COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL-PEDAGOGICAL WORK

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Abstract. In this paper, communication competence is seen as one of the most important skills in modern educational-pedagogical work. It is not about the absolute disposition of man, but about a set of variables that can be improved by learning to the level necessary for the realization of a certain social role. These are two groups of individually determined variables / potencies through which the degree of communication competence of an individual is articulated: cognitive and interactive. Pedagogical communication is most effective if it is realized with professional and communicatively competent teachers, individualized teaching in direct and / or indirect interpersonal communication and encoding of communicative messages, whose reception in pedagogical terms, ie. in terms of cognitive effects and value consequences, will be unambiguous.

Keywords: iommunication in education; pedagogical communication; communication competence; communicativeness

1. Pedagogical communication and communication competence

Pedagogical communication can be separated from the entire communication practice of a person by observing the specifics of the communication situation and the communication act that are inherent in the educational process, ie. teaching and learning, bearing in mind that education, which is the basis of upbringing, in addition to socio-generational (transfer of knowledge from generation to generation) and individual aspect (personality development), is determined by the interactional aspect.

Namely: "The essence of educational action (is) in human relations" (Marinković 1981, 14), which cannot be realized outside of some form of communication practice. "This third, interactional-communicative aspect, actually leads us to see education as the most concrete activity in which both social and individual laws are broken" (Bratanić 1990, 26), thanks to which it is possible to achieve socio-historical and pedagogical educational goals.

Each communication situation, as a relatively static moment of communication, is determined by the subjects of communication, the whole social context in which communication acts take place, the symbolic system within which information is encoded into messages and the characteristics and specifics of media through which they are communicated and received.

Pedagogical communication is specific to all elements of the communication situation, primarily, the subjects of communication and the social context. To a lesser extent, it is profiled by the symbolic systems used in it and the media through which it is realized, because both symbolic systems and media are not unique to pedagogical communication, but a certain specificity stems from highly selective, ie didactic use of symbolic systems and media.

The division and asymmetry of the social roles of teachers and students in pedagogical communication do not question their complementarity and the more the exchange of messages between them at a higher interaction level, the more successful the results of educational work will be.

Of the symbolic systems, special importance in pedagogical communication, since they are inherent in education, have systems based on scientific - taxonomic and algorithmic codes. "Scientific codes correspond to two major functions: classification and calculation; hence the two great types taxonomic and algorithmic or operational" (Guiraud 1975, 60).

Finally, the pedagogical communication situation is shaped by the media through which communication acts are performed. For centuries, the dominant medium used in education was a book / textbook, first a manuscript, and then in the middle of the 15th century a printed book. Today, a whole range of different media is used in the educational process, up to the most sophisticated ones (electronic book, computer, multimedia computer network).

2. Cognitive and interactional variables of communication competence

The pedagogical communication act, the dynamic aspect of communication in educational work, is most directly influenced by: the communication and socio-emotional competencies (Baucal & Altaras-Dimitirijević 2016) of the subjects of communication – teachers and students; forms of communication practice, ie forms of teaching; and the communicativeness of the messages exchanged in the classroom. "Teacher competence includes three groups of fundamental professional competencies: educational competencies, course content competencies (the system of knowledge and skills derived from the course content) and communication competence. Communication competence, as a system of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivational disposition, attitudes and properties in teaching communication and social interaction, is the essential competence of teachers" (Zlatić, Bjekić, Marinković & Bojović 2014).

Communication competence has become the subject of communication research in the last decades of the twentieth century in the United States. It is not about the

absolute disposition of man, but about a set of variables that can be improved by learning to the level necessary for the realization of a certain social role. These are two groups of individually determined variables / potencies through which the degree of communication competence of an individual is articulated: cognitive and interactive.

The first group includes: empathy, perception of social interaction from the perspective of a communication partner, cognitive complexity, understanding of social relations, knowledge of the situation, self-observation and mastery of symbolic systems; and in another: involvement in interaction, interaction management, behavioral flexibility, listening, social style, and fear of communication (Reardon 1987).

Here, those variables of communication competence that are important for the teacher-student interaction, ie for the pedagogical communication act, will be considered.

