

Communication Styles of Primary School Teachers During Teaching

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Abstract: In international literature, teacher communication style (TCS) is defined as the teacher's ability to effectively communicate, verbally and nonverbally, with his/her students in order to improve their academic performance and manage their behavior. Surveys in educational environments show that each teacher may display a primary communication style during classroom teaching with recurring other styles of communication, which can change according to the audience and the situations he/she has to deal with. This combination of communication styles enables individuals not to feel confined to the way they communicate, but to become flexible and capable of choosing communication strategies according to the variety of situations they are faced with.

Within this framework, the present study deals with the phenomenon of human communication and focuses on the communication style of teachers. More specifically, the study explores the communication style of primary school teachers during teaching process, utilizing modern Greek and international typology and teachers' communication strategies according to Jay Lemke and behaviors related to verbal and nonverbal immediacy during teaching. Those communication styles shaping the school climate and contribute in interpersonal relationship development among teachers, students and parents.

Keywords: Communication style, primary school, teaching, instruction, teacher.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of human communication, either it is referring to a daily act or to personal or professional relationships, is not something simple. As communication scholars argue communication is a very complex process (Stamatis 2013). The understanding of communication complexity is considered like to be equally compared to one of the greatest discoveries of the twentieth century. Especially over the last six decades, human communication has been systematically in theoretical and practical dimensions under the scope of international scientific community (Stamatis 2011). The results of many studies have shown that the concept of communication is enriched and constantly changing. It is expanded more and more in an impressive way as humans communicate by engaging in a communication process as a physical and psycho-mental entity with a specific intent and clear goals (Richmond and McCroskey 1997). However, it is certain that anybody cannot feel completed without communicating with his/her fellow humans. As communication -especially in modern society- finds many obstacles in its expression, it requires the individual to acquire as much communication knowledge as possible, plus to ability of expressional strategies and social skills in order be

able to effectively communicate (Kodakos and Polemikos 2000).

Based on these views, international research experience refers to scientifically-based categorization of communication strategies and techniques that individuals use to communicate by highlighting the appropriate types or styles of communication (Stamatis 2014). Communication types or styles are widely known since ancient Greek times as those which referred by Hippocrates for instance. The purpose of communication typologies is to highlight not only the most important communication features of individuals but also to enable individuals to learn in which way they could to identify different styles of communication in order to identify which of them they can use as they interact with others. Different circumstances require the development and use of different styles of communication than what they are used to. Thus, people can gradually develop communication skills that require a high level of self-awareness and social competency.

In this framework, it is reasonably understandable the communication to be linked with Education Sciences and especially when they focus on the pedagogical dimension of communication, both at the level of relation development between the members of the educational community and more widely, with all involved persons in the function of a school unit, aiming in realization of educational program (Vrettos 2014).

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Modern Pedagogical Science treats man as a whole, as a multifaceted personality, the various aspects of which are strengthened and developed in a balanced way. For this reason, it focuses on the relationship between teacher and student and on the field of communication developed within the classroom and generally in school environment (McCroskey *et al.* 1996).

The educational work in total and in particular the didactic one is characterized by an endless communicative process, which makes the work of teachers mainly communicative (Stamatis 2005). Consequently, in the field of Pedagogical Communication, teachers are categorized according to their communicative behavior, which is a basic criterion for evaluating the teaching efficiency and improving the learning process as a whole (Edwards and Edwards 2001).

As one could find out by reviewing the Greek bibliography, there are many references about types of teachers such as authoritarian, democratic, progressive or uninterested and some styles of teaching behavior as well as for communication models which arise from the emergence of the teacher-centered teaching method or of a student-centered interactive pedagogy and teaching which actually is a communication-centered teaching procedure (Stamatis 2013).

Modern international typological approaches for communication style distinguish a variety of styles in regards to verbal and nonverbal communication. Relevant approaches converge to twelve basic communication styles the identification of which were required theoretical and research studies over two decades (Lemke 1990; McCroskey and Daly 1976).

According to international literature, teacher communication style (TCS) is defined as teacher's ability to effectively communicate, verbally and nonverbally, with his/her students in order to improve their academic performance and manage their behavior (Kodakos and Stamatis 2002). Surveys in educational environments show that each teacher may display a primary communication style during classroom teaching with recurring other styles of communication, which can change according to the audience and the situations he/she has to deal with (Endress 2016; Bolton and Bolton 2009; Richmond and McCroskey 1997). This combination of communication styles enables individuals not to feel confined to the way they communicate, but to become flexible and capable of choosing communication strategies according to the

variety of situations they are faced with. Teacher communication styles are presented as follows in the next unit.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

Within the above mentioned framework, the present study deals with the phenomenon of human communication and focuses on the communication style of teachers. More specifically, the study explores the communication styles of primary school teachers during teaching process, utilizing modern Greek and international typology and teachers' communication strategies according to Jay Lemke (1990) and behaviors related to verbal and nonverbal immediacy during teaching. Those communication styles shaping the school climate and contribute in interpersonal relationship development among teachers, students and parents. More specifically, the study aims to investigate:

