# NON-VERBAL PEDAGOGICAL COMMUNICATION IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FROM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' POINT OF VIEW

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**Abstract -** Pedagogical communication is very important part of teaching profession. The main aim of presented study is the analysis of non-verbal ways of pedagogical communication in educational process. Presented study has theoretical-empirical character. In the theoretical part, there are definitions of pedagogical communication and characteristics of non-verbal communication in the educational process. In the empirical part, there are results of own empirical research. Empirical research was realized by quantitative design of research using statistical software SPSS 20. Surveyed university students emphasized that non-verbal communication is observable part of communication between teacher and student. University teacher should reflect on his/ her non-verbal ways of communication with students. The study was funded by the Cultural and Educational Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic KEGA under grants 020UCM-4/2021 "Education in theory and practice" and KEGA004UCM-4/2022, Promoting Health and Well Being through inclusive education in Higher Education".

**Keywords** - Haptics, Non-Verbal Communication, Pedagogical Communication, University Teacher.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is, without doubt, one of the most important professions in any social system. Managing and directing educational processes in an institutionalised environment is undeniably a demanding task. An educator can be considered an expert who possesses a wide spectrum of characteristics necessary for the teaching profession and its realisation. Leading an educational process requires, among others, the ability to communicate suitably and efficiently with persons participating in the educational processes at various levels of the existing school system. In this context, we would like to focus our attention on a closer study of the course of the educational process at higher education institutions. The process of education in this environment has its own specifics. Equally distinct is the course and means of communication in the university educational process. A university educator communicates with university students via verbal as well as non-verbal means. In addition to the verbal means of expression, the expert explanation of the content is supplemented with non-verbal instruments based on which university students are able to identify mainly the subjective attitude of the educator toward the educational process in the university environment.

As a result, we see it as important to pay increased attention to the study of the course of pedagogical communication in the university educational process. Because the issue of pedagogical communication is rather expansive, in our opinion, this contribution focuses only on non-verbal communication and the individual ways of realizing non-verbal communication in the university educational process. Based on the above-mentioned, we consider it important to introduce the chosen field of haptics in university education as viewed by the addressed university students.

## II. THEORETICAL PREREQUISITIES

In general, communication can be understood as a process of verbal as well as non-verbal transmission of messages, pieces of information, attitudes, opinions and life experiences. The basic elements of communication are [2]:

The communicator – that who communicates, the source of information

The message - the content of information

The communication channel - the method of information transmission

The communicant - the recipient of information

The stated communication elements determine the entire course of the communication process. During the course of communication, it is important (in general as well as within the educational process) to identify not only the communicator as the bearer and the transmitter of information and the communicant as the information's recipient but we must not forget the content itself as well as the method of its transmission. The expert specification of the process of communication can be found in several professional publications. The summary of definitions related to communication may be outlined in the following way. Communication can be understood as [3]:

- the process of transmitting information in any form, which is realized between people and manifests itself through some effect,
- the process of interchange whose goal is the exchange of idea contents between the participants of communication through words,

- the process of transmission which is bilateral as it involves not only the transmission itself but also the reception of the message from one person to another,
- the process of transmission of information contents realized within various communication systems using various communication media; communication is most often realized through language,
- social interaction, which can be in the narrow sense understood as a language transaction,
- a measure leading to the achievement of the desired result,
- the most important form of social interaction - its essence is based on receiving and transmitting signals containing also self-representation and self-confirmation,
- the process of mutual understanding, as well as exchange of meanings, realised through a system of symbols,
- the transmission of information conducted by emitting and receiving signals, symbols of video, audio, olfactory, tactile and other characters.

