

## Nonverbal Communication through Dance

Mirela Arsith<sup>1</sup>, Daniela Aurelia Popa Tănase<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** The hypothesis from which we begin our approach is that a significant way of communication is non-verbal, the language of the body that can express emotions, thoughts, attitudes, without the need for words, postures, movements and gestures. Very important in non-verbal communication is the dance, which involves a specific way of communicating with others, but also with yourself. Through dance, communication blockages are overcome. Movement and gestures, expressive or symbolic, along with certain postures, can “communicate” emotions, feelings, attitudes, giving us access to the inner world of the dancer. In the study, we want to argue in favour of dance, as a form of communication and as a form of therapy, able to allow communication and harmonization of relations between people. We also seek to make some references to the *LOVE Life and Dance: Expressive therapy for empowering youth*, which will be conducted at the Faculty of Communication and International Relations, at Danubius University of Galati.

**Keywords:** verbal communication; dance; movement; emotion; body language

### 1. Introduction

Nonverbal communication involves a coding that is done by voluntary or involuntary contraction of muscles, using time and space, artefacts, etc. (Chelcea, Ivan & Chelcea, 2008, p. 17) Miles L. Patterson defines non-verbal communication as passing information and influencing individuals through physical and behavioral reactions (apud Chelcea & Ivan & Chelcea, 2008, p. 28) Posture, facial expressions, gestures can support words or replace them. Thus, feelings are communicated by non-verbal signals rather than by words, revealing even more than what the person living them intends. (Borg, 2010, p. 19) In non-verbal communication, the

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<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Communication and International Relations, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Boulevard, 800654 Galati, Romania, Tel.: +40.372.361.102, fax: +40.372.361.290, Corresponding author: arsith.mirela@univ-danubius.ro.

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Communication and International Relations, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Boulevard, 800654 Galati, Romania, Tel.: +40.372.361.102, fax: +40.372.361.290, E-mail: daniela.popa@univ-danubius.ro.

signification of the transmitted signs is determined by the concrete social and cultural context and with a certain degree of probability.

## 2. Nonverbal Communication and some of its Messages

There are human activities that are not directly observable but can be perceived and interpreted from the perspective of their meanings; these are behavioral indicators. These activities must communicate the environment of origin or education, thoughts, mood, or the intentions of the people. (Collett, 2001, p. 15) Behavioral indicators tell us a person's expression or position. The man, face to face with his fellow men, through his attitude and attitude, oscillates between distance and proximity. If the man opens, his body is *appealing*; if he closes, his body is *aversive*. (Turchet, 2005, p. 36) In the first case, he sends out acceptance, sympathy, interest, truth; in the latter case, he communicates rejection, dislike, boredom, or disappointment. All these can be expressed through gestures.

According to James Borg, the language of the body is the window to a person's mind. (Borg, 2010, p. 25) The essence of interpreting body language is "reading" the experience, feelings, attitudes of a person. Ray L. Birdwhistell introduced the term *kinesics* to denote the study of body movements in relation to non-verbal elements of interpersonal communication. (apud Chelcea & Ivan & Chelcea, 2008, p. 47)

Gestures, movements, expressions and posts transmit messages. Hands are the most expressive and communicative part of the body. (apud Chelcea & Ivan & Chelcea, 2008, p. 134) To convey a proper impression and to convey trust, it is good for hands to be visible. The feet and their orientation give us clues about where we really want to be (Borg, 2010, p. 177), and the feet as part of a body of gestures can communicate openness or discomfort. At the same time, we also communicate through the way we use a certain space.

It is the posture that gives us information about the status that a person has or wants to own. The posture is related to the fixed position of the body. (Chelcea & Ivan & Chelcea, 2008, p. 165) Henri Wallon states that modulation of posture plays an important role in the expression of emotions, depending on social situations and the characteristics of people, especially the mental states of the moment.

Nonverbal communication takes part in communicating one's own identity or social identity, communicating the intensity of emotions, feelings and experiences. Nonverbal communication also participates in influencing and self-inflicting. The

more the posture, the appearance is neat and the gestures are decent and non-dominant, the greater is the degree of persuasion of others.

### 3. Dance - Communication and Therapy

The movement is an elementary communication tool that enhances the expression of emotions, the connection of senses and actions with self-awareness, can be the basis for cognitive learning and development and for social interaction. (Shalem Zafari & Grosu, 2016, p. 666) Dance is a form of non-verbal communication between the dancer and his own body, between the dancer and the other people; rhythm, movement, and accompanying music, externalizing experiences, emotions, feelings of freedom and freedom from conflicts with self and with others.



