
Original Paper

English Majors' Perceptions of the Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking

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Abstract

Public speaking is a vital means of effective communication, as it enables speakers to convey ideas to an audience in various contexts. The purpose of this study was to investigate English majors' perceptions of the effects of body language on public speaking. The study followed a descriptive approach, using a 30-item questionnaire. The participants were 60 final-year students majoring in English Studies at a public university in the Mekong Delta. Findings revealed that the majority of students held a positive perception of the effects of body language on their public speaking performance. In particular, students reported that body language enhances confidence, improves message delivery, and captures audience attention. Finally, the study recommends integrating body language into EFL speaking instruction to enhance the quality of students' public speaking performance.

Keywords: Body Language, EFL, English Majors, Perceptions, Public Speaking

Introduction

Public speaking is defined as the act of presenting ideas openly to an audience, sharing them with others, and influencing their opinions or actions (Lucas, 2005). In today's interconnected world, public speaking has become a vital skill for effective communication, particularly in academic and professional settings (Li et al., 2016). As Jasuli et al. (2024) mentioned, this is especially relevant for students of English language education programs, who are expected not only to attain language proficiency but also to serve as role models in communication for their future learners. The ability to speak in front of an audience is highly valued in almost every profession, as the success of a presentation often relies on the speaker's ability to communicate effectively, engage with the audience, and maintain eye contact (Kilag et al., 2023). However, verbal expression alone does not define a successful speaker, as successful public speaking is not solely based on the words themselves. As Kilag et al. (2023) emphasized, it also involves the strategic use of non-verbal communication, particularly body language, to convey ideas more effectively but also keep the audience engaged. Effective use of body language not only improves students' credibility and confidence but also strengthens audience engagement and message clarity (Adams, 2022). Therefore, mastering both verbal and non-verbal aspects of public speaking is becoming essential in today's interconnected and communicative world, especially in language education programs at schools.

Previous studies have revealed that body language contributed to the effectiveness of EFL students' speaking performance (Ismayilli et al., 2025; Sopyanti et al., 2025). Body language includes a wide range of non-verbal expressions that convey an idea. This type of non-verbal communication uses physical movements, such as gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and postures, to communicate with the audience. These components often work together to reinforce spoken language, clarify ideas, and convey emotions or attitudes that spoken words may fail to express (Sharma, 2024). According to Patel (2014), non-verbal expressions account for a majority of meaning in face-to-face interaction. Similarly, Djalolovna (2025) stated that non-verbal communication, including gestures, postures, facial expressions, and eye contact, is crucial in conversations because it shapes how messages are delivered and understood. In this regard, facial expressions are considered visual aids in communication that help

emphasize key points and maintain the audience's interest (Sopyanti et al., 2025). Moreover, gestures and eye contact are also used to help convey the message and complement the speech (Thamrin & Darsih, 2023). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, in which the lack of non-verbal expressions in public speaking might reduce message clarity, effective use of body language becomes even more crucial in enhancing comprehension and interaction.

While the verbal content of public speaking often receives the primary focus, the role of body language remains comparatively underexplored, particularly among EFL students. In the context of Vietnam, Ho et al. (2025) indicated that poor physical delivery, such as the inadequate use of postures, gestures, and eye contact, was a significant challenge for public speakers. These shortcomings, especially the ineffective use of facial expressions, may considerably reduce the clarity and persuasiveness of a presentation (Oanh et al., 2016). To address this gap, it is important to take into consideration the potential effects of body language on EFL students' oral performance, particularly in a university case of the real context in which Vietnamese undergraduate students have opportunities to learn two courses of public speaking in their training program. As effective use of body language can improve confidence, clarity, and audience engagement in public speaking, EFL students who master this skill are more likely to enhance language proficiency (Ismayilli et al., 2025). Therefore, gaining insights into how students perceive and apply body language in public speaking is essential for enhancing their overall speaking ability.

Therefore, the present study aims to explore English majors' perceptions of the effects of body language on public speaking. The findings of the present study are expected to inform pedagogical practices that enhance body language instruction in EFL classrooms and serve as a foundation for further research on its role in improving public speaking performance of English majors.

To achieve the aim mentioned, the present study seeks to answer the following research question:

How does body language affect English majors' perceptions of their public speaking performance?

