researchers clarify the distinction between personal perceptions and actual relationships of constructs and nonverbal behaviours (e.g., Hall et al. 2005). Furnham & Petrova (2010) note that body language involves cues like glances, smiles, gestures, and postures, which can enhance verbal communication. They emphasize that body language is context-dependent, as gestures like a thumbs-up may have different meanings across cultures. Misinterpretation can occur without considering these contextual differences.

Patel (2014) highlights the importance of body language in modern communication, stating that 55% of information is conveyed through body language, including facial expressions, posture, and eye contact. In educational contexts, body language is primarily interpreted through facial expressions, eye contact, and head movements. Nodding, shaking the head, and smiling can indicate approval or understanding, while frowns may indicate disapproval or tension. Goldin-Meadow (2004) suggests that students' gestures can reveal their knowledge but cannot convey it at the time.

Examining students with language impairments helps teachers understand their emotional states and support their learning. Nonverbal communication, including facial expressions, posture, and eye contact, is crucial for effective public speaking. Lack

of animation, openness, and engagement can leave the audience unaware of the message. Sophie Thompson (2017) compiled eight critical strategies for improving body language, which significantly influences the effectiveness of a speech.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The delivery of a speech transcends mere verbal expression. It pertains to how we utilize our bodies for communication. Individuals are intrigued by the impact of bodily motions on verbal communication. They seek to understand how gestures, posture, facial emotions, and eye contact influence others' comprehension of our verbal communication. This review will analyse existing scientific findings about the impact of body language on speech.

Burroughs (2007) explored the link between instructors' nonverbal communication and students' standardized academic performance in a study involving 564 undergraduate students. Participants completed a survey on their learning experiences, which included questions to assess standardized learning outcomes. The results showed a correlation between instructors' nonverbal communication, students' learning evaluations, and their educational performance.

Miller (1988) emphasizes the importance of educators mastering nonverbal communication to understand students better and enhance learning. Various pedagogical experts suggest that nonverbal cues from students influence teachers' strategies and behaviour. These cues, such as priority and attitude, carry significant information. Hans and Hans (2015) identify five key aspects of nonverbal communication in the classroom: eye contact, facial expressions, movements, gestures, and physical interaction.

Market al. (2011) and Izard (1994) note that nonverbal communication can outweigh verbal accuracy in performance settings, as the appearance of correctness often matters more than the actual words. This aligns with the saying, "Action speaks louder than words," as people tend to trust nonverbal signals over spoken ones.

Kinsey and Dumas (2008) highlight that nonverbal communication reveals hidden intentions and emotions such as fear, sincerity, enthusiasm, uncertainty, and discontent. Subtle behaviours, like posture or how someone enters a room, can indicate

confidence, reliability, and worth. Miller emphasized that nonverbal signals are conveyed both consciously and subconsciously, while Zoric et al. (2007) argued that certain behaviours, like winking, are learned, whereas others, such as shame, are innate. Gender, culture, age, and context all affect nonverbal communication and must be considered by educators.

Dipika S. Patel, in her study *\*Body Language: A Potent Communication Instrument\**, examined the complexity of body language, which is somewhat universally understood but varies greatly. Hartland and Tosh (2001) noted that the human body can make around 700,000 distinct movements. Advances in brain-imaging technologies in the late 20th century accelerated the study of body language, linking it to the brain, emotions, and physical action. Patel argues that while much body language theory relies on empirical data from observation, continued research is expected to provide more robust scientific evidence. Despite its complexity, essential factors must be considered when interpreting body language.

In her study, it was noted that various researchers have explored the role of body language, reporting that only 7% of the information humans convey comes from the words they use. In contrast, 38% is conveyed through how people speak (e.g., voice quality, accent, projection, and pitch), and 55% is transmitted through body language (e.g., posture, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions). Her paper emphasizes the powerful impact of body language in everyday communication and highlights the importance of understanding it to enhance interactions.

Tarjani Seth from Uka Tarsadia University also highlights the significance of non-verbal communication, particularly in professional settings. Her study examines strategies for improving non-verbal communication and notes that it has been emphasized in business performance and social competence but less so in language instruction. She discusses how recent advancements in neuro-linguistic programming have influenced the study and application of body language. Seth argues that when nonverbal cues align with verbal communication, they build trust and clarity, while misalignment leads to friction and mistrust. Her research underscores the importance of teaching

nonverbal communication to improve student's learning outcomes through better interpretation of body language.

#### General Objective of the Study

The study aims to investigate body language's role in the speech delivery of EFL learners in English classes.

#### 2.2 Research Question

What is the role of body language in EFL learners' speech in EFL classes, and how does body language impact EFL learners' speech delivery and comprehension?

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

The present study used a nonexperimental quantitative descriptive survey research design to gather data from the research participants. The researcher uses the Survey method to explore the research questions from the respondents' points of view and to understand the impact of body language on EFL learners' speech delivery.

#### 3.2 Research site

This study was conducted at Helmand University, Department of English Language and Literature.

#### 3.3 Research Participants and Sample Collection

The study used 60 students; a sample of (n=60) EFL learners was chosen randomly from three classes of the English Department, i.e., first-year students, sophomores and juniors. All the respondents (n=60) were males doing their bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature. They were selected as a sample because they experienced the impact and role of body language on speech delivery during their study years in the Department of English.

