

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARALANGUAGE USED IN EFL CLASSROOM INTERACTION

ALFIAN SANDY WILLIAM KOK¹, MIKHAEL MISA², EDMUNDUS BOUK³,
*YANUARIUS SERAN⁴

^{1,2,3,4}*Universitas Timor*

¹alfiankok960@gmail.com, ²mikhaelmisa@unimor.ac.id, ³mund.timor@gmail.com, ⁴januarseran@gmail.com*

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Abstract

This study examined students' perceptions of English language teachers' use of paralinguistics in schools on the border between Indonesia and Timor Leste, specifically its impact on students' engagement and comprehension in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. Paralinguistics—encompassing vocal qualities such as pitch, volume, and rate of speech—plays a critical yet often overlooked role in effective communication, especially in a language learning environment where non-verbal cues can significantly impact students' comprehension. Through qualitative methods, including observation and semi-structured interviews with students at SMA Fides Quarens Intellectum and SMA Negeri 2 Kefamenanu, this study investigated how students interpreted their teachers' paralinguistic cues and how these cues influenced their learning experiences. The findings revealed that students perceived paralinguistics as a valuable tool for enhancing clarity and emotional connection in the classroom, aiding their comprehension and encouraging active participation. Elements such as pitch modulation and vocal emphasis were shown to help students understand important information and stay engaged, while balanced vocal qualities created a supportive and engaging classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, this study highlights the role of paralinguistics in reducing student anxiety and increasing self-confidence, which is particularly relevant in cross-cultural educational settings where language barriers and cultural differences can hinder effective communication. These insights underscore the importance of incorporating paralinguistics awareness into teacher training programs, suggesting that the intentional use of vocal cues can enhance instructional effectiveness and support student language acquisition.

Keywords: *Paralinguistics, Students, Perception, Communication, EFL*

INTRODUCTION

Perception plays an important role in the teaching and learning process because it involves the interpretation of various stimuli. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), students' perceptions refer to the ways in which they interpret the verbal and non-verbal stimuli produced by their teachers during classroom interaction. These perceptions can significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviors, as perception determines how individuals respond to the information they receive. It involves selectively attending to certain aspects of sensory input while disregarding others. Meaningful classroom interaction is therefore essential for shaping students' perceptions of their teachers, as interaction provides opportunities for students to observe and interpret teachers' verbal and paralinguistics cues (Mayada & Addinna, 2025). Because interaction cannot occur without communication, effective communication becomes a crucial element in facilitating these perceptions.

Istiqamah et al. (2023) found out in their study that teachers' nonverbal communication focused on body language and paralinguistics. Body languages that include

this nonverbal communication were facial expressions, body gestures and movement, eye contact, touch, and the use of space, while paralinguistics includes some points such as intonation, tone, rhythm, volume, pace, accent, and emphases. Those results conveyed types of teachers' non-verbal communication in English classes as below.

Researchers believe that paralinguistics is a part of non-verbal language that is often used when someone communicates. If communication does not take place effectively it will cause problems such as misunderstanding and misinformation. It means that communication will be ineffective. Then, if it is not done immediately if handled, it will give rise to bad and distorted perceptions. Paralinguistics also has a very important influence in the process of learning English in the classroom because when a teacher wants to create an active and effective class then there must be good communication in the class because if the communication is not carried out well it will have an impact on both the students and the teacher. In this case, students might feel afraid or bored because the class atmosphere is not active. The teacher will also suffer the negative impact of poor communication because this can damage his image.

Schools on the Indonesia-Timor Leste border often face challenges in terms of the availability of adequate teachers. This can affect the quality of the learning process at the school. Therefore, it is important to understand how teachers use paralinguistics because this can influence students' perceptions of English language learning in educational environments that have such challenges. This research is relevant in the context of education in schools on the border of Indonesia and Timor Leste, especially at SMA Fides Quarens Intellectum and SMA Negeri 2 Kefamenanu, where learning English is an important subject in improving the quality of education.

Based on the fact found by the researcher paralinguistics is usually used by people when speaking, because when they speak they use vocal sounds or tones. This also happens in classroom interactions. There has been a lot of research conducted on nonverbal communication in general which reveals paralinguistics as part of nonverbal communication. However, the researcher rarely found studies that focused on students' perception on paralinguistics, and this is the novelty of this study. This fact invites researchers to further explore the use of paralinguistics in classroom interactions which focuses on students' perceptions of the use of paralinguistics in EFL classes and the impact of paralinguistics use in EFL classes. The focus of this research can contribute to the study of non-verbal communication, the study of paralinguistics, in different communication settings. Therefore, this research aims to know students' perceptions of the use of paralinguistics in English and the use of paralinguistics influence student motivation in learning english.