Literature Review

Definitions of Public Speaking

Public speaking is one of the most effective ways to communicate ideas to the audience. It has long been a tool for politicians to share their thoughts and persuade others. These days, body language becomes crucial in various contexts, such as thesis defenses, job interviews, and business pitches, in which strong communication skills are required (Li et al., 2016). Therefore, mastering this skill is essential for effective communication, which often opens doors to greater career opportunities and personal growth. Whether the goal is to advance professionally, launch a business, or inspire and motivate others, the ability to present ideas to the target audience in a clear, structured, and captivating way is indispensable (Nikitina, 2011). Through public speaking, individuals can effectively express their ideas, influence others, and open up more opportunities to personal development. In summary, public speaking is a purposeful and structured form of oral communication used to share ideas, inform, persuade, or motivate an audience. Mastering this skill allows individuals to express ideas clearly, engage others, and create opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Factors Contributing to Successful Public Speaking

According to Nikitina (2011), successful public speaking is attributed to five key components, namely storytelling, body language, tone of voice, pauses, and visual cues. Each of these components contributes to how effectively the speaker can enhance the message delivery while maintaining the audience's interest. For EFL students, applying these components to their presentation is essential for achieving success in public speaking.

Definitions of Body Language

Body language is commonly understood as a form of non-verbal communication through which emotions and information are conveyed without spoken or written language. In other words, it is the process of communicating what people are feeling or thinking by placing and moving the bodies rather than by words ("Body language," Oxford University Press, n.d.). In communication, the majority of

meaning is transmitted not only by words but also through physical movements, such as gestures, postures, facial expressions, and eye movements (Kucuk, 2023; Tai, 2014). Therefore, body language can be interpreted as the study of how different parts of the body convey meaning in communication (Tai, 2014; Tipper et al., 2015).

Previous studies demonstrated that body language plays a vital role in effective communication. Jassuli et al. (2024) claimed that using gestures and facial expressions engages the speaker's ability with the audience. Building on this, Ferginan et al. (2025) reported that these non-verbal expressions also foster learners' confidence and participation in speaking activities. Additionally, Newman et al. (2016) further demonstrated that non-verbal communication can significantly enhance the speaker's perceived confidence and persuasiveness, even when the verbal contents they deliver remain unchanged. Taken together, these findings suggest that body language, when combined with verbal language, can significantly contribute to effective communication (Waliulu et al., 2025).

Although definitions of body language may vary, researchers (Tai, 2014; Waliulu et al., 2025) generally agree that it is an indispensable part of human communication. For the purpose of the present study, body language refers to the use of bodily movements and physical space of public speakers that reinforce spoken language, thereby contributing to effective communication.

Components of Body Language

Body language comprises a wide range of behaviors that complement and enhance verbal communication. While previous researchers have categorized it into various aspects (Hans & Hans, 2015; Pease, 1981), the present study focuses on five key components of body language that are most relevant to public speaking in EFL contexts, namely facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, postures, and body distance.

Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking

Relevant studies highlighted the effects of body language on enhancing the quality of public speaking by strengthening message delivery and audience engagement. It is often regarded as a complementary language that communicates through gestures, postures, eye contact, facial expressions, and body distance. According to Thamrin and Darsih (2023), non-verbal communication significantly contributes to the clarity and effectiveness of students' speeches. In particular, the appropriate use of gestures allowed students to complement verbal communication and convey their intended messages more clearly to the audience (Thamrin & Darsih, 2023). Similarly, Mehrabian's (1971) communication model reveals that more than half of the meaning in face-to-face communication is conveyed through body language, highlighting its significant contribution to persuasiveness in communication. Additionally, Jasuli et al. (2024) noted that effective use of non-verbal communication enhances perceived credibility, audience engagement, and message clarity, particularly for English language learners. Physical behaviors such as maintaining eye contact, employing gestures, and adopting a confident posture not only reinforce the spoken message but also cultivate a trustworthy and authoritative presence of the speaker. These congruent non-verbal expressions help capture audience attention and facilitate message retention, ultimately making public speaking more successful. According to Rodero (2022), an excessive number of gestures or gestures with overly strong intensity can distract listeners. However, using a moderate number of gestures with medium intensity enhances public speaking by maintaining audience attention and increasing the speaker's credibility (Rodero, 2022). Therefore, body language can be seen as an indispensable component of successful public speaking, reinforcing verbal language and shaping the overall audience experience.

