Participation in the EFL Classrooms: Relationships between the Functions of Teacher's Embodied Actions and Learners' Embodied Reactions

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ABSTRACT

Vygotsky (1978) uses the example of a child's gesture, arguing that finger-pointing presents an interpersonal relationship; but an intrapersonal relationship occurs only after internalization. The purpose of this study was to investigate the discourse and corresponding gestures at a foreign language university general English course using Socio-cultural theory as a theoretical framework. This study used a qualitative research methodology. The instruments used in the current research included: a questionnaire, two video-recordings, student surveys, and a follow-up semi-structured teacher interview. Particularly, the observations were of the teacher in interaction with students concerning the subject matter. The teacher's teaching was video-recorded for the first five weeks of a sixteen-week course, meeting twice per week for one hour and thirty seconds. The teacher's gestures were analyzed according to the transcription conventions developed by McNeill (1992). The findings are discussed in relation to the teacher's embodied practices. The data revealed that the teacher gestured and mimetically illustrated in order to concretize the language. The gestures observed were organized into different linguistic categories of grammar and lexis on the basis of the lessons of the course- book. So, not only the gesture types, but also the functions, are discussed. This organization reinforces the notion that the instructor was trying to concretize the language and codify it.

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1. Introduction

Learning a language is a consequence of the interaction between teacher and students in the linguistic environment. Two or more people participate in reciprocal actions in such interaction (Celce-Murcia, 1987). This action may be verbal or nonverbal.

Here some terms such as participation, engagement, and embodied action are defined (Warayet, 2011):

Participation: it means all modes that teachers use to involve students in classroom activities. In another words, participation means to employ talk and so all other involvement modes. For instance, students listening to the teacher instructions are participating even if they don't say something in the classroom. Thus, in this study, participation wasn't teacher-oriented based on the traditional approach of teacher-student talk, but other ways of teacher participation related to classroom communications were applied (Warayet, 2011).

Engagement: it is a type of classroom involvement. Classroom involvement includes different kinds of verbal and nonverbal engagements (Warayet, 2011).

Embodied action: it means to employ movements that teachers use when they want to engage students in classroom activities. That is, teachers, rely on certain types of embodied actions within oral classroom activities instead of participation by talking. These actions include some gestures such as facial expressions, gaze patterns and body orientations (Warayet, 2011).

The topic of gesture is one that is only recently being examined in relation to foreign language learning. Gesture has been neglected for so long because of the practicality of the verbal features of the language and lack of videotaping (Hudson, 2011).

The theoretical framework of the study

Vygotsky (1978) stated the mind moderate interaction with people through signs. In respect to the current research, gestures are assumed as tools that have a significant role in the learning process.

The focus of this section was on the integration of language and gesture. Especially, the integration of gestures into classroom practices and the influence of cultural artifacts such as words on thinking were tested. Another focus of the current research was to understand whether the gestures used by the teacher lead to learning and whether the students appropriate the gestures used by the teacher or not.

In the discussion of Zone of Proximal Development, Vygotsky states that students cannot complete tasks unaided, but can complete them with guidance. Learning collaboratively is more efficient than learning which can be achieved individually. In the present research, foreign language students were in social communication with other students and with their teacher in the classroom. Data were analyzed according to the view that participation increases learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Vygotsky (1978) argued that each action in the development of a child occur twice. First, it occurs on a social level. Second, it occurs on an individual level. This movement of external operation into the internal operation is called

internalization ([Vygotsky, 1978](#)). Language learning must also be occurred in the social interaction, and the gesture of others, particularly language teachers toward their students. In relation to internalization, in this research, in the context of the classroom, a foreign language student will view a gesture initially from a teacher as an external sign; if the students appropriate the gesture, he/she will be transformed internally.

In relation to Luria's ([1979](#), [1982](#)) study, showing that a cultural activity such as schooling can change thought and the purpose of the current study was to consider how foreign language learning in the classroom could change thought.

This study was also investigated the use of the gestures and the language that the students use to mediate behavior in the language classrooms. The results of studies conducted by Luria ([1979](#), [1982](#)) show that language plays a significant role in mediating behavior. In the present research the role of embodiment was considered to help foreign language learners to perform tasks, achieve self-regulation, and internalize language and gesture.

Objectives of the study

Instructors often explain that while they do have some knowledge of other languages, they only teach in English because the students in their classes speak many different native languages. The person with whom they are speaking is often dumbfounded, asking how it is possible to teach students English without speaking their language.

The objective of this study was to test the role of gesture as it relates to foreign language teaching in the classroom. This study aims to examine teacher nonverbal behavior in classroom

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discussion by analyzing gestures and other nonverbal behavior that one EFL teacher employs in her classroom.

Research questions

The present study aimed at answering the following questions.

1. What gestural patterns do EFL teachers show to mediate learning in the classroom?

2. How aware are these EFL teachers of the gestures they use in the classroom? Do the teachers, for example, intentionally manipulate gestures in a particular way in the classroom?

3. Do the teachers explicitly teach specific gestures?

4. How aware are the students of their teacher's embodied actions and react to them?

2. Literature review

As the studies above indicate, the topic of gesture in the second language classroom is an emerging area in the literature and would greatly benefit from further research. The current qualitative study of a second language instructor and her students in an ESL classroom is a contribution to this expanding subject of study.

In the context of second language (L2) classroom interactions, [Matsumoto and Dobs (2016)](#) studied the effect of gestures on teaching and learning grammar. The data included video recorded interactions in an intensive English program at a US university from a beginner- and an advanced-level grammar classroom. The talk-in-interaction sequences used for sequential analysis included gestures used by teachers to explain English temporal concepts and students used to respond to the gestures of their teacher.