Theories of Perception

Perception is something we have always experienced, knowing how it works by itself. Perception is everything we see, hear, test, feel or smell created by our sense-mechanism. It means that what we perceive is not only determined by what is —out there but also by the nature of our senses (Goldstein, 2010). Perception is a process of meaning to the stimulus. As a process, perception always requires the object. Object perception is very diverse; one of the object perceptions is self and social. If the stimulus is an object, it is called object perception, and if the stimulus is a human, it is called social perception (Aronson et al., 2022)

However, perception can be motivated because perception tends to observe or pay attention to some aspects of available sensory data and ignore others. Perceptions of teachers and students in the classroom environment affect student achievement in education (Adeyemo, 2011). According to Ferguson and Bargh (2004), perception is the determinant of our behavior. How one decides to behave is based on a stimulus or impulse from a sensory process called perception.

In conclusion, Perception is a mental process in which we interpret and give meaning to the information we receive through our senses. Simply put, perception is the way we see, hear, feel, smell, and taste the world around us. This perception is very important in the classroom because it can influence student motivation, interest in learning, and achievement.

Principles of Perception

Ormrod et al. (2022) mentions that the teacher must know and apply those principles concerned with perception is very important. This is due to the reasons that; (1) The better an object, person, event, or relationship is known, the better object, event or relationship can be remembered; (2) In teaching, avoiding misunderstanding is a must done by the teacher, because misunderstanding was make students learn something wrong or irrelevant; and (3) In teaching something, teachers need to replace the actual object with pictures of the object, then teacher must know the image or should be made in order to avoid wrong perception.

Theories of Paralanguage

Paralanguage is nonverbal aspects of speech such as intonation, vocalization, gestures, body movements, eye-contact, speed, pitch, and facial expressions. Paralanguage accounts for 93% of understood communication, with 55% from the face, 38% tone, and shockingly 7% from words (Delmonico, 2023). Zani (2011) said that Paralanguage is an indication for vocal tones that is used in communication which shows different interpretation when constructed. For example, a communicator might use a verbal statement to convey confidence, e.g., I am positively sure that.... But listeners was consciously and unconsciously interpret the paralanguage to assess the communicator's degree of confidence. (Khalifa & Faddal, 2017) Stated that Paralanguage is the area of non-verbal communication that highlights body language and voice tones as means of expressing thoughts and feelings. There are several aspects of paralanguage such as posture, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone of voice. (Azzahra et al., 2022) explained that Paralanguage is a delivering message to others with not only focusing on the verbal message but also the nonverbal message like body language, voice tone, and rate so that the receiver can understand the message of the sender properly. It is basically a language of motivation for EFL learners and its appropriate use not only motivates them to learn more but also improves their academic progress.

From the definition of paralanguage above, it can be concluded that paralanguage is a very important aspect or part of communication because it includes sound quality, speed of speaking, loudness, softness of voice, dialect intonation, etc., paralanguage also plays an important role in the English learning process because can motivate students to improve their English skills and build good communication with teachers.

Aspect of Paralanguage

Paralanguage is wordless sounds and wordless language characteristics such as pitch, volume, rate, and quality. Non-verbal communication also has many types. One of them is paralanguage. According to DeVito (as cited in Ayuningsih et al., 2022), there are two major areas of paralanguage. They are voice qualities and vocalizations. Voice qualities consist of such elements as pitch (the highness or lowness of tone), rhythm (for example, whether smooth or jerky), resonance (ranging from resonant to thin), and rate (the number of words spoken per unit of time). Vocalizations include vocal characterizers (for example, laughing and crying, yelling and whispering), vocal qualifiers (for example, intensity or volume which can range from overly loud to overly soft), and vocal segregates (for example, *uh-uh*, *sh*, and the pause).

From several paralanguage factors above, it can be concluded that paralanguage plays a very important role when we communicate because it can provide better and more effective communication.

METHOD

Research Design

This research used a qualitative descriptive approach. Descriptive research involves a strategy in which the researcher examines events and phenomena within individuals' lives, gathering narratives and experiences from participants. These accounts are then systematically retold by the researcher in a descriptive, chronological format. Thus, qualitative descriptive methods allow researchers to explore and convey phenomena in a detailed, narrative structure (Colorafi & Evans, 2023). Given this framework, a qualitative descriptive design is well-suited for this study, as it examines students' perspectives on the use of paralanguage in EFL classes. Consequently, data were collected, analyzed, discussed, and presented through a qualitative lens.

