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## LANGUAGE PATTERNS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE

*Distance learning with its virtual settings has launched the transformation of education delivery, pedagogy, and classroom management. Consequently, it could cause educational discourse transformation in higher education as well. The research is focused on revealing educational discourse transformation in distance learning. Besides, the paper answers the following research questions: how university teachers communicate with students in virtual classrooms; what language patterns they use for giving instructions; whether verbal communication between teachers and students has crucially changed in digitally-based education. A mixed method approach (discourse analysis of 12 video-recorded lessons of ESL university teachers and the survey of students (n = 45)) makes it possible to shed light on the state of play in virtual educational discourse. The paper reveals that 1) communication in virtual classrooms depends on pedagogical activities which allows classifying educational language models into the following categories – preparation of teaching material presentation online, student engagement in an activity online, giving instruction on how to use EdTech, and expressing emotions or attitude; 2) university teachers use special language patterns for giving instructions related to using ICT tools and apps, e.g. screen sharing, chatting and emotional modality; 3) verbal communication between teachers and students except for linguistic and extra-linguistic features includes informal modes of communication – chat emojis and signs. The findings highlight that educational discourse has crucially changed in digitally-based education and has transformed into virtual educational discourse. The insights of the paper can contribute to the investigation of virtual educational discourse analysis.*

**Keywords:** *discourse analysis, educational discourse, educational language model, higher education, language patterns.*

### INTRODUCTION

The emergency transition of higher education to digital format during the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected traditional teaching and learning in face-to-face classrooms. Distance learning with its virtual settings has launched the transformation of education delivery, pedagogy, and classroom management. Studying pedagogy transformation in the pandemic Teruya (2023) reveals «the shifting perception of the teaching profession, the proliferation of divergent pedagogical discourses and technologies, and increased teacher agency in (re)making their own identities, roles, and responsibilities» (p. 185).

Moreover, distance learning requires teachers to be aware of various platforms, apps and ICT tools, and be competent in their effective implementation in digitally-based education. These factors could affect educational discourse transformation as well.

The article assumes, that the educational language of teachers in verbal communication with students, primarily in teaching instruction in virtual settings, is likely to

modify. Consequently, **the research is focused on** revealing educational discourse transformation in distance learning by answering the following research questions:

1. How do university teachers communicate with students in virtual classrooms?
2. What language patterns do they use for giving instructions?
3. Has verbal communication between teachers and students crucially changed in digitally-based education?

**Theoretical Background.** In the scientific literature, «educational discourse» refers to «a personalized type of discourse, it is the discourse of the classroom whose goal is the transfer of knowledge» (Manoliu, 2015, p. 230). The main component of the educational discourse is the educational language used for conveying educational content, pursuing teaching outcomes, setting pedagogical rules, and for the specific institutional and organisational aspects of a teacher-student relationship. The educational language has three functions: to send educational information or instruction; to assess and evaluate; to incite a reaction (Manoliu, 2015). The notion of ‘educational discourse’ is overlapped with ‘pedagogic discourse’ and ‘classroom discourse’.

A pedagogic discourse is realized in two sets of language choices: a regulative register (the goals of the teaching-learning activity) and an instructional register (the teaching/learning content) (Christie, 1995). A pedagogic discourse is described by Rose (2014) as a complex unit of pedagogic activity (a way of knowledge presentation, accumulation and evaluation), pedagogic modalities (linguistic sources of meanings) and pedagogic relations (teacher-learner exchanges). Girault & Corredor (2019) consider pedagogical discourse analysis as the departure point to teaching through discourse in the language classroom. Besides, Girault & Corredor (2019) emphasise that language teachers must incorporate discourse analysis into their pedagogy to effectively achieve students’ communication. Discourse analysis is the definitive process by which students can understand how to use language in real-life situations while considering its formal and functional aspects, causes of communication breakdowns, and sociocultural features.

In its turn, ‘classroom discourse’ is the oral and written language used by teachers and students for communication in the classroom (Forsell, 2023). However, Meißner (2023) believes, that the view on the language used in schools is strongly influenced by the concept of academic language. In its turn, academic language refers to the spoken, written, auditory, and visual language proficiency necessary for effective learning in schools and academic programs, i.e., the language used in classrooms, textbooks, assignments, and tests (Academic Language, 2013; Sokolova, 2015).

A quick literature review shows that scholars investigate various concepts related to the educational discourse. Currently, they can be divided into the following thematic groups: written and oral educational discourse analysis, the national transformation of educational discourse, and online educational discourse.

