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Using "good" as feedback – meaningless or meaningful in sports contexts?

A comment on praise and feedback on the personal level

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Abstract

An issue in sports contexts as well as other educational contexts has been whether feedback on the personal level, often in the shape of praise, contributes to the progression of the practitioners' skills. This article examines whether PEH teachers' feedback on the personal level, using the word *good*, in specific contexts actually can contribute to crucial progress and empowerment of the pupils/practitioners. The empirical material consists of video- and audio-documentation from training sessions in athletics, jujutsu, and gymnastics, and from preparatory classes in Physical Education and Health, where the pupils were newly arrived immigrants in Sweden. As a complement, observations were made and documented in writing. In the analysis, Basil Bernstein's superordinate concept code is used, which includes the principles classification and framing. A strong classification results in exclusion, whereas a weak classification can open up with respect to content. Correspondingly, a strong framing precludes, whereas a weak framing opens up towards a broadened and changeable concept. A strong classification and framing results in a separated code, whereas a weak classification and framing results in an integrated code. The integrated code is manifested in a shift in the balance of power and a loosened division of control between the teacher of the preparatory class and his pupils. Furthermore, the integrated code opens up for empowerment and the development of an identity, which per se contributes to a progression and development of the pupils.

The conclusion is that, under specific circumstances, using *good* as feedback, in the shape of praise and on the personal level, is meaningful. It can even be considered effective, positive, and useful in certain sports contexts and aims at developing an identity rather than performance skills and at empowering practitioners. Feedback on the personal level does not primarily contribute to the progression and development of sport-specific skills of the practitioners, but its contribution to the empowerment of the practitioners, on the other hand, is obvious.

Key words: feedback, praise, classification, framing, integrated code, separated code, empowerment

1. Introduction

Coaches' verbal instructions and feedback is crucial for progress in athlete learning (e.g. Davids et al. 2008; Hodges & Frank 2002; Klatt & Noël 2019; More & Franks 1996; Potrac et al. 2000). In discussions of feedback, in sports contexts as well as educational contexts, an issue has been whether feedback on the personal level contributes to the progression of the practitioners' skills, i.e., whether it is effective (e.g. see Bond et al. 2000; Hattie & Timperely 2007; Lundin 2020; Mouratidis et al. 2008; Otte et al. 2020). This article focuses on feedback on the personal level, which in the present study is defined as a contrast to goal-oriented feedback on the task level. Feedback on the personal level is often delivered in the shape of praise (Airasian 1997; Hattie & Timperley 2007), for example the word *good* (Lundin 2018, 2020), which is defined as solely positive feedback, regardless of the quality of a performed exercise. From this perspective, feedback on the personal level, especially when delivered in the form of praise, is not effective (Deci et al. 1999; Hattie & Timperley 2007; Mouratidis 2008): it is argued that there is no development unless feedback is given on the task level. This point of view implies that feedback on the personal level is not effective since it is not oriented towards the goal (Ward 2011) and, consequently, does not contribute to progression and development of specific skills. On the other hand, it is claimed that feedback on the personal level is effective, but it is effective only up to a point in a youth's development. For instance, Meyer et al. (1979) and Meyer (1982) have shown that praise may be counterproductive and even have negative consequences on student's self-evaluation of their ability: "older students perceived praise after success or neutral feedback after failure as an indication that the teacher perceived their ability to be low" (Hattie and Timperley 2007:97).

The aim of this article is to study the relativity of *good*, which is the most typical example of feedback on the personal level, and also frequently used as praise. The relativity and context dependence of *good* makes possible that, under certain circumstances, *good* is not only effective but also crucial for certain kinds of progress and development. One such situation and context is when newly arrived immigrant pupils participate in Physical Education and Health (PEH) in a preparatory class, where the empowering of the participants by means of praise and personal feedback is a goal *per se*. The issue is important since the school subject PEH provides an opportunity for the pupils to participate in an

activity without any proficiencies in the Swedish language and to feel the positive effect of body work. Consequently, it is possible to make PEH an inclusive school subject, where *good* actually can be defined as purely meaningful, despite the fact that it is sometimes rejected as proper feedback (Hattie and Timperley 2007:84; Ward 2011).

When approaching the relativity of *good*, the starting point is that relativity in general is closely connected to changes in the context, i.e., *good* has different meanings in different contexts. In the article, Bernstein's analytical framework (1973, 2003a,b) is applied on an empirical material consisting of video-documented training sessions on the one hand, and preparatory classes in PEH on the other. The application of Bernstein's analytical framework on the empirical material provides tools for analysing principles of control and communication regarding, for instance, content and the distribution of power in the communicative situation.

The outline of the article is as follows. After having presented a background and a brief survey of selected previous research, which motivates the present study, the feedback concept is discussed in section three. Section four introduces Bernstein's concepts *classification*, *framing*, and *code* (1973, 2003a,b and onwards) in sport contexts. In section five, the empirical material is introduced. The results of the study are presented in section six, namely the impact of the different codes (Bernstein 2003a,b) on the use of *good* as feedback. In the last section, the results are summed up and discussed, and a conclusion is drawn.

