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Non-Verbal Teacher-Pupil Communication in the High-School Physical Education Lesson

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Abstract

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Based on various sources, according to which non-verbal communication is a form of expression through body language, one can say that physical education is one of the fields in which the relevance of this type of communication is a sine qua non condition in interpersonal relationships. Non-verbal communication contributes to the promotion of an active education, based on collaboration, on stimulating the common interests and promoting interdependence, interrelations between the participants in this process. The research started from the idea that using interpersonal communication in high-school education, one could stimulate a quality instructive-educational process. Research hypothesis By knowing how to approach, during the physical education lesson, the forms and functions of non-verbal communication, one can make improving interventions, in the sense of capitalizing on them, for the benefit of the high-school instructive process. The research consisted of a sociological approach, using an organized inquiry on a target group of 50 pupils from the Mangalia Economic College, county of Constanța. As a result of this sociological intervention, it can be said that during the communication process of certain implicit contents, such as the motor content that is specific to the school instructive-educational process, the role played by non-verbal forms is very important.

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Keywords: Non-verbal communication; sociological approach; high-school; physical education lesson.



1. Introduction

According to Cerghit I. (2008), the teaching process, from the perspective of multiple representations, presupposes action, information, interaction, communication and sociocentric systems based on social interaction. The lesson, as principal means of organization and development of the educational process, represents the framework in which there is an interaction between the factors of the instructive-educational process: teacher-pupil. The effectiveness of the interactive methods is ensured by the teachers' communication skills, their performance level that ensures the effectiveness of the transmission and reception of the message. The diversity of the people communicating demands from the teacher rhetorical and even persuasive skills.

(http://www.smc.roedu.ro/index_htm_files/suport%20de%20curs2.pdf)

Interpersonal communication implies the presence of three successive elements: purpose, psychosocial means, and effects of communication. The real communicative behaviors can have a verbal, non-verbal, para-verbal dominant, or they can be mix. No matter the way, all means have as essential trait an exchange of significations, functioning only based on those generalizing cognitive elements perceived by the people communicating.

Current communication theories (Hall & Knapp, 2013) identify in the non-verbal ones the "kinesics," a name for the body language that includes body movements, the facial expressions ("facial kinesics"), and regard ("oculesics"). Physical aspect, artifacts, and olfactory signals are considered also separate categories of non-verbal communication, even if it is known that people transmit signals simultaneously through multiple channels, which is why the integrative approach of this type of communication is necessary (Chelcea, Ivan, & Chelcea, 2005).

Most researchers accept a classification resulted from the combination of the message transmission codes and environments. Thus, J. Ruesch and W. Kess (1956, p. 205) associate non-verbal communication with three categories: sign language, including gestures; action language, including body movement in various activities; object language, incorporating the disposition of objects in space, for their usage.

R. P. Harrison (1974) divides this type of communication into four categories: performance codes associated with body movements, facial expressions, regard, touch and vocal activity; spatial-temporal codes, referring to messages resulted from the combined use of space and time; artifact codes, used in messages received from objects, and mediator codes referring to the special effects between emitter and receiver.

D. G. Leathers (2007) identified the following non-verbal communication channels: facial expressions, eye movement, posture, proxemics, physical aspect, suprasegmentals, such as intonation, tone, voice volume, and skin touch. According to M. L. Knapp (2010), the field of non-verbal communication includes: the way we regard, hear (tone of voice), smell, move (gestures, posture, regard, facial expressions, body touch, and proximity), and how the human interactions affect the environment and vice versa.

The functions of non-verbal communication, according to P. Ekman (2015) are: repetition, substitution - replacing the verbal messages, completion - collaborating to the transmission of verbal messages, for a better decoding, accentuation/moderation - emphasizing the verbal messages,

amplifying or diminishing what has been said, and contradiction - transmitting signals that are in opposition to the verbal messages.

Based on various sources, according to which non-verbal communication is a form of expression through "body language," one can say that physical education is one of the fields in which the relevance of this type of communication is a sine qua non condition in interpersonal relationships. Body language communication represents the messages that are not expressed through words and that can be decoded, creating meaning. (Dobrescu, 2006, p. 23). Non-verbal communication contributes to the promotion of an active education, based on collaboration, on stimulating the common interests and promoting interdependence, interrelations between the participants in this process.

