

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE SOCIAL SKILLS STUDENTS OF JOURNALISM AND OF SPEECH PATHOLOGY

## *Análise comparativa das habilidades sociais dos estudantes de jornalismo e de fonoaudiologia*

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** to compare the repertoire of social skills of students of Journalism and Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences. **Methods:** 189 students participated this study, 89 students of Journalism (63 women and 26 men), aged between 18 and 28 years, and 100 students of speech, language and hearing sciences (96 women and 4 men) with ages varying between 18 and 31 years. Who have responded to the Social Skills inventory. **Results:** students of speech, language and hearing sciences demonstrated social skills rated as “good above average” for social communication skills (F1), civility (F2), empathic (F4), work (F5) and “very elaborated” to assertive social skills (F3) and overall score. And the journalism students presented the rating of “Good below average” for social skills of civility (F2) and “Good above average” for social communication skills (F1), assertive (F3), empathic (F4), work (F5) and overall score. The results showed that there was statistically significant difference ( $p = 0,001$ ) in the social skills of civility (F2), work (F5) and overall score. **Conclusions:** It can be concluded that students of speech, language and hearing sciences showed better results than the journalism students to the social skills of civility (F2), work (F5) and overall score.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Communication; Journalism; Students; Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences

### ■ INTRODUCTION

Human communication is a complex subject related to social and professional function. Professionally, social competence has been required and valued in practically all areas of knowledge and individuals have to improve their social skills to present an effective interpersonal communication and succeed<sup>1,2</sup>. Social skills are specific behaviors which result in positive social interactions.

Some studies have claimed that the development of social skills should be part of professionals' qualification, i.e., higher education should include technical knowledge with quality and individual

excellence as well as the development of interpersonal competencies which involve cooperation and team work<sup>1,3</sup>.

Currently, researches on higher education students' social skills have provided the base from social skills assessment methodology to social skills training programs in educational contexts<sup>4-6</sup>. The assessment of social skills is related to social interaction situations<sup>2,7</sup> and the Social Skills Inventory (SSI) by Del Prette & Del Prette (2001)<sup>3</sup>, which presents questions contemplating a myriad of demands, interlocutors and situations, is a frequently used tool. These studies assume particular importance when one considers mainly those areas in which performance depends, critically, on the quality of professional-client relationships<sup>8-14</sup>.

Journalists are among the professionals who must develop social skills in order to attain an effective communication and thus, succeed professionally. For journalism students, the development of social skills allows greater access to information,

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besides greater ease in their communication and professional performance. For them, it is important that information of public interest be transmitted reliably, as they act in all society interfaces and help to shape citizens' critical awareness.

Likewise, speech pathologists focus their work on human communication. Speech pathology is involved with human communication from its development process to its improvement and even with communication disorders which demand rehabilitation. Human communication allows the humanization and socialization process, hence, for Speech Pathology students, the development of social skills is paramount to their professional career.

No studies in the scientific literature have explored the social competence of students in both courses, therefore, this study aimed at comparing the social skills of Journalism students with those of Speech Pathology pupils.

## ■ METHODS

This is an exploratory and descriptive study from the analysis of two previous works: "Social skills in Journalism students" and "Social skills in Speech Pathology students", both approved by the Ethics in Research (CEP) - Bauru School of Dentistry of the University of São Paulo (FOB/USP), under protocols No. 045/2008 and No. 016/2008.

Eighty-nine journalism students of the Paulista State University "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" – UNESP/Bauru, being 63 (71%) females and 26 (29%) males, between 18 and 28 years and mean age 21 yrs ± 1yr and 10 months, and 100 students from the Speech Pathology course of the Bauru Dental School – University of São Paulo – FOB/USP, i.e., 96 (96%) females and 4 (4%) males, between 18 and 31 years and mean age 23 yrs ±1 yr and 5 months, participated in this study.

The criteria were as follows: be 18 or older and study either Journalism or Speech Pathology in any period of the course. These criteria aimed at probing the knowledge of these college students at the beginning of their professional training.

Following the authorization of the dean and teachers, the researchers visited classrooms from the first to the fourth year of Journalism, explained the goal of the study to the students and invited them to participate. No one refused to join the research.

The Social Skills Inventory (SSI)<sup>3</sup>, whose purpose is to characterize social performance in different daily situations (work, school, family) and allows the analysis of psychometric characteristics in young populations, was the tool used to assess and analyze the social skills.

