

Speech-language pathology in the preparation of journalists: results of an action plan

A fonoaudiologia na formação do jornalista: resultados de uma proposta de atuação

Telma Dias dos Santos¹ , Lésle Piccolotto Ferreira¹ , Marta Assumpção de Andrada e Silva^{1,2} 

ABSTRACT

Purpose: To present and evaluate the effect of a speech-language pathology (SLP) intervention proposal focused on professional communication for undergraduate students of journalism. **Methods:** The study sample consisted of 23 journalism students. The SLP intervention was held in eight four-hour meetings, and evaluation of the students' communicative performance was conducted by 75 viewer judges. Pre- and post-intervention assessments were performed through analysis of videos considering the body, speech, emotion and interpretation aspects. **Results:** According to the judges, most (91.3%) of the students showed better communicative performance on video after the intervention. The parameters associated with the emotion and interpretation aspect showed the largest number of positive characteristics mentioned on the post-intervention videos. **Conclusion:** The SLP intervention program for professional television communication improved the communicative performance of most journalism students in the study sample. The aspects referred the most by the judges to justify this improvement were associated with emotion and interpretation followed by speech and body.

Keywords: Intervention study; Voice; Communication; Journalism; Speech, language, and hearing sciences

RESUMO

Objetivo: apresentar e avaliar o efeito de uma proposta de intervenção fonoaudiológica com foco na comunicação profissional, para alunos de graduação em jornalismo. **Métodos:** Vinte e três participaram, como sujeitos, 23 estudantes de jornalismo. A intervenção fonoaudiológica foi dividida em oito encontros, com duração de quatro horas cada, e a avaliação do desempenho comunicativo dos alunos foi feita por 75 juízes telespectadores. A avaliação dos momentos antes e depois da intervenção foi realizada por meio de análise de vídeos e dividida em aspectos do corpo, da fala, emocionais e de interpretação. **Resultados:** a maioria (91,3%) dos alunos apresentou desempenho comunicativo melhor no vídeo após intervenção, de acordo com os juízes. Os parâmetros relacionados aos aspectos emocionais e de interpretação foram os que tiveram mais características citadas positivamente nos vídeos após intervenção. **Conclusão:** o programa de intervenção fonoaudiológica para comunicação profissional televisiva promoveu melhora no desempenho comunicativo da maioria dos alunos de jornalismo da amostra pesquisada. Os aspectos que os juízes mais referiram para justificar a melhora foram os relacionados à interpretação/emocional, em primeiro lugar, seguidos pelos aspectos da fala e do corpo.

Palavras chave: Estudo de intervenção; Voz; Comunicação; Jornalismo; Fonoaudiologia

Study carried out at Pontifícia Departamento de Fonoaudiologia, Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUC-SP – São Paulo (SP), Brasil.

¹Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUC-SP – São Paulo (SP), Brasil.

²Faculdade de Ciências Médicas, Santa Casa de São Paulo – São Paulo (SP), Brasil.

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Corresponding author: Telma Dias dos Santos. E-mail: telmafono@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Although television (TV) has not overcome the influence of radio, and currently disputes space with the Internet, it is still one of the most influential channels of communication. TV journalism contributes to social reality, but is also constructed by society^(1,2). The recent changes brought about by new communication technologies have introduced significant modifications in news production, which is currently conceived and narrated through journalistic conversation of familiar routine recognized by the spectators⁽³⁾. These technologies enable the generation and multiplication of simultaneous informative content, and require that TV journalists and anchors be prepared to create differentiated content^(4,5).

The work of speech-language pathologists in TV stations has assisted with the preparation of journalists' communication for many products⁽⁶⁾. For over four decades, speech-language pathology (SLP) has developed a dynamic improvement work regarding the expressiveness of these professionals^(6,7) due to their increasingly changing demand.

Similarly, the inclusion of SLP therapy in technical courses for TV professionals is noteworthy. In contrast, the current journalism students were born in the era of connectivity and grew up immersed in technology. They are comfortable with just-in-time learning, and learn what is necessary when it is necessary⁽⁸⁾. This is a generation that needs work focused on professional communication with training and practical experiences^(9,10), which justifies the use of a SLP intervention especially designed for them. This study aimed at presenting and evaluating the effect of an intervention proposal with a focus on professional communication for undergraduate journalism students. We hypothesized that a SLP intervention with practical content on the professional performance of TV journalists would improve their communicative performance.

METHOD

The study sample was composed of 23 undergraduate journalism students, 11 male and 12 female, aged 18-21 years, from a public university in the city of São Paulo, Brazil.

