

Communicative messages as a guarantee of effective pedagogical intercourse

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Abstract. The article emphasizes a significant role of effective pedagogical intercourse between teachers and students in educational institutions. The constructive strategies of communicative messages, the use of which does not harm the relationship between them, are considered. The definitions of I- and You-messages and examples of their application are given. The possible errors when using You-messages are examined. A great efficiency of I-messages is underlined and options for their usage are highlighted.

Keywords: Thomas Gordon, teacher, student, I-message, You-message, pedagogical intercourse

Introduction. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most important success factors in any area of modern life. It is impossible to build a career, make reliable friends, arrange personal life, achieve prosperity and recognition without it. Communicative competence is a solid foundation for healthy interpersonal relationships and professional progress, improving which can open up new opportunities for a person. When someone expresses thoughts correctly and accurately, their position becomes clear to other people. Therefore, it is more likely that they will be able to reach an understanding [2].

Communication is an important factor in the existence of society, because there is no society without communication. Communication is the process that ensures the formation of society [9].

There are many definitions of the term "communication". Communication is the process of exchanging thoughts, ideas, facts with the groups of people or individuals to achieve the goal of reaching mutual understanding and gaining trust. Communication is always a dialogue where the thoughts, feelings and reactions of the audience are present; it is a two-way process [4].

Short review of the publications on the subject. Methods of effective communication between teachers and students have always been in the field of researchers' view. Among the well-known Ukrainian scientists we can mention such as E. Belenkina, O. Gluzman, V. Haluziak, M. Leshchenko, N. Pobirchenko, I. Stelmakhovych, K. Ushinsky, I. Zyazyun [6, 7]. Problems of psychology of pedagogical intercourse were studied by foreign scientists as well. The possible ways to improve the pedagogical culture of communication were explored by foreign scholars A. Frymier, M. Houser, Johnson, B. Maeetta, I. Rachmawati, W. Trigartanti, I. Triwardhani [3, 8, 10] and others. It should be noted that unfortunately for a long time the pedagogical heritage of American scientist, psychologist, educator Thomas Gordon remained unnoticed.

The purpose of the article is to get acquainted with Thomas Gordon's views [5] on the use of communicative messages that do not harm the relationship between teachers and students.

Materials and methods. To achieve the purpose of the article, such scientific research methods were used: the theoretical methods of research and the method of analysis, synthesis, generalization.

Presenting main material. To understand more clearly the essence of communicative messages, Thomas Gordon proposed to compare You-messages and I-messages.

He asserted that teachers are usually surprised to find that almost all of their confrontational statements are "you would" statements, such as "You would have stopped!" (order), "Either you calm down or..." (warning), "You would study better!" (moralization), "Try and you will succeed!" (logical reflections), "Do as I have shown" (proposal of decision, order), "You think like a child" (criticism), "You have always studied well!" (positive assessment). None of these messages contain information about the teacher, and all attention is focused only on the student. According to Thomas Gordon it is necessary to remember that when the teacher describes how he perceives the student's behavior and how it interferes with him, such statement immediately turns into I-message: "I'm tired of this noise!", "I do not like when someone in the class begins to command!" [5, 136-138].

Thomas Gordon also endeavored to study the disadvantages of You-messages. To his mind the error of You-messages is that when a teacher makes you-oriented statement, he essentially blames the student and absolves himself of responsibility for his irritation, although it should be noted that You-messages are rather vague, and reflect incomprehensibly what is happening inside the teacher. Only I-messages can reflect a person's own condition clearly, for example: "It's hard for me to work with a class when I'm interrupted so often". Such statement conveys the very feeling of the teacher, while You-message is only a negative opinion about the student and nothing more [5, 138].

