

The Influence of Body Language on Public Speaking Effectiveness: A Study of Toastmasters International Projects

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Abstract

This study explores how body language influences public speaking effectiveness, addressing the limited empirical research on how specific nonverbal elements impact confidence and audience perception among English Literature students. While previous studies have emphasized the importance of nonverbal communication, few have focused on the practical difficulties students face in applying it effectively. Using a quantitative descriptive and qualitative method, data were collected from 40 students through a Google Form questionnaire. The findings reveal that most participants agree that appropriate use of gestures, posture, and eye contact enhances message clarity and audience engagement. However, many still struggle to control hand movements and maintain eye contact due to nervousness. These results highlight that, despite awareness of its importance, mastery of body language remains a challenge. The study concludes that effective body language not only improves delivery and audience interaction but also significantly boosts speaker confidence, both in face-to-face and online contexts.

Keywords: Body Language, Public Speaking, Communication Effectiveness

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh bahasa tubuh terhadap efektivitas berbicara di depan umum, dengan menyoroti masih terbatasnya penelitian empiris yang membahas bagaimana elemen nonverbal tertentu memengaruhi kepercayaan diri dan persepsi audiens di kalangan mahasiswa Sastra Inggris. Meskipun banyak penelitian menekankan pentingnya komunikasi nonverbal, masih sedikit yang meneliti kesulitan praktis mahasiswa dalam menerapkannya secara efektif. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan data yang dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner Google Form dari 40 responden. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar peserta setuju bahwa penggunaan bahasa tubuh yang tepat seperti gerakan tangan, postur tubuh, dan kontak mata meningkatkan kejelasan pesan dan keterlibatan audiens. Namun, banyak mahasiswa masih kesulitan mengendalikan gerakan tangan dan mempertahankan kontak mata karena gugup. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa memahami pentingnya bahasa tubuh, penguasaan penerapannya masih menjadi tantangan. Kesimpulannya, penggunaan bahasa tubuh yang efektif tidak hanya memperkuat penyampaian pesan dan interaksi dengan audiens, tetapi juga meningkatkan kepercayaan diri pembicara, baik dalam konteks tatap muka maupun daring.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Tubuh, Pidato Publik, Efektivitas Komunikasi



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INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is a very important skill in various aspects of life, both professional and personal. The ability to convey ideas clearly, convincingly, and interestingly depends not only on the content of the verbal message, but also on how the message is conveyed non-verbally, especially through body language. Body language, including gestures, posture, facial expressions, and eye contact, plays a vital role in shaping audience perception, building speaker credibility, and creating emotional connections. Research shows that most human communication is nonverbal, making mastery of body language essential for effective public speaking. This research was driven by the need to understand more deeply and

comprehensively how body language can be optimized to improve public speaking skills. Many studies have been conducted on the importance of body language in communication, but there are still several aspects that have not been explored much. Therefore, this study raises several questions. First, Which nonverbal elements such as gestures, posture, eye contact, or facial expressions most influence audience perception and the effectiveness of the message?; second, How do verbal and nonverbal aspects interact to shape the overall impact of a speech?. Therefore, we decided to conduct this research to fill this gap and contribute to the understanding of the role of body language in effective communication. Public speaking is widely recognized as a fundamental communication skill that plays an essential role in academic, professional, and social contexts. Individuals who possess strong public speaking abilities are more capable of presenting ideas clearly, persuading audiences, and leading discussions effectively. In many educational and professional environments, public speaking competence is considered a key indicator of communication proficiency and leadership potential (Lucas, 2015).

In educational settings, particularly in language learning environments, public speaking is often used as a method to develop students' communicative competence. Students are encouraged to present ideas, participate in discussions, and deliver presentations to enhance their speaking confidence and fluency. However, the success of public speaking is not determined solely by verbal ability; nonverbal communication also plays a crucial role in shaping how messages are received by audiences (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016). Nonverbal communication refers to the transmission of messages without the use of words. It includes facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, body movement, and other physical behaviors that accompany speech. According to Knapp, Hall, and Horgan (2014), nonverbal cues often carry emotional meaning and can significantly influence the interpretation of verbal messages. Among various forms of nonverbal communication, body language is considered one of the most powerful elements influencing public speaking effectiveness. Body language encompasses physical movements and expressions that convey attitudes, emotions, and intentions. When used effectively, body language can reinforce verbal messages and increase audience engagement (Pease & Pease, 2006).

