

# Using the body in nonverbal skills development, C. Uusi-Rauva

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Title	Using the body in nonverbal skills development
Key words	communication, nonverbal skills, student activation
Basic course information	61A00100 Business Communication (6 cr), communication and language studies for bachelor students / 61C00900 Business Presentations (3 cr), master's skills portfolio course. Number of students in both courses ~24.
Goal	In both of these courses, one component is developing nonverbal communication skills.  Over the years, I have noticed that for many students, using more engaging body language means stepping outside their comfort zones. This made me think that crossing the borders of those comfort zones in the classroom could help the students radically improve their nonverbal communication skills.
Study process	To help students exceed their comfort limits, we do a number of short exercises in class, with methods used in e.g. improvisation theatres and laughter yoga sessions. Sometimes I also make them e.g. sing together, because for many Finns at least, singing in public is the worst imaginable thing.  Over the courses, we don't just use these methods in one session, but often start the session with a brief exercise to get everyone relaxed and in a positive mood.
Communication and interaction	The exercises involved in developing nonverbal skills include a lot of interaction between students, and of course also between teacher and students, as I participate in the exercises when possible. Having interaction is critical because the aim is to develop skills that help the students build interaction and create a connection with their audience when presenting.  While there are nearly always some students that clearly find the exercises very uncomfortable, the interaction has overall worked very well.
Learning and feedback	The activating approach to teaching nonverbal skills has worked very well, and has, besides helping students improve their skills in that area, very positive contributed to the learning atmosphere in the class.  Student feedback has been very positive, with many students commenting that it has been wonderful to actually get to do something instead of sitting down and listening all the time. They have been inspired.
Future	Keep developing the methods.
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