

The introduction of non-verbal communication in Greek education: a literature review

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Abstract

Introduction. The introductory part of this paper underlines the research interest of the educational community in the issue of non-verbal communication in education. The question for the introduction of this scientific field in Greek education enter within the context of this research which include many aspects.

Method. The paper essentially refers to the methodological problems that arise in the research field of nonverbal communication in education, as they have been recorded at international level. Regarding the investigation of the introduction of non-verbal communication in the Greek educational system, a literature review in all relevant Greek published books, articles, conference proceedings and dissertations has been conducted, following the method of content analysis.

Results. The content analysis revealed that in Greece, during the last two decades, only a few books have been published focusing on some research aspects of nonverbal communication in education. Many articles in journals and conference proceedings and just four doctoral theses have been published too.

Conclusion. The research on non-verbal communication in Greek education is still at an early stage and thus, needs great reinforcement because the specificity of non-verbal communication as a pedagogical strategy. The interest of Greek Ministry of Education seems to have a small but positive effect due to the introduction of some issues for the development of non-verbal communication skills in modern textbooks and manuals for teachers. In spite of this, the future of introduction of non-verbal communication in the Greek education could become promising by making more and more specialized research focusing on teachers' efforts to develop and implement programs for improving non-verbal communicative behavior in school environment.

Keywords: Non-verbal communication, communication in education, Greek education, pedagogical communication

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Introducción de la comunicación no verbal en la enseñanza griega: una revisión de la literatura.

Resumen

Introducción. En la parte introductoria de este documento pone de relieve el interés de la investigación de la comunidad educativa en el tema de la comunicación no verbal en la educación. La pregunta para la introducción de este campo científico en la educación griega entrará en el contexto de esta nueva búsqueda en la que se incluyen muchos aspectos.

Método. El documento se refiere esencialmente a los problemas metodológicos que surgen en el campo de la investigación de la comunicación no verbal en la educación, ya que se han registrado a nivel internacional. En cuanto a la investigación de la introducción de la comunicación no verbal en el sistema educativo griego, una revisión de la literatura en todos los libros griegos relevantes publicados, artículos, actas de congresos y tesis se ha realizado, siguiendo el método de análisis de contenido.

Resultados. El análisis de contenido reveló que en Grecia, durante las últimas dos décadas, sólo unos pocos libros se han publicado se centra en algunos aspectos de la investigación de la comunicación no verbal en la educación. Muchos artículos de revistas y actas de congresos y sólo cuatro tesis doctorales han sido publicados también.

Conclusión. La investigación sobre la comunicación no verbal en la educación griega se encuentra todavía en una fase temprana y, por tanto, debe reforzarse muy bien, porque la especificidad de la comunicación no verbal-ción como una estrategia pedagógica. El interés del Ministerio de Educación griego parece tener un efecto pequeño pero positivo debido a la introducción de algunos temas para el desarrollo de habilidades de comunicación no verbales en los textos modernos y manuales para los maestros. A pesar de ello, el futuro de la introducción de la comunicación no verbal en la educación griega podría llegar a ser prometedor, haciendo más investigación y más especializada se centra en los esfuerzos de los profesores a de-sarrollar y aplicar programas para mejorar la conducta no verbal de comunicación en el entorno escolar.

Palabras Clave: comunicación no verbal, la comunicación en la educación, la educación griega, ped-nuinamente pedagógica de comunicación

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Introduction

The framework of research in the field of non-verbal communication in education

Research in the field of non-verbal communication becomes more and more interesting worldwide and is indicated by the literature. In the field of education the international interest is also increasing gradually in the pedagogical effects, especially in the teaching process by utilizing aspects of non-verbal communication and their integration into a modern and effective teaching and learning strategy. Such parameters are the facial expressions, body language, touching and interpersonal approaches, the use of voice etc. (Stamatīs, 2011).

