

The Significance of Non-Verbal Communication in Oral Translation

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to discover a different definition of interpretation and how non-verbal communication is a fundamental interpretation part. Therefore, an interpreter without a good knowledge of non-verbal communication cannot be a complete interpreter. The interpretation process is not only the process of meaning transference from one language to another; it is also the transference of the facial expression, tone of voice, eye contact etc.

The problem of this study is that most interpreters do not take non-verbal communication into consideration, and they do not have enough information about it. This will be proved through an incident happened while USA president Joe Biden delivered a speech in April this year for which all details of the reason illustrated clearly. The lack of knowledge about non-verbal communication can cause problems while interpreting or analyzing a speech of a president or a government official or speaker. It leads to misunderstanding and misinterpretation that might be embarrassing for the interpreter and the organization or the Media network they are working for.

Non-verbal communication can be used in different forms, each illustrating or replacing a specific part of verbal communication. It contains many more figures than anyone might think in the first place. So non-verbal signs/Communications play a significant role in the interpretation. It is the essential base in the interpretation process; interpreters have to concentrate on these elements to carry out a successful interpreting process and achieve great interpretation results.

The data of this study is mainly taken from books and articles about translation, Interpretation and Nonverbal Communication. The exemplification is primarily drawn from English sources, books and articles that have partly been opted out depending on self-experience. Therefore, it is analyzed through a questionnaire in which eighteen professional translators/interpreters are asked seven questions regarding the importance of Non-Verbal Communication in Oral Translation. In conclusion, the outcome of this manuscript reiterated that interpretation and Non-Verbal Communication complete each other; the latter cannot be perfect without the former.

Keywords: Oral Translation, Verbal, Non-Verbal Communications, Interpretations, Facial Expression, gestures, Eye Contact, Speech.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is very typical if we don't know about many aspects of non-verbal communication when we hear about this topic. What comes to mind immediately are body gestures or facial expressions. However, there are too many aspects. For this reason, chapter two begins with a definition of non-verbal communication, and chapter three illustrates these definitions with Types of Non-verbal communication. They also demonstrate the significance of non-verbal communication in daily life. In this paper, the task of the interpreter is coded in two steps: first, the transfer of

a message from the speaker to the interpreter and secondly, the transfer of this message from the interpreter to the audience.

Therefore, the work of interpretation is not only converting the source language meaning into the target language, but most importantly is to grasp the meaning of what is said verbally through the non-verbal communications such as gestures, facial expression, tone of voice, body posture that can convey more than the words uttered.

2. METHODOLOGY

The data of this study is mainly taken from books and articles about translation, Interpretation and Nonverbal Communication. The exemplification is primarily drawn from English sources, books and articles that are partly been opted out depending on self-experience. Therefore, it is analyzed through a questionnaire in which fifteen professional translators are asked seven questions regarding the importance of Non-Verbal Communication in Oral Translation.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Bambaeeroo, F., & Shokrpour, N. 2017/ Non-Verbal Communication in Teaching) mentioned that if this skill is practiced by teachers, it will have a positive and profound effect on the students' mood. Non-verbal communication is highly reliable in the communication process.

(Magdalena & , Anthony. 2013/Non-verbal Signs). Mentioned that the essential functions of nonverbal discussion across the stages of research were identified as clarification, juxtaposition, discovery, confirmation, emphasis, illustration, elaboration, complementarity, corroboration.

(Chakravarty.D ,2015/Non-Verbal VS Verbal Communication) coaches say 93% of all interactions is non-verbal and only 7% is actual words.

(Burgoon,2014/Distinction between verbal and Non-Verbal Elements), The differences between the use of verbal elements and the use of non-verbal elements can be described as the difference between doing and communicating about doing.

CHAPTER ONE

1. DEFINITION OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

It is a spoken Behavior and elements instead of from words themselves that convey meaning. Non-verbal communication signs contain pitch, speed, tone and volume of voice, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, and proximity to the audience, eye movements and contact, and dress and appearance.