The most important of them is certainly empathy, which should be understood: at the cognitive-rational level – as the ability to observe the communication partner from his point of view and as the ability to enjoy the role of communication partner in a particular social situation; and in the affective-emotional level – as an understanding of the feelings of another and a willingness to participate in those feelings during communication (Bratanić 1990, 63). Empathic approach to the student is a condition for the success of the communication act, and thus the achievement of pedagogical goals in the educational process.

The extent to which a student can meet the mentioned requirements of communication competence also depends on his cognitive complexity, which concerns "the number and types of concepts and schemes that someone has to interpret various aspects of their environment" (Reardon 1987, 49).

These are so-called constructs, which could be defined as relatively unstable sets of secondary attitudes, most often expressed through stereotypes, prejudices, ad hoc opinions and the like. They are the opposite of the basic attitudes that determine the mental and psychological structure of a person and, from that point of view, those persons whose social behavior is based on a large number of constructs are more cognitively complex.

Knowledge and mastery of symbolic systems is a first-class premise of communication competence. First of all, because information can be communicated only if it is symbolically organized as messages. Then, because in communication, meanings are not exchanged, as is often wrongly claimed, but sets of signs / symbols from which the subjects of communication in the process of semiosis extract meanings / information. Meanings are immersed in the whole of their sensory, emotional and cognitive experience, and in order to achieve a pedagogical communication act in general, an isomorphism of meaning must be achieved through the use of appropriate symbols and symbolic assemblies, and this goal can be achieved only which are synonymous with recipients / students.

If this is not achieved (for example, by using many foreign words and expressions), semantic noise occurs, caused by great redundancy in the structure of the message, and the consequence is pseudo-communication (communicating messages that are not understood), ie teaching for teaching. As in other areas of social life, oral and written speech is dominant in the educational process.

However, one should not ignore the fact, especially when it comes to primary school, that messages can be encoded and are encoded with a multitude of paralinguistic and extralinguistic symbols. They sometimes represent the only symbolic form in which messages are organized, although, as a rule, they always follow verbal expressions and create a context that determines the breadth of the semantic field of everything that is said.

Interactive assumptions of communicative competence are a logical continuation of cognitive potentials. The first is involvement in interaction. "Highly involved people usually connect their feelings, thoughts and experiences with the ongoing interaction in which they participate. At the same time, their consciousness is directed towards themselves, others and the topic of conversation as an emerging reality… On the other hand, poorly involved people remain psychologically distant from the current interaction. Such people seem amused by their own thoughts and goals, distracted, insecure, and even excluded from the immediate social context. Their speech is vague, ambiguous, inconsistent, or shows misunderstanding. Also, the details of the previous conversation are poorly remembered. In general, they are less competent people in their interactions with others" (Cegala et al., 1987, 49).

In this case, the teacher's communication competence is measured by his empathic ability to dimension the student's involvement in teaching , because the basic pedagogical premise of its performance is the teacher's involvement in the interaction. Depending on that assessment, he will be able to direct communication towards the set educational goals, which is another interactional condition of communication competence.

There are two types of teacher influence on interaction: direct (dominant) and indirect (integrative). In the first case – giving lectures, emphasizing their opinion and authority, criticism of student behavior and knowledge – discourages student involvement, and in the second - requires students to express their opinions and ideas, encourage critical evaluation of communication and respect the student's personality, thus achieving harmony between group and interpersonal communication (Bratanić 1990, 111). The dominant type of teacher expects the students to adapt to themselves, while the integrative one tries to empathize with the students' peculiarities.

This increases his adaptability and flexibility, as well as engagement in conversation and listening skills (Zlatić & Bjekić 2015), which are important interactive assumptions of communication competence. Flexibility means a measure of a communicator's ability to adapt his behavior, verbal and non-verbal messages

to the interaction situation. If the teacher is too close to the timid student, if they interrupt or mimic a non-verbal message that he is unable to decode because he is focused on shaping the verbal message, there may be a so-called 'communication deviation' in which, due to inflexibility, the teacher changes the interaction behavior of the students and the content structure of the messages.

Flexibility depends on the willingness of the communication partner to be heard, as well as on the social style – the next two interactional conditions of communication competence. Any communication would actually be hampered by the willingness of the communication partner to be heard, which is of particular importance in teacher-student interaction.