2. Motivating the study: background and previous research on the use of *good* as feedback in four different sports contexts

In a study of coaches' use of *good* ('bra' in Swedish) as feedback when young practitioners have performed an exercise, Lundin (2016) shows that *good* has various meanings in different sports contexts. The expression is used when an exercise is well performed but also when a child has failed, which Lundin claims is an instance of the coaches' wish to avoid giving negative feedback. She describes this approach as salutogenic (cf. Olsson Jers 2010), which means that the coaches focus on what has been sufficiently performed. However, parallel to this salutogenic approach, the coaches need to provide their adepts with feedback that promotes their progression and development in their sports.

In a study of how *good* is used in jujutsu, gymnastics and athletics, Lundin (2016, 2019) presents some different applications. Beyond keeping the pace during the different exercises, *good* is used when the participants should change exercises or when the coaches have finished their instructions and the participants are expected to take action. In the two latter cases, *bra* has the function of a summariser. The results of Lundin's studies (2016, 2019) show that children who practice jujutsu receive *good* as feedback even if they have failed in their performance. This approach is described as super-salutogenic, where the children never receive any comments on what they could improve in a new attempt (cf. Olsson-Jers 2005; 2011). When an exercise is well-performed, the coaches use *very good* ('mycket bra') or *perfect* ('perfekt'); since *good* is used when something is not good, *good* must be reinforced in some way to emphasise that an exercise in fact is well performed. In gymnastics, on the other hand, the scale is different: here, *good* expresses that an exercise actually is excellently performed. If an exercise in gymnastics is not perfectly performed but still approved/passable, their feedback to the gymnasts is *good try* ('bra försök'), and when an exercised has failed completely, the feedback is something like *good that you tried* ('bra att du försökte'). In the latter case, the coach focuses on the attempt instead of the result. In athletics, the use of *good* shares properties with the uses of *good* in the two other sports. The coaches use *good* to signal that it was positive that the child tried to perform the exercise, regardless of the result, but they often add a comment regarding what is not well performed, for instance *Good, but do not forget your arms!* ('Bra, men glöm inte armarna!') or *Good, but higher knee* ('Bra, men högre knä!'). As a consequence, *good* is not equal to *well performed* in this context either. Although Lundin (2020) does not mention it explicitly, the results illustrate the relativity of *good*, which obviously has different meanings depending on the context. This observation is crucial for the present article.

In a following-up study of feedback in sports contexts, Lundin (2020) uses a model by Hattie and Timperley (2007), originally developed for feedback in academic writing contexts. She shows that young practitioners get salutogenic feedback in the sense that the coaches give them some positive comments but also provide them with instructions on which aspects should be developed in their next attempt to perform a somersault, a long jump, or a specific tumbling technique. Typically, the coaches use a pattern in which a positive comment is combined with a comment on the required development, where the comments are con-

nected by the conjunct *"but"*: *Malva, you fall out a bit here but otherwise ok* ('Malva, lite, lite att du tappade ut där, men annars helt ok'). Examples in which the negative comment precedes the positive are equally frequent, for instance, *Your speed was good until you jumped, but when you stepped off, there was no power in it* ('du hade bra fart fram till du hoppade, men sen när du trampade av så var det liksom ingen kraft i avtrampet'). The coaches' wish to stress their appreciation of the practitioners' performance is obvious, as is their wish to provide them with proper feedback that promotes their progression (Lundin 2020). Furthermore, it is shown that feedback using the sole word "good" has no effect on the practitioners' performance, at least not in a short perspective. In order to be efficient, the feedback needs to be explicit, goal-oriented, meaningful and reasonable with respect to the current skills and competence of the practitioners (Lundin 2020; cf. Hattie & Timperley 2007; Vygotsky 1934/1980). In Lundin's (2020) study, the practitioners obviously performed better in their second attempt when the instructions were specific and the feedback was explicit, focused on the task, and oriented towards the goal. For the second attempt to be better than the first one, it also seemed important that the coaches remembered and used their feedback from the first attempt and followed up the practitioners' performance in relation to these specific comments.