In Greece, research on issues of non-verbal communication was delayed compared to western countries. Since then there has been little progress. A fundamental element of this research, particularly in education, with very few exceptions, is the sparseness and the discontinuity of research efforts made either by individual teachers or by young researchers who publish the results of their work in journals and conference proceedings with diverse content. The progress of research in Greece in the field of non-verbal communication in education which is the subject of this paper is attempting to be presented in detail here in the form of relevant literature review on the one hand and on the other focusing on the methodological approaches of the field and the main issues that makes it a research field with many peculiarities and difficulties.

Initially, it should be noted that the introduction of non-verbal communication in the Greek educational system, as has happened in the most remarkable educational systems abroad, belongs to the significance and importance of non-verbal communicative behavior in education. References argue that the systematic introduction of non-verbal communication in education, primarily facilitates the teacher to make more effective teaching and make the lesson more vivid and therefore more attractive, more pleasant and easier to be understood (Simonds & Cooper, 2011). It also contributes to the development of positive interactions in the classroom, to the enhancing of verbal skills and improving interpersonal relations and educational climate between students and between teachers and students (McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 2006).

In the framework of a historical review it is observed that, even in international educational environment, the initial research on issues of non-verbal behavior was not related to the field of Educational Science. However, systematically from 1970 to present, is one of the most important fields of research, focusing on points such as research on microteaching, research on the expressive factors that occur during the teaching process, on elements of multiculturalism, on expectations of teachers; and on the interpretations of teachers regarding the non-verbal behavior of students. All these points of research are clarified below.

Research on microteaching - teachers training. Refers to the study of teacher's behavior during the implementation of the teaching project aiming to examine and highlight qualitative elements that contribute positively or negatively (Vrettos & Kapsalis, 2002). Within the framework of microteaching, teachers exercised in the development of their non-verbal skills, in the technique of answer or how to speak to the pupils under specific circumstances. They have been trained to become more expressive, to show more attention and exploit opportunities for expression of non-verbal communicative behavior, to increase their movements and expressions, to smile and laugh when necessary and to make them more accessible to students. They are exercised to train students how to reduce the negative non-verbal communicative behaviors at school and on the contrary to cultivate the positive one (Klinzing, 2010).

Research in expressive factors that occur during the teaching process. The development of the Doctor Fox Studies (1976) that focused on the evaluation of teaching by students, revealed that the attractiveness of the teacher is in connection with expressiveness and without detriment to the quality of the cognitive content of teaching. It was observed that the more the teacher attracts the students' attention with his physical appearance and presentation of the lesson the more they enjoy the lesson and learn it easily, even if it contains a lot of difficult concepts (Merritt, 2008). From this point begins the systematic study of issues of non-verbal communicative behavior, such as:

(a) the teacher's immediacy (immediacy) and enthusiasm (enthusiasm)

(b) individual aspects of non-verbal communication (thin slices research) related to specific career interests for expressing opinions on relevant issues. These issues (movement, micro-expressions, grimacing, nodding, etc.), are reached by micro-analysis. Similar surveys were conducted in schools of all levels, universities and other educational institutions, exploring and documenting views of pupils, students and teachers. This form of research is

complex and costly and makes focus on a small sample. It is mainly a qualitative research or a case study. The researcher observes many points simultaneously (eg, face, body, voice, verbal context, etc.), with absolute precision in the nick of time. He/She is asked to assess a wide range of research data, i.e. to work in a volatile and fluid research environment!

(c) the provision of student evaluations regarding the non-verbal communicative behavior of teachers.

Research on elements of multiculturalism. Understanding cultural differences / specificities at non-verbal communicative behavior, teachers and students avoid misunderstandings, in favor of tranquility and quality of school climate. For instance, looking straight in the eyes of the other has a positive meaning in Western culture due to the fact that it means honesty actually. In other cultures has the opposite meaning because it could mean aggression.

