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Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AS A COMPONENT OF FUTURE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

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Abstract

This paper considers the problem of development of nonverbal communication competence of future university teachers, highlights the relationships among the key research concepts: professional culture, communication competence, nonverbal communication. An analytical literature review shows that the problem of nonverbal communication is being discussed quite actively and the means of nonverbal communication are successfully used in the educational process, but teachers most often do not realize its importance. Thereby, the paper focuses on the following research questions: Are there any differences in nonverbal communication skills between future university teachers and specialists whose professional activities are not related to teaching? What kind of nonverbal communication skills should be included in the content of academic disciplines of the supplementary education program "University Teacher" aimed at training future teachers to pedagogical communication? The purpose was to identify the conditions for formation of training programs aimed at development of nonverbal communication skills in future university teachers. At the empirical stage, a comprehensive study was conducted including a survey, a Gilford's social intelligence test, a Labunskaya's technique of diagnosis of level development of ability to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior. The survey involved 132 respondents (average age - 26.5). Findings show there are no significant differences in nonverbal communication skills between future university teachers (experimental group) and those who do not intend to teach (control group). Since nonverbal communication competence is professionally important for effective pedagogical interactions, it can be developed with the help of training programs and obtained study results.

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Keywords: University teacher, communication, nonverbal competence, professional culture.



1. Introduction

Despite the fact that modern education is permanently in a state of modernization associated with the information boom and social transformations, the requirements for school and university teachers remain essentially unchanged: an ability to work in the subject-subject paradigm, to design educational processes, to ensure development of a student's personality. To accomplish this task, teachers must have a high level of professional culture, which is inseparable from general culture of a person and is determined by personal and professional qualities. An important component of teacher's professional culture is communicative culture that reflects a person's ability to verbal and nonverbal communication. The teachers' speech is the main means of pedagogical communication, thereby special requirements are imposed on them. Teachers must have a rich vocabulary, possess expressive possibilities and intonation expressiveness of speech, pronounce the words clearly. And if verbal means in most cases are used to exchange information, nonverbal tools help to form an idea of a communicator, to maintain an optimal level of interaction, to understand true goals of communication, respond flexibly to changes in a communicative situation, predict the possible consequences of the information being transmitted (Moskvicheva & Kostromina, 2019).

The nonverbal component of teacher's activity reflects true attitude to the subject, demonstrates level of professionalism, motivating or demotivating students to study activities. The teacher's body language is the most important thing in the classroom; the way he uses his eyes, the distance he stands from the students, the way he touches or refrains from touching them, all these unobtrusive things carry important signals that deeply affect students' sense of comfort, relationships, and provide significant information about their emotional states (Stevick, 1982; Maxim & Nowicki, 2003). And if a teacher competently uses nonverbal influence, then it can be an effective tool for achieving pedagogical goals of training and education.

Consequently, the teachers' ability to effective nonverbal communication in the process of pedagogical interaction with students is an important indicator of their pedagogical skills, which, in turn, demonstrates the level of their professional culture. This idea is reflected both in academic works of famous Russian researchers (Lomov, Belyaeva, & Nosulenko, 1985), and in modern publications, in which the problem of nonverbal communication and its interpretation in the process of pedagogical communication is discussed.

So, Koleva (2015) notes that according to the test results, students - future teachers do not possess the skills of nonverbal communication and interpretation of body language. This is due to the fact that they lack academic disciplines that would acquaint them with nonverbal features of communication. The importance of nonverbal communication in teaching is highlighted by Potapova (2012). A number of researchers study the nonverbal communication tools used by teachers in the process of communication with university students, determine their specifics and requirements for their use (Chernyshenko, 2017; Lukyanova, 2014; Pogorelova, Zhukova, & Kalyagin, 2009; Popandopulo, 2018).

The problem of nonverbal communication is the subject of research in international psychological and pedagogical literature. According to some authors (Kell & Sweet, 2017; Torrents, Castañer, Jofre, Morey, & Reverter, 2013) nonverbal aspects play a key role in the lecture, helping to build successful teacher-student relationships. It is extremely important that a number of authors state that a teacher has a

good degree of control over nonverbal communication (Gupta, 2013, Moreno, Huéscar, Peco, Alarcón, & Cervelló, 2013). Otherwise, a teacher loses motivation and self-confidence, which will contribute to the emergence of stress and burnout syndrome.

