

## **Verbal and non-verbal communication in sports culture** **Comunicarea verbală și nonverbală în cultura sportivă**

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### **Abstract**

Evolution is achieved by the individual's own development in which heredity, environment and education are considered as an influencing mechanism that marks human advancement.

Ontogenetically, non-verbal communication shows a large precocity, based on innate elements (reactions that are determined by emotions, for example), but also learned elements. On the other hand, it can be an independent form of self-contained communication too, with specific objectives (dance, pantomime, sport, etc.) as well as "betraying" the individual's socio-cultural area.

Practicing physical exercises contributes to an ability in forming movements, not only controlling them but also using them for action and expressivity. In sport, the expressive movements of "difficulty", "exercise", induce to the viewer a sensation of discomfort and inadequacy to the task.

In physical education and sport activity, the word is used by the teacher and student in different situations, with special intentions and methods of addressing.

Also, in sport, motor learning is achieved through directed and self-directed communication, (internal and self-regulated by the athlete) and usual learning is achieved through a more complex use of verbal means.

An athlete's attitude can be "read" from their posture and facial expressions (example, looking away/down or lack of attention shows indifference or boredom; raised eyebrows show lack of confidence, a brisk walk with the head up indicates self-confidence, a seated position with legs apart indicates relaxation, opening, tilted head while listening reveals interest, an explanation with open palms indicates sincerity etc.). These gestures should not be interpreted separately from other gestures or circumstances, but must be taken together and correlated with the situation as a whole.

**Key words:** language, non-verbal language (body language), non-verbal communication.

### **Rezumat**

Evoluția individului se realizează după legități proprii, în care ereditatea, mediul și educația se constituie ca mecanism de influențare, ce își pune amprenta asupra devenirii umane.

Ontogenetic, comunicarea nonverbală prezintă o mare precocitate bazată pe elemente înnăscute (reacții determinate de emoții, de exemplu), dar și învățate. Pe de altă parte poate fi o formă de comunicare de sine-stătătoare, cu obiective specifice (dans, pantomimă, sport etc.), precum poate „trăda” aria socio-culturală a individului.

Practicarea exercițiilor fizice contribuie la formarea capacității de efectuare a mișcărilor, de stăpânire a lor și utilizarea nu numai acțională, ci și expresivă. În sport mișcărilor expresive de „dificultate”, „efort”, induc la privitor senzația disconfortului și neadaptării la sarcină.

În activitatea de educație fizică și sport cuvântul este folosit în diferite situații, cu adrese și intenții deosebite, atât de profesor, cât și de elev.

Totodată în activitatea sportivă, învățarea motrică se realizează printr-o comunicare condusă, dar și autocondusă (limbaj intern și autoreglator al sportivului), iar la nivelul învățării obișnuite se realizează printr-o utilizare mai complexă a mijloacelor verbale.

Atitudinea sportivilor poate fi „citită” din posturile și expresiile lor faciale (exemplu, privirea în gol/în jos sau nepăsare, denotă dezinteres sau plictis; sprâncenele ridicate indică neîncredere; un mers vioi, cu capul drept indică încredere în sine, o poziție de tipul așezat, cu picioarele depărtate indică destindere, relaxare, deschidere; capul înclinat atunci când ascultăm denotă interes, o explicație cu palmele deschise indică sinceritate etc.). Aceste gesturi nu se pot interpreta separat de alte gesturi sau de circumstanțe, ci trebuie să fie privite în ansamblu și corelate cu situația ca întreg.

**Cuvinte cheie:** limbaj, comunicare nonverbală, limbaj nonverbal.

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## Introduction

In this paper, we aim to develop a quite heterogeneous topic that is equally risky if we keep in mind that non-verbal communication is considered to be “land shaking”.

Evolution is achieved by the individual's own development in which heredity, environment and education are considered to be an influencing mechanism, which has an impact on human advancement. The notion of “communication” comes from the Latin “*communis*”, which means “to agree”, “to be connected to” or “being in a relationship”, although in the ancient vocabulary the term means “to communicate to others “,” to share something to others”.

Some specialists reduce the definition to a simple classification: notification, news, relationship, rapport, connection; synonyms which are provided by the dictionary.

Society continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it would be correct to say that it exists in transmission and communication. There is more than a verbal connection between words, as expressed by *common, community, communication* (Cergit I).

People live in community by virtue of what they have in common, and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. To form a community or society, they must have common goals, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge, a common understanding, “same spirit” as sociologists say.

Communication is performed on three levels: logical, para-verbal and non-verbal.

The logical level (words) represents only 7% of all communication levels, 38% of communication occurs at a para-verbal level (tone, volume, rate of speech, etc.) and 55% is non-verbal (facial expression, position, movement, clothing, etc.).

## Verbal and non-verbal communication in sport

Communication between individuals and groups is very important and useful; it helps to form the personality as it allows the transmission of social experience. In terms of expression means, communication is divided into verbal and non-verbal. The second category is a sphere driven more by culture than by company and is often highly localized.

