

## STUDY REGARDING THE VERBAL AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION DURING THE TRAINING OF THE ROMANIAN NATIONAL SKI JUMPING TEAM

BALINT GHEORGHE, BALINT NELA TATIANA

Faculty of Movement, Sports and Health Sciences, University „Vasile Alecsandri” of Bacău, ROMANIA

E-mail: gyur68@hotmail.com

### Abstract

Building and maintaining a real team, meaning a united and perfectly harmonized collective, as the interests and activities are concerned, is one of the basic problems of a coach, whose activity is situated at the same level of importance as the training lesson and the competition, which are major concerns for every tactician.

The main objective of this research is a study regarding the verbal and nonverbal communication between coaches and athletes, as one of the main factors for attaining the proposed results. Starting from the unanimously known fact that the communication is a process through which two entities (E - emitter and R - receiver) exchange formal messages in a common code by using one or more transmission channels, the information flux functioning, at the same time in both ways, each of the participants playing alternatively the role of emitter and receiver, I have verified through this study the quality between the emitter (coach) and receiver (athlete) during the trampoline training process.

We must mention the fact that, unlike other sports branches in which the coach and the athlete can communicate in a direct manner, from a small distance, when the ski jumps are concerned, the athlete is permanently situated at a great distance from the coach, being on the trampoline, in flight or on the climbing mechanism, whereas the coach is obligated to verbally communicate with the athlete through a walkie-talkie or a previously common established gesture code (nonverbal communication). This type of coach-athlete communication, specific to ski-jumping, can be very dangerous during the training process, if certain conditions are not respected, the greatest risk being that the information transmitted by the coach to be distorted, or even wrongly received by the athlete, this having negative consequences on the training process. By using the specific instrument of the inquiry method – the formal interview, I have succeeded during this research to discover the main inconvenient processes of this type of verbal and nonverbal communication, and together with the coaches and the athletes, to elaborate a set of compulsory conditions in order to cancel these processes.

**Key words:** verbal communication; nonverbal communication; ski jumping.

---

### Introduction

The sportive training, as an instructional-educational process, has a bilateral character because it presupposes the intervention of a specialist – the coach – who conducts and leads the training activity and the actions of the athlete, the latter being the beneficiary of the activity, practicing in order to master his/her skills.

The coach-athlete interaction is determined by the direction of activity, which depends on the personality of the coach, on one hand, on the personality of the athlete, on another, and of the pedagogical situations that are created between coach and athlete. A system with “*entries and exits*”, the communication – understood as a part of the psychological and social life, must be presented as being essentially necessary for human relations.

Norbert Sillamy (1965) insists on the feedback of the communication. When the information is transmitted, an action on the receiver and a retroactive effect on the transmitter are produced (Sillamy N., 1965). Thus, **the communication** constitutes “*all of the psychological and physical processes through which one person is put in relation with one or more persons, for attaining certain objectives*” (Flament C. 1969).

Starting from the unanimously known fact that the communication is a process through which two entities (E - emitter and R - receiver) exchange formal messages in a common code by using one or more transmission channels, the information flux functioning, at the same time in both ways, each of the participants playing alternatively the role of emitter and receiver, I have verified through this study the quality between the emitter (coach) and receiver (athlete) during the ramp training process. We must mention the fact that, unlike other sports branches in which the coach and the athlete can communicate in a direct manner, from a small distance, when the ski jumps are concerned, the athlete is permanently situated at a great distance from the coach, being on the ramp, in flight or on the climbing mechanism, whereas the coach is obligated to verbally communicate with the athlete through a walkie-talkie or a previously common established gesture code (nonverbal communication).

This type of coach-athlete communication, specific to ski-jumping, can be very dangerous during the training process, if certain conditions are not respected, the greatest risk being that the information transmitted by the coach to be distorted, or even wrongly received by the athlete, this having negative consequences on the training process.

**Research methods:** study of specialized literature; observation; investigation – formal interview.

#### **Material and Method**

**The subjects:** are represented by the four coaches of the National Ski Jumping Team (group A and group B) and eight of the athletes in these groups (4 athletes in group A and 4 athletes in group B).