Researchers believe that only five percent effect is produced by the spoken word, forty five percent by the tone, inflexion, and other elements of voice, and fifty percent by body language, movements, eye contact, etc. ([van Wyk et al., 2013](#))

Nonverbal Communication has been defined as communication without words. It includes apparent behaviors such as facial expressions, eyes, touching, and tones of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as dress, posture and spatial distance between two or more people. Everything communicates, including material objects, physical space, and time systems. Although verbal output can be turned off, nonverbal cannot even silence speaks. From this website (([Harper et al., 1978](#)))

[Non-verbal communication](#) is the indirect means of communication which usually includes some gestures and sign languages. Some signs are understood beyond mere words. There are signs and gestures that do tell us many things about a certain individual and what he/she is trying to communicate. See the below diagram ([Scala and McGrath, 1993](#)).

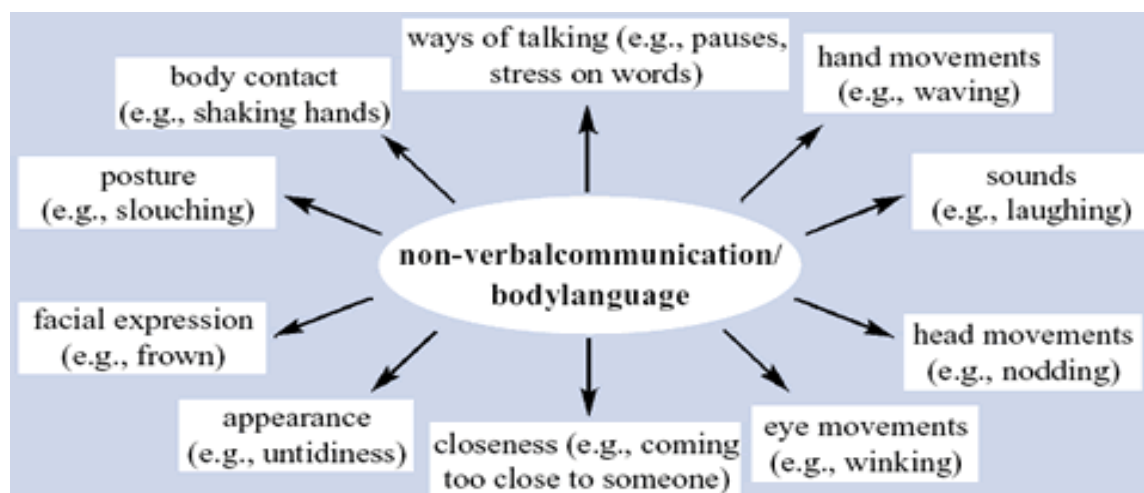


FIGURE 1

1.1 DEFINITION OF INTERPRETATION

The process of explaining, reframing, or otherwise demonstrating your understanding of something is known as interpretation. An interpreter interprets one language into another and explains what someone is saying to someone who doesn't understand it. To analyze something, you must first comprehend the piece of music, writing, language, or idea and then explain it. A

machine can generate large amounts of data, but humans will need your interpretation to understand it. (Definition of Interpretation, 2011)

1.2 TYPES OF INTERPRETATION

Simultaneous interpreting: The interpreter listens to the speaker and renders the message in the target language simultaneously.

Consecutive Interpreting: When the interpreter speaks after the source-language speaker has finished speaking, it is known as consecutive interpreting.

CHAPTER TWO

2. TYPES OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Facial expressions are responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication. Consider how much information can be conveyed with a smile or a frown. The look on a person's face is often the first thing we see, even before we hear what they have to say. While nonverbal communication and behavior can vary dramatically between cultures, the facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, and fear are similar throughout the world. (Zuckerman et al., 1981) See Example Below:

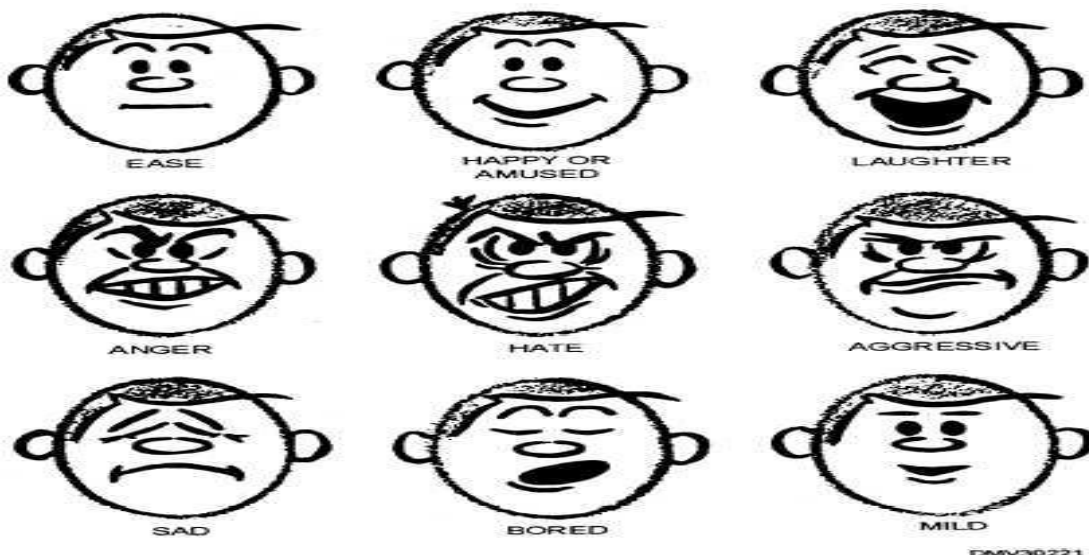


FIGURE 2

2.2 GESTURES

Deliberate movements and signals are an important way to communicate meaning without words. Common gestures include waving, pointing, and using fingers to indicate numeric amounts. Other gestures are arbitrary and related to culture. In courtroom settings, lawyers have been known to utilize different nonverbal signals to attempt to sway juror opinions. An attorney might glance at his watch to suggest that the opposing lawyer's argument is tedious or

might even roll his eyes at the testimony offered by a witness in an attempt to undermine his or her credibility. These nonverbal signals are seen as being so powerful and influential that some judges even place limits on what type of nonverbal behaviors are allowed in the courtroom. And gestures differ from a country to another in accordance to the culture as shown below: (Zuckerman et al., 1981)

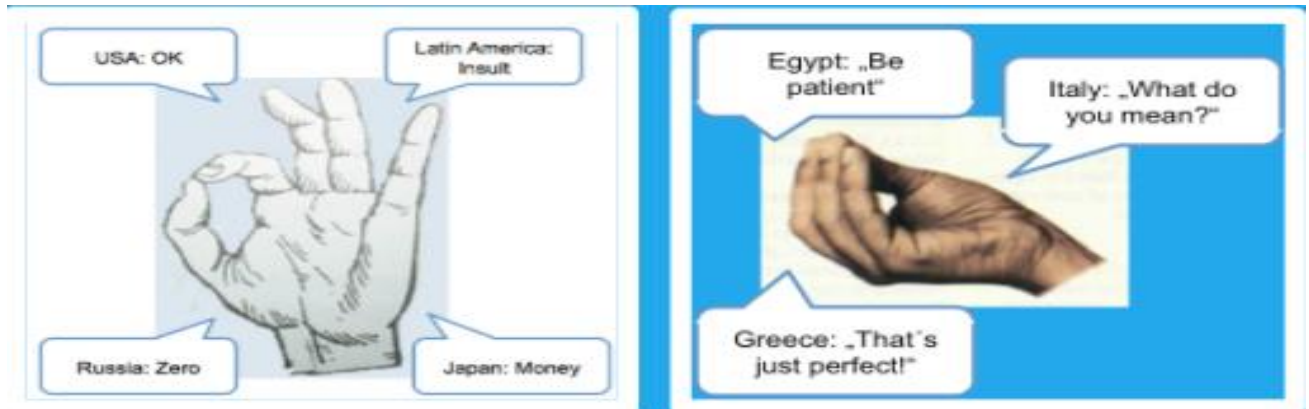


FIGURE 3

2.3 PARALINGUISTICS

Paralinguistics refers to vocal communication that is separate from actual language. This includes factors such as tone of voice, loudness, inflection, and pitch. Consider the powerful effect that tone of voice can have on the meaning of a sentence. When said in a strong tone of voice, listeners might interpret approval and enthusiasm. The same words said in a hesitant tone of voice might convey disapproval and a lack of interest. Consider all the different ways simply changing your tone of voice might change the meaning of a sentence. (Harper, R. G. 1978) A friend might ask you how you are doing, and you might respond with the standard "I'm fine," but how you actually say those words might reveal a tremendous amount of how you are really feeling. A cold tone of voice might suggest that you are actually not fine, but you don't wish to discuss it. A bright, happy tone of voice will reveal that you are actually doing quite well. A somber, downcast tone would indicate that you are the opposite of fine and that perhaps your friend should inquire further. (Zuckerman et al., 1981)