The analysis showed that in the classroom, teachers and students frequently used abstract deictic gestures and metaphoric gestures, which can become important interactional teaching and learning resources. In addition, to demonstrate their understanding of temporal concepts, learners used gestural catchments. Such results indicate that gesture is an important component of interactional competence for L2 grammar teaching and learning.

Students do not always comprehend what their teachers try to tell them. What factors affect their comprehension and learning from instructional discourse? It appears that the same factors that influence listeners' understanding of oral language might influence understanding of instructional discourse among students. One such factor is the non-verbal behavior that is provided by teachers' gesture.

The use of gestures with multiple representations by teachers is common non-verbal behaviour in teaching in the classroom. The gestures of teachers as a research topic have attracted more interest in recent years. To facilitate the analysis of the gestures of teachers in classroom teaching, categories of gestures need to be developed. From the perspective of multiple representations, this study developed categories of teacher gestures in classroom teaching. The study examined the gestures of six teachers through video analysis, based on the developed categories. The results show that the incorporation of the theory of multiple representation makes the function of categorizing gestures more specific and significant. The results of the application also show that this new approach is capable of distinguishing different

gestural characteristics between different teachers in relation to teaching experience. (Liu, Zhang, Chen, Wang, Yuan and Xie, 2020).

Gestures, like written words, have specific forms depending on the different content that teachers try to convey (Wilson, Boatright, and Melanie 2014).

Matsumoto & Canagarajah (2020) examine how multilingual speakers work together to find words and formulate what to say and promote this interactive work by incorporating gestures, and other embodied actions (e.g., gaze) in the context of English as a lingua franca (ELF). They examine video-recorded interactions of one dyad at a dinner table at an international graduate student dormitory in the United States using a multimodal conversation analytic approach. In particular, they demonstrate how gestures, gesture holds and gazes contribute to the distribution of the responsibility of working on interactional problems and the construction of intersubjectivity among these speakers.

According to Mondada (2014), multimodality refers to different interactional resources mobilized by speakers to organize their actions; such multimodal resources include gestures, gaze, body postures, body movements, prosody, lexis, and grammar. Multimodality involves various interactional resources without considering a hierarchy among them, regardless of whether they are verbal or nonverbal.

McNeill outlined four important classification systems which are movements of hands and arms utilized in conversation: *iconics*, *metaphorics*, *deictics*, and *beats*.

Iconic is "a concrete event or action that is

used in speech at the same time" (McNeill, 1992, p. 77). In addition, *iconics* are referred to as the semantic content of the speech. *Iconic* gestures can be defined as either *kinetographic* representing an action, like sweeping the floor or *pictographic* representing an object, like outlining the shape of a box.

Metaphorics are like iconics; however, they indicate abstract ideas rather than concrete actions. McNeill (1992) indicates that *metaphorics* are similar to iconics in that they are either pictorial or kinetographic, but the pictorial content considers an abstract idea as opposed to a concrete object or event. *Deictics* are defined as movements that include pointing either actual or metaphoric. For example, a finger pointing to an object in the immediate environment or a hand pointing behind us to represent past time (Hudson, 2011). *Beats* are gestures that demonstrate rhythm and emphasis. Beats are not related to the semantic feature of speech. Although *beats* may provide a referential function, their basic use is to regulate the flow of speech (Hudson, 2011).

People use gestures to organize meaning and thought. The combination of language and gesture presents this meaning. Gestures that are cultural specific have an influence on thought (Hudson, 2011). Goldin-Meadow (1999) supports McNeill's (1992) view and states that gestures "can reveal thoughts and feelings" (P.12). Goldin-Meadow (1999) argues that gesture is highly important for an understanding of the spoken component of discourse. Goldin-Meadow (1999) stated that gesture not only is a tool for thinking for speakers but also it is a communication tool for listeners. In another
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study, Seyfeddinipur and Kita (2001) argue that suspension in gesture is associated with suspension in speech. In other words, when speakers pause in their speech, they sometimes pause in their gesture as well.

Sato (2020) examined the effects of the gestures of Japanese teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) on their second language (L2) expressions in EFL lessons. The results were as follows: (1) L2 utterances were more complex and fluent with gestures, but when accompanied by gestures, accuracy was equal, and (2) there is a difference in the relationships between certain particular types of gestures and L2 utterances, with metaphorical gestures showing the highest complexity and fluency scores and emblems the lowest. These findings indicate that the gestures of teachers play an important role in EFL classrooms and should be taken more into account in L2 teacher education and training programs.

Dahl and Ludvigsen (2014) noted that the understanding of a video by the seventh and eighth grade learners of English as a foreign language, in which a speaker explained a cartoon image that learners could not see, was facilitated when the speaker used gestures in the video, while the comprehension of the video by native language speakers was not enhanced by gestures.

Although facial expressions are used in most of the affective state recognition techniques, many research studies demonstrate that body postures and hand gestures make a significant contribution to the students' affective state recognition. Results of these studies show that more than 70% of the accuracy of recognition is due to hand gestures and body postures for the

affective state of anger (Ashwin and Guddeti, 2020).

Liuka, Nakatsukasa, and Braver (2020) investigated the effectiveness of gestures for learning L2 segmental phonology. By studying the effects of handclapping on the development of Japanese L2 segmentals, they tried to fill this gap (long vowels, geminates, and moraic nasals). The results show that only those who saw and performed handclapping maintained the instructional effect on the delayed perception posttest, indicating that the memory-enhancing effect of gestures might reach the level of segmental phonology in L2 acquisition, at least in the form of handclapping.

