THE ROLE OF NON-VERBAL CUES IN EXPRESSING AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT IN ENGLISH[13]

Nusratullaeva Shokhista Sabirjon kizi
PhD student of
Uzbekistan State World Languages University,
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
E-mail: gamletovashokhista@gmail.com

ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
Non-verbal communication plays a fundamental role in the expression of agreement and disagreement in English, shaping interaction beyond the spoken word. Drawing on theories of face (Goffman, 1967), preference organization (Pomerantz, 1984), politeness strategies (Brown, Levinson, 1987), and contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982), this article investigates how multimodal signals contribute to alignment and opposition. The analysis highlights six main channels of non-verbal communication: gestures, facial expressions, gaze, posture, proxemics, and paralinguistic features. Findings suggest that agreement is typically realized through immediacy and convergence, including nodding, smiling, sustained gaze, forward posture, reduced distance, supportive intonation, and rhythmic synchrony. Disagreement, conversely, is characterized by delay, withdrawal, and divergence, such as gaze aversion, backward posture, crossed arms, softer or slower speech, and hesitancy markers. In cases of strong opposition, emphatic gestures, loudness, and falling intonation reinforce the stance. The integration of multiple channels reveals that meaning is negotiated not by words alone, but by the integration of multimodal cues. This underscores the need to view communication as an embodied practice where non-verbal behavior is indispensable for interactional success. The study contributes to pragmatics and conversation analysis by demonstrating how agreement and disagreement are managed through coordinated non-verbal resources, with implications for intercultural communication and language pedagogy.	

INGLIZ TILIDA ROZILIK BILDIRISH VA RAD ETISHNI IFODALASHDA NOVERBAL VOSITALARNING O'RNI

Nusratullayeva Shoxista Sabirjon qizi
O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti
tayanch doktoranti,
Toshkent,O'zbekiston
E-mail:gamletovashokhista@gmail.com

ANNOTATSIYA	KALIT SO'ZLAR
Ingliz tilida rozilik va norozilikni ifodalashda noverbal muloqot muhim ahamiyatga ega bo'lib, so'zlashuvdan tashqari munosabatlarni shakllantirishda asosiy rol o'ynaydi. Ushbu maqola Goffmanning yuz nazariyasi (1967), Pomerantzning afzalliklar tizimi g'oyasi (1984), Brown va Levinsonning xushmuomalalik strategiyalari (1987) hamda Gumperzning kontekstualizatsiya belgilari (1982) asosida ko'p modallikka ega signallarning kelishuv va kelishmovchilikka qo'shadigan hissasini o'rganadi. Tahlil noverbal muloqotning oltita asosiy yo'nalishini ko'rib chiqadi: imo-ishoralar, yuz ifodasi, nigoh, tana holati, proksemika va paralingvistik xususiyatlar. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, kelishuv odatda bevositalik va yaqinlashish orqali namoyon bo'ladi. Bunga bosh irg'ash, tabassum, uzoq nigoh, oldinga egilish, masofani qisqartirish, qo'llab-quvvatlovchi ohang va ritmik uyg'unlik kabi belgilar kiradi. Norozilik esa, aksincha, kechikish, o'zini chetga olish va uzoqlashish bilan ifodalanadi. Bu nigohdan qochish, orqaga og'ish, qo'llarni chalishtirish, sekinroq va pastroq gapirish, ikkilanish belgilari orqali ko'rinadi. Kuchli qarama-qarshilik holatlarida ta'kidlovchi imo-ishoralar, baland ovoz va pasayuvchi ohang pozitsiyani yanada mustahkamlaydi. Turli kanallarning uyg'unlashuvi shuni ko'rsatadiki, ma'no faqat so'zlar orqali emas, balki ko'p modallikka ega signallarning birlashuvi natijasida ham shakllanadi. Bu esa muloqotni mujassamlashgan amaliyot sifatida ko'rish zarurligini ta'kidlaydi, chunki noverbal xatti-harakatlar samarali o'zaro ta'sir uchun muhim ahamiyatga ega. Ushbu tadqiqot kelishuv va kelishmovchiliklar muvofiqlashtirilgan noverbal vositalar orqali qanday boshqarilishini ko'rsatib, pragmatika va suhbat tahliliga hissa qo'shadi hamda madaniyatlararo muloqot va til o'qitish sohasiga sezilarli ta'sir ko'rsatadi.	Noverbal muloqot, rozilik bildirish, rad etish, imo-ishoralar, mimika, ko'z qarashi, holat, proksemika, paralingvistika, intonatsiya, ohang balandligi, pragmatika, muloqot tahlili.

