

The Language of Movement: Exploring The Role of Communication in Sports and Physical Activity

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Abstract

Movement functions as a powerful, non-linguistic channel of communication. This paper examines the critical role that both verbal and non-verbal communication play in sports and physical education. It explores how spoken instruction, strategic gestures, and the body's own expressiveness are fundamental to skill acquisition, team performance, and the formation of a participant's identity. By synthesizing principles from communication theory, discourse analysis, and contemporary pedagogy, this study proposes a holistic educational model. This framework intentionally merges physical activity with expressive language tasks and reflective writing. The ultimate aim is to foster comprehensive development, cultivating not just physical competence but also enhancing cognitive understanding and emotional intelligence, thereby shaping more effective communicators and self-aware individuals.

Keywords: Non-verbal Communication, Physical Literacy, Sports Pedagogy, Discourse Analysis, Reflective Practice and Identity Formation

1. Introduction

In competitive sports, a decisive moment such as a missed penalty, a controversial referee call, or a game-clinching score, rarely carries a single meaning. Instead, it triggers a cascade of competing narratives shaped by the distinct perspectives of coaches, players, and media outlets. These stories arise from differing goals and rhetorical approaches, revealing that sport is not just a test of physical skill but a rich communicative ecosystem. Merging the analytical tools of Professional Communication Studies with the hands-on realm of Physical Education provides a powerful way to dissect this ecosystem.

By using techniques like narrative analysis, bias detection, and voice examination, students can view sport as a living cultural practice where words and movement combine to create meaning. This perspective prompts them to question how sports media frames events and upholds ideas such as

meritocracy and relentless competition. Through this critical lens, learners develop a sharper awareness of the power structures and representational choices that shape athletic stories.

Integrating reflective communication practices into Physical Education does not diminish the focus on physical mastery; it deepens it. The result is participants who are technically skilled, analytically astute, and culturally perceptive. This blended approach equips students to engage with the complex world of sport more thoughtfully and confidently.

Objectives

1. To implement advance planning that ensures resource readiness, staff alignment, and baseline measurement of communication confidence.
2. To establish a consistent weekly session structure that integrates warm-up, core experiential tasks, debrief, and guided reflection within 45–60 minutes.
3. To facilitate debrief and reflection routines using visible thinking tools and the “What? So what? Now what?” framework to deepen insight.
4. To maintain between-session follow-up through digital archiving, targeted journal feedback, and mid-cycle pulse checks for real-time adjustments.
5. To culminate the program with participant-led coaching philosophy presentations and a collaborative Communication Playbook.
6. To replace traditional exams with portfolio assessment and final surveys focused on reflective depth and participation growth.
7. To transform each session into a living laboratory where physical activity and communicative practice develop simultaneously.
8. To achieve measurable gains in body-language awareness, instructional clarity, and emotional expression through pre/post data comparison.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a structured, experiential methodology designed to integrate communication skill development within a sports-based learning environment. The approach emphasizes planning, consistency, reflection, and collaboration. Through advance preparation, weekly activity cycles, and continuous feedback, participants engage in both physical and communicative tasks that reinforce one another. Each session follows a clear sequence—from mindful arrival to guided reflection—ensuring that learning is active, measurable, and sustainable. The methodology thus bridges theory and practice, cultivating holistic growth in both athletic and communication competencies.

Advance planning and resource preparation

This opening phase ensures the program launches smoothly and remains sustainable throughout the term. By completing all groundwork one to two weeks early, instructors avoid last-minute stress and create a welcoming environment from day one. Gathering simple, low-cost materials (notebooks, cones, balls, and shared smartphones) keeps the focus on participation rather than equipment. Arranging the gym or field into clear zones supports simultaneous activities without chaos, while the ninety-minute staff

workshop builds shared language and confidence among teachers. The anonymous baseline questionnaire serves a dual purpose: it reveals individual starting points for body-language awareness, instructional clarity, and emotional expression, and it provides measurable data to demonstrate growth when the program ends.

Weekly Session Structure and Timing

The forty-five to sixty-minute sessions follow an identical flow each week, creating a predictable rhythm that reduces anxiety and deepens engagement. Soft music and a one-word mood entry set a mindful tone immediately upon arrival, followed by a light jog that transitions the body into learning mode. A five-minute unit-specific warm-up acts as an instant hook, connecting the day's theme to movement. The twenty-minute core activity forms the heart of the session, during which instructors circulate as facilitators rather than directors, asking open-ended questions and filming only when footage will enrich later discussion. This consistent timing respects attention spans while guaranteeing every participant experiences both physical challenge and communicative practice.