1. Which one of the twelve (12) basic communication styles are mostly preferred by teachers during classroom communication with their pupils having the possibility to select among the following communication styles:
 - a. Assertive communication style,
 - b. Aggressive communication style,
 - c. Passive communication style,
 - d. Passive-Aggressive communication style,
 - e. Submissive communication style,
 - f. Manipulative communication style,
 - g. Analytical communication style,
 - h. Personal communication style,
 - i. Expressive communication style,
 - j. Driver communication style,
 - k. Supportive communication style, and
 - l. Social communication style,
2. Which one of the above mentioned twelve (12) basic communication styles mostly characterizes the verbal and nonverbal behavior of the teachers in the classroom during teaching processes.
3. Which one of the six (6) verbal communication strategies introduced by Jay L. Lemke (1990) are

mostly preferred by teachers during classroom communication with their pupils and in which one communication style they could be classified from the following categories:

- a. Authoritarian communication style,
- b. Supportive communication style,
- c. Consultant communication style,
- d. Sing-song style,
- e. Careful enunciation communication style, and
- f. Official communication style.

METHOD

In order to be investigated the purposes and the specific objectives of this study in primary school units research was conducted on May 2016. The whole project was based on the principles of research ethics and common procedures related to the nature of present research subject.

Sample of the Study

The sample of the study was been consisted of fifty (50) teachers in total who were working in primary schools of the Rhodes city - Greece. Twenty-three (23) of them were men and twenty-seven (27) of them were women between 30-50 years of age. The sample was homogeneous. Only primary school teachers were participated in the study without restrictive criteria regarding years of work, level of study, the institutional framework of schools they were working etc.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument of research data collection was an improvised questionnaire by the researchers of the study structured in three parts. In each of that parts the participating teachers answered the given statements (or questions) closing in a circle the given answer which was only agree or disagree. The first part of the questionnaire was consisted of twelve (12) statements, the second part was consisted of six (6) statements and the third part was consisted of forty-three (43) statements. The (43) statements (or questions) of the third part were divided into twelve groups of statements equal to the twelve styles of communication approached in the present study. Every group of that statements (or questions) was depicted communicative behaviors related to verbal and nonverbal teaching immediacy in the classroom during teaching process.

Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaire was decided to be the main instrument for research data collection. It was distributed in person by the researchers to the participating teachers who were been informed for the subject of present study and the terms for its conduction. Anonymity of participating teachers was assured. All statements/questions were closed. Only one answer could be given choosing between agree or disagree (yes/no). The collection of questionnaires was completed within one month as a result of small amount of the sample and the closed type of statements/questions in which the participating teachers were invited to provide answers. The process of reaching conclusions was mainly based on the analysis and interpretation of gathered quantitative data.

RESULTS

The process of recording the research data was conducted in three stages one for each part of the questionnaire distributed. On the basis of this inventory of the main purpose and the specific objectives of the study, the following results were obtained.

Part A. The participating teachers stated that in their communication interactions with students during teaching they usually prefer or not to develop the follow twelve communication styles with related characteristics as Table 1 shows in specific percentages for each category of them.

Part B. All participating teachers stated that their communication styles in the classroom are characterized by verbal and non-verbal teaching immediacy behaviors. This statement classify them into Assertive Communication Style. However, at lower percentages, they stated their communication style is also characterized by verbal and non-verbal behaviors that include in descending order the Supportive Communication Style, the Social Communication Style, the Manipulative Communication Style, the Expressive Communication Style, the Analytical Communication Style, the Personal Communication Style, the Manipulative Communication Style, the Submissive Communication Style, the Passive Communication Style; and the Aggressive Communication Style. Consequently, the participating teachers develop in their class-

Table 1: Teacher Communication Style in Interactions with Students During Teaching

Nr	Communication Style (CS)	CS's Short description	Agree %	Disagree %
1.	<i>Assertive</i>	flexibility, self-confidence, honesty	12	1
2.	<i>Aggressive</i>	criticism, violence, competitiveness	3	19
3.	<i>Passive</i>	passiveness, obedience, covered anger	1	23
4.	<i>Passive-Aggressive</i>	sinister manipulation, obnoxious aggressiveness, mediated confrontation	3	19
5.	<i>Submissive</i>	ignorance, tolerance, compromising	7	10
6.	<i>Manipulative</i>	intrigue, cunning, control for personal benefit	8	9
7.	<i>Analytical</i>	precise, perfect, reasonable	11	3
8.	<i>Personal</i>	empathy, diplomacy, interpersonal relationship cultivation	12	2
9.	<i>Expressive</i>	extroversion, self-confidence, creativity	12	1
10.	<i>Driver</i>	hard working, ambition, leadership	7	11
11.	<i>Supportive</i>	patience, team working, adoptability	12	1
12.	<i>Social</i>	optimism, visionary, energized	12	1
	Total		100%	100%

room during teaching process the Assertive Communication Style which they alternate it with other styles of communication depending on communication situation they face every time.