The examinations of creolized texts (a text with verbal and non-verbal constituents) as a form of contemporary educational discourse in MOOCs (Platonova et al., 2015); the educational discourse in general and environmental education (Duoblienė et al., 2023), marketised educational discourses (Preece & Whittaker, 2023), and pedagogy as performance and discourse (Nicholson, 2023) are related to written educational discourse analysis. The oral educational discourse analysis is presented in the studies about the evaluation of the educational discourse of Mexican teachers from its motivational, instructive, affective, social and ethical dimensions (Perez & Gonzalez, 2018), the educational discourses and the educational media in teacher training (Peil & Bicca, 2018).

Another group of publications is focused on the analysis of the transformation of the educational discourse in the Balkans under the influence of the spreading European discourse (Zmas, 2012); the transformation of the university policies in Azerbaijan affected by UK and

USA educational discourses (Mammadova, 2019); content in American educational discourse (Friesen, 2021).

Furthermore, classroom discourse as a form of conveying knowledge in schools is an objective of current research as well. For example, a corpus-based lexical analysis of language in oral classroom discourse (Meißner, 2023), and the response of science teachers to student errors in classroom discourse (Soysal, 2023).

It is worth mentioning, that the COVID-19 pandemic has raised the significance of educational discourse during the global transformation of the educational environment. Thus, Rostoka et al. (2022) emphasise the role of educational discourse as a constructive tool of post-pandemic, determined by the new interpretation, where teachers become generators of innovations. Dorfsman's (2018) findings show that the online environment enables the development of an ethnocultural discourse as an integral part of the narrative in the discussion. Besides, in a virtual educational environment, a webinar as a genre of virtual pedagogical discourse has discursive markers that specify virtual communication during teaching/learning English (Drabkina & Tanchuk, 2020). The impact of technology on contemporary educational discourse is discussed by Mateus (2019).

## METHODOLOGY

The research aim is achieved through a mixture of methods. Discourse analysis as a research method (Anderson & Mungal, 2015; Anderson & Holloway, 2020) is applied to investigate university teachers' use of educational language in the context of the virtual educational environment. Moreover, following Martin et al., (2021) and Ojanola (2022), there is an attempt to reveal an education linguistic model (ELM) in teaching English in oral communication in virtual settings. For example, Ojanola (2022) found seven ELMs utilized by ESL teachers: «building rapport, acknowledging success, modelling, addressing challenging behaviours, scaffolding the learning, responding to the individual learner and self-monitoring the teaching» (p. 64). Moreover, the application of quantitative (observation) and qualitative (survey) research methods allow for revealing language patterns utilized in a virtual educational environment through teachers' and students' perspectives.

Following Rose (2014), the language patterns used as illustrations in this paper were observed directly in video-recorded lessons conducted by the university teachers-colleagues and available on the Department's Google Disk. The survey of students was conducted in the spring of 2023 to give answers to the research questions.

A quantitative questionnaire for students was designed in Google Forms and administered online via university e-mail, and responses were anonymous. A snowball technique for sampling was utilized, whereby students were asked to share the questionnaire with their group peers. As a result, the research presents data collected from the analysis of English language university teachers' oral instruction in 12 video-recorded lessons and the respondents of students (n = 45) from the English Philology Department at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University. A questionnaire example is given below (see Table 1).

Table 1

### A questionnaire for students to reveal their perception of language patterns

- |  |
|--|
| <p>1. Which linguistic features do the teachers frequently use at virtual sessions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can you see the screen well</li> <li>● Click the button</li> <li>● Copy &amp; paste</li> <li>● Mute on/off</li> </ul> |
|--|

- Switch on/off your camera
- Let's share a screen
- Use a chat tab
- Can you hear the audio/video well
- I'm sending a link to
- You can enter (breakout rooms)
- Nice to see your faces
- Text on the board
- Draw in a different colour
- Highlight in the text
- A second, please

2. Which extra-linguistic features do the teachers frequently use at virtual sessions?

- Smile
- Wave
- Clap
- Body movement
- Gestures
- None

3. Which informal modes of communication do the teachers frequently use at virtual sessions?

- Chat Emojis
- Raise hand sign
- None

Developed by author

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The observation of 12 videoed lessons conducted by 12 university teachers makes it possible to reveal 13 language patterns frequently used in virtual classrooms while communicating and interacting with students, managing the presentation, giving instructions and feedback: «Click on the button», «Can you see the screen well?», «A second, please», «I'll open a whiteboard», «I'm starting to share a screen», «Switch on/off your cameras», «Mute on/off», «Use a chat,» «Can you hear the audio/video well?» «On the screen, you can see...» «I'm sending a link to...», «You can enter now (breakout rooms)» and «Nice to see your faces».

