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Characterization of Discounting Words as Powerful Factors in Determining the Quality of Cooperation Within a Working Team

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Abstract: Optimal team communication and long-term cooperation depend on several various categories of factors. One of the factors that may point to efficiency decline within the cooperation is the presence of abusive words (labelling) which are named as discounting words by authors. They represent verbal aggression and are type of condensed metaphors that reflect people's view of the world around them. Since any communication units that disrupt the good teamwork are of a high interest to any quality manager, there is characterization of the discounting words given.

There is a certain correlation between the one who gives the discounting words and the one who receives them. There is also a chart of some of the discounting words given and conclusions included.

Keywords: discounting words, teamwork, cooperation, management

Introduction

When team members communicate, they may use certain words that cause conflicts or communication disrupt. Many of the conflicts cannot be easily solved, and so they may stay "frozen" just because some of the communication participants had used offensive words that some other participants cannot forget [Steiner, 2004]. Such words are strong factor in slowing down the process of recovery or forgiving. These words represent verbal aggression, and are type of condensed metaphors, which the unsatisfied communication participant uses to express own anger or frustration. They are used to offend. In practice, they are also used to blame someone or to justify own actions, offending the other [Steiner, 2004] [Steiner, 2003].

In practice these words are also used to **blame** someone or to **justify** own actions, offending the other. In languages within the Balkan area there is a concrete notion for these words. In English or other languages we could not find the equivalent for their name, but the nature of such words covers each of the following descriptive adjectives: abusive, harsh, offensive, conflictive, quarrelling, criticizing, even profanities.

In TA psychotherapy, working with clients and using the concept of Stroke/Discount offers diagnostic possibility of the way clients treat reality and themselves, where the discount matrix is of big help. However, here we do not analyze the level of consciousness of the people about the problems, but the focus is on how they break the communication using the mentioned words, how they show their anger, how they justify themselves for their behavior, or how they present their referent behavior towards the world.

Such words ignore or discount some realistic aspect of the ongoing situation. Within a team, they may cause disruption of an optimal communication, especially when their frequency in verbal communication is high. We call them discounting words (further in the text DW) because they:

- Discount: They selectively point out just some aspects (usually negative) of one's personality, and at the same time they selectively ignore other aspects (usually positive) [Петковски, 2012].
- Determine: When such words that give someone an offensive attribution are used, then the communication gets a direction according to the belief that stays behind what was said. These words illustrate one's behaviour or relation to the world and one's beliefs and opinion of the people that are called that way [Freud, 1922].
- Disrupt: These words are offensive. They break the cooperative team communication and direct it to psy-

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chological games and negative outcomes for the communication participants [Steiner, 2004] [Freud, 1922].
- There are signs that indicate a disrupted cooperation within the communication. Claude Steiner lists 10 such signs as presented below (Table 1) [Steiner, 2004]:

Table 1. Signs that indicate a disrupted cooperation

Signs that indicate a disrupted cooperation	
1	Gossiping out of working meetings in subgroups
2	Separated meetings in subgroups and making decisions in secret meetings
3	Labelling
4	Blaming the other
5	Highlighting differences at the others without concrete information or facts
6	Subgroups' pressure over the neutral team members
7	Comparisons, doubts on a conspiracy level
8	Radical decline or lack of a change enthusiasm
9	Personal communicability and warmth reduction – distance and groups
10	Guilt transfer

To illustrate, let us take sign 3 into consideration. It is labelling, therefore points to team members discounting. It is the labelling that is in fact naming particular team members names, which emphasize or ignore certain capabilities, character features etc. Labelling as a sign of disrupted cooperation points to the fact that the team members start treating each other through the discounting process and the authentic mutual contact among the team members is being lost. Under such conditions, the team manager faces complications in his work, since he no longer manages people but "labels". Team management should then be directed towards satisfaction growth of the team members.

Factors which are necessary to study are two types of conflicts [Петковски, 2012] [Freud, 1922]:
- Interpersonal conflicts, which may be the reason for lack of mutual understanding among team members, personal intolerance because of mutual incompatibility, different priorities in terms of communication channels etc.
- Group conflicts, related to the status, the vision and the mission, or the power distribution, which is often greater when coming from lower hierarchical level. Then, it may be related to management style, because of different treatment of team loyalty. It also may be related to distribution of the benefits from the achieved goals and assignments, and to the importance of each team member and the way it is being distributed.

The analysis of the DW points to the conflicts direction and place, through an analysis of the words that are used for both the user and the receiver, because it illustrates the relations among team members. A special tool that will help the manager to have an insight into team condition will be collecting the DWs that are used and determining their direction. That makes the first stage in the process, which would be completed by studying the DW as a powerful factor which breaks the cooperation and disrupts the teamwork. The manager approach to conflict resolution is the second stage and is not part of this article objective.

