

***El aprendizaje y la mejora de la competencia comunicativa
en alumnos universitarios. Proyecto de investigación***

***Learning and improvement of the communicative competence in university
students. Research project***

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DOI: 10.17398/1988-8430.24.1.6

Recibido el 10 de enero de 2016
Aprobado el 26 de mayo de 2016

Resumen: El presente artículo es el resultado de un proyecto de investigación que llevamos a cabo con estudiantes universitarios del grado de educación primaria de la Universidad de Málaga durante cinco meses. Teniendo en cuenta su deficiente dominio de la expresión oral y gestual, y con el objetivo de que mejorasen sus competencias comunicativas les propusimos la realización de diferentes actividades, tales como presentaciones de temas, exposiciones, dramatizaciones y talleres, así como improvisando y recreando ejercicios para diferentes contextos didácticos. En el estudio creamos y validamos nuestro test con el que los estudiantes se evaluaron y a través del cual pudimos conocer su nivel de adquisición y mejora de las habilidades de expresión oral y gestual.

Palabras claves: Expresión oral; didáctica; competencia comunicativa; gestualidad; estudiantes universitarios.

Abstract: This article is the result of a research project conducted during five months with university students from the degree in Primary Education at the University of Malaga. Due to their deficient command over the oral and gestural expressions and looking for the improvement of their communicative competences, several activities were proposed. For example: topic presentations, expositions, role-playing and workshops; in addition to improvisation playing and development of activities related to diverse didactic contexts. Along this research, we create and validate the test used by the students for their self-evaluation. Through it we could know their level of acquisition and improvement of the oral and gestural abilities.

Keywords: oral expression; communicative competence; body-language; university students; didactics.

1. Introduction

In the recent years, we have been able to confirm the lack of fluency in the command of the oral and body languages presented by the majority of our students from the Education School at the University of Malaga. This aspect is especially significant in terms of oral and gestural expressions. This is highly alarming considering that they will become teachers in the future, becoming their voice and body their main work tools. In addition, their attitude will be a reflection of their professionalism and commitment with their students' training.

The control over the communicative competence is essential due to the fact that it doesn't only contributes significantly to the integral development of the individual self, but because it helps us to success in our relationship with the environment and collaborates in our duty of being valued by others for what we say and the way we express ourselves (Carnegie, 2011). For this reason, and considering that our society is immersed in a process of continuous change, it is necessary for the young individuals to acquire, develop and command the communicative competence throughout their lives in a more functional than theoretical way (López, 2002).

For the purpose of helping our young university students to improve their communicative competences, we have accomplished a project that takes two groups as a sample, a total of 122 students from the Education School, specialization of Primary Education, at the University of Malaga. This study is based on a detailed working plan used during the course. During its time of application, the students accomplished projects, activities and periodical evaluations with the aim of developing and improving their oral and gestural expression through presentations, expositions and workshops. In addition to these, we also included some activities referred to the improvisation and recreation skills in a wide range of didactic contexts. In the same manner, we reached, besides the consequent rise of their auto-esteem

and self-confidence, the improvement of their creativity by the development of projects. These taught them how to transmit and inspire the communicative competence to their future pupils in an inspiring and stimulant way. With this aim, we used (among other resources) ICT tools, debates, drama activities and lecture and literature workshops.

2. Theoretical frame

2.1. Educative limitations for the improvement of the oral expression at Higher Education

Since they were born the individuals keep acquiring (both in the familiar and educational environment) a wide experience in informal speaking for situations that require a low level of reflection and speaking control. But those same individuals, as they mature and succeed in different educative and academic stages, don't stand out in their superlative domination of oral and gestural expression in more formal and complex communicative situations. In that regard, Romero (2001: 9) criticize the thoughts presented by many parents and educators who declare that "a hablar se aprende de manera espontánea y que los niños y niñas llegan a la escuela sabiendo hablar". This is one of the reasons why a deficient training in the oral and gestural expression exists in the classroom. At the present, there is a general tendency to elaborate the academic programs (since primary school) giving a priority to the reading and writing skills at expense of the oral expression (Recasens, 2003). The most significant reasons are, according to Recasens: 1) the Grammar study implies an important and ancient tradition; 2) the presumption that the students learn how to speak and listen in a natural way, and 3) the young students keep quiet if they are reading or filling cards rather than conversing. We have to consider that if a university student that is going to become a teacher doesn't receive an appropriate training on how to express himself/herself in different social situations, it will become very hard to surpass the existing barriers of teaching oral expression at the schools.

