

TEACHING FUTURE PROFESSIONALS TO OVERCOME NERVOUSNESS DURING PUBLIC SPEAKING

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Abstract. *The article touches upon the results of the study of the methods of teaching the future professionals to overcome public speaking fear. The reasons of public speaking fear have been analysed.*

The concrete steps of overcoming the fear of public speaking on the grounds of the principles and rules of successful individual's activity of speaking on a subject to a group of people have been analysed taking into consideration the aspects of the special organised training aimed at the intellectual and psychological readiness for public speaking of the future professionals

The psychological peculiarities of the usage of the author's programme on psychological readiness for public speaking (programme) based on the problem-learning training in the conditions of the higher educational establishment, which directly influences the level of the professional communicative competence of the future professionals, have been presented. The programme has been worked out taking into our consideration the aspects of public speaking overcoming fear is a common form of anxiety.

The results of the empirical investigation of the author's programme on forming and developing psychological readiness of the future professionals have been revealed.

The practical recommendations on the forming process of the professional psychological readiness as the component of professional competence of the future professionals for public speaking have been suggested.

Keywords: *future professionals, overcoming nervousness, psychological readiness, public speaking, teaching methods, training programme.*

INTRODUCTION

Topicality of research. The process of Ukraine's gradual integration into the European and international organisations determines the high-quality communication training for future professionals, including their abilities to speak at public up-to-the level.

Nowadays it is of vital importance to study the peculiarities of the special-organised training of future officers who have to be well-trained, with a deep knowledge of languages, and it requires a qualitatively new level of teaching both basic and specialised disciplines, and ensuring intellectual and psychological readiness for public speaking.

The study of the peculiarities of the formation and development of psychological readiness for public speaking, the search for resources for the formation and development of officers' communication skills and habits are

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important in view of the need to ensure their successful and effective communication in the performance of professional duties, including their public speaking. The psychological features of the formation and development of psychological readiness for public speaking require a special in-depth study, because the appropriate level of development of public speaking abilities and the proper level of psychological readiness ensure the formation of cadets' professional communicative competence - the abilities to communicate in public fluently while performing the official tasks including in the conditions of the increased psychological stresses as well.

The role of the teacher in the process of the very formation and development of psychological readiness for public speaking is important as for the creation of the favourable conditions for the development of communicative skills and habits of the future professionals.

At the present time there is a discrepancy between: 1) the urgent need of the Ukrainian society for professionally competent military and the real level of development of their communication skills and habits, including the abilities to overcome nervousness during public speaking; 2) the general social significance of the problem and 3) its insufficient development in psychological science. All these factors have determined the choice of the research topic 'Teaching Future Professionals to Overcome Nervousness during Public Speaking'.

That is why **the purpose of the article** is to work out the programme on forming and developing psychological readiness of the future professionals for overcoming nervousness during public speaking and verified its effectiveness empirically.

The study concept is the following: the formation and development of psychological readiness of the future professionals for overcoming nervousness during public speaking becomes effective when it is carried out systematically at all the stages of the cadets' professionalisation in the conditions of higher educational establishment on the basis of the usage of the author's programme. The programme is based on the psychological regularities of training psychological mechanisms, socio-psychological determinants of group influence on the learning quality by an individual and aspects of socio-psychological support for the study group management.

In the study we have taken into our consideration the fact that the problem-solving programme components, the main function of which are to maximise the development of cadets' mental, intellectual and creative abilities (Chepeleva, 2009), are interconnected.

The psychological and pedagogical prerequisites for the use of situationality in the programme ensure the effective process of developing cadets' abilities to overcome nervousness before public speaking and give them the opportunity to analyse the main directions in defining the concept

of a particular speech situation and present a system of logically consistent problem situations (tasks).

It is necessary to take into account the conceptual grounds of psychological support of teachers' pedagogical activities, which involves the usage of the programme.

Research period and the methods. The study was carried out at Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border guard Service of Ukraine in the period of September 2022 up to June 2024 in the real conditions of the military higher educational establishment on the basis of the general scientific methods of theoretical level and methods of the empirical research.

