

# LANGUAGE IN ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS: NOTES ABOUT “GYMISH”

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## **Abstract**

*This article aims to present and discuss the lexicon of Artistic Gymnastics through a case study conducted at a gymnasium for high performance Women's Artistic Gymnastics. As such, we have carried out an analysis of the communication between the protagonists of the study, gymnasts and coaches, with the objective of exemplifying how this lexicon has formed into a part of the sport's cultural heritage. The data indicates that words and expressions specific to Artistic Gymnastics exhibit historical and cultural traits and, in some cases, transcend the limits of this sport when incorporated into society.*

**Keywords:** *Lexicon, communication, sports culture, gymnastics.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It was back in 2003 at the World Championships in Anaheim, in the United States of America, that a salto with a 180° rotation along the longitudinal axis followed by a double salto forward in the pike position was presented in Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG) competition for the first time by the Brazilian gymnast Daiane dos Santos during a floor exercise routine. This new acrobatic element, Arabian double pike, contributed to an unprecedented gold medal in world competition for Brazil, and was subsequently included in the Code of Points (CoP).

The unprecedented nature of the world title contributed to Brazilian society learning about the “Dos Santos I”, the name by which this acrobatic element is known

within Artistic Gymnastics (AG). With its dissemination, the expression *Arabian double pike* advanced beyond the milieu of gymnastics and is used today by the population in distinct contexts, from television commercials to political news stories, as can be observed in the following examples:

- Burst mode [on the camera] is also great for capturing an entire sequence. Go ahead and record your friend's “Arabian double pike” from beginning to end. Later, tell the story with your fotos (Apple, 2013).
- In a matter of seconds, she [Luana Piovanni<sup>1</sup>] did an Arabian double pike and changed the subject (Cordioli, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Luana Piovanni is a Brazilian famous actress.

- (...) but stating that the company should not make any move towards receiving the newer generations is a backwards Arabian double pike (Galisteu, 2013).

- If that happens, [Miguel] Arraes<sup>2</sup> will give an Arabian double pike in his casket (Palazzo-Martini, 2013).

It is evident that the expression cited became a metaphor for doing something extremely difficult or unprecedented and is being used in many different situations. This fact corroborates Saporta (1990) who states that language promotes the interaction between sports and other contexts, like the political and the social. Indeed, the author mentions that these phenomema influence and reflect upon each other.

The extrapolation of sports language to other contexts is certainly influenced in large part by the mass media. Authors such as Lipónski (2009) state that sports media are increasingly popular and that sports occupy a high percentage of TV and radio time. Consequently, it exerts a strong influence on listeners and spectators. Internet access has also contributed sharply to the dissemination of information surrounding sports phenomena and AG (Bortoleto, Ferreira, & Rodrigues 2011). According to Oliveira (2010), names like Jade Barbosa, Daiane dos Santos, and the Hypólito siblings (Daniele and Diego) are nationally recognized and circulate through different vehicles of communication with certain regularity. Recently, Arthur Zanetti, 2012 Olympic champion on the rings apparatus, should also be added to this list.

Due to this increased media presence and the resulting popularity of AG, Brazilians are increasingly able to recognize the meaning of *handstand* or the aforementioned *Arabian double pike*, something infeasible a short while ago (Lopes, 2009). In this way, it appears that the language specific to AG has begun to extrapolate the sporting context and reached the society in general.

In fact, language is an inherent part of social life and, according to Delaney and

Madigan (2009), it is one of the most important symbols for the modern society. Kowalikowa (2009) states that language permits the establishment of interpersonal communication through cognitive processes that make it possible to express feelings, emotions and sensations. The author highlights that, "there are no human activities which can dispense with language" (Kowalikowa, 2009, p. 63). It can be written or oral and take on non-verbal forms like Morse code, sign language, and conventional signaling systems. In this way, AG has also developed its own codes to afford greater efficiency in the communication between its specialists.