Another aspect that impedes the teaching of oral and gestural expression at school is the fact that some teachers based their educational philosophy on traditional learning methods. This way, they usually give priority to the domination of different aspects of the linguistic system (learn how to use the verbal modes and pronominal forms). To reach this objective they present activities oriented to the formal analysis of the language, which limits the education to a correct knowledge of the grammatical code and causes a lack of dominance over the oral expression (Zuccherini, 1992). Under these traditional methods of teaching the language, the problem of the “mistakes” becomes a nightmare for the student. The main reason is the consideration of the linguistic work as a constant correction of the student, who is not going to stop making mistakes in his/her own learning process. This way, the correction becomes a form of repression for his/her creativity and expression, which, in addition, reduces his/her motivation and self-confidence. The traditional teaching method has supposed a bad influence on the students’ training regarding the oral expression. Except for the primary school period, the teacher is the only one who usually communicates in an oral way while he/she asks his/her students to remain silent, becoming the only one who can speak while the students are writing and reading (Villanueva, 2013). If for the second language acquisition, the realization of oral exams is a need and most of the time is devoted to speak in that language, why the importance of the oral expression is forgotten in the teaching of the first language and the priority is given to writing and reading?

In addition to the previously mentioned limitations, another barrier that prevent us from an adequate learning of the communication skill is the fact that the students don’t receive any help to face feelings such as shame, fear of making a mistake, fear of speaking in public and to improve their self-esteem. According to Brown (2010), shame is the fear of feeling ourselves rejected, a universal feeling that is not present in the classroom’s conversations and, consequently, it is suffered by the most insecure students or the ones who has very little confidence. Feeling shame or fear is good when it helps us to contain ourselves in certain situations. The negative aspect appears when the individual contains the desire to express his/her thoughts or feelings because “he/

she is not important enough to...”. This attitude leads to questions such as: “is it important for others what I think?” “if I fail, will they laugh at me?”; “what if I go blank?”, “I am sure what I am about to say is a stupid thing, it is better if I keep quiet”; “my reputation will collapse if what I am about to say is senseless”; or, “it is better if I don’t raise my hand. At least, it a stupid thing and although it is interesting, anyone is going to understand it”. Several people come to think that their comments and questions are not going to be accepted by others and they will be isolated for what they could say and who they are, being a source of mockery due to a simple ineptitude or a mistake.

To improve the use of the language in an integrated way and from an educational methodology (distanced from the mere imitation, repetition and memorization of formal grammatical structures) the teaching and learning processes of the oral expression need to start from an early age. In contraposition to this, we should prepare activities and strategies to offer the students opportunities to cooperate with an active response (Reyzábal, 1993), encouraging the skills referred to the reflection and critical thinking.

2.2. Improvement of the communicative competence at schools

To be a good or a bad communicator doesn’t necessarily imply to have a perfect control over the lexicon or the grammatical rules. On the contrary, it does imply to be motivating, convincing, entertaining and effective in his information. Consequently, only a constant training and a continuous practice would achieve the goal of becoming a professional in this field. Although in many aspects of our life personal and professional success implies the control over the communicative competence, “reducir toda la comunicación humana al uso de un código es, de entrada, descriptivamente inadecuado” (Escandell, 2005: p.15). For this reason, it is important to get rid of the generalized idea that several people expressing themselves in a superior oral way is debt to their acquisition of the ability in an inherent way. As a response to this though, López (2002) affirms that, although it is true that some people can stand out among others due to their possession of innate abilities

(such as the linguistic competence that facilitates the learning of manifestations related to oral and written languages), a formative process is needed to improve or acquire those abilities.

If, in order to achieve a superior oral expression we need a constant practice, it is equally important to have as referees or models individuals who are superior in their use of the communicative competence, such as orators, pedagogues or educators. They must act in a very sensitive way while helping their pupils to learn how to communicate in a more efficient way. If among the teacher duties we can find the ability to guide, innovate, organize, stimulate, motivate and being a model, interlocutor and mediator in the classroom (Mendoza, 2003), to be professional, competent and motivating in this field it is also necessary to have control over the language, a “competencia básica en el desempeño profesional de todo maestro, pedagogo, en definitiva, de cualquier educador cuyo trabajo implicará necesariamente el trabajo con personas en contextos diferentes” (Fernández, 2008: 27).