Source: <http://stiri.tvr.ro/>

Dance tells of man and his life, of friendship and enmity, of joy and sadness, of love and hatred, all happening in the specific and essential contexts of human life. Through dance, communication barriers disappear or diminish and open to others. It is thought that the dance is about the human body and the movement; it plays an important role in the individual process of attaining authenticity. (Cardas, 2015, p. 34) Being considered a way to connect with nature and what is beyond it, dance allows expression and emotional communication.

Dance also has a therapeutic effect. The therapy through dance combines the movement of the whole body, simultaneously with accessing the emotional and

mental level. Through free dancing, curative effects are obtained on the state of the human individual. According to (Shalem Zafari & Grosu, 2016, p. 666), the origin of dance and movement therapy is in modern dance because it is based on direct expression and spontaneous movement; as a result, there is a formalistic distance of the dance, thus allowing the expression of the inner world of man, without the mandatory observance of aesthetic standards.

### **Dance Therapy<sup>1</sup>:**

- can provide emotional maturity and cognitive skills development;
- contributes to acquiring a healthy self-image, with full self-awareness;
- can provide better control of the body and its movements;
- the release of emotions and negative affections can be achieved, their better management;
- promoting a non-judicious physical and emotional environment that respects individual's individuality.

The "symbolism" of dance refers to the expressiveness and movements of the body, communicating and releasing from different aspects of a problem that the dancer has. Dance therapy can be performed individually or within a group; it implies a distinct number of stages through which the participant/participants have to go through, in order to get a beneficial status from dance therapy, and a therapist is required.

The need of the current man to find alternative healing solutions for self and not only has determined him too redescovers healing through dance. Studies have shown that the personality of an individual comes to the surface through dance through his body posture, by the frequency and type of movements or their extent. All are clues that show how people feel, can express conscious or not emotions, or they can get rid of the accumulated negative tensions.

A dance therapy can have the following stages:

- physical training of the body through specific exercises and movements in a safe and comfortable environment;
- initiation, which is the moment when the participants begin to relax, to give up conscious control over their bodies and to begin to freely express their emotions

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-dance-movement-therapy.htm>, accessed 28th March, 2018, 6.00 pm.

through dance; at this stage there are symbolic movements for the feelings of the dancers, on a suitable musical background;

- the third stage is where the participants connect their symbolic movements and the new meanings they might have for them; in this approach, they are supported by a therapist;
- the final stage takes place at the end of the therapy and consists in assessing the achieved progress.

Dance and motion therapy analyses the quality of the movement and uses reference systems for analysing movements. (Shalem Zafari & Grosu, 2016, p. 665) Artistic and dance exercises are characterized by dynamism, rhythm, spectacularity related to music, and can include: variation of dance steps, artistic jumps, pirouettes, waves, balancing (using portable objects like ball, ribbon, etc.) cultivation of beauty, expressiveness, specific abilities, musical and aesthetic education. (Frățilă, Velescu, Cojocaru & Velescu, 2016, p. 128)

Cardaș Flavia defines a number of basic concepts as indicators in art therapies such as self-esteem, anxiety, and stress. (Cardas, 2015, p. 35) Self-esteem refers to an emotional and global self-evaluation of will and personal value. Anxiety is characterized as an emotional state of mental tension, irritability, lack of faith in one's own powers, inability to take risks, autonomous reactions and other psychosomatic symptoms. Stress is defined as an environmental factor that causes an abnormal reaction in the human body and the level of this factor depends on the strategies used by the stressed person to deal with it. (Cardas, 2015, p. 35) Stress is a state of tension and discomfort that occurs when we fail to solve a problem that disturbs our lives. Psychiatric stress is a particular case under the concept of "general stress" triggered by certain psychological stressors. (Nuțu & Munteanu, 2017, p. 209)

Dance, movement and music therapies have been studied by various Romanian authors and researchers. The music appears as a support for various forms of dance, contributing to the rhythmic skills of those who have accessed this art, exploiting the relationship between music and body movements. (Frățilă, Velescu, Cojocaru & Velescu, 2016)

#### **4. The LOVE Life and Dance Project: Expressive therapy For Empowering Youth**

At the Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Communication and International Relations, LOVE Life and Dance: Expression therapy for empowering young people is expected to develop and apply innovative methods of working with young people through communication techniques and through expressive art-therapy techniques. One of the goals of this project is to identify the benefits of dance and movement therapy in order to improve key psychological indicators: empowerment, self-esteem and decision making.

The hypothesis with which the project begins in order to achieve the project are as follows:

- dance is a universal language;
- dance and/or movement therapies give significant results in anxiety disorders, depression, low self-esteem and social isolation.