Research has shown that audiences tend to interpret a speaker's credibility, confidence, and enthusiasm through body language. A speaker who maintains appropriate eye contact, stands confidently, and uses purposeful gestures is often perceived as more competent and trustworthy. Conversely, poor body language may reduce the impact of even well-structured verbal messages (Gallo, 2014). One of the most widely cited perspectives in communication studies highlights the dominance of nonverbal communication in human interaction. Mehrabian (1972) suggested that a large portion of emotional communication is conveyed through nonverbal cues rather than words alone. Although the exact percentages have often been misinterpreted, the theory emphasizes the importance of nonverbal signals in communication effectiveness. Gestures are one of the most visible components of body language in public speaking. Hand movements can emphasize key points, clarify explanations, and maintain audience attention. Studies indicate that speakers who use natural and controlled gestures are more likely to appear dynamic and persuasive compared to those who remain physically rigid (Goldin-Meadow, 2014).

Posture is another important element of body language that influences audience perception. A confident posture, such as standing upright with open body positioning, signals confidence and authority. In contrast, slouched posture or closed body positions may convey insecurity or lack of preparation (Navarro & Karllins, 2008). Eye contact is also considered a central component of effective public speaking. Maintaining eye contact helps establish a

connection between the speaker and the audience. It allows the speaker to appear more sincere, confident, and attentive to audience reactions (DeVito, 2019). Facial expressions contribute significantly to the emotional tone of a speech. Smiles, raised eyebrows, and other facial movements can reinforce enthusiasm and clarity of message. When facial expressions align with verbal messages, communication becomes more authentic and engaging for listeners (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). In addition to individual nonverbal elements, the coordination between verbal and nonverbal communication determines the overall effectiveness of a speech. When body language supports spoken words, the message becomes more convincing and easier for audiences to understand. However, when verbal and nonverbal signals contradict each other, audiences may experience confusion or distrust toward the speaker (Burgoon et al., 2016). Public speaking anxiety is another factor that influences the use of body language. Many students experience nervousness when speaking in front of an audience, which may lead to uncontrolled gestures, lack of eye contact, or stiff body posture. These behaviors can negatively affect the clarity and persuasiveness of a speech (Daly, Vangelisti, & Lawrence, 2009).

Students in language learning programs often face additional challenges because they must simultaneously manage linguistic accuracy and presentation skills. As a result, their attention may focus more on choosing the correct words rather than controlling nonverbal behaviors. This situation makes body language training an important component of communication education (King, 2002). To address these challenges, many educational institutions incorporate structured public speaking programs or activities into their curriculum. These programs aim to help students practice speech organization, delivery techniques, and audience interaction. Through repeated practice, students gradually develop both verbal and nonverbal communication skills. One well-known program that emphasizes practical speaking development is Toastmasters International. This organization provides structured projects designed to improve speaking confidence, leadership skills, and communication effectiveness through guided practice and feedback. Many students and professionals benefit from this experiential learning approach.

Toastmasters projects encourage speakers to pay attention not only to the content of their speeches but also to delivery techniques, including body language. Participants are trained to use gestures, eye contact, and posture strategically in order to enhance message clarity and audience engagement. Despite the growing recognition of body language in communication training, many students still struggle to apply these skills effectively during presentations. Nervousness, lack of experience, and limited feedback often prevent them from mastering nonverbal communication techniques. Previous research has explored various aspects of nonverbal communication in public speaking. Some studies focus on audience perception of speaker confidence, while others examine the relationship between nonverbal cues and persuasion effectiveness. However, many of these studies emphasize theoretical frameworks rather than practical learning contexts. Furthermore, relatively few studies have examined how students apply body language during structured speaking projects such as those found in Toastmasters-style training environments. Understanding this context is important because it reflects real practice situations where students actively develop communication skills.

Another research gap concerns the specific nonverbal elements that most strongly influence audience perception. While gestures, eye contact, and posture are commonly mentioned, there is still limited empirical data identifying which elements students consider most impactful during presentations. Additionally, the interaction between verbal content and body language remains an area that requires deeper exploration. Communication effectiveness is rarely determined by a single factor; rather, it results from the integration of multiple elements working together. By examining both verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech

delivery, researchers can better understand how speakers create persuasive and engaging presentations. Such knowledge can inform teaching strategies for public speaking courses and communication training programs. The integration of body language training into language education can also help students build greater confidence. When students become aware of their physical expressions and learn to control them effectively, they often experience reduced speaking anxiety. Moreover, effective body language can improve audience comprehension. Visual cues provided through gestures and facial expressions can support verbal explanations, making complex information easier to understand.

