
The effect of the gender variable on the speeches of the pupils in Handball game in Tunisia

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Abstract: In this work, we pass from a behavioral conception that considers the teacher as the only source of information to a constructivist and even a semi-constructivist conception which focuses on the fact that the student is a real actor of the teaching-learning process. The objective is to study the semiotics of language interactions between pupils in Physical Education and Sport sessions and the power balance between girls and boys (Wallian, 2010). Discursive interlocutions of Tunisian pupils in handball are marked by a constant negotiation about domination and by a formulation of action projects (Zghibi, 2009). These language interactions have the advantage of deploying a rich and multifaceted rhetoric which is a sign of dynamic learning.

Keywords: Verbalization, Game, Handball, Speeches, Gender

1. Introduction

This study uses a semio-constructivist approach. It aims to study the verbal exchanges between pupils and the power balance between girls and boys during a football game in order to detect the role of language in PES learning in Tunisia. Such a work can indeed, make a valuable contribution to the science of intervention in terms of PES. The purpose is to take into account pupils opinions and how they co-construct their knowledge in and via action (Zghibi and al, 2013a ; Zghibi and al, 2013b).

In accordance with the works of Gréhaigine and Godbout (1999) and Gréhaigine (2009) on the teaching of team sports, and Wallian's works (2007a and 2007b) on the discursive socio-constructivism, the research approach is original. It uses field practices in order to allow pupils to structure their mutual positioning and to develop their interpretation of the game collectively.

Pedagogically and didactically, this paper involves an essential paradigmatic character. The use of linguistics and especially semiotics in team sports generates a real cultural rupture in the teaching/learning methods. The Physical Education and Sports (PES) is no longer a simple motor response, but also a way of discursive interlocutions between subjects. They build a full meaning via the co-construction of effective strategies in order to implement

common projects (Gréhaigine et al, 2004).

2. Methodology

A class of 20 pupils (8 girls and 12 boys) with an average of 15 years old alternates French and Tunisian Arabic as mediums of education. If the pupils' speech appears as determinant in the study, language support and distribution of the speech per gender are also relevant factors in the dynamics of verbal exchanges analysis.

What is the impact of this gender approach it in the dynamics of verbal exchanges and in achieving common projects? What is main language support used by boys and by girls? What is the impact of language choice on the Tunisian educational system and on the cultural context of the pupils?

The research protocol proposed in this work is, therefore, to organize a handball teaching cycle of eight "one effective-hour" sessions (8 hours of motor and verbal practice were observed and recorded). The proposed sessions are all based on game situations on a handball court (40 m X 20 m). Each session includes two game situations separated by a sequence of ideas' debate for 6 minutes (3 minutes under the supervision of the teacher and 3 others in his absence (Gréhaigine and Godbout, 1998; Zghibi, 2013a). The descriptive approach is qualitative and quantitative. The

first tends to convey the pupils' language productions through analysis models inspired from linguistics (Austin, 1970). This model distinguishes three speech acts: locutionary act, the illocutionary act, the perlocutionary act. The quantitative model serves to identify the effect of the gender variable over the modalities of decision making.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative Study of Girls/Boys Power Balance

3.1.1. The Distribution of the Speech Made by Boys/Girls in Presence of the Teacher

Table 1. The speech made by boys and girls in presence of the teacher

Sessions	Session1	Session2	Session3	Session4	Session5	Session6	Session7	Session8	Total
Boys	4	5	4	4	7	6	5	5	40
Girls	4	3	3	5	5	7	6	5	38

We note here that in presence of the teacher, girls intervene in speech (38) as well as boys do (40). No significant difference was noted between the speeches of girls and boys.

3.1.2. The Distribution of the Speech Made by Boys/Girls in the Teacher'S Absence

When the teacher is absent, boys tend to speak more than

girls. The difference is significant. The table below shows the number of interventions of both sexes in speech on the absence of the teacher. Indeed, there was a substantial increase in the number of boys' contributions comparing to girls during the times when the teacher is absent. We counted 82 interventions in total, including 53 made by boys and only 29 by girls.

Table 2. The speech made by both genders in absence of the teacher

Sessions	Session1	Session2	Session3	Session4	Session5	Session6	Session7	Session8	Total
Boys	5	4	6	5	7	7	8	9	53
Girls	2	3	2	3	3	2	4	5	29

We can therefore conclude that the boys' participation in the debate of ideas is major. Quantitatively, the number of their interventions is more relevant than girls' verbal productions.

