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## Linguistic Nuances in Crisis Communication: Advancing Conflict Mediation and Defense Education in Poland

### Abstract

This article explores the significance of linguistic nuances in crisis communication within the context of defense education in Poland. The author highlights the pivotal role of syntax, semantics, and cultural connotations in effectively conveying information during crisis situations. Emphasis is placed on the importance of cultural sensitivity and mediation competencies, as well as their integration within the legal frameworks applicable in Poland. An interdisciplinary approach is adopted, combining insights from linguistics, crisis management, and higher education. As a result, contextually sensitive communication strategies are proposed for Polish institutions of higher education.

### Keywords

crisis communication, defense education, mediation, linguistic sensitivity, Poland

### Introduction

Crisis communication has emerged as a crucial aspect of defense education, particularly in the context of Poland's unique socio-political landscape. Effective communication during crises is not merely a matter of relaying information; it involves an intricate interplay of linguistic nuances that can significantly influence the clarity, trust, and overall efficacy of emergency

responses. As highlighted in contemporary research, the adaptation of communication strategies to cater to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts is essential, with particular attention to the roles of syntax, semantics, and cultural connotations<sup>1</sup>. In the context of Polish higher education, where the risks of miscommunication can have dire consequences in crisis scenarios, the call for context-sensitive frameworks becomes increasingly urgent. This paper aims to explore the critical importance of linguistic sensitivity and cultural adaptation in enhancing mediation strategies within defense education, positing that miscommunication not only undermines response efforts but also jeopardizes the safety and well-being of students and faculty alike. Mediation and crisis communication strategies in Poland operate within a robust legal framework. Articles 183(1)–183(15) of the Polish Civil Code<sup>2</sup> provide formal guidelines for mediation, while the Act on Mediation and Conciliation in Collective Disputes ensures its adaptability across sectors, including education. Together, these laws form a foundation for integrating mediation into defense education. By examining effective tools and frameworks, such as infographics, which have been shown to improve understanding and engagement in global studies<sup>3</sup>, this study will offer concrete recommendations for Polish universities to incorporate linguistically nuanced strategies into their crisis communication training. Ultimately, bridging the fields of linguistics, mediation, and crisis management can create safer academic environments, fostering resilience and preparedness in the face of emergencies. Grounded in Art. 68 and 54 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland<sup>4</sup>, linguistically sensitive and transparent communication frameworks uphold the fundamental rights to safety and expression, fostering trust and resilience in academic communities.

- 1 G. Georgakopoulos, B. O'Dwyer, *Processes of auditability in sustainability assurance – the case of materiality construction*, „Accounting and Business Research” 2019, vol. 49, no. 1; C. Menkel-Meadow, A.K. Schneider, *International Conflict Resolution Processes*, SSRN Working Paper 2023, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=5168799](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5168799) [access: 2.03.2025].
- 2 Ustawa z dnia 17 listopada 1964 r. – Kodeks postępowania cywilnego, Dz.U. 2024, item. 1568, as amended, Art. 183<sup>1</sup>–183<sup>15</sup>.
- 3 R.W. Setyaningrum, S. Anam, *Translanguaging as a scaffolded practice in a primary school CLIL context during the COVID-19 pandemic*, „European Journal of Educational Research” 2022, vol. 11, no. 4.
- 4 Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r., Dz.U. 1997, no. 78, item. 483, as amended, Art. 68, 54.

## Linguistic Sensitivity in Crisis Communication

In crisis communication, the subtle interplay between syntax and semantics significantly shapes the strategies employed by organizations to manage and resolve crises. The framing of messages, whether emotional or rational, directly influences public perception and organizational reputation during crises, as evidenced by studies on the impact of such framing techniques<sup>5</sup>. This is particularly crucial when considering the semantic fields and neural binding processes involved in crafting effective crisis communication strategies that resonate with the audience<sup>6</sup>. Understanding the semantics of „crisis” itself, from a cognitive perspective, helps in identifying central semantic problems that may arise, thereby improving the overall efficacy of crisis management strategies<sup>7</sup>. To optimize these strategies, it is essential for organizations to integrate a nuanced understanding of syntax and semantics into their communication efforts, ensuring messages are not only clear but also contextually relevant. This approach can greatly enhance the alignment of messages with the intended audience, ultimately leading to more effective crisis resolution and management<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, a comprehensive incorporation of syntax and semantics into crisis communication strategies is imperative for organizations looking to navigate crises successfully.