Research on teachers' expectations. The expectations of teachers have a positive effect on student behaviors (learning, social, collaborative, communicative behavior, etc.). The expectations of teacher (see Pygmalion effect, self-fulfilling prophecies or self-esteem) may be expressed non-verbally. Many of these have been investigated during the time to examine whether encouraging or discouraging students (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). The research of this type includes diversification of non-verbal communicative behavior of teachers in the same or different students, in part or parts, focusing on exploring the educational expectations of development and degree of responsiveness to these students. For example, the duration of visual contact between teachers and students related to their academic performance was investigated. It was also observed that when the student answers incorrectly, the teacher attempting to encourage him, extends his gaze, looking a few extra seconds in the eyes of the student. It is like saying "you are wrong, think again." Research in this field has been sufficiently developed.

Research on teacher interpretations regarding the non-verbal behavior of students. From the interpretation of facial expressions (grimacing) of the student, the teacher often finds out the capability of understanding, the interest or participation of the student in teaching process, that specific moment. So, this type of research is quite valuable for the teacher who seeks for appropriate information in order to achieve more effectiveness on his instructional communication competence.

Methodological issues in research of non-verbal communication in education

As mentioned above, research on non-verbal communication in education began to gain the attention of the international scientific community, more systematically, from the 1970's. The slow progress compared to other areas of research on the sciences of education happened purely due to the difficulties of measuring non-verbal communicative behavior, although several research procedures had been proposed (Argyle, 1988). In the research of non-verbal communicative behavior in education, methodological problems gradually were overcome mainly due to development of three methods (Babad, 2005), which are:

1. Eliciting the views of participants in the research questionnaire. Under this method, students are asked to describe and evaluate non-verbal communicative behavior of the teacher, as manifested in the classroom. This process is not very reliable because the views of individuals have been shaped over time and not instantaneously.

2. The exploration of non-verbal communicative behavior with physical observation in the classroom. This method was developed in early 1990 and it requires physical presence of the researchers in the classroom and the record of their observations in a special worksheet.

3. The video-typing of non-verbal communicative behavior in the classroom, during the instruction. Today, the technique of video-typing for the collection of research data of non-verbal communication and behavior has been highly developed and also, the technique of video-analysis due to the evolution of technology and one's possibility to manage the data indefinitely.

Furthermore, the methodological problem of documentation of the views of observers, i.e. the weighted scale for the interpretation of observations, each non-verbal communicative behavior was confronted with the gradual construction of the standardized measurement scales over time, which focuses on a series of contradictory behaviors with commonly accepted interpretation of each. A relative example consists of the scales of Non-verbal Immediacy Scale - Observer Report (NIS-O), Non-verbal Immediacy Scale - Self Report (NIS-S), Non-verbal Immediacy-Short Form (SFNI) etc., which were based on contradictory behaviors (Richmond, McCroskey & Hickson, 2008: 257). According to these scales, if a, b and c behaviors simultaneously appear, it means that the teacher is approachable and, on the contrary, if d, e and f behaviors appear, then the teacher is unreachable. This method highlights only the main features of a behavior and not the important details that it could hide.

Although significant methodological problems in research of non-verbal communication have been addressed, the difficulties of accurate interpretation of non-verbal signals are always remaining, despite extensive observations, since it is extremely difficult to ascertain exactly the thoughts, feelings or intentions of the speaker, because these data are not -not even could be- completely measurable. These data are also volatile, subjective and often involve elements of pretense. However, the points where the micro-analytic method focuses (analysis of micro-expressions) are mainly the head and especially the face, hands, body position, the mood and voice. Furthermore, the researcher of non-verbal communicative behavior must take into account the contradictory signals and ambiguities created by leakage individual verbal and non-verbal signals to resolve any deceiving attempts (Pease, 2006).

Furthermore, the researcher must take into account that investigation of non-verbal communicative behavior of teachers showed a difference depending on the situation or person. For example, a change in the tone of teachers voices was observed when they were addressed to 'good' or 'bad' students or when they were teaching a new concept or when they were making comments to students who disturb the class etc.. Students understand all these micro-differentiations or discriminations of educators, which affects their view of the personality of the teacher and therefore, their attitude and general behavior in class (Richmont & McCroskey, 2000).