Thomas Gordon emphasized a great efficiency of I-messages. He noted that I-messages can be called "responsible statements" because the teacher who sends I-messages takes responsibility for his own inner state and listens to himself. I-messages never absolve a student from responsibility for his behavior. I-messages meet three important criteria that ensure the effectiveness of confrontation: 1) they provide a high probability of emerging of students' desire to change their behavior; 2) they do not affect the students' behavior negatively; 3) because of them the relationships between teachers and students do not get worse.

Almost all teachers report that such technique causes increased enthusiasm among students. Students perceive the teacher as an ordinary person, when he easily shares his feelings with them and shows himself as a person who is capable of such feelings as frustration, resentment, anger, fear. Students treat such teacher as a real person with all his weaknesses. However, many teachers see this

as a threat to themselves, because the image they consider obligatory is being destroyed – such a kind of monument to divine infallibility and serenity. Teachers are afraid that students will stop respecting them, so You-messages seem more appropriate to them, because they allow to hide their feelings and shift the blame on students. But still I-messages establish a certain closeness, as they represent the teacher as a sincere and frank person with whom students can form good relationships [5, 140-142].

Thomas Gordon described the strategy of making I-message. Teachers find it difficult to use I-messages. In order for such messages to have a significant impact on the student, they must contain three components. First of all, the student must know what is creating the problem for the teacher. When the student is aware of what is forcing the teacher to confront him, his statements are much more effective. A good start to I-messages is always to describe unacceptable behavior that does not contain a negative assessment and does not accuse the student of anything: “When I found the paper on the floor...”, “When I am interrupted during the explanation...”. All these statements follow the behavior of the student (or students), which is of concern to the teacher.

Sometimes the teacher's dissatisfaction causes a well-defined behavior, and then the pronoun “you” is used. However, unlike You-messages, such messages do not contain accusations, assessments, ready-made decisions or moralizing: “When you push Johnny...”, “When you interrupt me...”. The correct I-message is a message of fact without analysis. It is possible to feel the difference that occurs when an estimate creeps into a description: “When you are indifferent to each other...”, “When you touch...”.

Every correct I-message begins with “when”. The student should know that the teacher has problems when he behaves in a certain way: the teacher is not always upset, but only when confronted with a very specific behavior or situation. This helps the student to understand that the teacher pays attention to specific situations or behavior, and not to him at all [5, 142-144].

The second component of I-message indicates what exactly hinders the teacher's behavior, which is reported in the first component of the statement: “When you interrupt me (description without condemnation), I lose my mind and forget what I say...” (significant action, influence), “When the class is so loud (description without condemnation), I do not hear what each of you say...” (significant action, influence).

The words "significant action, influence" refers to cases where the impact of certain behavior on the teacher is absolutely obvious. Most students do not want to be considered “bad”. Most students want teachers to love them. However, they often do not even suspect how their behavior affects teachers. They defend their interests and do not understand that their behavior can create problems for other people. When students are told how their behavior interferes with the teacher (affects his behavior), their most common reaction is: “Sorry, I didn't know...”. But if the student understands that his behavior is (or may be) a real problem for the teacher, he has a strong motive to behave differently.

It is sometimes difficult for teachers to insert the second component into I-messages, as they become accus-

tomed to a different style of communication. For a long time, they used to send messages aimed at changing behavior, even in cases when this behavior does not affect them. After all, teachers have a clear idea of what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, even in cases when students' behavior does not put any pressure on them.

Accordingly, for I-message to be successful, the teacher must be able to divide students' behavior into two categories: one that significantly affects him and one that does not. Teachers are advised to expect results only from I-messages related to the first category of behavior, because people, especially students, rarely change their behavior if it does not have a significant adverse effect on other people [5, 144-145].

The third component of I-message describes the teacher's feelings concerning the significant influence of the student's behavior on him: “When you do not do homework (behavior characteristics), I need to explain much longer during the lesson (significant influence), and because of this I start to get nervous (feelings)”. The teacher reports that the student's behavior affects him (takes time away from him), and this influence creates a teacher's feeling of dissatisfaction. Consistency (behavior - influence - feelings) shows the cause of feelings, not the student's guilt.

