

**Alina Mărgărițoiu, *Gestul în comunicarea didactică. Valorificarea accepțiunii semiotice*, prefață de Laurențiu Șoitu, Editura Institutul European, Seria Științele educației, Iași, 2013, 193 p., ISBN 978-973-611-862-3.**



Using gestures is inevitable in all of man's activities. Hence, gesturing is a communicative opportunity worth exploring in two directions, the gesture-word relationship, as well as the gesture-sign analogy. The author is unmistakably committed to an ample programme of bettering the use of gestures in didactic communication; it is a kind of commitment detailed as late as Chapter 6 – the final one – in the book. As such, we believe this ordering position can be interpreted as a duly and implicitly climactic endpoint for the whole research that has been profitably undertaken here. Moreover, after covering the bulk of specialist literature dedicated to her topic, the author of this book makes her personal contribution, highlighting interesting conclusions. They are her own, after putting

to the test a few working hypotheses of hers on one hundred subjects picked from among the teaching staff members of three high-schools in the Prahova county. As concerns the propensity of Alina Mărgărițoiu to embrace the semiotic perspective in her enterprise, we get informed in Laurențiu Șoitu's preface to the book that it dates as far back as the author's doctoral work, only to grow in size and finesse of approach in consequence of her post-doctoral experience within pre-university and university environments.

In the Introduction to this book, Alina Mărgărițoiu points out that to her the teacher is simultaneously an ingenious orchestra conductor ("dirijor-resursă cu virtuți comunicative", p. 15) and a useful partner to the student ("partener al elevului în propria formare", idem, ibidem). Thus, gestures will be shown in their capacity of instruments and means too, requiring analyses in between their static presence (when they are signs) and the situational role in didactic acts (when they are part of semiosis). For the plenary comprehension of gestures, in Chapter 1, the researcher finds arguments along history, stipulating the (in)congruence between sets of gestures (including mimicry, too) and sets of spoken words. Obviously, the researcher-semiotician will raise an interest in any communicator's consciously targeted moves – voluntary doings that codify meanings in a different manner from what language does. Not by far less interesting is the genetic transmission of gestural meanings that are universally present in human interaction anywhere on Earth.

Chapter 2 is, at its core, an exploration of the potential of voice in an educator's intervention. Instead of verbal or non-verbal means for the achievement

of a pedagogical objective, the paraverbal component will make students assimilate richer messages from their mentor. Accordingly, an affective resonance is born with one's tone of voice, pitch, rhythm of delivery, intonation and vocal intensity, accent and pauses, and some other suprasegmental phonemes. The recipient of speech can thus be made to interpret for himself approval, amazement, irony, discontent, tiredness or irritation, warmth of address – a variety of attitudes favouring either good focus or dissipation of attention in the audience. In sum, the paraverbal interpretation will keep discourse meanings under rigorous control and in utmost usefulness for the enhancement of qualitative features in teacher behaviour.

Chapter 3 sets out to identify the details that make the specificity of didactic communication, only to get to a critical picture of today's social context. The actors of the educational system are the witnesses of "an abundance of stimuli, accelerated rhythm of living, search of popularity with shallow means, impoverished language, all of those putting pressure on stability, endurance, consistency and empathy" of the communication in schools (p. 95, our translation). The role of gestures, in consequence, should be seen as an accumulation of both functions and dysfunctions. This part of the book (pp. 101-118) manages a minute record of the typology of gestures tackled in educational research.

Chapter 4 aims at demonstrating that there is a similar degree of eloquence in gestures as is in words and sentences, an idea practically underlying the pedagogical experiment devised by Alina Mărgărițoiu. In short, this chapter puts forth its objectives, hypotheses, description of the subjects, and research methods and gets complete with an interpretation of the results previously obtained.

Chapter 5 is a sketch of the profile of the teaching staff investigated. The author is careful to place most of her emphasis on the iconic teacher of the last paragraph in this chapter: "Imaginea sa inconfundabilă se va păstra în timp și datorită particularităților vocabularului său gestual. Numai așa își vor aminti elevii de charisma pe care o emana, de vorbele, faptele și de gesturile sale" (p. 143). The teacher maximizing the impact of his input via gestural communication is, therefore, shown to compose a unique image that lasts and a sort of charisma that is likely to be remembered vividly by his students.

Chapter 6 takes the form of enumerations: of general and operational objectives ("obiective generale", "obiective operaționale"), of topics to be discussed ("teme de discuție"), of topics as food for thought ("teme de reflecție") and exercises for bettering efficiency ("exerciții de eficientizare a comunicării gestuale"), with various visuals that come later in the book too, in as many as fourteen annexes.

Alina Mărgărițoiu's study of gestures, in all probability, will be found instrumental in the hands of those who teach youngsters or talk to audiences of whatever age, and who strive for ever higher expressive transfer of their repertoire of ideas, emotions and opinions.

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