

Bangle, Dangle, Line, and Camp: Lexis for Success

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WR 122Z

Introduction

Communication is notably one of the most important elements of a successful team in the sports world. Every sport relies on communication in one way or another (Pedersen 56). Volleyball in particular has contributed to much of the discussion around communication within sports. There are several trends and themes that are key to understanding the vital influence communication and language have within volleyball teams. These themes consist of positive communication, nonverbal communication, negative body language, authority demonstrated through communication, and the importance of goals through communication.

Communication has a few different categories within the sport of volleyball. These all mainly fall under the umbrella of nonverbal cues. Many believe that positive communication, whether verbal or nonverbal, can win or lose games in the sport of volleyball (Cevahircioğlu et al. 123; Ergashevich 229; Pedersen 60). Furthermore, positive communication has also been linked to teams being able to compete at a higher level than teams who are unable to do so (Egrashevich 229; Neelon iii). Another claim is that team communication works toward improving overall team synchrony and collaboration on the court (Egrashevich 229; Raiola 355). Both of these, overall,

promote the idea that with positive communication, teams are likely to be successful and play to their full potential.

While positive communication and body language have been viewed to promote success for teams, negative body language has been shown to do the opposite for teams. Researchers agree that negative reactions to mistakes significantly lower the morale of a team (Egrashevich 229; Neelon iii). Negative reactions to mistakes may include slouching, avoiding eye contact, or visibly expressing frustration. Similarly, negative communication can hinder a team's success and break down their overall cohesiveness (Egrashevich 229; Neelon iii). Negative reactions are not only distracting but may also lead to further errors in the next play, creating a negative domino effect (Neelon 26). Overall, it is important to avoid and be able to control negative reactions to mistakes as well as regulate emotions, to work in the best interest of a volleyball team.

Specifically communicating through nonverbal cues has been discussed to be essential for volleyball teams (Raiola 350). Important types of nonverbal communication include gestures and eye contact among teammates. These are referred to as silential relationships (Bouvier 39). The stronger these relationships are between players, the more beneficial the communication is for the team (Neelon 22). Gestures have been shown to create a direct impact on the messages being sent during games (Egrashevich 229). In addition to gestures, simple eye contact and nonverbal communication are important as they work as a foundation to promote quick and concise plans during game time (Bouvier 40). Gestures and eye contact work together to strengthen silential relationships among teammates. Another important aspect of nonverbal communication in the context of volleyball is the pace of the game. Volleyball

is an intense, fast-paced game that favors the quickness of nonverbal cues previously mentioned (Bouvier 41; Raiola 350).

Communication within volleyball teams has shown to be the basis for success both on and off the court. Body language and nonverbal cues have been the focus of much research surrounding the usage of communication amongst volleyball teams. While this information is useful, there is limited research on the usage of verbal cues as a form of communication between volleyball teams. On a similar note, there is also little to no research on the usage of specialized language, or lexis, as a form of communication in volleyball, as well as its importance. This gap needs to be filled in order to fully grasp the different communication forms within the sport of volleyball.

Throughout this paper, I will evaluate the role lexis and verbal communication play in facilitating effective communication and decision-making for the Western Oregon University Club Volleyball Team during games as well as practices. Researching this gap will contribute to the existing research on communication by providing an understanding of the differences between verbal and nonverbal cues. It explores the usage of lexis and verbal communication within practice, as well as games. It will also provide insight into how specialized language also contributes to success amongst volleyball teams.

Methodology

To conduct further research on the importance of verbal communication as well as lexis amongst the Western Oregon University (WOU) Club Volleyball Team, I believed the best way to collect my data was to conduct a survey sent out to my teammates and conduct two sets of observations during gameplay and practice. Using two different forms of research helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the data I collected. A survey helps turn thoughts and opinions into visuals, while observations explore what happens to those thoughts during intense and less controlled moments.