Related Studies on the Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking of Students

Empirical studies demonstrated that body language contributes significantly to enhancing communication and students' public speaking performance across various contexts. First, Azemi (2021) investigated the impact of non-verbal communication on public speaking of 150 participants, focusing on how non-verbal behavior can amplify or reduce the verbal message conveyed by the speaker. Findings revealed that non-verbal communication plays a crucial role in public speaking. When combined with verbal language, non-verbal communication reinforces the speaker's message, enhances clarity, and builds credibility. In contrast, weak non-verbal expressions can reduce speech effectiveness

and audience engagement. The study concluded that effective public speaking requires not only verbal delivery but also the strategic use of non-verbal communication.

Similarly, Ismayilli et al. (2025) examined body language from a pedagogical perspective, which aimed to explore the importance of body language in language learning, as well as its impact on student-teacher interactions within the classroom. Participants were 15 randomly selected B1-level university students (8 females and 7 males). Semi-structured interviews with four open-ended questions were conducted to collect qualitative data. Findings revealed that students frequently use body language to support their speech, especially when they encounter grammatical difficulties or limited vocabulary. Moreover, students noted that body language helps reduce stress, boost self-confidence, and create a more natural and engaging communication experience.

A study conducted by Hadi and Prasanna Sree (2024) aimed to explore EFL students' perceptions regarding the role of body language in facilitating speech delivery. The purpose of the study highlighted how non-verbal communications contribute to fluency, audience engagement, and overall speaking performance. A total of 60 EFL students from three different classes were randomly selected to participate in the study. A 20-item questionnaire was the main instrument to collect data. The findings from the questionnaire surveys revealed that body language improved students' confidence. It helped them overcome the fear of speaking English and enhanced speech fluency. Based on the functions of body language, students were able to express emotions and maintain audience attention, even when facing linguistic challenges. Based on these findings, the study recommended integrating body language training into EFL curricula to help students develop their communicative competence.

In contrast to the quantitative focus of previous research, Thamrin and Darsih (2023) conducted a qualitative investigation into how students use non-verbal communication in actual public speaking classes. Participants of the study were three selected fourth-semester students enrolled in a public speaking course. Data were collected through observations and interviews to identify the types of non-verbal communication used and explore the students' reasons for using them. The findings revealed that gestures were the most frequently used, especially hand gestures, while posture was the least used. Through interviews, students explained that non-verbal communication helped boost their confidence during speech delivery. Finally, students also shared that speaking without gestures or facial expressions felt robotic and unnatural, which highlighted the significance of body language in the speech delivery of public speakers.

In Vietnam, Nguyen (2024) conducted a study to explore the types of non-verbal communication most frequently used by students during speaking performance and their perceptions of the effects of body language on developing speaking skills. A total of 59 non-English majors participated in the research. The data were collected through an observation checklist and questionnaire surveys. The observation results revealed that gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and postures were commonly used by students while speaking, with gestures being the most frequently used. These gestures helped students clarify their ideas and boost their confidence. The questionnaire findings showed that students had a positive perspective towards non-verbal communication, as it made them feel more comfortable and helped them express their ideas more clearly. Students also agreed that non-verbal communication contributed to message clarity and audience engagement. Finally, the study recommended that non-verbal delivery should be integrated into EFL instruction to support students' speaking skill development.

Based on the findings of the previous studies, it is considered that body language plays a vital role in public speaking enhancement of students in terms of speech delivery, confidence, and audience engagement. However, limited research has explored how body language affects English majors' perceptions of their public speaking performance, in which the effective use of body language is crucial to successful communication. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by providing evidence at descriptive level that informs the integration of body language instruction into EFL curricula and enhances students' communicative competence in both academic and professional settings.

Methodology

Participants

Participants of the study were 60 English-majored seniors from a public university in the Mekong Delta. Their ages ranged from 21 to 23 years old and were selected from four English-majored classes. The participants were selected using a convenience sampling method, which allowed the researcher to access participants and gather data with minimal time and resources (Acharya, 2013; Golza et al., 2022; Turner, 2020). At the time this study was conducted, all participants were in their final year of the bachelor's program of English Studies. They had completed two public speaking courses in the training program at the Faculty, namely Foundation of Public Speaking (in the second semester of the first year) and Advanced Public Speaking (in the second semester of the third year). This indicated that they had learned about the general structure of public speaking and had developed the ability to organize academic content for persuasive presentations, building on what they had learned from the two mentioned courses.

