

Communicative Culture of the Foreign Language Teacher: An Essential Aspect for Developing Listening Skills

Angela POPOVICI
Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania

Abstract

The article discusses the teacher's communication culture within foreign language classes, in our case Romanian as a non-native language. The focus is on teacher-student communication, playing an important role in the exchange of information. It progressively comes to the idea that in a language learning process, the teacher should facilitate effective communication, pay attention to the correct use of the language, provide a model of correct pronunciation and appropriate pace for learning, and encourage students to master sustainable language skills. Teacher-student communication is a fundamental aspect of the learning process, and the teacher's ability to motivate and adapt teaching methods to students' needs is essential in developing their language skills. This article aims to explore and analyse how a teacher's communicative culture can motivate students to learn a foreign language more attractively. It therefore identifies the answer to the question "To what extent can teacher communication quality develop students' listening skills?" This article aims to contribute to the dialogue by providing balanced and informed recommendations on teacher communication in the context of language learning.

Keywords: communication, culture, receiver, sender, message, listening skills.

Introduction

The role of communication in the work of the foreign language teacher is a permanent necessity, as the teacher is always responsible for the exchange of intelligible messages. The culture of pedagogical communication starts from the meaning of culture, then communication and pedagogy. The relationship between these words refers to the teacher's culture. At the same time, the teacher's personality is seen through the prism of his or her culture, as a result of training and experience.

The Romanian language (DEX) dictionary explains culture as follows: the totality of material and spiritual values created by mankind and the institutions necessary for communicating these values.

Communicative culture is the ability to communicate effectively, adapting discourse to different social environments and contexts. In the context of language education, this concept refers to the understanding and appropriate application of the rules of communication in the studied language. Communicative culture is an important component of the general culture of the individual, the formation of which acts as a pressing need of our times, when there is a change in old forms of interaction, a reassessment of values and ideals, and a search for new attitudes and life orientations. Referring to the phenomenon of *communication culture*, we can emphasize its

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moral and spiritual content, including: "education, spiritual richness, developed thinking, the ability to understand phenomena in different areas of life, a variety of forms, types, methods of communication and its emotional and aesthetic changes: mutual trust of the subjects of communication; its results in the form of mastering the truth, stimulating activity, its clear organization." [2, p.32]

The culture of communication is an essential aspect of individual development and is indispensable in a constantly changing society. This culture reflects education, inner wisdom, analytical ability, and the ability to understand various aspects of life. It involves a variety of forms, styles and methods of communication, and has an emotional and aesthetic impact.

The culture of communication promotes mutual trust between those involved, resulting in the development of truth, stimulation of activity and clear organisation of interactions. In addition, it relates to the concept of communicative tolerance and is manifested through various styles of human interaction.

Communicative culture is an integrative personality trait, which includes knowledge about communication, characteristics of tolerance, and the ability to objectively evaluate people, initiating dialogue, promoting cooperation and adopting an active moral stance in interpersonal relations.

Communication should be regarded as a primary phenomenon that brings knowledge into existence and the transmission of an experience, which without it would revert to oblivion [2, p.52). A balanced teacher-student communication makes the educational process more effective, and it depends on the professionalism of the foreign language teacher, an essential component being the culture of communication.

Methodology

Communication is a pressing need not only for each teacher, but also for the students, "as they have to help each other, to cooperate, to answer questions, either in the process of checking knowledge or in teaching" [8, p.20]. The following qualities of the language teacher are directed towards the existing recommendations in the information theory that requires the teacher:

- to be prepared to listen;
- to be interested in listening;
- to show an interest in students' verbal activity;
- to remain open;
- to follow the main ideas;
- to listen carefully;
- to listen critically;
- to note critical issues noted in students' responses;
- to stimulate the student speaker;
- to not interrupt the student speaker.

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Therefore, the qualities of the teacher focus on clarity, empathy, and engagement. In the case of oral verbal communication, these qualities of the *speaker* pedagogically exploit the mechanisms of external language: pitch, intensity, volume, timbre of voice, diction and accent, speed and energy of expression, and tactics of pause use. The mechanisms of internal language ensure the self-regulation of verbal communication by perfecting the pedagogical expression of the specifically targeted message according to the real and virtual reaction of the *receiver*. This reaction reflects the teacher's ability *to know how to listen*, expressed by: encouraging students; obtaining complete information; and creating the need for new information.