I began by sending out my survey to my teammates through our group chat asking them if they would fill it out to help my research. Eight out of nine players filled it out and permitted me to use the responses in my paper. The survey consisted of fourteen multiple-choice questions. All of these questions were closed-ended and multiple-choice, to gain precise data on the thoughts and opinions of my teammates. These questions were all about volleyball-specific terminology and the usage of verbal/nonverbal communication, as well as the relation of success to understanding the specialized language of volleyball.

Next, I conducted two sets of observations throughout February 20, during practice, and February 22 during our tournament in Beaverton, where we played and lost three games. Throughout these observations, I was specifically looking for instances where volleyball lexis was used and/or executed, and how that impacted a play, or the overall outcome of a game. During practice, I was looking for the same thing and also more specifically looking to see if practicing these terms and verbally communicating can lead to success during future play. The choice to observe gameplay

and practice was purposeful in hoping to add another layer of depth to the research I collected.

I had hoped to interview my teammates to understand what role lexis plays in providing authority amongst teammates. I was also interested in interviewing my coaches to see if there was a difference in their responses compared to players on my team. However, due to schedule conflicts and time limits, I was unable to do so and was stuck with conducting observations and a survey.

Discussion

After thoroughly observing the WOU Club Volleyball Team during games and practice, there were noticeable categories amongst the usage of lexis and verbal communication. While observing practice, the coach supported lexis utilization, and verbal communication was utilized often. The tournament observation provided three different categories for communication usage during gameplay. These consist of communication before play, during gameplay, and after gameplay. Players tended to utilize verbal communication about the same during games and practices, yet they were demonstrated and executed more strategically during gameplay.

Lexis Within Practice

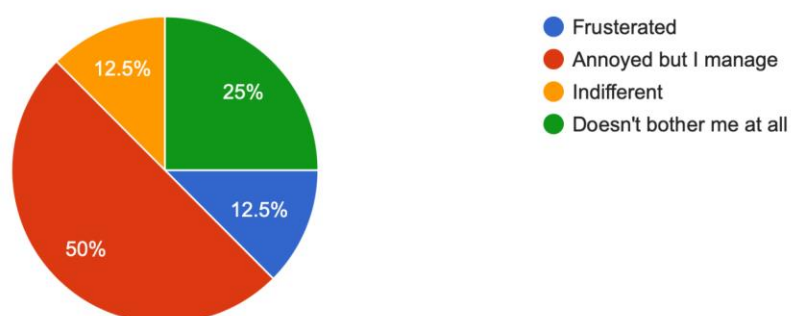
By the end of the observation, it was no secret that using lexis during practice was essential to executing strategies during gameplay. Most lexis used in practice were facilitated by the coach, especially when explaining drills. The players on the team would agree with this heavily by the survey results as well. On one question, 100% of the responses agreed that the coach uses lexis during training. On another question, 62% of players agreed it was helpful for a coach to utilize specific language during drill

explanations, while 25% answered it was very helpful. Overall, there was an agreement pattern around the fact that when a coach uses lexis, it helps put everyone on the same page.

Figure 1.

How do you feel if your teammate doesn't understand your/the specific language you're using?

8 responses



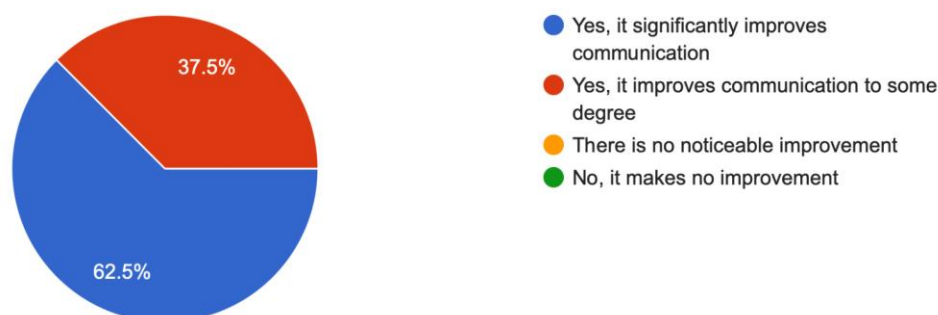
While playing any sport, miscommunication is inevitable, but teams often work very hard to make sure it doesn't occur. Interestingly, the survey revealed over 62.5% of players would feel some form of frustration when their teammate doesn't understand the lexis they're using. While observing practice, the coach explained a drill and said we needed to "tool the block." A player who is more unfamiliar with volleyball terms expressed confusion and asked what that meant. The coach then casually explained it, as well as some players on the team. No one presented themselves to be frustrated because of this occurrence. This is where the intensity difference between practice and gameplay comes into the picture. Since the coach was only explaining the drill during a low-key setting, there was nothing on the line if the player didn't understand what she was saying. If this instance occurred during a game, it can be inferred that some players, due to survey responses, may have reacted differently.

