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**FACTORS DETERMINING THE CHOICE OF SELF-  
PRESENTATION STRATEGY IN RUSSIAN ACADEMIC  
DISCOURSE**

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*Abstract*

The author of the article studies the effect of linguistic and extralinguistic factors on the choice of self-presentation tactics in the Russian academic discourse. The factors are represented by personal, interpersonal and situational ones which closely interconnect and interact during the presentation as well as when selecting the goals and ways of their achievement. We describe external factors that determine the use of self-presentation strategy in Russian academic discourse: social and cultural norms, interaction between the audience and the expectations of the speaker, the values, behaviour of listeners, information about the speaker. The most frequent tactics of self-presentation in the Russian lecture are tactics of “ingratiating” and tactics of “self-promotion”. According to the results of the research we may say that Russian academic discourse is not characterized by public evaluation and demonstration of positive qualities of the speaker but rather by self-deception tactics. The analysis of the five Russian lectures shows that the effectiveness of this tactics depends on the type of ingratiating, explicitness and the audience status. Each factor determines the effectiveness and ways of impression management and takes part in the process of achieving the desirable result of the lecturer not affecting self-esteem and personal growth of the speaker.

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**Keywords:** self-presentation strategy, tactics, academic discourse, lecture, extralinguistic factor



## **1. Introduction**

An important personal and professional quality of the lecture is the ability to effective self-presentation. Successful self-presentation is based on the meeting of situational requirements and the expectations of the communicants. When analyzing language strategies forming an efficient image it is necessary to take into account both linguistic and extralinguistic factors affecting the process of academic communication. The choice of self-presentation strategy when adapting to the situation is influenced by several factors: personal qualities, interpersonal characteristics and situational ones which relate to external factors.

### **1.1. Russian academic discourse**

Modern Russian lecture as a type of communication is a complex phenomenon in which the characteristics of various types of discourse from individual everyday to academic institutional discourse are concentrated. The reasons for this are conditions of the lecture interaction (the length, strict topic and the need for maximum contact of the speakers for the purpose of efficient communication of information to listeners and the assimilation of knowledge by recipients, etc.). Initially, lecture communication implied and still is intentionally aimed at the transmitting of knowledge from the lecture to the listeners, but in the contemporary Russian academic discourse the lecture increasingly passes on the principle of cooperation between the audience and the speaker, which presupposes a feedback of the communicators, as well as the individual approach to conducting the lecture on the part of the teacher. As a result of democratization of lecture communication, the lecturer can offer students knowledge on the basis of objects and phenomena relevant to the students, provoking a discussion at the level of existential discourse. If the lecturer is an individual who is keen on his subject, the presentation of the information can go on the basis of the speaker's personal reasoning of the topic, which in style and pragmatic power more resembles an existential discourse, especially if the subject of the lecture echoes the subject of a scientific study of the teacher. Thus, at present the lecture acquires a greater dialogical character, which is connected with the quality and way of presentation of information and leads to boosting cognitive activities of listeners and in turn expands the scope and range of the speaker's self-presentation.

### **1.2. Choice of self-presentation strategy**

The choice of self-presentation strategy when adapting to the situation of communication is influenced by several factors: personal qualities (psychological), interpersonal (intra-) characteristics and situational ones related to external factors. These factors are closely related to each other and depend on the goals and methods for achieving them (Baumeister, Tice & Hulton, 1989).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The values of the audience have an influence on the choice of tactics of the strategy of self-presentation. Taking into account all the characteristics of the audience, the lecturer chooses those qualities and features that will be approved and positively evaluated. Social norms of society require

coordinating the self-presentation of a person with the behaviour of others. Creating an impression of the speaker depends on how the audience will evaluate it at a given moment and later. Information about the speaker often limits his efforts in creating the desired image and limits the use of tactics of self-presentation strategy. The existing image of the speaker also effects the use of the strategy, since it is known that a person trying to belittle or not accentuate their achievements produces a more favourable impression in Eastern cultures.

### **3. Research Questions**

The level we are going focus on in analyzing the strategy of self-presentation is the description of external factors that determine its use: 1) social and cultural norms, 2) interaction between an audience and the expectations of the speaker, 3) the quality of the participants, 4) the values, 5) behaviour of listeners, 6) information about the speaker.

#### **3.1.External factors**

It is known that the speaker's expectations are formed under the influence of social norms, cultural context, personal qualities, experience and are based on the ability to correlate the speaker's wishes with the ones of the audience. Interpersonal interaction also refers to the external factor and affects the use of the strategy and the corresponding tactics of self-presentation. The speaker, who demonstrates elitism, power and status, is inclined to receive approval from the listeners, and on the other hand, needs less approval of the lower status audience. The characteristics of the audience are also important for the speaker, and determine the use of certain tactics of self-presentation strategy. The values of the audience have an influence on the choice of tactics of the strategy of self-presentation. Taking into account all the characteristics of the audience, the lecturer chooses those qualities and features that will be approved and positively evaluated (Tedeschi, 1981). Social norms of society require coordinating the self-presentation of a person with the behaviour of others. Creating an impression of the speaker depends on how the audience will evaluate it at a given moment and later. Information about the speaker often limits his efforts in creating the desired image and limits the use of tactics of self-presentation strategy. The existing image of the speaker also effects the use of the strategy, since it is known that a person trying to belittle or not accentuate their achievements produces a more favourable impression.

In different social contexts, a person reacts to the environment depending on his purpose and condition. Therefore, speaking about the strategy of self-presentation, it is necessary to touch not only on the influence of personal qualities, but also on the conditions of its implementation. The role of the situation of communication is enormous, and if you do not take it into account, you can minimize the role of the speaker himself (Leary, 2001).

