

# **VERBAL AGGRESSION IN THE PEDAGOGICAL MEDIUM**

Yulia Demianova

Ph.D. (Ukrainian Philology)

[AcaDemiaNova@gmail.com](mailto:AcaDemiaNova@gmail.com)

## **ABSTRACT**

The article suggests that verbal aggression is a destructive form of communication in the pedagogical medium. It aims to answer the questions concerning the conditions and causes of stability of the phenomenon of verbal aggression among the Ukrainian teachers; the forms of verbal aggression in the educational setting; the strategies to prevent the destructive speech behaviour of the teacher. The author stresses upon the fact that the Ukrainian educational system employs authoritarianism that is based on coercion and violence, on the principle of ‘carrot and stick’. It has been pointed out that destructive verbal behaviour, on the one hand, is condemned by students, and on the other hand – is absorbed by them. Verbal aggression, to the author’s mind, is not an inherited but a learned behaviour that the students could pick up through observing aggressive teachers, copying them and practicing over time. The consequences of verbal aggression in the classroom can lead to social isolation, stress, health problems, as well as to problems in educational advancement of students. In conclusion, we believe that the Ukrainian educational system must develop new principles of the teacher-student relations by using new assessment criteria of teacher’s activity, personnel selection, and implementation of the best folk traditions and student-centered methods of teaching.

**Key words:** verbal aggression, pedagogical medium, pedagogical discourse

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays we have to consider aggression and destruction as the most serious problems facing human society. The phenomenon of aggression affects the formation of different aspects of social and individual consciousness, increases conflicts and social disharmonization, stimulates verbal aggression, language manipulation, the use of invectives and cursing on a daily basis. Educational institutions play a critical role in the process of acquiring behaviour models and socialization of students. This fact determines the need for a comprehensive study of the problem of verbal aggression in the pedagogical medium on the example of Ukrainian educational establishments.

Verbal aggression has been studied by psychology (Hamilton, M. A., 2011), sociology (Geen, Russell G., Donnerstein, Edward D., 1998), linguistics (Apriesian, V., 2003) and related sciences (Wrede, Robert K., 2003). In particular, V.Apriesian (2003) and L.Fiodorova (2004) consider the cases of implicit and explicit language aggression; T.Vorontsova (2006) gives a theoretical justification of the phenomenon of verbal aggression in the light of communicative and discursive approach; a comprehensive study of verbal aggression as a linguistic and rhetorical, psychological, pedagogical and socio-philosophical problem is conducted by Yu. Scherbinina (2006). Most researchers agree that verbal aggression is an unproductive type of verbal interaction, one of the non-constructive ways of resolving conflict that has a destructive effect on the consciousness of the participants of communication, makes it difficult to exchange information, decreases the possibility of understanding between the communicants. Verbal aggression as a conflict behaviour may occur within any type of communication (interpersonal, group, mass) and any discourse, regardless of time and national factors (Vorontsova, T., 2006: 5, 9). It should be said, very few studies are found to examine verbal aggression in teachers in their workplace. The problem of aggressive speech behaviour of the teacher is accented in the works of N.Antonova (2007), O.Krasnopiorova (2006), T.Kosmeda (2010) and some other researchers. Thus, the current article aims to give a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of verbal aggression in pedagogical discourse at the Ukrainian educational institutions as its integral component. The three questions raised here are:

- What are the conditions and causes of stability of the phenomenon of verbal aggression among the Ukrainian teachers?
- What are the forms of verbal aggression in the educational setting?
- What should be done to prevent the destructive speech behaviour of the teacher?

## **VERBAL AGGRESSION IN THE PEDAGOGICAL MEDIUM: CONDITIONS, CAUSES AND FORMS**

Pedagogic discourse is a dynamic system of communication of the participants of the educational process that objectively exists and functions in the educational medium of higher education institutions. In particular, O. Krasnopiorova characterizes pedagogical discourse as a complex communicative phenomenon, the structure of which consists of dominance, didactic and aggressiveness. The latter is a way to achieve the teacher's goals (Krasnopiorova, O., 2006). In our article, the term 'pedagogical discourse' will be considered as the process of

communication in the educational medium, integrative set of individual communicative acts. The main emphasis is put on such characteristics of this phenomenon as dominance and aggression.