2.4 BODY LANGUAGE AND POSTURE

Posture and movement can also convey a great deal on information. Research on body language has grown significantly since the 1970's, but popular media have focused on the over-interpretation of defensive postures, arm-crossing, and leg-crossing, especially after publishing Julius Fast's book *Body Language*. While these nonverbal behaviors can indicate feelings and attitudes, research suggests that body language is far more subtle and less definitive than previously believed. (Zuckerman et al., 1981)



FIGURE 4

2.5 PROXEMICS

People often refer to their need for "personal space," which is also an important type of nonverbal communication. The amount of distance we need and the amount of space we perceive as belonging to us is influenced by a number of factors including social norms, cultural expectations, situational factors, personality characteristics, and level of familiarity. For example, the amount of personal space needed when having a casual conversation with another person usually varies between 18 inches to four feet. On the other hand, the personal distance needed when speaking to a crowd of people is around 10 to 12 feet. ([Zuckerman et al., 1981](#)).

2.6 EYE GAZE

The eyes play an important role in nonverbal communication and such things as looking, staring and blinking are important nonverbal behaviors. When people encounter people or things that they like, the rate of blinking increases and pupils dilate. Looking at another person can indicate a range of emotions including hostility, interest, and attraction. People also utilize eye gaze a means to determine if someone is being honest. Normal, steady eye contact is often taken as a sign that a person is telling the truth and is trustworthy. Shifty eyes and an inability to maintain eye contact, on the other hand, is frequently seen as an indicator that someone is lying or being deceptive. ([Zuckerman et al., 1981](#)).

2.7 HAPTICS

Communicating through touch is another important nonverbal behavior. There has been a substantial amount of research on the importance of touch in infancy and [early childhood](#). [Harry Harlow's classic monkey study](#) demonstrated how deprived touch and contact impedes development. Baby monkeys raised by wire mothers experienced permanent deficits in behavior and social interaction. Touch can be used to communicate affection, familiarity, sympathy, and other [emotions](#). In her book *Interpersonal Communication: an everyday encounter*, author Julia Wood writes that touch is also often used as a way to communicate both status and power. Researchers have found that high-status individuals tend to invade other people's personal space with greater frequency and intensity than lower-status individuals. Sex differences also play a role in how people utilize touch to communicate meaning. Women tend to use touch to convey care, concern, and nurturance. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to use touch to assert power or control over others. ([Zuckerman et al., 1981](#)).

2.8 APPEARANCE

Our choice of color, clothing, hairstyles, and other factors affecting appearance are also considered a means of nonverbal communication. Research on psychology has demonstrated that different colors can evoke different moods. Appearance can also alter physiological reactions, judgments, and interpretations. Just think of all the subtle judgments you quickly make about someone based on his or her appearance. These first impressions are important, which is why experts suggest that job seekers dress appropriately for interviews with potential employers. Researchers have found that appearance can play a role in how people are perceived and even how much they earn. One 1996 study found that attorneys who were rated as more attractive than their peers earned nearly fifteen percent more than those ranked as less attractive. Culture is an important influence on how appearances are judged.

2.9 ARTIFACTS

Objects and images are also tools that can be used to communicate nonverbally. On an online forum, for example, you might select an avatar to represent your identity online and to communicate information about who you are and the things you like. People often spend a great deal of time developing a particular image and surrounding themselves with objects designed to convey information about the things that are important to them. Uniforms, for example, can be used to transmit a tremendous amount of information about a person. A soldier will don fatigues, a police officers will wear a uniform, and a doctor will wear a white lab coat. At a mere glance, these outfits tell people what a person does for a living. ([Zuckerman et al., 1981](#))

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 INTERPRETING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

It has been stated that non-verbal communication plays a role in every kind of discourse, and in professional interpretation, it is crucial as well. This chapter discusses the following problems: in what situations and to what extent can the professional interpreter make sense of

non-verbal communication? Where exactly in the brain is this interpretation of non-verbal communication located? For this chapter, websites were studied, since they are often more recent than books. Similar to the act of translation, the act of interpretation is influenced by many factors. This is why this chapter tries to give a different view by mentioning aspects from the fields of sociology, neurophysiology and psychology. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

3.1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF FACE-TO-FACE SITUATIONS