Communication may be positive and negative; to obtain positive communication, the coach is required to have knowledge outside his area of expertise, such as psychology, pedagogy, anatomy, biomechanics, etc. This is necessary because athletes are different intellectually and emotionally, and the coach as the team leader must be clearly understood by all athletes. If this is not done, misunderstandings may occur, which can seriously affect individual and group performance, creating tension, so that the goals will not be achieved (Atkinson P). It has also been shown that positive expressions (“You can do it”, “Do not quit, it will be fine”) used by the coach in training or competitions often increase efficiency. All are part of verbal communication that is important in sports training.

The types of communication used by coaches and physical education teachers are:

- Intrapersonal communication - communication with oneself.
- Interpersonal communication - communication between people (teacher-athlete).
- Group communication - communication between the members of a group and communication of the group with other people.
- Mass communication - communication received or used by a large number of people.

## The meaning of communication in sport

Ontogenetically, non-verbal communication has a great precocity based on innate elements (reactions caused by emotions, for example), but also learned elements. On the other hand, it can be a form of self-contained communication with specific objectives (dance, pantomime, sports, etc.) and can “betray” the individual's socio-cultural area.

In verbal communication, the conscious sphere is largely involved, while non-verbal communication is spontaneous, less censored, unaffected by distortions. In sports, expressive movements of “difficulty”, “effort” induce to the viewer the feeling of discomfort and inadequacy to the task.

Movement communication skills manifest in social life, genetic psychology has shown the importance of communication through movement in children, especially in the pre-operational stage, when they want to express and communicate something.

Research has shown that eye, face and body movements are generally more revealing for the emotions and feelings concerned.

By communicating, we use a specific vocabulary and specific terminology, so that human communication through words is qualitatively conditioned by the volume of the vocabulary used and received. In adult communication, the transmission capacity is lower than the receiving capacity, while in the educational process students understand more words than they can express.

For example, the teacher announces the task as a verbal motor task (command, indication, etc.) often using specific technical terminology, (bending, leaning, tilt, roll, ball, etc.), words with precise meanings to describe these acts. Students understand what they are told, but they cannot use the same vocabulary if asked.

We mention some principles that stand out: issue causes reception, the message travels from one predominantly active pole (the teacher in the teaching process) to a passive receiver; the communication chain has a linear direction, the present steps automatically determine the future ones without reciprocity, etc. (H. Gardner).

The current focus is mainly on oral communication research, long neglected because of the lack of technical tools that capture communication in its complexity.

In physical education and sports activity, the word is used by both teacher and student in different situations, with special intentions and methods of addressing.

The main forms of communication specific to coaches (teachers) are: direct order, suggesting the action, discussion-communication, lecture, demonstration and analysis.

In sports, motor learning is achieved through directed

and self-directed communication (internal and self-regulated by the athlete) and usual learning is achieved through more complex verbal means. Learning situations are very numerous, and the execution and performance are very different from one class to another, and even from one student to another.

The teacher will transmit knowledge and guidelines, orders, encouragement regarding the execution of the motor acts. On the other hand, the student will “dialogue” with the teacher, trying not only to perform, but also to relate how and what he did, what and how the next attempt will be, he will assess his own performance and program new forms of movement. To describe the meaning of communication that we use daily, the following three terms are used:

a) The communication forms, which are ways of communication such as speaking, writing or drawing, are distinct and separate, each having their own messaging system. So, when signs are marked on the paper according to certain rules (grammar and spelling), words and “forms” are created in writing.

b) The communication environment is a means of communication that combines many forms. The environment may use technology that is beyond our control, for example, a book is an environment that uses forms of communication such as words, pictures and drawings.

c) The media are the mass communication means, such as radio, television, magazines etc.

In all sports, non-verbal communication exists and is specific to each individual, as evidenced by the codes, signs, drawings, etc. established between coaches and athletes, and between athletes. However, it can be stated that there are no “pre-established laws” like in verbal communication.

A frowning face of the coach, head signs of disapproval, and others generally have a powerful effect on athletes. A sign of approval or positive facial mimicry from the coach at the right time can give the athlete the extra energy needed to win a competition, even when he is in a physically critical moment.

The knowledge and understanding of technical terms by the athlete can greatly ease the coach’s job. A proper awareness of one’s own training and especially one’s own body combined with the desire to win can greatly facilitate communication between the athlete and the coach (De Vito).

This communication between the athlete and the coach is good and represents a balance in the athlete’s life because the athlete is often physically and mentally abused during training and competitions in addition to other problems: injuries, family problems, etc. For these reasons, the coach must have an understanding capacity and expression superior to those of the athlete. We know that there are coaches who mentally terrorize their athletes with expressions such as “you are good for nothing”, “trouble maker”, etc. In the long term, this attitude may cause mental damage to the athlete, most often leading to giving up on high performance sport.

Most athletes start with a desire to gain fame, which may “darken” their judgment at times. For this reason, knowing some psychology elements may help the coach

“refine” these feelings by implementing moral principles, fair play.