2. Material & Methods

The research started from the idea that using interpersonal communication in high-school education, one could stimulate a quality instructive-educational process. The theme was chosen based on the conviction that physical education is one of the fields in which expressiveness and relevance of expression through "body language" in the teacher-pupil relationships plays an important role during the lesson and in making the educational process more effective.

Research hypothesis By knowing how to approach, during the physical education lesson, the forms and functions of non-verbal communication, one can make improving interventions, in the sense of capitalizing on them, for the benefit of the high-school instructive process.

The research consisted of a sociological approach, using an organized inquiry in the academic year 2014 –2015 on a target group of 50 pupils from the Mangalia Economic College, county of Constanța.

The questionnaire comprised 12 items with open and prefigured answers, specifically designed for young people of high-school age. The following research methods were used: the bibliographical documentation, the observation, the inquiry, the statistical-mathematical method, and the graphical representation method.

The perceptions identified for some of the items were assessed by grouping the questions addressed to the subjects in 5 categories, according to the importance that each subject gave it. The normative assessments led to certain value judgments and seeing the subjects' opinions through the prism of the categories of assertions, identified and assessed on a scale from 1 to 5 for each item.

3. Results and Discussions

The first items of the questionnaire highlighted the fact that all inquired subjects (100%) believe communication to be indispensable for the instructive process during the physical education lesson, while 59% recognize it as a sine qua non in the teacher-pupil relationship, 21% - in the pupil-pupil relationship, 11% - the teacher-parents relationship, and 9% emphasize the importance of the relationship between specialized teachers and their colleagues (Figure 1).

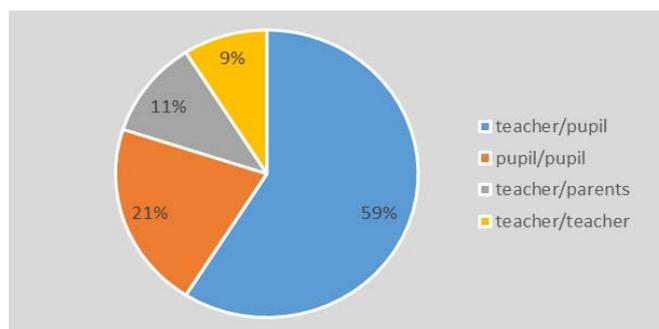


Fig. 1. Graphical representation of the answers given to question 2

In the next section of questions, most respondents (92%) said that during the physical education lesson there is a good communication in the teacher-pupils relationship. Of these subjects, 85.95% consider non-verbal communication as being the most useful and most often encountered in the structural part of the lesson, for consolidating the motor skills.

52.05% of the subjects said the most important role played by non-verbal communication during the lesson is associated with the verbal indications, 21.25% highlighted only the role of communication through body language, 18.35% supported the value of verbal messages and explanations (verbal communication), and only 8.35% of the subjects believed that vocal traits that accompany words (paraverbal) are more useful (Figure 2).

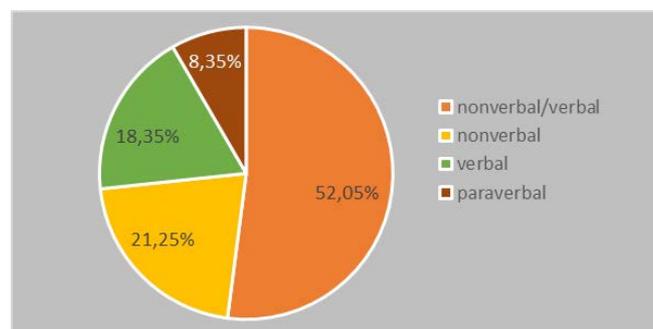


Fig. 2. Graphical representation of the answers given to question 6

Based on the functions identified in the professional literature (Ekman, 2015) that non-verbal communication performs in relation to the other communication forms, 52% of the subjects highlighted its role of support for the verbal communication, of doubling the verbal message through *repetition*. 17% of the subjects considered non-verbal communication important for a better decoding of the verbal messages (*completion*), 23% considered non-verbal communication can replace the words completely (*substitution*), while 8% supported the function of *accentuation and moderation* for verbal communication, amplifying or diminishing what has been said (Figure 3).