Last but not least, we need to see communication as a social occurrence forming "the essence of interpersonal manifestations involving transmission and reception of information in a particular environment while using a suitable communication channel and an agreed code with a verbal and/or non-verbal substance" [6]. Communication is understood as a process realized between two or more persons through which concrete information is both transmitted and received while various communication tools influencing the efficiency of the communication process are utilised. Based on the above-mentioned definition of communication we need to emphasise the division of communication according to the means used in communication [3]:

1) Verbal communication - speaking, also referred to as communication through words

2) Non-verbal communication - communication realized through symbols and body language

I. Nosková states the following division, specification and supplementation of verbal and non-verbal communication characteristics [6]:

- Verbal communication is conducted using linguistic means. It can be characterised as conscious as the person who communicates can purposefully choose linguistic means based on the communication goal and according to the communication situation. Verbal communication forms 13-15% of the overall expressed communication.
- Non-verbal communication is realized via non-verbal means. It is usually unconscious and as a result, is more natural and truer. Non-verbal communication forms 85-87% of the overall communication.

We consider the stated division of communication pertinent and transparent. In verbal communication, we emphasise not only the choice of linguistic tools based on the communicator's (usually) conscious work with words as he/she is the main initiator and conductor of the communication process, but also the significance of non-verbal communication which may be characterised as communication through non-verbal means and which is often spontaneous. As a result, many gestures, touches or body movements, in general, indicate true feelings and the true understanding of the message from the position of both the communicator and the communicant.

Deriving from the stated general characteristics of communication, we need to focus our attention on the course of communication in the university educational process. In this context, we talk about pedagogical communication. "Pedagogical communication is an effective tool for getting to know students within pedagogical interaction. It serves the teacher as a didactic tool for transmitting information but also as a social tool for becoming more acquainted with students." [5]. In addition, D. Fontana points out that pedagogical communication is supposed to reinforce a pleasant atmosphere in the class, optimise the relationships between the teacher and students, enable efficient management of socio-psychological processes in the team, create conditions for the development of students' motivation, form students' personalities with the emphasis to their self-respect and help the teacher use personality characteristics to enhance the efficiency of the educational process [1]. Based on the stated, we may assert that pedagogical communication plays important functions in the educational processes while contributing to their optimal realization.

**Non-verbal Communication**

Because the issue of pedagogical communication is, in general, quite extensive, this contribution focuses mainly on non-verbal communication and the individual ways of realising non-verbal communication between the university educator and students in the university educational process. It is the non-verbal method of communicating that, in our opinion, represents a significant area of interaction between the university teacher and students. Non-verbal communication is used mainly for the following purposes [3]:

- to support verbal communication (regulating the pace, emphasising particular expressions, etc.),
- to substitute verbal communication means (symbolism, illustrations, etc.),
- to express emotions (to manage a particular emotion as well),
- to express own interpersonal attitude (urgency, doubt, etc.),
- to realise self-expression.

These points aim to emphasise the outlined importance of non-verbal communication in general. Non-verbal communication is usually spontaneous and

unconscious. First and foremost, the communicator thinks about the content from a verbal point of view while choosing suitable words that would describe the message. Verbal means of expression chosen usually intentionally are at the same time supplemented and emphasised by the mentioned non-verbal means, which reflect real internal and subjective feelings and attitudes of the communicator. While the participants of the communication process concentrate on the choice of adequate words, the non-verbal communication takes place at the same time in an unconscious and automatic way. The initiators of communication concentrate on the targeted realization of the non-verbal part of communication much less when compared with the choice of verbal means of expression and that is why we see this method of communication as a more realistic and honest image of how the communicated fact is being experienced.

