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## **PRESENTERS’ INTRODUCTIONS IN TEACHER TRAINER WEBINARS IN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH**

The article is devoted to the study of presenters’ introductions in educational webinars. Twenty webinars done in the Russian and English languages were analysed to find out cultural similarities and differences. The following criteria were used for their evaluation: the length of the introduction, outline information, speaker’s credentials relative to the webinar topic, advertising, personal information, non-verbal behaviour.

**Key words:** achievement; presenter’s introduction; teacher training; webinar.

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## **ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ СЕБЯ СПИКЕРАМИ НА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ ВЕБИНАРАХ НА РУССКОМ И АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ**

Статья посвящена изучению выступлений спикеров на образовательных вебинарах. Было проанализировано 20 вебинаров на русском и английском языках для выявления культурных сходств и различий. Для оценки использовались следующие критерии: продолжительность раздела «Предъявление себя», информация о содержании вебинара, данные об опыте спикера по теме выступления, реклама своего образовательного продукта, биографические сведения, неречевое поведение.

**Ключевые слова:** достижение; представление себя спикером; подготовка учителя; вебинар.

**Introduction.** In a world where people study a lot, and continuous professional development (CPD) is an inseparable part of professional career, there is a growing demand for getting short and quick answers to the topics of their professional interest. That is why educational webinars are gaining popularity, they represent an easy way to upgrade competence at a convenient time for everyone. Also, the webinars attract internet users all over the world, both scholars and students, due to the variety of topics and their accessibility. Attending them, we can find answers to many questions, e. g., cross-cultural differences between Russian and English speakers.

In any webinar, one of the main parts is the presenter's introduction. In Cambridge dictionary, the introduction is regarded as: (1) the first part of a ... speech; (2) something you say to tell an audience who is going to speak to them or perform to them [1]. Other dictionaries give a similar definition: the act of making one person formally known to another or a group of others, in which you tell them the person's name [2]. Actually, the introduction may be done in short, with a couple of phrases when we introduce oneself and our personality. Studying them can be a particularly important step in learning how to successfully introduce oneself online to the audience who we don't know.

This research of presenters' introductions in webinars in cross-cultural perspective may be *relevant* for in- and pre-service foreign language teachers who plan to design their online courses, do reports and presentations. We see its relevance in social, professional, and personal dimensions. The social factors lie in their increasing popularity to train people — especially after the pandemic COVID-19, they are necessary for teachers' CPD, and their interactions across the globe. Professionally, understanding similarities and differences in introductions in Russian and English may help teachers avoid socio-cultural errors and enhance authenticity of presenter's speech. Introduction is an underestimated but very important part of the speech because it serves to create trust to the speaker. This will help teachers design more listener-friendly, attractive presentations, and get engaged in cross-cultural professional discussions. Moreover, successful beginning of the online lesson is able to make learning more goal-oriented and effective. Personally, successful self-presentation skills

can help a teacher-in-training take part in an interview and get a job, create a strong personal brand and contribute to the career success. This research is a good opportunity for pre-service teachers to better understand the ways to keep learners attentive and engaged.

The necessity of the research topic is determined by the interest of Belarusian students in cross-cultural issues, their desire to present the research findings in webinars, create online courses to teach their subject through webinars. Exploring introductions and the process of self-presentation allows university students, pre-service foreign language teachers, to raise self-awareness, find out cultural peculiarities, understand one's own strengths and areas for improvement. Eventually, this can help student teachers in their personal growth and upgrade self-esteem.

This study aims to find similarities and differences in presenters' introductions in teacher training webinars between linguistically and culturally different speakers: the Russians and English. The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What data are shared in introductions in teacher training webinars by Russian and English presenters?

2. What are the major similarities and differences in presenters' introductions in teacher training webinars in Russian and English?

**Research Methodology.** The research was done in March 2024 in the course “Basics of Cross-Cultural Communication” in Baranavichy State University.

We hypothesize that introductions in the webinars in Russian and English are basically similar, though they are generally longer in Russian: they talk more about themselves and speak more slowly, which makes self-presentation take longer. Meanwhile English-speaking people in their introductions will touch on their pragmatic goals, since it is important to sell a course, lessons or advertise their social networks; for them, a webinar is an opportunity to show the audience that there are also authors' courses on this topic.

This hypothesis results from the positions of cross-cultural communication theory. In particular, the sociolinguistic researcher D. Tannen discussed the notion that people from some cultures value “high involvement” conversation patterns, while others value “high considerateness” [3, p. 48]. Thus, many Russian speakers tend to value

“high involvement” style: that involves talking more. Many English speakers favour high considerateness style; they talk less, and as people representing individualistic cultures, they focus on the end result [3, p. 18].