РОЛЬ НЕВЕРБАЛЬНЫХ СРЕДСТВ ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ СОГЛАСИЯ И НЕСОГЛАСИЯ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

Нусратуллаева Шохиста Сабиржон кизи

докторант,
Узбекский государственный
университет мировых языков,
Ташкент, Узбекистан
E-mail:gamletovashokhista@gmail.com

АННОТАЦИЯ	КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА
Невербальная коммуникация играет фундаментальную роль в выражении согласия и несогласия в английском языке, обеспечивая взаимодействие без использования устной речи. Основываясь на теориях лица (Goffman, 1967), организации предпочтений (Pomerantz, 1984), стратегиях вежливости (Brown, Levinson, 1987) и контекстуализационных титрах (Gumperz, 1982), данная статья исследует, как мультимодальные сигналы способствуют согласованию и противопоставлению. В анализе выделяются шесть основных каналов невербальной коммуникации: жесты, мимика, взгляд, поза, проксемика (расстояние и взаимное положение) и паралингвистические особенности. Результаты показывают, что согласие обычно выражается через непосредственность и сближение, включая кивки, улыбку, устойчивый зрительный контакт, наклон корпуса вперед, сокращение дистанции, поддерживающую интонацию и ритмическую синхронизацию. Несогласие, напротив, характеризуется задержкой, отстранением и расхождением, проявлениями которых служат избегание зрительного контакта, отклонение корпуса назад, скрещенные руки, более тихая или медленная речь и признаки нерешительности. В случаях сильного противостояния эмфатические жесты, повышенная громкость и нисходящая интонация усиливают позицию. Интеграция нескольких каналов показывает, что смысл формируется не только словами, но и сочетанием мультимодальных сигналов. Это подчеркивает необходимость рассматривать коммуникацию как воплощенную практику, где невербальное поведение необходимо для успешного взаимодействия. Исследование вносит вклад в прагматику и анализ разговора, демонстрируя, как согласие и несогласие регулируются посредством скоординированных невербальных ресурсов, что имеет значение для межкультурной коммуникации и языковой педагогики.	Невербальная коммуникация, согласие, несогласие, жесты, мимика, зрительный контакт, поза, проксемика, паралингвистика, интонация, высота тона, прагматика, конверсационный анализ.

INTRODUCTION

Human communication in English relies on more than words alone. Non-verbal cues - such as gaze, gestures, posture, spatial orientation, and vocal features - play a central role in shaping how interlocutors' express agreement or disagreement. As Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson argued, "One cannot not communicate" (1967, 51), meaning that every movement or silence contributes to interpretation.

Agreement and disagreement are especially sensitive to these signals because they touch on what Goffman described as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself" in interaction (Goffman, 1967, 5). Agreement usually supports the speaker's position, while disagreement potentially threatens face. Pomerantz further noted that "agreement is a preferred next action" (Pomerantz, 1984, 63-64), with non-verbal resources often reinforcing or mitigating this preference.