The rationale for selecting these participants was that they had already become accustomed to public speaking and had practical experience in delivering presentations in class. Therefore, investigating students' perceptions of the effects of body language on public speaking might provide insights for enhancing pedagogical practices and directions related to body language instruction in EFL classrooms.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the main research instrument for collecting quantitative data in the present study. In this study, a questionnaire was employed as it offers a practical and efficient way to gather data, minimize expenses, and allow the inclusion of specific participant groups (Wright, 2005). This instrument was constructed based on a review of previous studies (Chalal & Yassine, 2024; Ismayilli et al., 2025; Nguyen, 2024; Sutji et al., 2020) to ensure its reliability and validity for the research context. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with 30 items was employed to examine students' perceptions of the effects of body language on public speaking, with responses ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. It was designed and presented in both Vietnamese and English to ensure that participants could understand the content and provide accurate responses.

The questionnaire consists of two main sections. Section 1 collected participants' demographics. Section 2 includes 30 items divided into four clusters, examining students' perceptions of the effects of body language on public speaking. These clusters focused on psychological effects, cognitive effects, speech effectiveness, and audience engagement.

Before the official distribution, the questionnaires were piloted via *Google Forms* within a small group of 18 English majors, who had completed the two public speaking courses in the training program at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, and they shared similar characteristics with the main survey participants. According to Renuse (2024), the purpose of pilot testing was to ensure the clarity and reliability of each item while identifying potential obstacles of the study (i.e., resource limitations, time planning, and the need for flexibility). A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability of 30 items of the questionnaire, which was equal to .791, indicating that the questionnaire was relatively reliable. In the official questionnaire delivery to 60 English majors, the reliability coefficient reached a high level, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .961 for the 30 items.

Findings

English Majors' Perceptions of the Psychological Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking

Table 1. English Majors' Perceptions of the Psychological Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	I think using body language boosts my confidence in speaking.	4.88	.32	SA
2	I can stay calmer during public speaking when I use gestures.	4.62	.52	SA
3	Body language helps reduce my nervousness while presenting.	4.68	.47	SA
4	Using body language helps me overcome my fear of speaking English.	4.47	.75	A
5	Using body language gives me the courage to speak in front of a lot of people.	4.63	.58	SA
6	Body language boosts my confidence to express more ideas to the audiences.	4.68	.47	SA
Total (Cluster 1: Psychological Effects)		4.66	.36	SA

Legend:

Based on the formula introduced by Lindner and Lindner (2024), the mean scores of the five-point Likert scale were interpreted as follows:

1.00-1.5: Strongly Disagree

1.51-2.5: Disagree

2.51-3.5: Neutral

3.51-4.5: Agree

4.51-5.00: Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows English majors' perception of the psychological effects of body language on their public speaking. As can be seen in the Table, the survey data revealed that English majors showed a high level of agreement regarding the psychological effects of body language on their public speaking performance, which gained an overall mean score of ($M = 4.66$, $SD = .36$). Most of the respondents agreed that body language boosts their confidence in speaking ($M = 4.88$, $SD = .32$), which also showed the most consistent responses. Besides, the role of body language in reducing English majors' nervousness and boosting their confidence to express more ideas to the audience was also perceived at a high level, which gained a similar mean score of $M = 4.68$ and $SD = .47$. Moreover, English majors also agreed that using body language helps them overcome their fear of speaking English ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.75$). While the mean score of this item was slightly lower compared to others, its finding remained significant, highlighting the considerable role of body language in reducing students' anxiety in public speaking. Overall, the findings from the questionnaire indicated that body language plays a crucial psychological role in students' public speaking performance. By using body language, students can alleviate nervousness, build confidence, and manage anxiety when speaking in public.