Sapir (1949) draws attention to the fact that language has become a fundamental element for the study of culture, as it is capable of revealing unique aspects of a determined group. According to Ullman (1991, p. 122), "it should be considered as something part of human beings, something inherent. Language emerged with man, and man emerged with language".

Despite being an inherent and distinctive characteristic of human beings, language does not constitute an instinctive and biological mechanism. Marconi and Presotto (2010) describe the learning process necessary to embody language and consequently the culture in which the individual is inserted.

As previously cited, just as with a majority of sports, AG has its own vocabulary, which we call *Gymish*. It can sound like a foreign language to those who are not used to hearing it (Gutman, 1996). This specific lexicon embraces elements that are important within the context of this sport and make it possible to name things, describe events, and express the feelings, values and norms that are specific to it. We believe that when hearing the expression *Arabian double pike* for the first time, individuals who do not belong to the context of AG must experience the sensation that they are hearing a different language or, rather, that they do not understand the meaning of the codes.

<sup>2</sup> Fomer Brazilian politician.

Delaney and Madigan (2009) explain that groups belonging to subcultures modify the language in order to meet their own needs. The authors continue, stating that, "this is especially true in the world of sports, as all sports utilize language in a symbolic manner relevant to their domain" (Delaney & Madigan, 2009, p. 74). These changes emerge from the elements, terms, and expressions that were developed and established by the practitioners, coaches, fans, and sometimes by the media.

In fact, as Lipónski (2009) highlights, sports give rise to numerous amounts of jargon which can be linked to coaching, to terminology for training methods, to the language of sports science, to sports medicine, and to the slang terms of athletes and fans. Kowalikowa (1997) adds that language in sports also owes its peculiarity to factors like sporting goods, accessories, and the types of relationships that exist between participants.

These aspects make the language of sports a component that is distinct from other forms of language, since according to Kowalikowa (2009, p. 63), "each human activity affects its linguistic expression in terms of vocabulary, phonology, syntax and phraseology" whose features, as stated by Sedlaczek (2009, p. 121), "are visible mainly on the lexical level: names of disciplines, activities, equipment, places, etc.". It's important to highlight that the specialized language, as Kocourek (1991) points out, are subcategories of broader language. And they are used by a group that shares the same interests. In this direction, Sager, Dungworth and MacDonald (1980, p. 74) say that these specialized language "are semi-autonomous, complex, semiotic systems based on and derived from general language".

Starting from the assumptions presented earlier, this article seeks to identify and discuss the lexicon unique to AG and, more specifically, to WAG. This will allow us to enlarge our knowledge of sports phenomena as well as facilitate the communication between all of these involved in this sport,

whether they are gymnasts, coaches, scholars, or even those who appreciate AG.

## METHODS

We have opted for a case study approach in the development of this research. Yin (2009) states that this research method is used in different fields and situations with the intention of contributing to the knowledge of individuals, groups, and social and political organizations. Furthermore, according to the author, the method allows for the investigator's holistic viewpoint on the events of daily life, such as life cycles, the behavior of small groups, organizational and management processes, school performance, and international relations, among others.

Merriam (1998) states that a case study that has its focus on cultural aspects can be labeled as an ethnographic case study. This investigation method utilizes techniques traditionally attributed to ethnographic research (observation, interview, document analysis) to provide a deep description of a unit aiming to understand its idiosyncrasies, but without losing the characteristics of a case study (André, 1995).

Bogdan and Biklen (1994) portray the ethnographic case study as an observational approach in which the focus of the research is centered on a specific organization or on some other unique aspect of this organization. This type of study aims for discovery and allows new elements to emerge throughout the development of the research, a fact which demands that the search for new inquiry and answers always occurs in consideration of the context in which the phenomenon is situated.