3.1.3. Interpretation

The fact that the intervention of girls in the debate of ideas increase only in the teacher's presence can be explained by the persistence of patriarchal system that dominates the Tunisian society (Borrmans, 1977; EL Khayat, 1985; Belhssen, 1992). This system keeps women through constant supremacy made by men, and in conditions of unequal states. Education received by the Tunisian young child, is mainly issued from Arab-Muslim culture that recognizes the differences between men and women. It passes through socialization, ways of doing, thinking, and acting of each gender: (expl boys dominate in discussions). Since it is the "sport", that was for a long time considered incompatible with women (Oglesby, 1986), the situation of sport is "one of the social situations where men and women can effectively implement differences" (Goffman, 2002). Thus, gender is seen as a collective way of life (Matthew, 1991). Like many other domains, sport is a mirror of the social. Not to mention that our subjects are in an age with huge differences to appear between the two sexes (Bessis & Belhassen, 1992). This refers to a substantial literature about sex differences in educational practices. Barry and al consider that men were relevantly more trained to

achievement and independence while the female used to obey and to maternity (Clelland et al, 1953). We can therefore conclude that the presence of the teacher represent the educational institution, supposed as based on equal opportunities for girls and boys. Teachers decrease the boys' dominance. That way, girls feel more encouraged, even protected by the presence of the teacher, they feel more free to participate in conversations and express their opinions.

3.2. Qualitative Study of Girls/Boys Power Balance

In this section we analyze the pupils' speech in the absence of the teacher to see the impact of the gender variable in their verbal productions.

➤ Session N°1

- Nouredin (boy): "We must continue to play in the same way"
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order, injunction
- Nabila (girl): "The solution ... the solution is to attack with more than two players"
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: declaration

In this brief dialogue, we note that the boy dominates the discussion, since he produces an injunctive discourse involving the whole group. Nabila, disagrees with him, since she guides the discussion to another solution adopting an assertive form. As a result, the boy's speech does not exceed the level of proposal that does not oblige anyone. Things

would be different if the girl used the same form of speech that her classmate. Her speech would then cancel the first to surpass it.

➤ Session N°2

- Naim (boy) : *“We will try to take the initiative and be the first to score”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Fawzi (boy): *“But are you a defender with us or what?”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: interrogation
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: reproach
- “Try to get the ball”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “It’s not acceptable that you are stuck in the same place!”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: reproach

It seems that the power balance is on the side of Naim, since he imposes to his teammates game tactics involving the whole group: he appears then as the strategist of the group. These findings would be confirmed if he did not face the intervention of his teammate Fawzi who just criticized all his plans. Fawzi’s speeches were interrogative and assertive and they have the form of reproaches that defy what is already said. These verbal productions are reinforced by injunctive form conveying reproaches. From this brief discussion, we can deduce that there is a tension between members of the same team. Concerning power balance, it is always the boys who dominate.

➤ Session N°3

- Nourreddin (boy): *“We must score again”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “We have to keep a defender to survey the backside”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “Provide coverage at the back”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “We have to score other goals so we can play at ease”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Fawzi (boy): *“We have to participate collectively in the ball recuperation”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “Since you don’t try to pull the ball, we will never be able to win”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: declaration
- “We have to try collectively to take the ball from them”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “It must be done continuously and not occasionally!”*

- ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
- ✓ Perlocutionary act: order

For both Nourreddin for Fawzi, they use injunctive sentences conveying orders about how to play. Their verbal exchange offers plans to make in order to score via this use of injunctive forms listing many instructions to be followed by all team members.

➤ Session N°4

- Montassar (boy): *“We will try not to throw the ball no matter how”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “Try to no more use long passes too”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act : injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “We will opt for short passes”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act : injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Chayma (girl) : *“We will try to be faster in attack”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act : injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Imed (boy): *“We must get closer because we're leaving them plenty space”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- “We must reduce the gaps by making a man to man defense”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Hamdi (boy) : *“Try not to let them play freely”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Imed (boy) : *“We must be organized in defense not to concede goals”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Chawki (boy) : *“We need to score more because they always find spaces, and they can score at any moment”*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order

Four pupils were involved in this debate: one girl and three boys. Although the speech of Montassar is injunctive offering game prospects, Imed’s verbal productions remain more perfectible. Indeed, he does not just gives injunctions that involve everyone, but also, he presents argumentative connectives. He uses the justification of his opinions and of the eventual consequences to convince his interlocutors. In the same way, Chawki, in addition to the injunction, uses justification. For Chayma, reformulating an order is not associated to clear explanation. It is clear that the discourse of boys is more consistent than that of girls. Not only quantitatively (01 girl and 04 boys) but also in terms of contribution to the game improvement. This leads us to conclude that girls are dominated by boys; they do not participate as much as boys in verbal exchanges and are briefs in their interventions.

➤ **Session N°5**

- Noureddin (boy): *"We should concentrate more"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Nawfel (boy): *"We have to profit on every occasion"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Noureddin (boy): *"let's try to no more play air balls and play as usual"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Nabila (girl): *"We must wait until we score. Since there are occasions on target, we have chances to score"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Noureddin (boy): *"It would be better that you passed me the ball because i am in a better position than you"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: declaration

The game's actors continue to produce a speech oriented to game tactics to adopt to get back into the game and lead the score. Paradoxically, the speech of Nabila is the richest. Her injunctions are reinforced by explanatory argumentative structures. She uses argumentation to demonstrate the utility of her proposals. In the other hand, boys' injunctions are short and rigid, without any explanation. Qualitatively, the power balance tends to be reversed in favor of girls.

