TEOPETUYECKAЯ, ПРИКЛАДНАЯ И СРАВНИТЕЛЬНО-СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНАЯ ЛИНГВИСТИКА/THEORETICAL, APPLIED AND COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

DOI: https://doi.org/10.60797/RULB.2025.68.4

LANGUAGE TEACHER AT UNIVERSITY: KEY COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES

Research article

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Abstract

The article deals with the communicative strategies of language teachers at universities (higher institutions). Most of the existing studies are devoted to the development and formation of communicative (professional) competence, while linguistically-oriented studies dedicated to communicative strategies are limited in number. This article introduces the concept of 'Communicative strategy'. The author attempts to classify the strategies according to the goals of professional communication: didactic communication, scientific communication, interaction with colleagues/authorities, communication in the media (including the Internet). The examples from offline university classes, scientific events, open communication platforms for foreign language teachers, materials of the conference proceedings constitute valuable and relevant illustrations.

Keywords: professional communication, foreign language teachers, communicative strategies, didactic speech, scientific communication.

ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЬ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА В УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ: ОСНОВНЫЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ

Научная статья

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Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются коммуникативные стратегии преподавателей иностранных языков в университетах. Большинство существующих исследований посвящено развитию и формированию коммуникативной (профессиональной) компетенции, в то время как лингвистически-ориентированные исследования, посвященные коммуникативным стратегиям, немногочисленны. В данной статье уточняется понятие «коммуникативная стратегия». Автор делает попытку классифицировать стратегии в зависимости от целей профессионального общения: дидактическая коммуникация, коммуникация в научном сообществе, взаимодействие с коллегами и руководством, общение в СМИ (в том числе в Интернете). Иллюстрациями служат примеры, собранные на университетских занятиях, научных мероприятиях, открытых дискуссионных площадках для преподавателей иностранных языков и из сборников трудов научной конференции.

Ключевые слова: профессиональная коммуникация, преподаватели иностранных языков, коммуникативные стратегии, дидактическая речь, научная коммуникация.

Introduction

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, serving as a critical mechanism for self-determination and personal development. Consequently, the study of communication, its structure and content are pertinent across *a range of scientific disciplines*. Broadly defined, *'communication'* refers to the process that involves the exchange of information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings between individuals or groups [16, P. 85–85]. Within this broad framework, numerous subtypes of communication with their unique characteristics and strategies can be identified.

The variability of strategies in communication has become a highly topical issue due to communication problems within some special groups of people or spheres, including education in general. It should be noted that the paper includes some strategies ascribed to 'educational communication', which is usually defined as a specialized form of professional interpersonal communication that occurs within educational environments. But some practitioners and scholars believe that communication of a teacher (and a high school language teacher is not an exception) is not only concerned with the transfer of knowledge and ideas in a classroom environment; it also plays a vital role in managing feedback and facilitating interaction among educators, students, and other participants of the educational process. In different situations individuals assume various communicative, social, and psychological roles, which — shaped by social status and context —contribute to the selection of specific speech strategies and are crucial for regulating interpersonal relationships within educational settings.

The role of professional communication in the educational process has long been a subject of scholarly discussion, particularly in relation to its methodological aspects. But it was predominantly done within a framework of secondary general education institutions (e.g., E.V. Bondarevskaya, 1999; V.S. Grekhnev, 1990; V.A. Kan-Kalik, 1990; A.A. Leontiev, 1979; I.V. Makarovskaya, 2003; A.A. Murashov, 2017; E.V. Prozorova, 1998; M.G. Rud', 1999; M.V. Telegin, 2009; L.A. Vvedenskaya, 1999, etc.). We should admit that "educational communication" is regarded by some scholars as an interdisciplinary area (O.V.

Ivanova, 2005; E.Y. Sysoeva, 2018; S.D. Yakusheva, 2017) with its huge linguistic part. It could be stated that the papers usually put emphasis on the methodology of formation and development of communicative (professional) competence; linguistically-oriented studies are few in numbers (Dryangina, 2017; N.S. Kharlamova, 2023; A.B. Savchenko, 2012; L.N. Yastrebova, 2012).