Verbal Communication within Practice

While verbal communication was utilized in similar ways during practice in comparison to gameplay, there was a difference in the usage surrounding strategy. One main difference observed was the loudness to which players would discuss strategies.

Figure 2.

Does practicing specified language lead to better communication during games?
8 responses

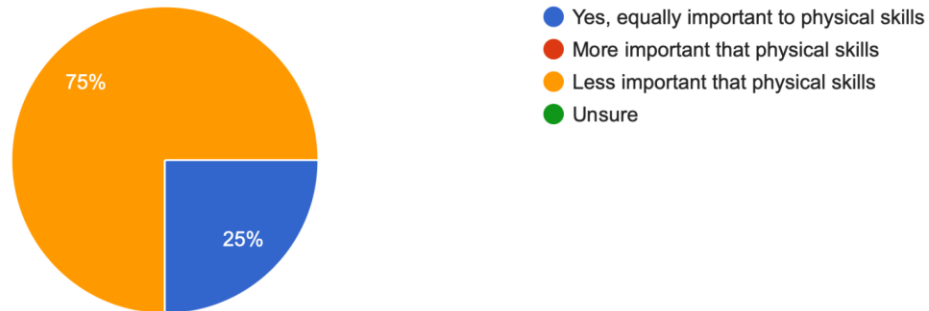


During practice, the main focus is practicing communication amongst teammates to succeed during gameplay. While the team agrees this is important and true, communication practices and utilization often differed from how it was executed through gameplay. Players when communicating often approached it louder, and more noticeably, even during scrimmage. An example observed was how players called for hits. Calling for a hit is important to let the setter know you are ready to hit, and an available option to set. Players typically would yell out the given number for the set they wanted to hit during a point or drill. A player would yell “4,4,4”, or “5,5,5. This differed from the hitter-setter communication observed during gameplay, which will be discussed in depth later.

Figure 3.

Do you believe that mastering volleyball-specific language is just as important as mastering the physical skills of the sport?

8 responses



While verbal communication and lexis were both prevalent during practice, they were not as present in comparison to learning physical skills to improve your game. Players heavily leaned towards the idea that physical skills are more important to master than volleyball-specific language. This trend was also observed in practice when watching players ask questions. While there was an instance where a question was asked surrounding lexis, players were more likely to ask questions when practicing skills and fundamentals. Overall, verbal communication usage and lexis during practice were agreed to be important, beneficial, and necessary to a team's overall success. Coaches are often looked at to facilitate these actions and hold players accountable when they lack communication. Despite this, physical skills are still the focal point during practices.

Communication and Lexis Utilization During Gameplay

As stated earlier, there were three main communication types and lexis utilization during gameplay. These are all strategic, help players execute strategies, and win points. The three types consisted of before-play communication, during-play communication, and after-play communication. While these all take place through extremely different forms, they all utilize lexis, as well as verbal communication. All together, they promote teamwork and execution during matches.

