



## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN PRESENTATION BY THE GERMAN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN INDONESIA

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p><b>Received:</b> April 4<sup>th</sup> 2021 <b>Accepted:</b> April 22<sup>th</sup> 2021 <b>Published:</b> May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021</p>	<p>This study attempts to describe the verbal and nonverbal communication strategy used by students in Freier Vortrag (Free Speech) course. The research was conducted at the Universitas Negeri Malang Indonesia for one semester. 39 female and seven male students participated in this study and they were aged between 20-21 years old. The data was collected through videotape and observation sheets. The findings revealed that students used various communication strategies. Interestingly, this research revealed that female students unconsciously produced specific body language when they tried to generate ideas and control themselves over nervousness. It also indicated that students should increase their ability to be able to speak German fluently and accurately. The implication for research and practice is that lecturers should know the communication strategies; thus, they can find out the difficulties of students presenting in German and can find solutions to these problems.</p>

**Keywords:** Communication strategies, verbal and nonverbal, Free Speech

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Research on verbal and non-verbal language has been widely carried out among others by Kadhim, Kamiasi, and Ramlah (Kadhim et al., 2020; Kamiasi & Nepsa, 2019; Ramallah et al., 2019). However, research on verbal and non verbal in a presentation in German has never been done. Kadhim's research is an analytical study of the use of body language in August Strindberg's play *The Stronger* (Kadhim et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Kamiasi's research describes the teacher's gestures in an English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Kamiasi & Nepsa, 2019), while Ramallah's research focuses on the non-verbal communication provided by the teachers for their students, which creates a relaxed learning atmosphere (Ramallah et al., 2019). This study aims to answer the questions, how to overcome students' difficulties in presenting some materials using German in Freier Vortrag (later called FV) course? What are the communication strategies used by students? What are the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies used by students? Those are the underlying questions and problems in this study. FV course is compulsory to be taken by fourth-year students of the undergraduate program at Universitas Negeri Malang (State University of Malang, later called UM) Indonesia. The classroom activity was mainly in the form of an individual presentation followed by a discussion session, in which the presenters should present scientific and current issues in German language learning. The purpose of such a discussion session is to help students to be able to use some communicative expressions in the class for any roles, such as presenter, moderator, and audience.

The objective of the course is in line with the vision and mission of the German Department, Faculty of Letter, the UM. The primary purpose is to make students become competent German speakers. Subsequently, they are expected to be qualified tour guides and translators as the additional competencies. Mastering German is a must for students because it will help them to have better careers in the future either as teachers, tour guides, or translators.

To support the vision of the program, the students are equipped with language skill courses to facilitate them to be good public speakers. Therefore, in the FV course, students were assigned to present and to discuss some issues related to language teaching. European Union political language categorized language mastery into six stages: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 (Glaboniat et al., 2013). Having a B1 language mastery level is the prerequisite for this course. Most of the students found some difficulties to present the presentation material in German. However, they tried to explain the content and to communicate with the audience using various communication strategies.

Opina has done similar research on verbal communication. She carried out research entitled *Verbal Communication Behaviors: How Male and Female University Students Interact in Gendered Talks*. She investigated the verbal communication behavior in mixed-gender and same-gender talks. Her findings revealed that the gender, group size, and nature of talk influence the employment of interactional strategies. Furthermore, she also found that of the verbal communication behaviors during all-male and all-female conversations were similar in both groups (Opina, 2017a).

In this study, German students come from different provinces in Indonesia, in which they have different languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, Maduranese, and other languages as a mother tongue (L1). Therefore, they preferred

to use the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, to communicate with friends instead of speaking German since it is a foreign language. Thus, those mentioned above became the main problem of speaking difficulties.

Students tended to use the avoidance strategy because they are afraid of making mistakes. This strategy is further categorized into two types: (1) topic avoidance because of the limited knowledge about the topic being discussed; and (2) message abandonment, which occurs during a conversation when students do not acquire the target language. A paraphrase is used to explain a specific concept using personal words, giving examples, different sentence structures, synonym, and giving more explanations for the idea. Borrowing means using a foreign language expression to be able to deliver the material well. Commonly, it is known as code-mixing. Appeal for Assistance is applied when students need some direct or indirect assistance from others when they do not know how to express their messages correctly. Mime refers to delivering messages in mime or using gestures.