Non-verbal communication does not only play a role in face-to-face situations. It is also important in mediated communication, for example, as this is the case for telephone interpreting, where the interpreter does not see the speaker. Non-verbal communication is also crucial for every other kind of professional interpreting where the speaker cannot be seen. (Buck, Ross., & VanLear, Arthur. 2002) It is important, because even in such situations the voice itself can express non-verbal paralinguistic messages. (Burgoon,& Woodall, 1996) Those messages, for example, are intonation, tone of voice, vocally produced noises or pause. Then again, it has to be considered that non-verbal, communicative acts might only be fully expressed and observed in face-to-face situations, where rhetorical sensitivity is accompanied by visually perceivable emotions. As a result, this chapter will mainly consider face-to-face situations. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

3.1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF A SHARED CULTURE

The differences between the use of verbal elements and the use of non-verbal elements can be described as the difference between doing and communicating about doing. It is believed that non-verbal communication is continuous, while verbal communication is discontinuous. Furthermore, as we have seen, verbal activity never stands alone – it is always joined by non-verbal action. Non-verbal action can be dynamic and spontaneous, but usually it is patterned by the respective culture. (Burgoon,2014) A successful interpretation of non-verbal elements conveyed by the speaker requires the same understanding of the symbols shared between interpreter and speaker. That means, for the understanding and for the correct interpretation of an utterance and its simultaneously conveyed non-verbal elements, it is crucial that there is a shared knowledge of the rules and codes of non-verbal communication, which are embedded in the participants' culture. Therefore, if the participants have a shared understanding of non-verbal meanings, the interpreter can also predict the non-verbal action of the speaker. Predictability is extremely important for interpreters. That is, thanks to the interpreters' unconscious or conscious knowledge of the culturally determined non-verbal elements, they are able to predict what exactly is going to be said, or are able to detect the meaning in an early stage of the discourse. Thus, predictability of meaning in the field of interpretation is not only a result of the interpreter's general culture, but also a result of his ability to interpret non-verbal communication. ([Phutela, 2015](#)).

3.2 INTERPRETING NON-VERBAL ELEMENTS: NEUROPHYSIOLOGIC ASPECTS

What is the biological explanation for the process of interpreting non-verbal elements, for the interpretation of gestures or other signs, as well as for the supposition that this process happens

even before the act of interpreting utterances? It has been proved that emotional areas of the brain fire up even as cognitive areas fire up when discussing emotional topics. That means that the emotional areas of an interpreter's brain will work as well as the cognitive areas, when the interpreter listens to an angry speaker who raises his voice. Of course, "good" interpreters should not show emotions and must remain impartial. The process of understanding non-verbal and verbal elements can be described as follows: Neural pathways bring information to the brain through the senses. Information entering through eyes or ears goes first to the thalamus, to the large part of the limbic system. (Blumer, 1969) The thalamus could be compared to a mail sorter. It decides to which parts of the brain to send the information. If the incoming information is emotional, the thalamus sends out two signals – the first to the amygdale and the second to the neo-cortex. As a result, the emotional brain, the limbic system, receives the information first. For the biological aspect of a species' survival, here human beings, this point is very important: hypothetically, in the event of a crisis (attack of a wild animal, confrontation with an enemy etc.) the interpreter could react (flee or fight) before the thinking brain has even received the information and had a chance to weigh the options. Today, the interpreter must not fear to be confronted with such dangerous attacks or confrontations. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

3.3 THE TRANSFER OF NON-VERBAL ELEMENTS FROM THE INTERPRETER TO THE AUDIENCE

As mentioned above, non-verbal communication is emotionally expressive as people from all cultures smile, cry, caress, or then repress their emotions through body or facial action. Many emotional expressions seem to be displayed universally. However, non-verbal behavior varies from culture to culture, which means it is specific to each culture and may be interpreted differently. (Argyle, Michael F., Alkema, F, & Gilmour, R. 1971). What reactions do these non-verbal elements evoke among an audience when being transferred by an interpreter? Referring to the examples of non-verbal communication listed in chapter 3, the following text deals with the transfer and reception of such elements with special regard to cultural characteristics.

3.3.1 INTONATION

Ideally, interpreters should recreate the same intended meaning of the speaker in target language. However, intonation is not always used correctly. For instance, the fact that simultaneous interpreters do not know how the speaker is going to proceed in his or her speech that may lead the interpreters' intonation to indicate their state of expectation. In that case, the voice tends to go up at the end of a sentence. In many languages, a rising intonation is a sign of surprise or a question, but when being used systematically by the interpreter it becomes very difficult for the audience to listen and understand where sentences begin and end, or to distinguish what is affirmative and what is interrogative. Furthermore, interpreters should not emphasize words where there is no need for it. Especially in rather vacuous texts, the actual emptiness of the text is highlighted by stressing too many words and the interpreter will come across as a poor public speaker. ([Phutela, 2015](#)).