Studying the language use in the Swedish school subject Physical Education and Health in preparatory classes with immigrant children who are newly arrived in Sweden, Lundin (2019) describes the PEH-teacher's use of *good* as super-salutogenic and undifferentiated (cf. Olsson Jers 2005, 2011), at the same time, however, emphasising that such a description of the communicative situation would be a simplification. For discussions on the communicative situation in the preparatory class, see also Lundin & Linnér (2018a,b), who state that the lack of a common verbal language obviously prevents discussions and more complex exercises, and, furthermore, that the body language, which is crucial in sports contexts and PEH-classes, is far from sufficient when it constitutes the only tool for communication. When giving feedback to newly arrived children, the PEH-teacher does not comment upon the performance of an exercise in the first hand: instead, the primary function of *good* is to encourage, positively evaluate, "boost", and provide the pupils with energy. Furthermore, *good* is used as a general statement, as for instance *Is Mahdino here today? Yes? Good!* ('Är Mahdino här idag? Ja? Bra!'). In this specific context, *good* is obviously connected to the empowering of the

pupils, in the sense of providing the pupils with "the means to take more control over their lives and become stronger and more independent" (*Collins English Dictionary*, also see Askheim & Starrin 2007; Tengquist 2007). The concept of empowerment aims towards an experienced power of the individuals with respect to, for instance, task assignments and the local environment. The concept is sometimes interpreted as the ability of an individual to take power over his or her situation. In Lundin (2019), the empowering force of *good* is claimed to be crucial for PEH-teachers in preparatory classes.

In sum, the different studies on *good* indicate that the meaning of *good* used as feedback varies with the context. The analyses of the different uses and meanings of *good* as feedback in the studies by Lundin (2016, 2019, 2020) do, however, solely distinguish the uses of *good* that can be categorised as task-oriented feedback, aiming at filling the gap between the present skills of a practitioner and the skills and abilities that are desirable. Since *good* used as praise on the personal level is ever so frequent in one of the empirical materials analysed, it is fruitful to deepen the analysis of feedback on the personal level and not simply reject it as praise with no purpose to serve.

3. The Feedback Concept

Depending on the perspective, different types of feedback are distinguished, for instance, negative and positive feedback, with corrective or affirming comments about past performance, respectively, or negative and positive feedforward, with ditto comments about future performance (e.g. Lundin 2020; Ward 2011). Regardless of the overall perspective, feedback is supposed to provide a sense of interactivity and engagement, in order to allow learners to take ownership of their learning (e.g. Ward 2011). This implies that the learner has a goal, takes action to achieve the goal, and receives goal-related information about the actions (Pacheco et al. 2019; Ward 2011): "[a] goal is a level of performance proficiency that we wish to attain, usually within a specified time period" (Latham & Locke 2006:332). When effective, feedback shows a current level of performance and provides information about what is needed in order to reach a higher level (e.g. Button et al. 2020; Chow 2013; More & Franks 1996). Another type of effectiveness is discussed by Mouratidis et al. (2008), who have studied the motivating role of positive compe-

tence feedback for highly talented sport students regarding, for instance, well-being, performance, and intention to participate.

Feedback in a classroom situation concerns information that allows a learner to reduce the gap between the current status or performance, and the status or performance one wishes to obtain. It is stressed that in any type of educational context, a situation that involves feedback is often delicate, and the responsibility of the teacher or coach is heavy when it comes to formulating the feedback (cf. Olsson Jers 2005, 2011). A consequence of this, according to, for instance, Olsson Jers (2005, 2011), Penne and Herzberg (2008), and Palmér (2008), is that the feedback becomes too gentle and misleading, or even deceptive, unfair and dishonest, since it precludes facts that are obvious for the sender as well as the receiver (Olsson Jers 2005, 2011:171). A focus on what is working or what is well performed is described as a salutogenic or even a super-salutogenic approach: in the latter approach, no negative critique, negative feedback or even neutral feedback is delivered, regardless of the performance. Within such an approach, the linguistic expression – often *good*, "bra" – is claimed to lock also the positive feedback, since *good* is neither concrete, problematized or motivated (Olsson Jers 2011).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) have studied the use of feedback in several academic contexts that involve writing. Their major points are relevant also when discussing feedback in relation to performed exercises in sports contexts. For feedback to be most effective, seemingly it should be presented as information feedback about a task and instructions how to do it more effectively. They claim that "[l]ower effect sizes were related to praise, rewards, and punishment" (Hattie & Timperley 2007:84). That praise is not effective does not surprise them, since that kind of feedback does not contain any information that concerns learning or educational matters. The discussion can be compared with a non-commented and isolated *good* in Lundin (2016), which stresses the risk of locking the positive as well as the negative feedback where *good* completely loses its meaning. In their model on feedback, Hattie and Timperley (2007) distinguish four levels: goal-oriented feedback, relating to the performance of the task; feedback at the personal level, unrelated to the requirements of the task and the goal; feedback relating to the understanding on how a task is to be performed; and "the regulatory or metacognitive process level" (Hattie & Timperley 2007:86). In sports contexts, seemingly, feedback with respect to the performance of the exercise/task and feedback with respect to the personal level are the most relevant types (cf. Schmidt

& Wrisberg 2001; Von Holst & Anderson 1992). Feedback with respect to the metacognitive process level – the fourth level – is primarily relevant in non-practical contexts and is seemingly specific for feedback given in relation to written texts.[1]