Promoting the control over the communicative competence also involves helping other people improve their self-esteem, their self-confidence and their capability to socialize. This way they will learn how to act in diverse environments, with different kinds of people and to solve conflicts and problems through dialogue and respect, with a peaceful attitude and full responsibility of their actions. For this reason, it is necessary for the teachers to take advantage of their students' qualities and favor their integral development, preventing them from their inhibition, subjugation and normalization (Reyzábal, 1993). In that regard, Zuchherini (1992) recommends to create a distance between the teacher and the students, which involves a more objective attitude at the moment of the moderation and regulation of the oral interventions accomplished by the students. This includes the moments when they defend their research works or make personal contributions, specially the in case of assemblies, debates and discussions.

For the improvement of the communicative competence, Núñez (2002) proposes, for different educational stages, a language learning based on: 1) renovation of the old rhetoric (the art of speaking in

public); 2) fomentation of the reading and the critical thinking; 3) creation of a space inside the classroom for the radio; 4) employment of dramatization and theatre as didactic resources to promote a regular and formal use of the language and the imagination; 5) employment of the video camera to analyze the work made in class; 6) promotion of language and literature workshops.

3. Research proposal

3.1. Research objective

The main objective of our research was to improve certain aspects of the oral and gestural communicative skills in two groups of students facing their second year of their Degree in Primary Education at the University of Malaga. For this project, we decided to work with them during the time assigned in the class schedule to the Didactics of the Language and Literature subject. Furthermore, we tried to promote the students' communicative skills, both oral and written, according to the objectives of the subject and making use of the ITC resources. To that effect, we prepared a detailed work planning to provide the students some activities and strategies to carry out the oral interventions in class, such as the use of diverse audiovisual resources. The learning process was evaluated through a questionnaire based on 30 items that we created and that was validated. According to it, the students evaluated aspects related to the oral and gestural expressions used in their public interventions.

3.2. Research questions

Are there any differences between the first self-evaluation (T1) and the last one (T5)?

Are there any significant differences between the different questionnaires (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5)?

Are there any significant differences between the first self-evaluation and the peer-review questionnaires?

Are there any significant differences referred to the sex or the group?

3.3. Research hypotheses

Invalid research hypotheses:

There are no significant differences between the first self-evaluation (T1) and the last one (T5).

There are no significant differences between the peer-review evaluations (T2, T3, T4).

There are no significant differences between the first self-evaluation and the peer-review evaluations.

There are no significant differences referred to the sex and the group.

3.4. Research project

Our research project was structured in four phases. During the first one, we informed the students about the project and we requested their collaboration. Subsequently, we exposed, in detail and through several examples, the thirty items that composed the questionnaire. This way, the students could illustrate different situations where, for example, the individuals don't express themselves fluently, aren't convincing, move too much while speaking or don't express the ideas with enough modulation and a suitable volume. Once the items were analyzed and understood, we delivered every student the questionnaire (T1) for the self-evaluation.

The second phase consisted in working with the students different aspects related to the feelings of shame and insecurity that appeared while they were speaking in public. During the first week, and in an intensive way, we oriented and encouraged them to participate in a debate about this topic in the classroom. In addition, we facilitated them diverse strategies and resources so they could learn through the activities how to surpass the difficulties that appear when they are

speaking in public. For example, we make them record their own interventions with audiovisual media to promote the reflection.

In the third phase, with a length of 12 weeks and during the time assigned to the theoretical lessons (6 hours a week), the students carried out expositions about different topics related to the subject and based on the following objectives:

- a) Create an initial interest making use of experiences, news or questions.
- b) Give rhythm to the exposition with pauses, emphasizing or transmitting enthusiasm.
- c) Inform, not only providing data, but also using examples, comparisons and questions, to highlight the practical value of the exposition.
- d) Motivate the audience's thinking through questions and activities, facilitating their participation and consequently, their attention.
- e) End the exposition showing a practical use and visually summarizing the main points previously mentioned.

After each exposition, the students were evaluated through a questionnaire by three classmates while the rest of the class added justified comments, emphasizing the most relevant aspects of the presentation and specifying the possible improvements. The expositions were recorded with a video camera and, after being stored in an Internet server, the link was only provided to the students who had presented the work so they could watch their own performance and improved it in the next project.

