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ANALYSIS OF REGISTER IN COACHS' COMMUNICATION IN SLOVAK – BASIC INFORMATION

The main aim of the paper is to provide information about the design and some of the results of research carried out into communication between a Slovak-speaking coach and players of older school age practising team ball games (football, handball, volleyball) within two basic genres: training dialogue and game dialogue. Methodologically, the research is based on the concept of the sport communication register as macro-social and the coach communication register as micro-social. The paper provides information about the research procedures and the basic socio-pragmatics features of the coach communication register: the types and way of expressing communication functions, the types and use of gestures, the way of addressing the players and referring to them, and the use of the means of the varieties of contemporary Slovak language.

Keywords: sport communication register, coach communication register, ball games, training dialogue, game dialogue

0 Introduction

Minimal attention has been paid, so far, to spoken language and verbal communication in sport both from the side of sport sciences and linguistics. It is quite surprising taking into account the social and political role sport has in contemporary society. There can be various reasons for the fact; one of them can be derived from the idea of the Austrian philosopher K. P. Liessmann who, in his essay *Das runde Leder: Reflexionen über das Fußballspiel* analyses the relation between philosophy and sport – and characterizes it as distant and unfriendly. The problem is that philosophy is interested in spirit and sport is mainly interested in the body. If we change philosophy for linguistics, we would be not so far away from the basic relationship between sport and linguistics. Anyway, language has not been interesting enough for the sport sciences and sport has not been interesting enough for linguistics. If there was any interest at all, at least in Slovakia, it was predominately the language of sport in media communication (cf. e.g. Mlacek 1981; Masár 1981, 1982; Felix 1992, 1993; Mislovičová 1993, 1994; Mergeš 2016).

1 Objectives

The main aim of the paper is to introduce the design and provide some of the results of research into intra-sport communication, mainly communication between Slovak-speaking coaches and players of older school age practising team ball games (football, handball, volleyball). The given paper is only of informative nature. The methodological basis, sources, material and results are published in the Slančová, Slančová: 2014. As it is the first research of its kind in Slovakia (and also in the broader European context) and as the book was published only in Slovak, we have decided to inform the conference of the main ideas of the research. To begin with, the primary research questions were put as follows: what is the form of spoken and non-verbal communication between a coach and players of team ball games of older school age? What are the means by which this form of communication is realized? We specifically decided to answer those questions on the interdisciplinary, socio-pragmatic and sport humanistic basis. It means linguistic phenomena are interpreted as ones determined by their sports counterparts and sports phenomena determined by the linguistic ones.

2 Methodology

Methodologically, our research is based on the concept of communication register (Slančová, Slančová 2012, 2014). The term *communication register* represents our own adaptation of *register* as one of the leading sociolinguistic concepts (cf. Hymes 1974; Ferguson 1977; Halliday 1978; Andersen 1992; Biber, Finegan 1994; Biber, 1995; Hoffmanová, 1997; Coupland 2007; Biber, Conrad 2009) and can be designed as in Scheme 1:

Scheme 1: The concept of communication register

- social institution –
- communication sphere –
 macrosocial
- communication register –
 microsocial
- communication situation –
 [– text –]
 (genre, style)

The fundamental concept is the sociological concept of *institution*. Our definition of institution is based on the definitions found in Velký sociologický slovník (1996), and the works by Keller (1991), Giddens (1999), Balegová (2005), and Kráľová (2007). It is understood as relatively stable, in the given society or social group accepted complex of rules and norms, including social norms (Kráľová 2007: 19). Social institutions represent dynamic reality and express supra-individual kind of social activity. They are considered as the basis of culture and can be classified in various ways, mostly according to the domain of the institutionalized lives of people living in an advanced society (daily life, family, education, art, religion, science,

administration, media, healthcare, sport, army, etc.). Human interaction cannot exist without communication, thus social institution also can exist only by means of communication. In this sense, within social institutions, communication spheres are originated. *Communication sphere* is the communication space belonging to the social institution. *Macro-social communication register* is understood as the conventional linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour of people related to communication spheres; the *micro-social communication register* is interpreted as the conventionalized linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour of people linked to social status, social role and social distance. Communication is realized in a specific *communication situation* via its basic units – *text* and *genres* – by implementing the features of the *individual personal style* of a speaker.