In the context of emergency response communication, cultural connotations play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of the messages conveyed to diverse communities. The research emphasizes the importance of cultural literacy and humility, which are crucial for developing communication strategies that resonate with the cultural contexts of different communities<sup>9</sup>.

- 5 A. Claeys, V. Cauberghe, *What makes crisis response strategies work? The impact of crisis involvement and message framing*, „Journal of Business Research” 2014, vol. 67, no. 2.
- 6 M. Conoscenti, *The Deepwater Horizon Crisis: A Linguistic and Cognitive Analysis of BP Communicative Strategy*, 2012, <https://iris.unito.it/handle/2318/110597> [access: 19.01.2025].
- 7 *Discourse in crisis: critical perspectives*, red. A. De Rycker, Z. Mohd Don, 2013, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1075/dapsac.52.01der/html> [access: 19.01.2025].
- 8 M. Sigala, *Social media and crisis management in tourism: Applications and implications for research*, „Current Issues in Tourism” 2011, vol. 22, no. 5.
- 9 T. Vandrevalla et al., *Strengthening the relationship between community resilience and health emergency communication: a systematic review*, „BMC Public Health”

Integrating cultural sensitivities into emergency planning is not just a best practice, but a necessity for building genuinely responsive and resilient systems. When communication strategies reflect the lived realities and cultural values of local communities, messages are more likely to resonate and prompt action. More importantly, when community members are treated not just as recipients but as contributors in the planning process, they become active participants in shaping outcomes. This collaborative approach enhances both the legitimacy and long-term impact of emergency responses. A model that values inclusivity, encourages reflection, and acknowledges the insights of non-experts helps shift the dynamic toward shared responsibility and mutual trust. Ultimately, these strategies highlight the need for continuous learning and adaptation, ensuring that communication efforts are culturally sensitive and tailored to meet the unique needs of each community.

In adapting communication strategies to diverse linguistic contexts, it is essential to consider the interplay between local practices and global methodologies like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). These approaches, when adapted to the local environments, can address specific conceptual, classroom-level, and societal-institutional constraints, ensuring that language education is both effective and culturally relevant. Moreover, the adoption of innovative or decentralized language-in-education policies can offer additional avenues for adapting these strategies, allowing for flexibility and creativity in multilingual settings<sup>10</sup>. The integration of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) can also play a critical role by enhancing collaborative communication, thus bridging gaps between speakers of different linguistic backgrounds and developing mutual understanding – an approach that not only facilitates improved communication but also encourages the valuing of diverse linguistic resources, which can be crucial in corporate or institutional settings striving for inclusivity. Emphasizing the adaptability of communication strategies, particularly in environments characterized by linguistic super-diversity, calls for „an enhanced focus on languaging” – a phenomenon that supports multilingual practices and encourages speakers

2024, no. 2, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s44263-024-00112-y> [access: 19.01.2025].

10 Y.G. Butler., *The Implementation of Communicative and Task-Based Language Teaching in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Cambridge 2016.

to utilize their entire linguistic repertoire to effectively convey and interpret messages<sup>11</sup>. To achieve this, interventions should focus on creating policies and educational frameworks that are flexible, context-aware, and inclusive of the linguistic diversity present in various regions.

### **Importance of Cultural Adaptation in Defense Education**

Cultural adaptation plays a crucial role in Polish higher education as it aligns with the increasing demands of the global job market, where intercultural competencies are becoming indispensable. Higher education institutions bear the responsibility of preparing students not only in their respective disciplines but also in navigating culturally diverse contexts with competence. In today's interconnected world, the ability to work across cultural lines has shifted from a desirable trait to a professional imperative. As organizations increasingly operate on a global scale, effectively engaging with cultural diversity is now seen as a key driver of innovation and strategic success. Thus, universities need to integrate opportunities that help students build cultural awareness and adaptability throughout their academic development<sup>12</sup>. By developing these competencies, Polish higher education institutions can better prepare graduates for the complexities of a multicultural workforce, ensuring they possess the skills required to succeed in a diverse and interconnected world.

In academic environments, the risks of miscommunication during crisis scenarios are profound, often resulting from the failure to establish and maintain effective communication channels prior to emergencies. When institutions fail to cultivate and test communication strategies outside of crisis situations, their ability to convey essential information under pressure can be significantly compromised. In such cases, the lack of structured, two-way communication between university leadership and the student body often results in a disconnect – leaving student needs misunderstood and response measures poorly aligned with lived experiences, particularly during events

11 A. Cogo, *ELF and super-diversity: a case study of ELF multilingual practices from a business context*, „Journal of English as a Lingua Franca” 2012, vol. 1, no. 2.

