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Communicative States in Different Communication Situations (Using the Example of Defectology and Psychology Students)

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Abstract

This study addresses the limited exploration of communicative states both generally and in specific interactional contexts. The purpose of the study is to investigate communicative states in various communication situations. The objectives of the study are to identify typical mental states that accompany and arise in various communication situations; to consider their dynamics; to determine their nomenclature. A novel questionnaire was administered to 149 participants aged 20–25, eliciting mental state reports for specific communicative scenarios. The dynamics of these states were analyzed from the beginning to the end of the communicative process. Frequency and content analyses identified the most frequently reported states for each situation. The research provides an initial examination of mental states determined by diverse communication situations and accompanying the communication process. Results indicated that communicative states differ in modality and intensity, contingent upon the specifics of the situation. Stressful and demanding situations requiring heightened engagement elicited a broader range of these states. Furthermore, the dynamics of communicative states were influenced by the communication format. In complex situations, the modality shifted from negative to positive midway through and at the conclusion of the interaction, with a concurrent decrease in intensity. These findings lay a foundation for further research into communicative states, potentially leading to the identification of a new, independent class of mental states – “states of communication,” which constitutes the study’s novelty. The findings have practical applications in educational program development, career guidance, and the cultivation of professional competencies.

Keywords: mental states, communicative states, communication states, communication situations.

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Introduction

According to the classics of Russian psychology, communication is the process of information exchange and interpersonal interaction, manifesting across various contexts and conditions (e. g., lectures, mass communication) (Leontiev, 1997). It is considered both an integral part of any activity and a standalone form of activity (Leontiev, 1997). A key feature of communication is how individuals build relationships with others. Communication facilitates understanding of reality, shapes emotional responses to this reality and the behaviors within it, enables knowledge and experience exchange, and is essential for solving both professional and personal challenges.

The success and effectiveness of communication depend on multiple factors. Some researchers argue that individuals can be trained to develop qualities that enable them to understand others' mental states (Bodalev, 1995). Communication shapes personality since it involves emotional exchanges, the sharing of moods and mental states, and the unfolding of individual potential and traits. Effective communication requires not only empathy and attentiveness to others but also cognitive and emotional intelligence (Bodalev, 1995). Communicators must anticipate how their statements will affect the recipient's mental state to achieve successful interaction (Dragoni et al., 2002).

Although research on communicative states exists, it is usually limited to specific contexts. Studies have examined, for instance, interactions with robots (Shimrova, 2020), professional communication among lawyers, operators, and diplomats (Bubnova, 2021; Serbinovskaya et al., 2020), leader – team dynamics (Robinson, 2020), and educational settings (Buravleva, 2015). These works demonstrate that communicative states significantly affect the effectiveness of interaction. Emotional states also influence the credibility of information transmitted during communication (Safina, 2016). However, what remains insufficiently addressed is a systematic analysis of communicative states across diverse communication situations and the ways in which their dynamics unfold during the interaction. The gap lies in the lack of integrative studies that compare different formats of communication (online, group, interpersonal, eco-communication, and self-communication) to identify both typical and unique states as well as their temporal evolution.

Against this background, the present study aims to identify and classify typical communicative states arising in different communication situations and to examine their dynamics throughout the course of interaction. We argue that communicative states can be understood as a distinct class of mental states, shaped by the situational characteristics of communication, which have not been systematically explored in earlier research. The novelty of this work lies in approaching communicative states as context-dependent psychological phenomena with both practical and theoretical significance.

The article is structured as follows: first, we provide a brief review of the relevant literature on communicative and mental states in the context of communication. Second, we present the research design, including participants, instruments, and methods of analysis. Third, we report and interpret the findings across different communication situations. Finally, we summarize the main conclusions, discuss implications for professional training and practice, and outline directions for future research.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate communicative states in various communication situations. The objectives of the study are to identify typical mental states that accompany and arise in various communication situations; to consider their dynamics; to determine their nomenclature.