The SLP intervention was held in eight weekly meetings with duration of four hours each, totaling 32 hours (Chart 1). In these meetings, the participants performed vocal exercises aimed at respiratory and postural adjustment, relaxation, and vocal and articulatory warm up prior to each practical activity.

The students were individually evaluated on their recording of an excerpt from a TV journalistic text collected in the script archives of a national news program of a TV station in São Paulo. The text was available for reading on a computer screen (Acer Aspire), in power point presentation mode, font Calibri, size 32, capital letters.

The pre-intervention recording was conducted in a silent classroom using a digital camera (Sony Cyber-Shot, DSC-W730). At the moment of the recordings, the students were asked to stand up 1.2 m away from the computer screen

to allow closed and half frames⁽¹¹⁾ and evaluation of body expressiveness.

The post-intervention recording was conducted at the end of the final meeting. The students were again called, one by one, to record the reading of the same text, following the same procedures used at the pre-intervention sessions. Both recordings have image and sound of satisfactory quality. All participants were in good health conditions on the recording days.

The collected material was analyzed by 75 viewer judges of both genders aged ≥ 25 years. The judges were selected based on the television audience profile, which reveals that the spectators who spend more time in front of the TV are of both genders, with 37% aged >50 years and 31% aged 25-49 years*, an age range that represents 79% of the spectators who use TV to remain informed**. The judges evaluated 23 pairs of videos (pre- and post-intervention recordings) and through an instrument containing two multiple-choice questions with three different categories in question 2: body aspects; speech aspect; and emotion and interpretation aspects (Figure 1).

The pre- and post-intervention videos recorded by the students were randomized and edited in pairs as a strategy to prevent the judges from identifying their origin (pre- or post-intervention). Statistical analysis was performed using the Pearson Chi-squared test at a significance level of 5%.

The study was approved by the Ethics Research Committee of the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo* under protocol no. CAAE 39280514.3.0000.5482. All participants (students and judges) were volunteers and signed an Informed Consent Form (ICF) prior to study commencement.

RESULTS

According to the results obtained, 91.3% of the students performed better after the SLP intervention ($p < 0.01$) (Table 1).

In the group analysis of the 23 individuals, the comparison between pre- and post-SLP intervention showed significant improvement after intervention: 86.0% (n=1498) vs. 14% (n= 238); $\chi^2 = 886.6$, $p < 0.001$).

The results also showed improvement in all three evaluated aspects at the post-intervention moments, with proximity between the moment after intervention and the interaction of the body, speech, and emotion and interpretation aspects (Figure 2).

* IBOPE Online. Brazilians spend more time in front of the TV. 2014. Published on Jan 22, 2014 [accessed on Jul 27, 2015], available at <http://www.ibope.com.br/pt-br/noticias/Paginas/Brasileiros-passam-mais-tempo-em-frente-a-TV.aspx>

** SECOM - *Secretaria de Comunicação Social da Presidência da República*. Brazilian Media research 2015: Media habits of the Brazilian population. Brasília, DF: 2015. [accessed Jan 23, 2016] available at <http://www.secom.gov.br/atuacao/pesquisa/lista-de-pesquisas-quantitativas-e-qualitativas-de-contratos-atuais/pesquisa-brasileira-de-midia-pbm-2015.pdf>.

Chart 1. Description of the eight intervention meetings

<i>Meeting 1 – VOICE PRODUCTION</i>
§ Text recoding before intervention
§ Program presentation, with overall explanation of the dynamic of the eight meetings
§ Vocal tract anatomy and phonation physiology
§ Use of natural breathing for journalistic reading
§ Role of voice emotion, relationship with articulation, resonance and how it reflects the personality
<i>Meeting 2 – PANORAMA OF JOURNALISM IN BRAZIL</i>
§ Changes in the performance of journalism professionals over time
§ The current journalistic language and preoccupation of connection with spectators of new journalistic genres - infotainment of the media convergence
· Illustration with videos of journalistic reports and presentations of the last two and present decades
<i>Meeting 3 – NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION – THE BODY ON TV</i>
§ The body as a tool for professional performance
§ The importance of expressiveness in the different journalistic products: national and local newscasts from different broadcasters at different times
o Practice: videos analysis
o Practical training – self-postural recognition and expression in the mirror and on video
<i>Meeting 4 – VERBAL COMMUNICATION – NATURAL SPEECH ON TV</i>
§ Verbal language in today's news
§ The interpretative parameters involved in journalistic communication
§ Improvisation in natural news telling
§ Practice: Video recording
o Natural speech building exercise
o Keyword improvisation exercise
<i>Meeting 5 – REPORTER PERFORMANCE IN THE NEW TV JOURNALISM</i>
§ Summarize the concepts of the new reality of television and the conversation with the spectator
§ Summarize the aspects of posture, breathing, and interpretive resources
§ Non-verbal communication adopted in the construction of news in the streets
§ Report improvisation and the role of interpretive, verbal, vocal and non-verbal resources in constructing live news
§ Exercise: analysis of the students' videos and news creations
§ Practice – Video recording - news building and individual adjustments
<i>Meeting 6 – PRESENT PERFORMANCE IN THE NEW TV JOURNALISM</i>
§ Summarize the concepts of the new reality of television and the conversation with the spectator
§ Resume aspects of posture, breathing, and interpretive resources
§ Exercising facial expression, new body and hand postures as an argumentative presentation tool in the news presentation process
§ Exercise: analysis of the students' videos and news creations
§ Practice – Video recording - news building and individual adjustments
o Bench presentation simulation
o Standing presentation simulation
o Seating presentation simulation
<i>Meeting 7 – PRESENTATION</i>
§ The presenter in different situations and media (studio presentation and virtual setting)
§ Practice: studio recording
o Sports program presentation simulation (bench and studio)
o Simulation of presentation of a journalistic program with guests
o Simulation of weather forecast presentation
<i>Meeting 8</i>
§ End of the intervention program, with raising of positive and negative aspects. Ask each student to reflect on their opinion about the intervention process
§ Post-intervention video recording

