

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING DIDACTIC COMMUNICATION IN VETERINARY AND AGRICULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. *The way in which didactic communication is achieved in agricultural and veterinary higher education can influence the quality of the didactic process, and therefore there is a constant preoccupation of the teachers for the improvement of didactic communication. In the paper we present students' views on the factors that influence their participation in classroom debates as well as ways to improve didactic communication and interactive student participation in veterinary and agricultural lessons.*

Keywords: *didactic communication, didactic process, communication method*

INTRODUCTION

At present, efforts made in higher agricultural and veterinary education focus on the graduates of various study programs acquiring a set of professional and transversal competencies such as: personal and professional development, social interaction, autonomy and responsibility (O.M.5703/2011), and, among all these, the communication competence plays an essential role, being made up of *abilities to manifest communication behaviours optimal for each given situation* (PĂNIȘOARĂ, I.O., 2015). The specific of the didactic communication is given by purposes specific for the educational field which confers a characteristic aspect to its forms, means and contents, encompassing in its sphere a series of psychological, psycho-social and pedagogic components (POTOLEA, D. et al, 2008,). During didactic activities, interpersonal communication relations teacher-student and student-student are established, which must skilfully be orientated towards achieving educational objectives, through the teacher's ability to produce an effect on the students and organise learning activities. The issue of didactic communication and the teacher's communication competence are subjects treated in numerous speciality papers, from the field of communication sciences and psycho-pedagogy. Thus, ZLATIC, LIDIA et al, (2014,), SEGHEDEIN, ELENA (2012,) underlines the importance of communication competence formation during teaching stuff preparation, RUSU, OANA; ȘOITU L.; PANAITE, OANA (2012,), mentions the fact that, in the students opinion, the teacher's communication and relational skills are essential for the development of the didactic process, and SUCIU, LAVINIA (2014,) considers that communication efficiency identified as pedagogic efficiency is based on a cultural fundament common to both teacher and students, by the relational status and, in IONESCU'S, C.E. (2015,) opinion, pedagogic efficiency depends on the communication style. An important aspect in the development of an efficient didactic communication is, in the opinion of ZANATON, H.I. et al (2012,), IUREA CORINA, (2015,), ZHANABEKOVA MAGULSIM (2014,) the creation of an optimal communication environment, which should offer students opportunities to develop their communication abilities they are bound to use in their profession, and PETKARI ELENI (2015,) explains the relationship between communication and the satisfaction of the learning experience. Also, didactic efficiency depends on the degree to which the student prepares the subject open to debate, if there is an informational base on which one can build ideas, and vice versa, good communication abilities contribute to the improvement of the students' knowledge, resulting from active and interactive learning activities (HALIZAH AWANG & ZAWAWI DAUD, 2015) if

learning activities allow the creation of reflective exercises in order to improve the teacher-student interaction (DARINSKAYA, LARISA et al., 2014). Inefficient communication is due to existent communication barriers, a topic discussed by numerous authors (PĂNIȘOARĂ, 2015; POTOLEA D. et al, 2008; STAN NARCISA, 2002; BOROS, M, 1995). Thus, possessing knowledge about aspects regarding the improvement of student communication abilities during didactic activities constitutes an important objective for the elaboration of efficient didactic strategies in the given didactic context, in order to obtain the expected results.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The purpose of this paper is to highlight a few aspects regarding didactic communication from the student's perspective in higher agricultural and veterinary education, the importance and necessity to develop communication competencies so as to increase the quality of didactic activities. The research objectives were the following:

- identifying student perception on the importance of the formation and development of student communication skills during the instructive-educative process in higher agricultural and veterinary education;
- identifying student perception on the importance of the formation and development of teacher communication competences during the instructive-educative process in higher agricultural and veterinary education;
- identifying communication barriers, in the context of didactic activities.

The research was carried out in the academic year 2017/2018 using the questionnaire method, we used as work means an opinion questionnaire which included 10 items (closed, precoded items and open items) in order to form, as accurate as possible, an image of the aspects observed by didactic communication.