Particularly the sociometric method has allowed us to determine the psychological features and indicators of the cadets' psychological readiness while forming their level of professional competence.

Research hypothesis. The abilities to regulate emotional state and overcome nervousness during public speaking is guaranteed by the usage of the programme. In accordance with the study purpose and research hypothesis, the objectives of the investigation are the following:

1. To analyse the meanings of the terms "glossophobia" or "fear of public speaking"; "public speaking nervousness"

2. To study the causes of public speaking fear and determine the mechanisms of overcoming nervousness during public speaking.

3. To develop and verify the special programme on forming and developing the cadets' psychological readiness for overcoming nervousness during public speaking taking into consideration the features and indicators of psychological readiness while forming their necessary level of professional competence.

4. To develop the practical recommendations on the usage of the programme in the conditions of the higher military educational establishment.

INVESTIGATION RESULTS

INTRODUCTION. Public speaking as a complex activity is the subject of research by the representatives of many sciences: philosophy, history, psychology, pedagogy, sociology of linguistics and others. As a certain work of art, it affects both the intellect and the feelings of a person. Undoubtedly, everyone who prepares for a public speech (a politician, an organisation leader, an officer, a student or a cadet before taking the floor) asks himself or herself the question: "How can I overcome the fear of public speaking?"

Scientific sources analysis. The results of the scientific sources analysis testify about the fact that a number of scientists dedicated their studies to various aspects of the theoretical grounds of the speech

development in general, and the criteria for overcoming nervousness during public speaking in particular. Some key points of the analysis are revealed below.

What causes public speaking fear?

People who fear public speaking may have a real fear of being embarrassed or rejected. Glossophobia or fear of public speaking may relate to one's prior experiences. The person who has a bad experience during public speaking may fear a repeat of that prior experience when attempting to speak again (Black, 2018, 2019).

In order to understand the nature of the causes of public speaking fear we have pay our attention to the aspects of so-called struggle with public-speaking anxiety. Particularly, when the people get up to speak they try to anearly initially avoid making eye contact with members of the audience and it actually makes the speakers even more nervous while avoiding direct eye contact with the audience speaking anxiety appears (Sarah Gershman, 2019).

Sarah Gershman investigates the reasons of public speaking fear in the historical paradigm going way back to the prehistoric times, when humans perceived eyes watching people as an existential threat. Those eyes were likely predators. People were literally terrified of being eaten alive. In response to that prehistoric reality, the amygdala of the brain that affects how people feel emotions, especially fear and pleasure, kicked into full gear, helps people respond to danger. Public-speaking anxiety is in our DNA that carries genetic information. The people experience public speaking as an attack and physiologically register an audience as a threatening predator and mount a comparable response (Sarah Gershman, 2019).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary the term “amygdala” means one of two parts of the brain that affect how people feel emotions, especially fear and pleasure (McIntosh, 2024). Amygdala is part of limbic system, which is the center of emotions, behavior, and memory. It is also a contributor to the control of reactions to stress, attention, sexual instincts (Abuhasan et al., 2023) and threat processing (Moses, 2024). The amygdala is commonly thought to form the core of a neural system for processing fearful and threatening stimuli (Baxter & Croxson, 2012) and it is part of our brain that helps us respond to danger. Nervousness or anxiety in certain situations is normal, and public speaking is no exception (Sawchuk, 2017).

Psychological readiness and public speaking fear

Psychological readiness is about being in the right frame of mind to undertake a new activity, in our case, while taking the floor.

Psychological readiness covers both the mental and emotional factors of the individual, involving a combination of mental strength, emotional stability, confidence and adaptability (Sawchuk, 2017).

Psychological readiness is considered in the context of professional knowledge, developed skills and habits and personality traits: attitudes, beliefs, skills, interests, professional memory, thinking, attention, professional orientation of thought, performance, emotional and moral potential (Uhryn, 2020). It is the result of the proper professional training on overcoming nervousness. It serves as a regulator of success of professional activities.