➤ **Session N°6**

- Montasser (boy): *"I'm also the last defender; I'm the responsible of all the defense so I have to move forward and anticipate"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion / injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: declaration
- Ahmed (boy): *"We have change our organization"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Nawfel (boy): *"We should use long shots and from all the distances"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Naim (boy): *"That's why we have to profit on those lost balls"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: declaration
- Riadh (boy): *"We have to carry on playing collectively because it's our strength"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: declaration
- Hanen (girl): *"Now we have to be organized so we can be able to stop them and dominate"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Hanen (girl): *"Believe me, we can easily dominate them"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion

✓ Perlocutionary act: declaration

In general, all the verbal productions aimed to project orders about how to play collectively. Boys' injunctive discourse is completed by arguments. Whether justificative or consequential, arguments given by boys inform us about the reasons and the expected impact of those decisions. Hanen is involved in the same logic twice. Her presence is unfortunately distorted by the quantitative dimension of the verbal production made by the opposite sex. In this sense, the boys dominate the discourse again.

➤ **Session N°7**

- Noureddin (boy): *"You can score without shooting. Like that, you can place the ball"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: reproach
- Hanen (girl): *"We are not organized"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: reproach
- Hanen (girl): *"We must be better placed all over the pitch"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Riadh (boy): *"We must attack stronger than this"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Fawzi (boy): *"We must reverse the situation"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Fawzi (boy): *"Attack instead of defending!!"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: injunction
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Imed (boy): *"We must circulate the ball before going to attack"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Leila (girl): *"We have to progress as fast as possible to their target"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order

Two key moments characterize the verbal exchange: reproach and proposed orders to remedy. On a syntactic level, there are two types of sentences: assertive and injunctive. Except Hanen's speech, all statements, whether assertive or conveying orders, remain laconic offering only solutions to be back in the game. Hanen, not only just reformulate a reproach, but she completes it by the full injunctive structure proposing a solution. This made her speech the more structured compared to her teammates.

➤ **Session N°8**

- Nawfel (boy): *"We must continue to play like this"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Ahmed (boy): *"We must intercept the ball, if not, we will not fix this problem"*
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Nawfel (boy): *"We have to surpass their marking otherwise, we will not win"*

- ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
- ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Montassar (boy): “*We should no more concede goals*”
“*We have to call for a pass in the open spaces*”
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Nawfel (boy): “*We must take advantage of occasions we have*”
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Chawki (boy): “*We have to avoid losing balls stupidly*”
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Nabila (girl): “*We have to shoot*”
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order
- Chawki : “*We must not shoot, we have to fix the goalkeeper and dribble him, the target is too small to shoot from a long distance*”
 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order

“*We have to approach as possible as we can from the goalkeeper before taking any decision*”

 - ✓ Illocutionary act: assertion
 - ✓ Acte perlocutoire : order

“*We will attack in pairs and each time we change the roles*”

 - ✓ Acte illocutoire : assertion
 - ✓ Perlocutionary act: order

Whether produced by girls or boys, all statements are assertive serving to give orders. They are all instructions to correct the failure. Most are, in fact, accompanied by a brief argument that explains the cause or the consequence of the act. Nabila produced a structured speech but she is dominated by boys who made more. Among all the interventions, Chawki’s speech remains the most consistent. Quantitatively, girls are dominated by boys who made more intervention regardless of the presence or absence of the teacher. The number of their interventions exceeds that of girls who participate in the debate relevantly less than their male teammates. This result was confirmed by the qualitative study. Indeed, although the girls seem to take part in the discussion, their interventions remain unimportant. Their analytical verbal productions remain negligible or less perfectible compared to those of the boys. Girls are unable to gain the upper hand over the boys.

4. Conclusion

The semio-constructivist approach applied in the PES didactics, is an innovation. This study starts from a handball game situation played in a Tunisian scholar environment, based on Austin’s typology (1970). The language interactions are characterized by deploying a rich and multifaceted rhetoric reflecting learning dynamic. It is up to the teacher to schedule and plan sequences of verbalization

in PES programs in order to give the game a reflective dimension. This can be a favorable condition for the collective success for all pupils who participate in the process of co-construction of knowledge via their own experiences lived in the game situations. Such occasions, are required to lead pupils to do analysis and to understand what happens during the game situations.

Verbal exchanges between pupils can help them to build effective action rules collectively. In addition, the teacher can allow girls to better contribute to decisions by giving them more opportunities to participate in conversations by democratizing the distribution of speech between girls and boys. Such an approach can strengthen the position and the role of the girls in the game during a PES session and the role and state of women in Tunisian society in general.

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