BASED ON THE TWO WATCHED VIDEOS, ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

COMBINATION 1

1. In your opinion, in which video does the student show better performance?
 A video
 B video

2. Choose the body, speech, and emotion and interpretation aspects that justified better performance.

BODY ASPECTS	SPEECH ASPECTS	EMOTIONAL AND INTERPRETATION ASPECTS
<input type="checkbox"/> Facial expression	<input type="checkbox"/> Speech rate	<input type="checkbox"/> More natural
<input type="checkbox"/> Body posture	<input type="checkbox"/> Articulation / diction	<input type="checkbox"/> More secure
<input type="checkbox"/> Body movement	<input type="checkbox"/> Pauses	<input type="checkbox"/> More likable
<input type="checkbox"/> Head movement	<input type="checkbox"/> Clarity / inteligibility	<input type="checkbox"/> More interesting
<input type="checkbox"/> Gesture	<input type="checkbox"/> Voice	<input type="checkbox"/> More pleasant
<input type="checkbox"/> Eye	<input type="checkbox"/> Speech emphasis	<input type="checkbox"/> More confident
<input type="checkbox"/> Clothing		<input type="checkbox"/> More charismatic

Figure 1. Multiple-choice instrument used by viewers to evaluate the pre- and post-intervention videos

Table 1. Comparison between the performance of students pre- and post-Speech-language Pathology intervention according to the viewer judges

Students	In your opinion, in which video did the student show better performance?						
	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention		p-value*	None*	
	n	(%)	n	(%)		n	(%)
1	3	(4.0)	72	(96.0)	<0.001	--	--
2	1	(1.3)	74	(98.7)	<0.001	--	--
3	4	(5.5)	69	(94.5)	<0.001	2	(2.7)
4	8	(10.7)	67	(89.3)	<0.001	--	--
5	6	(8.0)	69	(92.0)	<0.001	--	--
6	5	(7.0)	66	(93.0)	<0.001	4	(5.3)
7	28	(40.0)	42	(60.0)	0.094	5	(6.7)
8	18	(24.0)	57	(76.0)	<0.001	--	--
9	5	(6.7)	70	(93.3)	<0.001	--	--
10	1	(1.3)	74	(98.7)	<0.001	--	--
11	13	(17.6)	61	(82.4)	<0.001	1	(1.3)
12	1	(1.3)	74	(98.7)	<0.001	--	--
13	5	(6.7)	70	(93.3)	<0.001	--	--
14	14	(19.2)	59	(80.8)	<0.001	2	(2.7)
15	13	(17.3)	62	(82.7)	<0.001	--	--
16	8	(10.7)	67	(89.3)	<0.001	--	--
17	4	(5.6)	68	(94.4)	<0.001	3	(4.0)
18	65	(89.0)	8	(11.0)	<0.001	2	(2.7)
19	8	(10.7)	67	(89.3)	<0.001	--	--
20	6	(8.0)	69	(92.0)	<0.001	--	--
21	14	(18.7)	61	(81.3)	<0.001	--	--
22	1	(1.3)	74	(98.7)	<0.001	--	--
23	7	(9.3)	68	(90.7)	<0.001	--	--
Grouped	238	(14.0)	1468	(86.0)	<0.001	19	(1.1)