Most often, we distinguish between eight forms of non-verbal communication: mimic, eye gaze, proxemics, gestures, haptics, posturics, kinesics and adjustment of appearance. The stated forms of non-verbal communication influence and supplement each other [4]. After identifying some forms of nonverbal communication, we consider it necessary to define a part of nonverbal communication referred to as haptics. Haptics is "a discipline that studies touching, it derives from the Greek word haptein - to touch, it is a so-called tactile contact" [3]. We should add that non-verbal communication conducted through touching is very efficient as it can transfer a lot of information and signals about feelings, attitudes, thoughts and the motivation of a person. To perceive, interpret and correctly understand signals of haptic is more complicated than verbal communication [6]. Touching performed during an interaction with other persons is characterised as a significant indicator mainly of certain feelings of both the communicator and the communicant. Most frequently, we engage in the following ways of touching our own parts of the body during communication [6]:

- touching the face - restlessness, stress, sadness (wiping tears);
- rubbing the nose - lie, deception, conflict;
- touching the forehead - thinking, contemplation;
- touching the eyes, rubbing the eyes - tiredness, overload, waking up;
- touching the ears - intensive stress;
- chin in hands - deep thinking, worries, sadness;
- touching the hair - restlessness, but also seduction or just a bad habit;
- pulling the hair, jerking the hair - despair, anger, rage, intensive stress;
- stroking the hair - caress, admiration, pacification.

The stated forms of touching our own body parts during communication can be applied also in the course of pedagogical communication during the university educational process. By touching mainly the area of the face, a university educator expresses his/her subjective feelings during the interaction with students.

**Methodology**

The main objective of the study is to discover if during the course of the educational process the addressed university students notice teachers' touching various parts of their body within the pedagogical communication. The chosen part of haptics we wanted to study in the process of non-verbal communication is the head, in particular the hair.

For the study of the issue at hand, we have used the quantitative approach. Data acquisition was facilitated via a standardised questionnaire prepared in advance. We have interviewed 166 university students. The recorded answers were analysed using the statistical software SPSS 20. Based on the set goal, we conducted a two-level data sorting. We have defined the zero hypothesis and the corresponding alternative hypothesis while looking for statistical dependence between the gender of the university educator and his/her touching of the chosen body part - the hair - during the course of university education and its non-verbal expression. Subsequently, multivariate data analysis was performed, confirming the set interpretations and findings of the study. The output of the multivariate data analysis is represented by a correspondence map, which can be seen as a transparent graphical representation of the mutual dependence of the researched variables.

## III. RESULTS

Based on the focus of our empirical study, we would like to concentrate on the interpretation of recorded empirical data. We have discovered that during the course of the university educational process, the interviewed university students notice the chosen forms of non-verbal communication manifested by their educator. As has been stated above, we want to focus our attention on the area of haptics. We wanted to discover if according to the respondents, a university educator touches his/her face - in particular the hair - during lectures, seminars or practice lessons and if the chosen area of haptics depends on the educator's gender. The recorded findings are presented in the following table (Table I).

| ***Haptics (hair touching) by a university educator*** | | ***Educator's gender*** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *no answer* | *male* | *female* | *total* |
| *no answer* | *frequency* | 1 | 12 | 7 | 20 |
| | *%* | 0,6 | 7,2 | 4,2 | 12,0 |
| *no* | *frequency* | 1 | 6 | 15 | 22 |
| | *%* | 0,6 | 3,6 | 9,0 | 13,3 |
| *mostly no* | *frequency* | 10 | 33 | 38 | 81 |
| | *%* | 6,0 | 19,9 | 22,9 | 48,8 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *mostly yes* | *frequency* | 1 | 7 | 22 | 30 |
| | *%* | 0,6 | 4,2 | 13,3 | 18,1 |
| *yes* | *frequency* | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| | *%* | 0,0 | 0,0 | 3,6 | 3,6 |
| *can't say* | *frequency* | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| | *%* | 1,2 | 1,8 | 1,2 | 4,2 |
| *total* | *frequency* | 15 | 61 | 90 | 166 |
| | *%* | 9,0 | 36,7 | 54,2 | 100,0 |

**Table1: Educator's gender and haptics (hair touching) during the course of lectures in a university educational process**