3.3.2 TONE OF VOICE

The interpreters' choice of the adequate tone of voice can give rise to serious problems. They can only be guided, in each case, by their tact and intuition. For example, an overreaction to being under pressure might manifest itself by an exaggerated attempt to sound calm. This can lead to a monotonous interpretation that sounds totally bored or even supercilious and will probably fail to communicate, as it might be rather irritating for the audience. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

3.3.3 BODY POSTURE

The simultaneous interpreters might not be able to reproduce the speaker's body postures (for example, due to the positioning of the booth) whereas interpreters that are visible to the audience may do so. However, one must consider that the audience usually looks at the speaker while listening to a simultaneous interpretation. In this case, there is a rather small need for the interpreter for transferring body gestures.

3.3.4 BODY GESTURES

Body gestures can only be transferred if the interpreter is visible for the audience. Body gestures vary considerably according to cultural regions. A speaker, for example, agrees on a proposal - which is reproduced by the simultaneous interpreter - but shakes his or her head several times. This might be a sign of consent in the speaker's culture. However, a European audience will consider this gesture as a sign of refusal and is probably confused not knowing, which information might be correct – the positive one (by the interpreter) or the apparent negative one (visually). (Dolin, D, & Booth,1993) If the simultaneous interpreters could express themselves visually, they would support the verbal reproduction of consent by nodding their head. It is generally not recommended that interpreters imitate or exaggerate (striking) gestures as they run the risk to make fools of themselves.

3.3.5 FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND EYE MOVEMENT

Likewise, body gestures, facial expressions and eye movement differ from culture to culture. A speaker from a far Eastern country may report on a rather depressing subject but at the same time may be smiling or even laughing. Consequently, a European audience will be puzzled by these apparent contradictions. Once again, simultaneous interpreters are limited in their opportunities of cultural transfer for they cannot communicate visually in their booth and clarify the situation.

3.3.6 PAUSE

Appropriate pauses do add to the meaning of a speech and give interpreter's time to gather their thoughts in order to provide a better interpretation. However, some interpreters may feel under pressure to keep up a continuous flow of sound. The interpreters think the audience will become impatient and lose confidence in them because the hearers seem to be missing something. Indeed, there are some people who encourage this belief, who turn round and frown or make gestures indicating they feel their headphones are no longer working if they do not hear something for a few seconds. ([Phutela, 2015](#))

3.4 SUMMARY OF FINDING

Depending on the questionnaire results arranged to ask eighteen professional interpreters seven questions that are covered below. Therefore, the vast misinterpretation made by (The Sun), (Gravitas), (K24), and many other international journals was the best evidence to show that interpreters have poor knowledge about Nonverbal Communication and they do not take this point seriously. Furthermore, the president of the USA, Joe Biden delivered a speech on 17 April; then, at the end of the speech, he moved his hand towards the audience, waving at the backstage security officers to show him the way out. Regretfully, all the mentioned journals and media have misinterpreted his gesture, claiming that he shakes hands with thin air. It is worth noting that the interpreters in these international Journals or media are supposed to be more accurate than any other international and local journals. Professional interpreters need to study and grasp the meaning of the nonverbal communication of the presidents.