Debrief, Reflection, and Closing Routine

The ten-minute debrief transforms raw experience into insight through visible thinking tools such as comparison charts or collaborative posters, making abstract concepts immediately tangible. Using the “What? So what? Now what?” sequence keeps discussions focused and forward-looking, while the rule that every voice must be heard once prevents dominant speakers from overshadowing others. The final ten minutes of guided journaling, whether recording sensations, tactical reasoning, or rewritten phrases, cements the link between doing and articulating. This closing ritual trains participants to treat reflection as a natural extension of movement rather than an add-on task.

Between-Session Follow-Up and Mid-Cycle Adjustments

Quick, five-minute post-session actions maintain continuity and build a living archive of the term's work. Uploading digital artifacts to a shared folder and offering brief, depth-focused journal comments signals that every contribution matters. Scanning peer-feedback forms for patterns allows instructors to respond nimbly—for instance, adding extra silent-leadership rounds if group cohesion scores lag. Four-week and eight-week pulse checks repeat two survey questions, providing clear evidence of progress that can be celebrated in real time and used to refine upcoming units without disrupting the overall flow.

Culmination, Showcase, and Final Assessment

Unit 10 transforms participants from learners into creators through relaxed two-minute presentations of personal coaching philosophies, giving everyone a platform to synthesize the term's insights. The collaborative Communication Playbook compiles the most effective gestures, phrases, and counter-narratives into a single, practical resource that belongs to the group. Replacing traditional exams with final questionnaires and portfolios shifts evaluation toward genuine growth in reflection and participation. This celebratory close reinforces the study's core message: physical skill and communicative

competence are not separate domains but interdependent strands of holistic development in sports and beyond.

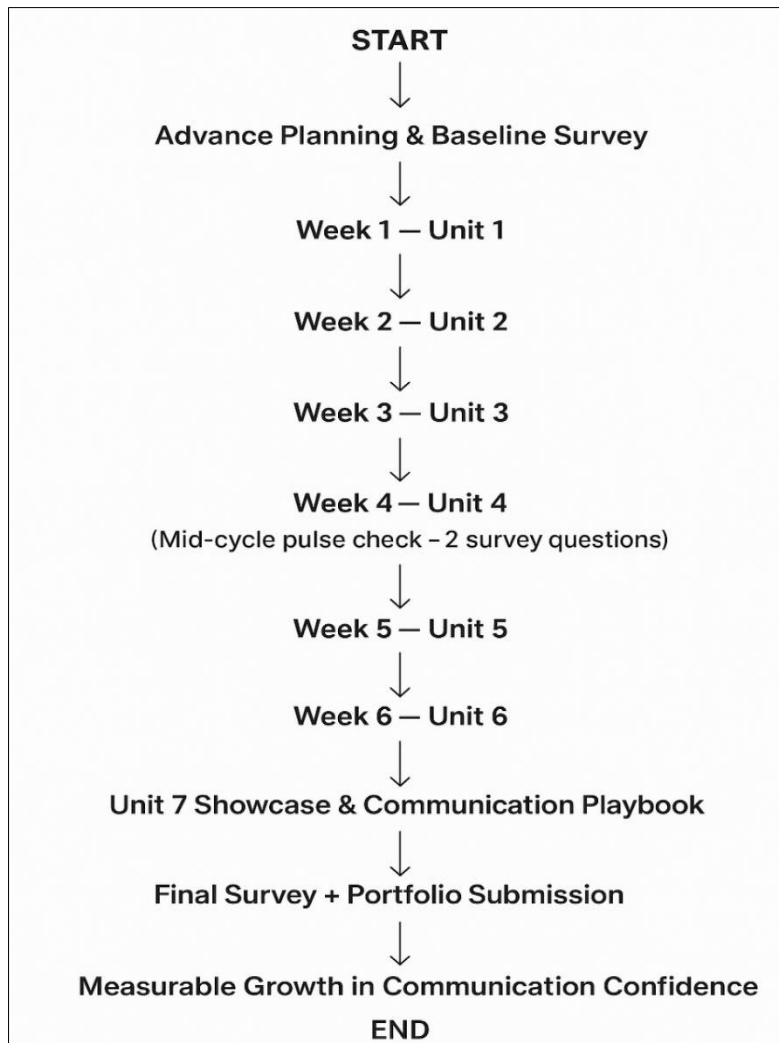


Figure 1 *planning and baseline survey*

Table 1 Weekly Session Timing (45–60 min)

Time (min)	Phase	Activity Example (any unit)	Purpose
0–5	Arrival & Mood Check	Soft music, one-word journal entry, light jog	Mindful transition
5–10	Unit-Specific Warm-Up	Mirror Drill (Unit 1) or Emotion Mime (Unit 9)	Immediate hook to theme
10–30	Core Experiential Task	Silent game, stations, relay, video creation, etc.	Hands-on practice of communication skill

30–40	Debrief & Visible Thinking	T-chart, mural, gesture poster; “What? So what? Now what?”	Turn experience into insight
40–50	Guided Reflective Writing	3 targeted journal prompts	Link movement with language
50–60	Closure & Upload	Quick share, upload artefacts, optional teacher comment	Maintain continuity

Table 1 shows the 60-minute session builds communication skills through a structured flow, starting with a mood check and warm-up, followed by hands-on activities, reflection, guided writing, and a closing upload—to connect experience with insight and ensure continuous learning.

