

## **COACHES' GESTURES IN SPORTS GAMES**

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### **Keywords:**

- Nonverbal communication.
- Match.
- Training Unit.

### **Abstract:**

The paper deals with the analysis of coaches' gestures. The aim of the research was to describe and analyze nonverbal communication of sports games coaches with players in pupil's category during training units and matches with focus on coaches'. The objects of the research were coaches of football team 1. FC Tatran Prešov, handball team Tatran Prešov and volleyball team VK CHEMES Humenné. Indirect observation was used as the basic research method. For the needs of the paper we recorded 3 matches and 3 training units. Collected data in the form of audiovisual records were transcribed using the software CHAT of system CHILDES. Coded transcripts were transferred to Microsoft Excel program and subsequently filtered. The analysis was focused on the gestures' selection and their frequency in coaches' nonverbal communicative discourse. In training units in all three sports games the order of gestures occurrence was identical within illustrators and adaptors. Illustrators were definitely the most often used gestures in all three observed coaches. In football and handball affective displays were the third numerous group, in volleyball it were emblems. Emblems and regulators were not recorded in the football coach, handball coach did not use regulators at all. Volleyball coach used all five types of gestures.

The order of gestures occurrence in matches was the same in case of illustrators, adaptors and affective displays. In football coach we recorded only these three types of gestures. Both in handball and volleyball emblems were next group of used gestures. Regulators were recorded only in volleyball training units.

According to [7] communication process in sport in connection with the communication of coach consists of following steps: (1) idea (thought, feeling, intention) that coach needs to communicate, (2) formulation of thoughts into the message that is suitable to be announced, (3) transmission of the message verbally or nonverbally, (4) athlete receives message (if he/she pays attention), (5) athlete tries to understand content of message; interpretation of message so depends on how correctly or incorrectly he/she understood its content in accordance with the coach's intention, (6) athlete inwardly reacts to the interpretation of message.

Nonverbal communication is undetachable part of communication. It is an important carrier of basic types of information and sporadically has greater effect and is more progressive than the power of word, because it contains more dynamic element of positive aggression, has more visible image and confronted with verbal communication it is easier to register. Nonverbal communication can in significant level change the meaning of linguistic

part of the utterance, more or less to modify it. Therefore, it is important and necessary to know the relations between verbal and nonverbal communication, their synchronization and mutual functioning [3].

The main reason why one uses nonverbal communication is according to [17] to support the speech in the meaning of the regulation of its tempo, to substitute with illustration and symbolics, to express emotion and to handle the emotion, express the attitude towards the other person and also to realize selfexpression.

When one speaks, he constantly accompanies his speech with movements of hands, body and head. Movements of hands, body and head are overall marked with term gesticulation. As [8] mentions, these movements together with other nonverbal, resp. nonvocal means accompany, modify or substitute verbal, spoken communication. Some movements or gestures are of the communicative character, other are the selfexpression of particular person.

[2] divides gestures to symbolic gestures (symbols), emblems that contain own semantics. They are used on purpose and knowingly and specific for particular culture and social groups. Illustrators strengthen verbal signals and at the same time accompany them. Illustrators are realized with the movement of hands. It is possible to illustrate also with head or whole body. Illustrators can be also used to indicate shape or size of subjects being discussed. Affective gestures are mimic expressions, but also gesticulation with hands or movements of whole body that express emotional meanings. They are used for completing and strengthening of verbal expression and also as substitution of words. Regulators are signals that monitor, control, coordinate or keep the speech discourse of communication partner. At last, adaptors are gestures that meet the need of speaking one (f.e. scratching). Adaptors can be focused on one's own or on the person we communicate with, eventually on the subject.

According to [1] sports game is competitive activity of two competing teams or individuals who try to show their predominance over rival by better handling with common subject – ball (author is focused on volleyball). This activity is in progress in floating game situations that players has immediately to react on and to solve them. Basic form of sports game is match which result is the only and determining measure of performance in sports game.

Training unit and match are basic organization units, in communicative meaning communicative occasions, within the frame of which communication between coach and players in sports collective ball games happens.

Training unit is basic organization form of training process. As [9] present, training process is systematic, rationally planned activity. Besides planning and realization also control or error correction is the supposition of training process. The basis of training consists in the interaction between athletes and coach. [11] present that in training units long-term training intentions are realized in concrete form. From the view of content focusing the authors differentiate training units to physical (focused on the development of motor abilities), game preparation (focused on game learning and game training) and mixed. Sports training is characterized with dominance of physical load because usually it is in progress in psychologically less difficult conditions. Basically, sports training is preparation for competitive situations and activities. Sports competition can be characterized as a load with the dominance of psychical aspect because it itself presents stress situation [9].