#### 3.4. Data Collection Instrument/s

##### 3.4.1 Questionnaire

A survey method was used to gain reliable data from learners. The data collection instrument used in this study includes a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised 20 question items. The study was conducted using a hard-copy questionnaire distributed to the participants students to collect reliable data. After the permission was obtained, the aim of the study was explained, and their consent regarding participation in the study was obtained.

The questionnaire was distributed to learners in the classrooms for their convenience.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The data was entered into an Excel program and analyzed using Microsoft Excel to find the percentage and frequency to determine the use of body language and its role in EFL learners' speaking skills and speech delivery in English classes.

4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Gender of the Participants

All of the participants (*respondent students*) were male students. Due to the ban on female education by the Taliban interim government in the country, females were not included in the study. The study was conducted to see the perception of EFL students about the role of body language in EFL class speech delivery.

4.2 Grade/class of the Participants

Freshers	Sophomores	Juniors
20	20	20

4.3 Participants' Age

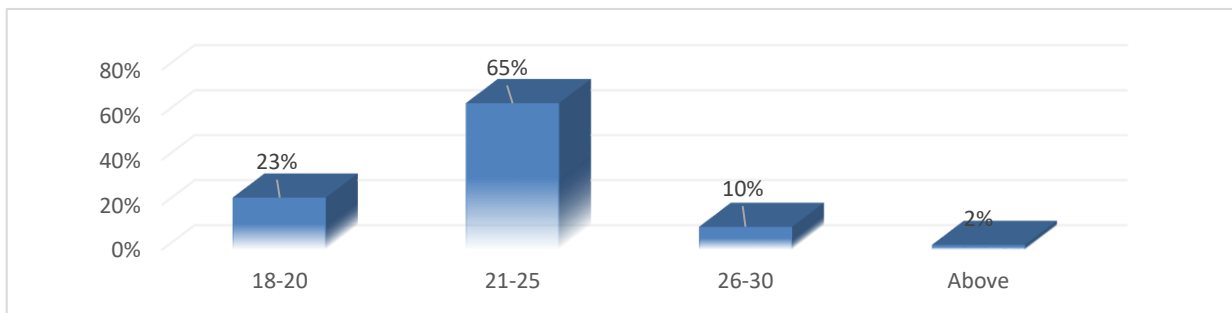


Figure 1

Figure 1 illustrates that 23% of the respondents were aged 18 to 20. Sixty-five percent, 65% of the respondents were aged 21 to 25. Ten percent (10%) of the respondents were aged 26 to 30, while two percent

were above 30. The demographic data reveals that a significant proportion of the responders are aged 21 to 25.

Item 1. Body language leads to how I perceive and understand my speech when I am giving a speech.

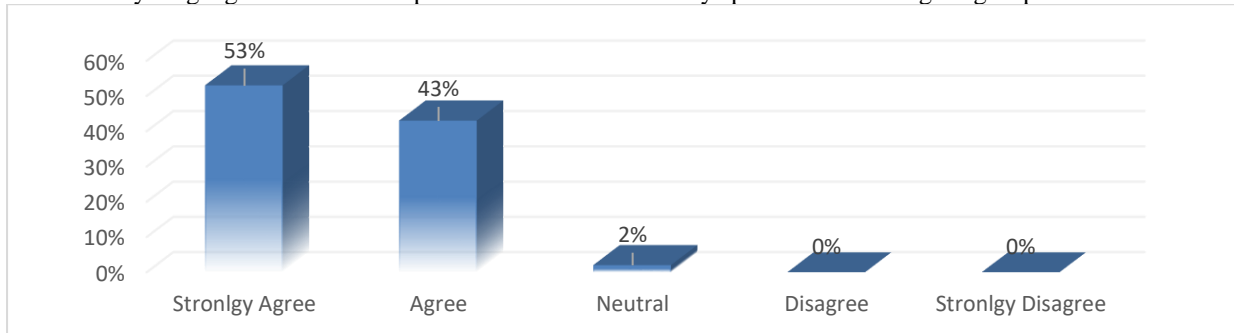


Figure 2

Figure 1 indicates that (53%) of the learners strongly agreed, and (43%) of learners agreed that body language leads to how they perceive and understand their speech during a lecture. Just (2%) remained neutral, and (0%) of learners strongly disagreed with

the abovementioned statement. The above figure points out that many learners strongly agree that body language influences how they perceive and understand speech.