**Main part.** To prove the above hypothesis we used a set of quantitative and qualitative research methods: the statistical and content analysis of the introductions in teacher training webinars on the educational platforms. The selection of the webinars was done randomly, ten events in each language delivered recently on the channels: *Svetlana Titova LearnTeachWeb*, *Образовательная платформа «Юрайт»*, *Просвещение*, *Онлайн Академия* in Russian, and *British Council | TeachingEnglish*; *Trinity College*; *Dr. Nellie Deutsch* professional development blogs — in English. In some cases the introduction was done by the moderator, in others by the presenters themselves.

The study was organized in two stages. The purpose of the first stage was to get and process the empirical data, which allows us to highlight the main components of introductions in webinars in Russian and English. The second stage was aimed to compare the data.

To select webinars, we used the main criteria — presenters are introduced and their backgrounds, including credentials relative to the webinar topic, are provided at the beginning the topic, and the objectives or goals of the webinar are clearly communicated to the audience [4]. The introductions in the webinars in Russian and English were viewed on YouTube sites in order to find the answers to the following questions:

1. How long does the introduction last?
2. How many subtopics do they mention as the outline of the webinar?
3. What do speakers say (are reported by somebody else) about their experience with the webinar topic?
4. What do they advertise?
5. What personal information (bio) do they share?
6. What achievements do they mention?
7. What nonverbal signs do they use quite often?

**Results and Discussion of Research.** The obtained empirical data about the introductions delivered in Russian are presented in table 1.

T a b l e 1 — Presenters' introductions in webinars in Russian

Presenter's name	Afanasyeva, L. [1a]	Aleshina, M. [2a]	Kharlamenko, I [3a]	Korenev, A. [4a]
Length of introduction	1 min	4 min 20 sec	2 min 10 sec	1 min
Outline information (subtopics)	—	8	1	4
Speaker's credentials relative to the webinar topic	Online teaching experience	—	Course author	Scientific director and author of many scientific publications
Advertising	University	Social network VKontakte	—	—
Personal information (bio)	—	Work experience	Affiliation	Affiliation
Achievement	Docent	– Education; – International certificates	– Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences; – certificates; – competition awards	Assistant Professor
Non-verbal behaviour	Eye contact	– Closed position; – arms crossed	Closed position	Smile

*Continuation of table 1*

Presenter's name	Marinina, E. [5a]	Markova, T. [6a]	Pokidova, A. [7a]
Length of introduction	1 min 10 sec	2 min 40 sec	2 min
Outline information (subtopics)	—	—	1
Speaker's credentials relative to the webinar topic	Extensive experience work in schools	Professional business translator	English school exam developer
Advertising	—	Online English school	Online course
Personal information (bio)	Work experience	– Lives in Florida; – work experience	—
Achievement	– Candidate of Philological Sciences; – Associate Professor	Education	– Author of workbooks and collections of tests; – teacher and methodologist of the highest qualification category
Non-verbal behaviour	– Closed position; – arms crossed; – serious intonation	– Smile; – gestures	– Smile; – eye contact

End of table 1

Presenter's name	Sidorenko, S. [8a]	Titova, S. [9a]	Verbitskaya, M. [10a]
Length of introduction	1 min	3 min	2 min 40 sec
Outline information (subtopics)	—	3	3
Speaker's credentials relative to the webinar topic	—	Author of many online courses and lessons	Author of methodological complexes
Advertising	—	—	—
Personal information (bio)	—	– Work experience; – plans for future work	—
Achievement	Methodist	Vice-Head of the Department of Foreign Languages	– Doctor of Philological Sciences; – Professor
Non-verbal behaviour	– Smile; – engaging intonation	Engaging intonation	– Smile; – engaging intonation; – eye contact

The average length of the introductions in Russian is 2 minutes and 20 seconds. The quantity of points in the outline mentioned by the speaker differs from zero to eight, that is three on the average (We purposefully decided to mention that, because we believe that it illustrates the speakers' ability to structure the speech). The experience speaks about the authority on the topic of the webinar: for example, 40 % of Russian speakers are the authors of online courses and lessons on the topics they talked about in the webinar, perhaps this is the most significant information which is able to create trust to the presenter. As for personal information, almost everyone mentioned experience and

place of work. The analysis shows that they say similar information about themselves (affiliation, work experience). The speakers told about their achievements in profession career: degree, position, education. In general, speakers demonstrated similar nonverbal cues, such as smile, engaging intonation and close position.

Let's consider the data which we found out while observing the presenters' introductions in English (table 2).

Having compared the obtained data, we see that the average length of the introduction is three minutes. The average number of subtopics in the outline constitutes 3 topics. The bio information that proves the presenter's experience with the webinar topic includes, for example, their degree in teaching (master, trainer, manager). 7 out of 10 speakers said where they lived as their personal information. Not all the speakers talked about their achievements: degree, job, experience. In their introductions they often smiled (90 %), and used many gestures.