In order for the research to meet its established objectives, we have used three data collection techniques: bibliographic and documental research, participant observation, and informal interview. The period of observation prioritized the preparation for the 2012 London Olympics in the months of March, April, May and June. After this major sporting event had ended, the observations resumed in

September with a total of 16 visits and 85 hours.

The gymnasium selected for this study was a training site for WAG team which had athletes that competed in the state and Brazilian championships during the 2009-2012 Olympic cycle in four different categories: pre-infant (9-10 years), infant (11-12 years), juvenile (13-15 years) and adult (16 years and older)<sup>3</sup>.

When we contemplate the sporting career of the gymnasts included in this microculture, we find athletes that had competed in World Cups, Panamerican Games, South American Games, World Championships and Olympic Games.

The focus of this research was restricted to the training squads that aimed the high performance gymnastics, which trained from Monday to Saturday. The gymnasts from the pre-infant (n = 1) and infant (n = 9) categories trained for 30 hours a week. The juvenile (n = 3) and adult (n = 6) gymnasts, in addition to the activities carried out in the gym, had weight training in a different location. Furthermore, some athletes had physical therapy, in order to prevent and recover from injuries.

The coaching staff observed consisted of three renowned professionals with both national and international experience in the sport. Upon analysis of the coaches' resums, participation in the following competitions could be observed: State Championships, Brazilian Championships, South American Games, World Cups, and Olympic Games.

The study was approved by the Committee for Ethics in Research of the School of Physical Education and Sport at the University of São Paulo (Report number: 225.814).

## RESULTS

### Oral language

Sports, as a sociocultural phenomenon, combine communication processes that are

accomplished by way of language (Sedlaczek, 2009). It is possible to observe the existence of language variation in the sporting context since ancient times. According to Lipónski (2009), the names of sports equipment, as well as their descriptions and reflections about them, have been preserved in texts from different periods in history, such as the Classical Era.

Over the years, the study of language has collaborated with the understading of sports and sporting behavior, principally because it has facilitated understading between interlocutors, as well as outside observers (Blanchard, 1995).

Kowalikowa (2009) states that in the daily sporting routine there is a gamut of interactions that are influenced by the roles that the interlocutors play (athletes, coaches, judges, spectators, medical team, managers, among others). According to the author, the interlocutors develop a discourse that frequently reveals specific patterns and can generate a unique lexicon, which in AG can be known as *Gymish*.

Upon analysing the daily routine of a high performance WAG gymnasium, we have observed that some of the specific patterns cited by Kowalikowa (2009) have emerged in the nomenclature of the apparatus and equipment used during training. However, others are synthetic terms employed to substitute the complex description of the gymnastics elements stipulated by the Code of Points (CoP).

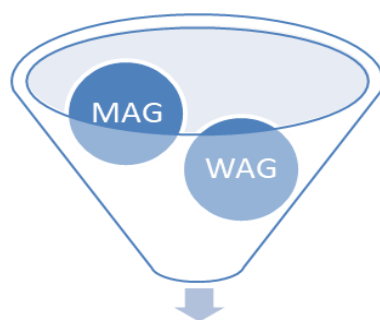
We know that floor, balance beam, vaulting table, and uneven bars are the names attributed to each specific apparatus in WAG. Furthermore, we can also add some auxiliary equipment used in the day-to-day activities of gymnastics to this list (Nunomura et al., 2009). Examples of such equipment are bar straps, parallettes, floor bar, roller wheel, vault box, tumble track, among others. These examples provide evidence for the kind of nomenclature explained by Kowalikowa (2009) and establish a pattern, which is specific to this sport.

In general, the nomenclature of the apparatus can be considered closer to the

<sup>3</sup> Categories established by Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation.

public when it is associated with the language of sports, or rather, when it transcends the gymnastics milieu. Authors such as Bergh and Ohlander (2012) clarify that the delimitations between languages, the language of sports and language specific to a particular sport are porous. They cite Tingbjörn (2003) who highlights other

levels in the divisions of sports language, since we can identify the common language among sports played on courts or in team sports. Moreover, we could also add the common language of gymnastics. In Figures 1 and 2 that follow, we can observe these questions.