English Majors' Perceptions of the Cognitive Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking

Table 2. English Majors' Perceptions of the Cognitive Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
7	Using body language makes my presentation more interesting to the audiences.	4.75	.44	SA
8	I can attract the audiences' attention when I use facial expressions and gestures.	4.77	.47	SA
9	Body language helps me express my emotions in my speaking performance clearly.	4.72	.59	SA
10	When I speak, I can convey my intentions more effectively through facial expressions.	4.75	.47	SA
11	Thanks to body language, the audiences can better understand what I want to express in my speaking performance.	4.78	.49	SA
12	I feel motivated to deliver the messages in my speaking performance when I use body language.	4.73	.52	SA
Total (Cluster 2: Cognitive Effects)		4.75	.37	SA

Legend:

Based on the formula introduced by Lindner and Lindner (2024), the mean scores of the five-point Likert scale were interpreted as follows:

1.00-1.5: Strongly Disagree

1.51-2.5: Disagree

2.51-3.5: Neutral

3.51-4.5: Agree

4.51-5.00: Strongly Agree

All items in this Cluster were designed to explore English majors' perceptions of the cognitive effects of body language on their public speaking performance. As shown in Table 2, the findings indicated a consistently high level of agreement among students, with an overall mean score of ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .37$). Several items highlight how students perceived the cognitive effects that body language contributes to the audience's experience. In particular, students strongly believed that body language helps the audience better understand the speaker's message, which received the highest mean score ($M = 4.78$, $SD = .49$). In addition, students agreed that body language makes their presentation more engaging ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .44$) and enables them to convey their intentions more effectively ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .47$). They also expressed strong support for the statement that body language helps them communicate emotions more clearly during their speaking performance, which achieved a slightly lower mean score ($M = 4.72$, $SD = .59$). In general, these findings from quantitative strand showed that students possess a strong awareness of the cognitive effects of body language on public speaking. Students recognize its significance in enhancing message clarity, expressing emotions, and facilitating effective message delivery in their public speaking performance.

English Majors' Perceptions of the Effects of Body Language on Speech Effectiveness

Table 3. English Majors' Perceptions of the Effects of Body Language on Speech Effectiveness

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
13	Using body language helps me deliver my message more clearly.	4.82	.39	SA
14	Gestures enhance my speaking performance, making it more persuasive.	4.80	.40	SA
15	Using body language helps the audiences follow my ideas better.	4.80	.44	SA
16	Body language helps me communicate more effectively with the audiences.	4.77	.43	SA
17	Standing at the appropriate distance from the audiences helps me communicate more effectively.	4.65	.73	SA
18	Based on the functions of body language, the audiences can understand my messages better.	4.72	.49	SA
19	Body language helps me emphasize key points in my presentation.	4.82	.47	SA
20	Using body language helps organize my speech more clearly.	4.72	.64	SA
21	Using body language makes my presentation smoother.	4.78	.49	SA
Total (Cluster 3: Speech Effectiveness)		4.76	.38	SA

Legend:

Based on the formula introduced by Lindner and Lindner (2024), the mean scores of the five-point Likert scale were interpreted as follows:

1.00-1.5: Strongly Disagree

1.51-2.5: Disagree

2.51-3.5: Neutral

3.51-4.5: Agree

4.51-5.00: Strongly Agree

The data presented in Table 3 provide a comprehensive overview of students' perceptions of the effects of body language on the effectiveness of their public speaking performance. Students' perceptions of the effectiveness of body language in public speaking received the highest mean score ($M = 4.76$, $SD = .38$). This finding clearly showed that students strongly agree that the use of body language in public speaking contributes positively to the effectiveness of their speaking performance. Most notably, the highest levels of agreement were observed in students' perceptions that body language helps the speaker deliver messages more clearly and emphasize key points in their presentations, with both gaining similar mean scores of $M = 4.82$ with $SD = .39$ and $SD = .47$, respectively. In addition, students also showed strong agreements that using gestures enhances their speaking performance by making their presentations more persuasive ($M = 4.80$, $SD = .40$) and help the audience follow their ideas better ($M = 4.80$, $SD = .44$). Meanwhile, although maintaining an appropriate distance from the audience received the lowest mean score among the items, it was still perceived positively by students ($M = 4.65$, $SD = .73$). The lower score of this item suggested that while body language significantly enhances public speaking, students perceive its components, namely facial expressions, gestures, postures, eye

contact, and body distance contribute differently to the effectiveness of their speaking performance.