In addition to the expositions accomplished in this phase, the students should have selected fairytales, short stories or texts from the children's literature area. After being advised on how to make the reading more interesting and stimulating for the audience, and after a previous rehearsal, they read them in front of groups composed by four or five students to be evaluated afterwards by their classmates taking in

consideration those items included in the questionnaire that referred to the reading aspect.

A third activity in this third phase consisted on the use of the ITC resources for the composition of tales which main aim was to promote values. This way, the students dramatized ordinary or fantastic situations that organized and structured and with duration of no more than five minutes, were recorded in video for their consequent evaluation considering aspects such as the vocalization. Afterwards, the students must play and record the same scene, but this time without using any words, only gestures, to express themselves. The objective was the understanding of the story by, for example, students with hearing disabilities.

The fourth activity accomplished during the time dedicated to the theoretical lessons consisted of the execution of a dubbing activity for film scenes, chapters from TV shows or advertisements, making every student to work his/her voice possibilities, such as tone, volume, emotion, pauses, etc. In the same manner presented in the previously mentioned activities, students through the questionnaire evaluated this.

The Didactics of the Spanish Language subject consisted, in addition to the six hours per week devoted to the theoretical aspects, of three hours dedicated to the practical aspects, which we used to propose every student to write a text about diverse topics (compassion, fury, love, hate, forgiveness, infidelity or death) in the present, past or future tenses. We let them tell a story about a personal experience or an event that they had witnessed, or also to reflex about the concept chosen. Later, they read and discussed the texts in front of their classmates. During this activity we took full account of the reflection presented by Reyzábal (1993), when he affirms that it is essential to respect the verbal productions accomplished by the students and don't fault them arguing inaccuracy or unsuitability. On the contrary, we should encourage our students to improve themselves keeping in mind the criteria related to interlinguistic and extralinguistic (or social) fields. That is why we considered indispensable the establishment of rules among the students for this activity, which must be obeyed

scrupulously, due to the fact that several stories were about personal situations. For that reason, during every exposition, no one could leave the class, everyone must remain silent and, at the end, no comments could be done. The objective was to create an absolutely respectful environment and complicity among the students, so they could expose their opinions in a completely free way, fearless of being judged. This activity was not evaluated by the questionnaire because we tried to create a space where the students felt free to share, voluntarily and without any kind of pressure. With this activity, many students affirmed that they had felt comfortable and safe because they could expose not only their ideas, but also very delicate situations lived by them personally.

In the fourth phase of the project, after completing the lesson plan and 12 weeks after the beginning of the research, the students self-evaluated themselves again, following the same method they had used in the first phase of the project. This way, we could obtain some data to study and value the conception presented by them in relation to their own learning process. Furthermore, we could establish comparisons with the ones obtained in the peer-reviewed evaluations as a result of the works accomplished during the third phase.

In the fifth phase of our research, we analyzed the results obtained from the questionnaires:

Questionnaire T1: First self-evaluation at the beginning of the course.

Questionnaire T2: Peer review evaluations of the expositions about the syllabus.

Questionnaire T3: Peer review evaluations of the reading of children's literature texts and dubbing activities.

Questionnaire T4: Peer review evaluation of the audiovisual work.

Questionnaire T5: Second self-evaluation at the end of the lesson plan.

Previously to the exposition of the results obtained from our research, we proceed to describe and analyze the questionnaire used in the different phases of our research.

3.5. Description and validation of the questionnaire

After reviewing different questionnaires to evaluate and study the progress of the verbal and gestural aptitudes of the university students, and being unable to find one that covered the aspects that we planned to cover, we decided to create our own questionnaire. This was subjected to a statistical analysis regarding the research data. According to the results obtained, the questionnaire was structured by four theoretical dimensions, which respond to different aspects of the verbal communication. The description of the dimensions can be seen in Table 1.

Dimensions	Description
Dimension I	Referred to the command over the language: speaking accuracy, vocabulary adequacy, pronunciation precision, fluency, pauses, volume and rhythm.
Dimension II	Referred to the structure and organization of the exposition and to the improvisation skills to convince, build and inform.
Dimension III	Referred to the way how the attention transmits and maintains and to the way used to express feelings, enthusiasm and spontaneity through an adequate body language and visual contact.
Dimension IV	Referred to the closure of the exposition: emphasize and highlight the main points, create a practical value and obtain efficient conclusions.