SSI comprises 38 items and each one describes a situation of social performance demand and the possible reactions to it (never or seldom; little frequency; regular frequency; quite often; always or almost always). Out of the 38 items, 31 were divided into five factors (F1, F2, F3, F4, and F5) and the other seven were analyzed separately, according to the manual's instructions:

- **F1 Social communication skills:** corresponds to asking and answering questions; gratifying and complimenting; asking and giving *feedback* in social relations; initiating, keeping and finishing a conversation (items 1, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 29);
- **F2 Social civility skills:** refers to self-affirmation skills, being also related to a part of the assertiveness concept; say "please"; say "thanks"; introduce oneself; greet; say "goodbye" (items 03, 06, 08, 10, 28, 30, 35);
- **F3 Assertive social coping skills:** presupposes knowledge of the rules of everyday relationships; express opinion, agree, disagree; request, accept and refuse requests; apologize and admit fault; establish emotional/sexual relationship; end a relationship; express anger and ask for behavioral change; interact with authorities; handle criticism (items 13, 17, 19, 22, 24, 36, 37);
- **F4 Empathic social skills:** portrays situations which involve approaching unfamiliar people; paraphrasing; reflecting feelings and expressing support (items 9, 14, 23, 26);
- **F5 Social work skills:** involve reaction and control of anger and aggression; group coordination; speaking in public; solving problems; making decisions and mediating conflicts (items 18, 31, 38).

The remaining seven items of the questionnaire (02, 04, 25, 27, 32, 33, 34) refer to the following situations: "Ask someone to change his/her behavior", "Interrupt someone else's speech", "Deal with fair criticism", "Express dislikes to friends", "Request help from friends", "Negotiate the use of condom" and "Refuse abusive requests".

The students were given the questionnaire and answered it in the presence of the researchers who explained the directions, emphasizing that there were no correct or incorrect answers and highlighted the importance of responding all items. They were available for any clarification and guaranteed the anonymity of the respondents. On average, the questionnaire was applied in 20 minutes.

For data analysis, the overall score (sum of the responses of the 38 items) and the specific score of the five factors of each student, were calculated according to the manual's instructions<sup>3</sup>. The scores were converted into percentile (P) and

divided according to the classification proposed by the authors<sup>3</sup>, these being: Need for training (P1 to P25), Good below average (P26 to P49), Medium (P50), Good above average (P51 to P75) and Quite elaborate (P>75).

The remaining seven items of the questionnaire, not included in the five factors, were analyzed separately and classified according to the presence or absence of difficulty in such behaviors.

The chi-square test was used for the statistical analysis of this study and the Mann-Whitney for proportions, so as to verify possible differences between the groups, for each variable of interest, and the value  $p < 0,05$  was considered as the significant result.

It is worth noting that the age range is quite small, thus, the age variable did not have a significant

effect on the statistical comparison tests, and being homogeneous, the distribution of students, per year, was not submitted to isolated or comparative analysis, according to the year attended.

## ■ RESULTS

Table 1 shows the mean values and standard deviation obtained from the SSI answers given by the students of Journalism and Speech Pathology for the five social skills factors and the statistical result from the comparison between scores.

Table 2 shows the comparison between the answers obtained from the students of Journalism and Speech Pathology for each one of the remaining items of the SSI, as to the presence or absence of difficulties.

**Table 1 – Mean and standard deviation of the scores of the five factors of social skills and general score of SSI for the students of Journalism and Speech Pathology and the statistical result of the comparison between the courses, for each factor.**

Factor	Social Skills	SSI			
		Course	Mean	Standard Deviation	p*
F1	Communication	S. Pathology	62.50	27.49	0.500
		Journalism	62.50	25.60	
F2	Civility	S. Pathology	62.50	26.63	0.001
		Journalism	47.50	26.44	
F3	Assertive Coping	S. Pathology	77.50	33.53	0.058
		Journalism	70.00	31.60	
F4	Empathy	S. Pathology	66.25	27.23	0.375
		Journalism	67.50	26.74	
F5	Work	S. Pathology	65.00	22.08	0.001
		Journalism	55.00	23.89	
	Global Score	S. Pathology	77.50	27.51	0.001
		Journalism	60.50	29.44	

\*Mann-Whitney test.

**Table 2 – Percentages of the seven items not included in the five factors of the Social Skills Inventory, obtained from students of Journalism and Speech Pathology, and the statistical result of the comparison between the courses, for each item.**

Items of the SSI, not included in the five factors				
Items	Course	With difficulty (%)	With no difficulty (%)	p*
Ask for behavioral change (Q02)	S. Pathology	65.00	35.00	0.148
	Journalism	29.03	70.97	
Interrupt someone else's speech (Q04)	S. Pathology	52.00	48.00	0.285
	Journalism	59.68	40.32	
Deal with fair criticism (Q25)	S. Pathology	67.00	33.00	0.583
	Journalism	30.65	69.35	
Express dislikes to friends (Q27)	S. Pathology	40.00	60.00	0.436
	Journalism	33.87	66.13	
Request help from friends (Q32)	S. Pathology	62.00	38.00	0.124
	Journalism	62.90	37.10	
Negotiate the use of condom (Q33)	S. Pathology	90.00	10.00	0.654
	Journalism	11.29	88.71	
Refuse abusive requests (Q34)	S. Pathology	23.00	77.00	0.712
	Journalism	30.65	69.35	

\*Chi-Square test.

## ■ DISCUSSION

Graduation is a period of intense learning and social development for students of Journalism and Speech Pathology and the knowledge of their social skills will encourage the development of new strategies, seeking a better personal communication and professional performance.

The results from the comparison between the social skills of Journalism and Speech Pathology students show a statistically significant difference ( $p=0,01$ ) between two of five factors (F2 and F5) and between global scores. These results indicate that the Speech Pathology students presented better global social skills of civility and work as compared to Journalism pupils.