Gallego, A., McHugh, L., Villatte, M., & Lappalainen, R. (2020) have proved that self-reported public speaking anxiety correlates significantly with a number of aspects of psychological flexibility (i.e. openness to experiences, self-perspective skills, and cognitive fusion).

Sawchuk (2017) points out that fear of public speaking is a common form of anxiety and an individual can overcome his/her fear with proper preparation and persistence.

In this regard, let us briefly characterise the psychological and pedagogical prerequisites for the use of situationality based on the skills-based approach in the process of developing cadets' abilities to overcome nervousness before public speaking while using the programme.

Padraic Gibson (2022), characterising the types of speakers, uses Mark Twain's quotation "There are two kinds of speakers in the world. Those who are nervous, and those who are liars." In his study he proves that glossophobia, or speech anxiety, is one of the most common fears. He finds fear to be the anticipation of pain; differentiates real fear and imagined fear, paying our attention to the fact that feeling nervous and anxious before public speaking is totally normal.

EMPIRICAL STUDY

To verify the validity of our findings and effectiveness of the programme for the formation and development of psychological readiness, we conducted an experimental study of the level of psychological readiness of future professionals to overcome nervousness before public speaking.

As a criterion, we have chosen the number of pauses during a five-minute speech by a cadet in front of the study group.

According to the study results and the results of our observations, for this age group (the study group members from 18 to 21 years old), the average number of the pauses during such type of public speech is approximately 2-3 ones per person.

Having analysed this category, we have defined the following levels of psychological readiness: 1) level A - the high level (no more than 2 short-term pauses in the cadet's speech); 2) level B - the sufficient level (3-4 short-term pauses, the total time of the pauses is not more than one minute); 3) level C - the medium level (3-4 short-term pauses, the pauses are long, the total time of pauses is not more than two minutes); 4) level D - the below

medium level (pauses are long and short, the combination of long and short pauses are typical; the total duration of pauses - up to three minutes); 5) level E – the law level (in this case the person is keeping silence most of the time).

This methodology has been used for studying the psychological readiness of the cadets in four training groups with a total number of 112 people. The results of the first study phase analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Results of comparative analysis of the cadets' psychological readiness for public speaking at the beginning of the study
(Source: compiled by the author)

Groups	Levels of psychological readiness										Total
	A		B		C		D		E		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Group 1	1	3,13	5	15,63	18	56,25	5	15,63	3	9,38	32
Group 2	2	6,90	4	13,79	20	68,97	2	6,90	1	3,45	29
Group 3	2	8,00	3	12,00	16	64,00	3	12,00	1	4,00	25
Group 4	0	0,00	3	11,54	20	76,92	2	7,69	1	3,85	26
Total	5	4,46	15	13,39	74	66,07	12	10,71	6	5,36	112

The psycho-pedagogical conditions for the formation and development the cadets' psychological readiness for public speaking with the help of the author's programme have been determined and experimentally verified during special training based on the problem-solving tasks.

While using the programme a teacher has to remember that the systematic increasing in complexity of the problem-solving tasks demands taking into his/her account the individual characteristics and capabilities of the group members, as well as the psychological patterns of cadets' communicative activities in a particular problem-solving learning situation (Smulson, 2003).

The influence of various intellectual and motivational factors for transforming a specified external problem into a problem in a psychological sense (Smulson, 2019) by a cadet.

Practice makes perfect.

Moreover it is important to motivate (Safin, 1995) cadets to speak without a fear.