Informants

In qualitative research, the terms "participants" or "informants" are typically used instead of "research subjects." This distinction emphasizes that qualitative researchers are not interested in having individuals report on others; rather, they seek insights from individuals who share their own perspectives and experiences through their actions and words (Suaidiyah, 2013).

For this research, participants were purposively selected from two schools in the Indonesia-Timor Leste border area, specifically in Kefamenanu, North Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. From each school, SMA Fides Quaerens Intellectum and SMA Negeri 2 Kefamenanu, two classes of second-grade students were observed. Based on these observations, six students from each school were chosen as informants for the interview sessions, resulting in a total of 12 participants in this research.

Instrument

Instruments are tools chosen and used by researchers in carrying out data collection activities so that these activities become systematic and made easier by them (Creswell & Creswell,

2023). The instrument used in this research is a semi-structured interview which was developed to meet the needs of this research. The purpose of this interview was to find out how students perceive the use of paralinguistics in EFL classes, and to explore deeper data regarding the impact of paralinguistics on students' learning motivation in EFL classes. The tool used in this research was a digital camera. Digital cameras were used to document the entire process of research activities.

Procedure of Data Collection

The data collection techniques for this research are observation and interviews. Through observation, the researcher observed the entire English class and investigated the use of paralinguistics by filling in the observation sheet check list. Meanwhile, through interviews, researchers interviewed 12 students to obtain complete data.

The researchers collected data through several steps namely, first, the researchers arranged and obtained prior permission from the school principal, English teacher, and students from the target schools as participants in this research. Second, the researchers set up time and schedules with the participants. Third, researchers conducted research by conducting observations and interviews. In the observation stage, the researcher attended the English class and observed the entire English class to determine the use of paralinguistics during the class. Researcher conducted classroom observations and filled out a check list observation sheet containing the use of paralinguistics during teaching and learning activities (KBM). After observation, the next step is interview. At this stage, researchers interviewed participants to obtain complete research data regarding the use of paralinguistics in EFL classes. After the data collection process, the researcher analyzed and then discussed the data.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques include; (1). Transcription: In the initial stage, the researchers transcribed the interview data into a written format. This process involves converting spoken language from the interviews into text, ensuring that all relevant information is captured accurately. Transcription serves as a critical foundation for subsequent analysis, providing a clear and organized representation of the data. (2). Reduction: Following transcription, the researchers engaged in data reduction, wherein they systematically eliminate irrelevant or extraneous information that does not contribute to the research objectives. This step is essential for narrowing down the dataset to focus on pertinent details that enhance the clarity and relevance of the findings. (3). Classification: After reducing the data, the researchers classified or categorized the interview responses into distinct types of paralinguistics. This classification process enables the researchers to organize the data systematically, facilitating easier comparison and analysis of various forms of nonverbal communication observed during the interviews. (4). Triangulation: To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the researchers conducted the triangulation phase. This involves comparing and cross-referencing data obtained from each informant to identify patterns and discrepancies. By triangulating the information, the researchers can ensure a comprehensive understanding of the students' perceptions of paralinguistics and reduce the potential for bias. (5). Analysis: In the final stage, the researchers analyzed the categorized data based on the types of paralinguistics exhibited during classroom interactions. The analysis focused specifically on

vocal characteristics, vocal qualifiers, and vocal segregates, as identified by Miles and Huberman (2018). This detailed examination provided insights into how these elements of paralinguistics contribute to students' understanding and engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes.

Table 1. Coding and Identification

No	Code	Meaning
1	Vc	Vocal Characterizers
2	Vq	Vocal Qualifiers
3	Vs	Vocal Segregates
4	Rr	Researcher
5	Ss	Student

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This study employed qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews with students from two distinct high schools, SMA Fides Quarens Intellectum (FQI) and SMA Negeri 2 Kefamenanu, to examine the influence of paralinguistics on English language learning. Paralinguistics encompasses various aspects of vocal expression, including pitch, voice quality, speed, volume, and style of speech. Within this study, paralinguistics was analyzed through its primary components vocal characterizers, vocal qualifiers, and vocal segregates to assess their influence on student comprehension and engagement in English language instruction. These elements shape how spoken content is perceived and processed by students, impacting their ability to focus, understand, and retain information. By examining each aspect of paralinguistics, the study sought to understand its role in facilitating or hindering effective communication in an educational context, particularly within English language learning, where vocal nuances play a crucial role in comprehension (Wakaria, 2023). The interviews focused on capturing students' perceptions of various vocal elements, including emotional expression, tone and pitch variations, accents, articulation, speaking rate, volume, and the use of fillers, to understand how these factors contribute to their listening and overall learning experience.