Such logical sequence is important, but not required. It is too likely that I-messages with any order of components (or even by reason of one missing component) will be heard and adequately perceived by students. The fact is that I-message is always better than the accusatorial You-message or indirect statement [5, 145-146].

Thomas Gordon suggested to change the strategy after sending I-message. Although I-messages are much less probably than You-messages to drive students to the defense, it is unlikely that any of them will be happy to hear that his behavior creates problems for the teacher. This means that there is always a risk that even the most verified I-message may seem tearful to the student. After all, the teacher tells the student about the unacceptability of his behavior clearly, and this creates a problem for the student.

Teachers are encouraged to master the methods, by which it is possible to change the tactics of communication with students quickly, and move, for example, to active listening, as this, firstly, helps the student cope with the problem that arises again, and secondly, demonstrates that the teacher understood and accepted the student's reaction in response [5, 146-147].

Thomas Gordon tried to understand what makes teachers angry themselves. To his mind, teachers, having acquired knowledge in the courses, sometimes wait do not wait for the moment when they will have the opportunity to confront their most troubled students. However, their desire to apply a new method of pedagogy is sometimes so great that it escalates into aggression that frightens students or makes their behavior even more hostile.

If aggression (anger) is one of three components of I-message in which the teacher expresses his feelings, then there is no doubt that students will perceive such confrontation as a form of accusation or insult. Aggression turns teacher's indicatory finger into an accusatory finger. I-messages with the meaning “I'm angry” are usually per-

ceived by students as “I am angry with you” or “You made me angry”. To Thomas Gordon’s opinion, aggression (anger) is secondary, and it always follows the original feeling.

Besides that aggression (anger) can be seen as a position or action, but not as an emotion or feeling. Often, immediately after a person has an outburst of anger, he has certain physiological manifestations, such as palpitations, tremors and the like. They may be a reaction to his own harsh actions. After all, in a certain sense, persons provoke their physiological manifestations by themselves, which, however, they perceive as emotions [5, 148-149].

The second serious risk is that it is necessary to change one’s own behavior. Sometimes it all ends up, and adults re-educate themselves, not re-educate their pupils. For instance, the transition to active listening leads to the receipt of new information, which forces the teacher to reconsider their behavior [5, 153-154].

The third risk is responsibility. For most people, one of the most difficult (but always rewarding) actions is to take responsibility. You-messages shift the center of responsibility to other people, while I-messages make teachers responsible for their own state [5, 153-154].

Thomas Gordon underlined the achievements because of the usage of I-messages. According to the survey, teachers confirm the amazing and extraordinary results that can be achieved through I-messages. Students often have no idea how their behavior affects other people, and are sometimes very surprised. Their frequent reaction is: “We did not know that this was a problem for you” [5,

153-155].

Students can be responsive and responsible if adults are sincere and open with them. But, unfortunately, very often teachers underestimate the willingness of students to understand teachers [5, 155].

Conclusions and prospects for further scientific research. The effective pedagogical communication is impossible without establishing positive contact between teachers and students. One of the ways to do this is correct usage of communicative messages. That is why every teacher should understand the difference between them. According to Thomas Gordon there are two types of communicative messages – You-messages and I-messages.

You-message is a message that means the assessment of the interlocutor; it is unsuccessful in conveying the feelings of the teachers, as in most cases the student is understood either in terms of what he should do or how bad he is [1].

I-message is a message about the assessment of the state (feelings, emotions) of the speaker (teacher); it is effective in terms of influencing the student in order to change his behavior, unacceptable to teachers; is used with the intention to express their own feelings, experiences, thoughts, without forcing the listener (student) to feel guilty about their occurrence [1].

As practice shows, due to I-messages it is possible to achieve an effective solution to problematic issues during the educational process, professional development of future specialists and pedagogical intercourse in general.

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