Research on gaze (Kendon, 1981), proxemics (Hall, 1966), and kinesics (Birdwhistell, 1970) demonstrates that cues such as eye contact, distance, and body orientation systematically influence whether responses are perceived as affiliative or oppositional. Paralinguistic features - intonation, pitch, and rhythm - also shape the immediacy or hesitation of agreement and the weight of disagreement. Rather than functioning in isolation, these elements work in tandem with verbal content to organize meaning in face-to-face encounters.

MAIN PART

The study of non-verbal cues in agreement and disagreement in English can be anchored in several complementary theoretical traditions. Each highlights a different dimension of how interaction is structured and interpreted.

One of the most influential frameworks is Goffman's concept of *face*. He defined it as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman, 1967, 5). Agreement functions as a face-supporting act, affirming the interlocutor's line, while disagreement threatens face and requires delicate management. Goffman's framework clarifies why participants often mobilize non-verbal cues - gaze

withdrawal, posture shifts, prosodic hesitation - to mitigate the potentially damaging effect of open opposition.

Within conversation analysis (CA), Pomerantz (1984) introduced the concept of preference organization, where agreement is structurally "preferred" and disagreement "dispreferred." This does not refer to psychological preference but to conversational design: agreements are typically immediate, brief, and positively marked, while disagreements are delayed, hedged, and often accompanied by non-verbal cues signaling reluctance. As Pomerantz explained, "Agreement is a preferred next action, while disagreement is a dispreferred one" (Pomerantz, 1984, 63-64). Non-verbal cues play a critical role in either smoothing the flow of agreement or cushioning the delivery of disagreement.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory further illuminates how non-verbal cues operate in agreement and disagreement. They distinguished between *positive face* (the desire to be approved of) and *negative face* (the desire for autonomy). Agreement enhances positive face, while disagreement risks threatening it. Non-verbal strategies - smiles, nods, soft intonation - serve as positive politeness devices, signaling approval and solidarity. Conversely, gaze aversion, hedging gestures, and reduced volume often serve as negative politeness strategies, mitigating the threat posed by disagreement.

Gumperz (1982) introduced the concept of contextualization cues - verbal and non-verbal signals that help participants interpret meaning in interaction. Intonation, rhythm, gaze, and gestures provide the "frame" within which agreement and disagreement are interpreted. For example, a softly spoken *"yes"* with downward gaze may be understood not as wholehearted agreement but as reluctant compliance, framed by non-verbal contextualization cues.

Finally, multimodal interaction analysis, rooted in Birdwhistell's kinesics, insists that communication cannot be reduced to words. Birdwhistell emphasized the "necessary interdependence of the kinesic and linguistic" (Birdwhistell, 1970, 17). Non-verbal cues are not supplementary but integral to the organization of meaning, especially in delicate acts like disagreement.

Together, these frameworks highlight that agreement and disagreement in English are not merely verbal acts but interactional events shaped by multiple channels. Facework explains the stakes, preference organization explains structural tendencies, politeness theory accounts for strategies of mitigation, and contextualization theory shows how non-verbal cues guide interpretation.

Gestures and facial expressions constitute some of the clearest non-verbal resources through which English speakers convey alignment or opposition. They provide immediate cues that may reinforce, anticipate, or even substitute for verbal responses.

Nodding is the most conventional sign of agreement. Argyle noted that "Nods are almost universal signals of agreement, encouragement, and understanding" (Argyle, 1975, 161). In English conversation, listeners often accompany supportive responses like *"yes"* or *"right"* with subtle nods. Open hand gestures and forward movements similarly index receptiveness.

By contrast, gestures of disagreement are typically negative counterparts. Kendon observed that the head shake is the most standardized non-verbal form of negation in English (Kendon, 2004, 231). Other markers include dismissive hand waves or finger wags, which visually contradict a speaker's prior claim. Disagreement gestures often appear with delay or emphasis, reflecting the misreferred status of oppositional turns (Pomerantz, 1984, 63-64).