The research was carried out with a lot of 67 students registered at the Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and the Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Agricultural Biotechnologies, which attend courses of the pedagogic module, of which 67.16% are girls and 32.83% are boys. The situation on age groups is as follows: between 18-20 years there are 56.71% of the students, between 21-30 years there are 37.31%, and between 30 and 54 years there are 5.97% of the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After applying the questionnaire, we obtained the following results regarding student perception on the importance of forming and developing pupil/student communication competences: we observed that 64.17% of the students consider it very important and 35.82% consider it important for pupils/students to develop communication competences, and similar percentages (62.68% - very important, respectively 37.31% - important) consider it important for the formation of future teachers, during their initial as well as continual formation.

Regarding the way in which students prefer to communicate, 65.67% of the students indicated the fact that they prefer to communicate verbally, while 34.32% prefer to communicate in writing. A percentage of 76.11 % of students indicated that they possess good verbal communication abilities (16.41% to a very high degree and 61.19% to a high degree) and 23.89% appreciated they have low verbal communication abilities (19.40% to a small degree and 2.98% to a very small degree). Regarding written communication, 19.40% of the students claim they have good writing skills abilities and 62.68% good abilities, while 17.91% consider they have good writing communication skills to a small and very small degree.

Analysing the above results we observe, although students prefer to communicate verbally, they consider to an approximately equal degree that they have very good and good verbal and

written communication abilities, in other words, there is a student disposition towards verbal communication, which could facilitate the development of interactive didactic activities.

Starting from the nature of didactic communication, respectively the potential of growing impact on pupils/students and of orienting didactic activities, which the teacher's communication competence may have, we observe that a proportion of 98.50% of the students admit the importance of the communication competence in the teacher formation profile and that communication effects manifest within the didactic process developed on a cognitive level in proportion of 31.34% to a very high degree and 56.71% to a high degree, while 11.94% of the students consider cognitive level effects manifest to a small and very small degree. The effects on the affective-attitudinal and emotional component manifest, in the student's opinion in proportion of 23.88% to a very high degree and 52.32% to a high degree, while 22.23% of the students consider these effects occur to a small and very small degree. The third effect category manifests explicitly at a psychomotor level to a very high degree in the opinion of 31.34% of the students and to a high degree in the opinion of 49.25% of the students, while 19.40% consider these effects to be manifested only to a small or very small degree. Overall, students consider that the most obvious effects of didactic communication on the didactic process take place at a cognitive level and the smallest effects are detectable only at an affective level.

Regarding the way in which communication skills can help people in their learning/formation activities, they enumerated, in a decreasing order, the following: *"it helps us to correctly acquire knowledge, develop our personality, correctly transmit information, efficiently communicate with others, develop general and specialty language, develop social relationships, boost our self-confidence and control our emotions, solve problems and request assistance"*.

One questionnaire item aimed at identifying student availability to participate in discussions during class, since there are well known benefits of the active participation in a context where cognitive conflict of a certain type and intensity potentiates communication and pedagogic efficiency. The answers indicated that only 5.97% of the students actively participate every time and 38.80% most of the times, while 50.76% of the students rarely participate. Three students (4.47%) indicated the fact that they never actively participate in discussions.

Overall, we observe that although students recognize the importance of actively participating in debates and most of them consider they possess good and very good verbal communication abilities, they rarely get involved in debates.

Among the factors with an inhibiting effect on interpersonal communication during didactic activity, the students identified as a highest proportion (37.31% of the answers) the fact that they are very much disturbed by the inadequate use of paralanguage by the teacher (too high or too low speed velocity, voice tonality, speech pauses or tics, etc.) an much (in proportion of 34.32%), and 5.97% consider not to be affected by this communication aspect. Another inhibiting element constitutes the omission of some information during communication, students indicating in a 28.35% percentage the fact that it bothers them very much and 49.25% that it bothers them a lot, while 22.8% consider they are only slightly or not at all bothered by this aspect. External and internal noise, as inference, represents in the opinion of 26.86% of the students and inhibiting factor which influences them very much, 38.80% consider it influences them a lot, while 34.32% of the questioned students consider this factor as a slight or no influence at all. The negative, affective or behavioural educational conflict is considered to highly influence the quality of didactic communication by 22.38% of the students and a lot by 47.76%, while 29.85% claim they are a little, slightly and/or not at all bothered by this aspect. Regarding barriers raised by the status difference between sender and receiver, respectively teacher-pupil/student, 22.38% of the students indicate the fact that they are very much bothered by this aspect and 37.31% indicate the fact that they are bothered a lot, while 40.29% of the students declare they are a little, very little and/or not at all