12 A. Knap-Stefaniuk, Ł. Burkiewicz, *Rozwój systemu komunikacji kryzysowej w Polsce*, „Ius Novum” 2023, <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/1597280.pdf> [access: 19.01.2025].

like forced relocations. Additionally, when vital support systems are not clearly and proactively communicated, students may be unaware of available resources, heightening their risk and undermining their resilience in times of emergency<sup>13</sup>. These interconnected challenges highlight the necessity for proactive measures, including the establishment of clear, consistent, and transparent communication practices well in advance of any crisis. By doing so, academic institutions can enhance their preparedness and responsiveness, ultimately safeguarding the well-being and trust of their stakeholders.

Building on the concept of empowerment and inclusion in emergency response communication, cultural adaptation emerges as a pivotal factor in enhancing the effectiveness of mediation strategies. By fostering cultural intelligence (CQ), individuals can significantly improve social performance, which is essential for effective mediation<sup>14</sup>. Incorporating linguistically nuanced mediation strategies aligns with Art. 267 of the Act on Higher Education and Science<sup>15</sup>, which empowers universities to develop autonomous safety and crisis response protocols. This approach ensures both legal compliance and effective conflict resolution. This enhanced social performance not only facilitates innovation but also strengthens the capability to manage and resolve conflicts effectively; furthermore, individuals with high CQ are adept at understanding and appreciating diverse cultural perspectives, which is crucial in maintaining harmony and relationships among parties involved in mediation<sup>16</sup>. Such cultural awareness helps overcome divisions and reduce conflicts, creating the foundation for stronger social unity – an essential element in effective mediation. Therefore, integrating cultural adaptation into mediation strategies is vital for achieving effective and sustainable conflict resolution, necessitating deliberate efforts to cultivate cultural intelligence and adaptive capacities in mediators.

- 13 H. Wu, *Mass email risk communication: Lessons learned from COVID-19-triggered campus-wide evictions in Canada and the United States*, PLOS ONE 2023, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0289117> [access: 19.01.2025].
- 14 U. Awan, A. Kraslawski, J. Huiskonen, *The impact of relational governance on performance improvement in export manufacturing firms*, „Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management” 2018, vol. 11, no. 3.
- 15 Ustawa z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. – Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, Dz.U. 2018, item. 1668, as amended, Art. 267.
- 16 U. Awan, A. Kraslawski, J. Huiskonen, op. cit.

## Tools and Frameworks for Effective Communication

In recommending context-sensitive frameworks for Polish universities, it is crucial to adopt methodologies that align with both the specific educational needs and cultural contexts of Poland. The development of a comprehensive framework that includes context-sensitive approaches is essential for Polish universities to enhance their educational offerings and research outputs<sup>17</sup>. This involves integrating techniques from existing frameworks that have been effectively utilized in different contexts, such as context-sensitive explorations and implications drawn from diverse sectors like Mobile Commerce and public good frameworks<sup>18</sup>. By doing so, Polish universities can create environments that are not only sensitive to local needs but also adaptive to global academic standards, ultimately contributing to the broader educational landscape. To achieve this, ongoing evaluations and adaptations of these frameworks will be necessary, ensuring that they remain responsive to the evolving educational and socio-cultural dynamics.

In the realm of global crisis communication, infographics have emerged as a vital tool for effectively disseminating complex data and facilitating a comprehensive understanding among diverse audiences. The integration of strategic communication and visual design is pivotal during global crises, as infographics can bridge cultural and linguistic divides, ensuring that critical information is conveyed efficiently across different communities<sup>19</sup>. Notably, infographics serve not only as connectors of data but also as collective calls to action, which can galvanize public response to crises. This dual

17 C. Atkinson, P. Bostan, T. Butter, *SALSA—A Framework for Context-Sensitive Service Discovery in Mobile Commerce Applications*, <https://journals.riverpublishers.com> [access: 19.01.2025].

18 M. Krzyżanowski, *Ethnography and critical discourse analysis: towards a problem-oriented research dialogue*, „Critical Discourse Studies” 2011, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17405904.2011.601630> [access: 19.01.2025]; E. Brewis, S. Marginson, *Introduction to the special issue: 'The public good of higher education: A comparative study'*, „Higher Education” 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-024-01346-3> [access: 19.01.2025].