Literature review

Emotional responses and mental states arising during communication can either strengthen, disrupt, or reorganize relationships. The nature of these experiences reflects the communicator's level of personal development (Bodalev, 1995). While communication influences the mental states of participants, these states also affect perception, interaction accuracy, and interpersonal judgments (Verderber & Verderber, 2003). Emotional states during communication are influenced by various factors, including communication style, behavioral patterns, personality traits, and expectations (Bodalev, 1995).

Although there are focused studies on communicative states, they mostly examine specific contexts. Research has explored communicative states in interactions with robots (Shimrova, 2020), professional communication among lawyers, operators, and public diplomats (Bubnova, 2021; Serbinovskaya et al., 2020), leader-team dynamics (Robinson, 2020), and educational settings (Buravleva, 2015). These studies highlight how communicative states influence the effectiveness of interactions in different situations.

This context underscores the relevance of researching the specific characteristics and classifications of mental states that accompany communication, particularly under varying conditions and situations.

Methodology

The study involved 149 senior students: 111 from special education programs and 38 psychology majors. Participants completed a custom-designed questionnaire focused on the mental states they experienced and how these evolved in various communication situations. Responses were analyzed using content analysis and frequency analysis.

For content analysis, the tool webscript.ru was used, which enables text analysis, including word frequency counting. The platform excludes one- and two-letter words and treats words with different cases or fonts as distinct entries (e.g., “joy” and “Joy” are counted separately). Additionally, spelling errors were not corrected automatically, so manual adjustments were made to consolidate similar semantic units. Words unrelated to mental states were excluded from the dataset.

To refine the analysis, synonymous terms were grouped together based on the Ozhegov and Dahl dictionaries. For example:

- Interest and Curiosity were grouped under “Interest”;
- Joy and Happiness were combined as “Joy”.

Only frequently mentioned mental states were included in the final analysis, while isolated or unique responses were excluded.

Results

A preliminary survey identified several communication scenarios, which were grouped into the following categories:

1. Online Communication: Interactions in internet chats, virtual conferences, and email correspondence;
2. Eco-Communication: Interaction with nature and animals;
3. One-on-One Communication (*Human – Human*): Communication with sick individuals, children, the elderly, or people with disabilities;
4. Group Communication (*Human – Group*): Public speaking and group decision-making processes;
5. Self-Communication: Internal dialogue and self-reflection.

The study paid special attention to structured communication formats, analyzing how mental states evolved from the beginning to the middle and the end of an interaction. Structured scenarios included online communication and group interactions.

Example: Online Communication Dynamics

Online communication presents unique characteristics, such as the absence of face-to-face interaction. While this can offer a certain level of freedom in expression, it often limits emotional exchange.

Table 1. Communicative States in Online Chat Interactions.

Communicative State	Beginning	Middle	End
Calmness / Serenity / Tranquility	0.18	0.22	0.21
Joy / Cheerfulness	0.13	0.11	0.13
Interest / Curiosity	0.28	0.16	—
Satisfaction / Peacefulness	—	—	0.15

Note: The numerical values represent the frequency of each state, calculated as the number of identical or synonymous responses divided by the total number of respondents.

In the context of communication in online chats (Table 1), respondents more often experience positive states of high and medium levels of mental activity. The beginning and middle of the communication are accompanied by interest, calmness, and joy. By the end of the conversation, interest is no longer noted, but a state of satisfaction and serenity arises.

Let us now consider communication in the context of a network conference (Table 2). A network conference, like a standard in-person conference, involves interaction among a large group of people (sometimes unfamiliar or barely acquainted), discussion of current issues, sharing of research results, professional experience, and practical developments. However, unlike in-person formats, a network conference allows some participants to have their cameras turned off, which makes it difficult to receive feedback in the form of emotional responses from participants.

Table 2. Communicative States in Network Conference Communication.

