

Axis 4: Sports Communication Skills

Lecture 4.1: Pedagogical Language and Coaching Cues

Effective coaching is fundamentally about communication. The ability to convey complex technical instructions clearly and concisely in English is vital for international coaches. This lecture integrates Motor Learning theory with English communication.

4.1.1 The “6 Cs” of Communication

Effective coaching communication is often characterized by the “6 Cs”:

1. **Clear:** Unambiguous instructions using simple vocabulary.
2. **Concise:** Brief and to the point. Avoid “over-coaching” (talking too much).
3. **Correct:** Accurate technical information.
4. **Complete:** All necessary details included.
5. **Courteous:** Respectful tone to build rapport.
6. **Constructive:** Focused on improvement rather than criticism.²⁷

4.1.2 Internal vs. External Focus of Attention

A critical area of research in sports science is the language of cues.

- **Internal Focus:** Directs the athlete’s attention to their own body parts or movements.
 - *Examples:* “Contract your quads,” “Bend your knees,” “Snap your wrist.”
- **External Focus:** Directs the athlete’s attention to the *effect* of their movement on the environment.
 - *Examples:* “Push the floor away,” “Reach for the ceiling,” “Snap the towel.”
- **Scientific Consensus:** Extensive evidence (Wulf et al.) suggests that **external focus cues** generally result in superior motor learning, retention, and efficiency. Mastery of English coaching involves translating internal mechanics into external metaphors.²⁸

4.1.3 The Constraints-Led Approach (CLA) Terminology

Modern coaching utilizes Ecological Dynamics. The language here shifts from “instructing” to “designing.”

- **Constraints:** Boundaries that shape movement.
 - *Task Constraints:* Rules, equipment (e.g., “Small-sided games”).
 - *Environmental Constraints:* Weather, surface.
 - *Organism Constraints:* Height, weight, fatigue.

- **Affordances:** Opportunities for action provided by the environment (e.g., a gap in the defense “affords” a through-ball).
- **Self-Organization:** The process by which the athlete finds a movement solution without explicit instruction.
- *Coaching English:* Instead of “Pass the ball here,” a CLA coach might say, “Find the open space” or simply manipulate the drill so passing is the only solution.²⁹

Lecture 4.2: Leadership, Feedback, and Conflict Resolution

4.2.1 Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback can be **intrinsic** (felt by the athlete) or **extrinsic** (given by the coach).

- **Knowledge of Performance (KP):** Feedback about the movement pattern. “Your elbow dropped during the throw.”
- **Knowledge of Results (KR):** Feedback about the outcome. “The ball missed to the left.”
- **The “Sandwich” Approach:** A standard method for delivering constructive criticism in English contexts:
 1. **Positive Reinforcement:** “Great intensity on that approach.”
 2. **Corrective Instruction:** “Next time, keep your chest up specifically during the transition.”
 3. **Positive Encouragement:** “You’ve got this, let’s go again”.²⁸

4.2.2 Emotional Intelligence and Conflict

High-performance environments are high-stress.

- **Active Listening:** Using phrases like “What I hear you saying is...” or “Can you explain that further?”
 - **Confirmation:** Verbal and non-verbal acts that make the athlete feel valued (Acceptance and Challenge). Research shows “confirming behavior” links to higher task cohesion and winning percentages.³¹
 - **De-escalation:** Using “I” statements (“I feel concerned when...”) rather than accusatory “You” statements (“You always...”).³²
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