The Ukrainian educational system still employs authoritarianism, which is the educational practice that has been developing over centuries and is based on coercion and violence, on the principle of ‘carrot and stick’. Authoritarianism is the official theory on the basis of which the content and methods, textbooks, lessons and the whole educational system are developed. Here we see the roots of disharmonization of the educational medium. Authoritarian pedagogical thinking supervises the activity of the vast majority of teachers, educators, trainers, school/university psychologists and parents.

According to V.Apriesian, language aggression covers all types of negative or critical attitude of the speaker to the addressee, expressed by linguistic means (Apriesian, 2003). The main objective of aggressive verbal behaviour is the creation of a communicative imbalance and communicative situation of inequality due to the limitations of communicative rights of the partner (Vorontsova, T., 2006: 7). It is also a behaviour rooted in the need for demonstrating superiority or power over others. A taxonomy of verbally aggressive messages, as Andrew S. Rancer suggests, includes ‘character and competence attacks, disconfirmation, physical appearance attacks, racial epithets, teasing, ridicule, threats, cursing, negative comparisons, and nonverbal aggression (e.g., rolling the eyes, gritting the teeth, looks of disdain, ‘flipping the bird’)’ (Rancer, Andrew S., 2012). All of these types of aggression are destructive and often lead to escalation of the conflict. Let us discuss the forms of verbal aggression in pedagogical discourse.

Communicative competence of teachers is associated primarily with the genres typical for their work, mastering appropriate speech models and using them in specific pedagogical situations. As it is noted by T.Kosmeda, the repertoire of pedagogical genres includes explanatory monologue, educational dialogue, assessment, generalization, meeting and greeting formulas, instructions, comments, etc. Using a particular speech genre the teacher explains, informs, summarizes, instructs, motivates, activates his students (Kosmeda, T., 2010: 99). In pedagogical discourse the assessment speech acts are often used as stimulus and orientation, as the means of individual characteristics. Teachers engaged in aggressive communication usually adopt attack modes of thinking and action. Stereotypical remarks of the teacher and critical comments can be addressed to the physical actions and intellect of the students. Unfortunately, for many teachers such forms as notation, sarcasm, criticism become the norm in pedagogical communication. The destructive role of criticism is manifested in the

suppression and distortion of the student's personality. Conflict pedagogical subculture involves a wide range of tools and for many teachers aggressive formulas become a kind of art. Teachers-philologists are especially inventive in this speech genre. To implement the aggressive intentions teachers use such language and stylistic means as metaphor, hyperbole, litote, oxymoron, irony; they use word-building and phraseological potency of the Ukrainian language. The most common forms of verbal aggression are exaggeration ('The whole school is crying because of you'), negative generalization ('You are never...', 'You are always...'), threats ('Just try not to do this'), ironic, sarcastic intonation, imitating student's words, intonation, facial expressions, interruption students in conversation and others. According to the results of our survey conducted among the students of the pedagogical college, 98.6 % of respondents at least once in life were subjected to verbal aggression of teachers in one form or another. It is tempting perhaps to think that the destructive speech behaviour of teachers is a natural, though undesirable thing in the educational medium. Familiarity, rudiness, negative bias in the assessment of individual students or the whole group/class – all this transfers pedagogical communication in the area of subject-object relations.

## **DISCUSSION**

Professional pedagogical communication assumes its high culture, the main characteristics of which are the equal psychological positions of teacher and student, focus on the partner and interaction of attitudes, cooperative activity of both parties. The high culture of pedagogical communication is not just the culture of using language means and methods of formation and formulation of thought, but also the highest level of the general culture, culture of thinking, culture of pedagogical impact. The reverse side of pedagogical discourse is aggression and dominance. To prevent aggressive verbal actions and the negative psychological impact the code of ethics of the teacher exists. We must remember that destructive verbal behaviour, on the one hand, is condemned by students, and on the other hand – is absorbed by them. Verbal aggression, to our mind, is not an inherited but a learned behaviour that the students could pick up through observing aggressive teachers, copying them and practicing over time.