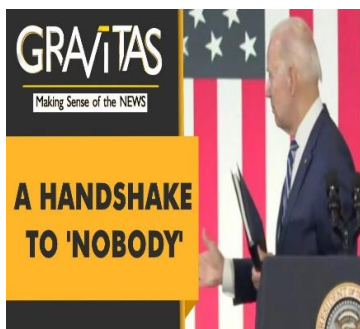


FIGURE 5



FIGURE 6

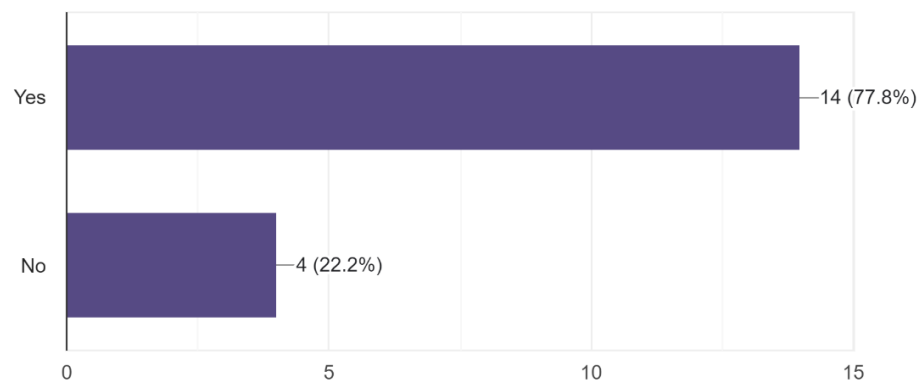


FIGURE 7

Below are the pie charts of the questionnaire results:

1-Non verbal communication has a noticeable impact on practical translation

18 responses



2-Translation/Interpretation is not only the transference of the meaning of SL into TL, but it is also the transference of the emotions ,feelings and nonverbal communication into the target language ?
18 responses

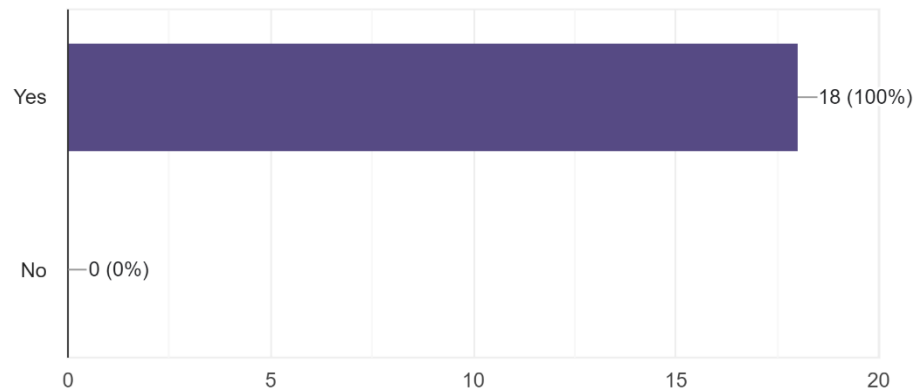


FIGURE 9

3-It is very important that practical translators grasp and translate what is not said
18 responses