Mehmet et al. (2013); Valdivieso, Carbonero, & Martín (2013) report that successful work of teachers and learning process largely depend on the teacher's ability to improvise adequately in the classroom and maintain close relationships with students. At the same time, the important role of the paralanguage, namely the tone of voice, which facilitates the learning process attracting the attention of students is emphasized.

Nonverbal behavior complements, expands or modifies a verbal message. For example, a teacher who looks confident while giving a lecture improves the quality of teaching. Nonverbal behavior, as Capper (2000) notes, provides vital signals for students to interpret speech acts and significantly improves communication. Students are not only aware of nonverbal communication of their teachers, but are also prone to using certain types of nonverbal signals and behavior in communication.

The use of eyes in nonverbal communication may indicate a person's cognitive abilities during interaction. So, if during intercourse one of the interlocutors looks away, then his act may signal difficulties in information processing. In addition, his eye contact may depict the degree of interest and focus in the other participants' message (Khan, 2001). For example, if the eyes are narrowed, it means that the person is trying to concentrate on the received message.

Nonverbal communication may change over time due to changing cultural factors. For example, Nepalese male and female students in past did not use to sit in the same classroom. They were shy while talking, but nowadays they shake their hands, sit and walk together. The role of nonverbal communication "varies depending on the age, sex, and the various culture involved" (Harris, 2002, p. 155).

In general, the analysis of the literature shows that the problem of nonverbal communication in the process of pedagogical communication has been discussed quite actively, rich experience has been gained in teachers' use of effective means of nonverbal communication, however, teachers most often do not realize the importance of these tools. At the same time, a contradiction was revealed between the objective need for specialists in education, who own all the means of pedagogical communication capable of navigating in difficult situations of pedagogical interaction, and the inadequacy of their training in the field of nonverbal aspects of communication.

This contradiction determines the relevance of the topic in the title of the paper, which can be reformulated as a question: is it necessary to develop nonverbal communication competence as a component of professional culture of future university teachers? The answer to this question follows from the content of this study.

2. Problem Statement

First of all, it is necessary to consider how key research concepts are interconnected. They include *professional culture, communication culture, nonverbal communication, interpretation of nonverbal signals or non-verbal information*. The concept of professional culture is considered from the standpoint of theoretical and practical training in the field of a particular profession in accordance with state standards and application of professional knowledge and skills in the process of performing labor functions by an

employee (Pokrovskaia, Petrov, & Gridneva, 2018). Professional culture of a specialist reflects the level of personal development in the profession and the extent to which he has mastered professional experience and able to its disseminating and enriching.

The analysis of psychological and pedagogical researches (Esipov, 2017; Matyash, 2016; Senko, 2014; Sutugin & Mukhina, 2015) shows that communication culture is understood as a component of general culture of an individual, manifests itself in human communication and regulates the processes of information exchange among subjects of communication.

In general, communication culture is considered as a system of personal qualities, including:

- creative thinking (non-standard, flexibility of thinking);
- culture of speech (literacy of constructing statements, simplicity and clarity of presentation of thoughts, presence of argumentation, figurative expressiveness, pace of speech, intonation, clear pronunciation);
- culture of self-presentation;
- culture of nonverbal communication means (gestures, facial expressions, extralinguistic means);
- culture of perception of communication partner;
- culture of emotional self-regulation.

Based on the above, the ability to nonverbal communication occupies an important place in the general structure of teacher's communication culture and is considered as an integral characteristic that determines the teacher's ability to solve typical professional tasks using knowledge of the semantics of nonverbal means of communication and methods of presentation of nonverbal information, skills and abilities of adequate interpretation of nonverbal phenomena in all their diversity.

The interpretation of nonverbal signals or nonverbal information is the process by which a person receives nonverbal signals and translates them into semantic messages. Researchers of communication processes claim that on average information transfer occurs at the expense of verbal means - 45%, of these, words account for 7%, other sound means (tone of voice, intonation) account for 38%, and nonverbal means account for 55% (Mehrabian, 1981).

A targeted nonverbal message can be as informative as a verbal one. A teacher can express his attitude to what is happening by using eye contact (the corresponding section in the sciences on nonverbal communication is called oculosics) or gestures (pantomimicry), by changing the distance or position in the classroom (kinesics and proxemics). General requirements for the use of nonverbal signs in pedagogical communication are aesthetics, wholeness, conciseness, recognizability, conventionality, stability, repeated use without changes.