Language of Artistic Gymnastics.

Figure 1. Language of AG.

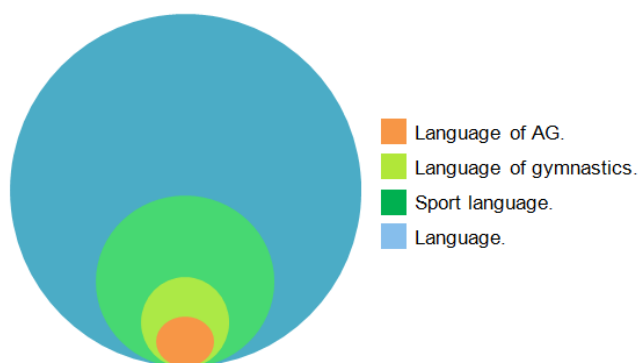


Figure 2. The language of AG as a component of the language. Adapted from Bergh and Ohlander (2012).

In some situations observed during the field research, we determined that the use of words belonging to the lexicon of Portuguese also exercised a specific semantic function that could pose difficulties for individuals who are not part of the context of this sport, as can be verified below. It is important to highlight that we opted for the literal translation from Portuguese to English, and in parentheses the meaning in *Gymish*.

*Se você não marcar a parada não irá valer.* / If you don't hold your stop (handstand), it won't count!

*(Você) está fazendo a chamada de lado.* / You're doing the call (hurdle) to the side.

*Pode ir pro caninho.* / You can go to the little pipe (bar straps).

*Vai pra cravar o salto.* / Go to stick (stopping landing) the vault.

*Abraça o cavalo.* / Hug the horse (the horse as apparatus).

*Pensa na posição da canoinha. / Think about the little canoe position (hollow position).*

*Salta mais depois que levanta da vela. Quero ver você fazendo força nessa perna! /*

Jump more after getting up from the candle (candlestick position). I want to see you pushing with this leg!

The preceding quotes were taken from our field observation notes (FN). In the first sentence, the expression *marcar a parada* (literally: hold your stop) means to execute the handstand element (inverted support) and maintain the static position for at least two seconds. If this requirement is not met, the judge will not consider the value of the element when calculating the difficulty

score. For this reason, the coach says, “It won’t count.”

In the second phrase, the word *chamada* (literally: call) represents the hurdle movement made up of an action, which is executed before a pre-acrobatic or acrobatic element. In the following phase, a *caninho* (literally: little pipe) is a resource used for practicing certain elements on the uneven bars. It is made from a piece of PVC pipe and fabric straps, which are wrapped around the bar and also around the wrists of the gymnast (see FIGURE 3). This mechanism allows the gymnast to hold on to the bar and practice the elements with increased safety and decreased strain on the hands.



Figure 3. Details of the straps and the PVC pipe “caninho” around the bar. Source: Gibson (2016).

The word *cravar* (literally: to stick) is used continually in AG and means to carry out a landing or dismount with control and without any additional steps or wobbles. In other words, it means to land with the feet *sticked* in the floor/mat. *Cavalo* (literally: horse), the next term on the list, alludes to the apparatus used in AG, which got this name due to its origin during the Roman Empire, when it was used for training soldiers in the cavalry. During that period this piece of equipment had the same physical characteristics as the animal, but with time they were excluded as the uses of this apparatus for motor development progressed (Oliveira & Bortoleto, 2011). Finally, *canoinha* (literally: little canoe) and *vela* (literally: candle) are basic body positions used in AG which are commonly used in physical training exercises.

We could also add other expressions that were repeated throughout the training, such as point your toes, tighten your bottom, kick up your heels, strong cast, be stiff, you’re throwing your head, wait to release, leave your feet on the bar longer, look at your hands, open your legs more, shoulders down, among others. We have noticed a great deal of similarity between these expressions and those explained by Bortoleto (2004, p. 270) in the study of men’s artistic gymnastics (MAG), “tighten your bottom, point your toes, lift your head, push your hands, suck in your gut, fly more, hold your hollow position”.