Match is the top sum and control of coach's and players' work in training process. Match is at the same time an indicator of work effectiveness of coach. Sports competition is in the relation to training unit its goal [4]. Competitions and matches become the culmination of training process, abilities and skills that players learned and developed are examined. The aim of game activity in competitive cycle period is (in line with rules of particular sport) to reach

victory. Also the coach's activity in connection with match is rather different in opposition with his activity in training process.

Recently, in the field of sport in Slovakia following authors have been dealing with analysis of communication within verbal and nonverbal discourse in more details: [5], [6], [12], [13], [14], [15] and [16].

## **AIM**

The aim of the paper is to describe and analyze communication of sports games coaches with players in pupil's category during football, handball and volleyball training units and matches with focus on coaches' nonverbal communicative discourse.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

We addressed the coaches of football team 1. FC Tatran Prešov R. M., handball team Tatran Prešov M. G. and volleyball team VK CHEMES Humenné M. F. All three teams won the 1st place and became Slovak champion in season 2009/2010. We recorded 3 records of training units and 3 records of matches. The combination of training unit and match was chosen because of the representation of situational interaction complex of coach and players. Audiovisual record was chosen to catch the communication most accurate. Videocamera was used to record the nonverbal communicative discourse of the coach and dictaphone with external microphone to record the verbal discourse. Dictaphone was hung on coach's neck before the start of training unit or the match (similar researches show that so called microphone effect disappears within 5 – 10 minutes, so dictaphone and the fact that discourse is being recorded do not effect on the coach disturbingly). After recording we transcribed the material by the software CHAT (Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts) of CHILDES system (Child Language Data Exchange System) that was originally founded for the research into the child speech but it is suitable for the needs of our research. Within the transcription we synchronized video and audio records and coded verbal and nonverbal discourse of the coach. Coded transcript was transformed into Microsoft Excel program and consecutively analyzed. On this basis the communicative discourse of the coach was evaluated with focus on its nonverbal part. Methods of the research comes from the project VEGA No. 1/0164/15 Interdisciplinary analysis of sports communication register.

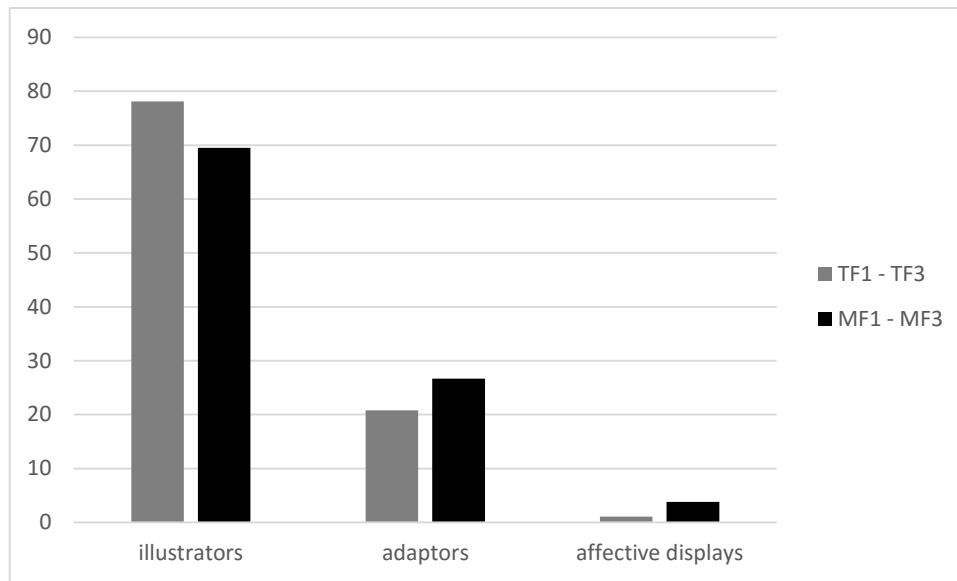
## **RESULTS**

In the results part we focused on the analysis of gestures occurrence and usage of gestures in training units and matches. We proceeded according to the gestures classification introduced in the beginning of this paper. Usage of gestures is not presented in absolute frequency, but in percentage due to the situational character of research samples both in training units and matches including different length of halftimes in football (2 x 25 minutes) and in handball (2 x 35 minutes) and in advance unpredictable number of sets in volleyball. Total number of gestures observed in particular research samples is always 100 %.