In the digital era, public speaking skills are increasingly required not only in face-to-face settings but also in online communication environments. Virtual presentations, video conferences, and recorded speeches require speakers to adapt their body language to different communication platforms. Although the visual frame may be limited in online presentations, facial expressions, posture, and eye focus remain important for maintaining audience engagement. Therefore, understanding body language remains relevant across various communication contexts. Considering these factors, studying the role of body language in public speaking becomes increasingly important for communication research and educational practice. It helps identify strategies that can improve both message delivery and audience interaction. This study specifically focuses on the experiences of English Literature students who participate in public speaking activities inspired by Toastmasters projects. By examining their perceptions and challenges, the research aims to provide insights into how body language influences speaking performance.

The research also seeks to identify which nonverbal elements students perceive as most influential in shaping audience reactions. Understanding these perceptions may help educators design more effective training programs for communication skills. In addition, this study explores how verbal and nonverbal elements interact to create the overall impact of a speech. By analyzing these interactions, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of communication effectiveness in academic speaking contexts. Ultimately, the findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of more comprehensive public speaking training strategies. By emphasizing the importance of body language alongside verbal communication, educators can better prepare students for effective communication in both academic and professional environments.

Literature Review

Body language, which includes posture, movement, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures, is a key element of nonverbal communication. Because it allows people to express their feelings, attitudes, and intentions without using words, it is an essential tool for improving public speaking abilities. Gaining proficiency in body language techniques like proper posture, expressive gestures, and sustained eye contact can make presenters seem more assured, believable, and interesting. Previous studies have repeatedly emphasized the significance of nonverbal communication in public speaking. Up to 90% of human communication is nonverbal, including extralinguistic component (clothes, gestures, and physical distance) as well as paralinguistic components (tone, rhythm, and pauses) . She contends that for communication to be effective and to build honesty and trust, verbal and nonverbal cues must be in balance. (Azemi, 2021) The Impact of Nonverbal Communication on Effective Public Speaking in English by Jasuli, Hartatik, and Astuti (2024) bolsters this theoretical framework by highlighting the importance of nonverbal communication for public speaking effectiveness, especially for English language learners. They discovered that posture, vocal tone, eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions all improve the speaker's credibility and message clarity through a literature analysis that was informed by the PRISMA framework. Additionally, they

emphasize how cultural differences might affect how nonverbal cues are interpreted, highlighting the necessity of cultural awareness in communication instruction. (Jasuli, 2024)

Similarly, Nurhayati (2025) builds on the practical application of nonverbal communication in Powerful Public Speaking, stating that the combination of confident body language, expressive tone, and regulated rhythm is necessary for an effective delivery. She illustrates how body language, gestures, and facial expressions encourage both emotional and intellectual engagement with the audience, drawing on Mehrabian's (1971) theory that nonverbal cues communicate 55% of communication meaning. Despite being largely theoretical, her work offers helpful advice for presenters who want to come out as more engaging and convincing. (Nurhayati, 2025) The Use of Body Language in Public Speaking by Kilag et al. (2023) adds to this conversation by providing a more practice-focused investigation. According to their study, the key components of a good delivery include posture, eye contact, facial expressions, and hand gestures. They describe how deliberate body language, including keeping a straight posture and making different eye contact, contributes to building trustworthiness and rapport. Despite the lack of quantitative analysis, their descriptive findings offer speakers clear recommendations for using body language with awareness to improve authenticity and audience connection. (Osias Kit T. Kilag, 2023) Article about The Impact, Importance, Types, and Use of Non-Verbal Communication in Social Relations by Helena Mukli Grillo and Miranda Enesi adds that nonverbal communication plays a significant role in supporting effective interaction by conveying emotions, attitudes, and meanings beyond spoken language. Body language elements such as facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice function as essential complements to verbal communication, helping individuals achieve clearer message delivery and mutual understanding in social and communicative contexts. These findings reinforce the idea that the integration of verbal and nonverbal communication is fundamental to improving public speaking effectiveness and audience engagement. (Helena Mukli Grillo, 2022)