Communicative State	Beginning	Middle	End
Calmness / Serenity / Tranquility	—	0.19	0.19
Interest / Curiosity	0.11	0.19	—
Anxiety / Nervousness / Worry	0.37	0.10	—
Satisfaction / Peacefulness	—	—	0.16
Fatigue / Tiredness	—	—	0.14
Focus / Concentration / Engagement	—	0.11	—

Note: see above for explanation.

Communication in a network conference is accompanied by a broader range of mental states. At the beginning of the network interaction, most participants experience anxiety and nervousness, though some also feel interest. By the middle of the conference, anxiety for many is replaced by a state of calmness and

serenity, and a greater number of respondents note interest, focus, and engagement. The end of the conference is accompanied by feelings of satisfaction, calmness, and fatigue.

It is worth noting that in a network conference, both positive states of high and medium levels of mental activity and negative states of high and low levels of activity are observed.

Let us analyze communication via email (Table 3). The specificity of this type of interaction lies in the fact that feedback is received with a time delay, allowing participants to repeatedly edit the text and refine its content. Individuals can express their thoughts and feelings only through sentence structure, punctuation, and the use of expressive marks. Additionally, email correspondence often has a business-like, formal nature, meaning the communication is limited to the exchange of specific information.

Table 3. Communicative States in Email Communication.

Communicative State	Beginning	Middle	End
Calmness / Serenity / Tranquility	0.16	0.25	0.32
Interest / Curiosity	0.11	—	—
Indifference / Apathy	0.15	0.15	0.15
Anxiety / Nervousness / Worry	0.12	—	—

Note: see above for explanation.

Throughout the entire timeline of email communication (beginning – middle – end), respondents experience positive states of a medium level of mental activity (calmness, serenity) and negative states of a medium level of activity (indifference, apathy). Only at the beginning of the correspondence do some respondents report interest (positive state of medium activity) and anxiety, nervousness (negative state of high activity).

In “person-to-group” communication scenarios, we include group decision-making and public speaking. These situations differ significantly: in the first case, there is direct contact among all group members aimed at problem-solving and decision-making, while in the second, the interaction is primarily between the speaker and the audience, with minimal interaction within the target group.

Table 4. Communicative States in Group Decision-Making.

Communicative State	Beginning	Middle	End
Calmness / Serenity / Tranquility	—	—	0.23
Anxiety / Nervousness / Worry	0.13	—	—
Joy / Cheerfulness	—	—	0.14
Interest / Curiosity	0.21	0.13	—

Communicative State	Beginning	Middle	End
Focus / Concentration / Engagement	0.14	0.19	—
Satisfaction / Peacefulness	—	—	0.21
Fatigue / Tiredness	—	—	0.10

Note: see above for explanation.

At the beginning of communication in a group decision-making scenario, respondents report interest, focus, and engagement, with some also experiencing anxiety and nervousness. Interest and engagement persist in the middle stage of the communication process. The conversation concludes with both positive and negative states of varying levels of mental activity (calmness, serenity, joy, satisfaction, peacefulness, fatigue, and tiredness).

It is notable that high-intensity states occur more frequently at the beginning and end of the decision-making process, while the middle stage is mainly characterized by positive states of medium intensity.

In a public speaking scenario (Table 5), the pattern is different, despite involving a wide audience of interested participants.

Table 5. Communicative States in Public Speaking.

Communicative State	Beginning	Middle	End
Fear / Fright	0.34	—	—
Anxiety / Nervousness / Worry	0.64	0.17	—
Joy / Cheerfulness	—	—	0.21
Tension / Stress	0.13	—	—
Calmness / Serenity / Tranquility	—	0.13	0.19
Satisfaction / Peacefulness	—	—	0.17
Relief	—	—	0.13
Fatigue / Tiredness	—	—	0.12
Focus / Concentration / Engagement	—	0.11	—

Note: see above for explanation.