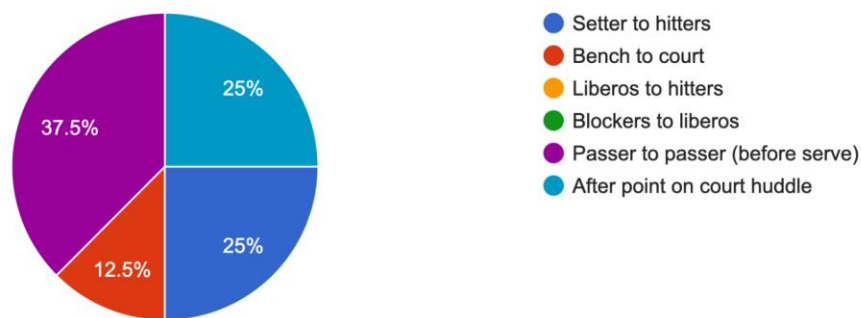
Before-Play Communication

There were notably many instances of players working to communicate before plays during games. This was heavily prioritized in order to make sure players were on the same page before a play started. For the WOU Club Team, they favored before-game verbal communication, as reflected in the survey.

Figure 4.

Which type of in game communication is most important?

8 responses



When surveying the WOU Club Team about which in-game communication form is most important, the majority answered passer-to-passer, before a serve. Through my observation, passer communication before serve receives was the most practiced

verbal communication not only in games but throughout practice as well. The WOU team communicates before serving by discussing “seams”, therefore utilizing lexis. Typically, three passers in the back row will turn to each passer next to them and say verbally if they have their “short” or their “deep.” Practicing this prevents miscommunication while receiving. Players were extremely consistent in practicing this before almost every single serve, practice, or game. It is no surprise the survey answers favored passer-to-passer communication as most vital, due to the observations also revealing the same thing.

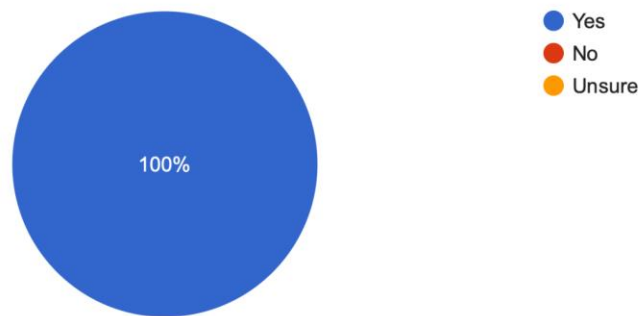
Furthermore, another observed communication form before plays was the setter to the hitters. While this wasn’t totally verbal, there were some verbal cues inserted to make sure players were on the same page. One-fourth of respondents viewed this to be the most important in-game communication. The observations revealed setters before points would often pull their shirt to cover their hand from the other team and show a number to the hitter. Each number is a different set a hitter swings. The setter would typically say the player's name, and give them a nod, while the hitter would say okay, and give a nod. While this communication is half verbal and half nonverbal, it also utilizes team-specific lexis. Every volleyball team has different numbers for different sets/hits available. Alongside that, strategy plays a big part when making sure the other team doesn’t see what numbers you are using. Circling back to earlier, this differentiates from how hitters would communicate through practice. In practice, often players will yell out what they want, whereas in-game they will say “Yeah, yeah, yeah” so the setter knows the already-agreed-upon set is available as an option, overall displaying ideas around strategy within the lexis usage and verbal communication.

Communication During Gameplay

Communication during gameplay acted as a facilitator for success and execution. While only 12.5% from the survey agreed that bench communication is most important, there was in game communication used in many different ways. These were all precise and strategic, helping the team to win points and once again, execute.

Figure 5.

Does volleyball specific language improve in game communication and likeliness to succeed?
8 responses



The team agreed unanimously that utilizing lexis is essential to improving the likelihood to succeed during games. The main lexis form used during gameplay occurs when passers suggest spots for hitters to swing. On the WOU team, we focus on four main spots. We call these spots bangle, dangle, line, and camp. During games, it was observed that as hitters went up to swing, back-row players would go behind them and yell one of these places for them to hit. The lexis usage in this scenario once again falls under the idea that strategy is executed through language. The fact that the WOU team has extremely unique names for these spots, makes other teams less likely to guess where they're hitting or to read them as well.

