

## Enhancing paralinguistic features through Dubsmash: A Case Study

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### Abstract

In the present era, communication is an important skill to excel in all professions, especially in the field of engineering and management studies. Fluency and accuracy in English is expected from the candidate as an essential part to enter his professional arena from learning arena. So, it is obvious that a learner should equip himself/herself with communication skills which comprises both verbal as well as nonverbal communication. According to the general thought that, 'Action speaks louder than words', would also be interpreted as nonverbal signs are more important than verbal. Paralinguistics are the components of spoken communication that may or may not include words. Thus, this study focuses on the enhancement of paralinguistic features which is the major part of communication other than fluency and accuracy. In order to keep up with the trend in technology and to kindle the interest of the learners as well as to enhance their communication skills in an innovative way, this case study explains the application of dubsmash as a technique to develop the learner's paralinguistic features.

### Keywords

*Communication, Dubsmash, Paralinguistics, Non verbal, Verbal*

### I. Introduction

Technology has become an inevitable part of education. In various field of studies, the use of technology has enhanced the quality of research. In the case of English Language Teaching, the focus has to be on all the four skills could be done through a combination of technology and face to face interaction. David Crystal in his book on language and internet shares his view on the paradigm shift in the thought process of the present generation as:

An emphasis, which formerly was on technology, has shifted to be on people and purposes. And as the Internet comes increasingly to be viewed from a social perspective, so the role of language becomes central. Indeed, notwithstanding the remarkable technological achievements and the visual panache of screen presentation, what is immediately obvious when engaging in any of the Internet's functions is its linguistic character. If the Internet is a revolution, therefore, it is likely to be a linguistic revolution. [12]

The above statement clearly proves that internet could be a resource for teaching linguistic features that are essential for interaction. Though interaction is applicable to all living beings, in the case of humans, they employ paralinguistic skills to communicate with others. Developing effective communication [10] skills could possibly help the learners to have successful interaction in their interpersonal relationships. Paralinguistic features are components of both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. It is entangled in these two skills and exist in continuum with these two skills. Effective communication skills would probably enable anyone to understand people and their situations better. Though paralinguistics was not given due credit in language studies, recently, linguists have demonstrated greater interest in this aspect.

Para linguistics could be defined as the non lexical components of a speech or spoken word [8]. They add various levels of attributes to what people say. Para linguistics also incorporate the analysis of vocal and non-vocal signals beyond verbal communication. The etymological meaning indicates that it is derived from both Greek and Latin,

which means “beside” + “language”, i.e. Para+ linguistics [5]. But the boundaries of paralinguistics are (unavoidably) imprecise [1]. Even in the earlier researches, it has been found that humans speak with their vocal organs, but they converse using their entire body. “Paralinguistic phenomena occur alongside spoken language, interact with it, and produce together with it a total system of communication. The study of paralinguistic behavior is part of the study of conversation: the conversational use of spoken language cannot be properly understood unless paralinguistic elements are taken into account” [2].

### ***1.1. Components in Para linguistics***

Paralinguistic components are crucial as they could probably change the message completely. The components include: body language, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, tone, pitch, and voice modulation. Shirley Weitz observes paralinguistics as “sets great store on how something is said, not on what is said” [1].

### ***1.2. Necessity of Effective Communication***

Effective communication plays an active role to make a person understand the emotion behind a message. There are various subtle nuances that are lost in electronic media. Effective communication skills help the learners to develop mutual trust thus developing a strong bond with the individual and also deepen interpersonal connections. The first step to become a good communicator is to listen. Here, too one should be an active listener. Listening is different from hearing, in the case of the latter; one should look for the underlying emotions and how the speaker feels. Effective listening avoids misunderstanding and create a healthy environment where the speaker feels that they are given due importance.

## **II. Hypothesis**

The major problem of any learner is that their pronunciation of English words are influenced by their mother tongue and as non native speakers most of the Indian learners tend to use words in a manner which is referred to as ‘Indianism’ in their spoken communication. The researcher had identified ‘Indianism’ in the communication of the experimental learners and they are unaware of stress and pause as well as the context in which they should raise their volume and appropriate intonation. After practising the method dubsmash the learners could use fillers and also should articulate the words with proper pronunciation. Also, in accordance, the learner would possibly express their facial expression and gestures. Hence the researcher wanted to enhance the paralinguistic features in their communication through dubsmash technique.

## **III. Objective**

The aim of this research is to make the students as better communicators by incorporating paralinguistic features in their communication through dubsmash technique, which would probably enrich their communication in work environment.

### ***3.1. Types of paralinguistic features***

Exercising paralinguistic features effectively make the learners stand apart from others. To be precise, paralinguistic features not only involves the meaning of words but also the pronunciation and their body language. Paralinguistic feature is of two types. The first type is vocal paralinguistic features and the second type is body paralinguistic features. The components that come under vocal paralinguistic features are pitch, volume, accent, tone, fillers, rhythm, articulation, and modulation. Paralinguistic features that come under the second category are facial expressions, body language, and gesture. The practitioners should incorporate these features in their speaking in order to become professionals.