Article about A Study of Body Language in Non-verbal Communication by Heng Yu adds that body language serves as an essential component of nonverbal communication that supports and clarifies verbal messages through facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact. The study explains that body language helps reveal emotions, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships while functioning as a communicative bridge that facilitates smoother interaction, especially across different cultural contexts. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating verbal and nonverbal elements to achieve effective communication and clearer message interpretation. (Yu, 2024) Article by Zoha A. Aqeel, Kevin C. Chung, MD, MS on Strategies for Improving Public Speaking Skills states that effective public speaking skills can be improved through structured practice, audience awareness, and the development of verbal and nonverbal communication skills. This study emphasizes that elements such as body language, voice control, confidence, and preparation play an important role in improving message delivery and audience engagement. The study also highlights that consistent training and feedback help speakers improve their communication performance, resulting in presentations that are clearer, more convincing, and more impactful. (Zoha A. Aqeel, 2024)

Body language plays a vital role in shaping effective oral communication. Hartati, Meisuri, and Ginting (2023) emphasize that proper nonverbal behaviors such as smiling, maintaining eye contact, and using expressive gestures enhance a speaker's confidence and audience engagement during presentations. Similarly, Allan and Barbara Pease (2004) explain that gestures, facial expressions, and posture function as key communicative tools that express emotions, reinforce spoken messages, and build credibility. These findings highlight that "body speak" is not only a form of visual communication but also a reflection of emotional intelligence

that contributes to persuasive and impactful delivery. (Rita Hartati, 2023) This importance of nonverbal competence is further evident in real-world speaking organizations such as Toastmasters International, which focuses on improving public speaking and leadership through structured training in delivery, gestures, and vocal expression. According to Toastmasters International Magazine (2020), the organization reported that skills developed through Toastmasters such as body awareness, expressive gestures, and confident delivery directly support success in professional communication and career advancement. In addition, during the pandemic, approximately 83% of clubs transitioned to online or hybrid meetings, showing how the practice of body language and virtual presence remains essential even in digital communication settings. (Nina John, 2020) All of these research support the idea that nonverbal cues are crucial while speaking in front of an audience. It influences listener perception, emotional involvement, and message effect in addition to enhancing verbal communication. Thus, body language may be used to change a speech from being informational to being inspirational by cultivating awareness and control over it, highlighting its importance as a fundamental component of successful public communication.

RESEARCH METHODS

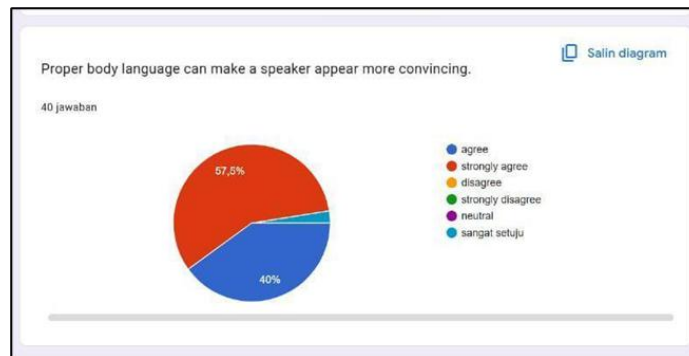
This study used a quantitative and qualitative research design to describe how In Body Language influences Public Speaking Effectiveness. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher was able to obtain statistical information from questionnaire answers and more in-depth understanding from participants descriptive responses, providing a comprehensive view of the phenomenon. The participants of this study were English Literature students from Universitas Negeri Medan who had experience using body language in public speaking. They were selected because their academic background and learning environment are closely related to communication skills, particularly in public speaking and presentations. The data were collected from 40 students through a Google Form questionnaire. The main instrument used in this research was a Google Form questionnaire distributed to English Literature students from Universitas Negeri Medan. The questionnaire contained multiple-choice and essay questions designed to measure and describe:

1. To identify which nonverbal elements such as gestures, posture, eye contact, or facial expressions that most influence audience perception and message effectiveness.
2. To Explore how verbal and nonverbal aspects work together to shape the overall impact of a speech.