Gestures have also been widely used to improve the effects of teaching pronunciation (see e.g., Hudson, 2011; Smotrova, 2017). Language teachers have used upward body movements, finger tapping, handclapping, and head nods for supra-segmental features to visualize and embody word stress and/or the rhythmic patterns of a target language.

The advantages of gestures for L2 learners' pronunciation of supra-segmental features are confirmed by several experimental studies. Zhang, Baills, and Prieto (2018) found that, by the use of handclapping, Chinese monolinguals learned the rhythmic patterns of French words better.

In order to help L2 learners improve intonation patterns in Spanish and accentuation in English, metaphorical pitch gestures (Yuan, González-Fuente, Baills, & Prieto, 2019) and rhythmic beat gestures have also been reported.

Mohan and Helmer (1988) stated that children could comprehend the L2 gestures while they were exposed to English as a second language in naturalistic context. Safadi & Valentine (1988) and Wolfgang & Wolofsky (1991) found that half of the gestures examined were understood by native speaking children, and less than half of the gestures were known by non-native speaking children. One implication Lazaraton (2004) stated is that because of the culturally-specific nature of emblematic gestures, second language teachers must be aware of their behavior in order to avoid confusing students.

Allen (1995) examined 112 post-secondary students of French. The analysis showed that those learners who learned emblems at the same time with French expressions had a better ability to recall the expressions on posttest than those learners who had not learned the emblematic gestures.

Allen (2000) described one female teacher taught high school Spanish in a classroom context. Allen observed that the teacher used different types of gestures extensively. The results indicated that those students who learned emblems simultaneously with French expressions exhibited greater recall ability of the expressions on posttests than those students who had not learned the emblematic gestures.

Lazaraton (2004) conducted a collaborative study on analyzing one part of the grammar component of a university class through microanalysis and self-reflection. The researcher concentrated on observing all kinds of non-verbal behavior, comprising gaze, gesture, and body position. It was found out that gesture plays an important role in the lesson.

Faraco and Kida (2008) conducted a study on second language learners of French, discussing how nonverbal behaviors such as gaze, prosodic features, and gesture provide negotiation of meaning.

According to Sime (2006), most of the studies examining foreign language learners' use of gestures investigated the relationship between foreign language proficiency and the number of gestures utilized. Adult FL students use more gestures than the native speakers and foreign language speakers' moments of difficulty in articulating themselves are facilitated by a related increase in the amount of gestures (Kita 1993; Nobe 1993).

Stam (1999) asserted that at advanced levels of proficiency the cognitive load on linguistic representations increases and this decreases the use of gestures produced by a speaker. As opposed to oral communication strategies, Gullberg (1998) examined the use of *gestural communication strategies* by foreign language speakers of French and Swedish. The results indicated that the use of complementary strategic gestures were frequently more than the use of substitutive strategic gestures in foreign language context. Furthermore, foreign language speakers seemingly like to favor a combination of both oral and gestural strategies_ more than the L1 speakers did. Gullberg proves that the FL speakers use gestures on the whole and as communication strategies, supporting differences between the individuals in the amount and types of gestures used.

In spite of the issues of cultural differences, the compensatory role of gestures have been confirmed by language learners, previous studies

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on gesture use in the language classes have scarcely been related to a coherent EFL learning theory. Lantolf and Appel (1994) suggested a sociocultural theory for the study L2 learning. Regarding Vygotsky's work (1978, 1986) this study concentrated on the pivotal role that social interaction displays in the process of learning. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a fundamental issue in Vygotsky's theory which describes an individual's immediate potential for cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning takes place in the "zone of proximal development" described as the progressive space in which a learner could perform a task with adult or peer guidance, an activity that could not be understood alone otherwise.

Regarding gesture, Hauge (2000) examined the use of emblems as regulated signs and recognized the existence of EFL classroom specific emblems. The results of the study showed that the teachers' use of emblems in teachers' gestural activity occurred more than the other kinds of gestures and teacher's gesturing is fitted to the particular context of the classroom in the same manner that teacher talk is.

The present qualitative study of a foreign language teacher and her students in an EFL classroom is a contribution to expanding the current literature. In a microanalytic inquiry of one ESL teacher's nonverbal behavior, Lazaraton (2004) also begins by expressing the lack of the literature on gesture in second language acquisition, indicating that gesture is merely considered in relation to strategic competence and animal behavior only. The present study fills some of the gaps in the literature which include:

1) asking teachers how they are conscious of the gestures and other nonverbal behaviors they exhibit; 2) considering how teachers manipulate their gestures in the classroom, and particularly what gestures they teach; 3) supporting the fact that it is useful to ask foreign language students about their consciousness of the gesture their teachers use in the classroom and how the students react to it; 4) determining how much students are aware of the use of gestures in their interactions and how gestures affect foreign language learning.

3. Method

The method employed in this study to represent gesture is termed second-line transcript (Lazaraton, 2004), in which the nonverbal behavior is set off (by italics, parentheses, etc.) from the verbal channel. All examples of the teacher's gestures are given according to the methods outlined by McNeill (1992) for gesture transcription. Further conventions for transcription are adapted from Zhao (2007).

Participants

The participants were one EFL teacher (the teacher, 42, had a Ph.D. degree) and 20 English language students in a pre-intermediate level general English course. Sampling of the study was simple random.

In this study, the main groups of people available for observation are university teachers and the students enrolled in their English course. All of the student participants were Persian native speakers, and were all enrolled in a general English course. The teacher's and students' consent letters were necessary for the researcher

to participate in the study. All of the students accepted to be observed in the classroom.