These language patterns can be arranged according to the following categories – preparation of teaching material presentation online, student engagement in an activity online, giving instruction on how to use EdTech, and expressing emotions or attitude (see Table 2).

Table 2

## Categories of language patterns utilized by teachers in virtual classrooms

Preparation of teaching material presentation online	Student engagement in an activity online	Giving instruction on how to use EdTech	Expressing emotions and attitude
Can you see the screen well? Can you hear the audio/video well? A second, please	I'll open a whiteboard I'm starting to share a screen On the screen, you can see... I'm sending a link to... Now you can enter (the breakout rooms)	Click the button Switch on/off your cameras Mute on/off Use a chat	Nice to see your faces

Developed by author

The language patterns classified into certain categories show that the pedagogical activity of teachers in virtual educational settings is primarily focused on the presentation of teaching material, student engagement in the activities, teaching effective EdTech use, and emotional modality. The last is likely used to fill in the gaps of social interaction in virtual communication. Besides, the teachers' language patterns for giving instructions include vocabulary related to EdTech and ICT tools, e.g., «screen», «whiteboard», «link», «click», «mute on/off», and «breakout rooms». That makes the language patterns utilized by teachers for giving instructions in virtual classrooms different from the ones used in a face-to-face educational environment.

The next step of the analysis is the frequency of the language patterns utilized in virtual classrooms (see Table 3).

Table 3 shows, that the most frequently used language patterns are the ones related to «screen» (M = 72.22%), which means that a screen is a significant tool for the demonstration of teaching material and assignments in the platforms for conferencing. The next frequent language pattern is related to «chat» (50%), which means that a chat tab is a quick tool for pedagogical activity in virtual space, e.g., for sending teaching material and assignments, giving written feedback, written communication, and polls. Besides, such discourse markers as «Nice to see your faces» (41.66%) and «A second, please» (41.66%) occur a lot in virtual communication between teachers and students as well. The first is used for performing various functions – from virtual greetings and praising to indicating students' appearance on the main screen after closing breakout rooms. The language pattern – «A second, please» is used primarily as a pause filler while a teacher is trying to switch on a certain ICT tool or app in the platforms for conferencing. Consequently, the article assumes that the frequency of language patterns usage depends on the pedagogical activity of a teacher and ICT tools or apps provided in virtual classrooms. Currently, teachers are likely to focus on screen sharing and using the chat tab, as well as expressing emotions and filling the pause in virtual communication.

Table 3

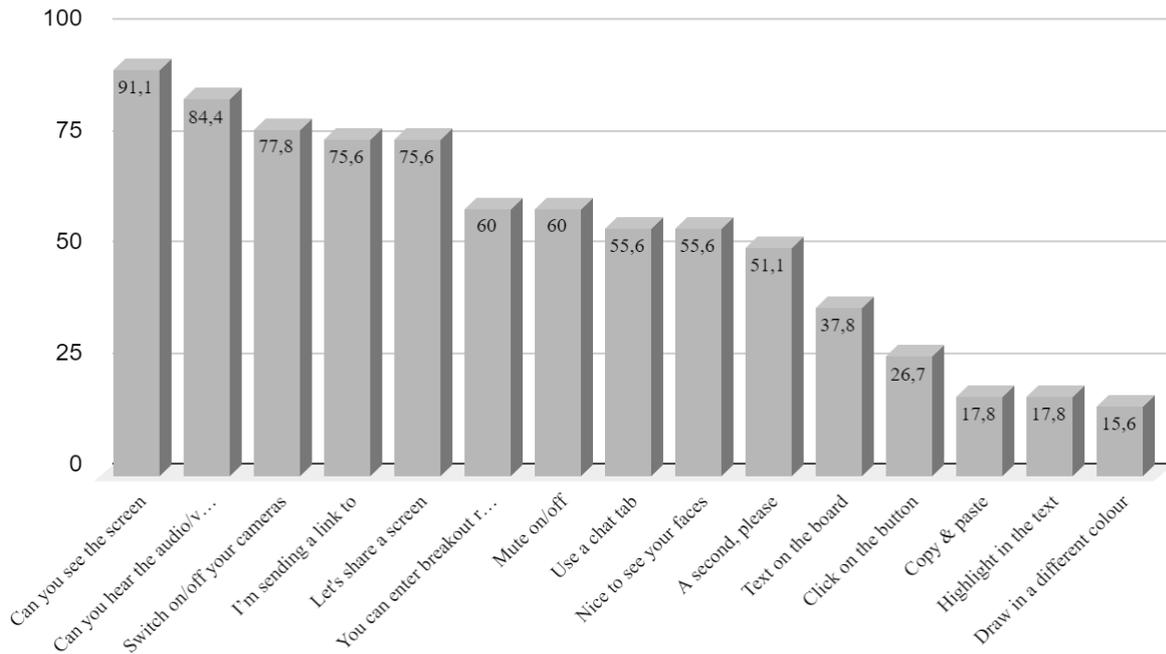
**Frequency of the language patterns in virtual educational discourse**