Kowalikowa (2009) asserts that the variety in terminology and semantic specificity are present in sport discourse as a whole. The author adds further examples

from sports such as football, baseball, and weight lifting.

Even though a large part of the vocabulary of the athletes and coaches belong to the lexicon of the Portuguese language, many key words are specific to the AG universe. Upon analysis of the communication between gymnasts and coaches in the study, we noticed that the interlocutors frequently resort to this specific language and, for those who do not belong to the context of this sport, understanding is compromised, as it is almost like a foreign language. We were able to verify this in the accounts taken from the field notes:

You are not doing the **snap down** when you go for the **Arabian double**.

The **Jäger** was better.

Go do the **Tkachev**.

You can warm up for your vault. Don't waste any time on the **Yurchenko**.

That's a good **free hip circle**! Be careful not to go too far!

If you do the **Tsukahara** like this, it's going to be considered as a pike.

You are throwing your head when you do the **flic**.

Open your legs more on the **swich leap**!

Did you do the **Stalder**?

The language distinction between AG and the other sports occurs mostly at the lexical level, since AG has its own ample vocabulary. This fact collaborates with the distinction and cultural identity of the sport (Lipoński, 2009).

Biderman (2001) confirms that the lexicon is related to the process of naming and with the comprehension/perception of reality, in addition to constituting a form of register. In the case of the accounts cited previously, we observed that these were made up of words and expressions that were understandable to those who were inserted into the context of AG and favor/facilitate the communication process. The unique

language of the CoP inspired many of these terms, however, others were coined and consolidated from inside the gymnasiums.

Another example, from those listed before, exposes the particularities of Brazilian AG. In Brazil, we use the word *twist* in a different way compared to English-speaking countries. Instead of representing a rotation on the transversal axis with a longitudinal spin, the *twist* in Brazil consists of a salto with 180° on the longitudinal axis followed by a forward rotation on the transversal axis. The Brazilian *twist* represents the element known as the *Arabian* in English-speaking countries.

The example cited above exposes, as well, the internationalism that, according to Kowalikowa (2009), is present in language of sports. The author relates the great influence of English on different sports. One of the most frequently used words in the gymnasium context is from English: *flic-flac*. In addition to *flic-flack*, we observed along the research the use of the term *layout (step out)* which is a back salto where the landing occurs with one foot at the time. Moreover, we were able to point out the influence of French language in WAG, mainly, in leaps, hops, jumps and dance elements whose origins are in ballet:

The coach observes and asks the gymnast to correct the wolf jump sequence and the *sissonne* on the beam.

On the floor, the children practiced doing a *chassé* followed by a *jeté*.

On the other hand, the German origin of this sport (Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique, 1981; Goodbody, 1982), in the work of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, "father of gymnastics", also comes out through the AG's vocabulary. The word *Kippe*, recurrent in training for the uneven bars, was used consistently by the subjects in this study (Figure 4).

You are bending your arms in the **kip**!

How many **kips** did you do? Question asked by the coach.

It's no use making the transition and not continuing.  
Do the **kip** and cast to handstand. Point highlighted

by the coach.

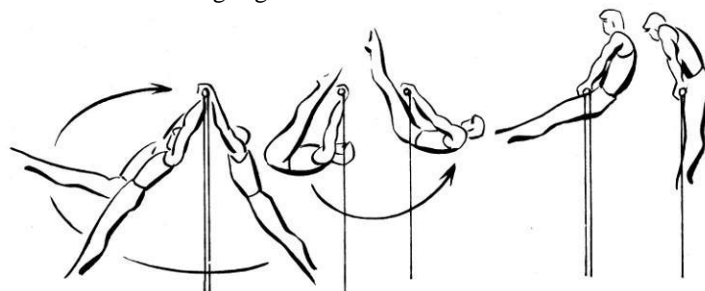


Figure 4. Kippe element. Source: Tonry (1973).

