

---

# CHALLENGES IN MODERN PATROLLING: A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

## ARAKELYAN MARIAM

Senior Lecturer at the Chair of General Humanities and Socioeconomic Disciplines,  
PhD in Pedagogics,  
Rescue Service and Crisis Management Educational Unit,  
Educational Complex of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

## POGHOSYAN LEONARD

Chief Specialist at the Department of International  
Cooperation and Public Relations,  
Lecturer at the Chair of General Humanities and Socioeconomic Disciplines, Rescue Service and  
Crisis Management Educational Unit,  
Educational Complex of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia  
DOI: 10.63925/18294847-2026.b|21-19

---

**Abstract.** The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it examines the challenges in modern patrolling from a linguistic perspective with regard to verbal and nonverbal communication, cultural constraints and linguistic performance under stress. Second, it conceptualizes the term “professional linguistic and communicative competence of a patrol officer” in order to redefine the law enforcement linguistic training agenda.

**Key words:** linguistic competence, communicative competence, cross-cultural constraints, language mastery, body language, patrolling, society, skills.

### Introduction

Modern patrolling requires a wide range of skills. Physical readiness, communication, negotiation and conflict management competences figure prominently among the qualities attributed to a highly skilled patrol officer. However, in today’s context of globalization patrolling increasingly requires officers to operate in multilingual and culturally diverse environments. Obviously, ensuring effective communication with various segments of population is a tough task due to the heterogeneous social contingent<sup>1</sup>. As it stands, both linguistic and communicative competences do matter in modern patrolling. Chomsky introduced the notion of linguistic competence as the unconscious knowledge of grammar people use to understand and speak languages<sup>2</sup>. Alternatively, linguistic knowledge is our tacit knowledge of the structure of language<sup>3</sup>. In contrast, the communicative competence implies the actual use of language in concrete situations. While delivering policing, we strongly consider professional linguistic and communicative competence of a patrol officer as an integrated feature, or

---

<sup>1</sup> Berkut D. G., *Cultural Aspects of Language Competence in Professional Communication of Law Enforcement Officers* //Mogilev Institute of MIA, Mogilev, 2022, p.38

<sup>2</sup> Chomsky N., *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985, p.4

<sup>3</sup> Newmeyer F. J., *Grammatical Theory: Its Limits and Its Possibilities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 35

else, a combination of language fundamentals, world knowledge, and personal qualities that enable an officer to make practical use of a language<sup>4</sup>. In other words, no delineation could be made between linguistic and communicative competences since the absence of each component might lead to:

- **miscommunication** – incorrect or wrong information may be recorded,
- **lack of operativity** – ineffective communication may lead to tardiness and inaction,
- **safety risks** – misunderstanding is likely to increase danger for both sides of the emergency,
- **cultural constraints** – poor knowledge of cultural characteristics may incite a conflict<sup>5</sup>,
- **stress and frustration** - misunderstanding in stressful situations may provoke frustration.

Given these facts, the ability of patrol officers to communicate effectively in a foreign language is becoming a prerequisite for operational success, public trust and safety.

A considerable body of research has been conducted concerning the tactical, physical and strategic aspects of patrol operation. The procedures and practices required to deliver effective patrolling have been widely overlooked in both foreign and domestic academic literature as well as in government and policing reports. However, the linguistic dimension, for instance, defining how officers use a foreign language to collect information, de-escalate conflicts, give instructions and build rapport has won less academic interest. The lack of research in this field highlights the **relevance** of this research.

The research takes into focus the challenges that a patrol officer faces ensuring communication with different layers of society. In an attempt to achieve this aim, the study formulated two research **objectives**, namely:

1. analyzing in what way the mastery of a language, communication skills, cross-cultural constraints and use of body language affect effective communication within delivering policing,
2. pointing out the concerns that could be addressed in the realm of police training.