Scheme 2 shows the application of the concept of communication register to sport and communication between coaches and their players:

Scheme 2: The concept of sport and coach communication registers

- sport (as an institution) –
- sport communication sphere –
 - sport macrosocial
- communication register –
 - coach microsocial
- training and game communication situations –
 - [– text –]
- genres: training and game dialogues
- coach individual personal style

Sport is understood as belonging to the group of vital social institutions (cf. Balegová 2005: 26). Communication in sport is realized within the *sport communication sphere*. Conventional linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour of people related to the sport communication sphere is understood as the *sport macrosocial communication register*. The preferred form of a coach's linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour is understood as the *coach microsocial communication register*. It is realized in two basic *genres*: *training dialogue* and *game dialogue*. Their content, function and form are influenced by the characteristics of training and game as the basic organizational units of team ball game sport activities and by the communication situations present within those activities. The form of the coach communication register in communication between coaches and players is influenced by the *coach's individual personal style*.

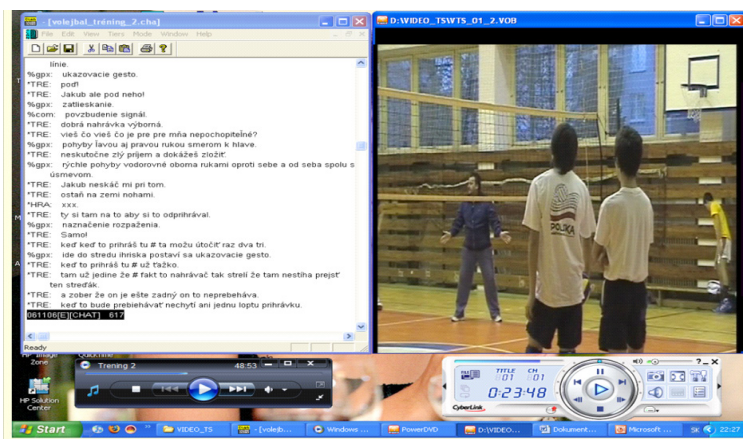
3 Procedure

Our research sample was created from a tri-modal corpus consisting of video and audio recordings of five complete training units and five league games, respectively, for each coach – players dyad in all three kinds of sports (football, handball, volleyball) and their transcripts. Video-recordings were obtained using a static camera focusing mostly on the coach; audio-recordings were obtained using

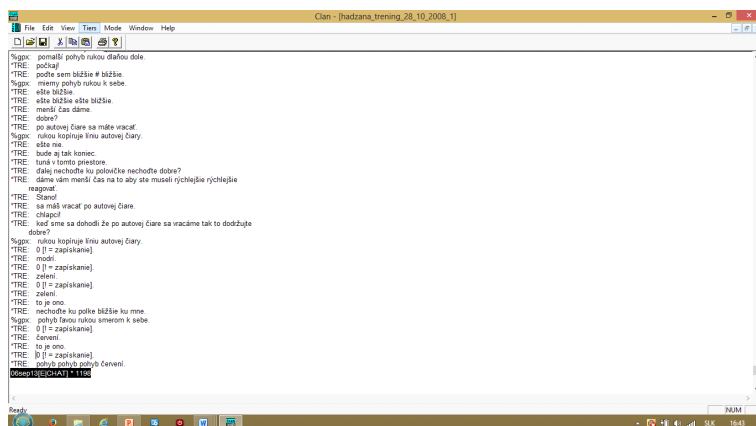
a dictaphone placed around the neck of the coach. All the recordings were made by the co-author of the paper with her personal participation in training units and games. The verbal and non-verbal communication of coaches and partially players (if in proximity of the recording device) was transcribed using the CHAT (of the CHILDES system) transcription and coding system (cf: <http://childes.talkbank.org/>). In the end, three training units for each sport and three league games for each sport were analysed (18 sub-samples – 450 pages of text in total).