To answer research question 2, we are to compare the data in two tables. In terms of the length, English speakers' introductions are 40 seconds longer on the average. One exception is H. Benucci' speech who had the fastest intro which lasted 30 seconds. More points in the outlines were mentioned by English speakers. With detalization of the webinar, the presenter helps to anticipate the information, and helps to perceive it more consciously. The listener gets a clear idea of what the webinar will be about. If the number of points is smaller, as with Russian speakers, then listeners are not so much engaged in the topic of the webinar. In terms of credentials, overall, 80 % of the presenters on both sides are very experienced in the webinar topic, because they have extensive experience in their field. 7 out of 10 people in every country have advertised a product or personal brand. Concerning personal information they shared, the most common fact of English speakers, is the place where they live, while Russian speakers almost didn't talk about it. As for achievements, 80 % of the speakers mentioned their extensive work experience (minimum 15 years), and also many of them are teacher trainers. In terms of non-verbal behaviour, nonverbal signals are used more frequently by English speakers, they smiled more and used gestures more often. Not a single Russian speaker had a head nod, and only two people looked at the camera and maintained eye contact.

T a b l e 2 — Presenters' introductions in webinars in English

Speaker's name	Benucci, H. [11a]	Deutsch, N. [12a]	Douidi, A. [13a]	Duridanova, D. [14a]
Length of introduction	30 sec	4 min 30 sec	1 min 15 sec	4 min 30 sec
Outline information	4	3	2	—
Speaker's credentials relative to the webinar topic	—	—	Researched the intercultural potential of Algerian textbooks	20 years of teaching experience
Advertising	Online course	Free online professional development programs on Moodle for teachers	YouTube channel	—
Personal information (bio)	– Lives in the US, Washington; – affiliation	Work experience	– Lives in Scotland; – EAP teacher	Work experience
Achievement	—	She has taught EFL in K-12 and higher education for over 40 years and has applied CALL since 1992	– Ph. D. from the University of Southampton; – investigated the intercultural potential of English textbooks	Teaching more than 20 years
Non-verbal behavior	Serious intonation	– Eye contact; – smile; – head nodding	– Smile; – head nodding	– Smile; – eye contact

Continuation of table 2

Speaker's name	Mascitti, S. [15a]	Moyle, E. [16a]	O'Brien, E. [17a]
Length of introduction	1 min 20 sec	3 min 5 sec	1 min 30 sec
Outline information (subtopics)	3	3	5
Speaker's credentials relative to the webinar topic	Works as a freelance materials writer for highly-recognized platforms and language schools	15 years of teaching experience	– Master's degree in Applied Linguistics; – conducted research on inclusivity issues
Advertising	YouTube channel	Online school	—
Personal information (bio)	– Lives in Spain; – work experience; – teacher of English and materials designer; – from Buenos Aires	– Lives in the UK; – teacher in the university of Warsaw	– Lives in Madrid; – work experience
Achievement	– Has worked in ELT for more than 20 years; – teaches adults online	Teacher trainer	– Master applied linguistic; – teacher trainer
Non-verbal behaviour	– Eye contact; – head nodding; – smile; – engaging intonation	– Engaging intonation; – smile; – gestures; – eye contact	– Smile; – gestures; – eye contact

End of table 2

Speaker's name	Perkins, L. [18a]	Ribeiro, R. [19a]	Sweeney, S. [20a]
Length of introduction	2 min 47 sec	2 min 10 sec	40 sec
Outline information (subtopics)	5	—	3
Speaker's credentials relative to the webinar topic	Extensive experience in the online field	—	Teacher and trainer with over 20 of ELT
Advertising	Online course	YouTube channel	—
Personal information (bio)	– Lives in the UK; – work experience	Lives in Brazil	Work experienc
Achievement	– Teacher trainer; – teaching quality manager	—	Has worked in various contexts, with longer stretches in Italy, Spain, the UK and Japan
Non-verbal behaviour	– Engaging intonation; – smile; – gestures	– Engaging intonation; – smile; – gestures; – eye contact	– Engaging intonation; – gestures; – eye contact; – head nodding; – smile

**Conclusion.** This study proved the hypothesis that basically, Russian and English speakers use similar tactics of behavior in their introductions. The presenters in both cultures turned out to be pragmatic.

The limitations of this research is that one study based on the observation of twenty webinars may not claim general theoretical conclusions, and presenters' cultural heritage was not considered in detail. This requires more thorough investigation in the future.

Nevertheless, this project helps us understand that introductions in teacher training webinars in Russian and English are similar in many respects, especially the number of subtopics in the outline, the length of the introduction, but there are differences concerning personal information and biographies. This information can be used when teaching students how to deliver presentations in English lessons, and how to do cross-cultural research.

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