## **IV. Literature review**

In the present scenario, technology has become a handy tool for both teachers and learners. It enables the teachers to teach in more interesting and innovative ways and in the process also makes learning fun and can certainly add another dimension. Technologically advanced tools such as Blogs, Face book, Skype, Twitter, Whatsapp and Instagram along with sufficient use of gadgets like Smart phones, laptops or PCs have changed the physical classroom into a world of possibilities for learning English as a second language [13]. The researchers have

surveyed a series of papers before narrowing down the research topic. Paralinguistic language features not only deal with language related techniques but also include a formal system. For instance: when a person smiles, he/she raise their eyebrows, action, and movements etc. These are the movements in which one could plausibly understand the confident level of the learner and also their talents. Further, the researchers have added gestures and postures as other kinds of non-verbal communication. They depict the current status of their mind. For example; the scratching of our head indicate confusion mode, a slouching man indicate laziness and people holding their head down indicate getting upset and inferiority. These are the signs that match with one's mindset and body language. In addition, voice modulation conveys meaning with proper intention and mode of the speaker. For example, if a person's voice rises to a high pitch, it indicates that he/ she is angry.

According to Townsend, words convey meaning but they may fail to deliver the absolute content but the body language conveys 75% of the 'real' message [4]. In "Multiple levels of linguistic and paralinguistic features contribute to voice recognition" by Jean Zarate, Xing Tian and David Poeppel, their research demonstrates the contribution of phonetics towards meaning making [3]. Similarly, in the article titled "Paralinguistics", the importance of paralinguistic features, which is a spoken communication that does not have an involved word has been described. It gives some sensible expression and support to our speaking. Paralinguistic features are important in our speaking and it may change the meaning of the content, tone and pitch which is the support to conveying meaning in the form of language. It gives great impact to the language as well as body language. In "Paralinguistic Effect On Developing EFL Students' Listening Comprehension Skills" by Shams, Salwa Muhammed, Elsaadany, Kamel Abdelbadie, they had analysed the effect of paralinguistic feature for EFL'S student and how they learned and adopt the foreign accent in which investigate and help them to develop the speaking skill [6,7]. In Tanta University, a faculty had conducted an experiment in which the students are divided into two groups. The first group looks for the paralinguistic features that accompany spoken discourse whereas the Second sets of students listen only to the discourse material. Hence, the experiment comes to the conclusion; the result is that the first group has enhanced their paralinguistic feature by listening to the discourse even though the content is the same.

#### **4.1. Dubsmash**

Dubsmash refers to a brand name of an app for sending video messages on a mobile phone [9]. Using this application, users could possibly choose an audio recording or sound track and record a video of themselves dubbing over that piece of audio. Dubsmash is a video messaging application for iOS and Android. This application allows the users to record their video with an audio of their choice from a recording or soundbite from movies, shows, music or internet trends [13]. Dubsmash not only enhances the creativity of the learners but also entertains them.

### **V. Methodology**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom, students are interested in using dubsmash as an entertainment. They are willing to adopt the dialogue, accent and pronunciation that are related to the clips and video. As a result, the participants adopt the gesture and accent from the video clippings that they have watched, practiced and in turn improved their communication skills. They are willing to adopt the dialogue, accent and pronunciation that are related to the clips and video. As a result, the participants adopt the gesture and accents from the concept. This is the motif of the researchers that the students of management should improve the paralinguistic features, in a methodology in which the learner willingly participated to shape their speaking skills through a model presentation. This in turn leads to the eloquence of speech which ultimately leads to eloquence of thought and as technology expands, eloquence of speech seems to be an area which is contracting or in decline. Enthusiastic internet users can actually get by with very little speech [16]. The researcher has followed audio lingual method in which the learner easily adopts the accent, body language, tone, articulation of what they listen to. Besides, rehearsing, recording and editing spoken work digitally allows pupils to improve their pronunciation, boost their confidence, extend their speaking and listen back as many times as they like [15]. Using dubsmash is similar to the synchronous solutions like video-conferencing and face-to-face interaction through online virtual worlds are becoming increasingly popular as vehicles to promote language learning [14].

#### **5.1. Description**

An experiment was conducted among 10 students of the School of Engineering and Management. The study is divided into five activities and the report is as follows:

##### **5.1.1. Activity-1**

In the first activity, the students were brainstormed the importance of speaking skills. Then, the participants are summoned even if they showed hesitation and lacked interest, they were given copies of the poem of ‘O Captain, my captain’ and were asked to recite the poem. The participant students did not have the knowledge of paralinguistic features when they narrated the poem and their paralinguistic features were noted with a parameter. The recitation was observed and it was identified to be insensible with improper pronunciation, body gesture, lack of interest and lack of confidence.

The following figure (Fig 1) shows the paralinguistic features observed among the students before they became aware about the paralinguistic features. The x axis shows the parameters on which the students were analysed and Y axis displays the range of marks (100 maximum)they scored in the direct observation session.

