

## An Analysis of Body Language of Grade 8<sup>Th</sup> Students in English Lesson at SMP Negeri 9 Kupang

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assist teachers, especially English teachers, in understanding the body language used by students during the teaching and learning process as a means of communication to indicate their interest in the lesson. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. The subjects of the study are the students of Class VIII D at SMP Negeri 9 Kupang. The data collection instruments include observation tables, a camera for photos and videos, and writing tools such as notebooks and pens. Based on the findings, there are 16 types of body language produced during the learning process, namely: resting chin on hand, staring out the window, nodding, actively taking notes, occasionally covering the face with hands, apathetic facial expressions, playing with objects on the desk, making eye contact, sitting or standing lazily, using the phone without teacher instructions, forced smile or blank expression, yawning, slouching in the seat, doodling in the notebook, positive facial expressions, and briefly discussing with a classmate. There are also four categories of body language identified during the learning process: (1) eye contact, for example, looking directly at the teacher indicates attention; (2) facial expressions, such as forced smiles and positive expressions like smiling indicate boredom or amusement; (3) gestures, such as nodding which signifies agreement or understanding; and (4) body posture, for example, leaning forward while sitting or standing upright shows confidence or readiness.

*Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk membantu guru, khususnya guru Bahasa Inggris, dalam memahami bahasa tubuh yang digunakan siswa selama proses pembelajaran sebagai sarana komunikasi untuk menunjukkan minat mereka terhadap pelajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas VIII D di SMP Negeri 9 Kupang. Instrumen pengumpulan data meliputi meja observasi, kamera untuk foto dan video, dan alat tulis seperti buku catatan dan pulpen. Berdasarkan temuan, terdapat 16 jenis bahasa tubuh yang dihasilkan selama proses pembelajaran, yaitu: meletakkan dagu di tangan, menatap ke luar jendela, mengangguk, aktif mencatat, sese kali menutupi wajah dengan tangan, ekspresi wajah apatis, bermain dengan benda di meja, melakukan kontak mata, duduk atau berdiri malas, menggunakan telepon tanpa instruksi guru, senyum paksa atau ekspresi kosong, menguap, membungkuk di kursi, mencoret-coret di buku catatan, ekspresi wajah positif, dan berdiskusi singkat dengan teman sekelas. Terdapat pula empat kategori bahasa tubuh yang diidentifikasi selama proses pembelajaran: (1) kontak mata, misalnya, menatap langsung guru menunjukkan perhatian; (2) ekspresi wajah, seperti senyum yang dipaksakan dan ekspresi positif seperti tersenyum menunjukkan kebosanan atau hiburan; (3) gerak tubuh, seperti mengangguk yang menandakan persetujuan atau pemahaman; dan (4) postur tubuh, misalnya, membungkuk ke depan saat duduk atau berdiri tegak menunjukkan kepercayaan diri atau kesiapan.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Language as the tool of communication has an important role to reveal an intention to someone else. DeVito (2009) communication is the process of delivering messages that involves context, source, message, channel, receiver, noise, feedback, and effects. Language has an important role in this process, because people easily express their thoughts, feelings and ideas, and serves as a tool to express themselves and exchange information with others. Language is closely related to communication and is fundamental in human interaction and daily life. Whether spoken, written, or conveyed through body language, language facilitates the exchange of meaning and fosters relationships between people.

Uzun (2021;1), communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. The people will be able to express their thought and feeling by using language. The language cannot be separated with communication and life. Students sit in school and listen to teachers. People read books and magazines, talk to friends, watch television, and communicate through the Internet. It means that every day in everywhere people always communicate with others. It's the function of language as tool of communication. By the language as tool of communication that used by people, they can express their needs, feelings and thoughts.