Despite the importance of the German language in WAG, we have observed that examples from this language such as *stütz*, *stützkehre* and *überschlag* are utilized with greater frequency in the men's gymnastics, quite probably due to the historical development of MAG and the origin of these gymnastics elements.

In this way, we notice that *Gymish* preserves its relationship to the origin of AG and that communication among those who participate in this sport highlights a cultural process, since it has suffered under the influence of the periods and history in AG, from its beginnings to present day.

Just as in Kowalikowa's (2008) report on the language of sports, in the discourse used in WAG, we notice sentences with specific syntactic constructions using verbs in the imperative or interjections that, according to the author, substitute more elaborate sentences.

**Stay!!!!** The other gymnasts scream out in chorus while observing a gymnast executing series on the beam at the moment she carries out a flight element.

**Tight!!!** Legs **tight!!!** **Hit it** hard!!! Coach Diego chants out the series as the gymnast Irina carries out her floor routine.

**Grab it!!!** A teammate screams when the gymnast grabs the bar after a release.

**Push it!!!** Girls watching the vault give incentive.

**Let's go!!!!** Gymnasts scream out, both men and women, during the gymnast Laura's realization of a suicide drill (resistance training dynamics in which the gymnast executes the acrobatic passes from the floor routine between running intervals).

**Hit it!!!** Hit the cast to handstand!!!  
**Firm!!!Firm!!!!Stay** stiff!!! The coach chants while observing a series.

**Strong!!!! Better!!!!** Coach Diego provides incentive.

**Open!!! Open!!! Open!!!** The coach speaks while observing the execution of an element on the *tumble track*.

**Right on!!!** The coach gives incentive while observing the sequence of elements in an acrobatic pass.

**Go!!** The young gymnasts yell out before the music starts.

**Good!!!!** Coach Diego yells out after watching the execution of elements on the bar.

This last expression used by Coach Diego, was also cited in Bortoleto's (2004) study in which the author reveals that "when a gymnast performs an element or an exercise in a 'brilliant' way, both the coach and frequently the other athletes use the expression *good*". This kind of expression, as well as the other imperative expressions cited above, is common in the competition environment and is used by coaches, athletes, and, in some cases, by the spectators, especially when the crowd is made up of people who follow the sport and know about its peculiarities.

Throughout the observations and dialogues established with the protagonists of the study, we determined that the specific lexicon of WAG increases each year with the addition of new elements. According to Nunomura (2008), the FIG can name a new element in the CoP using the gymnast's name when he/she is the first one to present



it in an official competition with good execution. In 2017, at the World Championship held in Montreal, Canada, 10 elements were submitted to the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique to be evaluated for inclusion in the Women's Artistic Gymnastics CoP (Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique, 2017) increasing the lexicon of this sport.

This aspect is a significant particularity of this sport. It also allows for the continued expansion of *Gymish*. Since 2002, a Brazilian gymnast had named a gymnastics

element in the CoP. Even though many people attribute the unprecedented inclusion of the first Brazilian element to the gymnast Daiane dos Santos, it was the athlete Heine Araújo who successfully incorporated a new element for the first time in the history of Brazilian gymnastics. Heine wrote her name on the *magna carta* of this sport with a salto forward stretched with a double twist during her balance beam routine presented at the 2001 World Championship in Ghent, Belgium (Figure 5).

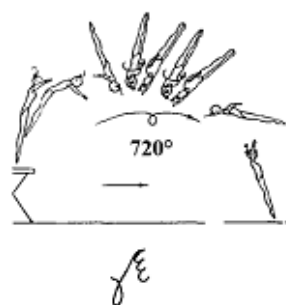


Figure 5. Araujo element in the CoP. Source: adapted from FIG (2013a).