<b>Language patterns</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>%</b>
Can you see the screen well?	11	91.66
On the screen, you can see...	8	66.66
I'm starting to share a screen	7	58.33
Use a chat	6	50.00
Nice to see your faces.	5	41.66
A second, please	5	41.66
I'm sending a link to...	4	33.33
Mute on/off	4	33.33
Can you hear the audio/video well?	3	25.00
You can enter now (breakout rooms)	3	25.00
Click on the button	2	16.66
Switch on/off your cameras	2	16.66
I'll open a whiteboard	1	8.33
Total number of teachers – 12		

Developed by author

To make a virtual educational discourse analysis complete, the article presents the results of the student survey, conducted to examine their experience of teachers' language patterns utilized for giving instruction in the virtual educational environment (see Fig. 1).

According to students' data, teachers' language patterns relate to «*screen*» sharing (M = 83.7%), virtual classroom management – «*Switch off/on your cameras*» (77.8%) and «*Mute on/off*» (60%), delivering teaching material – «*I'm sending a link to...*» (75.6%), and students engagement into pair activity or teamwork – «*You can enter breakout rooms*» (60%). The last group of language patterns that occurred a lot in classroom virtual communication is the instruction related to chat tab usage («*Use a chat tab*» – 55.6%), emotional modality («*Nice to see your faces*» – 55.6%), and pause fillers («*A second, please*» – 51.1%).

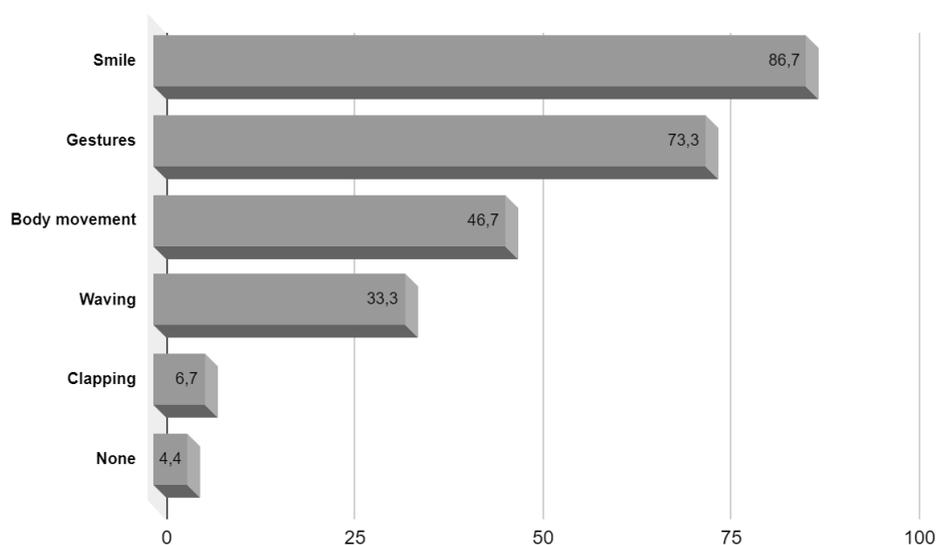


**Figure 1. Students' perception of teachers' language patterns utilized in virtual classrooms**

Developed by author

Next, students evidence that teachers use various extra-linguistic features in virtual settings (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2 shows that virtual communication is close in extra-linguistic features to real-life communication in classrooms. Thus, teachers smile (86.7%), use gestures (73.3%) and body movements (46.7%), wave (33.3%), and even clap (6.7%). However, there is a minority of those who stay still during the lesson (4.4%).



**Figure 2. Extra-linguistic features used by teachers in virtual classrooms**

Developed by author

Furthermore, students have evidenced that teachers use informal modes of communication in virtual educational settings (see Fig. 3).