English Majors' Perceptions of the Effects of Body Language on Audience Engagement on Public Speaking

Table 4. English Majors' Perceptions of the Effects of Body Language on Audience Engagement on Public Speaking

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
22	I can engage with the audiences better when I use body language.	4.67	.51	SA
23	Facial expressions make my speech more engaging to the audiences.	4.77	.47	SA
24	I can keep the audiences' attention better when I use gestures.	4.77	.43	SA
25	Facial expressions make my speech more attractive to the audiences.	4.68	.62	SA
26	Having good eye contact helps me interact with the audiences more effectively.	4.77	.43	SA
27	Body language makes me appear more confident and professional.	4.80	.40	SA
28	Body language helps me understand and respond to the audiences' reactions.	4.77	.47	SA
29	The audiences react more positively when I use body language in my speaking performance.	4.73	.45	SA
30	Using body language helps build trust between me and the audiences.	4.75	.65	SA
Total (Cluster 4: Audience Engagement)		4.74	.36	SA

Legend:

Based on the formula introduced by Lindner and Lindner (2024), the mean scores of the five-point Likert scale were interpreted as follows:

1.00-1.5: Strongly Disagree

1.51-2.5: Disagree

2.51-3.5: Neutral

3.51-4.5: Agree

4.51-5.00: Strongly Agree

Table 4 presents the findings of students' perceptions of the effects of body language on audience engagement in public speaking. As shown in the Table above, the descriptive findings revealed that students demonstrated positive perceptions of the role of body language in enhancing audience engagement ($M = 4.74$, $SD = .36$). Generally, students' responses across all items were relatively consistent, showing strong awareness among students. Among all items, the highest mean score ($M = 4.80$, $SD = .40$) was found in students' perceptions that body language enhances their confidence and professionalism during public speaking. The high mean score of this item underscored that students consider body language as an essential factor for creating a credible and professional speaking

performance. In addition, students strongly agreed that facial expressions contribute to making their presentation more engaging and that body language assists them in interpreting and responding to audience reactions, both of which obtained similarly high mean scores of ($M = 4.77$, $SD = .47$). Also, students' perceptions related to the role of gestures in maintaining audience attention and the role of eye contact in facilitating effective interaction also achieved high levels of agreement ($M = 4.77$, $SD = .43$). The consistent and similar mean scores in this Cluster highlighted the significant contribution of body language, namely facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact, to cultivating audience involvement of students' public speaking. Furthermore, students also expressed strong agreement with the statement that body language helps them connect more effectively with the audience, which received the lowest mean score of ($M = 4.67$, $SD = .51$). Based on the descriptive findings, it was evident that the majority of students are highly aware of the effects of body language on enhancing audience engagement in their public speaking.

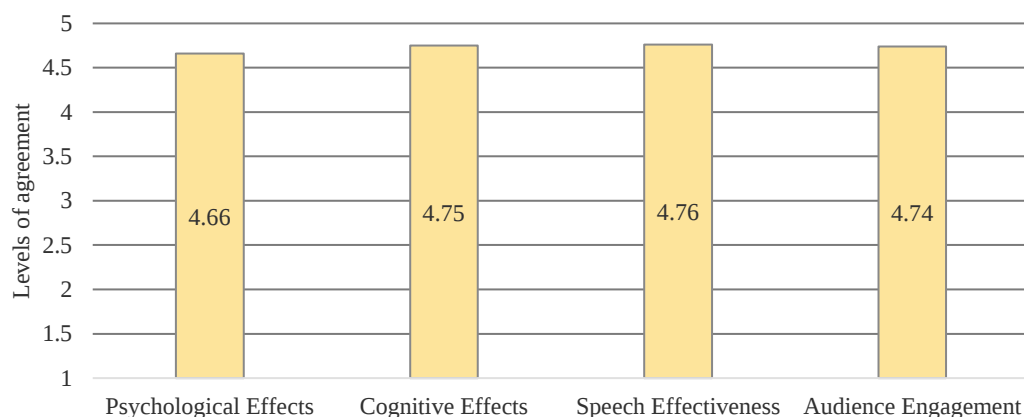


Figure 1. English Majors' Perceptions of the Effects of Body Language on Public Speaking

Figure 1 summarizes the findings of the present study related to English majors' perceptions of the effects of body language on public speaking in terms of psychological effects, cognitive effects, speech effectiveness, and audience engagement. These findings not only support previous studies but also provide further insights into how the use of body language enhances the public speaking performance of EFL students.