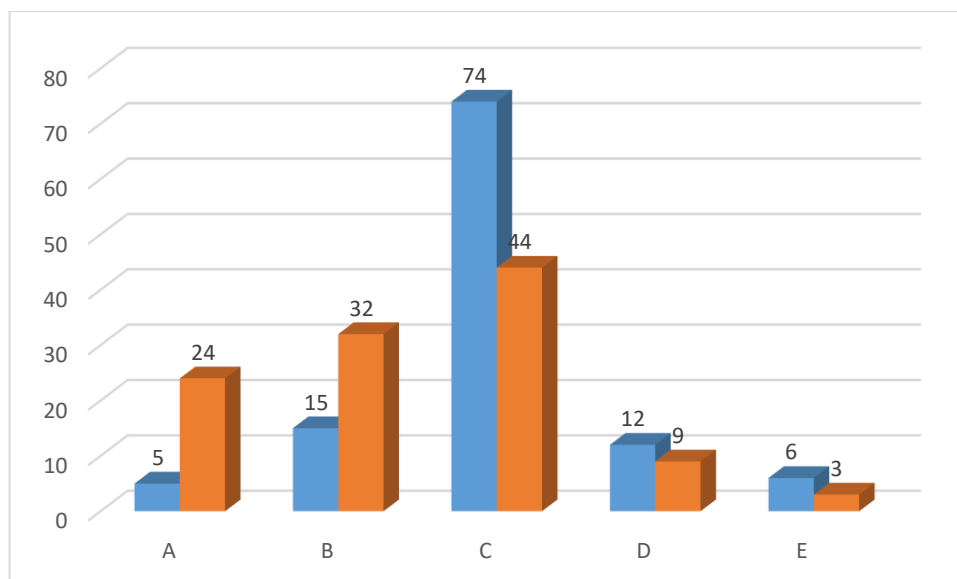
After having used the programme, at the end of our investigation we conducted the experimental study. The results of the second phase of the study according to the categories are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Results of comparative analysis of the cadets' psychological readiness for public speaking at the end of the study

(Source: compiled by the author)

Groups	Levels of psychological readiness										Total number
	A		B		C		D		E		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Group 1	7	21,88	10	31,25	10	31,25	3	9,38	2	6,25	32
Group 2	6	20,69	8	27,59	12	41,38	3	10,34	0	0,00	29
Group 3	5	20,00	7	28,00	11	44,00	2	8,00	0	0,00	25
Group 4	6	23,08	7	26,92	11	42,31	1	3,85	1	3,85	26
Total	24	21,43	32	28,57	44	39,29	9	8,04	3	2,68	112

As a result of the purposeful activities aimed at the cadets' motivation to be ready to take the floor during the process of their involvement into the problem-solving situations the positive changes of the levels of cadets' psychological readiness took place which are presented in Figure 1.



(blue colour – at the beginning of the study; orange colour- at the end of the study)

Figure 1 Results as for the levels of the cadets' psychological readiness for public speaking at the beginning and at the end of the study

(Source: compiled by the author)

We have used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion λ to varify the statistical significance of the cadets' psychological readiness changes for public speaking with the help of the author's programme. This criterion is designed to compare two distributions: the empirical distribution of a sign with the theoretical (uniform evaluation criterion or normal) distribution or two empirical distributions. The criterion gives us the opportunity to find the point at which the sum of the accumulated differences between the two distributions is the largest and also it allows to evaluate the reliability of this difference in values.

During the calculation procedure, first of all, the frequencies have been compared by the first level, then changes – by the sum of the first and second levels and after that – by the sum of the first, second and third levels, etc. Thus, the frequencies collected at the certain level are compared every time.

If the differences between two distributions are significant, then at some point the difference in accumulated frequencies will reach a critical value, and then the differences can be considered reliable. This difference is included in the criterion λ formula. The larger the empirical value λ , the more significant the discrepancies.

If $\lambda_{emn} \geq 1,36$, the differences between the distributions are significant with the reliability is not less than 95% (Valchuk, 2013).

We would like to emphasise that we met all the limitations of this criterion, particularly: the sufficient sample size, ordered levels of the sign, and the sufficient number of the levels sign.