The next in-game communication form was bench-to-on-court player communication. This pretty much consists of the bench helping guide the players on the court spatially. Whether it is on defense or serve-serve, bench-to-on-court player communication can be the deciding factor in winning or losing a point. Bench players are to watch balls, and yell “In, in, in” or “Out, out, out.” When bench players watch where the ball is going, they typically have a better sense of if it’ll be in or out, due to the angle they’re watching from. From the tournament, it was observed that the majority of the time the bench called something in or out, and the players would listen. There were times the bench was wrong about where the ball would drop, but that never hindered the trust among players.

Communication after Plays

Lastly, there was the category of communication after plays. There were two main categories surrounding communication, depending on whether the team got the point or not. There was positive communication or praise if the team won the point. If the team lost the point, there was typically verbal communication that was encouragement-based. Both types together help bring up the overall team vibe and positivity. Bringing these things up helps the chances of winning points, sets, and games.

When the point was won, there were a few main reactions observed during practices and games. Oftentimes, a player would go to the player who won the point by getting the kill and hype them up. They would also tell them to do that again, good job, or simply just scream for joy. These findings were consistent within practice and games, despite the observation that players tended to get more excited during games than

during practice. Yet, when the team lost the point, there were hardly any negative reactions from teammates. Lexis was prevalently utilized especially on lost points. During a game observation, one player served the ball into the net. When the team went into the huddle after the point, another player said to her, "Make it up with a pass." This means to make up for your mistake on the next play, by executing on serve receive. Another observed verbal tendency was for players to say, "right back." This is frequently used during games and practices when players make mistakes. The idea is that you will get it right back, or in other words, move on to the next point.

Conclusion

My findings after observing and surveying the WOU Club Volleyball Team reveal that lexis and verbal communication are key influences to promoting overall success. Lexis usage and verbal communication is facilitated and encouraged by coaches during practice through repetition. Players replicate the encouragement and usage, in order to succeed, especially during in-game situations. While there are a decent amount of studies done on the usage of nonverbal communication amongst volleyball teams, there are little to no studies on the usage of verbal communication and lexis. Alongside this, there has never been an individual study on the WOU Club Volleyball Team. This new study I conducted is extremely important to understanding the different communication types that are used within volleyball teams, as well as how the discourse-community-specific lexis plays a supporting role for encouraging that action.

While understanding the important roles that lexis and verbal communication play fills a large gap in the research around volleyball teams, there is much more research needed to be done in order to fully grasp the entirety of communication amongst

volleyball teams. Further research that can be conducted could be centered around a quantitative study. This study can focus on the actual numbers, verbal communication usage, nonverbal communication, and lexis utilization. Having quantitative numbers and representations can help bring a different perspective, as well as a data set to be interpreted. Comparing the nonverbal and verbal language usage can also help coaches, players, and anyone in the volleyball world understand how players communicate, but on a deeper level.

I highly recommend further research to be conducted by anyone within the volleyball field or interested in it. There is much research about many other sports, but volleyball lacks much academic exposure and conversation. Further exploring the communication practices and how it benefits teams can change the game of volleyball and the strategies used in the future.