The participant demographics add depth to the study's context: both high schools are located in the East Nusa Tenggara region, a culturally rich area where local dialects and accents shape communication styles and preferences. Students at both institutions are accustomed to using their local dialects in daily communication, which makes specific paralinguistics features such as tone modulation, articulation, and pace particularly relevant when learning a foreign language like English. Pan (2014) stated that Nonverbal language, including paralinguistics, is profoundly influenced by cultural context, affecting both the use and interpretation of communication cues. This cultural variability can complicate interactions, particularly when students are exposed to foreign accents, speech patterns, or faster-paced language delivery. For students in this study, the regional linguistic background further suggests that they may struggle to adapt to unfamiliar accents or rapid English speech. This highlights the importance of employing tailored paralinguistics strategies that account for

students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, ultimately promoting more effective English language learning and improving comprehension.

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Paralanguage in English Classes

Budacia (2010) defines paralanguage as communication that goes beyond the specific spoken words, encompassing nonverbal elements tied to vocal expressions (Muchemwa, 2013). Khalifa and Faddal (2017) elaborate, describing paralanguage as the area of non-verbal communication that highlights body language and voice tones as means of expressing thoughts and feelings. Similarly, Sabas and Torres (2017) characterize paralanguage as a tool that helps spoken language convey the full meaning behind words. In essence, paralanguage includes the vocal, yet nonverbal, aspects of communication.

Student interviews revealed that paralanguage comprising vocal tone, gestures, facial expressions, and fillers significantly enhances their understanding of spoken English. Many students noted that these nonverbal cues allow them to grasp nuances that extend beyond words alone. For instance, changes in vocal tone can convey emotions such as enthusiasm, sarcasm, or uncertainty, which help students interpret the speaker's intent more clearly (Zani, 2011). Likewise, gestures and facial expressions provide contextual information that enriches the spoken message, creating a stronger connection with the content. While fillers are often viewed as signals of hesitation, students reported that these pauses help them process information, supporting a smoother conversational flow.

The paralanguage components identified were categorized into Vocal Characterizers (emotions and expressions), Vocal Qualifiers (elements like pitch, volume, and tempo), and Vocal Segregates (fillers such as "uh" and "um"). Approximately 75% of students highlighted the importance of vocal qualities like tone, tempo, and volume for understanding English, emphasizing how variations in pitch clarify emphasis and meaning. For example, 80% reported that high volume and clear articulation help them comprehend challenging English terms, especially those seated further from the teacher. Around 60% found fillers helpful, as they provided natural pauses for processing English material. These reflections underscore how diverse paralanguage components enrich comprehension and engagement in language learning, suggesting that effective communication in English extends well beyond words alone.

The findings, organized into Vocal Characterizers, Vocal Qualifiers, and Vocal Segregates, each uniquely enhance students' learning and engagement in English, underscoring the essential role paralanguage plays in the language learning process.

Vocal Characterizers (Vc)

Vocal characterizers encompass emotional vocal expressions, such as laughter, crying, shouting, and whispering, which add depth and nuance to communication (Devito as cited in Ayuningsih et al., 2022). For teachers, managing these expressions can be crucial for creating a learning environment that is both comfortable and conducive to language acquisition.

According to Aldrup et al., (2024), a teacher's ability to regulate emotions effectively helps build positive relationships with students, making the classroom feel open and supportive rather than stressful or intimidating. Interview participants emphasized that emotions play an essential role in fostering a relaxed, focused, and receptive classroom

atmosphere. Students with the initials C, K, W, explained that emotions have an important role in EFL classes.

Table 2. Data of Vocal Characterizers (Vc)

No	Code	Data
1)	Rr	The first is a vocal characterizers that includes emotions such as laughing, happy, sad, angry, etc. Is it necessary not to express emotions in a lesson?
3)	Ss (C)	Emotional expression or vocal inflection is critical in establishing an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. However, too much emotion can distract from learning, so it's essential for the teacher to strike a balance. If the teacher's voice remains flat, the class can feel dull, causing students to lose interest. A good teacher knows how to energize the atmosphere, sometimes using humour or a change in tone to keep us engaged.
3)	Ss (K)	Emotions are important in a conversation or teaching specifically English. English is a foreign language which requires students to work hard to understand. So if teachers implement emotions into explanations, this will be very helpful in helping students understand what is being conveyed, meaning that emotions can help an explanation be conveyed.
5)	Ss (W)	In my opinion, it is important to lighten the atmosphere, for example in a class where you are bored or saturated, so a laughing atmosphere is needed so that students don't feel bored and fed up with the lesson.