For this study, one teacher was observed. The teacher was a part-time university teacher and had been assigned two general English courses to teach. She was also an English language instructor at an institute. She was a native speaker of Persian. She spoke English and French as a second and a third language.

In the research, all the students who enrolled in the English course have been observed and videotaped. All of 20 students were adult females and from Iran. They were at pre-intermediate levels in EFL general English classes. Table 1 summarizes the information.

Table1. Information of the study

	Sampling	Teacher	Student
Age	-	42	20-28
gender	-	female	female
number	-	1	20
Native language	-	Persian	Persian
Second language	-	English	English
Third language	-	French	-
level	Simple random	Ph.d in TEFL	Intermediate
nationality	-	Iranian	Iranian
experience	-	12	-

Instruments

A teacher interview was conducted after the observations (see Appendix D for the questions of teacher interviews (Hudson, 2011)). This interview was done at class at noon. Furthermore, questions of student survey were given to some students (see Appendix B for the questions of student survey (Hudson, 2011)). In order to understand the way gestures are treated in the classroom, these actions are considered. The specific data sources used in this study in order to

answer the research questions included teacher background questionnaire, observations, an informal, semi-structured teacher interview, and written surveys of student participants. Observations were general, and both the teacher and the students received particular attention.

Questionnaire

One short Likert questionnaire with 20 questions (see Appendix C (Hudson, 2011)) that the researcher obtained from Hudson (2011) was used before the observations were given to the instructor to collect background information from the teacher. This questionnaire was given to the instructor via e-mail, and the teacher was asked to return the answers in either hard copy or e-mail. It was returned in hard copy.

Recordings

Two video recording cameras were used for the observations that were digital. For the observation, the teacher and the students who were willing to participate in the study were video-recorded for the whole class lessons. One video camera was positioned behind the classroom and focused on videotaping the teacher's movements and the other camera was held in front of the classroom and focused on the students. Finally, after the observations, the gestures in the video were analyzed.

Student Survey

Students were provided with follow-up surveys (see Appendix B (Hudson, 2011)). The researcher obtained the survey questionnaire from Hudson (2011) and was given to the students. Seven of the fifteen students returned the written surveys and all of them were female).

Interview

After the data collection and analysis, a short, individual, and semi-structured follow-up interview that the researcher obtained from Hudson (2011) was conducted with the teacher (see Appendix D for the proposed interview questions (Hudson, 2011)). In other words, after viewing and analyzing the videos, this interview was applied. Though the interview was semi-structured, there was encouragement for open discussion and comment. Parts of the video were shown to the teacher with her gestures for member checking. The teacher's interview has been recorded.

Data collection procedure

The observations for the study occurred in a classroom at the university. This was the institution's choice because the current research focused on pre-intermediate adult general English learners, who were the population of interest.

Approval was received from Shiraz University prior to conducting the current study. On September 8, 2018, approval was granted. For this research, the participation of teachers and students was observed in their classroom context during scheduled English. To ask for teacher willingness to participate in the study, a teacher who teaches English as a foreign language was initially contacted via e-mail. After the teacher accepted to participate in the study, she was given the consent letter and accepted to participate. The data was collected in the usual hours of teaching and learning. Students were given the consent letter and the opportunity to ask any questions about the study prior to the class observation.

Researcher suggested that productivity increased due to attention and not because of changes in the experimental variables. If any student did not have the opportunity to participate in the study, she / he would have been asked to sit in a position they were out of view. If no students had agreed to take part in the current study, they would have observed and videotaped a different teacher. However, all students accepted to participate in the study. The teacher and students were video-recorded in the classroom for the first five weeks of a sixteen-week general English course, meeting twice per week for one hour.

The observations focused primarily on the gestures that the teacher used and analyzed the patterns that appeared, using a socio-cultural framework to explain how gestures affect language learning and teaching and create meanings.

For these observations, field notes were taken to handheld videotaping during the class lessons. After the class observations, the notes were immediately written into a laptop computer.

Data analysis procedure

The method used to describe gestures in this research is called second-line transcript (Lazaraton, 2004), in which the nonverbal action is set off (by italics, parentheses, etc.). All the gestures of the teacher were transcribed in accordance with the methods developed for gesture transcription by McNeill (1992). Appendix A lists the full conventions.

4. Results

Grammar

Grammar gestures in the data are grouped according to the categories of deictic and iconic gestures.

Deictic gestures and verb tense

Past tense

In order to clarify the grammatical definition of verb tense, the teacher showed many gestures, particularly the simple past tense. For instance, the teacher tried to talk about the summer trip in the summer (2018) and in an attempt to explain the past tense; she often used abstract deictic gestures to show the past tense as if it were located behind her. She used her thumb regularly. The teacher pointed to the surface to show the present tense.

In Figure 1, the teacher explained to the students that when they spoke about a trip in the summer 2018, the verbs used must be in the past tense. In the following frames illustrating this example, the teacher both pointed behind her and stepped backward with right foot simultaneously in order to depict the past tense. She particularly lifted her right hand to point behind her. In Figure 1, the teacher was explaining simple past tense.

Figure 1. class 2 at 20:14

T: use past tense verb for….

[used RHF with thumb to point behind her]

< Stepped back with the right foot >

The teacher repeated this gesture many times

as she explained simple past tense. She dropped her hands and Keeping her palm open, she used her right hand referring to the past (Figure 2).

Figure 2. class 2 at 20:17

T: I want you to talk about trip in the summer use past verbs…

[Used RH thumb with open palm to point behind her]

The teacher used these gestures in the class to represent the past tense. She sometimes used gestures without body movement; and sometimes used body movement without gestures.