Finally, the interactional assumption of communication competence is the (non) existence of fear of communication. Due to the asymmetric social roles of teachers and students in the educational process, fear usually occurs in a certain number of students, especially in the younger grades of primary school, and can be the result of many different mental, psychological and social causes. The teacher must be able to neutralize the fear of communication, relying on all the already mentioned, cognitive and interactional potentials of his own communication competence.

3. Pedagogical communication act and forms of teaching

The pedagogical communication act is directly, further, determined by the form of communication practice / form of teaching and learning within which it is realized. The past and, still, the present of organized and institutionalized education show that the educational process is realized primarily through interpersonal (individual form of work, work in pairs, work with small groups) and group communication in *ex cathedra* (frontal form of work).

In the classical way of working in school (from primary school to college), the dominance of group communication is obvious, namely its basic form ex cathedra, in which not only social roles are clearly divided – which is inevitable, but also the communication roles of pedagogical practice subjects. On the one hand there are teachers, who, in addition to a fixed social role, in this form of communication / teaching also take on the role of active communicators – senders of messages, and on the other hand passive recipients of messages – students.

The possibility of reciprocal variability of communication roles, and thus messages, communication in the full sense, is narrowed to a certain number of cases, which largely depends on the teacher. If they remain in the traditional pattern of teaching (lecture – examination / testing – lecture), they stabilize the division of communication roles over a long period of time, which results not only in student passivity but also in their own pedagogical degradation. formalized interactions during the examination of students, can be based only on indirect feedback (class attendance, silence, murmur, non-verbal symbols, etc.).

Direct feedback, ie reciprocal variability of communication roles, is fully realized only in interpersonal communication. This leads to the logical conclusion that the form of teaching work, organization of classes and teaching methods must be adapted to this form of communication practice in which, through the complementarity of communication roles of teachers and students, individualization of teaching is achieved. The inequality of these communication / pedagogical subjects in teaching is immanent to their asymmetric social roles and it cannot be overcome even in the most sophisticated asynchronous forms of education through a computer network.

The practical consequence of this thesis should be, especially when it comes to primary school, constant insistence on individualization of teaching, regardless of the chosen form of communication practice. If it is an inevitable frontal form of work, ie communication ex cathedra, communication acts must be constantly transferred from the group to the interpersonal level, through the efforts of teachers to replace one-way distribution of messages intended for the class by exchanging messages with students in the classroom.

4. Communicativeness of messages in teaching

The extent to which this pedagogical goal, through the appropriate form of communication practice, will be achieved depends on the communicativeness of messages, the exchange of which exhausts each individual act of communication.

The term 'communicativeness' is a neologism derived from two English words: *communication* and *ability* (power, skill, capacity)[1].

The 'communicativeness' of a message is a semantically very complex attribute and is directly related to the communication situation and its structural composition. The simplest definition of a communicative message in pedagogical communication would be that it is easy to understand. This definition of a communicative message points to the problem of the degree of isomorphism of the meaning of the message (mM), ie. similarities or closeness of the meaning of the message (mM) for the subjects of communication.

The most communicative is the message that provides complete isomorphism, ie the identity of its meaning for the subjects of communication and could be expressed by the equation:

mM = mM.

However, this is an ideal model that never appears in communication practice. The meanings are, as Susanne Langer would say, in people, not in words, that is messages. One of the first theories of communication - the theory of individual differences and selection, showed that each person is a separate personality from all other people (including, even, identical twins) by their mental and psychological characteristics and biological characteristics, resulting in different outcomes in 'the collision' of genetic predestination and the process of socialization. Therefore, the

meaning of each message is always 'slightly' different, its semantic field narrower or wider for each subject of communication, simply because there are no two identical people on the planet.

Its opposite is a completely incomprehensible, therefore incommunicable message, which can be expressed by the relation:

$mM = 0$.

Here, the meaning of the message on the reception side is zero, because the recipient or recipients are not able to decode it in any way after sensory perception. Most often, those messages that are organized in one of the symbolic systems, which the recipients do not control at all, are completely incommunicable. Whether it is a foreign language or, perhaps, non-verbal symbols united by a code that is unknown to most people (eg the language of the deaf-mute or the naval 'language' with flags and light signals).

Between these two extremes are the messages that are most present in everyday life, messages that in relation to the first, ideal-type model, can be expressed by the relation:

$mM \rightarrow = mM$,

ie messages that contain a certain degree of isomorphism, ie similarity or closeness of the meaning of messages. Different variations are possible; from the:

$mM = mM +$,

to the:

$mM = mM-$.