Item 2. Gestures and facial expressions help increase my speech understanding

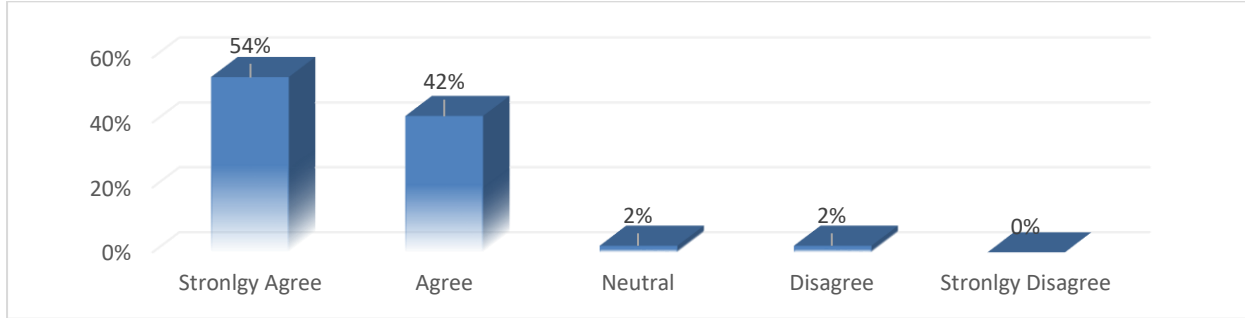


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows that (54%) of students strongly agreed, and (42%) of students agreed that gestures and facial expressions increase their speech understanding. (2%) students remained neutral, only (2%) disagreed, and (0%) strongly disagreed that gestures and facial

expressions increase their speech understanding. Finally, it shows that most learners strongly agree that gestures and facial expressions increase their speech understanding.

Item 3. Appropriate use of body language makes my speech more engaging and memorable.

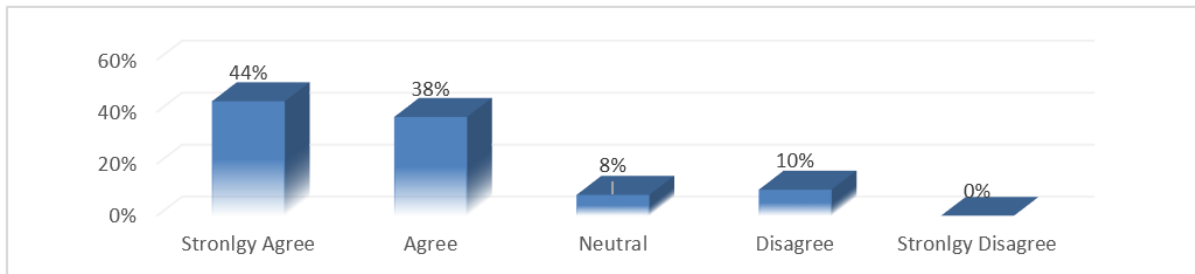


Figure 3

Figure 3 shows that (44%) strongly agreed and (38%) agreed that the appropriate use of body language makes speech more engaging and memorable for them. Otherwise (8%) addressed feeling neutral and

(10%) of the learners disagreed, and (0%) were strongly disagreed about the above figure. The vast majority of the addresses strongly agree with the above figure.

Item 4. It's hard for me to understand speech with false use of body language.

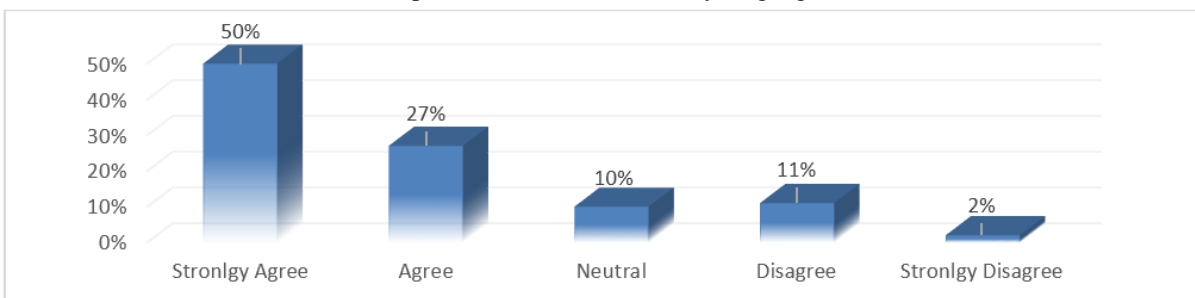


Figure 3

In essence, the proper use of body language enhances both the speaker's confidence and the audience's comprehension, ultimately improving the overall effectiveness of speech delivery. Figure 4 shows that (50%) of the students strongly agreed, and (27%) students agreed that it's hard for them to understand

speech with false body language. (10%) of the students remained neutral about the mentioned item. In the above figure (11%) of the students disagreed, and (2%) strongly disagreed with the mentioned statement. So, the above figure clearly shows that many students strongly agree with the statement.

Item 5. I convey my emotions through the use of body language when I am speaking.

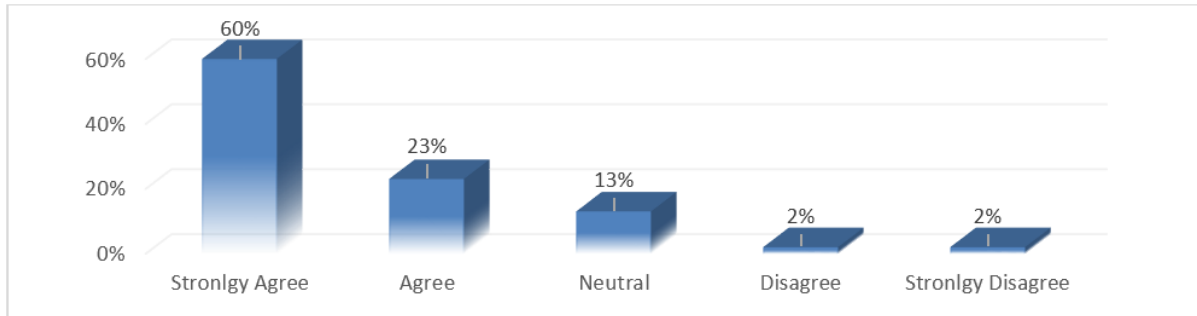


Figure 5

Figure 5 shows that (60%) of the learners strongly agreed, and (23%) of learners agreed that they can convey emotions through body language in speaking. (13%) of the learners selected the neutral option.