Vocal Qualifiers (Vq)

Vocal qualifiers refer to characteristics such as tone, pitch range, intensity, accent, articulation, rate, tempo, and volume. These aspects of paralanguage serve to modify or emphasize verbal communication, adding meaning and enhancing comprehension. Each of these components can be broken down further to understand how they contribute to effective language learning.

Tone

Tone, or the range of high and low pitches, can capture students' attention and emphasize the significance of certain information. According to Paulmann and Weinstein (2022), tone variations prevent monotony in lessons, engaging students and reinforcing their focus on key points. Students with the initials K, Y, W, think that the high and low voices help them record the process of learning English.

Table 3. Data of Vocal Qualifiers (Vq)

No	Code	Data
6)	Rr	The second element is vocal qualifiers, which include the pitch range or pitch of the voice, tone intensity, accent or dialect, articulation, rate or tempo and volume which are related to the loudness and softness of the voice. The question is, do you think the pitch of the voice influences the learning process? English?
13)	Ss (K)	Variations in pitch, or the high and low tones, help guide us in understanding. When the teacher uses a high tone, it feels like a signal to pay extra attention—it emphasizes importance. Different tones also make learning more varied and less monotonous, which keeps us interested
10)	Ss (Y)	In my opinion, the high and low levels of the voice in the process of learning English are very important because there are several vocabulary words that are almost the same, so if the voice is low it will make it difficult for students who are behind because they will have difficulty hearing.
12)	Ss (W)	In my opinion, it is very influential because if there are certain words or sentences that are not clear, you can use a high voice so that students can understand and comprehend the words or sentences being conveyed.

This feedback shows that the deliberate use of tone helps clarify important material and maintain students' interest by breaking the rhythm of spoken language. In conclusion, the high and low levels of voice or tone can help students stay focused on the material provided by the teacher in the EFL class.

Accent

In Indonesia, the use of diverse regional accents became more pronounced as people began incorporating distinct dialects into their daily communication. This diversity can make English learning challenging, as different accents may affect pronunciation and comprehension Büyükahıska & Uyar (2019). Student C, G, W, explained that although some accents present difficulties, they also believe that teachers who use accents that are familiar to students can facilitate better understanding.

Table 4. Data of Accent

No	Code	Data
13)	Rr	Next, it relates to accent or dialect, does this accent have an influence on the English language learning process?
14)	Ss (C)	I think accent matters, especially for students here in Timor. We find it easier to understand if the teacher speaks with a local accent. When teachers use unfamiliar accents, it can be challenging for us to grasp the material.
19)	Ss (G)	Both teachers and students need to pay attention to accents. Accent is also very helpful in making it easier for students to understand what is being said. Real English accents need to be practiced in teaching so that students get used to existing accents.
17)	Ss (W)	In my opinion, the accent is needed because students here tend to use market languages and use Timorese dialect more, so the accent or dialect is also needed so that students can understand more easily.

These responses suggest that teachers' awareness of students' linguistic backgrounds can support a smoother learning process, making English feel more accessible. It can be concluded that the use of accent has a very important influence in EFL classes, especially schools in border areas

Articulation

Articulation, or the clarity of word pronunciation, plays a vital role in EFL classes by helping students understand and reproduce English sounds more accurately. De Jong and Mora (2019) explain that clear articulation aids students in identifying and pronouncing challenging vocabulary. Student C,W,G,M explains that articulation has an important role in the English learning process.

Table 5. Data of Articulation

No	Code	Data
17)	Rr	OK, the next question is about articulation, does articulation have an influence on the process of learning English?
24)	Ss (C)	Articulation matters because there are English words that are difficult to understand or pronounce. Proper articulation from the teacher makes it easier for us to understand meanings more quickly and to pronounce words more accurately
19)	Ss (W)	In my opinion, it is influential because there are some students who don't really understand and don't understand English, therefore articulation is needed so that these students understand better and can hear clearly.
24)	Ss (G)	Articulation is very important in learning, especially learning English. Clear articulation can help students understand what is being conveyed. If the articulation is not clear, students will not understand or misunderstand what is being explained. This will result in less effective learning.