Adequate interpretation of nonverbal signals depends on understanding and using the rules of verbal and nonverbal behavior, so that the messages can be interpreted properly. The ability to interpret nonverbal information is a necessary element in the field of pedagogical skills, improving the efficiency and quality of teaching.

Consequently, the teacher's nonverbal communication competence is a part of professional competence, which, in turn, reflects the level of teacher's professional culture. Based on the above, the problem of the study is to identify the conditions for nonverbal skills development among university

teachers. One of these conditions can be training within the supplementary education program “University Teacher”, which includes courses aimed at developing the nonverbal communication skills.

3. Research Questions

In the process of organizing the study, the following questions were formulated:

- 1) Are there any differences in nonverbal communication skills of future university teachers and specialists whose professional activities are not related to teaching?
- 2) What kind of nonverbal communication skills should be included in the content of academic disciplines of the supplementary education program “University Teacher” aimed at training future teachers to pedagogical communication?

4. Purpose of the Study

To identify the conditions for establishment of training programs aimed at development of nonverbal communication skills in future university teachers.

5. Research Methods

The empirical part of the work was carried out at the medical and philological faculties of St Petersburg State University from 2018 to 2019. The study involved 132 participants aged from 22 years to 31 years (average age - 26.5). The initial survey involved 102 students, the experimental group consisted of 15 people (future teachers - students of the program "University Teacher"), the control group - 15 people who do not plan to engage in educational activities.

Research Methods:

- 1) Survey (questioning)
- 2) Labunskaya's (2008) technique of diagnosing of development level of ability to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior.
- 3) Guilford's test of social intelligence (Available at: <http://psylab.info/> J. Guilford test of social intelligence)

Statistical processing of the research results was performed using the SPSS 15 software package.

Survey (questioning)

Purpose: collection of primary information about the significance of nonverbal communication for teachers and students; building a control and an experimental group.

The results of the survey indicate that most of the students (77.45%) associate the physical attractiveness of a person and the friendly style with positive human qualities. Physically attractive people are perceived by others as sociable, successful, persuasive. At the same time, more than half of the students (55.88%) disagree with the statement that physically attractive teachers are very smart. If a teacher looks tired and exhausted, then 36.2% of students do not distract from their studies, and 26.4% of respondents spend less time on their studies.

Gestures are very important signals for students. It is easy for students (75.5%) to speak in front of those teachers who usually encourage students by nodding their head. In this case, pointing gestures are

often viewed as a manifestation of aggressiveness and superiority. Most students (64.7%) felt nervous and embarrassed when the teacher indicates a particular student while asking the question.

Respondents also note the importance of eye contact. It was more difficult for students (65.7%) to perform tasks if teachers stare them coldly. Students (64.7%) avoid eye contact when they do not know the answer to the question. They disagree with the fact that teachers usually look away when a difficult topic is being discussed (66.6%) and that teachers make eye contacts only with the talented students (68.6%). Only half of the students pay more attention to their studies if the teacher make eye contacts with them in the classroom. The other half denies this fact.

During a speech in front of an audience, it is recommended from the point of view of the majority of students (57%), to walk around the audience, stretch their hands in the direction of the audience. The non-punctuality of a teacher does not affect the perception of him as frivolous for 46% of students. Some students (26.7%) disagree with this opinion. The remaining group of respondents (27.3%) adheres to a neutral position. If the teacher takes over time in the class, then the majority of students (83.3%) see their watches. Neutral in this situation are 10% of students.

Labunskaya's technique of diagnosis of development level of ability to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior

Technique of diagnosis of development level of ability to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior consists of eight socio-perceptual tasks aimed at:

- 1) diagnosis of adequacy of understanding the states and relationships of a person based on his posture;
- 2) identification of adequacy level of interpretation of emotional states of a person on the basis of his facial expressions;
- 3) determination of adequacy level of understanding of intellectual-volitional states, emotional nuances of these states on the basis of individual and nonverbal behavior;
- 4) diagnosis of the adequacy of understanding of relationships, relationships of people included in nonverbal interaction (dyad, group);
- 5) diagnosis of adequate understanding through the establishment of links and differences among the psychological content of various elements of nonverbal behavior;
- 6) diagnosis of adequacy of understanding through "regulation" of diad and group relationship in an emotionally negative direction;
- 7) diagnosis of adequacy of understanding nonverbal behavior through "regulation" of diad and group relationship in an emotionally positive direction;
- 8) diagnosis of adequacy of understanding nonverbal behavior through establishment of links between verbal and nonverbal behavior.