The **novelty** of the research is the conceptualization of the term “professional linguistic and communicative competence of a patrol officer” and the formulation of recommendations for law enforcement linguistic training. The research is premised on the following **methods**: study of foreign and domestic literature, reflection, description, generalization, comparative and deductive analysis. Modern patrolling operates at the intersection of law enforcement, public communication, and sociolinguistic interaction. From a linguistic standpoint, patrol officers are not merely executors of legal authority but active communicators whose language use directly affects operational effectiveness, public trust, and situational outcomes. The following subsections examine key linguistic challenges faced in contemporary patrolling.

**Mastery of Language.** One of the fundamental challenges in modern patrolling is insufficient mastery of language in both native and foreign contexts. Patrol officers are frequently required to operate under high-pressure conditions where precise lexical choice, syntactic clarity, and pragmatic appropriateness are critical. Limited vocabulary, weak command of professional

---

<sup>4</sup> In this article the word “language” stands for “foreign language”.

<sup>5</sup> Blommaert J., *The sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p.109.

terminology, or inadequate control over formal and informal registers may result in ambiguous instructions, misinterpretation of legal norms, or escalation of routine interactions. Additionally, the growing complexity of legal language poses a significant challenge. Officers must translate abstract legal concepts into comprehensible, situationally appropriate speech for civilians with diverse educational backgrounds. The inability to simplify legal discourse without distorting its meaning creates a communicative gap between law enforcement and the public, undermining legitimacy and compliance. Thus, language proficiency plays a decisive role in police–citizen interaction, as limited mastery of professional and legal language may result in misunderstandings, procedural errors, and reduced public trust.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, multilingual environments, the lack of adequate foreign language proficiency further complicates patrolling. Encounters with non-native speakers often expose linguistic asymmetries that limit officers’ ability to gather accurate information, assess risk, or convey authority effectively.

**Communication Skills.** Beyond linguistic competence, modern patrolling demands advanced communication skills, which are frequently underdeveloped or inconsistently applied. Patrol officers must engage in spontaneous, unscripted interactions that require active listening, turn-taking management, clarification strategies, and conflict-sensitive discourse. Specifically, a recurrent challenge lies in the predominance of directive or authoritative speech styles that may be perceived as confrontational or dismissive. Such communicative patterns can provoke resistance, mistrust, or non-cooperation, particularly in emotionally charged situations. Moreover, inadequate questioning techniques may result in incomplete, distorted, or unreliable information during initial field assessments. In other words, effective communication in patrolling extends beyond the transmission of commands and includes active listening, adaptive discourse strategies, and situational awareness.<sup>7</sup>

Another critical issue is the inability to adapt communicative behavior to different interactional roles—such as victim, witness, suspect, or bystander. The absence of role-sensitive discourse strategies often leads to communicative breakdowns that compromise both procedural fairness and operational accuracy.

**Cross-Cultural Issues.** Modern patrolling increasingly takes place within culturally heterogeneous societies, making cross-cultural communication a major linguistic challenge. Cultural norms influence speech behavior, politeness strategies, concepts of authority, and interpretations of legality. When officers lack awareness of these variations, routine interactions may unintentionally generate misunderstanding or offense.

The absence of cross-cultural communicative competence may lead to misinterpretation of civilian behavior and negatively affect police legitimacy<sup>8</sup>. Differences in discourse conventions, such as

---

<sup>6</sup> Herbst L., Walker, S., *Language Barriers in the Delivery of Police Services: A Study of Police and Hispanic Interactions in a Midwestern City* // Journal of Criminal Justice. Vol. 29(4), 2001, pp.329–340.

<sup>7</sup> De Vito J. A., *Communications in Policing* // Research Gate Publication, 2021, 19p.

<sup>8</sup> Sereni-Massinger C., Wood N., *Improving Law Enforcement Cross Cultural Competencies through Continued Education* // Journal of Education and Learning. Vol. 5(2), 2012, pp 258–266

directness, silence, eye contact, or narrative structure, can be misinterpreted as evasiveness, disrespect, or non-compliance. Similarly, culturally specific expressions, metaphors, or speech acts may be misunderstood or overlooked, leading to flawed situational assessments. Furthermore, implicit cultural bias embedded in language use can shape interactional dynamics. The unintentional use of stigmatizing labels, culturally loaded terminology, or exclusionary discourse reinforces social distance between law enforcement and minority communities, weakening communicative legitimacy.