The athletes’ attitude can be “read” in postures and facial expressions (gazing into space, looking down show indifference, disinterest or boredom, raised eyebrows indicate distrust, a brisk walk with the head up indicates confidence, sitting with legs spread indicates relaxation, opening, listening with tilted head shows interest, an explanation with open palms indicates sincerity and so on). These gestures should not be interpreted separately from other gestures or circumstances, but must be taken together and correlated with the situation as a whole.

### Methods and means for developing non-verbal communication skills in physical education classes

So far body expression, in conjunction with intellectual aspects, moral and psycho-affective-volitional, with facial expression as a support, has been included in the stage movement discipline as an objective for the completion of the actor’s art (Isac Carmen Aneta).

Conceptually, body expression is a study discipline, with an artistic function based on the fact that it interferes with various arts: music, dance, theater, painting, sculpture, and various branches of gymnastics in establishing plasticity forms in correspondence with music.



Fig. 1 – Theme: “In the mirror”.

Each lesson comprises different objectives and contents, gravitating around five main methods: warming up, combining different techniques and movements, structural improvisation, structuring and demonstrating the structure.

In school, for developing non-verbal communication skills, we can use rhythmic themes, gymnastic elements, dance, mimic and pantomimic elements.



Fig. 2 –Theme: ”Butterfly”.



We present an example of a lesson:

a) *Organizing the collective of students*

Lesson sequence organized to ensure the beginning of the lesson. To capture the students' attention and interest we can use rhythmic themes and music games (5 minutes).

b) *Preparing the body for effort*

Gradual stimulation of morphological and functional indices ensuring an optimal excitation condition, using different means for developing coordination:

- Spatial-temporal orientation (5 minutes each lesson);
- Motor rhythm (5 minutes);
- General coordination (5 minutes);
- Forming the basis of the general aesthetic movement (7-8 minutes each lesson).

*Recommended means*

- Complex structures varying paces in different tempos, ranging from walking to running in different directions and at different signals;

- Rhythmic and musical games, which can be used both indoors and outdoors.

c) *Influencing the motor system*

This lesson sequence is very important, it has a formative value especially in primary and secondary schools (10 minutes each lesson).

*Recommended means*

- It addresses at the same time aesthetic education;

- Eurhythmy specific exercises such as mimicry will be used (expressiveness, facial mobility), means of expression through gesture and attitude, mime, dance expression);

- Complex structures for aesthetic education;

- Complex structures to optimize harmonious physical development (development of joint mobility and elasticity), optimizing muscle tone (alternating contraction and relaxation), developing intersegment coordination.

d) *Developing specific motor skills*

- Developing mobility, speed, strength, springing (20-25 minutes each lesson);

- Learning, consolidating and improving motor skills.

Consolidation lessons will aim to strengthen and stabilize the skills and capacity to associate different movements and to adapt them to different situations and even to music.

e) *Relaxation (2-3 minutes each lesson)*

- We can use eurhythmy for different variations of steps, slow movements that engage the whole body into stretching movements etc.;

- Among training methods we used verbal communication methods (when themes were presented), practicing, questioning.

*The teacher's role* is to accurately capture and discover all the relevant factors in relation to commands. Everything is possible around a theme, provided that the base picture is respected.

The teacher plays a role in making the student manifest sensitivity, so that every gesture matches one's content, abstract and personal at the same time.

Here a dual principle is present, which is important in the bipolar body-imagination relation; on the one hand, the teacher focuses attention on the gesture to make it meaningful for the subject, and on the other hand, on mental representations and sensations according to each gesture

phases. Orders raise the student's personal imagination, as the concepts are abstract and precise, the individual possibilities are opened.

The teacher should organize learning around this major concept for the student to build, structure, and make visible and distinctive an image.

Examples of general themes:

- Exploring verticality, horizontality;
- Indicating the notions up, down;
- Drawing paths in any space (three-dimensional);
- Opening, closure;
- Playing with the notion of rhythm, based on the theme.

## Conclusions

1. A good communication can lead to increased performance of an athlete or team, being one of the main elements of performance; a good coach-athlete communication makes the road to high performance easier and pleasant.

2. Physical education and sport teachers can "awake" in students the love for practicing sports.

3. Judgment, individuals and society are not discrete structures, but personal and interpersonal interaction processes. Symbolic interaction emphasizes the importance of language as a fundamental mechanism in becoming aware and judgmental. Personality is what is proper and a distinguishing characteristic of each person as an individual, in their own way.

4. The art of communicating is not a natural process or a skill with which we are born; we learn to communicate, so we must study what we learn, so we can use our knowledge more effectively.

5. Any communication involves creation and exchange of meanings; these meanings are represented by "signs" and "codes". It seems that people have a real need to "read" the meaning of all human actions.

6. Observing and understanding this process can make us more aware about what happens when we communicate.

## Conflicts of interests

Nothing to declare.

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