J. Guilford's test of social intelligence

Purpose: to assess the private ability to understand people's behavior, including:

- - the ability to anticipate the consequences of behavior;
- - understanding of the logic of development of difficult situations of interpersonal interaction;
- - understanding of the internal motives of human behavior.

In our study, we used only nonverbal stimulus material.

6. Findings

The results of the student survey confirm the well-known conclusion that the teacher's identity is the most important factor for successful learning.

Teacher's mastery is impossible without his diverse skills, which are manifested in the adequate use of knowledge and skills. The teacher who owns communication competence knows not only verbally optimal means when communicating with the audience, but also the corresponding intonation, the gestural complex that is necessary and organic for situations, providing both dialogical openness and correct understanding of what is said.

Thus, at the disposal of the teacher there is not one but two languages of communication. For the first language, the main things are words, phrases, their combination, that is, verbal language, and for the second - body movements, gestures, facial expressions, especially the eyes, etc., that is, nonverbal language.

As a result of application of the methodology of Labunskaya (2008), it was found that the success of the subjects in the experimental and control groups in the level of development of ability to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior (Table 1) is average for all subtests.

Table 01. Mean values of individual experimental subtests and control groups on Labunskaya's technique of diagnosis of development level of ability to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior

| № п/п | Studied parameters | Mean values in groups | |
|----------|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | Experimental | Control |
| 1 | Adequacy of interpretation of states and relationships of a person on the basis of his posture | 9,06 | 9,47 |
| 2 | Adequacy of interpretation of emotional states of a person on the basis of his facial expressions (mimic) | 5,19 | 6,47 |
| 3 | Adequacy of interpretation of intellectual-volitional states, emotional nuances of these states on the basis of individual and nonverbal behavior | 12,38 | 12,93 |
| 4 | Adequacy of interpretation of attitudes, relationships of people included in nonverbal interaction (diad, group) | 16,75 | 16 |
| 5 | Adequacy of interpretation through establishment of links and differences among the psychological content of various elements of nonverbal behavior | 14,5 | 14,8 |
| 6 | Adequacy of interpretation through "regulation" of diad and group relationship in emotionally negative direction | 12,94 | 12,73 |
| 7 | Adequacy of interpretation through "regulation" of diad and group relationship in emotionally positive direction | 23,56 | 21,73 |
| 8 | Adequacy of interpretation of nonverbal behavior through establishment of links between verbal and nonverbal human behavior | 3,69 | 3,87 |
| | General indicator of the level of interpretation of non-verbal behavior | 84,56 Std. dev. 13,818 | 86,00 Std. dev. 13,737 |

Significant differences between the indicators of individual subtests were not found. It can be concluded that the abilities to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior are not sufficiently developed in the subjects of the experimental and control groups.

Thus, subjects in both groups are not always able:

- to adequately understand the state and attitude of a person on the basis of his posture;

- to clearly assess emotional and intellectual and volitional states of a person based on facial expressions;
- to understand both conflict and friendly relationships of people included in nonverbal interaction;
- to adequately understand nonverbal behavior through establishment of links between verbal and nonverbal behavior of a person.

As a result of the study of assessing the individual abilities to interpret people's behavior (Table 2) in accordance with the test of social intelligence of Gilford, it was found that the indicators of the subjects in both groups correspond to the normative, that is, all research participants have an average level of ability to anticipate the consequences of behavior, to understand the logic of development of difficult situations of interpersonal interaction and to understand internal motives of behavior.

Table 02. Mean values of experimental and control groups on Gilford's test of social intelligence.

| Studied parameters | Experimental group | | Control group | |
|---|--------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| | mean | std. dev. | mean | std. dev. |
| Ability to anticipate the consequences of behavior | 9,94 | 2,016 | 9,73 | 1,944 |
| Understanding the logic of development of difficult situations of interpersonal interaction | 8,06 | 2,081 | 8,40 | 1,957 |
| Understanding of person's behavior internal motives | 5,56 | 1,031 | 5,53 | 1,060 |

According to the results presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that the subjects in both groups are not always able:

- to anticipate the consequences of behavior;
- to anticipate further actions of people based on the analysis of real situations of communication (family, business, friendly);
- to predict events based on understanding the feelings, thoughts, intentions of the participants of communication.