Thus, along with the problem of recognition of aggression as one of the characteristics of pedagogical discourse, the problem of finding the ways of its harmonization appears to be urgent, too. In our opinion, the first steps in this direction could be as follows:

- creation of an integrated system of prevention of aggression and the search for solutions to problems related to the correction of the aggressive behaviour among teachers;
- implementation of psycho-pedagogical training, role-playing games, psychodramatic techniques into the system of would-be-teachers' training that would assist in overcoming aggression in pedagogical discourse;
- improvement of the content of special courses and seminars on pedagogy and psychology for would-be teachers;
- introduction of such academic disciplines as Pedagogical Rhetoric, Theory and Practice of Communication for students of pedagogical universities;
- search for effective communicative strategies and tactics, copying the educational speech style of the elite teachers.

## **CONCLUSION**

The consequences of verbal aggression in the classroom can lead to social isolation, stress, health problems, as well as to problems in educational advancement of students. It therefore was considered important to identify the causes of verbal aggression and try to find the effective strategies of overcoming it.

In our opinion, the assimilation of basic concepts of pedagogical discourse by would-be teachers together with the recognition of verbal aggression as a really existing pedagogical phenomenon will contribute to the formation of their professional competence, improving the discursive speech, developing productive professional communication style. The Ukrainian educational system must develop new principles of relations between teacher and student, using new assessment criteria of teacher's activity, personnel selection, implementation of the best folk traditions and student-centered methods of teaching.

Therefore, a detailed study of aggressive verbal acts, causes and conditions of aggressive speech behaviour of the teacher is to stimulate further search for strategies for the prevention and mitigation of verbal aggression, the implementation of effective tactics in discursive practice, and therefore, it seems to be promising.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Antonova, N.A. (2007). Pedagogicheskiy diskurs: rechevoe poviedeniye uchitelia na uroke.

Accessed from <http://www.dissercat.com/content/pedagogicheskii-diskurs-rechevoe-povedenie-uchitelya-na-uroke>

2. Apriesian, V (2003). Implicitnaya agressiya v yazykie. Accessed from <http://www.dialog-21.ru/Archive/2003/Apresian.htm>
3. Fiodorova, L.L. (2004). Priamoye vyrazheniye agressiyi v riechievom obschienii. Moscow. RGGU.
4. Geen, Russell G., Donnerstein, Edward D. (1998). Human Aggression: Theories, Research, and Implications for Social Policy. Academic Press. London.
5. Hamilton, M. A. (2011, November 7). Verbal Aggression: Understanding the Psychological Antecedents and Social Consequences. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. SAGE Publications. doi:10.1177/0261927x11425032
6. Kosmeda, T. (2010, V. 50). Elitarnist pedahohichnoho dyskursu vykladacha vyschoyi. Visnyk Lvivskoho Universytetu. Seriya filolohichna.
7. Krasnopiorova, Y. V. (2006). Tekhnologiya preodoleniya proyavleniy agressii uchytieliey v pedagogicheskem diskursie. Izhevsk.
8. Rancer, Andrew S. (2012). Understanding Aggressive Communication. Accessed from <http://history2.net/u/understanding-aggressive-communication-e1955-pdf.pdf>
9. Scherbinina, Yu.V. (2006). Verbalnaya agressiya. Moscow. KomKniga.
10. Vorontsova, T. A. (2006). Riechievaya agressiya: kommunikativno-diskursivnyi podkhod. Cheliabinsk.
11. Wrede, Robert K. (2003). Communication and Conflict: Managing Verbal Aggression in Mediation. Accessed from [http://www.mediate.com/articles/wrede\\_R.cfm](http://www.mediate.com/articles/wrede_R.cfm)