The beginning of public speaking is accompanied by negative states of high mental activity, such as anxiety and nervousness (reported by more than half of respondents), as well as fear and tension. By the middle of the speech, anxiety persists for some respondents but shifts for others to states of calmness, serenity, or focus and engagement.

The end of public speaking is marked by positive states of varying levels of mental activity (joy, calmness, peacefulness, relief) as well as fatigue and tiredness.

Let us now consider situations where communication can be defined as less regulated, as the process and content often involve many influencing variables (the personalities of those communicating, their personal attitudes toward each other, motivation, goals, conditions, and the overall context of the interaction) and lack formal social rules, aside from ethical norms.

- We conditionally include in this category:
- “Person-to-person” communication (Table 6) – such as interacting with a sick person, children, elderly individuals, or people with disabilities;
- “Eco-communication” (Table 7) – communication with nature and animals;
- Communication with oneself (Table 7).

Table 6. Communicative States in “Person-to-Person” Situations.

Communicative State	With a Sick Person	With Children	With Elderly People	With People with Disabilities
Empathy / Compassion	0.29	—	—	0.21
Pity	0.21	—	—	0.17
Sadness / Sorrow	0.19	—	—	0.13
Joy / Cheerfulness	0.11	0.61	0.11	0.13
Anxiety / Nervousness / Worry	0.15	—	—	0.15
Interest / Curiosity	—	0.23	0.19	0.15
Calmness / Serenity / Tranquility	—	0.11	0.28	0.15
Tenderness	—	0.11	—	—
Respect	—	—	0.12	—

Note: see above for explanation.

The mental states experienced during person-to-person communication vary depending on the specific situation.

- Similar emotional states are observed in interactions with both sick people and those with disabilities, as well as in interactions with children and the elderly.
- Communication with sick individuals and people with disabilities often evokes both positive and negative states of high and low mental activity (such as empathy, pity, sadness, joy, and anxiety).

- In interactions with people with disabilities, positive states of medium mental activity (calmness, serenity, and interest) are also frequently noted – this is most typical for specialists like defectologists, suggesting that one’s professional role influences the emotional dynamics of communication.

In contrast:

- Communication with children and the elderly is mainly associated with positive states of high and medium levels of mental activity (joy, interest, and calmness), though the balance of these emotions differs:
- Over half of respondents noted joy during interactions with children;
- During communication with the elderly, only a small portion reported experiencing joy, with a greater emphasis on calmness and serenity.

Other notable findings:

- Tenderness was only reported during communication with children;
- Respect was specifically noted in interactions with the elderly.

Eco-Communication and Communication with Oneself

Let us now analyze the specific emotional states encountered during eco-communication and communication with oneself (Table 7).

Table 7. Communicative States in Eco-Communication and Communication with Oneself.

Communicative State	With Pets	With Nature	With Oneself
Joy / Cheerfulness	0.61	0.22	0.23
Tenderness	0.20	—	—
Calmness / Serenity / Tranquility	0.19	0.50	—
Satisfaction / Peacefulness	0.15	0.27	0.13
Love	0.14	—	—
Happiness	0.10	—	—
Inspiration / Enthusiasm / Engagement	—	0.11	—
Shame	—	—	0.15
Sadness / Sorrow	—	—	0.16
Anxiety / Nervousness / Worry	—	—	0.16

Note: see above for explanation.

Emotional states experienced during communication with pets are predominantly positive, with medium to high emotional intensity.

- Interactions with animals most frequently evoke joy, cheerfulness, and tenderness.

Communication with nature also induces positive states of medium and high levels of mental activity, but the emotional range is narrower.

- The most commonly reported feelings are calmness, serenity, and peacefulness, with some respondents also noting inspiration and enthusiasm.

Communication with oneself – understood as an internal dialogue about past events or recent experiences – evokes a wider spectrum of emotional states.

- The most frequently mentioned emotion is joy.
- This is followed by sadness, anxiety, shame, and satisfaction.