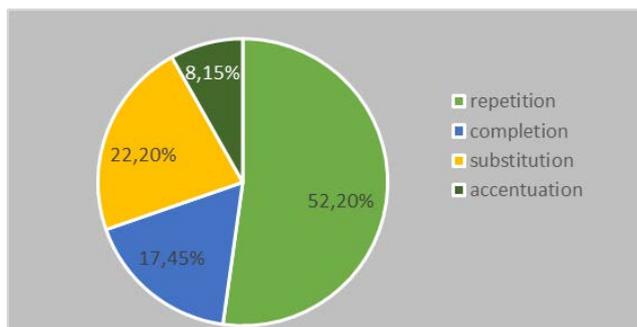


Fig. 3. Graphical representation of the answers given to question 8

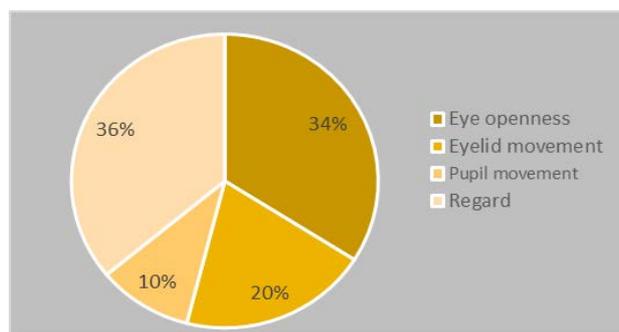


Fig. 4. Graphical representation of the answers given to question 9

The questionnaire also emphasized the components of facial expressiveness as means of non-verbal communication, which, in the high-school pupils' perception, constitute important elements for transmitting messages - the openness degree of the eyes (34%); eyelid movement (20%); pupil movement (10%), and type of regard (36%). (Fig. 4)

Through another item, the elements of communication through facial movements have been identified, and the subjects highlighted their importance in the teaching process as follows: frowning (36%), nose wrinkling (24%), eyebrow lifting (22%), lip tightening (18%). (Fig. 5)

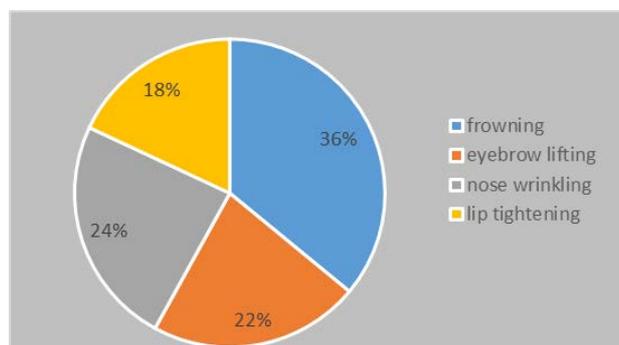


Fig. 5. Graphical representation of the answers given to question 10

Of the non-verbal communication alternatives between teacher and pupil, the 5 means identified from the professional literature were: posture, movement, gestures, facial expression, and look (exterior appearance). Based on the statistical evaluations, the first place is taken by body movement, with an

average of 4.82 points, and the second place, by gestures that are specific to body expression in physical education, with an average of 4.74 points.

These results are supported in both cases by a maximum value of 5 points, and a minimum value of 4.33 and 2.66 points, respectively. The third place is taken by posture, with an average of 4.45 points, a maximum value of 4.66 points and a minimum value of 3.33 points. Less recognized are the influences of facial expression and look (3.70 points) in the communication relationship between teacher and athlete. (Fig. 6).