Attempts have certainly been made to reduce a paucity of evidence on speech characteristics of teachers in a higher school system (e.g., O.V. Ivanova, 2005; I.V. Barabasheva, 2015; S.D. Yakusheva, 2017; E.Y. Sysoeva, 2018; A.A. Korenev, 2023). Nevertheless, there is still place to improve and chance to investigate into the strategies applied to the communication of university teachers from the linguistic point of view. Besides, the general classification of communicative strategies has not been worked out yet.

Thus, the aim of the article is to present a draft classification of communicative strategies of a foreign language teacher in the higher school system. This requires not only taking the best communicative strategies of foreign language teachers (of secondary schools) into account but clarifying and renaming some of the strategies in accordance with the requirements of the higher school system, as well as including some new ones.

Research methods and principles

The study employs several methods to gain insights into the nature of teachers' communicative strategies, including the analysis of literature on the problem [2], [6], [7], [8], [9], personal observation of offline English classes (Department of English for Mechanical Engineering Specialties of Bauman Moscow State Technical University; discussions at scientific and methodological seminars held at the Faculty of Linguistics at Bauman Moscow State Technical University), contextual analysis of the conference materials [1], as well as the comments on the Internet platform 'VKontakte'. Some strategies were collected, reviewed and introduced for the first time through self-examination (introspection) as one of the research methods. We analyzed the colleagues' classes as well as our own in order to find similarities and spot the differences while giving lessons.

Main results

According to Y.V. Sorokopud, the concept of educational communication is defined as an interaction between teachers and students aimed at the realization of educational goals and objectives, when the development of both parties is realized [14]. However, the definition might be augmented with ideas of other researchers [3, P. 21–22], [11, P. 8–9], as communication in education being of a broader nature is carried out not only in the field of teaching, but also through participation in scientific events, interaction with colleagues and administration. Thus, communication of a high school language teacher is an effective two-way cooperation with all the participants of the educational process — students, colleagues, administration and scientific community — aimed at transmitting and receiving information by establishing contacts and social relations.

The paper specifically focuses on a critical component of communication of a high school language teacher: the communicative strategies employed by language teachers that are essential for managing effective speech interaction. A *communicative strategy* can be defined as a structured approach to the exchange of information, which involves the deliberate selection of methods, channels, and formats to best achieve specific communicative objectives. These strategies are inherently flexible and vary according to contextual factors such as the nature of the audience, communicative conditions, individual characteristics of speakers, the intended goals, and the available resources [5, P. 408–410], [10, P. 95–96]. The success of communicative actions depends on cognitive understanding of the situation with a constant anticipation of the communicative cooperation or communicative scenarios (e. g., the ability to analyze students' speech behaviour). However, it is worth mentioning that both verbal and non-verbal cues, and the broader context of the interaction are to be taken into consideration when choosing a strategy to use in an educational environment [10, P. 97–98].

The *communication of a high school language teacher* is very versatile, the number and content of communicative strategies can vary depending on the situations of interaction in the educational field [11, P. 9–10]. Some of the strategies presented below can obviously be applied to several groups. The paper focuses only on the most popular/frequently met strategies which — taken from literature or through personal observation — were classified according to the purpose of communication into *four* groups: strategies applied for didactic communication between the language teachers and students during the classroom activities; strategies used by language teachers when performing presentations at scientific events or writing scientific papers; strategies relevant for communication with colleagues / authorities; strategies used for commenting on publications, expressing opinions and composing media materials related to the problems of the educational environment of higher education:

1. The strategies of *didactic communication during the lesson* are aimed at effective student learning and management of the educational process, including explanation, instructional speech and stimulation (*educational communication). Most strategies are oriented towards cooperation, they illustrate approval, consolation, persuasion, etc. The list below can obviously be supplemented with some other strategies, but within the paper we relied on the data supported by our personal observation at Bauman University, as well as self-examination and further analyses of the language material used at English lessons.

Explanatory strategy [6]

The explanatory strategy can be subdivided into the substrategies: paraphrasing substrategy, which involves restating information in simpler or clearer terms; generalization substrategy, which summarizes or abstracts information to convey broader concepts; reinforcement substrategy, which strengthens learning through repetition or affirmation; displacement substrategy, which introduces alternative examples or shifts the context to enhance comprehension; contrasting substrategy, which highlights differences between related ideas or language forms to clarify distinctions.