In addition, one of the ways of communicating language is through speaking. Teaching speaking is not the same as teaching listening, reading, and writing because it requires habit formation and involves real communication (Brown, 2007;284). Speaking also refers to the gap between linguistic competence and teaching methodology (Brown, 2004;140). Through speaking, people are able to understand various situations in the world. Individuals who have good speaking ability will be more effective in sending and receiving information or messages from others (Harmer, 2007;46). Speaking is defined as the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in various contexts (Chaney & Martin, 2004;1).

Therefore, nonverbal communication cannot be separated from speaking activities in the classroom. In the classroom context, only a small percentage of communication occurs orally and primarily stimulates students' cognitive understanding, while nonverbal communication plays a greater role in stimulating students' feelings and attitudes during communication (Knapp & Hall, 2010;3-5). Nonverbal communication plays an important role in the teaching process because it can increase psychological closeness between teachers and students. Teachers' sensitivity in

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reading students' nonverbal behaviour can strengthen teacher–student relationships and support the learning process (Knapp & Hall, 2010;12).

Based on the opinions above, it can be concluded that communication plays an important role in expressing thoughts, feelings, and needs. Through communication, especially speaking, individuals can understand situations in the world. Communication is inseparable from body language, which is a part of nonverbal communication. In classroom learning, nonverbal communication cannot be separated from speaking activities because it supports interaction and meaning-making between teachers and students (Harmer, 2007;47; Knapp & Hall, 2010;15).

Butt (2011;19), body language is a nonverbal communication where people speak to listener through visual elements, such as eye contact, physical distance between the speaker and the listener, gesture, body postures, and body orientation and they are used to express many ideas, feelings and meanings. People often use body language instinctively as a complement to verbal communication, and it can significantly impact how messages are perceived and understood by listeners. Understanding and effectively interpreting body language can enhance interpersonal communication and facilitate better understanding between individuals.

One example of media in teaching English is body language. Body Language is included in audiovisual. Samovar, et.al, in Intercultural Communication; A Reader Cengage Learning (2010), body language is the process of exchanging thoughts and ideas by conveying messages in the form of gestures, facial expressions, eye views, touch, artifacts (symbols used), silence, time, sound, and posture and body movements.

Based on the statement above, the researcher wants to convey that body language is the bodily movements performed by someone to express thoughts or feelings. Each student can use different body language. However, the meaning of body language can vary greatly among students, so it is important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation. The body language used by students is crucial because it is one of the factors that support the smoothness of the teaching and learning process. Factors supporting smooth teaching and learning include discussion methods, learning media, and body language.

Butt (2011;35) stated that body language is a form of non-verbal communication, which consists of body postures, gestures, facial expressions and eye movements. Human send and interpret such signals subconsciously. Body language may provide clues as to the attitude or state of mind of a person. Body movement (For instance, waving, winking) position (For example hunched shoulder and wide open eyes). These signals are often sent and interpreted subconsciously by humans, playing a crucial role in interpersonal communication. Body language can convey emotions, attitudes, intentions, and even relational dynamics between individuals. Understanding

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and interpreting body language can greatly enhance one's ability to communicate effectively and comprehend the messages being conveyed.

Based on what is stated above, the author would like to say that body language is a type of non-verbal communication that includes movements of the body and its parts (head, eyes, neck, hands, arms, legs or other body parts) to reflect one's expression. Humans send and interpret these signals almost entirely unconsciously. Body language can provide clues about a person's attitude or state of mind. For example, attention, boredom, relaxed state, pleasure, amusement, and intoxication, among many other cues.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted using the descriptive qualitative method. Theoretically, the descriptive-qualitative method aimed to describe the found data in more detail through broader sentence explanations. Hancock and Algozzine (2006:45) stated that qualitative research was a research method that focused on a deep understanding of social phenomena through the collection of descriptive data. Nazir (2014:42) explained that the descriptive method was a research method used to study the status of a group of people, objects, conditions, systems of thought, or events in the present. In this study, the writer used this method to collect data about the body language of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at *SMPN 9 Kupang*. the researcher were 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from *SMPN 9 Kupang*. Therefore, in this study, the researcher visited the school and monitored the learning process in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. In the process of collecting this data, the researcher used observation sheets, video recording and taking note as a data collection instrument. In analyzing the data, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative method. After collecting and organizing the data, the researcher took several steps to analyze, identify, and group the data based on its types.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

During the classroom observation, various forms of body language were recorded to identify students' engagement and behavioral responses. The summary of these observations is presented in the table below, which outlines each type of body language along with the total number of students who exhibited it.