Table 1. *Description of the theoretical dimensions of the questionnaire*

The final questionnaire is constituted by 30 items in total, 9 of which are referred to the first dimension, 6 to the second, 11 to the third and 4 to the fourth. The response format presented is based on Likert's scale (from 1 to 6), being 1 Very Deficient and 6 Excellent.

3.5.1. Sample

For the preliminary validation of the questionnaire and the analysis of its psychometrical properties, we used a sample of 112 individuals, students from two groups at their second year of a degree in education at the University of Malaga.

3.5.2. Reliability

To calculate the reliability of the questionnaire we used Cronbach's alpha internal consistency index, from which we obtained a *suitable* reliability, being the final index of the questionnaire .937.

3.5.3. Validity of the interpretations obtained from the tool's results

To calculate the validity of the construct and confirm the correspondence between the factors referred to the different aspects of the oral and gestural expression, we carried out a Factorial Analysis of the Main Component with rotation Varimax. Observing the association of the variables, we obtained 7 factors with auto values over 1. After a detailed analysis, we verified that 66% of the total variance could be explained as it is shown in table 2.

Factors	Auto values	% Variance	% Accumulated variance
1	10.708	35.694	35.694
2	2.296	7.652	43.346
3	2,046	6.822	50.167
4	1.517	5,057	55.225
5	1.159	3.863	59,088
6	1,085	3.615	62.703
7	1,013	3.378	66,081

Table 2. *Percentage of the total variance according to the different questionnaires*

4. Results obtained from the research

The results obtained from the statistical analysis provide us information about the existence of a learning evolution or learning improvement related to the oral and gestural expression over the 14 weeks of duration that last our research with the 112 students. With this purpose, we have compared the matrixes obtained from the questionnaires and their dimensions, calculating the percentage of the variance and establishing a difference on the averages between the questionnaires, in addition to the difference established considering the gender and the group.

4.1. Analysis of the matrixes

In table 3 we can observe the matrixes of the components and the saturation of the items referred to each factor, which we have extracted with the analysis of the main components. In Questionnaire 1 of the Pre-self-evaluation, there is a great dispersion of the information referred to the topic of the oral and gestural communication. On the contrary, 12 weeks later, in Questionnaire 5 of the Post-self-evaluation, we can observe that the knowledge of the research topic is gathered around 4 dimensions.

Table 3. *Matrix of the main components contained in the questionnaires*

QUESTIONNAIRE-1. PRE-SELF-EVALUATION
Matrix of the components

Item	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28,	.740			-.328			
4,	.687				-.402		
19,	.682						
23,	.679						-.353
14,	.670	-.362					
20,	.653			.326			
15,	.651	-.322					
27,	.648						
10,	.630	-.443					
21,	.621					.332	
6,	.615		.349	-.305			
30,	.602			-.362			
17,	.596		-.347			-.370	
7,	.591			-.377			
22,	.588	.371					
18,	.580		-.366				

QUESTIONNAIRE-5. POST-SELF-EVALUATION
Matrix of the components

Item	Component			
	1	2	3	4
7,	.811			
6,	.766			
5,	.671	.390		
29,	.613		.308	
8,	.558	.485		.307
16,	.540	.408	.411	
21,	.518	.319		
22,	.471	.395		.364
9,	.460	.441		.351
10,	.451	.408		.409
2,		.750		.312
3,		.688		
1,	.311	.688		
4,	.438	.543	.305	
20,	.377	.514	.363	.311

Table 4 shows the decreasing evolution of the students' learning process from the initial 7 dimensions to 4 in the last questionnaire. Both in that table and number 3 we can see how the knowledge of the 30 items stop being so abstract and dispersed, becoming gathered in four main topics.

Questionnaires	Pre-Self-E. (T1)	Peer-Review-E1 (T2)	Peer-Review-E2 (T3)	Peer-Review-E3 (T4)	Post Self-E. (T5)
Dimensions	7	6	6	5	4

Table 4. *Dimensions according to the questionnaires and the learning process*

4.2. Comparative analysis of the averages presented in the questionnaires

In table 5 we can see the average score obtained by all the students in each questionnaire. Next, we will analyze if this evolution (from the first questionnaire (T1) to the last one (T5) is significant or not when we compare the data obtained.