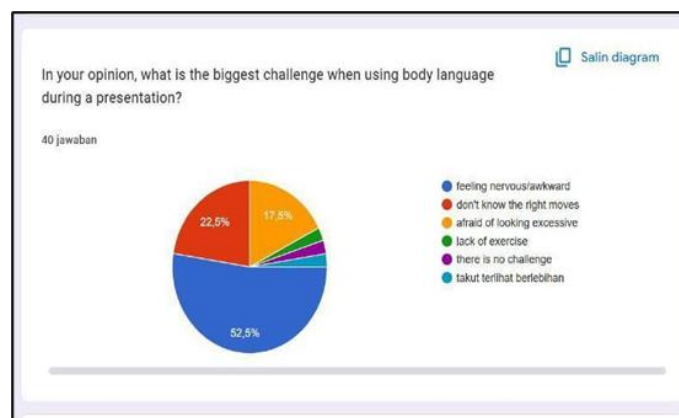
Data were collected through an online survey namely Google Form that shared to English Literature students of Universitas Negeri Medan. The researcher ensured that each respondent participated voluntarily and their responses remained confidential. The data analysis for this study employed descriptive statistical analysis and content analysis. Descriptive analysis was utilized to summarize the quantitative responses from participants, illustrating the frequency and percentage of responses. Content analysis, was used to examine the qualitative responses, focusing on gaining an in-depth understanding of how body language influences the effectiveness of public speaking. The results of the study are presented through diagrams and descriptive narratives. The diagrams display the distribution of participant responses, while the narratives explain overall trends. The narratives also emphasize how body movement, eye contact, facial expressions, and posture can enhance public speaking performance.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

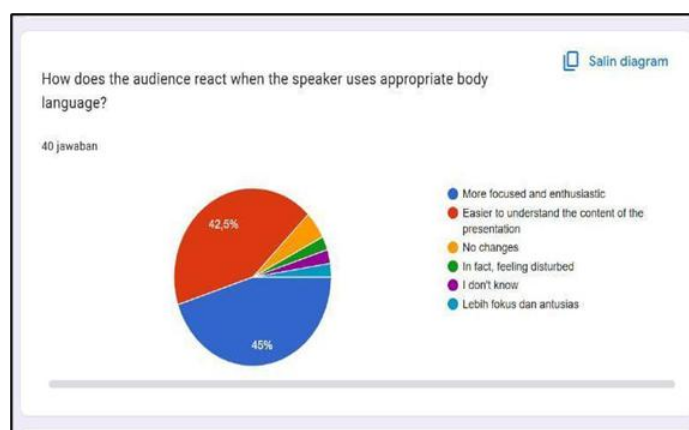
This research collected data through a Google Form questionnaire distributed to students of the English Literature Department at Universitas Negeri Medan. A total of 40 participants responded to the survey.



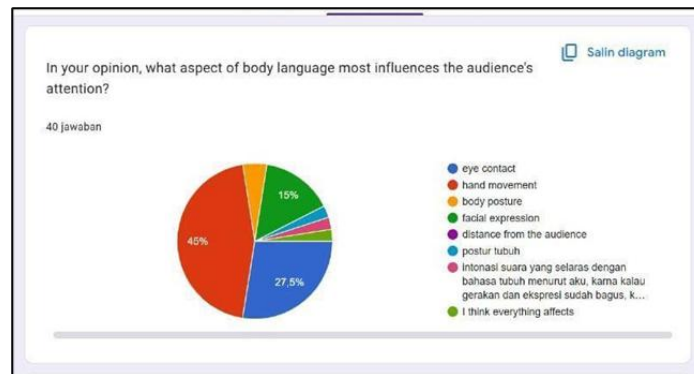
According to the survey, 57.5% of the participants strongly agreed and 40% agreed that using the right body language can make a speaker more persuasive.



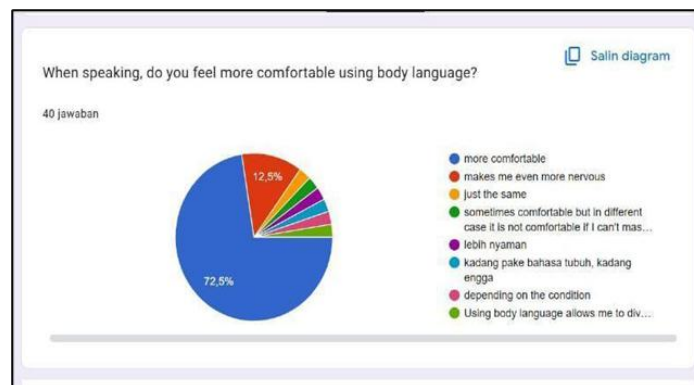
The survey results indicate that 52.5% of respondents identified feeling nervous or awkward as the main challenge when using body language during presentations. About 22.5% were unsure of the appropriate gestures, and 17.5% were worried about appearing too assertive.



