

PREFERABLE COMMUNICATION STYLE OF BELARUSIAN STUDENTS: HIGH CONSIDERATENESS OR HIGH INVOLVEMENT STYLE?

Introduction. Having polite successful communication with people you study or work with is extremely imperative in the current dynamic environment. Moreover, in personal life interaction is also vital as it bridges gaps and connects people with new ideas, expressions and visions [1]. Due to intensive social mobility of young people in the 21st century, the issues of cultural styles become very relevant. University students as the most active and informed part of the youth participate in exchange programs and face different situations which require application of an acceptable conversational style. Conversational style is defined as “a semantic process which encodes and derives the meaning from people’s speech” [2]. Experts believe that an appropriate communication style helps to avoid conflict as well as to solve problems both in personal and professional life. Communication style combines verbal and non-verbal elements. It refers to the way people use language, and it helps listeners to understand how to interpret perceived messages. Recognizing different communication styles helps us understand cultural differences that extend beyond the words we speak [3, p. 43]. As far as cultural styles can and do create misunderstandings in conversations among people from different cultures, this research can be helpful for English learners and their teachers to avoid intercultural miscommunication.

The goal of this study is to compare Belarusian students’ communicative practices with the common rules of behaviour in the USA. The research questions include: (1) What characteristics of high considerateness style do Belarusian students tend to favour? (2) What characteristics of high involvement style do Belarusian students tend to favour? (3) In what parts of the USA will Belarusian students’ cultural style contradict to the natives’ one?

Main part. In the study we considered the following indicators of high considerateness style: (1) speak one at a time; (2) use polite listening sounds; (3) refrain from interrupting; and (4) give plenty of positive and respectful responses to their conversational partners. The markers of high involvement style include: (1) talk more; (2) interrupt more; (3) expect to be interrupted; (4) talk more loudly at times; and (5) talk more quickly than those from cultures favoring “high considerateness” styles [3, p. 48]. According to the sociolinguist D. Tannen, both of them are used in the USA. New Yorkers tend to talk faster and respond more quickly (“high involvement style”) than Californians (“high considerateness style”). According to H. Frye, basically, a high involvement person is a very energetic conversationalist. One who excitedly jumps in to share what is on his/her mind, keeping intensity high and thriving on the fast-paced back-and-forth nature of the dialogue, the interchange is stimulating and heightens the conversation-satisfaction factor. On the other hand, a high consideration person is a very respectful conversationalist, one who politely waits for the other to finish their thought before responding, taking a few seconds to finish their own thoughts before responding. This type of person holds himself and his communication partner in high regard, with responses that are thoughtful and deliberate — appreciative of a healthy dialogue [4].

Belarusian culture is also characterized with its own features which are reflected in a specific communication style. Thus, when Belarusian students are involved in different communicative situations, they apply a particular style of communication. So, we decided to find out which of the features are similar and different.

The research was done at Baranovich State University in January — February 2019. We used the quantitative research method and considered eight parameters: talking time in a cue, number of interruptions, attitude to the interruption, speech speed, volume of speech, turn-taking behaviour, level of positivity in responses and the use of polite listening sounds. The participants were asked to survey informant Belarusians about their typical communicative behaviour in everyday life. The interviewees totally numbered 131 people, 98% females and 2% males; their social status was “a university student”. Having analyzed the data we found out that, on the average:

- a) the talking time in a cue constitutes ≈ 1 min;
- b) the number of interruptions was $\approx 0,32$ times;
- c) demonstration of negative attitude when interrupted occurred $\approx 0,2$ times;
- d) very quick speech was observed in $\approx 0,27$ situations;
- e) people spoke in a loud voice in $\approx 0,42$ situations;
- f) two partners spoke simultaneously $\approx 0,27$ times;
- g) many positive responses were given $\approx 0,47$ times;
- h) verbal reactions while listening was observed $\approx 0,4$ times.

Finally, the research was completed by the analysis of the empirical data. The obtained data gives us the basis for certain generalizations. Let’s consider each of the parameters that we measured in detail.

As far as the talking time in a cue constitutes one minute, we assume that due to the rules of a fast “ping-pong” conversation, it is too long, and people have a tendency to the use high involvement style. Having interrupted $\approx 0,32$ times in a conversation indicates, that the majority of respondents tend to avoid interruptions, but

in $\approx 0,2$ situations they disliked being interrupted: this figure is equivalent to more than 50% of the situations with interruptions. Altogether, these two factors make us suppose that the Belarusians don't have a vivid characteristic of high considerateness style of conversation. The fact that the level of speech speed and simultaneous speech is about $\approx 0,27$ times we conclude that one third of the respondents is value high involvement style, but the majority — high considerateness style. Loud speech shows that people have a tendency to favour high involvement style. On the contrary, the fact that many positive responses were given demonstrates the affiliation to high considerateness style. Verbal reactions while listening were done in the form of polite listening sounds, this indicates the high considerateness style.

So, we could identify high involvement communicative style which is reflected in such features as comparatively much talking time of in a cue, rather high quantity of interruptions, very quick speech, speaking in a loud voice, simultaneous talk of two partners. Furthermore, there are features of high considerateness style which is expressed in many positive responses demonstrating negative attitude when interrupted and giving verbal reactions while listening. On the whole, the study shows that many Belarusian students have a tendency to use high involvement style. It means that they will find it much more comfortable to study and work in the Eastern part of the US, where people favour high involvement style.

Conclusion. To sum up, the Belarusian students don't have a definite cultural style which D. Tannen suggested to use: they have some characteristics of both high involvement and high considerateness one. It means that in cross-cultural communication students can communicate successfully with Americans, avoid intercultural conflicts, establish good relations, cultural connections and so on. But in some situations they can face certain misunderstanding in different parts of the USA, mainly talking to Californians.

Therefore, the perspectives of this research are seen in studying the ways to learn the individual subculture on the parametres of high and low context culture, it would help to get a better understanding of preferable Belarusian students' style.

References

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