bothered. The lack of consonance between verbal and nonverbal communication is considered bothersome by 55.22% of the students to a high and very high degree, and 44.77% claim they are less, slightly and/or not at all bothered by this aspect. Emotional blocks are considered distressing during interpersonal communication by 20.89% of the students to a very high degree and by 32.85% to a high degree, while 47.76% of the students consider they are bothered only to a slight, very slight degree, and/or not at all. Among other didactic communication inhibiting factors, the students mentioned “the lack of attention” or “the teacher superior addressing tone”.

Regarding the causes that determine the students’ lack of participation in discussion during didactic activities, students indicated the fact that, most often, they “do not wish to distinguish themselves”, a fact which leads them to being only spectators, or the fact that they “cannot stay focused on the subject” for a longer period of time. Another reason, which frequently occurs in the students’ opinions (in a 29.85% percentage) and often (43.28%) is that students prefer not to get involved in discussions unless they are sure of themselves and their answers. 23.88% students claimed that they sometimes adopt this behaviour. 17 of the questioned students, that is 25.37% claim that they very often do not participate in discussions, considering that they understand things better when they listen to the other participants and 32.83 % of them consider that this is an often occurring situation. Pupils/students with a predominantly auditive learning style are more prone to manifest such a behaviour. Regarding the anteriorly mentioned aspect, a percentage of 36.80% of student answers indicated the fact that they do not manifest this behaviour or they only manifest it sometimes. An important element which influences to a high and a very high degree the active student participation in debates during classes (29.85%, respectively 20.89% of the answers) constitutes the degree to which students are familiar with the subject or have prepared for class, their success depending to a high degree on preceding documentation and the students’ in depth knowledge of the subject. 41.79% of the students claim they only sometimes avoid actively participating in discussions, considering they are not sufficiently sure of the discussed topic. Another aspect inhibiting student participation in discussions, represent expression difficulties and emotivity, students indicating the fact that they find themselves in such a situation *very often* (19.40%) and *often* (26.86%). Most students (41.79%) consider they find themselves in similar situations *sometimes* and 8.95% claim they have *never* been in such a situation. Next to emotivity, there is also the fear to make a mistake, and thus to determine the teacher to form a less favourable impression about the student, situation mentioned to occur *very often* (19.40%) or *often*, in a 23.88% percentage. 35.82% of the answers indicated the fact that sometimes students are concerned about their image in relationship with the teacher if they mistake, while 20.89% of the students never considered this aspect. Regarding the student’s position within the student body, 46.26% of the students declare they have never been bothered by critiques addressed by fellow students and 31.34% claim this fact manifests sometimes, a fact which hinders them to take part in discussions. Only 8.95% of the students declare that they very often stop getting involved in discussions because they are not comfortable with being criticised by their colleagues.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the information, obtained during the research on how students attending higher agricultural and veterinary medicine education perceive the importance of developing communication skills and of the communication barriers in the context of instructive-educative situations, highlighted the following aspects:

- students are aware of how important the development of communication abilities is in the context of didactic activities, in order to increase the efficiency of learning activities so as to insure correct knowledge acquisition and thinking development, speciality language formation, professional formation in general, for the development

of their personality, for an increase of their self-confidence and emotional control, and social integration.

- the formation of teacher communication skills during their initial and continual formation program represents, in the students' opinion, a very important objective, since they recognize the necessity of good communication skills in order to conduct efficient didactic activities which should stimulate, motivate, mobilize students, with effects on the components at an affective, cognitive and psychomotor level.
- students recognize the importance of active participation in debates and most of them prefer to communicate verbally, considering they possess good and very good verbal communication abilities, but they rarely get involved in debates.
- the barriers in didactic communication identified by students attending higher agricultural and veterinary education are of intrinsic as well as extrinsic nature.
- regarding the improvement of interpersonal communication during didactic activities, it is important to take into consideration the socio-pedagogic and affective climate where instructive-educative activities are developed, through the establishment of interpersonal teacher-student and student-student relationships based on respect, trust, cooperation.
- self-confidence stimulation and the increase of self-respect offers students the possibility to fully develop their personality.

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