Facial expressions further shape stance. Smiles, raised eyebrows, and sustained eye contact reinforce agreement, while frowns, compressed lips, or narrowed eyes project disalignment. Knapp and Hall state that "a downward turn of the mouth or narrowing of the eyes tends to be perceived as evaluative, often critical" (Knapp, Hall, 2010, 152).

Gaze direction and timing are central to the negotiation of agreement and disagreement in English. Kendon's classic study showed that "patterns of looking are systematically related to features of talk" (Kendon, 1981, 232). Sustained eye contact while nodding often amplifies verbal agreement, signaling attentiveness and

solidarity. Conversely, gaze aversion during or just before a response can foreshadow disagreement, softening the impact of an oppositional turn.

Goodwin demonstrated how gaze coordinates conversational alignment. When listeners return gaze at the completion of a speaker's turn, it often projects readiness to agree. When gaze is withheld or delayed, the response is likely to be hesitant or oppositional. Thus, gaze operates as both a regulator of turn-taking and a projector of stance.

Posture also contributes significantly to stance marking. Argyle observed that leaning slightly forward and orienting the torso toward the speaker tends to index agreement and involvement (Argyle, 1988, 67). Conversely, leaning back, crossing arms, or angling the body away often conveys resistance or disengagement. These postural cues are not accidental; they interact with verbal strategies to reinforce or attenuate alignment.

Birdwhistell emphasized the interdependence of such cues, noting that "the kinesic system is structured in its own right, but always in relation to the linguistic" (Birdwhistell, 1970, 17). A simple verbal "yes" uttered with an averted gaze and closed posture may be received as reluctant agreement - or even covert disagreement. In contrast, an equally minimal "no" paired with forward posture and steady gaze can appear assertive and unapologetic.

In English conversational practice, gaze and posture function together to signal the strength, timing, and delicacy of alignment. Agreement is typically accompanied by open, affiliative body orientation and mutual gaze, reinforcing its "preferred" status (Pomerantz, 1984, 63-64). Disagreement, being structurally "dispreferred," is often prefaced with gaze withdrawal, body shifts, or hesitant posture, which serve to cushion the act and manage its social impact.

Spatial orientation is one of the less consciously monitored but powerful indicators of stance in English. Edward Hall conceptualized proxemics as "the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture" (Edward Hall, 1966, 1). Within English-speaking contexts, proxemic behavior tends to follow certain cultural norms: closer personal distance,

open orientation, and leaning forward are read as affiliative. For example, in informal conversations among peers, moving slightly closer or orienting the torso directly toward the speaker reinforces agreement by signaling attentiveness and willingness to affiliate.

Research in workplace communication supports this observation. Beebe noted that seating arrangements and interpersonal distance can influence perceptions of cooperation or opposition (Beebe, 1974, 161-162). In meetings, participants who sit closer to the speaker and orient their bodies toward them are more often perceived as allies or supporters, while those who distance themselves or angle their chairs away are read as less supportive. Agreement, then, is not just in the words *"I agree"*, but in the embodied spatial alignment of participants.

Disagreement often involves subtle increases in distance or bodily withdrawal. Argyle emphasized that "increased distance or orientation away from a partner is likely to signal dislike, disagreement, or avoidance" (Argyle, 1988, 74). In English interactions, this can take the form of leaning back, turning slightly to the side, or crossing arms and legs. These cues communicate resistance or disengagement even before the verbal disagreement is articulated.

Case studies in intercultural pragmatics also show how proxemic signals interact with disagreement. Watson and Graves found that American English speakers in experimental settings tended to increase physical distance during conflict sequences, while in agreement phases distance was reduced (Watson & Graves, 1966, 102). Although proxemic preferences vary by culture, within Anglo-American English the correlation between distancing and disagreement remains strong.The meaning of proxemic cues also depends heavily on formality and context. In casual conversations, leaning in or reducing personal distance may be interpreted as strong affiliation. In contrast, in more formal situations (such as job interviews or academic defenses), maintaining greater distance is the norm, and spatial intrusion may not signal agreement but rather social impropriety. Similarly, disagreement may be signaled by subtle changes in orientation such as angling the torso slightly away - without requiring overt withdrawal.