According to the survey, 45% of participants said that when presenters employ suitable body language, the audience becomes more attentive and engaged. On the other hand, 42.5% of participants said that the presentation's substance was simpler to understand when their body language was appropriate. A tiny percentage of other respondents provided a range of responses: 5% said nothing had changed, 2.5% said they were distracted, 2.5% said they were unsure, and 2.5% responded in Indonesian with phrases like more focused and enthusiastic.



Based on the survey, 45% of participants believed that hand movement is the aspect of body language that most influences the audience's attention. 27.5% chose eye contact, while 15% thought that everything affects equally. The remaining participants selected other factors such as facial expression, body posture, and distance from the audience with smaller percentages.



According to the survey, 72.5% of participants reported feeling more at ease when speaking with body language, while 12.5% reported feeling even more anxious when using body language. The remaining participants responded in a variety of ways, including feeling the same, depending on the situation, or only using body language in specific situations. These are the respondents' answers to the open-ended questions. The responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and meaningful categories related to body language in public speeches.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses on Body Language in Public Speaking

No	Major Theme	Sub Theme/ Codes	Respondents	Summary Interpretation
1	Difficulty Controlling Hand Movements	Unconscious gestures; excessive movement; fidgeting; nervous hands	NF, NWP, TR, ERD, CAS, A, SEA, MAV, KAS, F, G, AAA, VP, M, VSS, CDA, MHZ, RPAOS	Hand movement is the most difficult body part to control and often reveals nervousness.
2	Eye Contact As Psychological Challenge	Avoiding gaze; feeling awkward; divided focus; discomfort	RAP, IGT, TS, YM, NS, GRG, NPT, C, AC	Maintaining eye contact is emotionally challenging but crucial for audience connection.
3	Body Language as Confidence Booster	Upright posture; purposeful gestures; internal confidence loop; self-perception	VIL, CAS, TS, YM, VNA, R, N, LSP, GRG, G, NPT, C, AK, M, AC	Positive body language enhances both external credibility and internal confidence.

4	Audience Engagement and Focus	More attentive; nodding; smiling; increased interest; clearer understanding	RAP, TR, ERD, JNA, VS, N, MAV, F, AAA, NPT, AK, CDA, RPAOS	Effective body language increases audience responsiveness and comprehension.
5	Interaction Between Content and Delivery	Content remains important; body language supports clarity; balance between verbal and nonverbal	NWP, VIL, S, CAS, A, JRSB, VNA, NS, JTLS, FNT, G, MHZ, AC	Students believe content and body language must work together to create effective communication.

Findings indicate that nervousness and difficulty controlling certain body parts, particularly hand movements and eye contact, are major issues among students. In addition, body language is widely considered to be a factor that increases confidence and significantly influences audience engagement and response.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Public Speaking Effectiveness (N = 40)

Variable	Pre-Test Mean	SD	Post-Test Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Overall Speaking Effectiveness	65.40	6.82	81.75	5.94	+16.35
Eye Contact	63.20	7.10	84.10	6.20	+20.90
Gestures	66.00	6.45	82.50	5.88	+16.50
Posture	70.10	5.90	83.30	5.21	+13.20
Facial Expression	62.80	7.25	79.90	6.33	+17.10

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of participants' public speaking effectiveness before and after completing Toastmasters projects focusing on body language development. The findings show a substantial increase in overall speaking effectiveness, from a mean score of 65.40 (SD = 6.82) in the pre-test to 81.75 (SD = 5.94) in the post-test, indicating a mean improvement of 16.35 points. Among the body language components, eye contact demonstrated the highest improvement (+20.90), followed by facial expression (+17.10), gestures (+16.50), and posture (+13.20). These results suggest that structured practice in body language significantly enhances various dimensions of public speaking performance.

Table 3. Paired Sample t-Test Results (Pre-Test vs Post-Test)

Variable	t-value	df	Sig. (p)	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Overall Speaking Effectiveness	9.87	39	0.000	1.59 (Large)

The results indicate a significant improvement in overall speaking effectiveness, $t(39) = 9.87$, $p < 0.001$. Since the p-value is lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms that participation in Toastmasters projects significantly improved public speaking effectiveness.

Table 4. Correlation Between Body Language and Speaking Effectiveness

Variables	r	Sig. (p)
Body Language Score & Speaking Effectiveness	0.72	0.000

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between body language and speaking effectiveness ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that improvements in body language are strongly associated with higher levels of public speaking effectiveness.