Such people have average abilities to clearly formulate strategies for their own behavior in order to achieve set goals, to orientate themselves in nonverbal reactions of the participants in interaction and in the knowledge of norm- role models and rules governing the behavior of people.

Thus, subjects in the experimental and control groups can be characterized as persons with an average level of ability to correctly assess the states, feelings, and intentions of people by their nonverbal manifestations, facial expressions, postures, and gestures. These people, most likely, do not always attach importance to nonverbal communication, they do not often pay attention to the nonverbal reactions of communication participants. However, for future university teachers, nonverbal communication skills are a component of their professional culture.

Consequently, they need to be developed with the help of training seminars included in the relevant academic disciplines.

Discussion

As a result of an empirical study, it was found that subjects in both groups have average abilities both in adequacy of interpretation nonverbal behavior (according to V.A. Labunskaya's technique of

diagnosis of development level of ability to adequate interpretation of nonverbal behavior and in ability to learn (according to J. Guilford's test of social intelligence).

There are no significant differences between the experimental and the control sample in the assessment of private abilities of person's understanding of behavior, namely, in the ability to predict the consequences of behavior, to understand the logic of development of complex situations of interpersonal interaction, to understand the internal motives of behavior.

The results of the empirical research can be one of the conditions for establishment of specially organized "Training of nonverbal communication" within the supplementary education program "University Teacher". The theoretical and practical sections of the training are based on the knowledge and skills gained by the students in the process of studying the disciplines "Psychology of a university teacher" and "Training of professional pedagogical communication" (see Darinskaia, Moskvicheva, & Molodtsova, 2015).

The purpose of the training: mastering the basic skills of effective communication through nonverbal communication, the development of skills to interpret the nonverbal communication of other people.

Training objectives:

- to form ideas about the features of effective pedagogical communication through nonverbal communication;
- to form the skill of self-control over one's own nonverbal communication (especially in stressful situations);
- to learn to recognize and take into account national and gender features of nonverbal communication in the pedagogical activity;
- to form the skill of building trust relationships by means of nonverbal communication.

The main stages of training (12 hours in total - three lessons of 4 hours each):

- 1) A mini lecture: "The role of considering proxemics in teacher's professional activities. Zones and territories. Zonal spaces of different nations". Exercises for practical development of knowledge about proxemics.
- 2) A video lecture: "The importance of kinesics in teacher's professional activities: mimicry, laughter, gestures". Diagnosis of students on the questionnaire "What facial expressions and gestures can say." Exercises to practice the knowledge of kinesics.
- 3) A seminar: "The value of kinesics in teacher's professional activities: posture, gait. National features. Exercises to practice knowledge about kinesics.

7. Conclusion

The goal of the study was to identify the conditions for establishment of training programs aimed at development of nonverbal communication skills in future university teachers. As a result of the conducted empirical research, we have revealed the absence of differences in the success of interpretation of nonverbal communication between future university teachers and specialists whose professional activities are not related to teaching. All subjects have an average level of success in nonverbal communication.

The obtained data can be associated with a number of different factors:

- a lack of special training in the field of teaching the interpretation of nonverbal communication;
- a lack of experience in teaching, as the subjects in the experimental group have only a little experience in the field of teaching (mainly conducting seminars and lectures during the internship);
- a low basic level of psychological and pedagogical knowledge, as the subjects in the experimental group have different basic education (natural science and humanities).

Thus, the success of a university teacher in interpreting nonverbal communication when interacting with students is a necessary component of professional culture and contributes to improving the efficiency and quality of teaching. To acquire nonverbal communication skills, the future teacher should undergo special training. For this purpose, we have developed a draft program of the academic discipline "Training of nonverbal communication" within the supplementary education program "University Teacher".

In conclusion, it should be noted that the material presented in this paper reflects only one side of the communication process - interpretation of nonverbal communication by future university teachers, but it seems interesting to develop this topic from the perspective of studying the features of nonverbal communication by university teachers with different experience and length of work.

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