Hall distinguished between intimate, personal, social, and public distances, each with distinct communicative functions. In English interactions, movement across these zones during an exchange often signals shifts in relational stance. Agreement tends to pull interlocutors into personal or intimate zones, while disagreement often pushes them back toward social or public distance.

Proxemic choices are rarely conscious, but they carry significant interpretive weight. Agreement emerges through bodily closeness, direct orientation, and reduced barriers between participants, while disagreement is often embodied through withdrawal, distance, or closed orientation. These spatial dynamics work in tandem with gaze, gesture, and prosody to regulate alignment in English conversation.

Paralinguistic features form a crucial layer in the expression of agreement and disagreement in English. Crystal noted that "intonation provides a listener with the most direct clue to the speaker's attitude" (Crystal, 1969, 174). In agreement, prosody typically signals alignment through smooth intonation contours, moderate pitch, and rhythmic synchronization. Backchannels such as *"yeah," "mm-hm,"* or *"right"* are often produced with level or slightly rising pitch, moderate volume, and rapid timing, which reinforces their affiliative function.

Couper-Kuhlen observed that speakers frequently display prosodic convergence, adjusting their tempo and intonation to mirror their interlocutor's speech (Couper-Kuhlen, 1996, 371-372). This convergence serves as an auditory signal of solidarity: when one speaker's intonation matches another's, the agreement is perceived as more sincere and empathetic.

Disagreement often carries distinctive prosodic markers. Pomerantz documented that dispreferred responses are delivered with softer onsets, lower volume, slower tempo, and longer delays (Pomerantz, 1984, 64-65). For instance, a mitigated disagreement might begin with a hesitation marker (*"well…"*) spoken at a reduced pitch and tempo, signaling reluctance. In contrast, strong disagreement often involves prosodic divergence: sharp falling intonation, heightened loudness, and faster tempo. Bolinger emphasized that "intonation is the primary vehicle of

attitude" (Bolinger, 1986, 21), making prosodic contrasts central to the communication of opposition. A clipped *"No"* with a low pitch fall and high volume is unequivocally oppositional, even if not accompanied by explicit justifications.

Speech tempo also contributes to the perception of stance. Ward and Tsukahara showed that slowed tempo and elongated syllables often function as hesitation signals, commonly associated with disagreement or reluctance (Tsukahara, 2000, 86). Conversely, rapid tempo and smooth rhythm tend to align with enthusiastic agreement. The difference between *"Yeees"* (elongated, hesitant) and a brisk *"Yes, exactly!"* illustrates how speech rate and rhythm shape interpretation beyond the lexical content.

Gumperz highlighted that prosody functions as a contextualization cue, framing how utterances are understood (Gumperz, 1982, 131). In English, the same lexical phrase - such as *"I see"* - may be interpreted as full agreement if uttered with rising intonation and moderate loudness, or as skeptical disagreement if produced with a flat, clipped tone. Thus, paralinguistic features provide the interpretive frame within which verbal content gains meaning.

Paralinguistic features, then, are not secondary but core indicators of stance in English conversation. Agreement is often indexed by prosodic alignment - smooth contours, convergence, and immediacy - while disagreement is either softened by reduced volume and slower tempo or intensified by loud, rapid, and emphatic delivery. These auditory cues regulate the preference organization of conversation, shaping whether a response is interpreted as affiliative or oppositional.

Agreement and disagreement in English conversation are not single-channel events but multimodal performances. Birdwhistell argued that "no kinesic element has meaning by itself; its interpretation depends on its relation to other behaviors" (Birdwhistell, 1970, 25). Thus, the significance of a gesture, gaze, or tone depends on how it coordinates with surrounding verbal and non-verbal signals.