Tarone divided communication strategies into five main categories: paraphrase, borrowing, appeals for assistance, mime, and avoidance (Tarone, 1981). From the explanation as mentioned earlier and examples of nonverbal communication, he defined communication strategies as (1) the learners' effort to express meaning in the target language systematically when they could not use the target language correctly, and (2) the learners' conscious effort to communicate their ideas when the inter-language doesn't successfully express the intended meaning (Tarone, 1981).

Meanwhile, in describing the nonverbal communication, the researcher refers to a theory proposed by Saul. She explained that communication strategies comprise two components, sprachliche Signale (language sign) or digital sign and nicht sprachliche Signale (non-language sign) or analog (Saul, 1999). Each element is further broken down in the table 1 shows:

*Table 1: Language and non-language sign*

<b>language sign (digital)</b>	<b>nonlanguage sign (analog)</b>		
content	style	Attitude	Performance
	voice	mime	clothes
	volume	eye contact	smell
	rhythm	attitude	hair cut
	intonation	distance with the audience	jewelry
		head movement	

In contrast to verbal communication, nonverbal communication is done unconsciously through body language or gesture. The sender tries to convey messages as bright as possible using specific gestures for unknown appropriate vocabulary and expression in German, hoping that the receiver understands the message clearly. As stated earlier that *sprachliche Signale* (digital) and *nicht sprachliche Signale* (analog) are the elements of communication strategy, the researcher limits the scope of this study only on attitude to discuss and interpret the findings more comprehensively.

Considerable research has been done on communication strategies. Indriwardhani found that most of the third-semester students who registered in Konversation II (conversation II) course made use of borrowing communication strategy in the form of literal translation; Students literally translated some sentences into their mother tongue or English due to their limited vocabulary and low grammar mastery. They were still beginner German learners (Indriwardhani, 2012). This current study has significant differences with a study conducted by Indriwardhani in many ways, such as the research subject and the length of the survey. The previous study was conducted to the third-semester students or the second-year students, while fourth-year students participated in this study. It indicated that students have taken or completed more language skill courses before this research has taken place. Furthermore, this research was carried out for one semester (16 meetings) with more participants.

Researching verbal and nonverbal communication plays a significant role in the field of communication strategies. It is in line with Azari's et al. statement that "although the findings of different studies vary with each other, but it can be concluded that "nonverbal signs" are vital in interpersonal communications and many cases have a critical role in transferring meaning from one person to another" (Azari et al., 2017).

**2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The qualitative descriptive research design was employed to describe the obtained data. The research was conducted at the UM Indonesia for one semester (16 meetings). In every session, students have to present about anything related to language learning. One student had an only one-time presentation scheduled. Forty-six students participated in the study. The researcher made used all the population as the sample of this study; in other words, no specific sampling techniques were employed. The majority of the participants are female (39 students) and male (7 students), and they were aged between 20-21 years old. The data was collected through documentation (videotape) and observation sheets. The obtained data was then analyzed and described.

The researcher videotaped the teaching and learning process in FV class when the students did the presentation and discussion activity. The students were accustomed to being videotaped in the classroom. Thus, it was not their first time to be videotaped when they spoke to the audience in the presentation because they have often participated as research subjects in some other courses and the previous semester. The obtained data was data visual from the

video in the form of verbal and nonverbal. The information is then analyzed following Miles and Huberman's interactive model (Miles & Huberman, 1992). The following are the procedures of data analysis: (1) data collection, obtained from video and observation (2) data reduction, identifying, describing, and classifying the communication strategy based on the category, (3) data interpretation, the classified data is given a code to match with the research problem, (4) data verification and concluding, to check whether the data interpretation and analysis is in line with the purpose of the study which further conclusion can be drawn, (5) data checking, done through two steps: checking the observation data and triangulation to check the corpus data, descriptive data, and research findings (Meleong, 2005).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Result

##### 3.1.1 Verbal Communication Strategies

Based on data collection and classification, it was found that students made using most of the types of communication strategies (verbal and nonverbal) during the presentation in the class. First, students employed verbal communication strategies in the form of avoidance, paraphrase, borrowing, and appeal for assistance. The detail description of each type can be seen below:

##### Avoidance

During the presentation, the students who acted as presenters used this strategy in different ways and characteristics as follow:

1. When the media could not be successfully displayed and operated, the presenter diverted the audience's focus to her explanation about the topic.
2. When the media did not function well, the presenter directly explained the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching media instead of discussing the assigned topic.
3. When the presenter was not quite sure whether his explanation about 'data collection' was right, he spontaneously decided to talk about his teaching media. So, he shifted from explaining the 'data collection' topic to something that he could explain well.
4. When the presenter could not define the word Pantomime in German, he diverted the audiences' focus to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the pantomime.
5. When the presenter could not explain clearly about the typology of exercises according to Übungstypologie (typology test) Gerhard Neuner, he directly considered the topic of the importance of being able to speak German well.
6. The presenter did not explain his/her research method and teaching media.