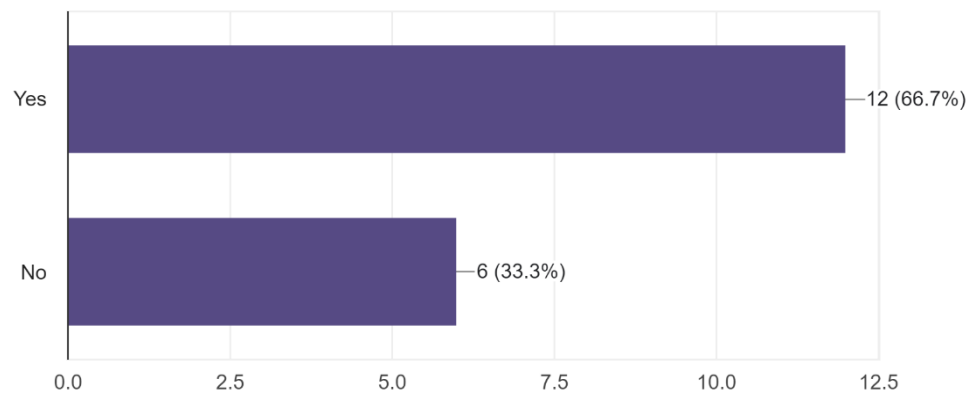


FIGURE 10

4-Is non-verbal communications important in practical translation

18 responses

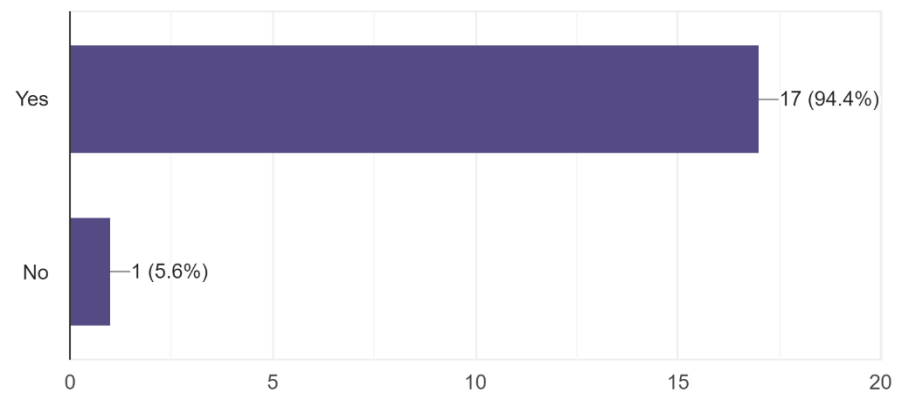


FIGURE 11

5-Non-Verbal communication help the translator to better understand the intention of what being said.

18 responses

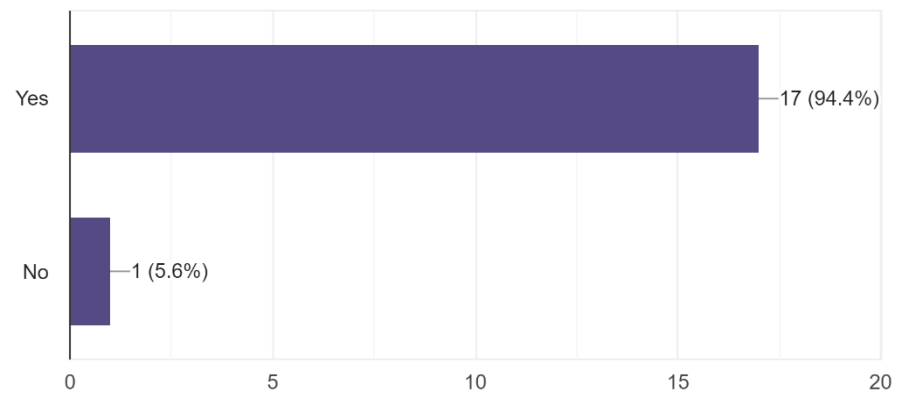


FIGURE 12

6-Do Interpreters consider the importance of non verbal communication in oral translation?
18 responses

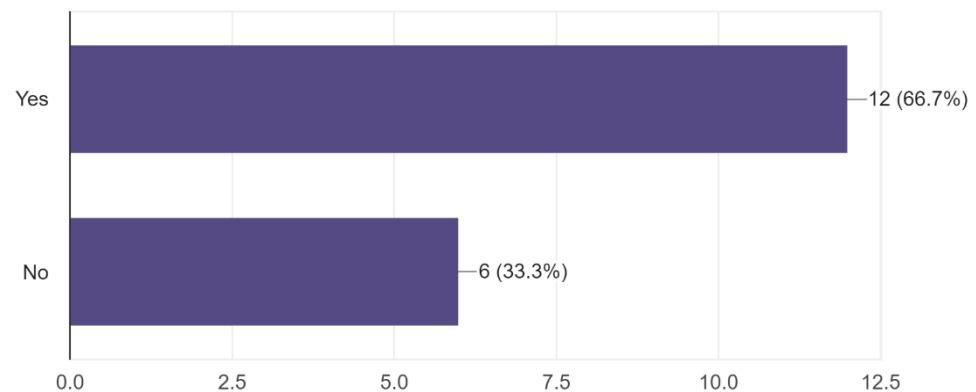


FIGURE 13

4. CONCLUSION

Throughout this research, we have come across a substantial result that can reiterate that non-verbal communication is essential for interpreters. They are conveying and facilitating the understanding process and the meaning of what the speakers said in a more appropriate forum. Therefore, the interpretation process is not about converting the speaker's words; it is about understanding the content of the speech in terms of the speaker's feelings, emotions, non-verbal signs, and the meaning behind every sentence they state. Therefore, the suggested new definition of Interpretation is transferring the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs from the source language into the verbal and non-verbal signs in the target language. Non-verbal communication can be used in different forms, each illustrating or replacing a specific part of verbal communication. It contains many more figures than anyone might think in the first place. So non-verbal signs/Communications play a significant role in the interpretation. It is the essential base in the interpretation process; it's why interpreters have to concentrate on them to carry out a successful interpreting process and achieve great results.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study can serve the field of interpretation training.

The Ministry of Higher education in collaboration with interpretation professionals and college of languages can use these findings to outline proper principles of interpretation when it comes to the syllabus of future translation field.

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