DISCUSSION

Exploring Communication in Sport

This unit directly targets the objectives of exploring spoken/non-verbal communication and examining non-verbal cues by forcing students to experience both extremes in a controlled game setting. The “Mirror Drill” builds instant awareness of body language while the silent-vs-full-communication rounds reveal how gestures and posture compensate for absent words. By comparing video evidence, students empirically see which cues build connection and which cause confusion, laying a concrete foundation for understanding communication as a core athletic skill rather than an add-on.

Analysing Storytelling and Symbolism

Aligned with analyzing storytelling and symbolism, this unit transforms personal experiences into shared cultural artifacts. The rapid storytelling circle gives every voice equal weight, while the collaborative mural externalizes symbols that define team identity. Students discover how narratives are not just retold but actively constructed, reinforcing the idea that athlete identity and team ethos are continually shaped through the stories members choose to celebrate and display.

Fostering Critical Language Awareness

By maintaining real-time vocabulary logs during physical exertion, students encounter authentic language use in PE and fulfill the critical-language-awareness objective. The gallery walk and collaborative rewriting process turn passive exposure into active critique, training them to distinguish motivational from demotivating discourse and to craft language that supports rather than undermines performance—an essential communication skill for future athletes, coaches, and citizens.

Developing an Integrated Pedagogical Model

This station-rotation model operationalizes the multidisciplinary framework objective by requiring simultaneous movement, verbal justification, and cognitive decision-making. Each task demands

that physical execution and clear explanation coexist, proving that motor skills and communicative competence are interdependent. When students later design their own stations, they internalize the model and become co-creators of an integrated approach rather than mere recipients.

Promoting Reflective Practices in Sport

Journaling immediately after intense gameplay captures raw thoughts and emotions that fade quickly, fulfilling the reflective-practices objective. The structured three-question prompt bridges physical sensation, internal dialogue, and external communication, while optional teacher feedback signals that reflection is valued. Over time, students build a personal archive that serves both self-exploration and performance analysis, turning narrative writing into a practical training tool.

Linking Physical and Verbal Literacy

The relay format deliberately ties scoring to both flawless execution and crystal-clear teaching, making the dual-literacy objective impossible to ignore. Students experience firsthand that physical competence alone is insufficient if it cannot be transmitted verbally to teammates. The debrief question forces them to confront which literacy felt more challenging, often revealing that verbal precision is the limiting factor in team success.

Enhancing Media Literacy

By juxtaposing rival broadcast clips of the same event, students viscerally encounter framing bias and fulfill the media-literacy objective. Creating counter-narrative videos shifts them from consumers to producers, requiring them to make deliberate choices about emphasis and omission. The exercise demonstrates how media shapes cultural perceptions of victory, failure, gender, and race, arming students to question rather than absorb dominant sports narratives.

Examining Non-Verbal Communication

Rotating silent captains in a fast-paced team sport isolates gesture-based leadership, directly addressing the non-verbal examination objective. Anonymous surveys reduce social pressure and yield honest data on cohesion, while the resulting gesture poster becomes a shared team language. Students leave understanding that leadership is not volume-dependent and that well-designed silent signals can sometimes outperform shouted instructions.

Cultivating Emotional Intelligence

Emotion charades and the “Pause & Name” rule create safe spaces to externalize feelings during competition, aligning with the emotional-intelligence objective. Naming an emotion in real time interrupts reactive patterns and invites collective empathy within ten seconds. The reflection circle reveals how emotional regulation spreads contagiously, proving that individual self-awareness strengthens team dynamics and decision-making under pressure.

Reframing Coaching Through Communication

Student-Coach Day places every learner in the communicator role, fulfilling the objective of repositioning communication as the heart of coaching. The mandatory feedback sandwich and peer rubric demand clarity, tone control, and encouragement—skills rarely practiced when students are only recipients of coaching. The final philosophy speech synthesizes the entire term, requiring students to articulate how effective communication drives leadership success both on and off the field.

Conclusions

1. Physical execution and verbal articulation are interdependent components of a single competency.
2. Students transform from followers into creators and architects of their own team culture.
3. Non-verbal cues (gestures, posture) often surpass verbal commands for effective leadership under pressure.
4. Identifying and naming emotions in real-time is a practical strategy for regulating performance.
5. Students learn to deconstruct how bias and narrative shape sports media.
6. Sports provide a real-world training ground for transferable communication and collaboration skills.
7. Structured journaling converts physical experience into deeper, lasting personal insight.
8. The station-rotation framework provides a practical, proven structure for interdisciplinary education.

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