#### **RESULTS**

Following the analysis of the specialized literature, corroborated with the formal interviews of the four coaches and eight athletes, we have succeeded together to elaborate a set of compulsory conditions in order to improve the verbal and nonverbal communication between the ski jumping coaches and athletes.

This set of compulsory conditions was built having the following in view:

1. The conditions for an optimal communication;
2. The characteristics of communication;
3. The complete scheme of the constitutive factors of the communication;
4. The specific language of the communication;
5. Communication through walkie-talkie;
6. The functions of the nonverbal communication;
7. Communication in three dimensions.

#### **The conditions for an optimal communication**

For a communication to be optimal, it needs to respect certain conditions:

1. the content consistency of the message must be offered by the quantity of information comprised in the message and to be significant for both parties (**it is recommended that the message to be short (succinct) but to contain also the right information and at the same time, the message must be understood by both parties (coach and athlete)**);
2. the expressiveness of the communication has to be elaborated and ensured through para-verbal elements (**this is essential in the case of ramp jumps, because of the relatively large distance between coach and athlete**);
3. the communicated information must be intelligible (**we must be very careful when communicating through walkie-talkie at the meteorological conditions – wind – the communication must not be deteriorated by the external stimuli (over imposed sounds, radio malfunctions etc.)**);

**The characteristics of communication** are found in the educational field and they suggest a series of concrete actions the coach can perform in order to improve the sportive interaction.

**Several directions can be considered for the coach to meditate upon, for learning and applying them responsively.**

In my opinion, **the coach must report himself to an active talking partner and produce this partner. Also, he must constantly ensure on the use of the same code by the partners (verbal and**

**nonverbal language) during communication. He must let the athlete the freedom to emit the answer at this own time, to launch and to read messages through multiple channels, to attenuate the effect of internal and external noise sources any time it is possible.**

*“A characteristic of any inter-human communication is that it is at the same time communication (it says something) and meta-communication (it qualifies what has just been said).”* (Mucchielli, Alex in Ezechil, Liliانا, 2002, p.55).

#### **The complete scheme of the constitutive factors of the communication**

Through communication changes of significations are operated, it presupposes a speaker and a listener, a means of communication that is known by both and, not in the least, a subject to talk about.

#### **The complete scheme of the constitutive factors of the communication includes:**

1. **a transmitter (emitter) who transmits a message (coach / athlete);**
2. **the message refers to a context (referent), a thing or an idea (e.g.: the performance of a motor act);**
3. **the message is composed of elements of a code that has to be shared by the two partners, directly, or indirectly, in contact (e.g.: the use of a language known by the coach and by the athlete).**

#### **The specific language of the communication**

The elements of the „*specific ski jumping language*” communication language we consider to be:

1. **The vocabulary**
  - a. All of the existent Romanian (and English) terms;
  - b. All of the terms used by the ski jumping specialists;
2. **A repertory of terms used in ski jumping**
  - a. Their specific expressions and idioms;
  - b. The grammatical form and structure.
3. **Communication through walkie-talkie**

The walkie-talkie is the most frequent means of communication used in the ski jumping training process.

#### **An effective use of the walkie-talkie must have in view, in our opinion:**

1. **preparing the message:** meaning to try and detach ourselves from the problems existing up to that point and defining the subject of the conversation. During a walkie-talkie conversation, we should include only 2-3 main ideas;
2. **preparing ourselves for the walkie-talkie call:** we must think about our tone and attitude. We should speak more slowly than usual, but we must not necessarily use a higher tone;
3. **a correct transmission of the message:** we must avoid the words and phrasings that are not known by the athlete and we must present the message as clearly as possible;
4. **listening the speaker:** we should listen very carefully what the athlete is saying (in our case),

and if he pauses, we must not interrupt him, we should leave him time to think and start over the conversation;

5. **conclusion of the conversation:** at the end of the conversation, we should reiterate (in a short and concise manner) our conclusion. The conversation must always end in a friendly manner, regardless its results.