The focus of the feedback is crucial for whether or not it will be effective. In feedback, focus can be on a task, a product or a performance and provide information on whether or not it is well performed, which can be translated into directives regarding an incorrectly performed exercise in sports contexts. For instance, the purpose of performance feedback is to provide the athletes with information that will help them to correct or maintain their performance (Ward 2011). Ward (2011:105) claims that the findings for feedback are inconsistent and do not underpin assumptions like more feedback is better (e.g. Lee et al. 1993; Magill 1994), some feedback is better than no feedback (Lee et al. 1993), or positive feedback is better than corrective feedback (Lee et al. 1993; Magill 1994). Also Wolters (2002) distinguishes between correcting and improving. In his claim that correcting implicates two unambiguously definable categories, right and wrong, he stresses the advantage of accepting the used technique and offering help to improving and optimising the movement. In addition, he pinpoints the importance of feedback in close relation to the performance so the pupils/practitioners can feel the specific feedback of their own body (Wolters 2002).

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007:91; also Airasian 1997), the most frequent type of feedback takes its starting point in correctness or incorrectness with respect to a clear and explicit goal. This form of feedback is frequent in sports contexts as well. A disadvantage when feedback is directed directly towards the result of a performed task or exercise is that the feedback is very specific, hence not generalisable (Thompson 1998). One can presume, however, that this would not be a problem in sports contexts, where transferability between for instance elements, branches, or types of jumps is not a primary goal. What Hattie and Timperley (2007) define as feedback – first and foremost situation status and progression in relation to the goal – is exactly the type of information that relates any kind of performed accomplishment to an expected standard, which one imagines coaches search for in sports contexts. The power of feedback lies specifically in its potential to reduce or fill out the

1 Note that this study does not aim at providing a model for feedback (cf. Annerstedt 2001, 2005, 2007, and references cited.)

distance between a current accomplishment and the goal to achieve (cf. Sadler 1989).

Related to the discussion of feedback is the importance of specific instructions, since they facilitate a focus on the task (Hattie & Timperley 2007; Locke & Latham 1984). With specific instructions, the feedback can be clearly regulated; for instance, Lundin (2020) shows how the trainees improve their second and third attempt in long jump when the feedback aligned directly to the instructions they were given. In sports contexts, goals are in general distinct, concrete and specific, which would imply that the prerequisites for coaches and trainers to provide the young athletes with constructive feedback are advantageous. Contrary to the common studies on feedback, which focus on feedback in relation to written texts, the present study focuses on sports context and the coaches' feedback when the practitioners have performed a specific exercise. To be able to understand the meaning of the feedback means to intelligibly understand a comment and transform the new knowledge into a practical performance, which is in line with Lundin (2020). Additionally, Lundin (2020) illustrates how feedback in relation to a performed exercise also functions as an instruction to the next attempt:

> Did you feel it, when you came jumping, Astrid, Astrid, you came here jumping, then you hung out a bit, and then you turned out, and then you came up with your leg – when you come here, trample off, it is directly that you come up with your leg, look, trample off, come up with the leg, all the way to the pit.

In such cases, the feedback consists of a mix of information and instructions

4. Bernstein's Concepts in a Sports Context

Basil Bernstein (1973, 2000, 2003a,b) uses the superordinate concept *code*, which includes the principles *classification* and *framing*. The classification principle is used to describe relations between different kinds of categories, on different levels, for instance school subjects or elements in one specific school subject. Classification relates to distribution of power and to hierarchies, and it isolates and sets limits between different categories. Simplified, classification corresponds to the didactic question of *what* would constitute the content in an educational context. In a sports

context – outside school as well as during PEH-classes – this relates to weather it is the teacher/coach who decides what the students/trainees will do during the session, or if the students'/trainees' wishes are taken into account. The matter relates to the different didactic choices (Oliynyk, in progress) made by the teachers/coaches.

The framing principle, on the other hand, relates to the different processes of transferring and acquiring, which are part of every educational context. Framing includes principles of control and communication, and, additionally, principles of social relations. Specifically, it relates to the question of *how* a content that is to be communicated could be expressed and communicated in the educational context (Bernstein 2000:12ff). In a sports context, this relates to, for instance, who is verbally dominating the training sessions and PEH-classes and whether the teachers/coaches provide the trainees/students with sincere, open questions – such as *why* and *how* – or are solely interested in short, closed questions, where the expected answer is "yes" or that the children get into action. For instance, when the coach utters "Are you ready?", this question is never expected to be answered by "no": only "yes" works in this context, or no verbal answer at all, where the children instead get into action.