To calculate the empirical value of the criterion λ , we used EXCEL software, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Calculation table for calculating the empirical value of the criterion λ

(Source: compiled by the author)

Levels	Frequencies				Frequencies sum		<i>d</i>
	$n_i^{(1)}$	$n_i^{(2)}$	$f_{emn}^{(1)}$	$f_{emn}^{(2)}$	f_1^*	f_2^*	
A	5	24	0,0446	0,2143	0,0446	0,2143	0,1696
B	15	32	0,1339	0,2857	0,1786	0,5000	0,3214
C	74	44	0,6607	0,3929	0,8393	0,8929	0,0536

D	12	9	0,1071	0,0804	0,9464	0,9732	0,0268
E	6	3	0,0536	0,0268	1,0000	1,0000	0,0000

We used the following formula to calculate the empirical value of the

criterion: $\lambda_{emn} = d_{\max} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{n_1 \cdot n_2}{n_1 + n_2}}$, (Valchuk, 2013: 49).

The largest difference d_{\max} . turned out to be 0.3214, so the empirical value of the criterion $\lambda_{emn} = d_{\max} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{n_1 \cdot n_2}{n_1 + n_2}} = 0,3214 \cdot \sqrt{\frac{112 \cdot 112}{112 + 112}} = 2,4054$.

As the empirical value of the criterion was greater than the critical value $\lambda_{emn} \geq 1,36$, the differences between the distributions are reliable with the reliability of at least 95%, and if the value obtained is less, there is no reason to assert that the groups differ in terms of the level

Thus, the study results have testified about the effectiveness of the programme on forming and developing psychological readiness of the future professionals for overcoming nervousness during public speaking in the conditions of the higher military educational establishment.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical and experimental study results of the psychological aspects of the teaching future professionals to overcome nervousness during public speaking have given us the opportunity to make the following conclusion:

1. The meanings of the terms “glossophobia” or “fear of public speaking”; “public speaking nervousness” have been analysed. We can call it nervousness, excitement in front of an audience, or public speaking shyness, but the essence of the term remains the same: fear or anxiety associated with interacting in public. To a certain extent, anxiety is cognitive in nature, i.e. an individual mentally anticipates how nervous he/she will be.

2. According to scientists, excitement during public speaking is a fairly normal phenomenon, and in fact, a little excitement helps a person to demonstrate all their capabilities, because if a person indifferent to his/her speech, this person will probably not deliver it in the best way.

Public speaking anxiety refers to the anxiety that an individual experiences when giving a speech or preparing to speak in front of others.

3. The causes of public speaking fear and the mechanisms of its overcoming have been investigated taking into consideration the mental and emotional factors of the individual, involving a combination of mental strength, emotional stability, confidence and adaptability.

4. Psychological readiness is a qualitative criterion of an individual’s self-regulation at the processes different levels: physiological, psychological, and social ones. Psychological readiness for overcoming nervousness during

public speaking is the essential part of the professional competence of the future professionals.

5. The systematic study of the psychological peculiarities of the formation and development of professional psychological readiness of future professionals has allowed the author: 1) to reach a new level of the theoretical understanding of the process of regulating cadets' emotional states and 2) to develop a programme on forming and developing cadet's psychological readiness for overcoming nervousness during public speaking.

6. The programme is a complex of the targeted teacher's influence on the cadets' motivational, need, emotional and cognitive spheres based on the leading activity and taking into account their individual psychological characteristics. It is an essential component of their professional training in the conditions of military higher educational establishment.

7. The proposed programme focuses on such psychological and pedagogical aspects of its implementation as the interaction of the teacher and cadets in the communicative learning environment, socio-psychological determinants of group influence on the development of cadets' ability to regulate their emotional state, psychological and methodological conditions for creating professionally oriented problem situations.

8 The data of the theoretical and methodological analysis have been verified experimentally. The results of the study suggest that the cadets' psychological readiness to overcome nervous states before public speaking is formed and developed more effectively when using the developed psychological and pedagogical programme.

9. The study does not claim to cover all the theoretical and methodological aspects of teaching future professionals to overcome nervousness during public speaking.

10. One of the main vectors for the further research in this area, in our opinion, is the development of a structural and functional model for managing training groups during training sessions on the formation of psychological readiness of future specialists to overcome nervousness before public speaking.

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