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| 22) | Ss
(M) | I think it's important because there are sentences or words that are difficult to pronounce, not everyone can immediately understand the material that the teacher explains, there are some students who immediately understand, but there are some students who don't understand, so there must be further explanation. |
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This highlights the importance of articulation in guiding students towards correct pronunciation and fluency, thereby increasing their confidence in spoken English. In conclusion, articulation is an important part of the EFL class because it makes students confident in pronouncing words or sentences.

Rate or Tempo

Rate or tempo, referring to the speed at which someone speaks, is also critical in an EFL classroom. Studies by Kamdideh and Barjesteh (2019) demonstrate that an appropriate pace is especially important for learners of a foreign language, as it allows students the time necessary to process and retain information. Student M,N,G,K also explained that rate or tempo really helped them in the process of learning English.

Table 6. Data of Rate

No	Code	Data
22)	Rr	Next is the rate or tempo, such as how fast and slow a speech is, for example when the teacher says a word too fast or slow, does the rate or tempo have an effect on the English learning process?
24)	Ss (M)	In my opinion, the rate or tempo has an effect because if the teacher explains too fast then there are students who find it difficult to understand and if the tempo is slow then it will be better because English is a difficult subject for people who still don't understand English so in my opinion the rate or tempo It is very influential in the process of learning English.
23)	Ss (N)	In my opinion, tempo is very important in a teacher's explanation. Listeners or students can follow the teacher's explanation and can understand the teacher's explanation. But the tempo should also be adjusted to the circumstances. If students already understand what is being explained, then the tempo is accelerated. On the other hand, if the material is new and requires a detailed explanation, the tempo should be slowed down.
30)	Ss (G)	In my opinion, tempo stability must be maintained or paid attention to by the teacher when explaining the material. Likewise, students, if they give opinions or answer questions, the teacher must pay attention to the tempo. In class, students' abilities to understand material or teacher explanations vary. There are those who can understand quickly even though the tempo in the explanation feels fast, but if you need to slow down the tempo then it should not be too fast.

		Additionally, if the pace is too slow, the class will feel very monotonous and uninteresting and can waste time. On the other hand, if the tempo is too fast, the points explained may not be conveyed effectively.
19)	Ss (K)	In my opinion, it is important because there are sentences or words that are difficult to pronounce, not everyone can immediately understand the material that the teacher explains, there are some students who immediately understand, but there are some students who don't understand, so there must be further explanation. In my opinion, pacing is very important in a conversation in particular. in the explanation of the material. As I said before, English is not our mother tongue, so it requires a lot of effort to hear and understand well. so a speaker must maintain the tempo. The tempo should not be fast, so that students can follow the teacher's explanation well.

From the explanation above, it can be said that rate or tempo has an important role in the EFL class. This shows that a moderate speaking speed, especially in foreign language teaching, helps students absorb and remember new material, especially for students who are still confident in speaking English.

Volume

Volume, or the loudness and softness of speech, is another essential factor in classroom communication, as it affects the accessibility of spoken material (Haan, 2023). Students K, W, G, M said that the volume helped them during the process of learning English.

Table 7. Data of Volume

No	Code	Data
24)	Rr	Next is volume which is related to the loudness or softness of the sound. In your opinion, does volume have an effect on the English learning process?
26)	Ss (K)	I think sound volume is very important in learning. A speaker, both teacher and student, must raise his voice when speaking. "A teacher must raise his voice when explaining material, especially important material. Having a large voice volume will help us as students understand the material being presented."
32)	Ss (W)	Volume is very influential because there are several words in English that are difficult for us to understand and seem to be convoluted, so we need a loud volume so that we can hear the pronunciation of the words given by the teacher.
40)	Ss (G)	Volume also has a big influence on the explanation of material. Teachers should pay attention to the loudness and softness of their voices when explaining the material. Whether students understand easily or not also depends on the volume of the teacher's voice. The loudness of the voice in the

		explanation also helps the teacher in emphasizing the explanation.
33)	Ss (M)	In my opinion, it has an effect because a voice that is too loud or too soft is not good or good in English lessons. The teacher should use a medium or standard volume, at least enough for all students to hear.

The feedback underscores the role of volume in improving clarity and ensuring that important information reaches all students, especially those sitting far from the teacher. In conclusion, it can be said that volume has an important role in learning in EFL classes because it can help students understand the material given by the teacher.