Present tense

The teacher produced some gestures in order to explain present verb tense. She walked forward and pointed to the ground to show present tense as opposed to past tense. In the past tense, she used backward gesture to explain past tense. In the following example (Example number 1), the teacher pointed down to show the present tense with a pencil.

Example 1 from class 4 at 14:30

T: the old man is still living.

[*RH with pencil points to the ground, with hand moving up and down*]

Eventually, the teacher explained the disparity in meaning between the ages *thirteen* and *thirty*. She moved her hand forward to indicate the age *thirteen* and backward to show the age *thirty*.

Example 2 from class 4 at 14:09

T: Zahra is thirteen.

[*LHF stretches forward*]

thirty

[*used RH thumb to point behind her*]

is my age

[*used LPO to point to herself*]

Iconic gesture and prepositions

Figure 3 reveals, by walking, the teacher shifted her physical orientation towards the students to demonstrate the concept of "to". She walked forward while at the same time saying, "I went to school". She illustrated the prepositional phrase "to school."

Figure 3. class 3 at 20:30

T: I went to school.

[*arms swings*]

<*walks forward*>

Lexis

The following lexical gestures are arranged based on iconics, metaphorics, deictics, haptics, and reflexive gestures. A subsection in this section is devoted to the students' gesture.

Iconic gestures

In figures 4 and 5, the teacher was describing the meaning of the past tense of the verbs *devour* and *grasped*. To describe *devour*, the teacher illustrated that she was stuffing food into her mouth.

Figure 4. class 3 at 57:09

T: your father could say you devoured your food. Children do that, too.

[*LH and RH alternatively moving to mouth seemingly eating too fast; each hand twice*]

In addition, the teacher illustrated the verb *grasped* by holding the student's object.

Figure 5. class 3 at 15:09

T: I grasped her pencil. <.> excuse me, I'm sorry.

[*LH and RH grasp a student's object*]

< *bends knees and leans away from student; "excuse me. I'm sorry." Said to the student*>

I grasped <.>

[*again the smaller version of gesture as she had the items in hand*]

In Figure 6, the teacher mimicked eating in order to demonstrate actions.

Figure 6. class 4 at 45:02

T: you ate cheese…

[*RH with fingers together approaching mouth and tap mouth*]

In figures 4, 5 and 6 the teacher exhibited gestures to demonstrate the *actions*.

Metaphoric gestures

Besides the iconic gestures, the teacher demonstrated metaphoric gestures to indicate abstract ideas. In Figure 7, the teacher demonstrated the word crazy as an example of metaphoric gesture.

Figure 7. class 4 at 56:18

T: Aghhh, makes you seem crazy

[*RH grabbed the hair and LH index finger touch the sides of the head*]

Deictics

Sight

In Figure 8, the teacher showed sight by pointing to her eyes.

Figure 8. class2 at 45:50

T: see

[*LH index finger indicates left eye while RH index finger points the finger up, but rests at the shoulder level*]

Haptics

Smell

In Figure 9, the teacher illustrated the sense of smell by placing her hand on her nose and inhaling through her nose.

Figure 9. class2 at 32:45

T: Smell is one of the five senses.

[*Putting RH to the nose, tapping the nose and smelling hands*]

Hearing

In Figure 10, the teacher integrated both deictic and haptic gestures to illustrate hearing. In Figure 10, it is important to note that the teacher is using both hands as opposed to one hand.

Figure 10. class 2 at 46:07

[*LH index finger indicates and taps left ear while RH index finger indicates and taps right ear; then BH index fingers point up*]

Taste

The teacher touched her tongue when she explained the taste and included a haptic component in the gesture (Figure 11).
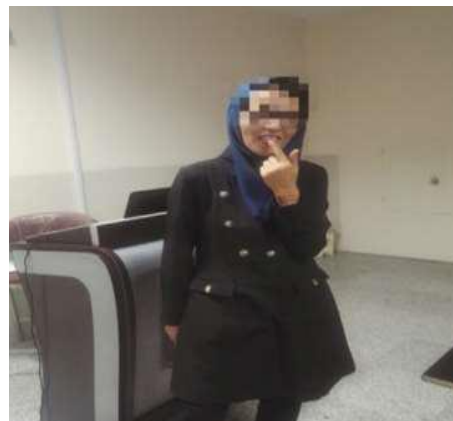

Figure 11. class 3 at 23:45

T: taste

[*LH index finger touches tongue*]

Touch

Finally, the teacher touched a student's table to illustrate the sense of touch. (Figure 12).

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Figure 12. class 3 at 54:09

T: touch

[RH touch the table three times]

Use of realia

The teacher used objects in the classroom to explain vocabulary. In Figure 13, the teacher blends foreigner talk with gestures, over enunciating the word *forty-five* when lifting up the book with both hands to exhibit the students the book.
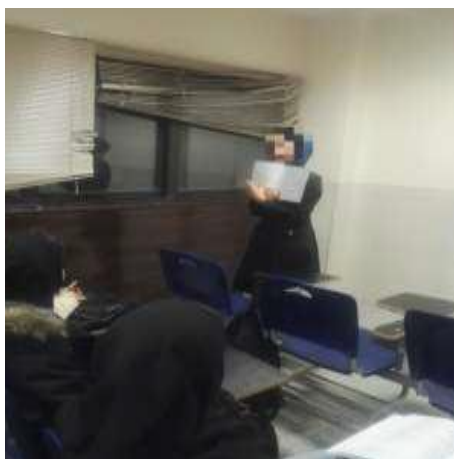
Figure 13. class 2 at 35:45

T: look at page forty-five.