J. Van Cuilenburg, O. Scholten, G.W.Noomen [3] define communication as "*a process by which a sender transmits information to a receiver through a channel, with the aim of producing certain effects on the receiver Communication Science*". In other words, each communication process has a specific structure represented by a certain type of relationship developed by the sender-messenger-receiver trinomial.

To convey his message, the sender uses a set of signs with verbal or non-verbal meanings, called a code, which the receiver identifies with the signs in his repertoire. Both the sender and the receiver have more or less common sign repertoires, and communication essentially relies on the commonality of the two.

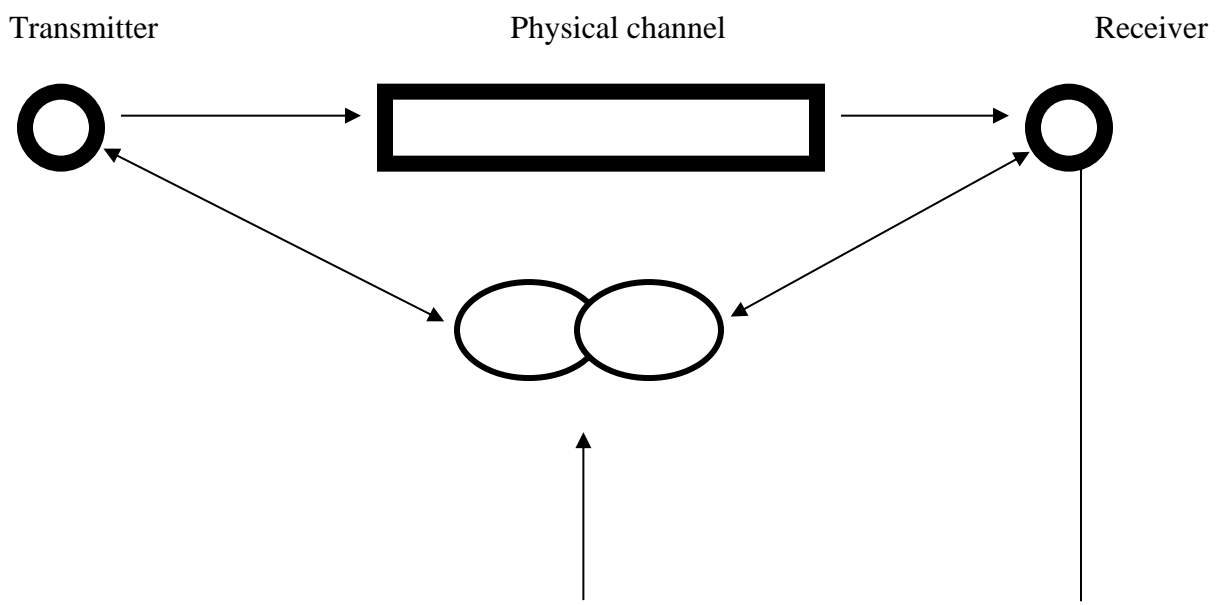


Fig.1. Communication process

Communication can be:

- lateralized, when the receiver does not become the sender at any time;
- non-lateralized, when there is feedback, which produces a temporary role reversal, with the receiver also becoming the sender, resulting in interaction and dialogue between those involved [5].

Communication in the classroom goes beyond interpersonal communication and turns into group communication when the teacher sends messages to the students, aiming to achieve changes in each of them.

In university groups, communication is the essential mode of their existence, as a group is first and foremost a medium of communication. Since the educational-instructional process involves the transmission of knowledge and messages, instrumental communication is predominant and is achieved through various communication methods and behaviours (questions, answers).

Mastering and practising a foreign language, in our case *Romanian as a non-native tongue*, is possible only if it is practised as a means of communication, in the process of which an exchange of information takes place. The lesson has several means for teacher-student communication and is the main way of organising the teaching-learning process. Pedagogical observations show that these means are not sufficiently used. Regarding this, cert. Rogova [12, p.6] establishes the following trends:

1. The teacher speaks the studied language, but his communication is accompanied by a translation into the mother tongue, which does not contribute to the formation of students' oral language skills. Knowing that the teacher usually translates his message, students make no effort to understand the information. It seems that this teacher does not believe in the students' possibilities. This uncertainty is conveyed to them. The students in these classes speak not in Romanian, but in their mother tongue translated into Romanian, i.e. the grammatical structures characteristic of the Romanian language are hardly used. Under such conditions, students treat Romanian as an object that has no practical application, which is a dangerous tendency in achieving the communicative goal.