Examples:

- 1) What tense markers of Present Perfect can you name? Ok, I will give you a hint: 'recently'.
- 2) Look at the word 'time-consuming'. Can you identify the verb 'consume' and the noun 'time'? What is the meaning of the adjective 'time-consuming'?

Motivational strategy [6]

This strategy is aimed at fostering encouragement and support by cultivating a comfortable atmosphere. It employs positive vocabulary to uplift and motivate individuals, making them feel valued and appreciated. Additionally, the use of rhetorical questions engages the audience, prompting them to reflect and connect with the message on a deeper level.

Example: You're great. Keep on going

Interactive strategy [6]

The purpose of this strategy is to engage students in a discussion. High school language teachers may do this by redirecting or rephrasing questions, posing questions in response to students' queries, or providing indirect answers that guide students toward the correct response without explicit correction. Such techniques promote cognitive engagement and foster autonomous thinking.

Examples:

- 1) What is your attitude towards this issue?
- 2) Can you, please, restate the sentence?

Correction strategy [6]

There are various ways of student's errors correction. Teachers may employ direct corrections, indirect cues, or model correct usage through repetition. Corrections can be delivered orally or in written form, and the choice of method often depends on the instructional context and the learning objectives. These varied approaches underscore the strategic complexity inherent in managing classroom interaction, reinforcing the idea that explanatory communication comprises a network of adaptable substrategies tailored to both instructional and interpersonal goals.

Example: Student: I have lost my keys yesterday. Teacher: Oh, did you lose your key? What a pity. I am sorry to hear that.

2. The second group includes *the strategies of scientific communication* (presentations and publications), which are enumerated below. They reflect the specifics of presentation of scientific achievements and participation in academic discourse. Scientific discourse is characterized by formal vocabulary, objectivity, argumentation. In terms of genre features it is necessary to note composition (introduction, main part, conclusions), clear logical connections, etc. The examples are borrowed from the conference proceedings [1].

Argumentative strategy [6]

The main idea of the strategy is to avoid subjectivity. This usually helps to justify the significance of the research / speech. However, it is important to find a good balance between reputable sources and personal conclusions. The use of terminology and references to international studies increases the level of argumentation.

Examples:

- 1) ... I would like to note separately the significance of the formation of these issues for the purpose of multicultural education...
 - 2) According to A.V. Chernyshova, the professional linguistic picture of the world...

Strategy of impersonalization [15]

This strategy involves minimizing personal references to create a more objective and formal tone in communication. This approach helps to focus on the content rather than on the individual, promoting a sense of professionalism and authority in the classroom.

Examples:

- 1) It is proposed that future translators...
- 2) It was revealed that when translating 'purple' into Russian

Discursive strategy of argumentation [13]

The strategy involves a careful selection of references to guide the discourse. A language teacher might use the strategy to give a student the key to their way of thinking. By making their logic transparent, the communicants eliminate possible doubts about the truth of their judgments. In addition, mixing the parameters of rhetorical influence enhances the impact on the listener.

Examples:

- 1) ...devoted to the scientific works of many researchers (Holmes, 2009; Kisurkin, 2013; Borovaya et al., 2013; Poluosmak, 2015; Kuzmina & Aleksin, 2019, etc.). We consider this scientific direction to be topical...
 - 2) ...and foreign (A.P. Cowie, J. Sinclair, L.P. Smith, J.R. Firth, V.H. Collins, M. Halliday, etc.
- 3. The third block reveals the strategies of *communication with colleagues and university authorities*, who are oriented towards cooperation, solving organizational and professional issues. This is mainly official and business discourse, which requires accuracy, formality and respectful tone. There is a list full of the most common strategies with the illustrations from the open scientific and methodological seminars at BMSTU.

Mitigation strategy [12]

The mitigation strategy involves softening statements to reduce the impact of potentially negative feedback or criticism. Language teachers often use this strategy to create a supportive learning environment. It helps maintain self-esteem and encourages teachers to view feedback as constructive rather than punitive. By using mitigation, language teachers foster a more positive atmosphere that promotes learning and growth.