In the first case, the information core is minimal, the new knowledge that the message carries in itself is modest, surrounded by great redundancy and value layers, whose intertwining can extract many different meanings. In the second case, the meaning of the message is below the level of the information core that the message carries within itself, precisely because of the inadequate structural composition of the message, ie. the absence of explanatory 'surplus' meaning and persuasive layers needed to domesticate information in the information core of the message.

5. Conclusion

What is an essential question and what leads us to the conclusion is: how to encode a communicative message so that it would be decoded in accordance with the set pedagogical goals of teaching, ie. in order to have a pedagogical communication act in general, in the multitude of which pedagogical practice is exhausted?

The question equally refers to oral messages during classes and to printed contents in textbooks, manuals and other classical teaching aids. The latter, being easily accessible, offer plenty of examples of uncommunicative messages that require decoding and experts sometimes take considerable time.

In order to answer the question, it is necessary to recall the communicative

understanding of the structure of the message, which always consists of the information core (one or more information), redundancy and value-persuasive elements.

Therefore, the communicability of the pedagogical message is determined by the following assumptions:

a) *Adaptation of syllabic systems in which messages are encoded to the age of students*. All subsequent encoding conditions of communicable pedagogical messages can be completely fulfilled, and the choice of the wrong symbolic system in which the messages are formed completely consumes its cognitive and persuasive effects. An example is the collision of the so-called 'Epichorian idioms' (Škiljan 1998), in fact local expressions contained in language, when prosodic symbols (raised voice of the teacher, for example) introvert student, although ready for class, is simply afraid to appear in the role of communicator.

b) Compliance of the information core with a certain aspect of reality that is conveyed by the message. A message that explains the socio-historical context of the creation of a work of art or scientific discovery, such as cumbersome theoretical texts about an event, cannot be encoded in a simple sentence.

c) Internal relationship of cognitive and value elements of the message. If education is understood as continuous acquisition of knowledge, and upbringing as the development of a value system based on acquired knowledge, it becomes obvious that both aspects of the same process are contained in every message exchanged between subjects – teachers and students.

It is clear that the educational contents are mostly and primarily located in the information core of the message, and the educational ones in the value-persuasive part. The communicativeness of the pedagogical message is also expressed through the establishment of an optimal relationship between cognitive and value content in it. The dominance of the former, which is inevitable in certain scientific and subject disciplines (mathematics, for example), reduces the pedagogical act of communication to a bare factual level, which, even in such disciplines is not acceptable in primary education, especially in younger primary school.

The dominance of others, especially in the humanities and subjects, turns pedagogical communication into preaching and doctrine, which causes extremely negative consequences in strongly ideologized educational systems, and turns it into what could, very conditionally, be called 'anti-education'.

d) Balance of factographic-logical and aesthetic aspects of the message. The classification of messages into pragmatic and aesthetic is theoretically-methodologically, therefore also didactically motivated. In communication practice, in most cases, an unlimited range of their various combinations appears.

Pedagogical communication in primary school, especially in the younger grades, offers an unlimited number of examples, especially in textbooks and manuals, but also in 'live' pedagogical practice. All messages are in fact a combination

of factographic-logical and aesthetic elements, which are most often expressed through the relationship of linguistic and non-linguistic (primarily – iconic and prosodic) symbolic systems.

The rule is that others – iconic, much more present in the design of messages intended for the youngest age of students (so textbooks and workbooks from first to fourth grade in their media form, in fact, picture books, often with elements of comics), and that with the cognitive development of students, the factographic-logical volume in pedagogical messages increases, through the dominant use of language.

Pedagogical communication act, ie. pedagogical communication as their continuum in which the teleologically clearly defined educational process is exhausted, is therefore possible only with a communicatively competent teacher who has developed social-emotional skills (De Fruyt, Wille, John 2015), individualized teaching in direct and / or indirect interpersonal communication and encoding of communicative messages, whose reception in pedagogical terms, therefore, in terms of cognitive effects and value consequences, be unambiguous.

NOTES

1. Very often, another word is used as a synonym, also of foreign origin – 'communicativeness'. However, the semantic fields of these terms are not identical. Only people can be communicative, but not messages or media. They are communicable or non-communicable.

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