Vocal Segregates

Vocal segregates, or fillers, include brief non-lexical sounds such as ‘mmm, uh, and hssst, that may indicate hesitation or thought (Zulhemindra, et al. 2022).. Although these sounds lack direct linguistic meaning, they can serve to manage pauses and give students time to think. Student C, W, G, M, explained that fillers have an important role in the process of learning English in EFL classes.

Table 8. Data of Vocal Segregates

No	Code	Data
39)	Rr	The third element is vocal segregates which refer to actual words but function as fillers such as (ehh, emm, er, hmm). For example, when Mr. teaches, he says one or two sentences, he says "emm" then continues with another sentence, So do you think fillers have an influence on learning English?
43)	Ss (C)	I think it's important because when we memorize a sentence in English and we go forward to speak and we feel nervous then we need fillers to recall the sentence.
44)	Ss (W)	Yes, it is very influential when communicating, we still want to remember words or still want to compose a sentence that we want to convey to the person we are talking to
48)	Ss (G)	These fillers are also a small part but can be a help to a teacher in explaining the material. Teachers can use fillers to help them think so that explanations are not interrupted. But it depends on the teacher. If the teacher prepares the material well, of course fillers are not really needed in the explanation. But personally I think it doesn't matter. As long as you don't use it too often. Because if you use it frequently, the explanation will sound monotonous and not smooth.
39)	Ss (M)	I think it's important because English is a language that not everyone can understand quickly, so when the teacher explains the material before he reads or memorizes the material, he needs fillers to remember the material he has read.

Fillers can indirectly support fluency and reduce stress by giving students short breaks to organize their thoughts, especially during challenging speaking practice.

The use of Paralanguage by Teachers Influence Students' Understanding in Learning English

The followings are students' perception on paralanguage that the teachers use influence students' understanding in learning English.

Table 9. Data of Teachers' Use of Paralanguage Influence Students' Understanding in Learning English

No	Code	Data	Code
29)	Rr	Does paralanguage help you in the process of learning English?	
30)	Ss (N)	The presence of high and low sounds or volume can help students in the understanding process. A high tone of voice gives the meaning of affirmation, meaning that it is important. Apart from that, the high and low levels of sound can make learning varied, not monotonous	Vq
13)	Ss (G)	It is important because the pitch, pitch and volume of the sound can help students with poor hearing hear and understand things clearly. In addition, a high voice can help to provide confirmation. This means that what is conveyed is focused or important to understand.	Vq
3)	Ss (K)	Emotions are important in a conversation or teaching, especially English. English is a foreign language which requires students to work hard to understand. So if teachers implement emotions into explanations, this will be very helpful in helping students understand what is being conveyed, meaning that emotions can help an explanation be conveyed.	Vc
5)	Ss (W)	In my opinion, emotions are important to lighten the atmosphere, for example in a class that is bored or saturated, so a laughing atmosphere is needed so that students don't feel bored and students become more active in English class.	Vc

From the explanation above, it can be said that paralanguage elements such as emotion, volume and pitch of the voice help students better understand what the teacher teaches in the EFL class. In conclusion, the integration of paralanguage within educational communication is essential for creating an engaging and effective learning environment. Experts in educational psychology, such as, underscore the importance of non-verbal cues in fostering deeper student understanding and emotional engagement (Mehrabian, 2017; Ekman, 2014).

Discussion

The data presented above led to some discussion that various aspects of paralanguage vocal characterisers, vocal qualifiers, articulation, tempo, volume, and vocal segregates own a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. These nonverbal elements, while often overlooked, directly influence students' engagement, comprehension, and confidence in learning English.

Vocal Characterisers

Students consistently emphasized the importance of emotions, such as laughter, enthusiasm, and vocal energy, in creating a comfortable and motivating classroom environment. This aligns with Aldrup et al., (2024) argument that teachers' emotional regulation builds supportive learning spaces. A balance is required: while a flat or monotonous voice risks disengaging students, overly emotional delivery may distract from

instructional goals. Then, other findings stated that positive emotions are crucial in teaching. This is used to balance up a classroom's atmosphere (Wang, 2023; Morgan, 2016). The interviews indicate that humor and light emotional expression help alleviate classroom tension, thereby facilitating receptivity to new knowledge. These results suggest that emotional vocal cues act as affective scaffolding, making language learning less intimidating and more relatable.