Based on the results of the observations, the researcher acted as the research instrument in the English learning process of class 8D, which consisted of 29 students. The findings revealed that students displayed various types of body language during the teaching and learning activities. A total of 21 students were observed resting their chin on their hand, which may indicate tiredness, boredom, or deep concentration. Additionally, 11 students were seen staring out the window, suggesting a lack of focus on the lesson. However, 17 students showed nodding behavior, which reflects understanding or agreement with the teacher's explanation.

During the observation, no students were found sighing heavily or raising their hands, indicating limited overt expressions of frustration and low active verbal participation. Only three students actively took notes, showing that few students were highly engaged in writing down the learning material. Furthermore, no students were observed checking the clock repeatedly, which suggests that impatience related to time was not apparent.

Several students also demonstrated behaviors that may reflect disengagement or discomfort. Eleven students occasionally covered their faces with their hands, while five students displayed apathetic facial expressions. In addition, 10 students were observed playing with objects on their desks, which may indicate distraction during the lesson. Despite this, positive engagement was evident as 27 students made eye contact with the teacher, showing attentiveness and interest.

Moreover, four students were observed sitting or standing lazily, and four students used their mobile phones without the teacher's instruction, indicating off-task behavior. Only one student showed a forced smile or blank facial expression, which may suggest a lack of genuine emotional involvement. Signs of fatigue were also identified, as eight students were observed yawning and eight students slouching in their seats. Meanwhile, no students were seen drumming their fingers, indicating the absence of visible impatience.

Other minor behaviors were also found during the observation. Two students were observed doodling in their notebooks, while 14 students displayed positive facial expressions such as smiling or appearing enthusiastic, reflecting a generally positive classroom atmosphere. Lastly, 21 students briefly discussed the lesson with their classmates, indicating peer interaction and collaborative engagement during the English learning process.

In the teaching and learning process, students often use various forms of body language to express their level of understanding, attention, and response to the lesson. These nonverbal cues serve as an important indicator to see how well students are able to absorb the information delivered by the teacher. Therefore, in this section, the researcher presents the meanings of the body language displayed by the eighth-grade students of *SMPN 9 Kupang* during English lessons, as observed in the study. The meanings of these body language expressions can be explained as follows:

**Table 1** Meaning Types of Body Language Students

| No | Types of Body Language Student                   | Meaning  |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | Resting chin on hand                             | This kind of body language usually shows that students are bored, tired, or not motivated. When a student rests their chin on their hand, they look low in energy and uninterested in the lesson |
| 2  | Staring out the window                           | It most likely means that they are not focused or their minds are drifting. This may happen because they are bored, do not understand the material, or have lost interest.                       |
| 3  | Nodding  | Nodding can be interpreted as a sign that students agree with or understand the teacher's explanation.   |
| 4  | Sighing heavily                                  | This body language reflects boredom, fatigue, or frustration.  |
| 5  | Raising hand                                     | This shows confidence, curiosity, and enthusiasm for learning.   |
| 6  | Actively taking notes                            | Taking notes actively demonstrates focus and motivation  |
| 7  | Checking the clock repeatedly                    | This action reflects impatience, loss of interest, or distraction.   |
| 8  | Occasionally covering face with hands            | This gesture may represent shyness, nervousness, or an attempt to hide emotions such as boredom or confusion.  |
| 9  | Apathetic facial expressions                     | A flat or blank facial expression, such as not smiling or not nodding, can mean that the student is not interested, does not understand, or does not care about the lesson.                      |
| 10 | Playing with objects on the desk                 | This behaviour indicates distraction and boredom.  |
| 11 | Making eye contact                               | Eye contact shown by students during the lesson indicates that they are paying attention or focusing on the teacher.   |
| 12 | Sitting or standing lazily                       | A lazy posture reflects low energy or lack of enthusiasm   |
| 13 | Using the telephone without teacher instructions | Using a phone during lessons demonstrates distraction and disengagement.   |
| 14 | Forced smile or blank expression                 | A forced smile or blank expression reflects a lack of genuine emotional involvement.   |
| 15 | Yawning  | Showing tiredness, drowsiness, or boredom  |
| 16 | Tapping feet or drumming fingers                 | This body language represents impatience, nervousness, or restlessness   |
| 17 | Slouching in the seat                            | A slouched posture demonstrates low motivation and disinterest.  |
| 18 | Doodling in the                                  | Doodling suggests boredom, loss of focus, or a   |