The social role also predetermines the audience's expectations (Leary, 2003). A lot of social roles are characterized by certain qualities, for example, the success of the social role of the "boss" depends on the ability to create the image of a successful leader, etc. Failure to translate a particular social role can lead to an unsuccessful self-presentation or even a loss of the opportunity to present it in the future. Thus,

the speaker tries to do everything to conform to the generally accepted canons concerning social roles and audience expectations.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

We aim at determining the external factors of self-presentation strategy and identifying the most common tactics which implement it in Russian academic discourse.

#### **5. Research Methods**

##### **5.1.Procedure**

Five live lectures were recorded on videotape. The lectures were both male and female. Articulated words, gestures, gaze and head movements were accounted for and registered. The relations between external and internal self-presentation were explored and the tactics of this strategy determined.

Analyzing the strategy of self-presentation we touched upon the description of external factors: 1) social and cultural norms, 2) interaction between an audience and the expectations of the speaker, 3) the quality of the participants, 4) the values, 5) behaviour of listeners, 6) information about the speaker.

#### **6. Findings**

Studies in the field of intercultural communication show that some cultures, including Russian, are not characterized by public evaluation and demonstration of positive qualities of the speaker. Western cultures manifest a clear demonstration of its positive qualities, unlike Eastern culture, which is prone to their veiling, and using self-deception tactics. When analyzing the implementation of the self-presentation strategy from the point of view of external factors, we pointed out the most frequent tactics in the Russian academic discourse – tactics of “ingratiating” and tactics of “self-promotion”.

##### **6.1.“Ingratiating” tactics**

The tactics of “ingratiating” consists in demonstrating a benevolent, gentle attitude to the interlocutor, praise, agreement with him, etc. Its goal is to satisfy others, and the emphasis is on a quick result. This tactics projects the behaviour that is desirable for the given situation, which often does not coincide with the real views and opinions of the speaker. This tactics is common in organizations with a high hierarchy of power and enables the speakers to survive in a competitive environment (Jones & Pitman, 1982). It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between normal behaviour and ingratiating, because every person wants to please others, only the genuine motive can prove sincere or insincere behaviour. Nevertheless, the tactics of “ingratiating” can be both successfully applied, and lead to unsuccessful, distorted and unnatural communication. In the latter case, the reaction of listeners may even worsen and the speaker may be seen as a manipulator and a flatterer. The following factors can determine the need for using this tactics: the motivational component determines how important the speaker is to an audience, where the factor of the social situation is taken into account; the cognitive component determines the success of the tactics; the ethical factor shows the correspondence of this tactic to the situation of

communication. An analysis of the lectures shows that the effectiveness of this tactic depends on the type of ingratiation, explicitness and the audience status.

One of the ways of implementing this tactic is to express opinions, ideas excepted for this audience (e.g. *Конечно, вы правы...; У нас принято считать, что..*). Consent with the opinion of the majority makes the speaker close to the listeners, their views and opinions, as we tend to like and accept those who hold the same opinions. The views of the majority can be understood in this context as a certain position, the point of view of the university, faculty, department sharing the ideas of a certain scientific school etc. It should be noted that in a Russian lecture discourse, this tactic is most often represented by the pronoun WE, when identifying ourselves with a group of scientists sharing the same point of view and, on the other hand, bringing listeners closer to the generally accepted position, involving them in their circle (e.g. *Мы с вами убедимся..., Допустим, мы согласимся с ...*). The application of this tactic is often observed during the discussion, or interactive part of the lecture, when answering questions from the audience. I would like to emphasise that this tactic in the Russian lecture is more prevalent in the cases of “unequal” status communication (with a person who is higher in position, status, scientific achievements, experience) and gives the opportunity to survive in a highly competitive environment. Lecture for colleagues demonstrates this case (e.g. *Да, да...; Соглашусь...*). The next way of implementing the tactic in the lecture discourse is to exaggerate the importance of the listeners. This is usually manifested in the desire to please the audience, raise listeners’ self-esteem (e.g. *Вы конечно же знаете об этом..., Я слышал вы в курсе..., Вы все об этом читали...*) which is a genuine demonstration of respect to the audience.

Another form to express this tactic is a compliment. According to norms of behaviour, we should respond with a compliment to the compliment, which is undoubtedly beneficial from the point of view of further approval of the speaker (e.g. *С вами очень приятно работать..., Вы моя самая любимая группа...*)

## 6.2. “Self-promotion” tactics

The tactics of “self-promotion” involves demonstration of your knowledge, achievements, experience in order to look competent and knowledgeable in the eyes of the audience. It can be negatively viewed in traditional Russian culture, where it is not common to stress your success, and might be perceived as bragging and vanity (e.g. *Я помог им успешно завершить работу..., Мы принимали ведущее участие в организации этой конференции..*) This tactic is expressed with positive adjectives, stressing speaker’s best characteristics (e.g. *успешный, профессиональный, хороший*) as well as superlatives (*лучший, самый успешный, новейший*). The personal pronoun I is rarely used in Russian academic discourse, only if the speaker switches to a less formal style but usually is replaced by pronoun WE, which is more acceptable in formal communication.

## 7. Conclusion

The results in this study show that the self-presentation strategy implemented in Russian academic discourse is characterised by the influence of various factors, among which external factors and internal

factors which play an important role and are responsible for choosing the most effective tactics for this particular environment. ”. According to the results of the research we may conclude that Russian academic discourse is not characterized by public evaluation and demonstration of positive qualities of the speakers but rather by self-deception tactics. The effectiveness of this tactics depends on the type of ingratiating, explicitness and the audience status. Each factor determines the effectiveness and ways of impression management and takes part in the process of achieving the desirable result of the lecturer not affecting self-esteem and personal growth of the speaker.

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