Vocal Qualifiers

Tone, pitch, and variation emerged as crucial tools for signaling importance and sustaining attention. Students noted that tonal shifts act as cues for focus, particularly when learning difficult vocabulary, which corroborates Paulmann and Weinstein (2022) claim that tone variation prevents monotony. Pratiwi and Ediyono (in Seran, 2025) and Harrison (2020) found out the same result that the use of vocal qualifiers is beneficial to avoid monotonous explanation and emphasize certain part of the teaching. In addition, accents played a dual role: while unfamiliar accents sometimes posed comprehension barriers, familiar local accents made lessons more accessible for border-area students. This supports Büyükahıska and Uyar (2019) observation that linguistic background must be considered in English teaching. Articulation was also highlighted as essential, with clear pronunciation aiding students' ability to decode and reproduce English sounds accurately. These findings underscore the pedagogical need for teachers to strategically adjust their tone, articulation, and even accent to accommodate student needs, particularly in linguistically diverse contexts.

Vocal Segregates

Similarly, fillers or Vocal Segregates provide essential pauses that allow students to collect their thoughts, particularly when speaking under pressure. Lombogia (as cited in Seran, et al., 2025) found that vocal segregates leads to a smooth conversation. These findings underscore that effective language teaching extends beyond mere vocabulary or grammar instruction; it requires an awareness of the subtle, nonverbal elements that help bridge understanding and foster deeper engagement with the language. This insight suggests that fillers can indirectly support fluency and reduce stress by giving students short breaks to organize their thoughts, especially during challenging speaking practice. In the EFL class, fillers are really needed when speaking because they can make students relax when speaking.

The use of Paralanguage by Teachers Influence Students' Understanding in Learning English

In the field of education, effective communication forms the foundation of meaningful and successful teaching and learning experiences. While content is unquestionably crucial, the way in which information is conveyed significantly impacts student engagement, comprehension, and retention of material. One essential yet frequently underappreciated component of communication is paralanguage, which encompasses the non-verbal elements that accompany spoken language. These elements include tone, pitch, volume, and speech rate, each of which can convey meanings and emotional nuances beyond the literal words (Sabas & Torres, 2017). By leveraging these features, educators are equipped with powerful tools that can facilitate a richer understanding of complex topics. For students, the ability to interpret paralanguage becomes integral to their capacity for deeper comprehension and a more emotionally resonant connection to the subject matter, enhancing both cognitive and

affective learning outcomes. In line with Student E's statement, he also stated that paralinguistic elements, namely tone, pitch, volume, and speech rate, have an important role in the process of learning English. Student M, C, W, explained that paralinguistic elements have an important role because they help them understand the material given by their teacher in the process of learning English in the EFL class.

Mehrabian's (2017) findings suggest that up to 93% of communicative meaning is delivered through non-verbal elements, highlighting the substantial impact of tone, pitch, and volume on message interpretation. Ekman's research further emphasizes that students who can perceive emotional undertones in spoken language often achieve better empathic connections, contributing to more meaningful and responsive classroom interactions. When educators strategically employ these elements of paralinguistic, students are better able to grasp the emotional context behind the content, enhancing both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Additionally, scholars like Fredrickson highlight how positive non-verbal communication can promote cognitive flexibility and broaden students' openness to new ideas (Fredrickson, 2018). Fredrickson's research suggests that recognizing and responding to paralinguistic fosters a collaborative and reflective classroom culture, encouraging critical thinking and active participation. Students attuned to paralinguistic cues engage more deeply in discussions, developing interpretive skills that enrich their learning experience. By incorporating paralinguistic into classroom dynamics, educators create an inclusive environment where students are not only recipients of information but active participants in the learning process, thereby supporting the development of essential social, emotional, and intellectual skills.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study aims to understand students' perceptions of the use of paralinguistic by English language teachers in schools on the Indonesia-Timor Leste border, and how the use of paralinguistic by teachers influences students' comprehension in English learning. One key finding reveals that vocal qualities such as tone and volume directly affect students' ability to interpret a teacher's intent and emotion. In an EFL setting, where students often face challenges in interpreting the literal meanings of words, paralinguistic serves as a crucial interpretive tool, helping students gauge when a teacher is emphasizing important points or clarifying nuanced material. This ultimately facilitates better comprehension and retention, especially when teachers vary their tone to emphasize key information, pitch to convey enthusiasm, and volume to command attention. In processing information, vocal fillers or vocal segregates like 'uh', 'um', or brief pauses, often viewed as interruptions, actually play a supportive role in language learning. Fillers provide students brief moments to process and internalize complex English concepts. Fillers could assist students to maintain the communication.

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