The coaches – men aged 34 to 40 years – were university graduates, born in urban areas of Eastern Slovakia, with a specialized higher educational qualification in coaching and training experience ranging from 13 to 15 years. The teams consisted of boys aged 13 to 15 years. The research was conducted over the course of two seasons in each sport.

Picture 1: Obtaining the tri-modal corpus on the computer



Picture 2: Example of coach's verbal and non-verbal communication transcribed by CHAT



4 Results

Analysis of the research material was made on the basis of qualitative methods: the coach communication register was described by means of the communication functions (illocutions) in the utterances of the coach's speech and the means of their expression; by means of non-verbal communication, mainly gestures, the coaches used while communicating with their players; by means of personal and social deixes, and by indicators of varieties of contemporary Slovak (standard and non-standard varieties).

4.1 Communication functions (CFs) in coach communication register

By analysing the communication functions (the function of a coach's utterance) we wanted to show, paraphrasing the classic sentence from J. L. Austin's pragmatics, "what coaches are doing in saying something". We used our own typology of communication functions, recognising seven basic groups of communication functions:

- referential (utterances with referential CFs express referential information),
- reactive (reactions to the stimuli which are part of a given communication situation),
- reactive/regulative (reactions to the stimuli which are part of a given communication situation with implicit manifestation of prompting the addressee to do an activity),
- regulative (prompting the addressee to do a non-verbal or verbal activity; stimulus for doing said activity),
- constructional (conventional communication activities regulating speech activity),
- contact (expressing contact with addressee),
- routines (routine, conventional communication activities).

Within each of these main groups, there were subgroups containing basic communication functions (37 in total).

We have collated the relative and absolute frequency of basic CFs. Relative frequency refers to the single occurrence of a basic CF in a sub-sample; absolute frequency refers to the number of occurrences of basic CFs in a sub-sample. The combination of these calculations enabled us to determine the illocutionary scale of the coaches' communication: the illocutionary centre, wider illocutionary centre, wider illocutionary periphery and illocutionary periphery for training and game dialogues, respectively. The illocutionary centre of the coach communication register within the training and game dialogue includes CFs of prompting, appreciation, commands and instructions, as well as of directions, acceptance, information and comments. The wider centre consists of both negatively evaluative and motivational CFs. According to these findings, the illocutionary character of coaches' communication is rather positive, progressive and future-oriented, prompting, commanding and instructing players. The coach communication register is also characterized by combining basic CFs into complex utterances, which reflect a dynamic way of

communication determined by the temporal and spatial dynamics of team sports and activities performed by players.

4.2 Gestures in coach communication register

The coaches' gestures (hand, head and whole body movements) were observed in the context of training and game dialogues and expressed in percentage terms for every sub-sample. According to DeVito (2008), they were divided into five basic groups:

- illustrators (the most common type of gestures used to illustrate the verbal utterances they accompany),
- adaptors (tactile behaviours and movements that indicate internal states typically related to arousal or anxiety),
- affective gestures (expressing emotional meanings),
- emblems (gestures that have a specific agreed-on meaning)
- regulators (monitoring, controlling, coordinating or maintaining dialogue).

Illustrators, affective gestures and adaptors were also classified according to positive or negative emotional markings.

Our data showed that gestures in the coach communication register form a separate, consistent semiotic system, which is within both training and game dialogues characterized by a predominance of illustrators, followed by adaptors and affective gestures. Emblems and regulators were the least numerous gestures. This fact can be explained by the specific character of sport activities. Training sessions are aimed at acquisition and refinement of game skills, game combinations and game systems and overall game proficiency and team play and thus require precise and frequent instructions and directions. Multiplying information coming from two semiotic systems, both verbal and non-verbal (mostly illustrative), strengthens such training intentions. In games, the use of gestures is dependent on the course of the game. If the team wins and follows the coach's instructions, the coach need not instruct the players to an extent present in situations when the team loses, the score is even or when the players do not follow the coach's instructions or required tactics. So, besides using illustrators, there is more space for using adaptors, namely gestures oriented towards the coach himself. The analysis of emotionally marked gestures also showed a higher degree of emotional load during games compared to that present during training sessions.