(13%) learners disagreed, and (2%) strongly disagreed with the above point. A high percentage of the learners strongly agree with the above figure that they can convey their feelings through body language.

Item 6. Understanding body language helps me stay interested in what someone is saying.

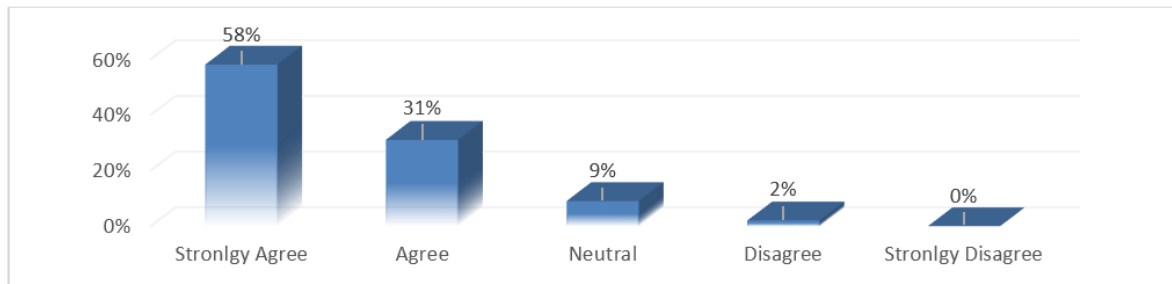


Figure 6

Figure 6 indicates that (58%) of the students strongly agreed. (31%) the students decided that Understanding body language helps them stay interested in what someone is saying. (9%) of the

students selected neutral about Figure 6. (2%) disagreed, and (0%) strongly disagreed. The vast majority in the above figure strongly agree that students recounted.

Item 7. Body language shapes my perception of the speaker's reliability and accuracy.

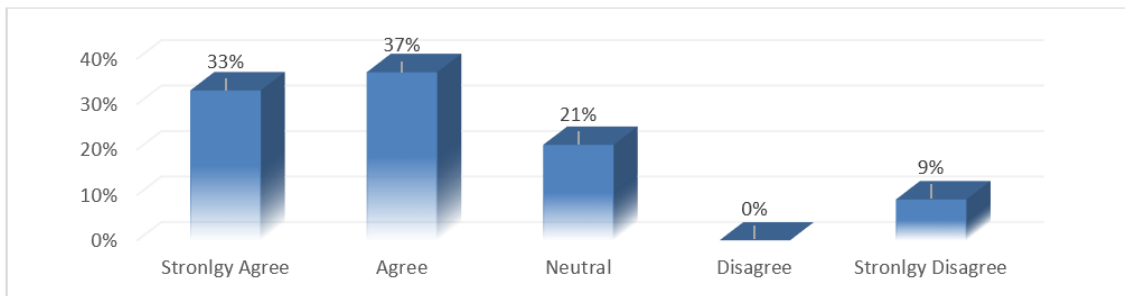


Figure 7

Figure 7 displays (33%) of the learners strongly agreed. (37%) the learners agreed that Body language shapes their perception of the speaker's reliability and accuracy. (21%) of the learners remained neutral in their statements. Disagreed learners recounted (0%) of the statement, and only

(9%) strongly disagreed about figure seven. It is clear from the figure that most learners agreed that Body language shapes their perception of the speaker's reliability and accuracy.

Item 8. I nod and shake to enhance my communication and understanding during the speech.

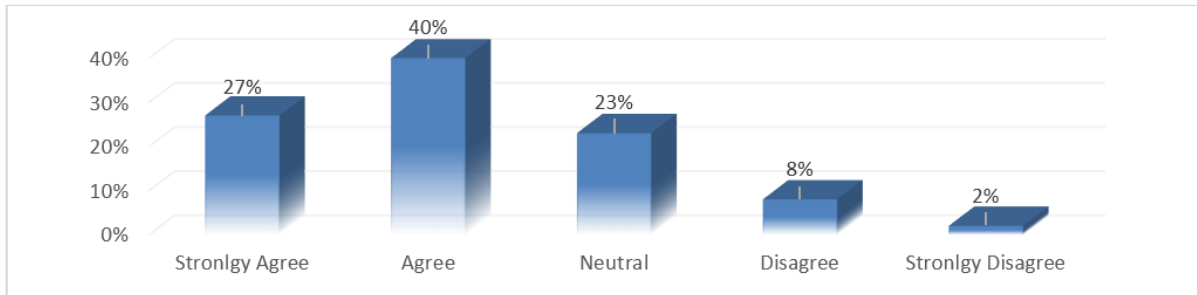


Figure 8

Figure 8 shows (27%) of the students strongly agreed that they use nodding and shaking their head to affect speech comprehension (40%) of the learners agreed with the above statement. (23%) of the learners remained neutral. (8%) of the learners disagreed, and

only (2%) of the learners strongly disagreed with the statement. The vast majority indicate that many learners agreed that nodding and shaking as body language can enhance their communication and understanding with the audience.