##### Paraphrase

Paraphrasing was expressing the same idea in different or personal words when it was challenging to find appropriate words or expressions in German. See the following description for further information:

1. The presenter explained the terms *Handpuppe* (hand puppet) and *Ausgangssphrase* (saying goodbye) in his own words.
2. The presenter explained his media and the procedures to operate them in their words.
3. The presenter explained the teaching procedure for the Cross-Cultural Understand II course using their words.

##### Borrowing

The students commonly apply this strategy by translating the L2 vocabulary to L1 or other foreign languages. The followings are some proves that students made use of Borrowing strategy in the classroom:

1. The presenter spoke Javanese (the native language of Javanese) to say "invisible" because she did not know how to say it in German.
2. The presenter used the word "*pion*" for "figure."
3. The presenter used the English word "sorry," which is "*Entschuldigung*" in German.

##### Appeal for assistance

Asking for help to other students for any communication difficulties, whether directly or indirectly is a part of this strategy, for example:

1. The presenter needed the audience's assistance by saying, "*Was ist das* (what is that?)" when he:
  - a. explained teaching media for a conversation course
  - b. got confused when explaining his teaching media suddenly did not work
2. The presenters spontaneously spoke Javanese "*opo iku* (what was it)? very loudly to get the audience help to:
  - a. find German words for "zinc/copper" (*Eisenblech*) and plywood (*Sperholz*)
  - b. find these words "easy," "audio", and "browsing" in German
  - c. tell the correct use of word *Teil* (a part) to explain the structure of the text
3. Also, the presenter used Indonesian and English languages as in the following examples:
  - a. The presenter said, "*membuat itu apa?*" or "What is "to make" in German?"
  - b. The presenter directly said, "beside" because he did not know the term for a word in German

### 3.1.2 Nonverbal Communication Strategies

The next findings revealed that students employed various nonverbal communication strategies, such as:

#### Mime

Grin and smirk appeared when students felt unsure in presenting a part of the material.

1. The mime of a "confused" feeling could easily be identified when they did not perform well.
2. The mime of "frown" was seen when they read the *Beitrag* (paper); however, they showed more serious mime when they explained the structure of their presentation, the content of the article, and its conclusion.
3. When they made mistakes in delivering the material, they spontaneously and unconsciously pulled out their tongue, appeared to be shy, and laughed.

#### Eye contact

Also known as *Wegblicken*, that means students do not make eye contact with the audiences during the presentation.

Below is further information about the strategy:

1. Most of the presenters made eye contact with the audiences only in the opening and closing parts of the session.
2. When the presenters delivered the primary material, they spent most of their time looking at their laptop, PowerPoint slides, ceiling, camera, paper, and outside the class. They focused on their slides when they tried to convince the audience or when they were thinking of some ideas to say, mainly during the discussion session.

#### Presenter-audience distance

It is related to blocking, which means the position in which the students stood during the presentations. From the observation and video, it is found that the distance between all presenters (46 students) and the audience remains the same or static. It seemed that all of the presenters felt comfortable standing nearby the table.

#### Body language

This strategy came up in different ways, the presenter:

1. explained a specific point by using two fingers formed like quotation marks.
2. Raised hand when mentioning the number, for example, two fingers to say "2 teaching materials" and five fingers to say "5 minutes".
3. Twisted his hand to say "austauschen (change)."