In general, the students of Speech Pathology showed social skills rated as "Good above average" for F1, F2, F4 and F5, and "rather elaborate" for F3 and global score. The students of Journalism were classified as "Good below average" for F2 and "Good above average" for F1, F3, F4, F5 and global score. Similar results in relation to some social skills were found in the study carried out by Del Prette et al. (2004)<sup>13</sup>, in which students of Psychology were rated as "Good above average" for F1, F3, F4, global score and "Good below average" for F2 and F5. One can assume that this result owes to the fact that Journalism students present a higher frequency

of social skills which involve the knowledge of the rules of everyday relationships, situations that demand approaching unfamiliar people. This is related to the function journalists perform in their daily routine, that is, the role of bringing the public close to the facts, under the perspective of reaching the recipient through the news is a Journalist's essential function, communication being the focus of the relationship<sup>9,10</sup>.

The students of Speech Pathology presented a greater frequency for all skills described, and this reflects the relations established between the health professionals and the user, which must be guided by their capacity to understand the suffering manifested and the immediate meaning of their actions and words. It is further understood that this relationship is not only based on the communication of facts, but also on behaviors and attitudes characterized as humanization or care towards the patient<sup>13</sup>. One may infer that this skill present in the students of Speech Pathology was developed throughout the course, not observed in the students of Journalism, though. Both are 4-year courses, however, the students of Speech Pathology, in their last two years, are inserted in practical activities such as diagnostic and therapeutic interventions at the Speech Pathology Clinic, and guidance to the population, in the Basic Health Units of the city. It can be stated that the deficiency in the acquisition

of social skills is due to the lack of knowledge for the implementation of a special social skill or failure in discriminating social behaviors which are appropriate in specific situations<sup>12</sup>.

The educational institution influences the professional's training process and can provide support for future actions in the workplace. Thus, undergraduate courses should encourage, through the disciplines offered, interpersonal development as part of the academic goals<sup>13</sup>. In this respect, it is understood that the practical disciplines which allow contact with the patient, the family, the population, stimulate students to develop social skills, which are urgently needed.

The statistical analysis of the comparison between the courses, as to the seven questions not included in the five factors of the SSI between students of Speech Pathology and Journalism showed no significant difference between the groups. It is noteworthy that in the analysis of the data presented, the terms of social performance standard are measured by the SSI in the emission frequency of socially competent reactions, therefore, the formal aspects of the performance of the skills assessed and its proficiency, include just the frequency report, although it is understood that frequency is just one of the dimensions used to assess social skills.

Thus, one can say that although the maximum of social competence implies in greater behavioral flexibility, typical of humans' adaptive capacity, people are not equally skillful in different interpersonal situations and the socially approved and valued performances can vary greatly from one culture to another. This situational-cultural character of social competence opposes to the notion of personality traits, implying the need for assessing the social performance under different contexts, demands and probable and significant interlocutors in the interpersonal relationships of the target population<sup>14</sup>. This analysis becomes more and more important, since good communication, which in turn transmits credibility, is a basic necessity for the development of interpersonal competence of every human being.

## ■ CONCLUSION

The social skills comparison between students of Journalism and students of Speech Pathology shows that the latter performed better, as represented by the global score and specifically, in the social skills of civility and work.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** comparar o repertório de habilidades sociais de estudantes de Jornalismo e de Fonoaudiologia. **Métodos:** participaram desta pesquisa 189 estudantes, sendo 89 do curso de Jornalismo (63 mulheres e 26 homens), com idades variando entre de 18 e 28 anos, e 100 de curso de Fonoaudiologia (96 mulheres e 4 homens) com idades entre 18 a 31 anos. Todos os participantes responderam ao *Inventário de Habilidades Sociais*. **Resultados:** os estudantes de Fonoaudiologia demonstraram o repertório de habilidades sociais classificado como "Bom acima da média" para habilidades sociais de comunicação (F1), de civilidade (F2), empáticas (F4) e de trabalho (F5) e classificado como "Bastante elaborado" para as habilidades sociais assertivas de enfrentamento (F3) e escore global. Os estudantes de Jornalismo apresentaram a classificação "Bom abaixo da média" para habilidades sociais de civilidade (F2) e "Bom acima da média" para as habilidades sociais de comunicação (F1), assertivas de enfrentamento (F3), empáticas (F4), de trabalho (F5) e escore global. As análises estatísticas demonstraram diferença estatisticamente significativa ( $p=0,001$ ) entre os alunos dos cursos de Fonoaudiologia e Jornalismo no escore global e para as habilidades sociais de civilidade (F2) e de trabalho (F5), com melhores resultados dos estudantes Fonoaudiologia. **Conclusão:** os estudantes de Fonoaudiologia apresentaram melhor desempenho nas habilidades sociais representado pelo escore global e de modo específico nas habilidades sociais de civilidade e de trabalho.

**DESCRITORES:** Comunicação Social; Jornalismo; Estudantes; Fonoaudiologia.

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