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|----|-------------------------------------|---|
|    | notebook                            | desire to occupy oneself.   |
| 19 | Positive facial expressions         | Smiling or showing enthusiasm reflects enjoyment and interest in the lesson.  |
| 20 | Briefly discussing with a classmate | Talking or exchanging ideas briefly with someone who is studying in the same class to discuss a topic or idea, besides that it also has a negative meaning, namely that students are talking about something outside the lesson |

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Based on the results of the observation, students' body language during the learning process can be categorized into two types, namely positive body language and negative body language. The most dominant positive body language was making eye contact with the teacher (27 students), which indicated the students' focus and attention during the lesson. In addition, brief discussions with classmates (21 students) were also observed, which can be interpreted as a form of positive interaction when it was still related to the learning material. Nodding (17 students) also showed students' engagement, as this gesture indicated understanding or agreement with the teacher's explanation. Positive facial expressions were displayed by 14 students, while 3 students were recorded as actively taking notes.

There were also students who displayed negative body language. A total of 21 students rested their chins on their hands, which generally indicated boredom or fatigue. Eleven students were observed staring out the window and another 11 students occasionally covered their faces with their hands, which could be interpreted as signs of lack of concentration, confusion, or shyness. In addition, 10 students were playing with objects on the desk, 8 students were yawning, and 8 students were slouching in their seats. Furthermore, 5 students showed apathetic facial expressions, 4 students were sitting or standing lazily, and 4 students using the telephone without teacher instructions. There were also 2 students doodling in their notebooks, and 1 student showing a forced smile or blank expression. Moreover, no students were sighing heavily, repeatedly checking the clock, drumming their fingers as a sign of restlessness, or raising their hands during the lesson since the teacher directly pointed at students to answer.

Overall, the results show that although many students displayed positive body language indicating their engagement during the learning process, quite a number of them also showed negative signs such as boredom. Thus, it can be concluded that the students were in a mixed condition between being focused and feeling fatigued, which implies that teachers need to optimize their teaching strategies so that positive body language becomes more dominant while reducing the occurrence of negative body language.

Based on the results of classroom observations of the teacher during the English teaching and learning process, the researcher found that the teacher used various forms of body language

throughout the teaching activities. This body language reflected the teacher's attitudes, emotions, and ways of interacting with students, as well as supporting the delivery of lesson material. In addition to verbal communication, the teacher consistently employed nonverbal behaviours that carried specific meanings and contributed to the effectiveness of the teaching process.

During the lesson, the teacher was frequently observed sitting on a chair while teaching, which created a calm and relaxed teaching atmosphere. At the same time, the teacher also moved around the classroom to monitor students' activities and maintain classroom control. The teacher regularly looked around the classroom and made eye contact with students while speaking, indicating attentiveness, confidence, and engagement with the learners. Smiling at students was another common behaviour, reflecting friendliness and approachability, and helping to create a positive learning environment.