Type and Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication Strategies

Body movement can be understood as communication strategies or noncommunicative strategies. In this study, the researcher just focused on somebody movements which were categorized as communicative strategies as presented in table 2:

**Table 2: Type and characteristics of nonverbal communication strategies**

No.	Situation	Non-Verbal	Type
1	Thinking of the material to be presented, mainly during the discussion session	closing eyes; shaking head; touching mouth, nose, face, and wrist; tidying up and touching veil; lifting shoulder; fitting the trousers, putting hands on hips, touching shirts and buttons, always in the sitting position, moving left and right	Communicative
2	Finding some difficulties to present the materials, mainly in question and answer session	scratching head, straightening hair, and fixing glasses	communicative
3	Delivering incorrect information	Clapping hands	communicative
4	Discussing	Touching the laptop screen, rubbing both hands; rolling up shirt sleeves	Non-communicative

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Verbal Communication Strategies

Verbal communication strategies, both in the form of monolog or dialogue, had been used by students to present some materials in FV class to maintain oral fluency in delivering some information or messages to the audience. In the classroom, students used communicative expressions to explain, elaborate, and exemplify their material. They used a speech to play different roles in the classroom, such as presenter, moderator, or audience. Furthermore, they used communicative expressions to discuss current and scientific issues.

In the classroom, all students should present the assigned topics in German. It is undeniable that making students speak fluently and accurately in German is not easy. However, the classroom rules forced the students to present their topics in German. Consequently, students made use of various communication strategies to deliver information and messages to the audience to make sure that they understand and get the words correctly.

One type of verbal communication, avoidance, could be seen when the presenters diverted one topic to another (either relevant/irrelevant) because they found it challenging to find appropriate vocabulary or expression in L2. The



first situation is when presenters should firstly discuss *Untersuchungsergebnis* (research findings), then they diverted it to discuss *Zusammenfassung* (conclusion) which is slightly correlated with *Untersuchungsergebnis* (research findings) in some parts. The second situation is when the presenters should explain about teaching media, but they suddenly told *die Stärke und die Schwäche des Mediums* (the weakness and the strength of media) instead.

Based on those facts, it can be seen that students found it challenging to find appropriate vocabulary and to use L2 sentence structure (German), so they avoid using them by discussing a new topic or using familiar words either in L1 or another foreign language. It is called syntactic avoidance. It is supported by Schachter, as cited in (Ahmed & Isma'eel, 2011). He argued that if a student finds that particular construction of the target language is difficult to comprehend, it is very likely that he will avoid producing it.

Paraphrase strategy was used by the students to explain certain concepts in their words, synonyms, and different sentence structures when they read unfamiliar sentences or unknown words. Nevertheless, students will likely to make a mistake in selecting appropriate diction and grammatical items. It is mainly caused by students' low capability in German. Consequently, it is still hard for students to express ideas orally in German, and it is also difficult to maintain oral fluency during the presentation.

The transfer is another type of communication strategy which was employed by students during the presentation session. Commonly, students made use of some words from their L1 or another foreign language, which they master better than German. It is known as interference (negative transfer). Furthermore, students felt more comfortable to speak a language other than German due to their low competence in the target language; and it was hard for them to express ideas in German. In this case, students used more than one language and, therefore, could easily use another language to avoid communication breakdown. It is also called code-mixing. Nababan, as cited in (Aslinda & Syafyahya, 2007), stated that code-mixing rarely occurs in an informal situation unless the speakers cannot find suitable words or expressions in the target language. So, it is acceptable to use other languages.

Appeal for assistance refers to a communication strategy that requires others to help to transfer the message successfully. It is one type of communication strategy used by the presenters in the classroom, for example, when one speaker did not know the German word for "*membuat* to make. "He asked the audience by saying "*membuat itu apa?*" ("What is "to make" in German?"). A further example was when a presenter said the word "besides?" loudly as if he wanted the audience to help him in finding the correct diction in German.

### 4.2 Nonverbal Communication Strategies

Mime is categorized as analog communication analog, and it has some limitations (Maletzke, 2001). This strategy is made up of the tone of voice, which includes pitch and volume. Those are necessary to complete the meaning. For instance, when speakers were not sure about their explanations, they showed smirk mime with low and wavy voice, and they also grinned.

Also, this strategy could be easily identified when a presenter wanted to show and explain the concept and the function of their teaching media, but it did not work well. In this condition, he showed a "confused" mime accompanied by low voice and stammering. Maletzke emphasized the collaboration between verbal and nonverbal communication strategies:

*"Das besondere der menschlichen Kommunikation besteht jedoch nicht allein in ihrer Fähigkeit zur Digitalisierung, sondern v.a. in der Kombination beider Ebenen, der digitalen (und vorwiegend verbalen) sowie der analogen (und vorwiegend nonverbalen) Ebene"*(Maletzke, 2001).