2. The teacher got the students to understand his verbal instructions, but uses messages they already know. However, with this approach, the teacher will not be able to create an "environment" for language learning, or the words and expressions so necessary for communication appear irregularly or are not included in the textbooks.

3. The teacher speaks in Romanian, students have the opportunity to listen to the language they are learning. However, in teacher-student communication, the decisive role will belong to the living language, not to other additional factors such as mimicry and gestures. Of course we will not deny the importance of non-verbal communication, but their use must be careful, or these causes will attest to a training of the students rather than a conscious mastery and understanding of spoken patterns.

When selecting the informational units that the teacher will use in his/her speech in the lesson, he/she should also take into account the expansion of the students' passive vocabulary, the development of prognosis in the listening process.

Prediction is based on interference, which can be: *intralinguistic*, i.e. adjacent words make it easier to understand the unknown word; *intralinguistic*, where we can include collocations, internationalisms and loanwords; *extra-linguistic*, historical events, traditions, and customs that help to understand unknown words. These conditions must be present in the listening material because they lead to prognostication, increase lexical potential; semantisation of unknown words takes place; with the help of prognostication difficulties during listening are overcome.

Therefore, the verbal content of the teacher's lesson must be accessible, correspond to the level of language proficiency and be neat, or the students will try to reproduce what they hear the teacher say.

According to the grammatical structure, the teacher's communication may differ from the grammatical content that is learned in the early stages of a language, because students retain some sentences as "expressions", not as phrases. It is recommended that the differences should not be major - then the language spoken by the teacher will serve as a model and effective practice in learning grammatical phenomena.

In the area of lexis, the teacher has more freedom. Taking into account the possibility of semantisation of the lexicon by means of known material and by means of prognostication, the teacher can gradually introduce into his speech the word he needs in the process of the lesson.

The dosage of the new lexicon in the teacher's message is as important as the dosage of the new material in the textbook, and the teacher must take this into account when planning his lesson. According to studies [11, p.57], the teacher should give the students 2-4 words/expressions per lesson. Other new words will only be introduced if the previous ones have been correctly mastered.

So the teacher's message should be a model of pronunciation, with correct rhythm, tempo and appropriate pauses. In order to set a suitable tempo for the message, the teacher should take into account the number of words spoken in one minute and the number of pauses in the text. Only in this way will the learner receive and understand oral language effectively.

The correctness of the comprehension of the heard message must be systematically checked. Each new expression should be repeated by the teacher not only during the teaching-learning lesson but also in subsequent lessons. The dialogue between teacher and pupil becomes a main form of spoken language communication, and therefore one of the means of unambiguous transition to listening, which is why it is so important that the teacher's message is free of any mistakes. The most common mistakes can be misprints, mistakes related to poor command of neologisms. Not knowing the literary norm of the Romanian language, the teacher may change the words and as a result, they may take a different form/meaning.

It is recommended that from the first years of study students' attention is drawn to words and expressions that are likely to be misunderstood and mispronounced, so they will be practised more with the help of different methods.

In general, the listening process in Romanian language classes is conditioned by a number of factors. Questioning the role of the teacher involved in this process [6, p.45], we conclude that the teacher must:

- examine and determine precisely, depending on the case: the type of text selected for audition, the purpose of auditioning the text, and the audition techniques in which the students will be involved;

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- take into account the fact that listening is interdependent with speaking, speaking and reading, and carry out the teaching activity by combining listening exercises with speaking, reading and writing;
- to motivate students to go through the three stages of the listening process: pre-hearing, hearing and post-hearing;
- to realise that the message is addressed to learners for whom Romanian is a second language and to consider all the factors that would facilitate and stimulate learning of the target language.

Conclusions

This article explored the teacher's communication as an aspect of developing listening skills in students, with a particular focus on the impact of the teacher's culture on students.

Teachers play a key role in promoting effective communication skills and intercultural understanding among students. During the lesson, the teacher is the main language carrier from whom students have to learn the language by listening.

The teacher's communication culture is a verbal medium that directly influences the students' culture, starting from listening and ending with hearing.

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