

## A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF DIDACTIC COMMUNICATION

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**ABSTRACT.** The efficiency of didactic communication largely determines both the quality of the educational process as well as the preparedness of the students. Given this starting point, our study primarily aims to investigate students' opinions on the quality of didactic communication. The main investigative methods used were the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire based survey with the focus on items such as: the extent and conditions under which students appreciate didactic communication as being effective, indicators that students consider that didactic communication is effective, factors that generate a sense of satisfaction as a result of attending a course and communication blockages. The results of the investigation indicate the fact that most subjects recommend devoting more attention to defining and explaining the fundamental concepts for overcoming communicational blockages.

**Keywords:** *didactic communication, communicational efficiency, communicational competence, communicational climate, communicational blockage.*

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.** Die Effektivität der didaktischen Kommunikation bestimmt weitgehend die Qualität des Bildungsprozesses, sowie das Ausbildungsniveau den Studenten. Von diesem Ausgangspunkt, stellen wir uns vor, als Hauptziel, die Untersuchung der Meinungen den Studenten über die Qualität der didaktischen Kommunikation. Die wichtigsten verwendeten Methoden der Untersuchung waren halbstrukturierten Interviewmethode und die Fragebogenerhebung. Diese wurden verwendet, um folgendes zu erfahren: in welchem Maße und unter welchen Bedingungen schätzen die Studenten die didaktische Kommunikation als wirksam; welche sind die Indikatoren, die diese Meinung den Studenten einflüssen und welche sind die Faktoren, die ein Gefühl der Befriedigung oder Kommunikations Engpässe nach der Anhörung eines Kurses generieren.

**Schlüsselwörter:** *Didaktische Kommunikation, Kommunikationseffizienz, kommunikative Kompetenz, Kommunikations Klima, Kommunikations Engpass.*

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## 1. Introduction

The literature devotes ample spaces to the issues of didactic communication and the conditions that ensure its effectiveness, knowing that there is a close correlation between the quality of communication and the quality of education as a whole. The vast majority of research in the field of communication is considered to be paradigmatic, while specialty literature identifies a number of four such approaches: a structural-expressive paradigm, a formal-transactional paradigm, a relational-systemic paradigm and a phenomenological paradigm (Muchielli, 2005). Beyond natural epistemological differences between the paradigms mentioned above, we do, however, find that there is a common concern, namely that of identifying the rules that govern communication and using them in order to increase its efficiency. Thus, the diachronic analysis of various approaches to communication shows that in their early days, most of them were focused mainly on the technical aspects of communication, because in the absence of a sufficiently well developed communicational engineering, trainers would permanently be in a position to improvise by exploring or even resorting to random combinations (Peretti, 2007).

Over time, the approach of communication as a technical situation was abandoned as a result of accepting that communication involves individuals, operators subjected to massive influences from psychological factors (Abric, 2002). Thus, a new direction arises that brings the human and social dimension of communication to the foreground. In this context, a number of non-technical elements are observed that are able to ensure the efficiency of communication, elements such as empathy, since interpersonal communication is not only the exchange of information but also of feelings and assumptions regarding the emotional state of another (Cabin, Dortier, 2010).

This fact is observed by numerous other studies indicating that the evocation of emotions in the form of a discourse is a constant of interpersonal communication, most conversations including affective components (Rime, 2007). Not only the empathic dimension justifies emphasizing the humanistic character of communication but also the intentional dimension because when sending a message to the receiver, the issuer operates in four distinct levels - the level of reality, the relationship plane, the level of self-revelation and the level of appeal, seeking to answer, through signs that make up the message, the following questions: what am I informing the receiver about?, how do I treat the receiver and how do I see my relationship with him?, what do I tell the receiver about me? And last but not least, what am I urging the receiver towards? (Fârte, 2004).

Emphasizing the human and social dimension of communication is not only necessary but also consistent with the current guidelines of pedagogy since knowledge is a dynamic activity, learning represents a natural consequence of performance and teaching is a process of negotiated construction of meaning (Arsith, 2012). Moreover, the humanistic approach to didactic communication is also important from the perspective of highlighting the opportunities to optimize it, because sometimes, due to the fact that our language skills were developed effortlessly, we might be tempted to believe that our level of competence in the use of language can not be changed, which is essentially wrong because by repeating the same processes that we used at first to inherit them, language skills can be modified and improved (Turk, 2013).

The awareness of this fact and its implementation in principle, underlying the initial training activity of future teachers is a priority, knowing that now, due to the multiplication of information resources and the low interest of students regarding school, class activity has lost much of its consistency. In this context, effective didactic communication can be a viable solution for many problems of the Romanian educational system.

## **2. Major research coordinates**

Our research falls along the lines of humanistic approaches to communication. Unlike other research that started from theory towards practice, from general towards particular, our investigation is inductive and is intended to capture the opinion of the beneficiaries of didactic communication regarding its efficiency and the requirements for its effectiveness.