Finally, additional methodological difficulty in measuring non-verbal communicative behavior develops when the survey is based on research data collected from student evaluations for the teachers. The difficulty is that questionnaires of the evaluation of non-verbal communicative behavior, which are made of adults, aren't couched in simple language and therefore they are not entirely comprehensible to children. This problem is often dealt with monitoring videotaped teachings or snapshots from teaching children. With this method, children are not directly involved in research settings, remaining neutral observers. Certainly, if adopted, the choice of specific instances in video-analysis there always exists the risk of not including in these films teachers' misbehavior such as remarks, reprimands, etc.. In the case of questionnaires, students evaluate these behaviors having a broader picture of the teachers, comparing them to benchmark attitudes of their teachers. It is quite obvious that in such case the research loses in credibility while perceptions of students based on stereotypes and misconceptions which created in their childhood could affect the data in a negative way.

Results of research on non-verbal communication in Greek education

Having noted above the main areas in which research on non-verbal communication in education is invited to take place, and also some important methodological issues, related to that, is a particularly valuable in-depth monitoring of research efforts that occurred in Greece in this area, especially during the 1990-2010. More specifically and following the method of content analysis, the literature review of relevant published books brings out that in the field of *micro-teaching research*, in 1993 the book of John Vrettos, a professor of the Faculty of Education in University of Athens, entitled "Non-verbal Behavior and Communication in the classroom- Practice with micro-teaching" was published in Greece. This book actually opened the way for the research in non-verbal communication in Greek education. A few years later, in 2002 edited by John Vrettos in collaboration with Achilles Kapsalis professor at the University of Thessaloniki a book entitled "Micro-teaching and practice of teaching skills". This book refers entirely to micro-teaching as a method of improving the instructional skills of teachers giving attention to non-verbal behavior. Essentially, this book is based on the development of Doctor Fox Studies project (1970-1990) that focused on the evaluation of teaching by students and deals with aspects of systematic research on topics of non-verbal communication in teaching, such as the immediacy and enthusiasm of the teacher, the provision of student's evaluations regarding the development of non-verbal communication of teachers in the classroom and the individual issues of non-verbal communication (thin slices research), such as body movements and postures, facial micro-expressions, grimacing, nodding, and other signs of body language. In 2003, the first book of Vrettos was republished with a similar title. Between the two previous editions of books, the book by Helen Papadakis-Michaelides was published, titled "the silent language of emotions", in which was described in details all body language secrets. The writer tried, very successfully indeed, a disclosure of the signs of body language for both animal and human beings. This book sold thousands of copies since it was well written by a Greek professor, of University of Crete and had a great impact on readers.

In the field of *research in expressive behaviors that take place during the teaching process*, for several years Anastasios Kodakos and Niketas Polemikos, both professors of the Faculty of Humanities sited in University of the Aegean, worked on this field of research. Their attempt was to highlight the issue of non-verbal communication especially in early childhood education. In 2000, their attempt led to publication of a book entitled "Non-verbal

communication in kindergarten" and in 2002 led to a special volume under their edit entitled "Non-verbal Communication - Current theoretical and research approaches". With these books the issue of non-verbal communication in education in Greece became famous. The books had a significant amount of sales. Later in 2005, this remarkable effort under scientific guidance of professor Kontakos a book titled "Pedagogical non-verbal communication" was published by Dr. Panagiotis J. Stamatīs. The book aims to provide students with knowledge on communication theories field and issues of non-verbal communication in the educational process. The ultimate aim is the improvement of non-verbal skills of teachers in the classroom. This book, with several changes and additions is now in its third edition.

In the field of *research in multicultural dimensions* of non-verbal communication the Ministry of Education approved and funded in 2003 a new edition. Another book written by Evangelia Kourtis professor at the University of Crete, entitled "Non-verbal communication in the school" was used as educational material for teacher training in education program for Greek Muslim children.

