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MOTIVATION AS A KEY PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANT OF COMMUNICATIVE ABILITIES IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study examines the psychological factors shaping communicative ability in university students. A sample of 120 undergraduates at two universities in Uzbekistan completed three psychodiagnostic instruments: a purpose-built Social-Psychological Questionnaire (SPQ), a communication technique scale, and a communicative control diagnostic. Motivational orientation proved to be the strongest predictor of communication technique, whereas communicative control functioned as a psychologically independent construct with no significant link to motivational or contextual factors. Communicative control also differed significantly across academic disciplines. The results suggest that the two components of communicative ability require separate developmental approaches.

Keywords: communicative ability, motivation, communication technique, communicative control, higher education, Uzbekistan

INTRODUCTION

Communication is consistently listed among the most essential competencies for graduates entering professional and social life. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 and UNESCO's global education agenda both emphasise interpersonal communication and social adaptability as core twenty-first-century capabilities [1]. In Uzbekistan, national higher-education reform has similarly elevated communicative competence to a strategic priority, as reflected in Presidential Decree PF-5847 (2019) on developing the higher-education system through 2030 [2].

Despite this institutional attention, the specific psychological mechanisms that drive communicative development in students remain underexplored. Existing research in the region tends to focus on language proficiency or pedagogical method rather than on internal psychological factors — motivation, emotional-volitional regulation, and social experience — that shape how students actually acquire and use communication skills. The present study addresses this gap.

Theory distinguishes two related but conceptually separate aspects of communicative ability. Communication technique refers to the behavioural layer: initiating conversation, active listening, clear self-expression, and adaptive use of verbal and non-verbal cues [3]. Communicative control refers to the metacognitive capacity to monitor and regulate one's own communicative behaviour in real time, adjusting tone and self-presentation to the demands of the situation [4]. While the importance of motivation for developing technique is acknowledged in the theoretical literature, direct empirical evidence linking specific psychological determinants to each component remains limited [5]. The present study provides that evidence.

METHOD

Participants. A total of 120 undergraduate students participated: 60 from Fergana State University (FSU; programmes: Psychology, English Language, Natural Sciences, Economics) and 60 from the International Institute of Food Engineering and Technology (IIFET). The sample

comprised 92 female (76.7%) and 28 male (23.3%) students; Year 1: n = 46, Year 2: n = 41, Year 4: n = 32.

Instruments. The SPQ (Yuldasheva & Xolbo'tayev, 2025) is a 15-item purpose-built questionnaire with four subscales measured on 5-point Likert scales: Block A (emotional-volitional characteristics), Block B (motivational orientation), Block S (social experience), and Block D (academic environment). Communication technique was assessed with the Communication Technique Scale developed by N. D. Tvorogov, which captures the operational-behavioural layer of communicative ability. Communicative control was measured with the Communicative Control Diagnostic adapted from M. Snyder's (1974) self-monitoring instrument, reflecting the degree to which individuals consciously regulate their communicative self-presentation.

Statistical analysis. Two-group comparisons used Student's independent-samples t-test and the Mann–Whitney U-test. Multi-group comparisons used the Kruskal–Wallis H-test with post-hoc Mann–Whitney pairwise tests. Correlational analysis used Pearson's r. The significance threshold was set at $p < .05$. All analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

RESULTS

Institution and gender differences. IIFET students scored significantly higher than FSU students on emotional-volitional characteristics (Block A; $t = -3.38$, $p = .001$) and social experience (Block S; $t = -2.12$, $p = .036$). Motivational orientation (Block B) and academic environment (Block D) did not differ significantly between institutions ($p = .288$ and $p = .425$, respectively). Regarding gender, male students rated their emotional-volitional characteristics higher than female students ($t = 2.05$, $p = .042$); no other SPQ block differed by gender.

Year-of-study trends. Year-4 students gave significantly lower self-ratings on emotional-volitional characteristics than both Year-1 ($t = 2.77$, $p = .007$) and Year-2 students ($t = 3.00$, $p = .004$), while Year-1 and Year-2 did not differ from each other ($p = .999$). Motivational orientation showed no significant variation across years of study. This pattern suggests growing self-critical insight in senior students rather than an actual deterioration in emotional regulation.

Discipline differences in communicative control. No significant differences across programmes were found for communication technique ($H = 1.37$, $p = .713$), indicating broadly equivalent skill levels. Communicative control, however, differed significantly ($H = 10.21$, $p = .017$). Table 1 presents the mean ranks by discipline.

Table 1

Mean ranks of communicative control scores by academic discipline (Kruskal–Wallis $H = 10.21$, $p = .017$)

Discipline	n	Mean rank
Economics	33	73.45
Psychology	32	62.45
Biotechnology / Engineering	27	57.35
English Language	28	46.04

Note. Higher mean rank indicates higher communicative control. Post-hoc comparison: Economics > English Language ($p < .05$).

Economics students scored highest and English-language students lowest — consistent with the greater everyday demands for negotiation and purposeful self-presentation in business-oriented programmes.

Correlational structure of communicative ability. Motivational orientation (Block B) showed the strongest association with communication technique ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). Social experience (Block S; $r = .27$, $p < .01$) and academic environment (Block D; $r = .23$, $p < .05$) also correlated positively with technique. Emotional-volitional characteristics (Block A) did not reach significance ($r = .16$, $p > .05$). By contrast, communicative control showed no significant correlation with any SPQ block (all $r < .15$, $p > .05$) and no correlation with communication technique itself ($r = .04$, $p > .05$), confirming that the two components are psychologically independent.

DISCUSSION

Two main findings stand out. First, motivational orientation is the strongest psychological predictor of communication technique. This accords with self-determination theory [6], which holds that intrinsic motivation leads individuals to invest sustained effort in acquiring complex behavioural repertoires. The practical implication for educators is straightforward: activating students' genuine desire to communicate — through peer interaction, professional role-play, and authentic communication tasks — should precede direct skill instruction, not follow it.

Second, communicative control is a psychologically independent construct. Its absence of significant correlation with all motivational, social-experience, and environmental variables suggests that it is governed by mechanisms distinct from those that build technique — likely related to executive-function capacity and stable trait-level self-monitoring tendencies, as theorised by Snyder [4]. This has a clear practical consequence: the motivation-focused interventions that improve communication technique will not, by themselves, improve communicative control. Separate training in self-regulation — structured reflective practice, metacognitive coaching, or mindfulness-based communication exercises — appears necessary.

The discipline-based differences in communicative control are consistent with a professional-socialisation explanation: programmes that routinely require students to persuade, negotiate, and manage impressions (Economics) develop higher communicative control as a by-product of their normal academic demands. This finding argues for discipline-specific communication development rather than generic cross-programme courses.

The decline in self-rated emotional-volitional characteristics from Year 1–2 to Year 4 is best interpreted as increasing realism and self-critical awareness rather than genuine regression — a trajectory analogous to the calibration effect described by Kruger and Dunning [7]. Motivational orientation, by contrast, remains stable across all years, which is an encouraging finding for educators.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates empirically that communication technique and communicative control, while both components of communicative ability, develop through different psychological pathways. Technique is driven primarily by motivational orientation and supported by social experience and a positive academic environment. Communicative control is independent of these factors and requires dedicated self-regulation training. Effective communication development in higher education therefore calls for a two-track approach, and for programmes that are sensitive to disciplinary context. Future research should test this model longitudinally and with experimental intervention designs.

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