Taking the above statements as a starting point, the main goal of our research was to identify the students' perception on the quality of the communicational act. The reason we considered this approach useful and necessary was that obtaining a perspective from the inside, observing viewpoints from those directly involved regarding the efficiency of teaching, we would be able to not only bring a necessary addition of knowledge in the field but also to provide practical solutions for an efficient didactic communication.

In a first stage, we used a semi-structured interview method for a group of 25 students from the Primary and Preschool Pedagogy specialization, with the purpose to identify and clarify the parts that will be the basis for achieving the actual investigation. Following this approach, a questionnaire was designed composed of six multiple-choice items, items covering the following aspects: the extent and conditions under which students consider didactic communication as being efficient, indicators regarding the students' opinions towards the overall effectiveness of didactic communication, the factors that generate a feeling of satisfaction as a result of attending a course as well as communication blockages.

Thus, the primary method of investigation used was the questionnaire based survey with a sample of subjects consisting of 92 students, future teachers for primary and preschool level education. The results obtained were statistically processed and the percentages obtained for each item and each choice are summarized in tabular form.

### 3. Presentation and interpretation of results

The first of the questionnaire items sought to highlight the students' opinions regarding the efficiency of didactic communication as a whole.

**Table 1.**

Opinions concerning the efficiency of didactic communication

Answers	N	%
Very efficient	42	45.7%
Efficient	49	53.3%
Slightly efficient	1	1.1%
Inefficient	0	0%
Total	92	100%

As we can see in the analysis of data presented in the table above, 45.7% of students consider their teachers' didactic communication as very efficient, while 53.3% think that it is efficient. Only one person considers didactic communication to be slightly efficient (1.1%) while no student opted for the "inefficient" answer. The large number of subjects that consider didactic communication as very efficient or efficient is an important indicator of the quality of the didactic activity carried out at the "Pedagogy of primary and preschool education" specialization.

The next item of the questionnaire aimed to identify factors in relation to which students form their opinion on the attractiveness of a course. The data is summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

Determinant factors of the attractiveness of courses

Answers	N	%
The importance of the subject	30	32.6%
The interactive character of communication	27	29.3%
The applicative nature of the course	22	23.9%
The teacher's interpersonal style	13	14.1%
Total	92	100%

The data presented in the above table shows that most of the subjects, 32.6%, consider that the central element based on which they consider a course to be attractive is its importance relative to other subjects but also in terms of its contribution to the formation of professional competences. We interpret that most students overlap the attractiveness of a course with its importance as being proof of pragmatism and utilitarianism, constant features of contemporary society. In turn, the interactive nature of communication is considered by 29.3% of subjects as a determining factor in the attractiveness of subjects while 23.9% of them stated that attractiveness is generated by the applicative nature of the course. A less important element in this respect appears to be the teacher's interpersonal style, considered important for the attractiveness of a subject by only 14.1% of participants. We thus see that for most of the students, 56.5%, the attractiveness of a course overlaps with its importance and its applicative nature while the interactive character of communication and the teacher's interpersonal style are important indicators only for 43.5% of subjects, which demonstrates, in our opinion, a high level of maturity and ambition of students regarding the educational offer.

Another element that our research pursued was capturing the conditions under which students consider didactic communication to be effective. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

Conditions under which students consider didactic communication as being efficient

Answers	N	%
When they learn unique pieces of information	23	25%
When they clarify certain previous concepts	40	43.5%
When references to actual life situations are made	29	31.5%
When concepts from different courses intertwine	0	0%
Total	92	100%

The data presented in the table above reveals that most of the students involved in the study, 43.5%, consider didactic communication to be effective in the situation where they can clarify certain concepts previously acquired. In other words, somewhat surprisingly, for 40 students out of 92, the efficiency of didactic communication is correlated with its ability to contribute to the clarification of certain concepts and notions already taught in the previous classes. Another indicator of the efficiency of didactic communication, considered important by 31.5% of the subjects surveyed, is represented by the references made in the classroom concerning real life situations, which

stresses the need for a concrete contextualization of the information transmitted and a permanent anchoring of the didactic discourse in everyday life. Equally surprising is the situation determined by the fact that the acquisition of new, unique knowledge, is considered as an indicator of the efficiency of didactic communication by only 25% of students. We do not interpret this situation as necessarily being a reluctance of students but rather as expressing a reaction to the phenomenon of informational saturation that characterizes contemporary superior education. We also observe the fact that intertwining the notions and concepts taught in other courses is not considered an indicator of the effectiveness of didactic communication by any of the subjects investigated.