Self-communication is a complex cognitive process involving reflection, self-awareness, subjective evaluation, and attempts at objective self-assessment.

- On one hand, it is deeply introspective, allowing for a broad range of emotional experiences.
- On the other hand, it excludes external influences, leading to unique emotional dynamics with varying levels of intensity and depth.

Discussion

The study of communicative states has a very high level of novelty, as it relates not only to psychological science, but also to sociology and psycholinguistics.

In sociological research, the communication process is studied (its stages, participants, formats, distance, etc.), with only limited attention paid to the emotional sphere, which is nevertheless a necessary condition for both successful and conflictual communication (Serbinovskaya et al., 2020). In psycholinguistics, aggression is explored as a form of communication (Bubnova, 2021; Golovina, 2019), along with theoretical aspects of speech communication, its structure and content (Myskin, 2020), among others. In psychology, communication is examined as a phenomenon connected with interpersonal interaction, where it is not only an exchange of information but also a transformation of personality, values, and attitudes, as well as an exchange of emotions and mutual influence. Mental states in communication are considered only in a limited way (Ageeva & Kostyunina, 2015; Buravleva, 2015; Kuznetsova, 2019). For this reason, discussion proves

difficult, as our research reveals another dimension of mental states in communication. They are closely interconnected and determined by communicative situations, and typical states can be identified for each situation.

Analyzing the results obtained, it can be stated unequivocally that communicative situations determine the specificity of experienced mental states.

Our attempt to group situations into semantic categories (communication in the online environment, eco-communication, “person-to-person” communication, “person-to-group” communication) was aimed at generalizing the results. However, the findings demonstrate variability in the frequency of occurrence of communicative states, even within a single semantic group.

The most frequently reported states are calmness, joy, and interest, but depending on the specific situation and its conditions, states of a different nature may also arise. Situations involving interaction with a large number of people (such as online conferences, public speaking, or group decision-making) give rise, alongside interest, engagement, and calmness, to negative states of high mental activity (anxiety, worry, fear, tension, stress, etc.).

Remote or time-delayed interactions produce a different spectrum of states. For example, communication in online chats is typically informal, with no strict time limits, which ensures a stable dynamic of states throughout the communicative process, with joy, interest, and calmness being the most frequently reported. Studies by several Russian and international scholars have shown that online communication can lead to states of different modalities – both negative (aggression, anger) and positive, which may be considered socially acceptable (Parks & Floyd, 1996; Pervukhina & Churikov, 2021; Shinchuk & Doroshin, 2016). This aspect was also confirmed in our study. However, online communication is manifested in diverse situations, which define the states of the participants. For instance, email correspondence may be both formal and informal. Recently, email has been used primarily for business-style communication and information exchange, which is associated with states such as calmness, serenity, indifference, and detachment throughout the communication continuum (beginning – middle – end). Only at the beginning of correspondence do some participants report anxiety and interest.

When examining “person-to-person” interpersonal communication, we identified the following specifics of communicative states.

Similarities were found in the states experienced during communication with ill individuals, people with disabilities, children, and elderly people. This specificity may be due to the particular closeness of attitudes

toward ill people and those with disabilities. Such communication is accompanied by emotional states of various modalities and intensities (compassion, empathy, sympathy, sadness, joy, anxiety, etc.). Communication with children and elderly people is also accompanied by similar states (joy, interest, calmness, tenderness, and respect). This may be explained by the fact that these groups of people hold special significance in society and culture. The study demonstrates that interpersonal communication is accompanied by a wide spectrum of states, depending on the specific situation. This partially confirms earlier findings (Kuznetsova, 2019; Safina, 2016), which showed that states influence the reliability of statements in interpersonal communication, can be a factor in uncomfortable professional communication, and more.

In a broader sense of communication, not limited to interpersonal and group formats, we analyzed communicative states experienced in eco-communication (with nature and animals) and self-communication.

