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Body Language Using Skills of Teacher Candidates from Departments of Mathematics Education and Social Studies Education

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine if there was a difference between elementary education mathematics teacher candidates and social studies teacher candidates in their use of body language. The study was carried out in the 2012-2013 academic year with 82 teacher candidates studying at the Departments of Mathematics Education and Social Studies Education of the Education Faculty, Uludag University. With the aim of collecting data, the “Body Language Questionnaire (BLQ)” developed by benefiting from the questionnaire developed by Bağcı (2008) with the aim of collecting data from students about their teachers’ using body language was used. The developed questionnaire was composed of 21 items. In the statistical analyses of the data obtained through administering the BLQ to the participants, independent samples t-test was used. It was found that the teachers’ use of body language did not differ according to their gender. However, a significant difference was found between the mathematics education teacher candidates’ and the social studies education teacher candidates’ use of body language. This difference was in favor of the social studies teacher candidates. While they thought using body language was necessary, the mathematics education teacher candidates felt doubtful about using body language.

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1. Introduction

Communication can be defined as the process of influencing another person through several symbols (Dökmen, 1994). People are in communication with each other at home, work, school and in many areas of their lives.

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Communication has a significant place in education and training, as in all aspects of life. Education is also a communication activity. The efficiency of this activity mainly depends on the quality of communication between instructors and students (Bolat, 1996). In this respect, the opinion that teachers should possess effective communication skills is critical in regard to the effective teaching of teachers. The acquisition of the factors of communication skills and the adoption of the importance of these factors in education by teachers during pre-service, can be stated to be significant (Dilekmen, Başcı and Bektaş, 2008; Tok and Temel, 2014). Having good communication skills is one of the main professional criterions to be influential in teaching, which is a profession of communication. Since an individual requires acquiring appropriate listening and speaking habits in order to express him in a better way and to understand another person better. In addition, people have the opportunity to explain their ideas, to evaluate and share these ideas through communication (Tutar, 2003). Hence, the acquisition and use of effective communication skills are critical for teachers for the concepts and subjects that they teach.

The communication of teachers with students has an important place in increasing the quality of teaching and learning and in improving the attitudes of students (Çalışkan ve Yeşil, 2005). Since learning process is generally an interaction process (Pehlivan, 2005). In this process, teachers should utilize not only verbal language but also non-verbal language. Teachers are required to use and utilize these two languages effectively in order to complete educational process efficiently. The body language movements that teachers possess and the accurate understanding of these movements by students are also critical in this process. Therefore, a teacher now is not simply the one with professional knowledge but also the one being acquainted with students and organizing educational activities appropriate for students. In this respect, the non-verbal communication tools used by teachers in classroom environment should be paid attention and the tools that would positively affect students should be used.

Non-verbal communication is a reaction form that people demonstrate certain body movements in the situations in which they cannot verbally express themselves against various internal and external stimuli. Body language demonstrates various manners of individuals such as gestures and facial expressions, clothing, postures, voices and intonations, and we observe that these behaviors provide messages about several aspects such as the moods and attitudes of these persons at that moment. Body language is our first and original language (Bağcı, 2008). Our body language provides clues about ourselves and our inner world. When we thoroughly learn how to use body language, it can be possible to communicate efficiently and properly with individuals and our environment. Whereas verbal communication is generally utilized in transferring information, non-verbal communication is used in order to express our emotions. As body language reflects emotions, the comprehension of body language brings about being sensitive to the feelings of others (Baltaş ve Baltaş, 2001: 1). People can sometimes control words, but it is impossible for them to control their bodies. Therefore, the process of understanding feelings and thoughts is based on the body language of a person rather than words used by him/her (Reca, 2007). From another point of view, we observe that non-verbal communication is effective when verbal communication is insufficient or any verbal communication cannot be provided. For example, a teacher does not require disrupt the course to get a student quiet as he can make an eye contact with the student through body language while lecturing. This situation can be considered as importance in the way that the teacher has an effective body language skill and that it indicates the importance of body language.

Students and teachers are in mutual and continuous interaction also in the classroom. During this interaction, teachers may give several positive or negative messages consciously as well as unconsciously by means of their body language (Erdoğan, 2003). In a learning environment, understanding and using body language, which is non-verbal communication means, is significant (McKay et al., 2009). Since more than 50% of the message is sometimes conveyed through body language. We can express our approval by nodding head and our love by holding the hand of our friend. A person contributes to verbal expression by using his face and body while speaking whereas a listener provides feedback to the speaker by means of his facial and body expressions. The speaker attempts to guess whether the listener can understand what is said or gets bored by means of observing the attitudes (Dökmen, 1994:27). What people do rather than what they say stands out in some situations (Dökmen, 2001). For instance, though some students express verbally whether they understand the subject or not, teachers with a good knowledge of body language can understand it by observing the body language of students. Therefore, the use of body language and the knowledge about understanding body language by teachers and prospective teachers are effective in achieving effective learning and making the course more productive. Understanding body language makes teachers more successful (Bağcı, 2008).

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