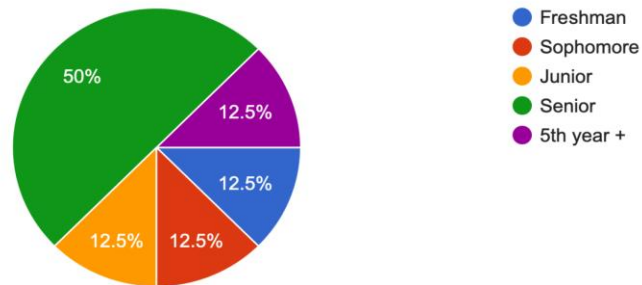
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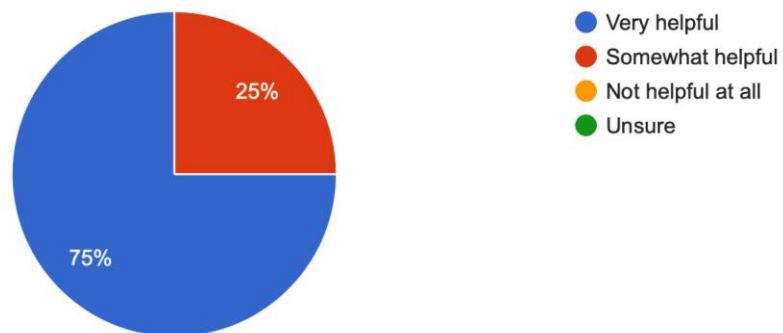
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Appendix A.

What is your grade?
8 responses

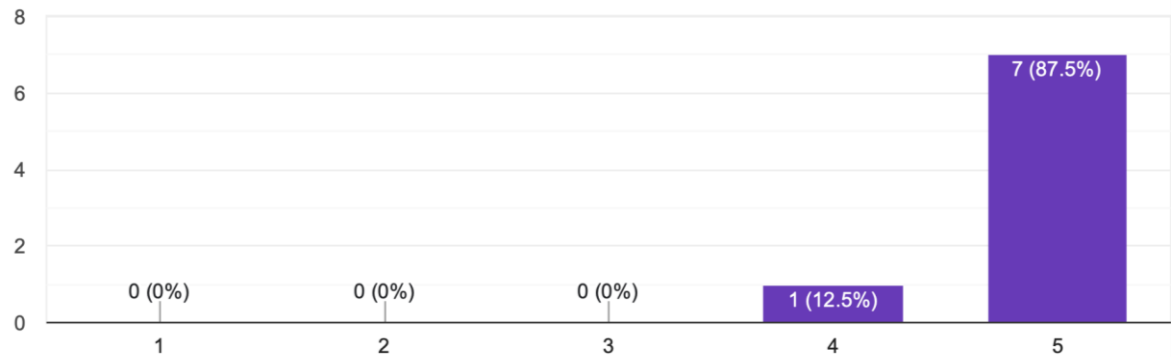


How helpful is learning volleyball-specific terminology in improving your skills as a player?
8 responses



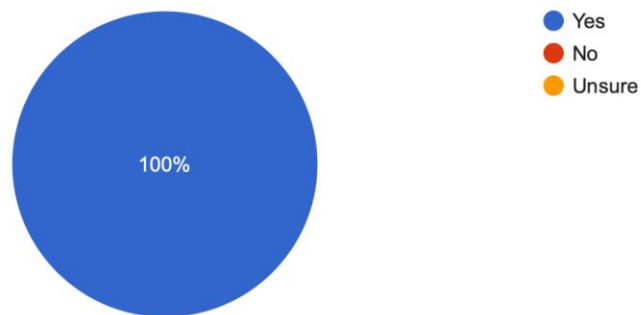
How important is it to teach new volleyball players specific terminology when introducing them to the sport?

8 responses



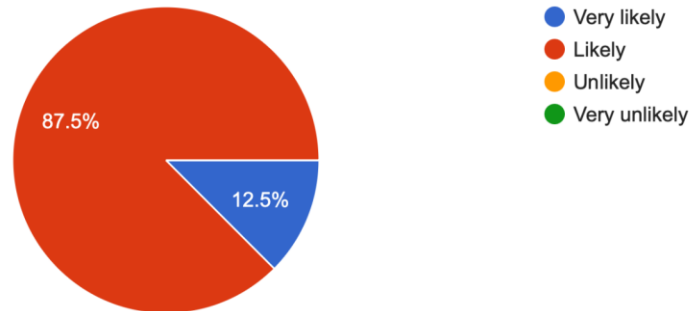
Does the usage of specified language help players execute strategies more effectively?