Item 9. The use of body language shows my confidence or nervousness during speech delivery.

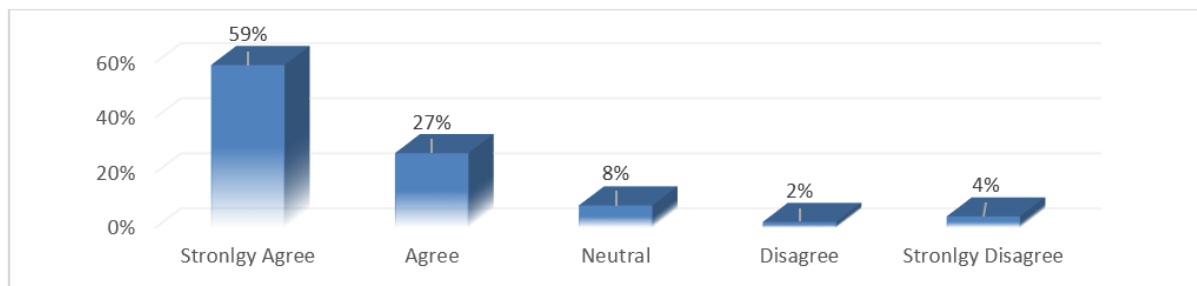


Figure 9

Regarding figure 9 (59%) of the addresses strongly agreed that Body language shows confidence or nervousness during speech delivery. (27%) of the learners agreed with the statement. (8%) of the learners selected the neutral option. Disagreement

recount (2%) of the learners in the statement. (4%) regarded strongly disagreed with the figure. It shows a high percentage of addresses that strongly agree with the statement.

Item10. Using body language with my speech adds more meaning to my speech.

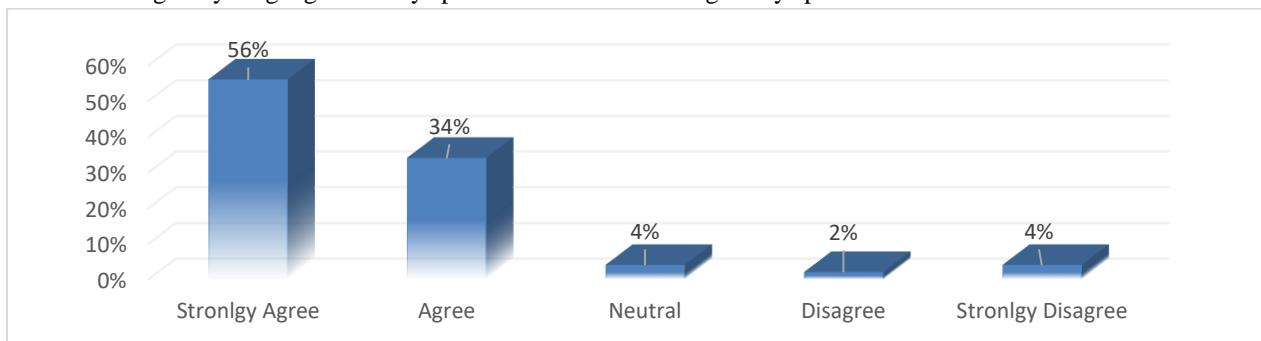


Figure 10

Based on the figure, 10 (56%) students strongly agreed. (34%) the learners agreed that Body language adds more meaning to what they say. (4%) of the students remained neutral. (2%) of the students

disagreed, and (4%) were strongly disagreed about the statement. Finally, the agreement is the high percentage of students in the above statement.

Item 11. Effective body language use catches the audience's attention during speech delivery.

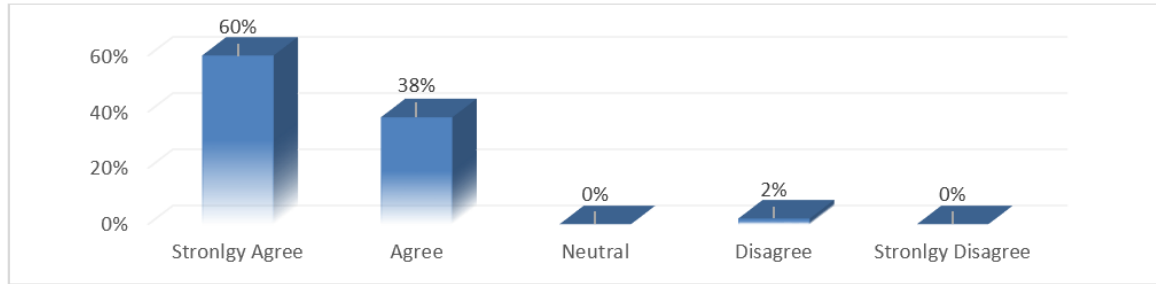


Figure 11

Figure 11 indicates that (60%) of the respondents strongly agreed. (38%) The students decided that effective body language caught their attention during speech delivery. (0%) were remained neutral. (2%)

disagreed. In this case (0%) of learners strongly disagreed with the statement. The vast majority of the students believed that Effective body language catches their attention during speech delivery.