19 V. Diwanji, J. Cortese, P. Merle, *Fighting a Global Pandemic in the Digital Age: Use of Infographics to 'Flatten the Curve' in the US and India*, „Journal of International Communication” 2023, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1553118X.2023.2231409> [access: 19.01.2025].

function highlights their ability to both inform and motivate action, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in crisis scenarios<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, the use of visual-based infographics, particularly when aligned with appropriate framing techniques, can significantly enhance message retention and engagement compared to text-based communication alone<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, it is imperative for crisis communication teams to harness the full potential of infographics by integrating them strategically within their communication frameworks, thereby optimizing their impact in managing and resolving crises.

Improving the clarity and credibility of emergency responses requires the integration of tools that facilitate both communication and cooperation. Digital platforms, in particular, can optimize how information flows within response teams, reducing administrative burdens and enabling a stronger focus on mission-critical activities. These technologies support the timely and accurate delivery of essential updates, which is vital for maintaining transparency and trust across teams and with external partners. Additionally, by creating a culture that values feedback and continuous learning, organizations can evolve their strategic approach to emergency coordination—strengthening both internal alignment and public confidence<sup>22</sup>. By adopting these integrated tools and practices, emergency response teams can achieve a more cohesive understanding of situations, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of their actions.

### **Recommendations for Polish Universities**

In the context of Polish defense education, implementing linguistically nuanced strategies requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the

- 20 D. Kaviani, N. Salehi, *Bridging action frames: Instagram infographics in US ethnic movements*, [w:] *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, vol. 6, no. CSCW1, New York 2022, <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3512926> [access: 19.01.2025].
- 21 S. Lee, J. Kim, Y. Sung, *When infographics work better: The interplay between temporal frame and message format in e-health communication*, „Psychology & Health” 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08870446.2021.1912342> [access: 19.01.2025].
- 22 M. Ohrling, K. Solberg Carlsson, M. Brommels, *No man is an island: management of the emergency response to the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) outbreak in a large public decentralised service delivery organisation*, „BMC Health Services Research” 2022, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12913-022-07716-w> [access: 19.01.2025].

complex interplay between language, culture, and policy. Language policies within the education system should not be confined to minimal linguistic rights but rather should embrace linguistic diversity to foster a more inclusive educational environment<sup>23</sup>. This inclusivity can be achieved by integrating authentic reading and listening texts that highlight the nuances of different languages, thus aiding in preventing linguistic fossilization and enhancing students' linguistic competence<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, the strategic use of discursive strategies can facilitate a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical contexts of defense education, thereby enabling students to grasp the nuanced meanings of policies and narratives related to national security<sup>25</sup>. By employing these strategies, Polish defense education can cultivate a more comprehensive understanding of national identity and security, while also promoting critical thinking and empathy among students. Such an educational framework not only prepares students for complex geopolitical challenges but also nurtures a generation that values linguistic and cultural diversity as a strength rather than a barrier.

The integration of linguistics into crisis management holds great potential for creating safer academic environments by enhancing communication and understanding during emergencies. Effective crisis management requires clear, concise, and culturally sensitive communication, which can be achieved by understanding and utilizing the nuances of language in emergency scenarios. By maintaining a personalized language approach in crisis response, institutions can foster a sense of safety and community, which is vital in ensuring effective communication during emergencies<sup>26</sup>. Effective crisis communication strategies must align with Art. 115–128 of the Polish Penal

23 N. Albury, K. Aye, *Malaysia's national language policy in international theoretical context*, <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/58857> [access: 19.01.2025].

24 M. Ehrman, *Understanding the learner at the Superior-Distinguished threshold*, Washington 2007.

25 M. Krzyżanowski, *Ethnography and critical discourse analysis: towards a problem-oriented research dialogue*, „Critical Discourse Studies” 2011, vol. 8, no. 4.

26 S. Veil, T. Buehner, *A work-in-process literature review: Incorporating social media in risk and crisis communication*, „Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management” 2015, vol. 19, no. 2.

Code<sup>27</sup>, which mandate the safeguarding of public safety in scenarios involving terrorism or mass endangerment. Such alignment enhances institutional preparedness and response efficacy. Interorganizational communication and decision-making are also crucial components of crisis management in academic settings, which can be significantly improved by incorporating linguistics into communication strategies<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, the use of language skills in crisis management not only facilitates the dissemination of vital information but also aids in bridging the gap between institutional protocols and individual understanding, thus ensuring that all stakeholders are on the same page<sup>29</sup>. This multidisciplinary approach not only supports the efficient management of crises but also contributes to a more resilient and cohesive academic community. To implement these strategies effectively, educational institutions must prioritize training and development programs that focus on enhancing linguistic competencies in crisis communication, thereby fostering an environment where safety and understanding are paramount.