### **Football**

Illustrators were the largest group of gestures in term of occurrence in matches, as well as in training units (graph 1). In training unit coach used more intensive verbal discourse related to regulation, instructing and error correction accompanied also with nonverbal discourse. That is why the occurrence of illustrators in training units is higher than in matches. The opposite phenomenon was recorded in case of adaptors. During game so called "dead angels" when coach only stands at the substitutes bench without any verbal or nonverbal discourse. This is the space for using gestures focused on the coach's person. Slight differences have also been recorded in case of affective displays. However, in regard of the

character of training unit and match we expected in comparison with training units significantly higher proportion of affective displays. Though, it does not mean that coach was without emotional load. We rather impute this phenomenon to the fact that except the second match (also won one) was the match progress definite in favour of the observed team.



**Graph 1.** Comparison of gesture occurrence in trainings and matches – football TF1 – TF3 a MF1 – MF3

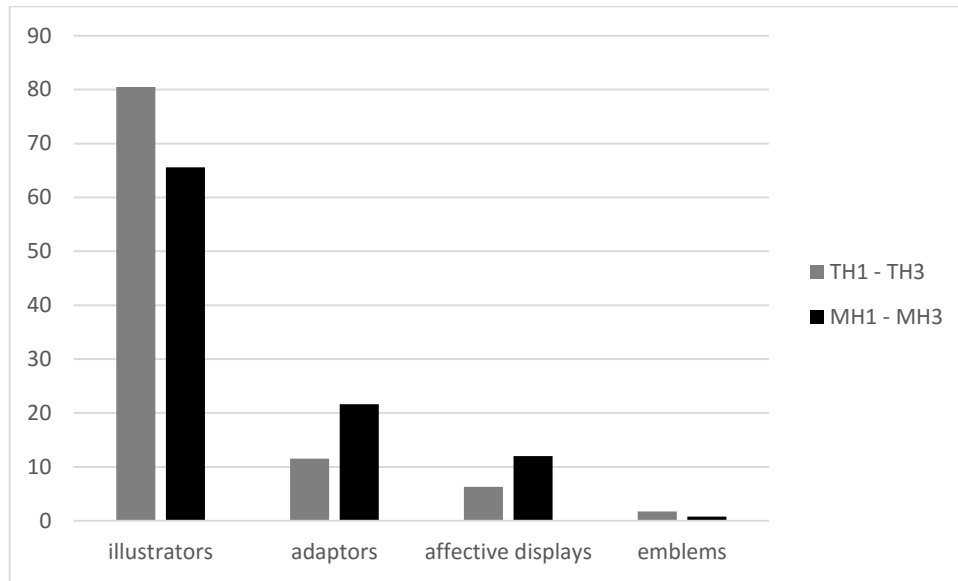
### Handball

Percentage of emblems was 1,7 % in training units and 0,8 % matches. Regarding such a low rate we will not pay much attention to comparison of these types of gestures in detail.

Illustrators made the most frequent group of gestures in term of occurrence both in training units and matches (graph 2). In comparison of using illustrators in training units and matches we recorded 15 % bigger difference in training units. It is connected with the volume of making instructions, directions and errors corrections. Within the content of training units consisting of learning and development of individual skills, game combinations and game systems and overall game performance and team coherence, accurate and often instructions (mainly in youth age categories) are essential for correct realization of activity and direction. That is why coach used verbal discourse accompanied with nonverbal one, especially with using of illustrators. With this fact using of adaptors is connected. With rising number of illustrators the number of adaptors lowers and vice-versa. In matches in comparison with training units we recorded 10 % higher occurrence of adaptors. During matches coach did not communicate with players very often. Within his verbal discourse the number of instructions and directions lowered, that is why enough space was created for probably unconscious usage of gestures focused on the coach himself. We connect this phenomenon with match progress and with the fact that all three matches were winning.