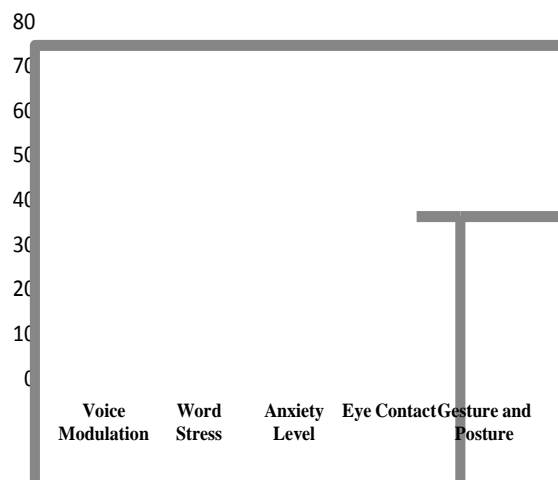


Fig. 1 parameters of paralinguistic features before the activity

5.1.2. Activity -2

In the second activity, the researchers introduced the concept of ‘paralinguistic features’ to the pupils. Definition of paralinguistic features was given and the questions of the students were clarified. The importance of major paralinguistic features such as pitch, tone, volume, articulation, modulation, fillers, rhymes, speed, facial expression, gestures, body language and eye contact are explained to the learners and they were made to understand that these features help them to enhance their communication skills. The researcher further explained the importance of paralinguistic that there is the relationship between the emotion and words in which the message is to be conveyed with the meaning in the proper sense.

5.1.3. Activity -3

In the third activity, the researchers recollected the concept of paralinguistic to the learners. Later, a video of ‘O Captain, My Captain’ recited by SaiKollo is displayed to the learners [10, 11]. The learners took some hints based on the video and simultaneously they observed the reciter’s facial expression, accent, pitch, volume, tone etc while reciting the poem. By the using the technique of dubsplash, the learners tried to imitate her performance. The researcher stimulated the learners to apply the paralinguistic features on their speaking skills. Some students are willingly participated in the task and they also partially succeed in their activity. In the practicing session, the learners made a few mistakes which the researcher pointed out and for the errors, the researcher gave solution to recover from the mistakes. Then, the learners are asked to keep practicing the concept of the poem by using the technique, dubsplash. The mirror is the best tool for justifying our mistake and rectifies them. Likewise, dubsplash reflects our mistakes when we perform in front of the camera. Moment after moment, the learner gets stronger and modify their attitude of themselves. It strengthened their level of confidence and reduced the hesitation. At the end of the activity the researcher gave individual feedback and suggestion and solution to rectify their mistakes.

5.1.4. Activity-4

In the fourth activity, the whole class practiced and clarified their doubts. The whole class got ready to perform on the stage without any fear. Then, the researcher justified the learner’s recitation of the poem of “O Captain, My Captain” in which the researcher qualified the speaking skill of the learner and how paralinguistic makes their accent, perfect and also they exhibited good body language. Then the learner proved their ability to speak with correct pronunciation, accent pitch and volume.

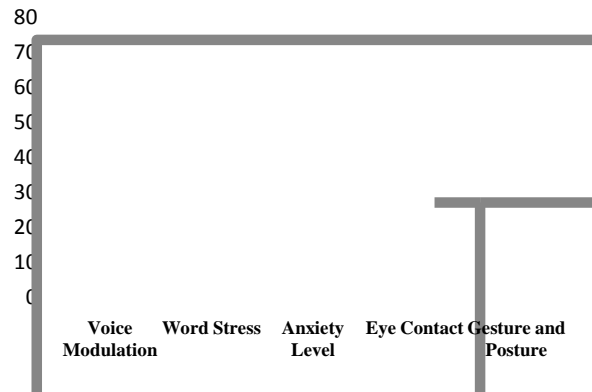


Fig. 2 parameters of paralinguistic features after the activity

The above figure (Fig 2) illustrates the enhancement of paralinguistic features after the inputs given to the students. The students practiced their presentation, observing the person in the video and formed their own parameters. They were conscious about the parameters and their influence on the onlookers which paved way for their improvement. It is evident from the diagram that their anxiety level is comparatively lower than the previous performance. Other features are found to be better than the initial performance.

5.1.5. Activity-5

This activity also calls for peer correction as they practice along with their colleagues. They can correct one another and offer feedback which would not invite criticism and this would help them to observe what others do in the same condition. They could develop paralinguistic features on their own and present the content in a unique way.

**VI. Conclusion**

Thus, this study proves that in the changing scenario, the teachers should use various latest methodologies of to prepare the learners who enter the professional world. There are a lot of techniques available to improve one’s communication skills but dubsmash proves to be a unique way to enhance the paralinguistic features and it is shown clearly to deliberately improve one’s communication skills.

**6.1. Further Study and Recommendation**

In the case of management students, they can focus on TED talks delivered by people of great knowledge in their respective areas and they can imitate them and this can pave way for their enhanced communication.

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