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# FUNCTIONAL AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN MILITARY DISCOURSE

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**Annotation**

This article analyzes the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication in military settings, where strict hierarchical and legal norms require clarity, precision, and disciplined interaction. Verbal forms such as orders, instructions, and reports ensure accurate information transfer, while nonverbal signals, including gestures, posture, facial expressions, and uniform elements, remain crucial in combat and restricted-communication environments. The study outlines key principles for effective military communication, including maintaining appropriate formality, managing jargon and slang, and avoiding profanity.

**Key words**

military communication, verbal communication, military discourse, body language, military uniform, linguistic pragmatics

## INTRODUCTION

Communication between military personnel, as well as their interaction with civilians, is conducted within strictly regulated legal and normative frameworks and is based on formal and goal-oriented communicative practices. The effectiveness of such communication largely depends on the coordinated use of two main components: verbal (spoken) and nonverbal (unspoken) signs. Modern research in military linguistics and professional communication demonstrates that the systematic integration of these components significantly increases the accuracy, speed, and pragmatic effectiveness of information exchange. This, in turn, strengthens the hierarchical stability of military management, reinforces discipline, and simplifies communication processes. In emergency situations, combat conditions, or when radio communication is limited, nonverbal signals become especially important and serve as a key method of delivering urgent messages. The following sections analyze the functional features of verbal and nonverbal means used in military settings.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Verbal communication refers to the use of linguistically organized words to convey meaning within a community that shares the same language system. Language itself is understood as "a system of symbols, letters, or words with arbitrary meanings, regulated by rules and used for communication" (Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth, & Harter, 2003, p. 74). Verbal communication is the primary means through which language is realized and expressed. As a social phenomenon, language is shaped by cultural norms and follows certain structural rules that are mutually recognized and understood by members of the same linguistic group. Moreover, verbal communication is not confined solely to spoken interaction; it encompasses both oral and written forms of expression. It may take place through numerous channels such as face-to-face conversations, group discussions, counselling sessions, interviews, telephone calls, teleconferencing, mass media broadcasts, memos, letters, reports, notes, and email correspondence, among others (The Business Communication, 2005). Verbal communication plays a central role in all areas of human activity, including the communicative system of military service. Human speech not only transmits information but also regulates social relations, coordinates cooperation, facilitates the exchange of experience, and expresses emotional states. As an essential part of human development, language becomes real through speech, making verbal communication the main means of conveying meaning, defining formal standards, and distributing communicative functions among military personnel.

Verbal speech has a wide functional range, including conversation, dialogue, formal speech, question answer exchanges, reprimands, congratulations, advice, discussions, announcements, and many other forms. Each form performs a specific communicative function giving commands, explaining actions, providing information, expressing emotions, or coordinating activity. These functions become even more important in military communication, where clarity, discipline, and precision are mandatory.

Communication always takes place within a specific context and involves individuals who either transmit or receive messages. In verbal interaction, the ability to speak or write appropriately is essential, as it requires choosing words that fit the expectations and norms of the situation. Verderber and Verderber (2005, p. 62) describe appropriate speaking as the selection of linguistic forms and symbols that match the listener's needs, interests, level of knowledge, and attitudes while avoiding language that may distance or confuse them. Effective verbal communication therefore requires awareness of the receiver's characteristics and the situational demands shaping the communicative event.

## METHODS AND RESULTS

In military settings, this principle becomes even more crucial because every communicative act whether spoken or written affects discipline, coordination, command execution, and overall operational effectiveness. Clear, context-sensitive verbal behaviour is not only a matter of politeness, but a core component of military professionalism and command structure. Verderber and Verderber's (2005, p. 62) guidelines for appropriate verbal communication can be directly applied to military speech as follows:

**1. Align formality with the communicative situation**

The level of formality must reflect the military hierarchy and the operational environment. Military communication generally demands a high degree of formality, especially when addressing superiors, issuing orders, submitting reports, or interacting in official settings. Formality shapes the choice of vocabulary, tone, and the structure of messages. While communication among peers or in non-operational settings may be more relaxed, military personnel are still expected to maintain respect, discipline, and clarity, avoiding overly casual expressions that may undermine authority or precision.

**2. Regulate the use of jargon and slang**

Jargon refers to specialized military terminology (e.g., "AO," "SITREP," "ROE"), while slang includes informal expressions used within specific groups. Although such terms facilitate rapid communication among trained personnel, excessive or inappropriate use outside the military community may hinder understanding and disrupt communication with civilians, new recruits, or allied units unfamiliar with specific terminology. In formal military contexts briefings, reports, and inter-agency communication jargon must be used accurately and, when necessary, clarified. Slang should be avoided entirely in all formal military interactions, as it can reduce clarity, professionalism, and cross-unit interoperability.

**3. Avoid profanity and vulgar expressions**

Profanity and vulgarity have become increasingly common in everyday social communication, but their use in military interaction can create negative impressions and signal a lack of discipline, emotional control, or professionalism qualities that are essential in the armed forces. Expressions such as "damn," "crazy," or more explicit forms of swearing may be tolerated informally but undermine respect, morale, and the disciplined character expected of military personnel. Avoiding such language is essential to maintaining authority, fostering mutual respect, and upholding the ethical standards of military service.

The core of military discourse consists of commands, instructions, oral reports, official statements, and speech units based on specific military terminology. Such speech is short, clear, unemotional, and requires immediate execution. For example, the command "Group, stop!" is a direct speech act with a strict intonation pattern. Verbal interaction in the army always follows hierarchical norms; therefore, oral reports have their own structure, including the order of information, the form of address, and identification of the responsible person.

Verbal communication, as a linguistically structured and culturally regulated system of expressing meaning, plays a central role in maintaining effective interaction across all areas of human activity, including military service. In the armed forces, speech serves not only to transmit information but also to structure social relations, coordinate joint actions, and support emotional and psychological stability. Because military communication operates within strict hierarchical and operational constraints, verbal behaviour must be precise, context-appropriate, and aligned with established norms.

**CONCLUSION**

The analysis demonstrates that effective military communication depends on the ability to select linguistic forms that correspond to the listener's status, needs, and level of understanding. Adherence to principles such as maintaining necessary formality, regulating the use of jargon and slang, and avoiding profanity ensures professionalism, clarity, and respect within the chain of command. Furthermore, the structured nature of military discourse evident in the form of commands, instructions, and standardized reports reinforces discipline and supports the accurate execution of orders.

Overall, verbal communication in military settings is a crucial component of operational effectiveness. When used appropriately, it strengthens coordination, reduces misunderstandings, and contributes to the orderly functioning of military units. For this reason, communicative competence grounded in linguistic accuracy, situational awareness, and respect for military norms must be regarded as an essential element of military professionalism and leadership.

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