4.3 Personal and social deixis in coach communication register

Person deixis concerns the encoding of the role of participants in the speech event in which the utterance in question is delivered (Levinson 1983: 62); social deixis concerns the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participant-roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee(s) or speaker and some referent (Levinson 1983: 63; Hirschová 2006: 68). We analysed the means of both personal and social deixis in training and game dialogues as based on the social structure of the given teams. The social structure of the team can be outlined as follows:

[WE]

[THEY]

[I]

[others]

[YOUpl]

YOU [YOUsg (YOUsg + YOUsg + YOUsg) YOUsg
YOUsg...]

Within the hierarchical relations in the team, the coach [I] has the central position. He communicates with a team of players [YOUpl], with individual players [YOUsg], and with a group of players (YOUsg + YOUsg + YOUsg). The coach and the players form the social group [WE]. From the point of view of social deixis, the potential team's rival [THEY] is also important. The same can be said about other communication participants (assistant coaches, referee, physio, organizers, fans, spectators) – [others].

Our analysis respected the central role of the coach and was focused on (i) the way of addressing the players; (ii) nominal and verbal personal reference; (iii) personal shifts.

The way of addressing the players and naming them has ambivalent social relevance: on the one hand, it indicates the dominant status of the coach; on the other hand it indicates the group solidarity between the coach and the players. Group solidarity manifests internally within the team and externally as opposed to “others”. Personal deixis shows that the coach either strengthens or loosens social cohesiveness within the team. The tendency to strengthen cohesiveness, which is manifested by using the 1st person plural form, is more frequent than the tendency to loosen the cohesiveness by using 2nd person plural forms. In the training and game dialogue, the coach uses a variety of communication strategies based on personal shifts. They represent the dynamic alternation of activities and their performers, which is typical for team ball games.

4.4 Varieties of spoken Slovak in coach communication register

This part of our research focused on determining the character of linguistic means present in the coach communication register from the perspective of varieties of contemporary Slovak. It was based on the stratification theory of contemporary Slovak, distinguishing standard Slovak; common standard Slovak and its western, central and eastern variants; west, central and east substandard Slovak; inter-dialects and dialects (Horecký 1979; Slančová, Sokolová 1994, 2011). The speech of coaches is thus characterized by using means of the common standard variety close to standard spoken Slovak, or by using the means of the eastern variant of common standard Slovak. Besides the individual personal style of particular coaches, the use of variety means is determined by both the communication situation and the social role of the coach. The effect of communication situation is manifested for instance through strengthening informal and non-standard means within the game dialogue with players, in self-communication, or in utterances containing negative assessment – compared to training dialogue, dialogue with a group of players or with an entire

team and utterances containing positive assessment, where the coach's speech is more formal and closer to standard Slovak. The effects of being aware of the social role by the coaches can be seen in the fact that less prestigious linguistic means are used in less public and emotionally tense situations.

5 Conclusions

The main aim of the paper was to provide the conference with information about the objectives, procedures and results of the research into one kind of intra-sport communication. The paper emerges from the publication *The speech of motion, authority and solidarity: Pragmatic analysis of coach communication register in communication with players of team ball games in [players of] older school age* (Slančová, Slančová: 2014) and takes the form of basic theses. It has tried to show one way how the main question regarding the form of spoken and non-verbal communication between a coach and players of team ball games could be answered. Although the object of our research was the coach communication register and its use in communication with players of older school age in football, handball and volleyball, we believe that the methods used in the given research could also be used while analysing communication within other team sports and other age categories.

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