Part C. According to Jay L. Lemke's verbal communication strategies the participating teachers made the follow statements:

- Fifty seven per cent (57%) of participating teachers stated that agree with 1st strategy "Nominating, terminating, and interrupting speakers". Forty three per cent (43%) of them stated that disagree. They adopt the Authoritarian Communication Style.
- Ninety eight per cent (98%) of participating teachers stated that agree with 2nd strategy of verbal communication "Marking importance or irrelevance". Just two per cent (2%) of them stated that disagree. They adopt the Supportive Communication Style.
- Ninety two per cent (92%) of participating teachers stated that agree with 3rd strategy of verbal communication "Asking 'test' questions and evaluating students' responses". Eight percent (8%) of them stated that disagree with that strategy. They adopt the Consultant Communication Style.

- Seventy per cent (70%) of participating teachers stated that agree with 4th strategy of verbal communication "Exaggerated changes in pitch". Thirty per cent (30%) of them stated that disagree with that strategy. They adopt the Sing-song Communication Style.
- Eighty six per cent (86%) of participating teachers stated that agree with 5th strategy of verbal communication "Careful enunciation". Fourteen per cent (14%) of them stated that disagree with that strategy. They adopt the Careful Enunciation Communication Style.
- Fifty two per cent (52%) of participating teachers stated that agree with 6th strategy of verbal communication "Formal vocabulary and grammar". Forty eight per cent (48%) of them stated that disagree with that strategy. They adopt the Official Communication Style.

All results of Part C are briefly shown in Table 2 based on communication styles created according to J. L. Lemke dominated verbal communication strategies during teaching process.

CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing and interpreting the results of the research data it is generally concluded that teachers use various communication styles with the Assertive

Table 2: J.L. Lemke (1990) Teacher Communication Style Based on Dominated Verbal Strategy

Nr	Communication style	Agree %	Disagree %	Communication strategy
1	<i>Authoritarian</i>	57	43	Nominating, terminating, and interrupting speakers
2	<i>Supportive</i>	98	2	Marking importance or irrelevance
3	<i>Consultant</i>	92	8	Asking "test" questions and evaluating students' responses
4	<i>Sing-song</i>	70	30	Exaggerated changes in pitch
5	<i>Careful enunciation</i>	86	14	Careful enunciation
6	<i>Official</i>	52	48	Formal vocabulary and grammar

Communication Style to be dominated in their classroom teaching processes. From the exploration of the individual research objectives, the following conclusions are drawn in more detail:

- a. The majority of participating primary school teachers adopt Assertive Communication Style in their communication processes during teaching, which is characterized by self-confidence, sensitivity and flexibility. However, these features are not the only ones they have according to their statements.
- b. Each communication style has multiple advantages and disadvantages and is characterized by flexibility. Like any other human being, teachers have multifaceted characters. Because of many interactions they engage themselves everyday during every teaching process, the communication skills they have acquired with their studies and their educational experience they have developed many features derived from different styles of communication in different proportions each of them. Thus, teachers who state that they adopt Assertive Communication Style also state that in parallel they adopt Manipulative Communication Style, Submissive Communication Style or Aggressive Communication Style, etc. In other words, it appears from the correlation of research data that primary school teachers adopt more or less all communication styles on occasion (occasionally) depending on which communication style is needed at a given time or in a particular situation. Each teacher sometimes expresses a friendly attitude to his students instead of hostility, liveliness instead of passivity, indifference instead of interest and the opposite etc. However, only the appropriate combination of elements among different styles of communication may enable individuals not to feel

confined to the way they communicate but to develop effective communication with others.

- c. The verbal and non-verbal teaching behavior of primary school teachers refers to Assertive Communication Style, which appears to be dominant. Then in descending order follow the Supportive Communication Style, the Social Communication Style, the Manipulative Communication Style, the Expressive Communication Style, the Analytical Communication Style, the Personal Communication Style, the Manipulative Communication Style, the Submissive Communication Style, the Passive Communication Style; and the Aggressive Communication Style.
- d. Participating teachers have stated that they use Jay L. Lemke's verbal communication strategies in their teaching processes, which classify them into the six suggested communication styles at higher or lower percentages per case.

LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS

The enrichment of this study with variables such as the experience or training of teachers, the institutional framework for the operation of schools etc. could positively contribute to its expanding in order more robust results to be come out. In this context preschool, primary and secondary schools could be participate in a such study in order to be investigated similarities and differences in the teachers' communication style based on the educational level they are teach. In addition, the combination of questionnaire and classroom observation could make a significant contribution to enhancing the findings of exploring teacher communication styles during teaching.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many warm thanks to all participants in this study. All of them were voluntarily participated and with great

willingness. Their responses contributed to the realization of this study in the best possible way.

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Received on 10-08-2017

Accepted on 15-09-2017

Published on 03-11-2017

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2017.06.17>

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