Eco-communication determines positive states of medium and high levels of mental activity, while communication with oneself may also involve negative states.

The aim of our study was not only to identify and categorize states typical of certain communicative situations but also to demonstrate their dynamics.

By analyzing and comparing the specifics of communicative states – that is, states accompanying and arising in communication – it becomes clear that the typicality (high frequency of occurrence) of states is determined not only by students' educational background and future professional activities but also by the specific communicative situations. Moreover, some states are common across many situations and occur with high frequency, including calmness, joy, interest, and anxiety.

Calmness (peace, serenity) accompanies communication in online interactions (chats, online conferences, email) and eco-communication (interaction with nature and animals stabilizes a person's state).

Joy arises in communication with ill individuals and people with disabilities, children, and elderly people, as well as in eco-communication and self-communication.

Interest accompanies communication in online chats, email correspondence, online conferences, and group decision-making, as well as interaction with children, elderly people, and people with disabilities – situations that activate cognitive processes.

Communication with special categories of individuals with physical and/or mental limitations (ill people, people with disabilities) predominantly gives rise to empathy, sympathy, compassion, and sadness.

Anxiety arises most often during online interactions, in “person-to-group” communication, in communication with ill people and those with disabilities, as well as in self-communication.

Thus, the typical communicative states include positive states of medium and high intensity and negative states of high intensity.

The dynamics of communicative states are specific to each situation, but certain patterns can be identified.

Situations that do not require significant emotional and energetic resources are accompanied by positive states of medium and high levels of mental activity throughout the process. By contrast, situations that are demanding for respondents, activating both intellectual and emotional resources, involve a broader spectrum of communicative states and more pronounced dynamics. At the beginning of such communication, alongside cognitive states (interest, concentration, involvement, engagement), respondents also reported negative states of high intensity such as fear, anxiety, and tension. In the middle and at the end of these communicative situations, the modality of states often shifts from negative to positive, with intensity decreasing and transforming into calmness, serenity, satisfaction, and relief – or remaining high but with a positive modality (joy).

Conclusion

The goal of our study was not only to identify and highlight the states typical of specific communication situations but also to demonstrate their dynamics. By analyzing and comparing the specifics of communicative states – those that accompany and arise during communication – it becomes evident that the typicality (high frequency of occurrence) of certain states is influenced not only by the students’ field of study and their future professional activities but also by the specific communication situations.

Summarizing the results of this study, it is evident that communicative states can manifest as psychological states of varying modalities and intensities, shaped by communication situations and the specifics of the activity. We identified typical, isolated, and “cross-cutting” states that occur across various scenarios. Each specific communication situation triggers certain psychological states that influence the course and outcome of the interaction, its success, and its effectiveness. While personal characteristics of the communicators cannot be disregarded, this aspect warrants future research. Based on this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Communicative states are specific to each situation, but “cross-cutting” states – such as interest, calmness, joy, and anxiety – are common across many communication scenarios. Some states are unique to specific situations, such as tenderness, respect, fear, indifference, and involvement.

2. In interpersonal communication, the nature of communicative states is influenced by the relationship with the interlocutor. For example, interactions with children and the elderly often evoke tenderness and respect, while communication with sick individuals and people with disabilities tends to trigger sadness, pity, and compassion.

3. The specifics of communicative states depend not only on the situation but also on the communication format. For instance, group communication in an online format causes less anxiety than in offline settings, where fear, tension, and stress are more common.

4. Eco-communication typically triggers positive states (joy, calmness, satisfaction, tenderness), while self-communication or self-reflection may also bring about negative states.

5. The dynamics of communicative states are shaped by the format of communication. High-pressure situations trigger intense negative states at the beginning, which tend to diminish by the end, transitioning to a qualitatively different state with reduced intensity and a shift in modality. For example, interest can give way to fatigue, while anxiety and tension may transform into calmness and tranquility.

Future studies will expand the understanding of “communicative states” and examine their relationship with other psychological characteristics.

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