Based on the data in the table above, we can state that 3.6% of the respondents did not notice the studied manifestation of haptics - hair touching during the educational process among male teachers. Almost 20% of the respondents mostly did not notice the studied manifestation of haptics - hair touching among male educators. On the other hand, we would like to draw readers' attention to the responses of 13.3% of the respondents who indicated that female university educators mostly touch their hair during lectures conducted within the university educational process. In addition, 3.6% of the surveyed university students unambiguously indicated the presence of the studied manifestation of haptics - touching of their hair by university female educators during university lectures, seminars or exercises. In our opinion, the studied manifestation of haptics - touching of hair during the course of the university educational process is more identifiable in female university teachers than in male university teachers because the above-mentioned manifestation of non-verbal communication is a frequent habit observed predominantly in the feminine gender.

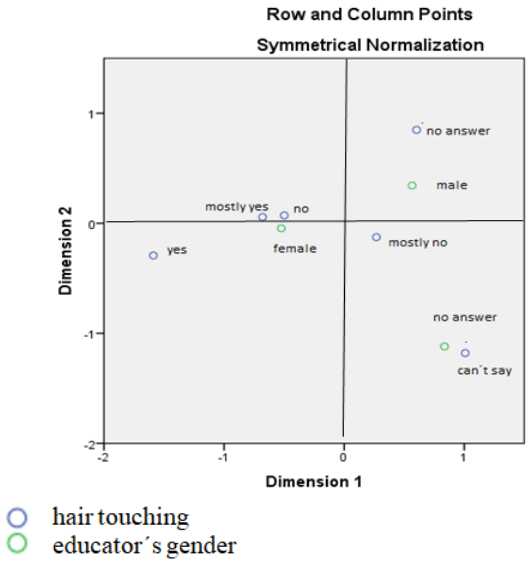



**Figure I - Correspondence map**

Since, we have identified a correlation between the selected area of haptics and the gender of university teachers, the recorded findings can also be analyzed through multivariate data analysis. A transparent representation of the results of the multivariate data analysis is shown in the correspondence map below (Figure I). In the chart, we can observe the responses of the interviewed university students indicating the predominant identification of haptics - hair touching during the university educational process among female university teachers compared to male university teachers.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Pedagogical communication is an integral part of the university educational process. In university education, interactions between university teachers and university students take place, which in many cases are based on different ways of communication, either verbal or non-verbal.

In the present study of theoretical-empirical character, we have focused in the theoretical part on the definition of communication as a social phenomenon conducted through verbal as well as non-verbal expression. In connection with the focus of our further analysis, we have concentrated in particular on the importance of non-verbal communication. It is the non-verbal way of expressing oneself that we consider a truer and more sincere reflection of the communicated reality. The above findings can also be applied to educational processes at universities. For this reason, in the empirical part of the study, we focused on exploring the attitudes and opinions of the interviewed university students concerning the link between pedagogical communication in the university educational process and the field of haptics, which we consider an important part of non-verbal communication. As we identified several ways of touching in the field of haptics, which reinforce pedagogical communication in the university educational process, we investigated whether the approached university students notice this form of non-verbal communication (in particular touching their hair) among their teachers during lectures, seminars and practical exercises. Based on the results of bivariate and multivariate analyses of the recorded data using the statistical software SPSS 20, we can conclude that the addressed university students identified the studied manifestation of haptics in non-verbal communication predominantly among female university lecturers. The above finding may be substantiated mainly by the fact that the mentioned manifestation of non-verbal communication is quite frequent among females also in everyday interactions outside the university educational process. Thus, touching various parts of the face, namely the hair,

represents in a way a habit, the persistence of which, as a rule, does not indicate any subjective attitude related to the university educational process.

As we view pedagogical communication in the university educational process as a non-negligible part of the process of education, it is necessary to study this area in more detail. The conclusions of our investigation suggest that within the framework of further investigation of individual modes of non-verbal communication of university lecturers and university students it would be appropriate to develop a more comprehensive analysis of other modes of non-verbal communication, which in our opinion are an equally inherent part of the university educational process.

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