Item 12. Smiling at the audience/listeners can engage more in speech delivery.

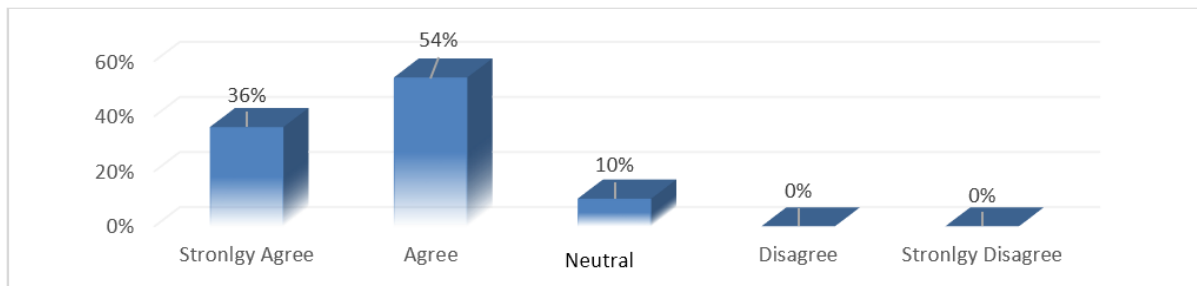


Figure 12

Figure 12 represents (36%) of the students strongly agreed that Smiling can engage them in speech delivery. (52%) of the learners agreed with the statement. (10%) selected the neutral option.

Disagreement recounts (0%) of the learners about the statement. (0%) were strongly disagreed with the figure. Many learners agreed that smiling can engage me in speech delivery.

Item 13. The emotional tone of the speech can create a more engaging speech delivery.

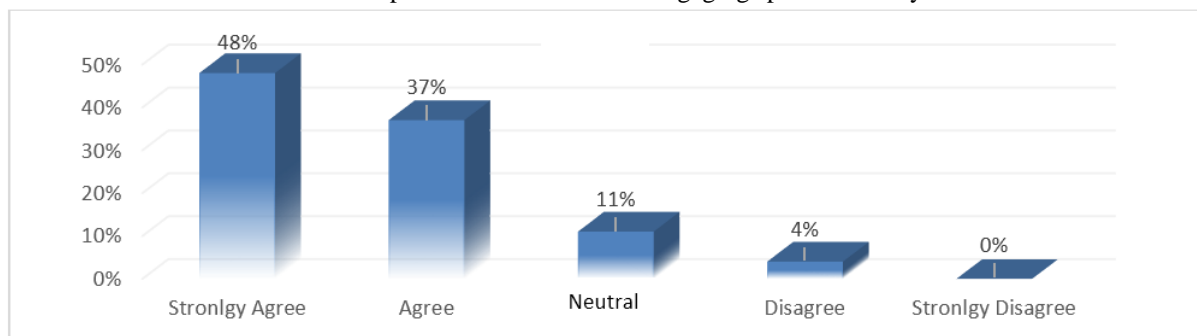


Figure 13

Figure 13 shows (48%) of the students strongly agreed that the Emotional tone of the speech could create a more engaging speech delivery. (37%) of the students decided about the statement. (11%) of the students

remained neutral. Just (4%) were disagreed, and (0%) were strongly disagreed with the figure. The figure shows that the vast majority of students strongly agreed.



Item 14. Using gestures emphasizes critical points and improves the impact of speech delivery.

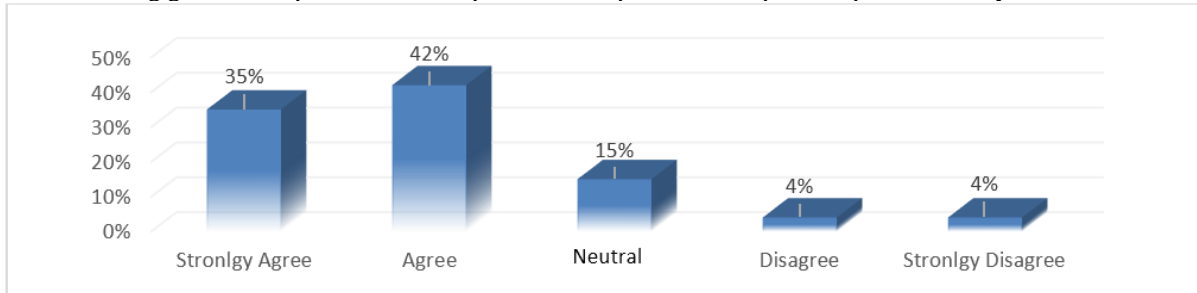


Figure 14

Figure 14 indicates (35%) of the learners strongly agreed that gestures emphasize key points and improve speech delivery's impact. (42%) of the learners agreed with the statement. (15%) of the

learners remained neutral. (4%) of the learners disagreed, and just (4%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The vast number of participants in the figure agree.

Item 15. Open and welcoming body language makes understanding with the audience during speech delivery.