Example: We know that there are various sources which stick to AI. Why do you think that the proposed technology is different...?

Strategy of diplomatic disagreement [12]

The strategy allows teachers to express differing opinions or corrections in a respectful and tactful manner. It encourages critical thinking and open dialogue. By employing diplomatic disagreement, teachers model respectful communication with colleagues.

Example: I believe that our country is going to introduce new frameworks that need to be implemented in real life; Perhaps we should focus on the following aspects...

Strategy of effective written communication [6]

Effective written communication is crucial in language education, as it equips the members of educational communication with the skills to express their thoughts clearly and coherently. Language teachers can implement the strategy by emphasizing the importance of structure, clarity, and style in writing.

Example: Dear colleagues, I would be grateful if you could collect signatures by Tuesday.

4. **Communication in the media (including the Internet),** for example, by participating in public discussions, informing about the problems of higher education, etc. Undoubtedly, this is a publicist discourse, which combines informativeness, emotional expressiveness and public exposure, as well, to effect positive change because of their high-level credibility. The Internet communication differs from the rest due to the great number of interactive tools to grab followers' attention, e. g., conversational prompts, rhetorical questions, capitalization, exclamation marks, ellipses, or asterisks to convey tone and emphasis, spoken language or casual tone reflection in digital conversations, emojis, etc. However, in case it is an official teacher's profile, they will try to stick to more academic point of narration. The examples listed to illustrate the most popular strategies are collected from 'Vkontakte' (translated into English).

Contrastive strategy

We have identified the strategy when reading and analyzing some commentary sections. High-school teachers often rely on differentiation between facts and opinions. In order to show the comparison and contrast of some issues that university teachers may face in their practice, they recognize various persuasive techniques.

Example: The growing dependence of students on digital translators is a double-edged sword. Although tools like Google Translate provide instant access to vocabulary, I think future students will never use printed dictionaries in their classes.

Strategy of constructive commenting [12]

Constructive commenting is essential for fostering positive online communication. Language teachers can model how to provide feedback that is both supportive and informative, encouraging others to express their opinions while also considering alternative viewpoints.

Example: Education in Russia needs deep modernization. It is important not only to introduce new technologies, but also to revise the very approach to learning; Modern students need much more motivation to learn foreign languages, and I am sure that the use of gamification and mobile applications are future trends...

Attention-grabbing strategies through storytelling

We have identified the strategy when reviewing some of the posts. Storytelling is an effective way to engage readers and make media content more relatable. This is the art of using narratives to engage, connect, and communicate with the audience through credible, authentic, and emotionally resonant content that grabs attention. Overall, it fosters a deeper connection with the audience. High-school teachers often share their knowledge, personal experiences, and new tools with their audience. They begin with an introductory story (as in the example below) or something that happened to them or their students. It is quite common for high school teachers to talk about some hypothetical situations

Example: Imagine you are talking to a person who grew up in a different culture...

Strategy of keeping a professional diary or the strategy of reflective writing

The strategy is commonly observed when analyzing lessons: we came up with the idea while attending the colleagues' classes. It should be noted that some teachers are willing to share their emotions, achievements and drawbacks in open public sources. Such practice encourages teachers to document daily teaching experiences, analyzing successful and unsuccessful teaching methods, challenges, and observations, thereby fostering a habit of systematic reflection. Over time, the diary becomes a repository of insights and a tool for identifying patterns in teaching behavior, classroom management, and student response. It allows educators to track their evolution and make informed adjustments to their pedagogical approach. Moreover, if it is done online, other teachers are likely to join the conversation supporting and exploring the issue.

Example: Today's lesson went better than I expected, my students were eager to introduce the examples from their personal experience.

Conclusion

Не указан.

Notwithstanding that there are more speech strategies in real life, we have tried to present their draft classification concerning various communicative situations. The communicative strategies of a language teacher in higher education have a linguistic basis and depend on the context of communication. Flexibility in the choice of strategies allows the teacher to interact effectively with various audiences and master their skills. We believe that the replenishment of the list would be a fruitful area for further work.

Конфликт интересов

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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