#### **The functions of the nonverbal communication**

In order to analyze the functions of nonverbal communication, we think we should the answer to the question: **Why coaches use this type of language?**. We should see what are the intentions, reasons and aims of this form of communication.

Having in mind the five functions of the nonverbal communication identified by Paul Ekman, we try to analyze these functions from our point of view:

1. **repetition** – we say „yes” and we nod our heads up and down in the moment in which we want to communicate to the athlete that the performed motor act is correct; we say to the athlete that the angle of take-off from the ramp must be of 30 - 38° and we complete with gestures this angle, so that the athlete would better understand our message;
2. **substitution** – replacing the verbal messages – a sad face can tell us that the athlete is not feeling well or is not in the mood for training;
3. **completion** – the collaboration between coach and athlete during the transmission of messages, leading to a better decoding;
4. **accentuating/moderating** – emphasizing the verbal messages, amplifying or diminishing the words that were said: when we raise our arm and show the fist; when we reprimand an athlete, our facial expression can show that we are very upset;
5. **contradiction** – transmitting signals which are in opposition with the verbal messages; we say that we are glad the athlete performed correctly what we asked, but we look the other way when we shake his/her hand.

#### **Communication in three dimensions.**

Communication means not only sending messages but also receiving them. In general, the coaches are recognized for their skills and the transmission is not listening. But coaches need to know not only convey the message clear and understandable, but also to listen to understand what athletes they send back.

1. Communication is verbal and nonverbal messages. Hostile gestures, facial expressions of joy, movement of intimidation and acts of kindness make up nonverbal communication. It is estimated that over 70% of communication is nonverbal, which reinforces the claim that what you say is not nearly as important as what you do.
2. Most people tend to control excessive verbal

messages, but not those non-verbal. Because coaches are observed mostly by athletes, administrators, public, they should be particularly careful in communicating by gestures, posture and facial expressions.

3. Communication has two parts: content and emotion. Content is the substance of the message and expressed verbally, emotion is what you feel content and expressed relative to nonverbal. Rising competition is causing the coach to control the content and emotional charge of the message.

Coaches are trained to send messages rather than to receive, to express verbal than nonverbal particular, to control the message in content more than the emotion. But, by effort and practice can develop the ability to listen nonverbalul and emotional skills.

#### **Conclusion**

By using the specific instrument of the inquiry method – the formal interview, I have succeeded during this research to discover the main inconvenient processes of this type of verbal and nonverbal communication, and together with the coaches and the athletes, to elaborate a set of compulsory conditions in order to cancel these processes, adapting also the „Decalogue of communication” elaborated by Gh. Dumitriu and I. Damian (2002):

#### **DECALOGUE OF THE ATHLETE/COACH COMMUNICATION:**

(adapted after *Consiliere psihopedagogică* (course), Dumitriu, Gh., Damian, I., 2002)

1. **You cannot not to communicate;**
2. **Communication presupposes self-knowledge;**
3. **Communication presupposes a realization of the other person's needs;**
4. **Communication means listening;**
5. **Communication presupposes the understanding of verbal and nonverbal messages;**
6. **To communicate means to realize feed-backs;**
7. **To communicate means to understand the processes of a relation;**
8. **To communicate means to know how to express your feelings;**
9. **To communicate presupposes the acceptance of conflicts;**
10. **To communicate presupposes a try to solve the conflicts.**

**This material has been approved for publication in the Technical Commission of Ski Jumping from Romanian Ski Biathlon Federation, dated 30 III 2010.**

#### **References**

- FLAMENT C., 1969, *Psychologie experimentale, vol. IX „Psychologie sociale”, P. Fraisse, J. Piaget, PUF;***
- DUMITRIU, GH., DAMIAN, I., 2002, *Consiliere psihopedagogică* (suport de curs).**

Universitatea din Bacău;

**MUCCHIELLI, A., 2002**, în Ezechil, Liliana, *Comunicarea educațională în context școlar*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, p.55.

**SILLAMY, N., 1965**, *Dictionnaire de la Psychologie*. Larousse.