Research part

The research that has been made by the authors and that consists of a thorough ellaboration and analysis of the DW, leads to a characterization through a descriptive analysis of the nature of the DW as presented in the diagram shown in Figure 1 at the end of this part.

Several properties and characteristics may be stated that hold whenever DWs are involved. They are given as follows:

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DWs are important words

People are able to verbally express their view of the world. Such a view had been formed through their experience with the world and information they received from the environment. The use of DW is just an illustration of people's reaction to certain situations that are unfavourable for them. In such situations they act similarly as their parents in analogues situations or as other people who have had impact in their programming and atributing. Such people were important in one's life and so what they had said was also important. Thus the words they said were important, too.

The words that have communicational meaning are important to us and may have characteristic of atribution. Such words may have impact on our emotions, thoughts and long-term behaviour. Attribution by use of DW that is often performed, may convince the child that it is exactly as some people call it. For example, if a child was told too often that it was bad, whenever it did something good, it thought that it was not good enough, because its parents defined it as bad.

Speaking of important words, here we put an accent on DW, although it is not only those that can make atribution and damage. DWs do not necessarily need to be offensive, they can also be expressions of empathy and care, aiming to help someone. What makes them powerful is their **repetition** while communicating, and even more if they come from a person who is very important in one's life. The most important people in our lives are the ones that we love and the ones that love us.

One of the ways of ruining each other's life is by use of DW, illustrated in the proverb: "Bad word hurts more than a slap in the face". Therefore, managing a team requires a careful choise of words in the first place, particularly in critical situations. This choise of words tends to build trust and wish for cooperation among team members. Within the team, when team participants are aware of the significance of the spoken words in terms of hurting someone, having a teamwork full of conciousness of such a significance will make a cooperative mood and mutual care.

DW that may hurt may be noticed in cases when people give each other critiques and orders, or when they want to show their own "magnitude" by use of such words. Some of the words are being said during one's childhood by adults who wanted to make influence on them. That is in fact adults who generally want to influence others, because being able to have impact on other people is a representation of **power**. Here we define power as the state of an increased importance of someone in somebody else's life.

DWs are critiques

Critiques from parent to child are important. When they are negative, for the child in that moment the "delivery" of love stops. So the child takes the parent seriously, tries to satisfy the one, to make what is best for the parent, and may even accept critiques regardless of how strong they are. After the storm is gone, sun rises again, they receive love again and everything is OK. Is it really?

Critiques may be said through realistic and unrealistic notes and they may consist of many DW. When there are DW within the critiques, then they are not realistic.

When one criticizes someone else, one does it because of some negative conclusions of the other's behaviour, looks, or opinion. But what does the other do to make the first one want to criticize? Within the first one's mind, he or she endangers or even brakes the harmony of that one's own homeostage or social status quo. This endangering may be real, if it conquers one's life space or psycho-physical health. Or it may be real if it takes one's life space with a series of actions. But criticizing may also be initiated by one's beliefs that the other's behaviour is being endangering, without being realistic. For example, when a child does not do well at school, it endangers parent's self-image of being a successful parent. Endangering also

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happens when someone ignores or rejects somebody else, in contrast to the other's expectations: „I don't like you!", „I don't want to listen to your advices!"

Regardless of what stays behind the motivation for criticizing, reality shows that people do criticize each other. It is not always made by realistic or balanced critiques in an appropriate moment. It is more probable that the critiques would be directed because of imposing own power and will, which would express one's need to have a control over something or somebody. It may also be a critique that releases the one who gives it out of an accumulated anxiety, projecting own aggression over others.

On an explicit level, the words that are offending are recognizable and they may also show whether one is angry, frustrated or defeated. The one who said the words believes that the other person deserves such words.

So such critiques may be easilly said using DW. These DWs are usualy metaphores with a clear and precise meaning in particular sociocultural communities. The approach in preventing DW within a team is directed to emancipating the team members, including their leader. Particularly, if the team leader is oriented towards supporting the colleagues, it is expectable that using DW in his/her critiques would illustrate his/her failure.

DWs are metaphores

Aristotel defined the metaphor as giving another name; it is a language expression that is a subject (in our case human or animal) different than the subject (human) for which there is an exsisting word in the language.

Literature theoreticians determine metaphores as unexpected and new choice in which essence lies in understanding of a phenomenon by the use of other phenomenon. According to **A. Ihana** a metaphor is a cognitive tool that helps people finding an analogue model to an unknown notion.

According to traditional understanding, metaphores are figures of speech that rather belong to retorics and poetic language. Then the metaphores were excluded from linguistic research and learnings.