In general, the quantitative data indicated that English majors perceive the effects of body language as necessary for captivating the audience in public speaking. Notably, students demonstrated strong awareness of several key components of body language, namely gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact, in building their presence on stage. They reported that these components serve as visual signals that not only capture and maintain the audience's attention but also encourage interaction during presentations. In other words, the questionnaire survey findings reinforced the conclusion that students hold a highly positive perception of the effects of body language to enhance audience engagement in public speaking.

Discussion

The findings of the present study reported a highly positive perception of English majors towards the effects of body language on their public speaking performance. Students strongly recognized the importance of body language across four dimensions, including psychological effects, cognitive effects, speech effectiveness, and audience engagement. Among these, speech effectiveness received the highest mean score, highlighting that body language helped improve clarity, persuasiveness, and fluency of students' speaking performance. These findings were congruent with those of Nguyen (2024) and Ismayilli et al. (2025), who concluded that students' use of body language contributes significantly to the

fluency and effectiveness of presentations.

In terms of psychological effects, the findings of the study indicated that body language was the key contributor in fostering students' confidence during public speaking. This finding is based on the assumption that purposeful bodily movements allow the speaker to redirect attention from feelings of nervousness to physical expression, which in turn helps them control their presentations better. These findings are consistent with Ismayilli et al. (2025), who noted that body language alleviates stress and strengthens speakers' self-confidence in communication. Additionally, students stated that body language reduced their anxiety when they practiced speaking English. This finding aligns with Hadi and Prasanna Sree (2024), whose study revealed that body language not only boosts confidence but also helps students gradually overcome the fear of public speaking.

Regarding the cognitive effects, the findings highlighted that students considered body language as an important tool for conveying emotions, intentions, and attitudes. This finding is consistent with the study of Thamrin and Darsih (2023), in which students reported that body language assisted in conveying the intended message more effectively, and the lack of body language made the speaking performance become robotic. Similarly, Sharma (2024) revealed that body language fosters emotional expression, clarifies speakers' intentions, and allows the audience to understand messages more accurately. The present study reinforces these perspectives, highlighting the cognitive role of body language in reinforcing verbal messages and supporting audience comprehension, thereby making public speaking more engaging to the audience.

Moreover, the findings indicated that body language significantly contributes to the overall effectiveness of public speaking. The majority of students highlighted in the interviews that using gestures frequently assists in conveying information more effectively. Body movements not only improved communication but also strengthened the structure and flow of the presentation. These findings share similarities with previous studies (Ardito et al., 2014; Chikiwa, 2021), which emphasized that gestures function as visual aids that complement verbal communication and strengthen message clarity. In the same vein, findings from the observational research conducted by Nguyen (2024) and Thamrin and Darsih (2023) also reported that gestures were the most frequently employed by students in public speaking classes, in which students felt expressive and perceived these bodily movements as effective in supporting speech delivery. Notably, the present study also draws attention to the significance of physical space, suggesting that strategic use of body distance may further enhance interaction between speakers and the audience in public speaking.

Concerning the effects of body language on audience engagement, data from the findings revealed that body language helped in increasing audience attention and interaction, which strengthened the speaker's credibility during public speaking. This aligns with the findings of Azemi (2021), Burgoon et al. (1990), and Rodero (2022), who stated that the strategic use of body language may influence how the audience perceives the speakers' credibility on stage. Similarly, Altun (2019) and Gareis (2006) noted that eye contact is essential for fostering interaction, as it allows speakers to observe and interpret the audience's level of interest based on their facial reactions. Aligning with these perspectives, the present study affirms that body language, particularly eye contact, plays an important role in sustaining audience engagement and enhancing audience interaction during presentations.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that body language should be considered as an integral factor of successful public speaking rather than a supplementary skill. At a descriptive level, the present study provides insights into English majors' perceptions of the effects of body language on public speaking. From a pedagogical perspective, the present study highlights the significance of incorporating body language into EFL speaking instruction to help students improve confidence, message delivery, and audience engagement in their presentations.

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