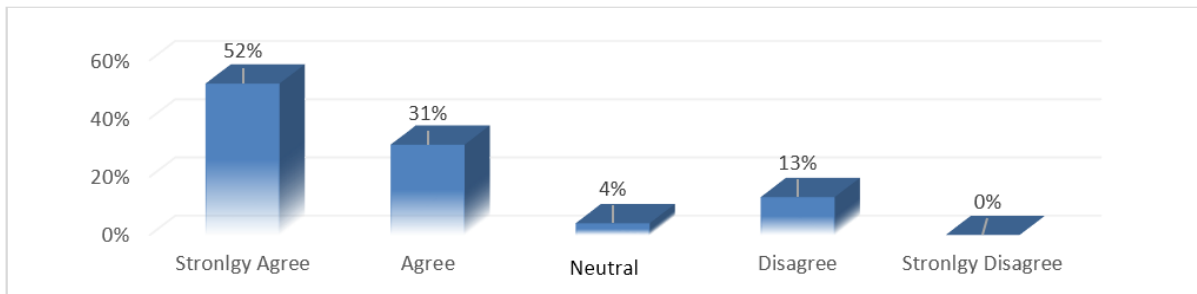
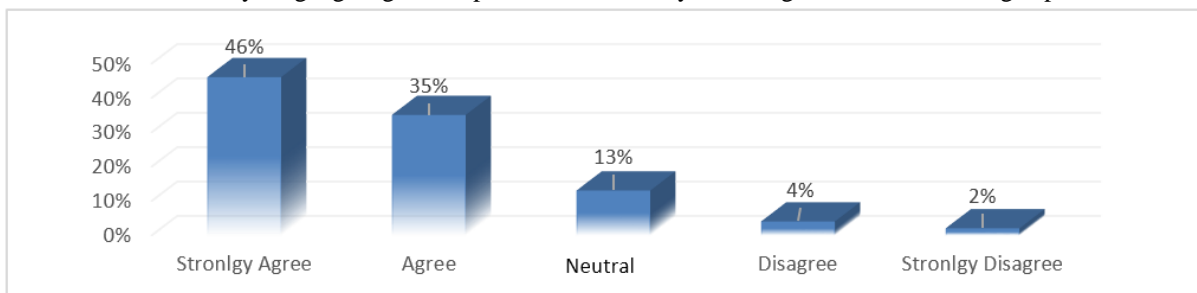


Figure 15

Figure 15 indicates (52%) of the students strongly agreed that Open and welcoming body language makes understanding with the audience during speech delivery. (31%) of the students strongly agreed with the statement. (4%) Of the students remained neutral.

(13%) of the students disagreed, and (0%) of the participants strongly disagreed with the above figure. It shows that Open and welcoming body language makes understanding with the audience during speech delivery.

Item 16. Different body language signals impact how effectively a message is delivered through speech.



Regarding figure 16 (46%), the learners strongly agreed that different body language signals impact how effectively a message is delivered through speech. (35%) of the learners agreed. (13%) of the

learners remained neutral. Disagreement recounts (4%) of the students about the statement. (2%) were strongly disagreed. The vast majority of the students are that large percent of them were strongly agreed.

Item 17. Repeated body language movements will make the audience more boring.

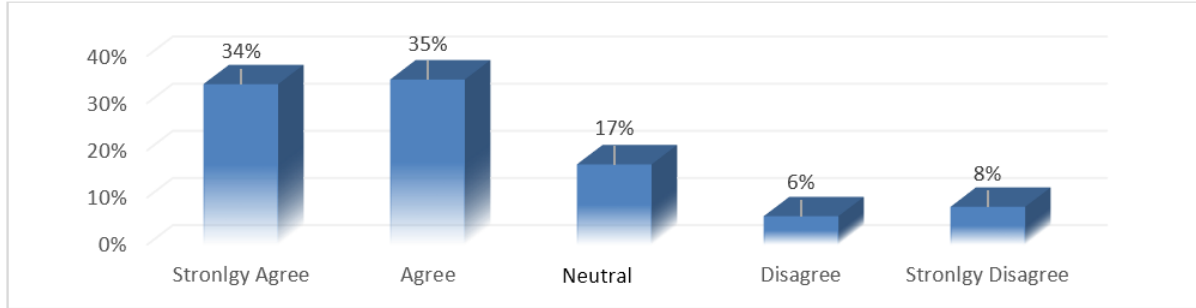


Figure 17

Figure 17 shows (34%) of the respondents strongly agreed that repetitive body movements are always dull for the audience. (35%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. (17%) of the respondents remained neutral. (6%) Some respondents disagreed that repetitive body movements are always dull for the

audience. ((8%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. It clearly shows that a large percentage of the respondents agreed that overuse or misuse of body language will make the listeners bored and unattentive.

Item 18. The use of hand gestures improves the clarity and impact of speech delivery.