Incorporating mediation strategies into crisis communication training requires a multifaceted approach that emphasizes the need for strategic anticipation and the integration of diverse expertise. A key step involves understanding the interplay between different crisis types and the respective communication strategies that can effectively address them<sup>30</sup>. This understanding necessitates the adoption of a holistic framework that draws from multiple disciplines, including strategic management and mediation, as these fields offer valuable insights into the complexities of crisis scenarios<sup>31</sup>. Mediation skills are crucial in this context for those involved in crisis communication, as it equips them to manage disputes and foster constructive conversations between affected parties. To build these

27 Ustawa z dnia 6 czerwca 1997 r. – Kodeks karny, Dz.U. 1997, no. 88, item. 553, as amended, Art. 115–128.

28 N. Kapucu, *Interagency communication networks during emergencies: Boundary spanners in multiagency coordination*, „Public Administration Review” 2006, no. 36.

29 H. Eshach, *Bridging in-school and out-of-school learning: Formal, non-formal, and informal education*, „Journal of Science Education and Technology” 2006, no. 2.

30 S. Utz, F. Schultz, S. Glocka., *Crisis communication online: How medium, crisis type and emotions affected public reactions in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster*, „Public Relations Review” 2013, no. 39.

31 J. Bundy, M. Pfarrer, C. Short, *Crises and crisis management: Integration, interpretation, and research development*, „Journal of Management” 2016, vol. 43, no. 6.

competencies, educational and training initiatives should emphasize hands-on scenarios where participants can practice mediation strategies in controlled, crisis-like environments. Such experiential learning reinforces their capacity to respond effectively when confronted with real-life emergencies.

The findings of this research paper illuminate the profound impact of linguistic nuances on crisis communication, particularly within the context of Poland's defense education and conflict mediation strategies. By emphasizing the relationship between syntax, semantics, and effective message framing, this study aligns with existing literature that advocates for a more refined understanding of communication dynamics during crises. The cognitive interpretation of „crisis” as highlighted in the paper underscores the necessity for organizations to adopt a more nuanced approach, integrating linguistic insights into their communication strategies. This is particularly relevant in Poland, where diverse cultural connotations can greatly influence public perception and response. However, while the paper advocates for the integration of local practices with global methodologies, it also raises important questions about the scalability and adaptability of these strategies across varying linguistic contexts. Future research should explore the effectiveness of these communication strategies in different crisis scenarios and among diverse populations. Additionally, the discussion on the risks of miscommunication in academic settings prompts a critical examination of existing communication frameworks, suggesting a need for proactive measures that enhance preparedness and responsiveness in crisis situations. The recommendation for context-sensitive frameworks in Polish universities is particularly timely, as educational institutions strive to align their offerings with both local and global standards. Yet, the study may benefit from a more detailed exploration of the specific challenges faced by educators in implementing these strategies. As the research underscores the intersection of linguistic diversity and cultural adaptation, it opens avenues for further investigation into the role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in facilitating effective communication among multilingual populations. Overall, the paper advocates for a holistic approach to crisis management that incorporates linguistic and cultural sensitivity, thereby contributing valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on effective crisis communication and management within the context of Poland's evolving socio-political landscape.

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## **Językowe niuansy w komunikacji kryzysowej: rozwój mediacji i edukacji obronnej w Polsce**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule omówiono znaczenie niuansów językowych w komunikacji kryzysowej w kontekście edukacji obronnej w Polsce. Autorka wskazuje ważną rolę składni, semantyki i konotacji kulturowych w skutecznym przekazywaniu informacji w sytuacjach kryzysowych. Podkreślono znaczenie wrażliwości kulturowej i kompetencji mediacyjnych oraz ich integracji z aktami prawnymi obowiązującymi w Polsce. Zastosowano podejście interdyscyplinarne, które łączy lingwistykę, zarządzanie kryzysowe i edukację wyższą. W efekcie zaproponowano kontekstowo wrażliwe strategie komunikacyjne dla polskich uczelni wyższych.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

komunikacja kryzysowa, edukacja obronna, mediacja, wrażliwość językowa, Polska