**Body Language.** Non-verbal communication constitutes a critical yet often underestimated component of patrolling. Body language, facial expressions, posture, and spatial behavior function as powerful semiotic signals that accompany spoken language. Inconsistent or inappropriate non-verbal cues may contradict verbal messages and undermine communicative intent.

A key challenge lies in the misinterpretation of civilians' body language, particularly across cultural contexts where non-verbal norms differ significantly. Gestures perceived as suspicious, aggressive, or deceptive may, in fact, be culturally normative or stress-induced responses. Conversely, officers' own non-verbal behavior, such as rigid posture, excessive physical proximity, or visible tension, may escalate situations unintentionally. So, misinterpretation of body language, especially across cultural boundaries, may result in inaccurate threat assessment and unintended escalation<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, the absence of conscious control over non-verbal signaling limits officers' ability to manage interactions strategically, especially in de-escalation contexts where body language often communicates more forcefully than words.

### **Solution-oriented approaches to linguistic challenges in modern patrolling.**

Addressing the linguistic challenges of modern patrolling requires a multidimensional framework that integrates linguistic competence, communicative adaptability, cultural awareness, and non-verbal literacy. From a linguistic perspective, these challenges can be mitigated through structured, evidence-based interventions.

**1. Enhancing mastery of language.** Improving language mastery among patrol officers necessitates systematic linguistic training tailored to operational realities. This includes the development of functional vocabulary specific to policing contexts, legal discourse, and emergency communication. Emphasis should be placed on pragmatic competence, namely, the ability to select linguistically appropriate forms based on context, interlocutor, and communicative intent. Language training should prioritize:

- simplification strategies for legal and procedural language without loss of semantic precision,
- register awareness, enabling officers to shift effectively between formal, semi-formal, and informal speech,

---

<sup>9</sup> Frank M. G., Matsumoto D., *Nonverbal Communication: Science and Applications*. SAGE Publications, Inc, 2013, 336 p.

- applied multilingual competence in areas with high linguistic diversity, focusing on operational rather than academic fluency.

From a linguistic standpoint, such training strengthens semantic clarity, reduces ambiguity, and enhances communicative authority.

**2. Developing professional communication skills.** Effective communication in patrolling requires moving beyond command-based discourse toward interactional competence. Training programs should incorporate principles from discourse analysis and pragmatics, enabling officers to manage conversational flow, employ appropriate questioning techniques, and recognize conversational implicatures. The key areas of communication skills development include:

- active listening strategies to ensure accurate interpretation of spoken information,
- role-sensitive communication, adjusting discourse strategies depending on whether the interlocutor is a victim, witness, suspect, or civilian,
- conflict-sensitive language use, emphasizing de-escalatory speech patterns and cooperative framing.

Such communicative competence promotes procedural justice, increases voluntary compliance, and enhances information reliability during patrol interactions.

**3. Addressing cross-cultural communication challenges.** Cross-cultural competence should be treated as a core linguistic skill rather than a peripheral social consideration. Training must integrate sociolinguistic and intercultural communication frameworks that explain how culture shapes language use, discourse norms, and interpretations of authority. The effective approaches to address cross-cultural constraints include:

- awareness of culturally variable discourse conventions, such as indirectness, silence, narrative styles, and politeness norms,
- instruction on avoiding culturally loaded or stigmatizing language that may reinforce social distance,
- scenario-based simulations involving culturally diverse interactions to build adaptive communicative strategies,

Grounding cross-cultural training in the curriculum could enable patrol officers to reduce misinterpretation, minimize bias, and strengthen trust across diverse communities.

**4. Strengthening non-verbal and body language awareness.** Non-verbal communication must be systematically incorporated into linguistic and communicative training. Officers should be educated in the semiotics of body language, recognizing how gestures, posture, facial expressions, and proxemics function as meaning-making systems. In this respect, the recommended strategies include:

- training in congruence between verbal and non-verbal signals to reinforce communicative intent.
- awareness of culturally variable interpretations of body language to avoid false assessments of threat or deception.

- conscious regulation of officers' non-verbal behavior, particularly in high-tension encounters.