8 responses



How likely are players to misunderstand each other during a match if they are unfamiliar with key volleyball terms?

8 responses



Appendix B.

OBSERVATION DAY 1: 2/20/2025 Practice 6-8:30

OBSERVATION(s)	THOUGHTS
Coach utilizing lexis	While explaining drills we would be doing, my coach often communicated the goals and how to do it through specialized language. An example of this is when she said we should “cross” which is a technique used amongst back row players. Another example is when we were doing a hitting drill and she told us to hit our bangle, dangle, and campfire, which are all spots on the volleyball court we try to hit to win the point.
Player lexis utilization	Similar to in game scenarios, after points players tended to discuss what happened in volleyball terms. When I shanked a ball, the blocker asked me if I wanted them to take away the line for them, so I wouldn’t be receiving the ball I just did. More so in practice than in games, seams would once again be discussed prior to every serve.
Player verbal language utilization	Players often called for sets out loud, further discussed below
Encouragement through lexis	More often in practice than games, players would encourage others, especially saying “right back” after mistakes. This was observed more often than not, especially in comparison to the in-game communication.
Overall thoughts	The data retrieved from observing verbal communication and utilization of lexis during practice provided much less data than during the observation of in-game verbal communication. One main difference is the usage of verbal communication in practices instead of bodily communication, which is typically used in games. An example of this is I

	noticed my teammates calling for hits yelling out the numbers “4,” “2,” or “pipe,” whereas in a game, our setter would pull their shirt to cover their hand, and display what number they’re going to set the hitters off of the serve, so the other team wouldn’t know.
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OBSERVATION DAY 2: 2/22/25 Beaverton Tournament

OBSERVATION(S)	THOUGHTS
Communication before plays (Passer to passer)	Passers receiving a serve often spoke to each other before a serve, discussing “seams” beforehand so they were on the same page.
Communication after plays (Praise)	This took shape in many different forms, but commonly when we got the point, everyone verbally celebrated, and if someone did something particularly good, that would be quickly mentioned within the court huddle before the next point.
Communication after plays (We didn’t get the point)	Typically, when we lost the point, in the huddle players made sure to tell the person who made the mistake “right back” which means move on to the next play and you'll get it right back. Another thing similarly said is if someone missed a serve, we would say “Make it up with a pass,” which is another way of moving on to the next play with positivity yet discipline as well.
Communication and utilization of lexis during gameplay	<p>Back row to hitters: Many hitters seek the back row’s input while swinging, if the back row players notice gaps in the defense, as the hitter is jumping the back row players will verbally say where the hitter should hit it. These spots consisted of dangle, bangle, camp, and line. When giving tips to the middle, oftentimes players would just say whether to swing “left” or “right.”</p> <p>Bench to passers: on serve or on defense the bench played a large role in helping the players understand what decisions to make, and where they are spatially. The bench does this by yelling whether a ball is headed in or out of bounds.</p>

Abstract: My essay is about the different dynamics facilitated through communication within the sport of volleyball. While the nonverbal communication of volleyball had been explored, there were little to no published works about the importance of verbal communication and volleyball-specific lexis. I grew up playing volleyball, and it is my favorite sport. I discovered how lexis contributes to success of teams on and off of the volleyball court, as well as how it contributes to the overall connection and culture of volleyball teams. This was provided through direct observation and survey of the WOU Club Volleyball Team.

Bio: My name is Emily Newbeck. I am from Monmouth, Oregon, and have lived here my whole life. I chose Western because it is close to home and is a great school for future teachers. Growing up, I loved to play sports, and recently I have enjoyed the outdoors, baking, and seeing friends and family when I can. I plan to teach language arts at the high school level and go back to school to get my master's degree in administration to eventually become an administrator. I have always loved writing, and education as well as teaching are my biggest passions.

Keywords: Volleyball, communication, verbal communication, nonverbal communication, discourse community, lexis, group cohesion, strategy, performance.

Teacher: Samantha Morgan