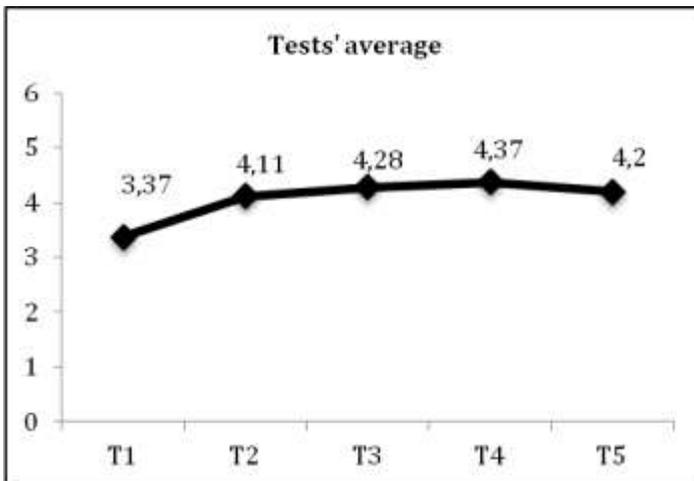


Table 5. *Comparison between the different measures obtained from the questionnaires*

To the question if any significant differences exist between the first self-evaluation (T1) and the last one (T5), with a temporary distance of 12 weeks, the response is that a difference of 0.8 points is

shown between the averages. Taking in consideration that the significant value of T5 regarding T1 is 0 points, we can affirm that significant differences exist. For this reason, we reject the invalid hypotheses and accept the alternate hypotheses, due to the existence of an improvement in the learning process of the oral and gestural communicative skills of the students based on the self-evaluation tests.

To the question if any significant differences exist between the questionnaires used to accomplish the peer-review evaluations and comparing the data obtained from questionnaires T2, T3 and T4, the response is that there are no significant differences between them, although a progressive rise of the averages exists. The difference between T2 (4.11 points) and T3 (4.28) is 0.16 points and with an index of significance of 1. Consequently, it is not significant. The same occurs between T3 (4.29 points) and T4 (4.37 points), with a difference of 0.095 points of average and with an index of significance of 0.93. There are no significant differences. In the case of the questionnaires T2 and T4, with a difference of 0.26 between their averages, according to the statistical data, there are differences with a level of significance of 0.49. Therefore, we accept the invalid hypotheses and affirm that between the learning process and during the peer-review evaluations, no significant differences appeared, although there was a progressive increase of the learning.

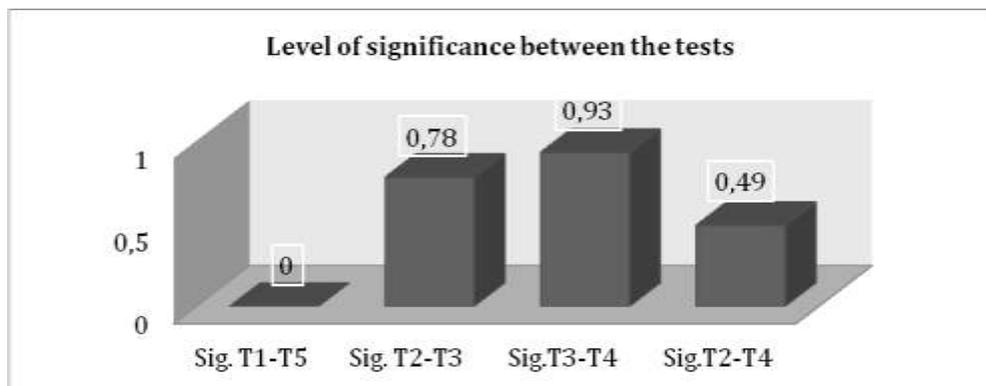


Table 6. *Comparison between the tests' averages*

To the question if any significant differences exist between the first questionnaire (T1) and the rest of them, according to the first self-evaluation completed by the students, they had a perception of their own oral and gestural expression valued at an average score of 3.37 points with regard to a maximum of 6 (outstanding), meaning it was “acceptable”. As we accomplished the consecutive questionnaires and the peer-review evaluations, the average score increased to 4.11 points in the second questionnaire (T2), 0.74 points more than the first one, with a level of significance of 0.02. With regard to T3, the rise reached an average scores of 4.28 points, 0.9 points more that in T1, with a level of significance of 0. With regard to the last peer-review test (T4) and reaching to 4.37 points, 1 point more than T1 and with a level of significance of 0, we can reject the invalid hypotheses and accept the alternate hypotheses according to which there are significant differences with the rest of the tests.