The mastery of non-verbal communication enhances interactional control and supports verbal de-escalation strategies.

Ultimately, effective modern patrolling requires an integrated linguistic framework in which language, culture, and communication are treated as operational tools. Linguistic competence should be institutionalized as a professional standard, equal in importance to tactical or legal training. When language is approached as a strategic resource rather than a mere medium, patrolling becomes more effective, legitimate, and socially responsive.

### **Conclusion**

Modern patrolling encompasses a number of skills and competences. Linguistic and communicative competence is of significant importance to create the public image of a patrol officer. Meanwhile, it contributes to safer, more effective and community-oriented policing. In multilingual societies communication barriers pose significant challenges that affect operational success and public trust. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive linguistic approach within police training combining language skills and intercultural awareness. We strongly believe the four-component training mentioned above is a holistic approach towards achieving the objectives of this research. Specifically, wording or finding the right register is of vital importance to establish communication with a certain contingent. If one of the interlocutors faces communication constraints, it would be advisable for a patrol officer to retain key words and ready-made phrases specific to given situations and use them instead of long sentences and complicated vocabulary. Appropriate wording is also important for linguistic performance under stress. Obviously, stress impacts both cognitive processing and verbal output. People are likely to revert to their mother tongue under stress, speak rapidly and loudly, or become incoherent. These factors hinder clarity and mutual understanding and result in miscommunication with safety implications. Accordingly, using key words and ready-made phrases could simplify the speech and make it understandable.

The use of body language and visual cues is a form of nonverbal communication between interlocutors with unequal level of language proficiency. Gestures, nonverbal cues, facial expressions, physical proximity and eye contact norms vary across cultures. Signals intended to calm or instruct may be misunderstood causing confusion or escalating a situation especially in case of high-stress encounters. Thus, some aspects of body language and visual cues could be incorporated in patrol officers' linguistic training agenda.

ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱԿԻՑ ՊԱՐԵԿԱՅԻՆ ԾԱՌԱՅՈՒԹՅԱՆ  
ՄԱՐՏԱՀՐԱՎԵՐՆԵՐԸ ՕՏԱՐԱԼԵՂՈՒ ՀԱՂՈՐԴԱԿՑՈՒԹՅԱՆ  
ՏԵՍԱՆԿՅՈՒՆԻՑ

**ԱՌԱՔԵԼՅԱՆ ՄԱՐԻԱՄ**

ՀՀ ՆԳՆ կրթահամալիրի ՓԾ և ՃԿ ուսումնական  
ստորաբաժանման ընդհանուր հումանիտար  
և սոցիալ-տնտեսագիտական առարկաների ամբիոնի  
ավագ դասախոս, մ.գ.թ.

**ՊՈՂՈՍՅԱՆ ԼԵՈՆԱՐԴ**

ՀՀ ՆԳՆ կրթահամալիրի միջազգային համագործակցության  
և հանրային կապերի բաժնի գլխավոր մասնագետ,  
ՓԾ և ՃԿ ուսումնական ստորաբաժանման ընդհանուր հումանիտար  
և սոցիալ-տնտեսագիտական առարկաների ամբիոնի  
համատեղության կարգով դասախոս

**Համառոտագիր:** Աշխարհայացման ժամանակակից պայմաններում, ի թիվս  
պարեկային ծառայողի մասնագիտական կոմպետենցիաների, մեծ կարևորություն է  
ստանում օտար լեզվի իմացության պահանջը: Այնուամենայնիվ, զուտ լեզվական  
իրազեկությունը բավարար չէ տարբեր մշակութային հանրային հետ պատշաճ  
լեզվահաղորդակցություն ապահովելու համար: Ի հայտ են գալիս այնպիսի խնդիրներ,  
ինչպիսիք են միջմշակութային բարիերը, ոչ վերբալ հաղորդակցության  
անհրաժեշտությունը, օտարալեզու հաղորդակցության ապահովումն սթրեսային  
իրավիճակներում և այլն: Ելնելով վերոգրյալից՝ հողվածում առանձին դիտարկվում են  
լեզվական և հաղորդակցական կոմպետենցիաները և մեկնաբանվում է «պարեկային  
ծառայողի լեզվահաղորդակցական կոմպետենցիա» եզրույթի էությունը: Այն ենթադրում  
է լեզվական գիտելիքների, փաստային գիտելիքների և անձնային որակների  
համախումբ, որը հնարավորություն է տալիս անձին տվյալ խնդրահարույց իրավիճակում  
ապահովել պատշաճ մասնագիտական լեզվահաղորդակցություն: Ուսումնասիրության  
արդյունքում առաջարկվում են որոշ մանկավարժական հնարքներ, որոնք կարող են  
կիրառվել ի նպաստ պարեկային ծառայողի լեզվահաղորդակցական խնդիրների  
լուծման:

**Բանալի բառեր.** լեզվական կոմպետենցիա, հաղորդակցական կոմպետենցիա,  
միջմշակութային խոչընդոտներ, լեզվական իրազեկություն, ժեստերի լեզու, պարեկային  
ծառայություն, հասարակություն, հմտություններ:

---

# СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ВЫЗОВЫ, СТОЯЩИЕ ПЕРЕД ПАТРУЛЬНОЙ СЛУЖБОЙ, С ТОЧКИ ЗРЕНИЯ ИНОЯЗЫЧНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ

## **АРАКЕЛЯН МАРИАМ**

Старший преподаватель кафедры общих гуманитарных и социально-экономических дисциплин Образовательного комплекса МВД РА, кандидат педагогических наук

## **ПОГОСЯН ЛЕОНАРД**

Главный специалист отдела международного сотрудничества и связям с общественностью Образовательного комплекса МВД РА, по совместительству преподаватель английского языка кафедры общих гуманитарных и социально-экономических дисциплин Образовательного комплекса МВД РА

---

**Аннотация.** В условия современной глобализации, с учетом требований, предъявляемых к профессиональным компетенциям сотрудника патрульной службы, важное значение придается требованию владения иностранным языком. Тем не менее, наличие только языковых знаний недостаточно для обеспечения правильной языковой коммуникации с представителями различных культурных сообществ. Появляются такие проблемы как межкультурный барьер, необходимость невербальной коммуникации, обеспечение иноязычной коммуникации в стрессовых ситуациях и т.д. Исходя из вышесказанного, в статье отдельно рассматриваются языковая и коммуникативная компетенции, анализируется сущность понятия «иноязычная компетенция сотрудника патрульной службы», которая предполагает совокупность языковых знаний, фактических знаний и личностных качеств, что, в свою очередь, в указанных проблемных ситуациях, дает сотруднику возможность обеспечить правильную профессиональную языковую коммуникацию. В результате исследования в статье предлагается ряд педагогических «находок», которые могут быть реализованы в практике для решения языковых коммуникационных проблем сотрудника патрульной службы.

**Ключевые слова:** языковая компетентность, коммуникативная компетентность, межкультурные ограничения, владение языком, язык тела, патрульная служба, общество, навыки.

## References

1. Berkut D. G., Cultural Aspects of Language Competence in Professional Communication of Law Enforcement Officers // Mogilev Institute of MIA, Mogilev, 2022, pp 34-39
2. Blommaert J., The Sociolinguistics of Globalization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 213 p.
3. Chomsky N., Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985, 66 p.
4. De Vito J. A., Communications in Policing // Research Gate Publication, 2021, 19 p.
5. Frank M. G., Matsumoto D., Nonverbal Communication: Science and Applications. Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2013, 336 p.
6. Herbst L., Walker S., Language Barriers in the Delivery of Police Services: A Study of Police and Hispanic Interactions in a Midwestern City // Journal of Criminal Justice, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2001, pp. 329–340
7. Newmeyer F. J., Grammatical Theory: Its Limits and Its Possibilities. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 201p.
8. Sereni-Massinger C., Wood N., Improving Law Enforcement Cross-Cultural Competencies through Continued Education // Journal of Education and Learning. Vol. 5, No. 2, 2012, pp. 258–266

Հոդվածը գրախոսվել է 12.01.2026  
Ներկայացվել է տպագրության 15.01.2026