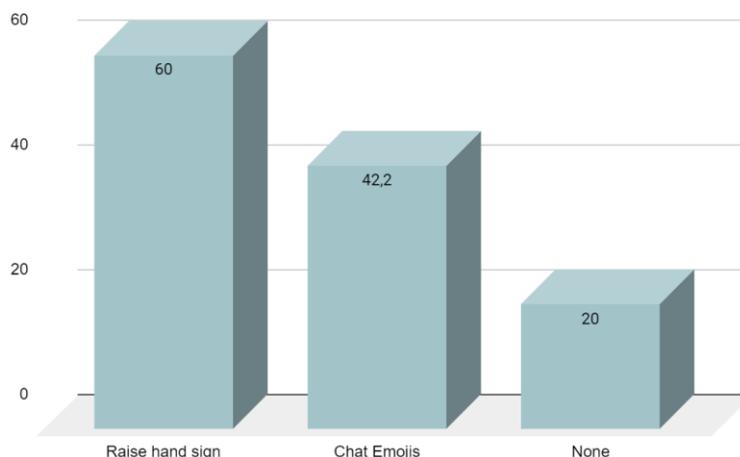


Figure 3. **Informal modes of communication used by teachers in virtual classrooms**  
Developed by author

In terms of informal modes of communication in educational discourse, Figure 3 shows that the majority of teachers ask students to click the rise hand sign (60%) for fostering teacher-student interaction and use chat emojis (42.2%) for expressing emotional modality or giving visual feedback. However, a minority of teachers (20%) apply any informal modes of communication in virtual educational settings.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research results indicate that educational discourse transformation in distance learning resulted in the adaptation of pedagogical activity to a virtual educational environment. In its turn, this causes the emergence of special educational language models widely applied in communication between teachers and students in platforms for conferencing. By answering the research questions, the paper reveals that 1) communication in virtual classrooms depends on pedagogical activities which allows classifying educational language models into the following categories – preparation of teaching material presentation online, student engagement in an activity online, giving instruction on how to use EdTech, and expressing emotions or attitude; 2) university teachers use special language patterns for giving instructions related to using ICT tools and apps, e.g. screen sharing, chatting and emotional modality; 3) verbal communication between teachers and students except for linguistic and extra-linguistic features includes informal modes of communication, e.g., chat emojis and signs. The findings highlight that educational discourse has crucially changed in digitally-based education and has transformed into virtual educational discourse. These insights can contribute to the investigation of virtual educational discourse analysis in the future.

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## МОВНІ МОДЕЛІ В НАВЧАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ: ВІРТУАЛЬНИЙ ОСВІТНИЙ ДИСКУРС

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*Дистанційне навчання з його віртуальним середовищем започаткувало трансформацію освітніх послуг, педагогіки та управління класом. Також це спричинило трансформацію освітнього дискурсу у вищій освіті. Це дослідження спрямоване на виявлення трансформації освітнього дискурсу в дистанційному навчанні. Крім того, у статті надано відповіді на такі дослідницькі питання: як викладачі англійської у закладах вищої освіти спілкуються зі студентами у віртуальних аудиторіях; які мовні моделі вони використовують для надання інструкцій; чи суттєво змінилася вербальна комунікація між викладачами та студентами в цифровій освіті. Використання змішаного методу (аналіз дискурсу 12-ти відеоуроків викладачів університету та опитування студентів (n = 45)) дає змогу пролити світло на сучасний стан віртуального освітнього дискурсу. Стаття показує, що 1) спілкування у віртуальних класах залежить від педагогічної діяльності, що дозволяє класифікувати освітні мовні моделі за наступними категоріями – підготовка презентації навчального матеріалу онлайн, залучення студентів до діяльності онлайн, надання інструкцій щодо використання освітніх цифрових технологій та вираження емоцій або модальності; 2) викладачі університетів використовують спеціальні мовні моделі для надання інструкцій, пов'язані з використанням ІКТ-інструментів і додатків, наприклад спільне використання екрана, спілкування в чаті та емоційна модальність; 3) вербальна комунікація між викладачами та студентами, крім лінгвістичних та екстралінгвістичних ознак, включає неформальні способи спілкування – чат-емодзі та знаки. Висновки підкреслюють, що освітній дискурс кардинально змінився в цифровій освіті та перетворився на віртуальний освітній дискурс. Отримані результати можуть сприяти дослідженню аналізу віртуального освітнього дискурсу.*

**Ключові слова:** *аналіз дискурсу, вища освіта, мовні зразки, навчальний дискурс, освітня мовна модель.*