Furthermore, the teacher occasionally touched students on the arms, shoulders, or head as a form of encouragement or guidance, which helped build rapport and emotional closeness. The teacher often stood in front of the desk while explaining the lesson, allowing students to focus their attention more easily. In delivering explanations, the teacher used hand gestures to emphasize important points and support verbal instructions. The teacher also maintained a relaxed body posture while talking, which conveyed comfort and confidence in managing the class.

However, the observation also showed that the teacher sometimes used a monotone or dull voice while speaking, which may have affected students' enthusiasm and attention. Despite this, the teacher displayed various facial expressions when talking, which helped convey emotions and clarify the meaning of the lesson content.

Body language is not only used by students, but also by teachers during the teaching and learning process. The way teachers move, stand, use facial expressions, or gestures can influence how students respond to the lesson. Good teacher body language can help make learning more interesting, comfortable, and easy to follow. Below are some types of body language that teachers often use in the classroom, along with their meanings and functions:

**Table 3 Meaning types body language of Teacher**

| No | Types Body Language of Teacher  | Meaning  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | Sit on the chair when teaching  | Shows a relaxed teaching style, but may also indicate lack of energy or less engagement.           |
| 2  | Move around the classroom when teaching                               | Indicates active involvement, closeness with students, and effort to maintain classroom attention. |
| 3  | Looking at the Classroom when teaching                                | Shows that the teacher gives attention to all students, creating a sense of inclusion.             |
| 4  | Make eye contact with their students when talking                     | Reflects confidence, honesty, and helps build interpersonal connection and focus.                  |
| 5  | Smile at students while teaching                                      | Showing friendliness, acceptance, and creating a positive and safe learning atmosphere.            |
| 6  | Touching the students' body (arms, shoulders, or head) while teaching | Expresses support and encouragement, but needs careful use to avoid misunderstanding.              |
| 7  | Stands in front of the desk when teaching                             | Demonstrates authority, leadership, and classroom control.   |
| 8  | Uses gestures when talking to the class                               | Reinforces verbal explanation, emphasizes key points, and aids student understanding               |
| 9  | Uses finger to point out the things around the class                  | Directs students' attention to specific objects, clarifying the explanation.                       |
| 10 | Use monotone/dull voice when talking to the class                     | Suggests lack of variation in delivery, making students bored or less attentive.                   |
| 11 | Makes various expressions when talking                                | Brings the lesson to life, clarifies meaning, and keeps students interested and engaged.           |

Based on the findings of the study on teachers' body language, the researcher found that during the teaching and learning process, teachers displayed various forms of body language. These included moving around the classroom, observing the classroom environment, making eye contact with students, smiling at the class as a whole, standing more frequently while teaching, using hand or body gestures, maintaining a relaxed posture, and showing a range of facial

expressions. However, there were also some forms of body language that were not demonstrated by the teachers during the lesson, such as sitting on the chair continuously, touching students' bodies (such as their arms, shoulders, or heads), and speaking in a monotonous or dull voice.

## **CONLUSIONS**

Based on the results of observations and data analysis, it can be concluded that body language plays an important role in the teaching and learning process, especially in English classes. Students use various types of body language to express their feelings, attitudes, and level of understanding during the lesson. Among the body language observed were nodding, eye contact, leaning forward, raising hands, yawning, fidgeting, crossing arms, and facial expressions. Each of these actions reflects the students' emotional states such as interest, boredom, confusion, or understanding of the material.

Similarly, the teachers also used different types of body language such as moving around the class, smiling, making eye contact, using gestures, and expressing emotions through facial expressions. These actions helped create a more interactive and engaging classroom atmosphere.

The study shows that body language serves as a non-verbal form of communication that supports verbal explanation, helps build connections between teachers and students, and improves the quality of teaching and learning. Understanding and interpreting body language correctly allows teachers to respond more effectively to students' needs and behaviors in the classroom.

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