As determined by this sport's tradition, some of the most popular elements in AG, those that are recognized by the general public, were named with the last names of their creators: Josef **Stalder**, Natalia **Yurchenko**, Mitsuo **Tsukahara**, Natalia **Shaposhnikova**, Nadia **Comaneci**, Yelena **Shushunova**, Bernd **Jäger**, Eberhard **Gienger**, Alexander **Tkatchev**, among others. In addition to the female Brazilian gymnasts Daiane dos Santos e Heine Araújo, since the beginning of the 21st century, the male gymnasts Sérgio Sasaki, Diego Hypólito and Arthur Zanetti have also had elements baptized with their names in the CoP, revealing the recent incorporation of Brazil into the high performance of this sport.

### Written language: symbols in women's artistic gymnastics

For millenia and millenia, mankind depended primarily on oral language. Knowing, based on fossil analysis, that

mankind has been around for three million years, and considering that writing, as it is now, emerged about six thousand years before Christ, it's possible to say that it appeared seconds ago in relationship to the existence of humanity (Ullman, 1991, p. 127).

According to Pierce (1999), in addition to verbal language and the occident way of alphabetic coding of Greek origin, there are other forms of codifying the writing. These forms are different from the languages that are articulated using alphabets, such as hieroglyphs, pictograms, and ideograms.

In 1979, the Women's Artistic Gymnastic Technical Committee published, for the first time, the symbols for the WAG elements (Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique, 2013a). According to Oliveira and Bortoleto (2009), this language system, codified by symbols that represent the elements of this sport, seeks to facilitate the registering (notation) of the routines performed by the gymnasts.

After years of development and use, the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique included these symbols for the first time in the 1993 edition of the CoP. This fact consolidated its use in AG judging process. At that time, the symbols for each element and their respective variations were introduced in the CoP creating a particular way of communication. In fact, the AG symbols permit a kind of reading similar to that used in the reading of the Chinese and Japanese languages, since the meaning of one action or gymnastics element is inserted with one, unique symbol, which allows for greater agility when observing, registering and then reading afterwards.

Unlike Portuguese, in which it is necessary to read a word or group of words made up of letters that only make sense when they are grouped together, *kanji*, the ideograms used in written Japanese, allow for the direct association between a graphic symbol and its meaning (Walter, 2011).

Santaella (2002, p. 25) points out that, “the symbol is associated with the object it represents through an associative habit that is processed in the mind of the interpreter and which leads the symbol to mean what it means”. This reflection demonstrates that the symbol is connected to its object by virtue of an idea. Complementing this, Bonfim (2006) shows that the symbol functions as a condenser and evocator of an idea and offers a definite and limited value, which aids in the communication between consciences. For this reason, the symbol

is distinguished from the index and the icon, since it is not dependent on a factual relationship or on any similarity with its object. However, this is subject to internalization in the mind of whoever is interpreting it, without which there would be no meaning. This leads us to the process of endoculturation (Laraia, 2011). In the case of WAG, the symbols operate in the sense that they bring the characteristics of the elements and/or actions to the mind of whoever is interpreting them.

Furthermore, the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (2013a) points out that the objective for adopting the symbols is to improve communication between judges, gymnasts, and coaches by breaking down the barrier imposed by traditional language and also favoring objective evaluation. The transcription of the elements allows for making posterior consultations in case of a discrepancy in judges’ scores that exceeds the margin established by the CoP or any doubts that might emerge from coaches and gymnasts.

This aspect refers to Ullman’s (1991) concept affirming that all writing has a mnemonic value, since it allows one’s memory to be transferred to another. Upon writing down the symbols from the routine, the judge allows other individuals to discover the elements presented by the gymnast, and associate the values and the execution errors attributed to them. In Figure 6, we can visualize the *Dos Santos I* element with its respective symbol.