Another element targeted by our investigation is represented by the reaction of students in situations where didactic communication and the teaching activity in general are considered to be less efficient. The results obtained on this issue are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

## Methods of compensation for inefficient didactic communication

Answers	N	%
Enlightening discussions with colleagues	23	25%
In-depth research of the course support and bibliography	40	43.5%
Requesting explanations from the teacher	29	31.5%
Requesting explanations from other teachers	0	0%
Total	92	100%

The analysis of the data presented in the table above indicates the fact that most of the subjects investigated, 43.5%, said that for them the main way of compensating for the inefficiency of didactic communication is an in-depth research of the course support and bibliography. In other words, they believe that cognitive obstacles and shortcomings existing in the teacher-student didactic communication can be best overcome through personal effort for the purposes of browsing through the course support and additional lectures in the field. Another important segment of the subjects, 31.5%, stated that in case of poor didactic communication, the main strategy put into play is represented by requesting explanations and further information from the teacher. We consider this to be a positive element as it indicates the existence of open relationships between students and teachers, where students bravely approach teachers if they have uncertainties and where the teachers exhibit solicitude and a cooperative attitude in relation to the students' explanatory requests.

Another strategy put into play by students in the case of misunderstanding theories, concepts or phenomena is represented by enlightening discussions with colleagues. Thus, 25% of students state that they clarify their insufficient knowledge through dialogue with colleagues on that topic. The variant of requesting clarification or additional information from other teachers was not agreed upon by any of the subjects.

Another item of the questionnaire aimed to surprise elements that, in the opinion of the students interviewed, teachers should pay more attention to in order to increase the efficiency of didactic communication. The results regarding the possibilities of optimizing the efficiency of didactic communication are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

## Ways to optimize the efficiency of didactic communication

Answer	N	%
Clear definition of the concepts	39	42.4%
Examples offered	40	43.5%
Highlighting the correlations between concepts	7	7.6%
Correlations to various existing theories	6	6.5%
Total	92	100%

As we can see in the table above, the students' responses for this item provide a clear view of how didactic communication can gain in both consistency and efficiency. Thus, we can observe that 43.5% of respondents consider that the main direction on which teachers should focus their concerns in order to increase the efficiency of didactic communication is represented by granting greater attention to doubling theoretical exposures with examples and illustrations of practical relevance. No less important is considered to be another aspect, namely the clarity and accuracy with which new concepts are presented and explained, which was agreed upon by 42.4% of the subjects investigated. Highlighting the correlations between various concepts and notions is considered to be a way to streamline didactic communication by 7.6% of participants while 6.5% of students opt for making connections and correlations to existing theories in the field.

Another aspect that our research pursued is represented by the issue of barriers and communication blockages. Interpersonal communication in general and didactic communication in particular, constitute an open system, influenced by many factors, most of them being able to constitute elements susceptible to lead to the decrease of communicational efficiency (Pânișoară, 2006).

We thus believe any factor able to determine the quality of communication and reduction of the clarity of receiving transmitted messages to be a communicational blockage. The classifications of communicational blockages and barriers are varied, being made by a variety of criteria. Our research aimed at capturing the students' views on communication bottlenecks caused by cognitive, affective or organizational factors. The results obtained on this issue are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

Blockages in didactic communication

Answer	N	%
Cognitive blockages	51	55.4%
Affective blockages	8	8.7%
Organizational blockages	33	35.9%
Total	92	100%

The data in the table above indicates the fact that, according to 55.4% of the students interviewed, communicational blockages recorded in teaching are cognitive. We refer in this context to the increased complexity of educational messages in relation to the cognitive resources of its recipients, complexity that generates difficulties in decoding information. Another category of disturbing factors in didactic communication is represented by organizational blockages, as stated by 35.9% of the subjects. Organizational blockages mainly refer to the conditions under which communication occurs, the fact that the teacher monopolizes the discussion, focuses mainly on teaching, allocates very little time for discussion and questions from students, does not encourage or facilitate communicational cooperation during the course. Affective communicational blockages seem to be uncommon, generated by shyness or the hostile attitude of teachers or colleagues, response option chosen only by 8.7% of the participating students.

#### 4. Conclusions

The results of the investigation conducted indicates the fact that the overwhelming majority of the students investigated, 99% of them, consider didactic communication to be very effective or effective. In terms of the attractiveness indicators of a course, the pragmatic orientation prevails, including items such as the importance of the matter, the applicative nature of the course as well as communicational interaction. Regarding the factors in relation to which didactic

communication is considered to be efficient, elements such as clarification of earlier concepts and references to concrete situations are highlighted, while learning new information or connections to concepts taught in other courses are assessed as less important or not important at all. The main ways of compensating for a less effective didactic communication are the individual in-depth research of the course support and bibliography as well as requesting further explanations from the teacher, while enlightening discussions with colleagues is an option only a quarter of the students participating in the research opted for. Regarding ways to optimize the efficiency of didactic communication, most of the subjects recommend granting more attention to defining and explaining the fundamental concepts but also a more frequent appeal to examples, while other elements such as highlighting correlations between the notions are less requested. Regarding communicational blockages, the majority of the students interviewed stated that they are cognitive and organizational, which requires both granting greater attention to information accessibility as well as organizing didactic activities in a manner that ensures enough time for discussions, debates and questions. The results of our research show that it is necessary to give greater attention didactic communication problems both in the classroom and in the initial teachers training program.

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