Consider the following excerpt (constructed in line with examples from Pomerantz, 1984, and Goodwin, 1981):

(1) Agreement Example

- Speaker A: *"That movie was really well done, wasn't it?"*
- Speaker B: *"Yeah, absolutely!"* (spoken with rising pitch, moderate loudness, immediate timing, accompanied by nodding, mutual gaze, and forward lean).

Here, agreement is not simply in the word *"yeah."* It is performed through synchronized channels: nodding reinforces acceptance (Argyle, 1975, 161), direct gaze signals attentiveness (Kendon, 1981, 232), and rising intonation indexes enthusiasm (Crystal, 1969, 174). Together, these cues construct a preferred, smooth response that progresses the conversation.

Now compare a disagreement sequence:

(2) Disagreement Example

- Speaker A: *"I think that policy is really fair."*
- Speaker B: *"Well… I'm not so sure."* (delayed onset, spoken softly with falling intonation, accompanied by gaze withdrawal, slight backward lean, and arms folded).

In this case, verbal hedging (*"well… I'm not so sure"*) is reinforced by non-verbal cues: delay, lowered pitch, and averted gaze. These are classic dispreference markers (Pomerantz, 1984, 64-65). The backward lean and folded arms align with Argyle's observation that increased distance and closed posture often signal opposition (Argyle, 1988, 74). Even before the verbal disagreement is complete, the multimodal ensemble communicates disalignment.

Goodwin (1981) demonstrated that interlocutors monitor such multimodal signals continuously. In English conversation, agreement tends to be displayed early and multimodally convergent, while disagreement is often delayed and multimodally dispersed. Hall's (1966) cultural framework reminds us, however, that interpretations of space and gaze are culture-specific; within English-speaking contexts, proximity and direct gaze may signal support, but in other contexts they could be interpreted differently.

The case studies illustrate that meaning is constructed through clusters of cues. Agreement emerges as the convergence of supportive multimodal signals - verbal,

kinesic, prosodic, and spatial - while disagreement often involves cues of hesitation, withdrawal, or emphatic divergence. This integration underscores that in English, stance-taking is an embodied, layered act rather than a strictly verbal phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of non-verbal communication in English shows that agreement and disagreement are not conveyed by words alone but are multimodal practices, built through gestures, facial expressions, gaze, posture, proxemics, and paralinguistic features. Each channel contributes unique resources, yet they operate in coordination, reinforcing, mitigating, or reshaping the verbal message.

Agreement emerges as the preferred action in English interaction. It is typically marked by immediacy: nodding, mutual gaze, forward posture, closer spatial orientation, supportive intonation, and prosodic convergence. These cues reduce ambiguity and strengthen solidarity, making agreement interactionally smooth and affiliative.

Disagreement, in contrast, is structurally dispreferred and thus often managed with caution. Speakers rely on gaze withdrawal, backward posture, increased distance, softer or slower speech, and hedging gestures to soften the opposition. At the same time, when opposition is strong, multimodal cues converge - direct gaze, louder voice, emphatic gestures-making the stance clear and assertive.

The findings confirm earlier theoretical perspectives. Goffman's (1967) concept of face explains why disagreement is socially delicate and why non-verbal cues play such an important role in saving or threatening face. Pomerantz's (1984) analysis of preference organization accounts for the structural differences between agreement and disagreement, which are consistently marked non-verbally. Birdwhistell (1970) and Hall (1966) remind us that these behaviors cannot be understood apart from the interdependence of channels and the cultural shaping of interaction.

In conclusion, non-verbal cues are not peripheral but central to the expression of agreement and disagreement in English. They provide interlocutors with subtle yet powerful tools for negotiating alignment, managing social relationships, and

regulating the flow of interaction. For scholars and practitioners alike, recognizing the multimodal nature of these acts highlights the importance of studying communication as a whole body of practices rather than as isolated words.

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