What type of metaphores are DWs? Lakoff and Turner made classification of two types of metaphores: **conceptual** and **basic [**Lakoff, 2003**]**. Basic metaphores are rarer and they are related to the understanding of life. They are used automatically and unconsciously. The metaphor is basic if its use is conventional, automatic, which means that it expresses the way of thinking. Basic metaphores that exist as parts of each culture are very few.

Since the process of creation of DW is such that another name is given to some notion, object or a person, we may say that a metaphorization happens. It means that the metaphor is bisection or mapping from object A to object B.

So in terms of metaphors there is a mapping process that can be of several types. There may be a mapping between concepts, and a mapping between images, where a range of mental images exist that contain attributes and relations part - whole. Such is the way that people map DW to others' behaviour, others' looks, others' opinion and emotions.

We accept and agree that in fact the unconscious is the most alive part of the metaphoric content. Since we accepted the view of cognitivistic linguists, we may conclude that metaphores are very important tool that helps people understand the world.

So DWs taken as metaphores offer us information that in the essence of the human perception, and later thinking development, and a structure of discounting perception of the environment may easily happen, which depends on the successfulness of the mapping using metaphores.

When we say the DWs are metaphores, then in the situations when team members describe the teamwork and conditions metaphorically, they should choose the option to find cooperation metaphors instead of critique or failure metaphors.

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DWs begin as comparisons

Many DW come out as comparisons, like: "he/she is as this" or "he/she is as that". Later, after a frequent use of this starting comparison, the distance in it is being lost. The one who says the discounting words starts to indeed think that he is "that". In fact, not being aware of making comparisons removes the control over reality and cannot provide an insight of person's frustrations.

Training the team members considering this issue, and particularly the leader, should cover the manner of comparing. Namely, when team members need to compare, they should find and use a clear criterion, and if they could not find any clear criterion, the comparison should be expressed through feedback.

DWs are geographically determined

The analysis of those DWs that are used in Macedonia shows that there is a great similarity to the DWs that are used in neighbouring or close Balkan countries such as Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and Croatia. It is interesting that some particular DW had Turkish root until 20-30 years ago, which was for sure a result of the presence of Turkey in this region for centuries. However, according to the research that was made in Macedonia, DWs are used with a particular meaning only in some parts of the country, while in other parts they are not, although there is the same ethnical group and religion. We may even notice that some DWs are used only in some parts of the big towns. The greatest difference was noticed between the use of DW in the central parts of the big towns and the use of DW in the peripheral parts of the same towns.

DWs are directed

DWs are in fact offensive words and by using them, one wants to offend other participant in the communication. So DWs are an offence, and therefore they are an introduction to conflicts. The offence for the participant given DW may cover the following aspects:

1. Skills
2. Knowledge
3. Intelligence
4. Achievements
5. External looks
6. Acceptance by others

Knowing the mentioned aspects provides easier detection of the eventual coflict direction and its dynamics when it comes to managing a team.

DWs are time limited

Within a certain time period, as a result of the conditions and certain behaviours, some DWs are "in style", or become "hits". There are certain DWs that are in use within a certain time segment, and under certain historic conditions, while some other DWs lose their "social use". This social use is connected to the influence of the society and the media trend in the community. It is also connected to certain social changes, crises, or wars. On the other hand, if there are not drastic social disturbances, then some DWs get lost, and only in some particular environment they keep getting used. Such environment may be: streets, quarts, and families.

Within a certain time period, as a result of the present conditions and certain behaviours, some DWs become "hits". There are whole generations that use same DWs within a certain time frame. Some DWs stop being in style and turn into similar DWs that have similar meaning, but different name.

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Within a team, if particular DWs have stopped being used after a period of their usage, it is necessary to check whether they have been replaced by some others. This should be done before one may jump to a conclusion that the teamwork has improved because of the elimination of those particular DWs.

DWs follow after certain conditions satisfaction

When the communication between team or group members comes to a level of using DW, it means that good communication is disrupted, and the cooperation is being broken. Since DWs are words that disrupt the communication, they are usually given as: crossed transaction, taking position I'm +, You are -, or I'm -, You are - (not so often), discount of some personality aspects, manifestation of corresponding refferent value system.

Calling somebody with DW is in correspondence with:
- Personal characteristics of the one who gives them;
- One's experience with the "named one", that is, the duration of their communication;
- Level of failure (intensity of damage) that was caused by the "named one";
- Repetitiveness of the failure;
- Duration of tries and mistakes.

DWs illustrate one's value system

When a team member gives DW of a certain type to other team member, then he gives a critique or exspresses own frustration related to a certain situation. Some important questions that need to be answered are: What motivates someone to choose certain types of DW over other types? Why are there people who use only one DW for everyone who caused them frustrations?