##### **4.1. Applications**

###### ***1. Dancing my Animal Totem***

Each participant will choose an animal that represents him as a personality, as a state of moment or as a character in everyday life (the specification will be: wild or domestic animal, bird, fish, insect, etc.). After each participant has mentally set his totem animal, he will represent it through dance and movement on a musical background, he will represent his behavior from his environment, he can form associations with other animals if he feels that.

###### **Specific Objectives:**

- Self-assessment and awareness of your own body;
- Introspection and expression of emotions;
- Self-esteem and creativity;
- Group cohesion.

<https://youtu.be/9YTO6wus8s0>

Anti-Depression and Anxiety, Balance Music Chakra with Nature Sounds

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hp\\_LiPnWFQo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hp_LiPnWFQo)

**Evaluation**

It will keep track:

- if the representations coincide with the chosen animal;
- the emotions expressed by the representation of the animal;
- characteristic of the chosen animal;
- the degree of self-confidence (as she expresses through dance);
- dynamics of movement, interaction with the group, self-esteem;
- body awareness and emotions in dance;
- the expansiveness of the movements, the space occupied during the dance;
- the intensity of the expressed feelings.

***Dancing my life***

In the first stage of the exercise the trainer will invite the participants to individually reproduce a 5-10 minute dance through which each will reproduce his life so far. In the second stage of the exercise, the trainer will invite the participants to individually reproduce a 5-10 minute dance through which everyone will exhibit how they want to show their lives in the future. The activity is individual but the participants can dance also with others if they feel it.

***Specific objectives:***

- Self-assessment, self-confidence, insight;
- Self-esteem;
- Expression of life situations;
- Expression of emotions, thoughts, feelings through movement, hope, fear or confidence in the future.

Simply Three - Rain (Original Song)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFppTBdCse8>

**Evaluation**

It will keep track:

- movement dynamics and body awareness;

- identifying predominant emotions;
- extroversion ability, self-esteem and interaction with others;
- the extroversion ability, which are the dominant emotions;
- interaction with others;
- the pace of the rhythm (faster or slower);
- printing a state of relaxation and inner peace.

***Dancing my emotion (universal signs for expressing emotions using body movements)***

The trainer will ask the participants to choose a universal sign, moving the movements of the body to express the following emotions: mourning, fear, anger, love, sadness, helplessness, joy, compassion. Signs agreed by the entire group of participants will be at the basis of future exercises, you can use them to express the emotions that you feel.

In the second round of the exercise each participant will choose an emotion and express it through the chosen universal sign, through dance and body movement. You can move from one emotion to another depending on how the melody you hear inspires you.

**Specific objectives:**

- Self-assessment and self-observation;
- Self-examining your own behaviour;
- Awareness of your own body and your own emotions;
- Group homogenization and position within the group;
- Creativity of the participants.

PLAYLIST - link: melodies to induce the states and emotions concerned.

Spiritual hang Music - Arambolla

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CwM\\_1jK1po&index=6&list=RDpubQNx0jA4c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CwM_1jK1po&index=6&list=RDpubQNx0jA4c)

Evaluation

It will keep track:



- the level of contribution to the establishment of the universal signs and emotions to which they participate;
- the level of creativity;
- team spirit;
- group membership, interaction with the group;
- awareness of the body, the emotions it transposes into dance;
- the state of rest or relaxation;
- the intensity of the expressed feelings;
- Amplitude and frequency of movements;
- relationships with other people, copying the movements of others.

**Recommendation for youth trainers:**

- Each observer/facilitator will receive an observation sheet for each participant;
- A good number of participants is recommended to run the workshop. The exercises are created for a group of 30 participants but can be adapted for any number of participants.
- It is recommended that the participants have a number of stickers on the body so that they can be tracked more easily by the observer.
- It is recommended that before starting the workshop, exercise is achieved in order to energize and know the participants.
- Workshops are recommended to be registered and participants are required to be registered beforehand.
- Keeping quiet in the room, participants do not have to talk to each other unless the trainer allows them or if the exercise requires it.
- Throughout the exercise, it is recommended that the trainer encourage participants to breathe properly to oxygenate the brain and facilitate relaxation.

**Questions for Debriefing and Reflection** (*for participants*):

After all the exercises have been carried out, each observer will address the participants with a few questions of reflection and feedback. Responses will be recorded in the observation sheets.

- What is the state with which you left the workshop?
- What is the state with which you entered the workshop? If you remember?
- What did you feel during the exercises?
- Which emotion was awesome?
- Define in one word (emotion, state, object, sensation) how did you feel today?

**4. Conclusions**

As a form of nonverbal communication, dance is a universal language that is part of man's life, helping him to mature, manifest and express himself. Dance is an important form of communication and therapy, through which people establish specific relationships with themselves, with others and with the world, and are able to better interpret the spiritual world and the natural world in which its life unfolds.

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