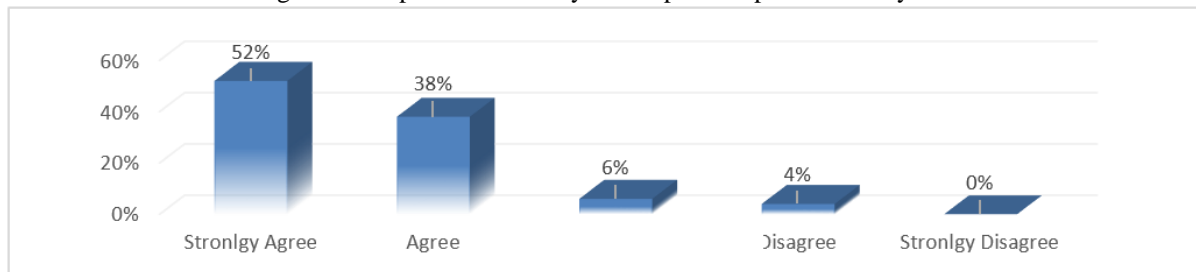


Figure 18

Figure 18 justifies (52%) of the learners strongly agreed that using hand gestures improves the clarity and impact of speech delivery. (38%) of the learners agreed with the statement. (6%) of the learners remained neutral. The statement recounts that (4%) learners are disagreed. (0%) were strongly disagreed

that using hand gestures improves the clarity and impact of speech delivery. Finally, it admires that many learners strongly agreed that using hand gestures enhances the clarity and impact of speech delivery.

Item19. Nonverbal signals like nodding or smiling can encourage audience engagement in speech delivery.

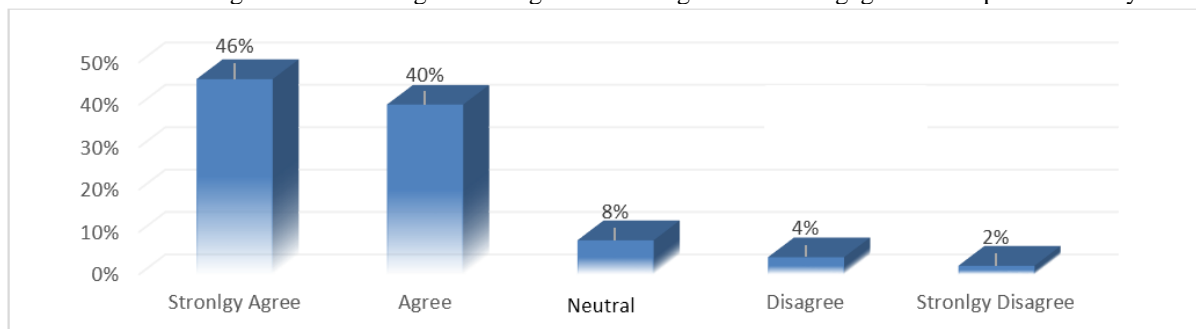


Figure 19

Figure 19 (46%) shows that the respondents strongly agreed that nonverbal signals like nodding or smiling can encourage audience engagement in speech delivery. (40%) of them agreed with the statement. (8%) of the respondents remained neutral. (7%)

respondents disagreed, and. (4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed about the statement. Many respondents strongly agreed that Nonverbal signals like nodding or smiling can encourage audience engagement in speech delivery.

Item 20. I can't convey a message well without body language during speech delivery.

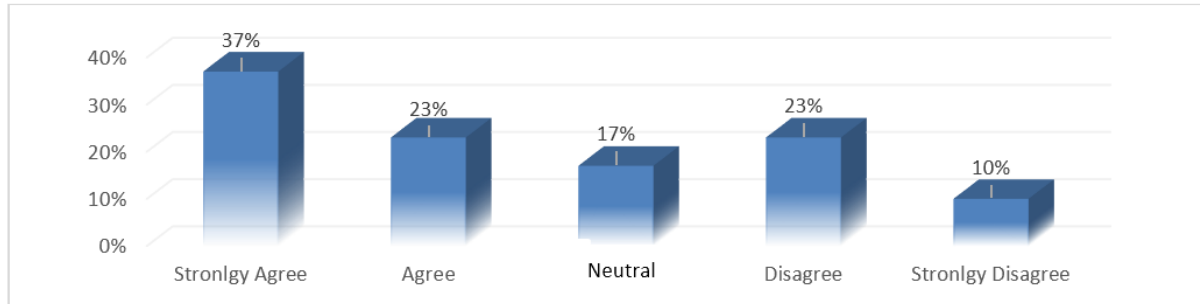


Figure 20

Figure 20 indicates (37%) of the learners strongly agreed that they can't convey a message without body language during speech delivery. (23%) of the learners agreed with the statement. (17%) of the learners selected the neutral option. (23%) of the learners disagreed. (10%) were strongly disagreed with the statement. This indicates that many learners agreed they can't convey the message without body language during speech delivery.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of body language, including facial expressions and gestures, in enhancing EFL learners' speech delivery at the English Department of Helmand University. The findings highlight that body language significantly improves communication effectiveness by providing visual cues complementing spoken language. EFL learners who incorporate non-verbal elements such as facial expressions and gestures into their speech can better express emotions, clarify meaning, and engage their audience. This leads to greater confidence and fluency in English speech delivery. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that learners who actively use body language tend to communicate more effectively despite linguistic challenges, making it a valuable tool for overcoming language barriers in an EFL setting.

In conclusion, integrating body language in speech delivery can be critical in enhancing EFL learners' performance and supporting comprehension and expression. Given its importance, incorporating training on effective non-verbal communication in EFL curricula at Helmand University could further improve learners' overall communicative competence and confidence in using English in real-world contexts. The research was conducted at Helmand University, Department of English. 60 EFL learners were selected randomly, and this research will contribute to EFL learners knowing the

importance of using body language in their speech delivery. The findings showed that proper use of body language helped EFL learners to engage more in speaking and add more meaning to their speech comprehension.

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