A subject with a strong classification has an identity of its own and is consolidated towards other subjects, whereas a subject with a weak classification is open to influence and interference from outside (Bernstein 2000:11–16). In a sports context this is the case when, for instance, the coaches in athletics allows the trainees to decide what to do the last ten minutes of each session, with the result that the classification is somewhat weakened (Lundin 2018). A strong framing entails that the teacher pursues evident control over the communicative context, whereas a weak framing entails that the teacher seems to have control (Bernstein 2003a,b). That a strong framing dominates the training sessions in jujutsu, athletics and gymnastics is obvious from the verbal dominance of the trainers and from the fact that the trainees hardly deliver any utterances at all during the instructions that precede the different exercises they are to perform (Linnér & Lundin 2015; Lundin 2018, 2019). On the other hand, it is notable that these two positions are not mutually exclusive; the pursued control might be an illusion, and in such case there is no proper control, although the pupils, youths or children apprehend it as if this were the case.

To sum up so far, the classification in any given educational context can be made strong or weak. A strong classification results in exclusion,

whereas a weak classification can open up with respect to content (*What* is to be communicated?). Correspondingly, a strong framing precludes, whereas a weak framing opens up towards a broadened and changeable concept of content (*How* is it to be communicated?). Directly related to classification and framing is the concept *code*. The code is determined by the relation between the principles for classification and framing and can be *separated* or *integrated*. A separated code is the result of a strong classification and a strong framing (Bernstein 2003a,b), which in the specific context means that there are explicit limits between different parts or elements and that these are kept apart. A crucial part of the separated code is discipline, which means work within a specific and determined frame. An integrated code is the counterpart of the separated and represents a wish to remove limits and focus on the entirety. Here, the classification is reduced. Bernstein defines classification, framing, and code in relation to one another. Consequently, classification is the result of hierarchical principles. These principles, in turn, are the result of relations of power, which affect the social division of labour. Correspondingly, framing is the result of principles of communication. These principles, in turn, are the result of how principles of control affect social relations. Classification and framing are mutually dependent, and furthermore, they depend on the distribution of power and the principles of control which they are determined by.

5. The empirical material

As pointed out in section two, in previous studies Lundin has stressed, for instance, the importance of specific feedback on the task level (see Lundin 2020) and the impact on the communicative situation of a separated code (see Lundin 2018) and an integrated code (see Lundin 2019). The studies are on based audio- and video-documented material from three different sports contexts outside school (athletics, jujutsu, and gymnastics) and ditto from PEH-teaching in a preparatory class. In the present study, basically the same empirical material is used, but focus is on the feedback on the personal level, which was not included in the previous analyses. The empirical material in the present study consists of video-documented communication of two different types. One part of the empirical material has been collected from training sessions in the sports athletics, gymnastics, and jujutsu (in sum, 38 hours of audio- and

video-documented recordings). The practitioners were boys and girls between 10 and 12 years old; in gymnastics, all participants were girls. Except for gymnastics, where the single coach was a man and the assistant (female) coach only helped out when the gymnasts perform difficult types of jumps, the practitioners were trained by coaches of both genders. In jujutsu, the head coach – the *sensei* – was a man, but the four assistant coaches included both men and women. The coaches in athletics were mutually responsible for the groups, without any differences in roles or status.

Only the coaches/teachers wore microphones during the video-documentation, a decision that was motivated in two ways: the high quality of the microphones entailed that the practitioners' (few) utterances during presentations and instructions were intercepted by the coaches'/teachers' microphones, and, furthermore, the researchers did not want the equipment to be an obstacle for the practitioners when performing different exercises (see Lundin & Linnér 2015; Lundin 2018). The video- and audio-documented communication was completed by observations, documented in writing, by the researchers in place.

The other part of the empirical material is taken from classes in Physical Education and Health (in sum, 7 hours of audio- and video-documented recordings). The classes were led by a male trained PEH-teacher, with no formal education in the Swedish language or Swedish as a second or foreign language. The participants were children and youths who were newly arrived immigrants in Sweden, constituting a preparatory class. Their ages range from 7 to 14. The documentation focuses on the communication between the coaches/teachers and their adepts.

There are differences between the video-documentations from the training sport sessions and the PEH-classes, but there are several similarities as well. The contexts are similar in the respect that in both types of sports contexts there is a hierarchical order between the coaches/teachers and the practitioners/pupils, although it has different shapes and has different prerequisites in the training sessions and the PEH-classes. The most crucial difference is the fact that the contexts are different with respect to the possibility of using a common oral language – Swedish – as a tool for communication, a fact which obviously strongly influences the communication (Lundin & Linnér 2018a,b). At the time, the pupils in the preparatory class had been living in Sweden between one week and three months, and 10–12 different languages were represented on each occasion. The pupils who had lived in Sweden for some months

sometimes interpreted in two directions when the PEH-teacher spoke. The PEH-teacher sometimes used English to try to make his message go through, but the main part of the pupils did not understand or speak any English. Consequently, the PEH-teacher consistently spoke Swedish, despite the fact that hardly any of the pupils understood him.

The differences and similarities in the empirical materials is a prerequisite for a thorough investigation of the relativity of *good* used as feedback in the different contexts.