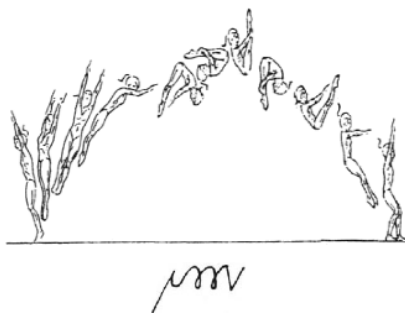


Figure 6. Arabian double pike (Dos Santos I). Source: FIG (2013a).

Using symbols for writing makes it possible to describe complex elements quickly, which are understandable to all







involved with AG. Bortoleto (2004, p. 308) makes it explicit that, “upon representing an action with a symbol, one seeks to simplify

the registration, the communication, and/or the comprehension". For this reason, graphic symbols are used to transcribe and transmit, by way of written language, the gymnastics elements. This permits, for example, the description of a routine with

the combination of multiple symbols. In this writing system, we notice that there is a certain logic that facilitates the use and incorporation of the new elements, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1

*Example of elements and their symbols. Source: FIG (2013a).*

ELEMENT	SYMBOL
Salto	
Double salto	
Twist	
Double twist	
Double salto with a twist	
Double salto with a double twist	

We have observed that the use of symbols and their combinations allows for the elaboration, with greater precision, of messages that register and transmit information and knowledge of this sport, which would be difficult to represent or describe in words.

Even though wide use of this kind of language was not seen along the field observations period, this kind of language was present in the coaches' notations and the CoP that was always in the gymnasium being consulted by the athletes and their sporting mentors.

We point out that the continued and official use of the symbols during the evaluation process in the competitions motivated all the professionals involved to incorporate them into their day-to-day work.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to Laraia (2011), we can identify individuals of different cultures

through a series of characteristics, among which are linguistic differences. The author reveals that this distinction allows for immediate and empirical observation and that, "man has spent a large part of his history on Earth separated into small groups, each one with its own language, its own vision of the world, its customs and expectations" (Laraia, 2011, p. 72).

Throughout this study, we have observed the presence of a terminological or lexical repertoire specific to WAG that represents a marked characteristic of the microculture of the high performance training gymnasium. We know that, through an accumulative process, man reflects the knowledge, experiences of his predecessors, and becomes an heir to this heritage. In the case of our study, the gymnasts and coaches exhibited these traits in their communication process.

Just as human language is a cultural product, *Gymish* can be considered a product of the sporting culture and, more

specifically, of the AG culture. We notice that this lexicon, specific to WAG, is in a constant process of development and receives influences and contributions from all of the individuals that participate in the sport, especially the athletes, coaches, and judges. These protagonists of the AG seek, by way of a specific language, to meet the communicative needs specific to the gymnasium and to the competitive context.

We noted, through the FN obtained in this study that the very origin of WAG influenced and is reflected in the language specific to this sport. This aspect was verified by the utilization of words with origins in the French and German languages, which belong to countries that were determinant in the process of the development of AG.

In addition to oral language, we found that the need to transcribe and transmit information about the gymnastics elements motivated the development of symbols. This codified system made it possible to transcend the barrier of different languages present in the universe of countries that participate in AG competitive scene.

The symbols are understood internationally and make it possible to quickly transmit information at the exact moment of evaluation during the competition which, in the opinion of the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (2013a), makes the process more objective, since it permits further consultation in case of any doubts.

Finally, we consider oral language, as well as the elements symbols and semantic peculiarities, to be worthy of attention in future research. We would also add the need for investigations that contemplate non-verbal language, which makes it possible to explain the execution of the elements and the feedback on errors of execution during training.

Dialogue with different knowledge fields, principally the ones of linguistics and semiotics, could deepen our study, which is rich with data and information that has potential to contribute to the better understanding of the AG and its

participants, whether they be gymnasts, coaches, judges, parents or spectators.

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