The previous statement means that human communication does not merely refer to their ability to communicate verbally, but also a human ability to combine two elements, namely at the digital (verbal) and analog (nonverbal) level (Maletzke, 2001). It means the applications of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies should go hand in hand. In other words, they work together and complete each other in communication. Nevertheless, verbal communication strategies are more dominant when disclosure takes place.

The most prominent strategy which can help a presenter to communicate, deliver, and explain the topic successfully is *Blickkontakt* (making eye contact). As communication should happen among two parties, here, the audience is the main target or receiver of the delivered information. Moreover, during the main presentation session, the presenter would be likely to look at both their laptop and projector screen. They needed to look at only one of them. They tried to explain all the materials correctly and accurately. Also, some presenters did other strategies when they tried to remember something by looking at the ceiling and outside through the classroom door.

Presenter-Audience Distance is related to a presenter's standing position during the presentation. The students stood in one place. They did not move towards the audience, or they moved from left to right systematically while interacting with the audience. They just stood next to the presentation table.

The gesture is one of the nonverbal strategies, which involve the body, hand, feet, head, and eye movements. Each movement has its meaning; for example, when students put their pointed finger up means that he explained specific points. Furthermore, when they touched their palm together, it means that they solved the procedures of operating the teaching media. One presenter placed both of his hands on the chest when he said: "*meine*" (mine).

Besides, communication strategy which involves body movement had also been used by presenters. The movement was done to communicate with the audience, such as rotating and moving hands when they explained the material. Psychologically, those body movements could help them to deliver or explain the content well and clearly. Straightening hair and scratching parts of the body were some communication strategies applied by the presenters

when they got confused to explain the material. Surprisingly, this study revealed new communication strategies implemented by female students during communication. "However, specific behaviors were exhibited more by a particular gender which conforms to the findings of previous research studies on language and gender" (Opina, 2017b). As known, most Indonesian are Moslems and one of the obligations for women is to wear hijab. Most female students in FV course wear hijab. During the presentation, they repeatedly straightened and waved their hijab when they were trying to find ideas to say and to overcome nervousness.

Not all body languages were communication strategies. In this study, the researchers focused on the body language done to appeal for assistance. In other words, the researcher excluded unidentified body language, such as straightening and blowing veil for female students, move back and forth and looking at the presentation slide.

### 4.3 The Role of Communication Strategy

Fourth-year students took this course. They have been learning German for about three years. Based on the data analysis, it was indicated that students still made grammatical errors and used wrong words. It was also found that some presenters explained the material out of context. Therefore, it was necessary to use communication strategies, either verbally or nonverbally, to deliver information. When those strategies are integrated, they created a meaningful communication. As stated by Azari, that nonverbal and verbal communication is inseparable (Azari et al., 2017). They always go hand in hand to deliver the message successfully.

Watzlawick, as cited in Maletzke, argued that human communication characteristics make use of digital (verbal) strategy and analog (nonverbal) strategy (Maletzke, 2001). The digital strategy comprises more complex syntax and logic. However, it is less complicated regarding its semantics, while the analog approach is less complicated regarding its syntax but more complex regarding its semantics. Buren supported the previous statement (Buren, 2002). He argued:

*communication takes place in two channels: one verbal, the other nonverbal. While the verbal channel consists of words, the nonverbal channel consists of behaviors that accompany the words. Nonverbal communication consists of several behaviors, including facial expression, paralanguage (voice tone, pitch, loudness), kinesics (posture and gesture), and proxemics (utilization of space and distance)*

Research on verbal and nonverbal communication in foreign language learning is crucial to be done because "foreign language teachers should improve their knowledge of the body language of their learners in the target language and help them to raise awareness of the significance of nonverbal communication in second language discourse" (Kałuska, 2013). All in all, the integration of verbal (digital) and nonverbal (analog) communication strategies are necessary for students as foreign language learners, mainly German to improve and maintain their oral fluency,

## 5. CONCLUSION

Verbal and nonverbal communication appeared during the presentation and discussion session in the FV course. The findings of this study proved that the majority of the students used avoidance strategy for verbal communication and gestures for nonverbal communication. The former is categorized as an oral communication strategy, and the later was classified as a nonverbal communication strategy. The findings proved that students need to give their best effort to improve their ability to speak German fluently. Therefore, the two types of plans help students to convey meaning. The exciting part of this study is the discovery of new communication strategies used by female students during the presentation. It occurred when they straightened and waved their veils when they were trying to find ideas to say. The application of those strategies indicated that the students' ability to speak German, especially their presentation skills, needs to be improved.

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