6. The Impact of the Separated and the Integrated Code on the Use of "good" as Feedback

Although a distinct progression is more or less explicit in the different sports athletics, jujutsu, and gymnastics, the coaches' language use and the structure of the training sessions display similar patterns: the coaches give their instructions, verbally dominate the training sessions, and do not invite the practitioners to participate in a dialogue (Linnér & Lundin 2015; Lundin 2018, 2019). At least the sessions in gymnastics and jujutsu are characterized by a strong classification and a strong framing (cf. Bernstein 1973, 2000, 2003a,b), which results in a dominance of the separated code. Lundin (2019) assumes that a separated code, being the result of a strong classification and a strong framing, is a prerequisite for good learning, progression and development of skills in these sports contexts. The coaches in the different sports bear this in mind, more or less consciously, and this is reflected in their language use: for instance, most of their instructions have the shape of pure imperatives, for instance *Raise your knees!* ("Lyft knäna!"), *Jump!* ("Hoppa!), or *Start now!* ("Börja nu!"). Furthermore, the coaches seldom use quesitive, inquiring questions, i.e., questions which cannot be answered by "yes" or "no". Quesitive, inquiring questions are introduced by for instance *why*, *how* or *when* (*Swedish Academy Grammar* 1999, IV:733ff) and require elaborated answers. This type of questions can be compared with closed, rogative questions, introduced by a verb, as *Are you ready?*. These questions are answered by "yes" or "no" or, in sports context, by the practitioners taking on the exercise (Lundin 2018), and they do not invite the participants in the communication. The use of quesitive questions would have favoured an inclusion of the practitioners in the communication, which

context otherwise was dominated by the coaches' monologues, at least with respect to oral language.

Lundin (2019) claims that if these sports context were dominated by an integrated code, on the other hand, the liberty of the coaches would be reduced: if the wishes and personal aims of the individual practitioners were the starting point, the coaches' possibilities to act and affect the content of the sessions would decrease. This would, in turn, result in an altered balance of power. Such an alternation of balance of power would obviously also affect the classification, which, in the next step, would affect the framing in the way that the coaches would wish for a stronger framing. With a stronger framing, the control over the content and the choice of exercises would be given back to the coaches: as long as the sports context is dominated by a separated code, which is connected to discipline, progression, and development of skills, *good* must be a useful tool for achieving these goals (cf. Lundin 2019, 2020). As a consequence, the feedback must be focused on the task and oriented towards the goal, and there is no obvious space or need for *good* to relate exclusively to something outside what is included in the given progression.

The element of complexity and unpredictability is present in every teaching context, i.e., teaching is not performed as expected, regardless of the (school) subject. The teaching situation can be described as particularly unpredictable, in the sense that it cannot be expected to proceed without obstacles (Lundin 2019). But even if unpredictable situations are common for all teachers, it is more obvious, concrete and palpable for PEH-teachers in preparatory classes for newly arrived immigrant children. In addition to the fact that the pupils do not speak or understand any Swedish, the unpredictable context is obvious due to the fact that the group changes from one lesson to the next; pupils who have been placed in the preparatory class may appear unannounced, and pupils who have been transferred to another school or into ordinary classes quit without the teacher being informed. The PEH-teacher manages the unexpected and unpredictable, but the unpredictability affects the classification and the framing, and consequently, it also affects the code: the lessons are dominated by an integrated code, as the result of a weak classification and framing.

Under these circumstances, the possibility for the PEH-teacher to affect and plan his lessons are reduced, as a result of the particular unpredictability on the one hand, and the lack of a common, oral language on the other; in the preparatory class, the teacher cannot control the content

of the pedagogical situation, and he cannot control how the content is to be communicated. The situation forces the PEH-teacher to work within a weak classification and a weak framing, which implies that the two concepts lose their proper meaning, i.e., to function as "tools" for the teacher when planning and running activities (Lundin 2019). During the PEH-lessons, the classification and framing concepts are used to describe the content and the communication of the content, but the definition of the concepts does no longer include an *active* and real possibility for the PEH-teachers to choose whether or not he would prefer a weak classification and a weak framing.

One outcome of the situation is that there is no real option for the teacher to relate his feedback towards any goal or on any task; the unpredictability in the communicative situation erases the goal and the presumed progression. Even though this development is not approved by the curricula, it still opens up for other possibilities for the PEH-teacher to conduct his teaching and, additionally, use *good* as feedback, unrelated to a goal or a task. Some examples, translated into English, from the lessons illustrate the use of *good* in the preparatory class context. In the first example, the pupil Mahdino tries to catch a rolling ball and succeeds in the third attempt. Mahdino has very limited previous experience of school attendance, and, consequently, has never participated in any kind of schooling in physical education. Here, it is obvious that *good* is used in a salutogenic way, since the girl does not agree with the teacher on the performance. In the second example, Rahele finally has implemented the rule of the game which states that in *murboll*, "the ball against a wall", one is not allowed to use one's feet. The rules are rather complicated, and Rahele came to Sweden only two weeks earlier. While body language can be used to illustrate that no feet are allowed in the game, it is not sufficient when it comes to explaining why no feet are allowed and how one is supposed to handle the ball without using them.