[the teacher lifted up the course textbook with BH]

Student use of gesture

Students were assigned to give one-minute speech during the course about their summer vacation in the class. In these presentations, some students gestured very often while others did not gesture at all or exhibited very few. During the course recording, one student produced some of the gestures that the teacher had shown. In Figure 14, first, the student touched her eye when saying what she had seen on her vacation. This is similar to the teacher's gestures as she clarified the verbs related to the senses.

Figure14. class 2 at 25:56

S: I saw the <.>the <.> historical places.

[LH index finger pointed to the left eye]

In addition, the student repeated several gestures for saw and think that the teacher had produced during the course.

Mirroring

As the teacher was teaching, a student was asking the meaning of the word tumble. When the student wanted to ask a question, she lifted her left hand fingers with palm open to ask her question. The teacher repeated the gestures of the student with both hand and she opened her palms to show the meaning of the word tumble.

Another example of mirroring occurred in the second class appears in Figure 15.

Figure15. class 2 at 13:42

T: did you understand the meaning of the word….?

[BH move up with palm open]

< the teacher holds the gesture, student mirrors teacher's gesture >

Student survey

Besides class observations, written student surveys were provided to the students (Appendix D). Seven of the 15 students in the class returned their survey questions, all of whom were female. The students were at the pre-intermediate level and their writing ability was limited. Some mistakes in the students' survey corrected.

Four of the seven students (of the 15 students in the class, seven students returned their survey questions and all of them were females) reported that they were aware that their teacher used gesture and three of them reported that they had not been aware it. One student commented that the teacher produced gesture "every time" and "it is important for their learning because by gestures they comprehend more". Another student commented that the gestures "are very important and we understand what the teacher intended to teach us."

Five of the seven students (of the 15 students in the class, seven students returned their survey questions and all of them were females) indicated that they were conscious of their gestures. When asked why they used gestures and what they think of their gestures, one student reported that "I love to move my hands, when I speak." On the other hand, two of the students commented that they were not aware of the gestures they used and reported that, "It is our habit to move our fingers and hands and we did this unconsciously."

When the students were asked if their teacher was teaching them gestures, one student commented that, "I do not know and I did not think so in the class", even though the observations demonstrated that the teacher taught the gestures both explicitly and implicitly. With regard to this question, one of the students reported, "Yes, I know that the teacher taught some hand movement," but another student commented that, "I did not remember".

All of the students commented that they had not had another teacher teach them body language.

When the students were asked to give further comments about their teacher's gestures, one student stated that, "I found them helpful for our understanding." When they were asked for comments on their own gestures, some of them commented that, "by gesture we can say our intended meaning to the teacher better rather than we had not use it."

Finally, when they were asked if they would like to talk further about their teacher's gesture, they simply stated that, "it was just helpful in order to comprehend the book better."

Instructor interview

After the class observation videos were reviewed, the teacher interview was administered to show the teacher video clips of her teaching (See Appendix C for questions lists (8 questions obtained from Hudson (2012)). Overall, three videos were shown from the data to the teacher.

Clip 1- Grammar

To begin, the teacher was asked if she had ever seen herself on video. She replied it was the first time that she experienced and seen herself on video. Because of the cultural issues in the EFL context of Iran a lot of teachers did not permit the researcher to video their ways of teaching in the classroom. The teacher was then shown the first video clip, as she stepped backwards; the teacher used gestures to indicate past tense. After the clip was shown, her initial answer was a statement on her specific purpose in the lesson that was to demonstrate to the students to integrate more verbs into their speeches. In addition to her clear speech, she used many gestures.

The teacher continued by stating both unawareness and conscious of her gestures and nonverbal behavior. She commented, "In some situations such as teaching reflexive verbs and haptics, I did not aware of my gestures and I naturally used them but in some lessons and in some contexts such as in grammar parts, I was aware that I stepped backward to show past tense and I used gestures intentionally for students to learn the lessons better." She further commented that, "some teachers lose gestures and as they are writing, talking. You cannot talk to the board." This indicated that she used gestures for students' understanding.

Clip 2- Lexis

The teacher was shown the second clip about lexis. She reported that, "I was doing actions to explain the meaning of the words clear because I have to." She also stated that, "If I do not have CD player to play it, I just talk to the students to clarify the meaning of the words."

Handedness

When asked the teacher about the use of her right hand, the specific section of the interview was as follows:

R: You used your right hand more than expected; maybe you are used to having….

T: you are right; I used my right hand because I wrote by my left hand and sometimes I have writing tools in my left hand. I have actually been in the teaching field approximately 15 years and always I wrote by my left hand.

5. Discussion

In this particular classroom, it is important to make a distinction between the instructor's roles both as an Iranian and as a teacher of language. By incorporating culture-specific gestures in addition to the other gestures she exhibited, the instructor was performing her role as an American in addition to performing her role as a teacher of language in the classroom.

Vygotsky (1978) in his study used the example of children's gesture and stated that finger pointing indicated an interpersonal relationship, and an intrapersonal relationship formed after this cultural mediation. Learning another language occurred in the context of social interaction, and particularly in this research the gestures of the teacher toward her students, is a

kind of social interaction and semiotic mediation (Hudson, 2011).

As one of the components of sociocultural theory, activity theory is essential to the discussion of the data. In this research, the focus was on the role of gesture in teaching and learning and the researcher investigated the gestures used in the EFL classroom by one female teacher and her students during one semester. The results are discussed with respect to embodied actions of the teacher.

