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Complutense University of Madrid  
3-6 July, 2017



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Minute Book. 20th European Conference on Literacy + 6º Foro Iberoamericano sobre Literacidad y Aprendizaje

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Libro de Actas. 20th European Conference on Literacy + 6º Foro Iberoamericano sobre Literacidad y Aprendizaje

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# MINUTE BOOK

## 20th European Conference on Literacy

Complutense University of  
Madrid 3-6 July, 2017



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# 20TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON LITERACY



Working together to encourage equity through literacy  
communities: A Challenge of the 21st century

**Complutense University of Madrid**

**3-6 July, 2017**

## MINUTE BOOK

Organized by:

**AELE**, Spanish Reading and Writing  
Association

**Research Group of UCM** (Complutense  
University of Madrid) “Communication and  
Languages Studies for Inclusion and Equity  
in Education”– ECOLÉ

In cooperation with:

**IDEC**, International Development in Europe  
Committee of the International Literacy  
Association

**FELA**, Federation of European Literacy  
Associations

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This event is developed with the logistical support of the University.

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## Nonverbal communication literacy of engineering students: Reading of nonverbal behaviour

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KEY WORDS: nonverbal communication literacy, engineering student, nonverbal decoding/reading, communication education.



## ABSTRACT:

Nonverbal communication literacy can be defined as a system of knowledge and skills that enables a person to understand or decode nonverbal signs in various communication situations and to use appropriate nonverbal signs (or encode) in a particular situation. Nonverbal communication literacy is a supportive basis of successful verbal communication. Nonverbal communication signs are more effective than verbal exchange in some cases. Engineering students' education in the field of verbal and nonverbal communication is an important part of their professional development.

Nonverbal communication literacy and interaction involvement are in the focus of the paper. Two instruments are used: Interaction involvement scale and Questionnaire of reading nonverbal signs. The sample consists of 116 engineering students: a half of them attended communication courses during one semester at the beginning of their university education. The results indicate the existing differences between engineering students who attended and the students who did not attend these courses: the students in the first group have a higher level of interaction involvement (attentiveness) and interpret nonverbal signs more precisely and with more details than the students in the second group. Both groups develop a moderate level of interaction involvement and relatively low level of nonverbal communication literacy. It is necessary to strengthen engineering students' communication competence and nonverbal communication literacy as its imminent constituent.

## INTRODUCTION: ENGINEERS' COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AND NONVERBAL LITERACY

Communication competence, as a system of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivational disposition, attitudes and properties, which is important to communication effectiveness, is one of the essential competences for the numerous professions. According to the Engineering Competency Profile (2008), the competent engineers have developed a complex system of skills: technical/engineering skills and knowledge in specific technical/engineering fields; program/project management skills and knowledge; knowledge of engineering review, decision making and analysis; ability, knowledge, and skills to communicate effectively; skills to identify, develop and analyse engineering designs, plans; skills and abilities for leadership. Competency mapping looks for the social and communication skills or behaviours that distinguish effective engineers



(Bjekić, Bjekić, & Zlatić, 2015, p. 368; Lappalainen, 2009). Engineers' communication is based on their communication competence in various areas of professional communication. Engineering students' education in the field of verbal and nonverbal communication is an important part of their professional development. The prior investigations, which were the basis for this research, confirmed positive impacts of university courses on the development of communication competence (Zlatić & Bjekić, 2006) and communicative language ability (Bojović, Palurović, & Tica, 2015). Since communication competence is formative for the engineers' successful professional performance, it is necessary to strengthen these competencies in a systematic way by organizing suitable courses for future engineers during their initial education and by organizing suitable training for active engineers (Bjekić et al., 2015).

Most comprehensive classification of communication types emphasised the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication. Based on this classification, the distinction of verbal communication competence and nonverbal communication competence is relevant to the consideration of engineer's communication competence. The cognitive dimension of communication competence is a basis of verbal communication. Behavioural and emotional dimensions present crucial basis of nonverbal communication competence and nonverbal communication literacy as an essential component of nonverbal communication competence. Effective communication implies the correspondence between the sender's intention and the receiver's understanding of the message. Verbal and nonverbal synchrony during the interaction is an indicator of communication effectiveness. According to an earlier study (Ramseyer & Tschacher, 2011, p. 286) it was emphasised that the synchrony may be linked to the increased relationship quality. The considerations of nonverbal communication effectiveness are based on the concept of communication ability or skills, and on the individual differences in the sending (encoding), receiving (decoding), and regulation (management) of nonverbal communication (Riggio, 2006, p. 79). Skill in nonverbal decoding involves the sensitivity to the nonverbal messages of others as well as the ability to interpret those messages accurately (Riggio, 2006, p. 81). It is the basis of the concept of nonverbal communication literacy.

Nonverbal communication literacy can be defined as a system of knowledge and skills that enables an individual to understand/interpret or decode nonverbal signs in various communication situations and to use appropriate nonverbal signs in a particular situation (or encode their own



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