EXAMPLE 1

Teacher: *Good, Mahdino. Good! Nice! Come on, go on. Good!*
Student: *I not good…*

EXAMPLE 2

Teacher: *Woo, good Rahele, good! Don't kick it, don't look down. That's good! Good! And no feet – good! Goooood!*

The third example illustrates a similar situation as the second: playing "the ball against a wall", Muhammad learns where to put the foot during the game. Common for the examples is the fact that *good* is not oriented towards a goal or affirms a step in a development or progress, and the pupils have not achieved any new skills which constitute a content of the subject PEH.

EXAMPLE 3

Teacher: *Good! Very close, good! One [foot] on the carpet! Yes, good. <u>One</u> on the carpet! Gooood!*

The fact that the PEH-teacher cannot use the oral language for communicating with the pupils obviously affects the progression and the prerequisites for different learning processes. In the curriculum of the school subject PEH, different learning processes are required, for instance,"[p]upils can talk about their own experiences from physical activities, and apply simple and to some extent informed reasoning about how the activities can affect health and physical capacity" and "can give simple descriptions of how to prevent injuries associated with games and sports" (*The Swedish National Agency for Education* 2011/2018). Seemingly, the PEH-teacher in the preparatory class aims at other goals, which cannot be reached in the same way (Lundin & Linnér 2018a,b). In the preparatory class, the purpose and the goal for the physical movement can be described as "rörelseglädje", i.e., that the pupils find satisfaction and joy in moving their body in different ways. The concept "rörelseglädje" is an explicit purpose of activities for publicly organised pre-schooling and school-age childcare (*The Swedish National Agency for Education* 2018), but it is not part of the syllabus for PEH. It is obvious that the PEH-teacher aims at stimulating the children's "rörelseglädje" by, for instance, asking them what they would like to do on the next occasion and fulfilling their wish. Due to the integrated code as a result of a weak classification and a weak framing (Bernstein 1973, 2003a,b), which code the PEH-teacher only partly has chosen by himself, this choice seems natural.

Seemingly, the PEH-teacher in the preparatory class aims at creating self-confidence in his pupils and contributing to the development of their identity, a process which also includes an element of democracy education. The goals of his teaching are not pragmatic in the way stated in the syllabuses (Lundin 2019): instead, he aims at making the pupils learn something new and, first and foremost, enjoy moving their bodies. Fur-

thermore, the PEH-teacher allows the pupils to occupy themselves with activities that they already master to some extent, even though the activities are not found in the syllabus. In this respect, working with newly arrived immigrant children in PEH is essentially different from working as a teacher in any other school subject. The attitude of the PEH-teacher in fact contributes to the weak classification and weak framing, which results in the dominance of the integrated code. The integrated code manifests itself in the loosened division between the controlling PEH-teacher and the children, who are otherwise supposed to obey the teacher's directives. If the division is loosened, the result is an equalised balance of power between the PEH-teacher and the children, which is an explicit manifestation of the integrated code. Under the circumstances of an equalised balance of power, *good* does not have to be oriented towards a goal that the teacher or the curricula have established. Instead, *good* can be regarded as an expression for appreciation of whatever kind of act or action carried out by the pupils. In the extension of this reasoning, under these circumstances, the power and the position of balance are tightly connected with democracy. Democracy, in turn, is a keystone in Swedish schools and crucial for the socialisation of newly arrived immigrant children into the Swedish society.

Regarding the power of feedback, it can be interpreted as contributing to the development of the identity of newly arrived immigrant school pupils through empowering; empowering is to be understood as the shifting of the balance of power between the PEH-teacher and the children, which is made possible by weak classification but foremost by weak framing. Consequently, in the specific context, the power of feedback is not necessarily to contribute to progression, to developing skills, or to focusing on an explicit goal. And if progression and development of specific (athletic) skills towards an explicit goal are not the kind of power one wishes to achieve, using *good* as feedback must be considered meaningful and potentially effective. In fact, using *good* as feedback seems to be necessary for empowerment, i.e., the participants receive the comment *good* even when an exercise or an attempt has failed completely – or when they have just turned up. In this specific case, it is "good" just to be there, be on time, be properly dressed for physical activities, and do one's best. In this specific case, *good* is a useful and simple word with a meaning and content that is easily understood, which is highly valuable.

In the article, it has been shown that a prerequisite for this interpretation and positive effect of *good* is that the Physical Education and Health

context is dominated by an integrated code (Bernstein 1973, 2000, 2003a,b). An integrated code opens up for different uses and implementations of *good* and, additionally, opens up for a positive meaning of *good*, separated from a performance, a task, or a goal. This positive meaning, in turn, has a positive effect in relation to its purpose. If this is the case, *good* used in a context dominated by an integrated code does not only open up for feedback at the personal level, but it actually requires, or at least welcomes, feedback at the personal level.