The gestures were organized into two different linguistic categories of grammar and lexis. The teacher taught gestures on classroom management according to function. This organization shows the teacher's efforts to concretize the language and codify it as presented to the students. So, not only the gestures, but also the functions, are discussed in the following sections.

Pedagogical performance

Performance was an important part of the teacher's EFL lessons. Newman and Holzman (1993) describe performance from the Vygotskyan viewpoint. It is important to distinguish between the teacher's roles in this class, both as an Iranian and as a language teacher. The teacher demonstrated her role as an Iranian and as a language teacher by incorporating culturally specific gestures and other gestures.

Communication as dance

Kendon (1990) and Wells (1999) refer to communication as a "dance." In the present research, in order to illustrate lexical meaning, the teacher used exaggerated gestures with facial

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expressions. This sometimes made the students laugh when the teacher used her whole body specifically to transfer meaning and help the students internalize the English language process.

An ecological view of the classroom

According to the activity theory, the events that occurred were part of an ecosystem in an environmental sense. From an eco-social semiotic frame of reference, the events that occurred in the classroom were considered, as the gestures must be analyzed in the context. The eco-social semiotics of this particular classroom include the use of space and time by the teacher, her orientation during teaching in the classroom, and what she wanted to do. For teachers to understand how gestures have been applied in the context of this classroom, all of these characteristics are essential. The data in this study was examined With respect to this feature of activity theory because the teacher's consideration of the nature of the language classroom was an essential component of what was observed.

The teacher's use of space in the classroom

The teacher developed her space in the classroom in relation to the use of gestures within an eco-semiotic framework when she was going to include mimetic actions. To answer the questions, the teacher stood in front of the classroom. The teacher used space in her pedagogical performance by standing in front of the classroom. The students could anticipate what would happen when they saw her walk into a position in front of the podium standing before them. In addition, when the teacher was to explain a new concept, she introduced it in front of the podium, and when she

completed it, she returned to her previous position behind the podium.

Foreigner talk

An important component here was that some foreigner talk was included in the teacher's speech; however, some components of her speech were contradictory to that of traditional foreigner talk. For instance, the teacher's foreigner talk did not include simplification or attrition of lexical items or an increase in volume. Foreigner talk is mimetic in general. Foreigner talk, however, has a reduction in language. The teacher did not reduce the language in this study. She wanted comprehensibility to increase. Therefore, the actions of the teacher were similar to the foreigner talk because the aim was to increase comprehensibility. The teacher did not decrease the grammatical components. Thus, there was a difference between the traditional foreigner talk and the teacher foreigner talk. The teacher's actions in the classroom included some register of communication than to simply reduce linguistic elements.

Pedagogical uses of space with regard to gesture categories

In the grammar section, when the teacher wanted to explain past tense, she included deictic gestures for that she did not use a particular space. The interview showed that when explaining past tense, the teacher was aware of stepping backwards. In the lexical section, the teacher used more space to demonstrate lexical meaning. This was demonstrated by describing *actions*.

Teaching context

Lazaraton (2004) studied the gestures of a teacher more frequently when the lesson concentrated on meaning rather than form. In addition, Lazaraton noted that the teacher reduced the range of gestures in the context of form-focused teaching than in the context of meaning-focused teaching. The study findings confirm Lazaraton's findings that when referring to grammar and vocabulary, the teacher did not gesture as often. A possible reason is that it is hard to concretize many words into gestures when the teacher explains grammar. The teacher often used concrete deictic gestures when teaching grammar.

Reconceptualization of foreigner talk as teacher foreigner talk

According to McNeill (1992), if an utterance cannot be interpreted from context, a speaker displays gestures. While the teacher showed gesture in the data, she also showed this when the speech was in a manner that cannot be understood from context.

Metaphorics

In the current study, the instructor performed several metaphoric gestures to represent the lexical meaning of concepts such as frustration, understanding, and feeling. This was in addition to the many instances where the instructor concretized words such as *speaking*, *pronunciation*, and *sound*. The instructor exhibited concretization to remedy the fact that ESL students need contextualization.

Concretization helps students to better contextualize language and meaning through gestural mimetic representation (McCafferty, 2008b). McNeill (1992) discusses the types of metaphoric gestures in narrative. This includes

the presentation of the idea of the conduit metaphor, explaining that abstract concepts such as language, knowledge, and art are presented as bounded containers. In these abstract gestures, the meaning is presented as having substance, the substance is inside a container, and the container can be passed to a recipient via a conduit.

Abstract deictics

To illustrate the grammar, vocabulary and linguistic elements, the teacher used abstract deictic gestures. For instance, the teacher pointed to her ear to indicate listening. In line with McNeill's (1992) research findings, this use of deictic gestures is in the sense that deictic gestures are about something abstract.

Iconics

The teacher used iconic gestures, for concrete objects that were small (McNeill, 1992). In order to illustrate these concrete objects, the teacher used realia. For example, (Figure 13), the teacher used her book as a realia and lifted up the book with both hands in order to show students' attention to page *forty- five*.

Haptics

Together with abstract deictic gestures, haptic gestures were also used to illustrate lexical meaning of senses, as while the teacher touched her ears, nose, and mouth when she was explaining the senses.

Symmetry

Many of the gestures observed in the data were symmetrical. For instance (Figures 10), the teacher used both hands to point to both her ears. The teacher used only one hand to point to her ear to show the term listening. In some instances, the

teacher used both hands to ensure that the students listen to her carefully.

Handedness

McNeill (1992) argued that people use their dominant hand for gesture. In particular, with the dominant hand, iconic and metaphoric gestures are made. The teacher was expected to perform these gestures with her left hand. However, although the teacher was left- handed, her right hand showed a lot of gestures. This was because she had a marker or pen in her left hand and she had gesture with her right hand. In the data, even if she did not have teaching material in her left hand, she would frequently use her right hand to gesture.