Differences were also recorded in comparison of affective displays occurrence, although not as significant as it was in case of previous two types of gestures. The difference in usage of affective displays was 5,7 %. Their higher occurrence was recorded in matches (12 %). We see here connection with the emotional character of training unit and match. Our finding is supported by the statement of [10] that competitions and matches become the culmination of the training process, learned and developed abilities and skills are examined. With respect to presence of other persons (parents, relatives, friends or coaches from other teams) matches are

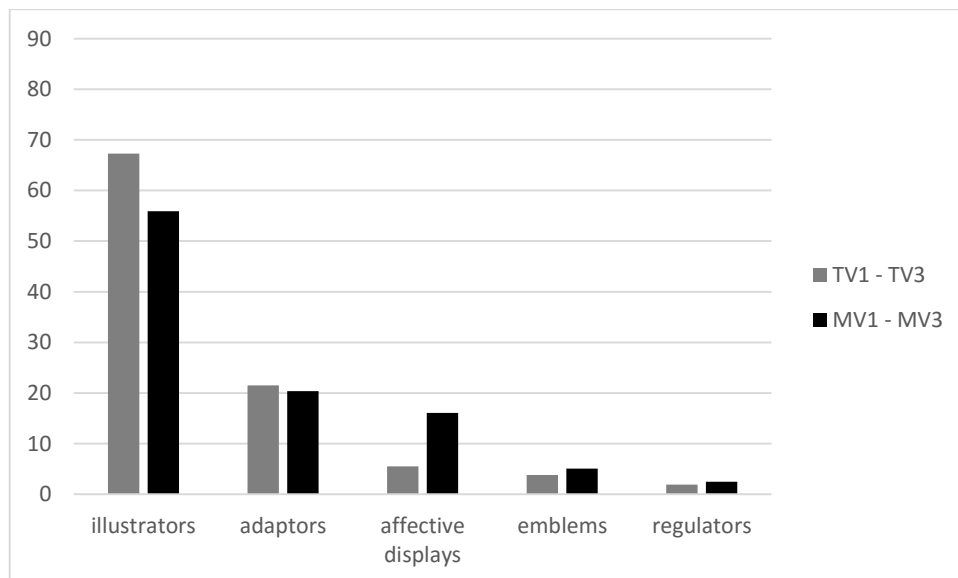
of the higher emotional load than trainings. This emotional load is not only about players but it is also undoubtedly related to coach.



**Graph 2.** Comparison of gesture occurrence in trainings and matches – handball TH1 – TH3 a MH1 – MH3

### Volleyball

Within this comparison we focus our attention especially on the group of illustrators and affective displays. Alike in previous analyses the situation when illustrator make the most numerous group both in matches and training units repeats (graph 3). As we have mentioned, coach used more intensive verbal discourse connected with direction, instructing and error correction accompanied with nonverbal one. That is why the occurrence of illustrators is higher in training units than in matches. The opposite phenomenon was recorded in case of affective displays what stresses [10] statement.



**Graph 3.** Comparison of gesture occurrence in trainings and matches – volleyball TV1 – TV3 a MV1 – MV3

On the basis of indirect observing of videorecords five occurred types of gestures have been recorded both in training units and matches, namely illustrators, adaptors, affective displays, emblems and regulators. Illustrators as most often occurred gestures coaches always used with the verbal discourse and their main function was direction of players, instructions and error correction. Adaptors focused on coach himself were the second group. We found out that the number of adaptors increased with absence of verbal discourse and, on the contrary, with more intensive verbal communication their number lowered. Affective display were the third group. The most frequently used gesture was clapping, fist hand/s and thumb up. Emblems and regulators were gestures with minimum occurrence.

In training units in all three sports games the order of gestures occurrence was identical within illustrators and adaptors. Illustrators were definitely the most often used gesture in all three observed coaches. Except only one volleyball training unit (2) illustrators always made more than 2/3 from overall gestures occurrence. In football and handball affective displays were the third numerous group, in volleyball it were emblems. Emblems and regulators were not recorded in football coach, handball coach did not use regulators at all. Volleyball coach used all five types of gestures.

The order of gestures occurrence in matches was the same in case of illustrators, adaptors and affective displays. In football coach we recorded only these three types of gestures. In handball and volleyball emblems were the fourth group of used gestures. We did not record regulators in nonverbal discourse of handball coach. In volleyball coach we recorded all five types of gestures as it was in training units.

## CONCLUSIONS

In comparison of the gestures occurrence in training and match dialogue illustrators were used more in training units than in matches what was connected with the character of training and match and training content. The number of illustrators lowered in football and handball matches, but at the same time the number of adaptors increased. Lower number of illustrators was also in volleyball matches, but surprisingly we also recorded lower number of adaptors. The difference in number of illustrators was showed in significant increase of used affective displays in matches. The increased occurrence of affective displays was also recorded in football and volleyball coaches, but the difference was not that significant as in comparison with volleyball coach what is related to the match progress and results and probably also with the personality and temperament of particular coach. Regarding to the mentioned facts it is not able to generalize the results.

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