In graphic 7 we can see the difference between the last peer-review test (T4) and the last self-evaluation, with a difference of 0.17 average points and a level of significance of 0.6.

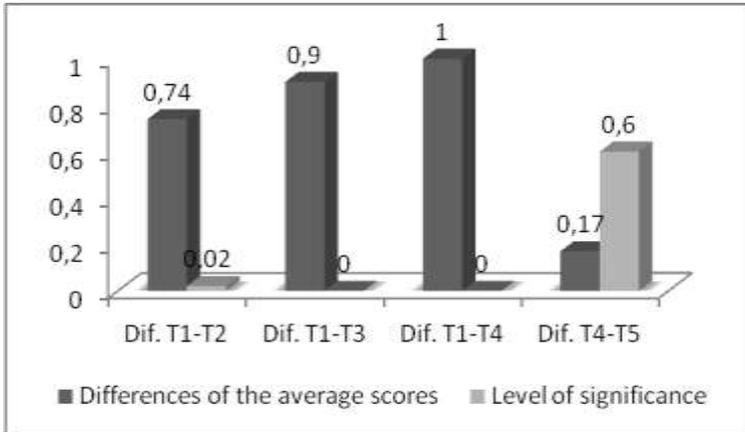


Table 7. Differences between the average scores and the level of significance of the tests

To the question if any significant differences referred to the sex exist, it only happened statistically in 5 of 30 items, of which 4 are related to Dimension 3. It is worth stressing that the girls obtained higher values with respect to the boys in 4 of the 11 items of Dimension 3, which is referred to how to express feelings, enthusiasm and spontaneity through a suitable body language and visual contact.

To the question if there are any differences between groups, significant differences exist in 8 of 30 items. Among them, one is referred to Dimension 1, another to Dimension 2 and 6 to Dimension 3. Regarding group 1, where there were more girls than boys, we see a non-significant relation between the differences by sex and group.

Conclusions

Although it is true that among the students who have access to the university exists a poor training in oral and gestural expression, one of the possible causes could be that their teachers haven't been trained during their academic training in these communicative abilities. Therefore, they have not being able to teach it to their students due to their lack of knowledge about the topic. Nowadays, the future teachers

can be trained at the university on oral and gestural expression through subjects such as “Didactic strategies for the development of verbal and written communication”, “Didactics of Spanish Language” or “Drama”, as long as their teachers have the appropriate training and are concerned about the competence and effectiveness of their students according to their future job. From our point of view, the data obtained from the first self-evaluation (T1) were excessively positive due to the fact that some students with an evident poor or deficient capability of express themselves in public or for making a good exposition valued themselves with 4 or 5 points being 6 the maximum. We wished to evaluate in a more objective way the oral expression of the students with the peer-review evaluations. After twelve weeks, we could observe a notable and evident improvement in almost the totality of the students, thanks partly to the high quantity of activities and projects accomplished in the classroom. This increased the opportunities given to the students to practice and improve their verbal and gestural abilities. In addition, the interest and the constant and voluntary participation of the students facilitated the learning process.

In the different questionnaires, specifically in the peer-review evaluations, we could detect the existence of a gradual evolution in the training that was observed and valued by the students. In our opinion, these evaluations were quite low in many cases, sometimes among students of the same group, due to feelings of rivalry and competition that existed between them. This reason why we think they were not significant between them, but the progress was still evident and significant. Perhaps, if the first self-evaluation had been accomplished in a more objective way, the improvement in the development of the oral and gestural expression of the students would be more significant. This is an aspect we must improve in future researches.

With the second and last self-evaluation, we could confirm that the students were concerned about their improvement in the learning process, aspect confirmed by the peer-review evaluations, although in many cases, the students were tough with themselves. The improvements were higher than the data provided by the young participants of the research in this last questionnaire. If we could have

kept working over the following weeks with the students, involving them in more projects and activities related to the improvement of their communicative competence, either only with them or collaborating with other teachers, we think we could have achieved more positive results.

Regarding the questionnaire used to value the progress of their abilities referred to their oral and gestural expression, according to the data obtained after the analysis was made, it is a reliable and valid tool to identify the evolution of the students as regards to their verbal expression.

To sum up, the project was effective, not only on the students, but also for the establishment of a starting point for future researches and collaborations with other teachers and schools, in addition to the students who would like to improve their communicative competence.

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