Discussion

Body language is nonverbal communication that is conveyed through gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, posture, and body movements. It is a way of communicating without words, and can reveal a wide range of information, such as a person's emotions, thoughts, and intentions (Istrator, 2024). One way to boost your confidence is to practice body language. This is because there are several types of body language that can make you appear more confident (Makarim, 2023). Body language can help us understand others and ourselves. Body language provides information about how someone might be feeling in a given situation. We can also use body language to express emotions or intentions. Therefore, body language needs to be used in public speaking (Kendra Cherry, 2025). The study's findings show that body language has a significant impact on how well a person speaks in front of an audience. According to the participants' answers, the speaker's trustworthiness, message clarity, and listener emotional engagement are all enhanced by the interaction of body language, posture, eye contact, and facial emotions. Data gathered from Medan State University English literature students demonstrates that presenters are acutely conscious of how their body language influences how the audience interprets their message. From this finding, hand movement are the most dominant and influential nonverbal element. Many respondents admitted that controlling hand movements was the most difficult thing to do when speaking in public. One participant (NF) stated, "In my experience, the most difficult part of my body to control during a presentation is my hands because they often move nervously without me realizing it. I try to manage it by practicing gestures so they look more natural and confident." Respondent (SEA) expressed a similar sentiment, saying, "In my experience, my hands are the most difficult to control during a presentation. I often don't know what to do with them, so I might fidget or make unnecessary movements, which can be distracting." These statements show that hand movements serve a dual purpose: on the one hand, they help emphasize meaning and reinforce the message, but on the other hand, they can reveal nervousness if not controlled properly.

Some respondents also associated hand movements with professionalism and self-control. Respondent (CDA) wrote, "Many people tend to fidget, play with objects, or make unnecessary movements while speaking in public. This can be caused by nervousness or habit. Controlling hand movements can help project professionalism and confidence during a presentation." This view shows that body movements are not only an aesthetic aspect, but also a means of communication that reflects self-confidence and self-control. Difficulty controlling hand movements also reflects an inner tension between the need to express oneself and the need to maintain calm. Eye contact is also an important element that is recognized as having a significant impact, even though it poses a psychological challenge for many participants. Some students admitted to feeling awkward when having to look directly at the audience. Respondent (TS) stated, "eyes (eye contact), sometimes when someone is nervous, they always look away; in addition to looking away, a nervous person also often avoids prolonged eye contact because they feel uncomfortable and afraid". The same argument is also stated by Respondent (YM), "Based on my experience, the most difficult thing to control is the 'eye contact'. sometimes during a presentation, i'm confused where should i stare to? if i keep on staring at the audience, it will feel awkward". Nonetheless, the majority of participants recognized that maintaining eye contact can foster rapport, trust, and a genuine perception of the speaker. The inability to sustain eye contact demonstrates that effective public speaking requires not only technique but also emotional control and self-assurance.

In addition, facial expressions and body posture also play a big role in shaping the audience's perception. Respondent (VS) said, "facial expression, because if we are nervous it will be more visible" while Respondent (N) added, "The important thing is to keep your facial

expressions calm and organize your language so you can give a good presentation.” Both claims highlight how viewers are extremely perceptive of visual cues like anxiety or uneasiness. As a result, relaxed facial expressions, open gestures, and an erect stance represent self-control and confidence. Participants also emphasized that successful message delivery requires a combination of verbal and nonverbal cues. Respondent(YM) said “ Confident body language makes me more willing to listen. Even if the content is good, a flat or nervous delivery can make it harder to pay attention”. Similarly, Respondent(NPT) observed, “Even if the content is interesting, I tend to lose attention if the speaker looks stiff or expressionless. Body language makes the message feel more alive”. From these perspectives, body language serves as a visual reinforcement of verbal meaning it embodies the tone, intention, and energy behind the words. This interaction reflects the dynamic relationship between verbal clarity and nonverbal expression in shaping audience perception. Respondent(GRG) stated that “Positive body language can help raise self-awareness and reduce anxiety, making speakers feel more confident and effective in delivering messages.” Meanwhile, Respondent(TS) expressed that “standing upright, making eye contact, and using purposeful gestures not only make the speaker look confident but also send positive signals to the brain.” Both statements imply that nonverbal action has a psychological feedback loop in which speakers who move confidently experience an internal boost in confidence that enhances their verbal fluency and poise. Amy Cuddy's idea of "power posing," which highlights how body position can affect emotional and mental states, is consistent with this (Nonverbal Communication in Political Debates, 2020).