In the field of *research on various issues of non-verbal communication*, in 2006 at the University of Crete an international conference on "the thinking body" was held. Most of the texts presented at this conference came from research on various issues of non-verbal communication. The conference proceedings were published in 2008 in a volume of 720 pages, under the scientific supervision of Marios Pourkos who is professor at the University of Crete.

If the decade of 1990 could be characterized as the decade of introduction of non-verbal communication in Greek education, then the decade of 2000 could be undoubtedly described as the decade of the flowering of non-verbal communication in Greece and even beyond the scope of education. Indeed, once in late 1990 began to be developed gradually the production of Greek-language texts on non-verbal communication in education, along with other scientific fields. Those texts were presented at conferences and were published in conference proceedings, attracting the attention of readers to the prototype, for those days, issue of non-verbal communication. However, the decade of 2000, was characterized by numerous of researches in the field of non-verbal communication in education and numerous publications of articles in Greek and international journals and conference proceedings. Between the lines, the course of research, writing and publishing texts on non-verbal

communication the upward course follows like the book publishing on the same subject, except that exists a significantly higher production.

Mainly, in the framework of this production university professors were involved, whose names have been mentioned above, and members of their research groups, which were active in preparing doctoral theses. However, searching the Greek national archive of dissertations showed that only four doctoral theses have been developed in the field of non-verbal communication in this period, although much more were elaborated in other fields of educational communication. This could be interpreted primarily as a sign of limited interest for research in a methodologically complex field of science and quite painful, in the absence of specific Greek proficiency to supervise dissertations on non-verbal communication in education.

Although interest of research in a scientific field is reflected formally by elaboration and successful completion of doctoral and postdoctoral studies, the Greek data in research of non-verbal communication in education at postgraduate level, is clearly disappointing. However, the picture is quite different in the extent to which small-scale surveys in similar matters were elaborated, given that a sufficient number of presentations in national or international conferences exist. While this issue is under close monitoring by the author due to scientific interest, it appears that some of the research in non-verbal communication in education presented at times are quite interesting, especially when placing them in comparative levels with similar surveys in different cultural and educational environments. It is quite regrettable that the possibility of publication in international journals by Greek researchers are significantly limited for many reasons, beyond linguistic or economic difficulties. However, the progressive increase of publications in some research projects on non-verbal communication in education in international print and electronic journals is remarkable (Stamatis & Kontakos, 2008).

Conclusions

In conclusion, making a general assessment regarding research in non-verbal communication in Greece and based on published books, articles and doctoral theses in the last two decades, one could argue that the research on non-verbal communication in the Greek education is still at an early stage having started basically in recent years. Undoubtedly, poor

research in this field needs great reinforcement because the specificity of non-verbal communication as a pedagogical strategy which improves the effectiveness of teachers and the learning capacity of students is recognized internationally. The effort of waking up the interest of the Greek Ministry of Education on the issue of import of non-verbal communication in education, which is made years ago by a small group of researchers in Greece, facing many difficulties over time, seems to have a small but positive effect. Already, in modern textbooks and manuals for teachers are included issues for the development of non-verbal communication skills. Let's hope that the economic crisis will not hinder the efforts of a few people who are working in Greece in this scientific field. Those who investigate issues of non-verbal communication in education are always seeking for international collaborations in this field.

Therefore, the future of introduction of non-verbal communication in the Greek education could become promising by making more and more specialized research focusing on teachers' efforts to achieve educational changes in their classroom climate, research on pedagogical interactions that occur at school environment, research on techniques for the improvement of teaching effectiveness, research on development and improvement of interpersonal relationships, etc. Design, development and implementation of programs for improving non-verbal communicative behavior of teachers, with systematic teaching at undergraduate level, with postgraduate studies, training and lifelong learning can be a driving force for introduction and development of non-verbal communication in the Greek educational environment for the benefit of the entire educational process and also for teachers and students involved in it and furthermore for each member of the educational community.

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