When there is a frustration for a team member who is DW giver, he may:
- Perceive only one type of events,
- Have one type of expectations from other team members,
- Not notice things or events that he does not find important.

Then, motivated by own upbringing, the team member will have a sensitive system of perception of the world when "things are not as they should be".

DWs are a strong indicator of team member's losing script

It seems that the one who uses many DW is unsatisfied of himself/herself and of the life that he/she lives.

Whenever someone allows himself/herself to name the others by a certain DW, it means that he/she has lost while not expecting it. In other words, one was loosing although he/she had expectations to succeed. How is it possible that one was expecting to succeed, but has failed? It happens because of the lack of insight in the mechanisms and patterns that lead the one through his/her internal plan up to negative outcomes, fulfilling his/her loser's script. DW may be an illustration of such mistakes, losses and errors. If one uses them often, there is a big probability that the DWs illustrate his/her loser's script. This is particularly expressed within a working team.

Figure 1 – characterization of the DISCOUNTING WORDS

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Results and Discussion

Below (Table 2) there is a Catalogue of DWs that are widely used in R. Macedonia, but are also used in the other countries in the Balkan region with small modifications [Петковски, 2010] [Петковски, 2000]:

Table 2. Catalogue of DW

DW	Characteristics that the team member accounts to a person by giving the DW	Characteristics that the team member ignores about a person by giving the DW
ANIMAL	Causes pain, Aggressive, Not willing to forgive, Egocentric, Has instincts only	Cares for others, Decent, Shows self-care, Gentle while in love
PIG	Greedy, Uses others, Dirty, rough	Cares for others, Learns from own mistakes, Gracious, Honest, Capable to love
OX	Insensible, stupid, Indecent, active	Readiness to spend time on external looks, Decency, charm, Knowing what love is
CHICKEN	Too loud, Not able to predict, No plans, no aim, Greedy, frigid, Not using own experience	Intelligent, Conscious, High intensity of emotions, Discreet
GOOSE	Stupid reactions, naive, Masochist, panic maker, Easily conquerable, passive	Control, Corresponding facial expression, Skills
SHEEP	Conformist, Dependant, Peaceful, Plain	Ability to make plans, Individuality, selfcare and defense, Intelligence, Ability to request, Being initiative
SNAKE	Uses others, Evil, vengeful, envious, Introvert, quick	Shows emotions, Friendly, Capable to love, Honest
PAIN IN THE REAR	Energetic, Communication hungry, Knows everything, Feels important, Boring, not critical, Exhibitionist, pervert	Cares for others, Productive, Successful, Capable to have real friends, Sensible, moderate Able to stay quiet and passive,
HICK	Imagines he is someone else or acts like it, Theatrical, open, rough, childish, Imposing, indecent Possessive, jealous	Decent, Moderate, Has wide knowledge, Ability to make a commitment
CORPSE	Passive, Goes with the flow, Insensitive, confused, dirty,	Reacts correspondingly, Involved, Initiative
IDIOT	Stupid, Not involved, not critical, Unsuccessful, clumsy	Has knowledge, Competent, Sensible, Able to predict

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FOOL	Behave to be noticed, Unpredictable, communicative, Nice, extrovert, Easily gets hurt, quickly forgets	Moderate in reacting, Able for corresponding reaction, Able to remember when being hurt
SCREWED	Confused, naive, too kind, Clumsy	Successful, Skillful, Capable
DUMB	Not involved, Naive, Easily makes mistakes, Listens others' advices, lazy, confused, kind, Justifies others, Joyful, careless	Able to concentrate, Informed, Able to use own intelligence and experience, Able to plan, able to think
TRASH	Highly ambitious, intelligent, Evilly manipulative, economical, Wants to use others, Knows how to get to something under any circumstances or price	Honest, With integrity, Liable, Honest friendly
WEIRD	Specific, original, Unpredictable, creative, Courageous, Different, wants different solutions, Shows love indirectly, afraid of love	Moderate, Conformist, Normal, Consistent

Conclusions

Studying the DW shows when and in which way group or team members end the communication, and what words they use to reflect themselves and their life beliefs. Awareness of using DW provides self-analysis and self-correction. This self-correction consists of the evaluation of own value system and own behaviour through a contact with a couching trainer, and also of analyzing how the team manager disrupts the cooperation development, in terms of freezing the conflict by using DW or even contributing its escalation.

Clarification of the used words enables:

- Team members' consciousness of their own weaknesses.
- Opening new approaches, which will not bring people to repetitive conclusions that give distorted picture of reality.
- Taking responsibilities for own behaviour, if one often gets the same DW.
- The team manager to have an insight into team condition.

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