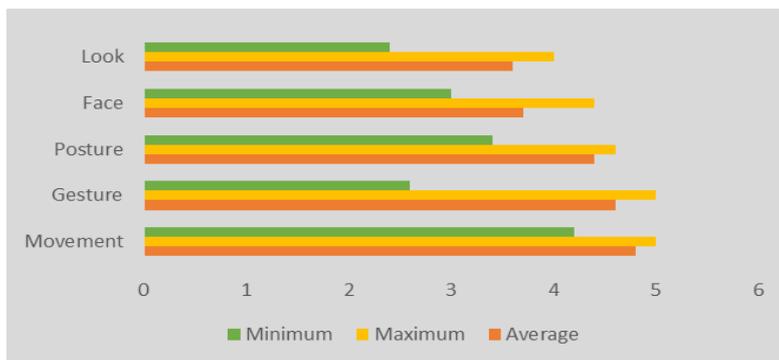


Fig. 6. Graphical representation of the answers given to question 11

Starting from the capitalization directions for non-verbal communication, the results obtained for the group of influence on the knowledge - self-knowledge process turn out to be in the top of the subjects' choices, recording an average value of 4.80 points, a maximum value of 5 points, and a minimum value of 4.30 points. One can say that the subjects are aware of the special role the body language plays in increasing one's ability to internalize the specific sports training motor content.

The second place in the subjects' options is taken by the influence on the assessment - self-assessment, with an average value of 4.60 points, a maximum value of 4.80 points, and a minimum value of 3.80 points, which proves that, according to the subjects' answers, the effects of the studied means on increasing the ability to assess a correct performance are recognized.

The third position is occupied by the direction feedback, which leads to the correct learning of the technical components, assessed with an average value of 3.50 points, a maximum value of 4.20 points, and a minimum value of 3.20 points.

The next category is the one regarding the correction-prevention, in the sense of forming the correct automatisms, with an average of 3.30 points, a minimum value of 2.50 points, and a maximum value of 3.80 points. The last group of non-verbal communication influences, as perceived by the subjects, is the one favoring the teacher-pupil relation, with an average of 2.80 points, a maximum value of 3 points, and a minimum value of 2 points, envisaging the synchronization tendencies between the emitter and the receiver. (Fig. 7).

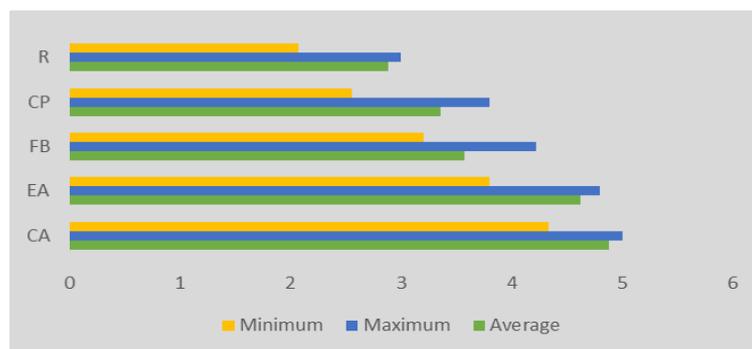


Fig. 7. Graphical representation of the answers given to question 12

4. Conclusions

Based on the results recorded during this study conducted on high-school subjects, the following conclusions can be drawn:

As a result of this sociological intervention, it can be said that during the communication process of certain implicit contents, such as the motor content that is specific to the school instructive-educational process, the role played by non-verbal forms is very important.

The body language communication is perceived by most respondents, the messages transmitted this way facilitating a useful dialog between the teacher and the pupil.

A dominant form of expressing in the physical education lesson is represented by body movements as "an expression of energy and information through posture, movement and indices", a psychosomatic connection (body-soul) through which feelings and emotions are expressed.

The teacher and the pupil must know and use the types of non-verbal communication as best as possible, according to the goals of the instructive process, taking into consideration the techniques identified in this study.

The identification of the subjects' perception regarding the importance of non-verbal communication can influence the result of the instructive process and, implicitly, can lead to the achievement the goals of the curricula and of the physical education lesson.

These results highlight the importance of using non-verbal communication compared to the other two types, para-verbal and verbal, while during the instructive process the teacher and the pupil must master and use opportunisticly and harmoniously all the communication techniques, for an increased effectiveness of the transmission of new knowledge and motor skills.

The gestures of illustration and the facial expressing are other landmarks of the existence of non-verbal communication perceived by the students in the instructional process.

The variety of the non-verbal communication types can provide the solution for various stages of the instructive-educational process in pre-university institutions, especially in high-school, as was proven by this study.

In order to verify the ways in which this form of communication can be capitalized, in the sense of improving the instructive process, this research can be followed by an applicative intervention.

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