Teacher's view of gesture as a mediational form in L2 learning

In the interview, the teacher stated that teachers should not write on the board when they are talking. She commented, "some teachers lose gestures and as they are writing, talking. You cannot talk to the board. You must join on many levels. Teachers lose them." These statements demonstrate that the teacher responsibility was to involve gesture as a mediational tool in foreign language learning.

Authenticity

Lazaraton (2004) suggested that teachers who provide clear, slow enunciation may equip students with an unauthentic learning context when this is compared to the authentic English context outside the classroom. The gestures employed by the teacher in the present research and her responses during the interview, showed that she believed the students' comprehension of

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content matter is important in the classroom.

Consciousness of gesture use

After viewing and analyzing the data, language teacher interview demonstrated that in some contexts she was aware of the use of gestures and in some situations she was not. The interview revealed that the teacher was both unconscious and conscious of her gestures and her body movement. She commented, "In some situations such as teaching reflexive verbs and haptics, I was not aware of my gestures and I naturally used them but in some lessons and in some contexts such as in grammar parts, I was aware that I stepped backward to show past tense and I used gestures intentionally for students to learn the lessons better."

6. Conclusions and implications

Gesture plays an important role in communication and in second language learning. The lexical and gestural component of ESL instructors' pedagogy still requires further attention in the realm of second language acquisition research. Even more thorough consideration of the aspects of classroom discourse will provide more insight into the role of teacher and student speech and behavior in the language classroom.

Gesture is clearly an important part of the language classroom. The purpose of this research was to investigate how gesture is used with language learners, and to consider how gesture affects meaning in the foreign language classroom. Gesture is beneficial in students 'struggle to communicate in a foreign language.

The topic of gesture and foreign language behavior is recently being considered in regard to foreign language learning. The observations reveal teacher's belief about how much gesture played a role in making meaning for the students in the classroom. One important feature of the present study is that the teacher was aware in some contexts of the gestures she used. This study has given teachers a better ability to understand how gesture is used in the classroom. Gestures play important role in the realm of foreign language learning.

The findings of this qualitative study provide some pedagogical implications for the field of foreign language acquisition. With respect to skills related to language acquisition, it is important for teachers to be aware of other particular pedagogical functions that are interpreted with gestures. One important pedagogical implication is that teachers should be aware of the culture of the students and ask them if they understand the specific gestures that have been exhibited. Another implication is that it is possible for teachers in the foreign language classroom to overuse gestures, and make students over-reliant on the teacher's gestures to understand lessons. Is it possible for teachers not to use enough gestures? Gestures are a natural part of the language classroom, and if teacher does not expose students to adequate gesture, is this a disservice to students? One limitation in this study is that the observations were only of a single instructor. Another limitation of this study is that this particular course was a pronunciation and listening course; further study is warranted on other language skills.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data Transcription Conventions

Oral Data

…=ellipsis;

<.>, <..>, <…>= pauses of different lengths;

<italics>= comments by transcriber; movement other than gesture by the participants;

<?>= unclear utterances;

<# word#>= uncertain hearing;

<@>= laughter during speech;

Wor-= word truncation;

_ = verbal utterances corresponding to the whole gestural phase;

*= self-interruption;

= = other interruption;

% = non speech sound (such as a swallow)

Gestural Data

[italics]= description of gestures, trajectory, shape, location;

LH= left hand;

LHF= left hand forming a fist;

RH= right hand;

RHF= right hand forming a fist;

BH= both hands;

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BHC= both hands open, facing each other, forming a half-open container shape;

LPO= left palm open;

LPOU= left palm open, facing up;

LPOD= left palm open, facing down;

RPO= right palm open;

RPOU= right palm open, facing down;

LA= left arm;

RA= right arm;

C-VPT= character viewpoint of an iconic gesture;

O-VPT= observer viewpoint of an iconic gesture

Appendix B: Student Follow-Up Survey Questions

1. Are you aware of the gestures that your teacher uses?
2. If yes, what do you think about the gestures?
3. Are you aware of the gestures that you use?
4. If yes, what do you think about the gestures that you use?
5. Has your current teacher taught you gestures?
6. If yes, which ones?
7. Have you had another teacher teach you gestures?
8. If yes, which ones?
9. Do you have any other comments about your teacher's gestures?
10. Do you have any other comments about your own gestures?
11. Would you be interested in talking with me about your teacher's gestures?

Appendix C: Teacher Background Questionnaire

1. Which classes are you currently teaching?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is/are your native language(s)?
4. Please indicate any other language(s) spoken and how you learned each language.
5. Please describe in detail your experience living in other countries. (Please list the countries you have lived in and the amount of time you lived there).
6. Please describe in detail your experience traveling to other countries.
7. Please list your education including major(s). (For questions 7 &8, please feel free to just attach your CV if it is easier).
8. Please list your teaching experience (include school, years teaching, grade, and subject).

Thank you!

Appendix D: Teacher Follow-Up Interview Questions

1. Have you ever seen yourself on video while teaching? If so, what were your impressions?
2. When you watch these clips, what do you notice about yourself as a teacher?
3. Are you aware that you use gestures as part of your teaching? For what purposes do you use gesture? What are you generally trying to accomplish?
4. At times, it seems like you are performing the language. What do you think?
5. Do you have any thoughts as to why you use your right hand to gesture?
6. What is your theater background?
7. You bring in personal experience and use that to relate to what you are teaching. Are you aware that you do that? Why do you do that?