¥ Chi-squared for one sample; * percentage regarding the 75 registries (viewer judges)

Captions: n = number of individuals

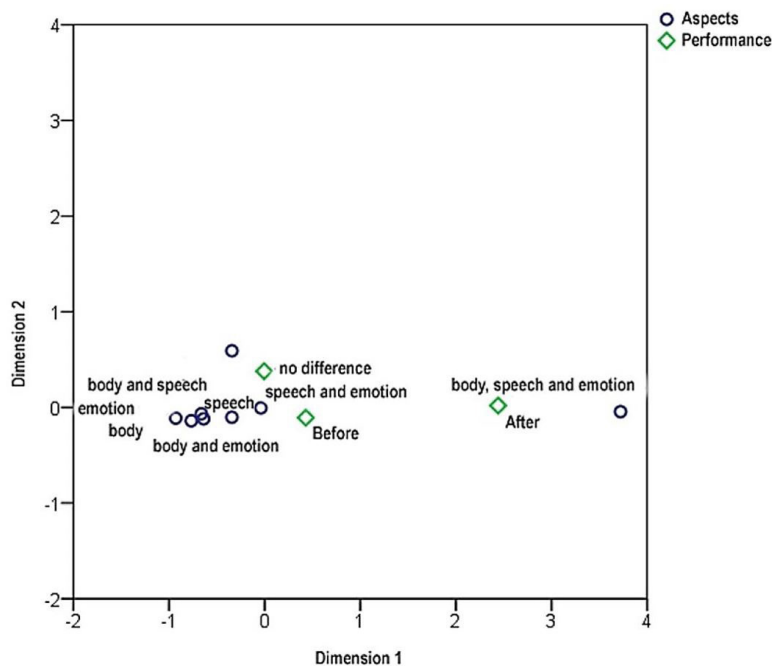


Figure 2. Correspondence analysis between the pre- and post-intervention moments and the body, speech, emotion and interpretation aspects. Dimension 1 is related to the moment of the video (pre- and post-intervention). Dimension 2 reveals the proximity of the aspects vs. performance

DISCUSSION

Telling a good story and interacting with the spectator require good articulation of body, speech and interpretation in order to transmit the idea with emotion⁽¹²⁾. Figure 1 shows the correspondence proximity between the body, speech, and emotion and interpretation aspects on the post-intervention videos, indicating that after the intervention the students were able to integrate the body, speech, and emotion and interpretation aspects to build a journalistic story.

According to the statistical analysis, the body aspects that justified the improvement on the post-intervention video were the relationship between the items ‘body motion’ and ‘gestures’ and the item ‘more natural’, as well as the relationship between the item ‘body posture’ and the items ‘more confident’ and ‘more secure’.

With the new journalistic formats and the creation of news as a story made for the public⁽¹⁾, the body and arms have become part of the story, including the creation of a closer relationship with daily reality. Thus, non-verbal communication and gestures were also exercised all the time during the intervention, with discussion about new body posture possibilities, arm movements, and forms of facial expression.

The intervention proposal described in this study considered the next generation of journalists, and privileged practical acting focused on the preparation of journalism students for new demands. Therefore, this intervention program was aimed to fully present and experiment expressiveness, interconnecting aspects of verbal, non-verbal and vocal communication.

The work consolidated by speech-language pathology in TV stations supports and justifies the inclusion of speech-language pathologists among future journalists. Some Brazilian universities already offer theoretical/practical disciplines for the communication improvement of these future professionals.

These disciplines are taught by speech-language pathologists and have a practical focus on providing better development of the students with more autonomous communication, not only in the academic environment, but also in professional life^(6,13,14).

We showed significant positive results that point to the integrated improvement of the body, speech, and emotion and interpretation aspects. Speech-language pathology interventions with journalism students are interesting since they affect their learning and consolidate the current demands in new curricular guidelines of the journalism course, i.e., professional training combining theory and practice^{***}.

We suggest the division of the participants into experimental and control groups in future studies, a fact declared as a limitation to this study.

More studies are necessary to subsidize the advances in the interface between speech-language pathology and journalism.

CONCLUSION

The speech-language pathology (SLP) intervention focused on TV professional communication improved the communicative performance of most of the undergraduate journalism students according to the spectator judges. Improvement in the students’ performance on the post-intervention video was justified by the integration between the body, speech, and emotion and interpretation aspects.

*** *Ministério da Educação (MEC)* Resolution no. 1 of September 27, 2013. Implements the national curricular guidelines for the course of journalism, bachelor’s degree and other measures. Brasília. [accessed on Feb 16, 2016], available at http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=14242-rces001-13&category_slug=setembro-2013-pdf&Itemid=30192.

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