Hattie and Timperley (2007:95) claim that "effort feedback" and "ability feedback" are crucial in relation to feedback on the personal level. Their point is that effort feedback is credible at the early stages in a learning process. However, when the skills and ability of a performer develop, feedback related to performance and their skills is crucial if the feedback is to remain credible in the view of the receiver (cf. Olsson Jers 2005, 2011). In such case, using *good* as feedback in a context where the integrated code dominates does not affect the credibility of the coaches. Consequently, the coaches could continue using effort feedback in their empowering mission of the practitioners, since the weaker classification and the weaker framing leave no specific goal to achieve.

There is a parallel between this situation and to Jönsson's discussion (2017) on interpellation. Based on Althusser (2001), who stresses the role of language and of the linguistic expression in every communicative situation, Jönsson claims that coaches by their speech acts when addressing the practitioners during the training sessions create different (sports) subjects, dependent on and subordinated to a specific ideology. When being addressed, the practitioners become subjects, which means that the way of addressing them is crucial. Using partly the same empirical material as Lundin (2016, 2018, 2019, 2020), Jönsson (2017:11–15) shows that the coaches in the different sports gymnastics, athletics, and jujutsu address their adepts differently, hence creating different sports subjects by their interpellation; the practitioners become subject to the language that the coaches use. Similarly, the PEH-teacher creates sports subjects by addressing the pupils by their name and by encouraging them, and presumably his interpellation is even more crucial if the pupils are to be able to see themselves as individuals, as subjects.

As previously noted, there are several factors in a preparatory PEH-class that speak in favour of different goals compared with an ordinary PEH-class. Two examples that were pointed out was the lack of a common oral language and the unpredictable situation with respect to the

non-consistent composition of the group. The goals are reinterpreted as physical movement aiming at "rörelseglädje" – i.e., the satisfaction and joy in moving the body in different ways – together with the development of an identity of the pupils, and the empowering of them. In this situation, *good* constitutes the only feedback possible. The illustrated effectiveness of feedback is important because PEH, at least in the preparatory class, provides an opportunity for pupils to take part in an activity without any proficiency in the Swedish language and to enjoy the positive effect of body work; the situation highlights the potential of PEH to be an inclusive school subject. However, taking part in PEH still requires a lot from the pupils, since they often participate in Physical Education and Health in an ordinary class, i.e., without first participating in a preparatory class. In such cases, it takes more effort for PEH to be an inclusive school subject, but the potential is still there, together with a lot of positive (side) effects.

7. A Summing up and a Conclusion

The rather simple word *good*, in the shape of praise on the personal level, can be considered an effective, positive, and useful kind of feedback in certain sports contexts and, as such, serves other and more profound purposes than other types of feedback. Here, *good* aims at developing an identity rather than performance skills and at empowering practitioners for whom nothing is simple and everything is new. Feedback on the personal level does not primarily contribute to the progression and development of sport-specific skills of the practitioners; its contribution to the empowerment of the practitioners, on the other hand, is obvious. As has been shown, in order for feedback on the personal level to be positive, some prerequisites with respect to the context need to be fulfilled. Firstly, the context needs to be characterised by an integrated code (Bernstein 2000, 2003a,b), as the result of a weak classification and a weak framing, i.e. the concept of content may be broadened, changeable, and influenced from the outside. In such a context, the entirety is in focus and the limits between specific parts are removed. Secondly, the expected progression of the participants must be of another type than usual, which, in turn, means that the PEH-teachers need to partly re-evaluate their mission.

Put differently, when pupils who are newly arrived immigrants in Sweden and lack any kind of proficiency in the Swedish language participate in PEH in a preparatory class, the empowering of the participants by means of feedback on the personal level is crucial for, for instance, their identity-formation. Although some may object that empowering pupils, children, and youths is beyond the objectives in the school subject PEH, one can claim that empowerment as part of a socialisation and the developing of a new identity are overall objectives in the Swedish school. This applies not least for newly arrived immigrant children, who do not understand or speak any Swedish and lack all knowledge of the Swedish society, and is an example of inclusion on several levels. The fact that PEH has the potential to be inclusive and provide opportunities for all pupils to take part in different physical activities and experience the positive effect of body work makes the subject exclusive.

Sadler (1989) claims that the power of feedback lies specifically in its potential to reduce or fill out the distance between a current accomplishment and the goal to achieve. Hopefully, this article has shown that the accomplishment as well as the goal can be of different kinds; under certain circumstances, using *good* as feedback must be considered meaningful, despite the fact that it does not contribute to progression or development with respect to any athletic skills. Instead, other purposes are fulfilled, namely democracy, empowerment, inclusion, and socialisation, which are core concepts and fundamental values in a Swedish school context.

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