The responses from students also illuminate how audiences react to effective body language. As one participant (ERD) wrote, “When a speaker uses body language like eye contact and natural gestures, the audience looks more interested, pays attention, and even responds with nods or smiles.” Respondent (NPT) supported this by noting, “When a speaker just stands still and talks without any movement, people get bored easily.” These findings highlight the fact that listeners react both visually and emotionally to the speaker's energy rather than passively taking in information. Information is more memorable and engagement is maintained with animated posture and expressive gestures. Additionally, Respondent(A) gave a detailed reflection on this process, saying, “When a speaker actively uses body language, the audience's response tends to shift: they stay more focused, they nod, they smile, and they feel included. Without body language, the delivery feels flat, even if the content is strong.” This aligns with communication theories that propose a feedback loop between speaker and audience nonverbal cues not only express confidence but also invite positive reactions that reinforce the speaker's assurance in return. The descriptive statistics demonstrate a clear improvement in students' public speaking effectiveness after completing Toastmasters projects. The overall speaking effectiveness increased substantially from a mean score of 65.40 in the pre-test to 81.75 in the post-test, indicating that structured practice contributed to better speaking performance. Among the body language components, eye contact showed the greatest improvement, suggesting that students became more confident and capable of maintaining audience connection. Improvements in gestures, posture, and facial expressions also indicate that students developed better control of nonverbal communication. These findings support the idea that body language training enhances not only delivery techniques but also overall communication clarity and confidence.

The paired sample t-test confirms that the improvement in speaking effectiveness was statistically significant. The result, $t(39) = 9.87, p < 0.001$, indicates that the difference between pre-test and post-test scores was not due to chance but was influenced by the Toastmasters training. The large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.59$) further shows that the impact of body language practice was strong and meaningful in practical terms. This suggests that consistent training in

gestures, posture, facial expression, and eye contact can significantly enhance students' public speaking ability. These findings reinforce previous research emphasizing the importance of nonverbal communication in improving speaking performance and speaker confidence. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between body language and speaking effectiveness ($r = 0.72, p < 0.001$), indicating that students with better body language skills tended to demonstrate higher speaking effectiveness. This finding suggests that body language is not only a supportive element but also a key factor influencing overall communication performance. Effective use of gestures, eye contact, posture, and facial expressions helps speakers deliver messages more clearly and engage the audience more effectively. This result aligns with communication theories stating that nonverbal behavior strengthens verbal messages and contributes to audience understanding, confidence, and engagement during public speaking. Overall, the results show that through the development of body language skills, systematic Toastmasters training significantly improves students' public speaking performance. Effective public speaking is accomplished by combining verbal delivery and nonverbal communication, as seen by improvements in all nonverbal components, which are backed by strong correlations and significant statistical results. These findings demonstrate how body language plays a crucial role in communication performance, enhancing speaker confidence, listener engagement, and message clarity. Thus, integrating methodical body language training into public speaking lessons can be seen as a successful tactic for raising students' communication proficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that body language plays an important role in improving the effectiveness of students' public speaking through the integration of verbal and nonverbal communication. Body language components such as hand gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and posture have been proven to contribute to clarifying messages, increasing audience engagement, and building speaker confidence. Qualitative findings show that students are aware of the significant influence of body language on audience perception, although some aspects, particularly hand gestures and eye contact, remain challenging during presentations. Quantitative results reinforce these findings by showing a significant increase in public speaking effectiveness after Toastmasters training and a strong positive correlation between body language skills and speaking performance. Thus, this study explicitly fills a gap in previous research by identifying the most influential elements of body language and explaining how the interaction between verbal and nonverbal communication together shapes the effectiveness of students' public speaking in the context of real presentations. Therefore, the systematic integration of body language training into public speaking instruction is recommended as an effective strategy for improving students' communication skills and confidence.

The novelty of this study lies in its empirical analysis of the influence of body language elements—such as gestures, posture, and eye contact—on the effectiveness of public speaking within the context of Toastmasters-style presentation projects among English Literature students. Unlike previous studies that mainly discuss nonverbal communication from a theoretical perspective, this research integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the relationship between students' awareness of the importance of body language and their actual ability to control physical expressions and interact with the audience. Furthermore, the study highlights practical challenges faced by students, including speaking anxiety and difficulties in maintaining consistent eye contact, which directly affect communication effectiveness in both face-to-face and online speaking contexts. Therefore, this research contributes a practical perspective to the development of more structured body language-based public speaking training strategies in language and academic communication learning.

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