

PEDAGOGY OF PRESENCE: THE TEACHER BETWEEN STAGE, SYMBOL AND RELATIONSHIP – PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION AND DIDACTIC PROTOCOL AS FORMS OF SYMBOLIC AUTHORITY

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Abstract: *This paper develops the concept of "pedagogy of presence" as a symbolic-communicative framework for understanding educational authority in contemporary educational environments. Drawing primarily on the sociological perspectives of Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman, the study examines how pedagogical legitimacy is constructed through symbolic capital, communicative performance, nonverbal interaction, impression management and professional protocol. The analysis adopts a conceptual-synthetic approach situated at the intersection of educational sociology, communication studies, semiotics and pedagogical theory. Particular attention is paid to the role of visibility, symbolic representation, corporeal communication, public speaking and institutional conduct in shaping professional identity and educational credibility. The paper proposes an integrative model of pedagogical presence and outlines five typologies of pedagogical identity characteristic of contemporary education: the institutional teacher, the performative teacher, the relational teacher, the symbolic teacher and the digital-representational teacher. The study argues that educational authority increasingly depends on communicative coherence, symbolic intelligibility and relational credibility rather than on institutional hierarchy alone. By conceptualizing teaching as a form of symbolic mediation and embodied communication, the paper contributes to a broader understanding of educational legitimacy in contexts characterized by digital exposure, communicative acceleration and evolving professional expectations.*

Keywords: *pedagogy of presence; symbolic authority; educational communication; symbolic capital; impression management; nonverbal communication; professional identity; pedagogical presence; educational legitimacy; professional protocol.*

Introduction

Educational space increasingly functions through mechanisms of visibility, symbolic exposure and communicative performance. Pedagogical legitimacy emerges within a complex network of institutional codes, relational dynamics and representational structures that continuously shape the public image of the teacher. Under such conditions, teaching acquires a pronounced performative dimension, articulated through discourse, corporal expressivity, spatial positioning, ritualized conduct and symbolic coherence. The transformation of educational environments during recent decades has generated profound mutations in the social representation of the teaching profession. Hyperconnectivity, digital mediation and permanent public visibility have destabilized traditional forms of authority grounded exclusively in institutional hierarchy. Professional recognition now circulates through more fluid configurations of symbolic capital, relational credibility and communicative competence. Within this framework, symbolic authority depends increasingly on the capacity to construct legitimacy through presence, coherence and interpretative control over social interaction. As Pierre Bourdieu observed, “symbolic power is a power of constructing reality” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 166), an idea particularly relevant to educational environments structured through asymmetrical relations of recognition, prestige and institutional validation.

Educational communication therefore exceeds the boundaries of verbal transmission. Gesture, posture, proxemic organization, vocal modulation, dress code, eye contact and ritualized interaction participate in the codification of pedagogical presence. Such elements operate as symbolic markers, capable of generating credibility, distance, authority or relational accessibility. The educational act consequently develops within a multilayered semiotic field, in which the teacher becomes readable before becoming audible. Symbolic perception frequently precedes cognitive reception. These transformations have intensified the relevance of impression management and professional self – representation within pedagogical practice. The contemporary teacher navigates multiple spaces of exposure simultaneously: classroom interaction, institutional representation, academic events, digital platforms and social media environments. Identity construction thus unfolds through continuous processes of communicative negotiation and symbolic positioning. From this perspective, pedagogical presence acquires strategic significance within the architecture of educational interaction.

Erving Goffman described social interaction as a dramaturgical configuration structured through performance, staging and impression control, arguing that individuals “perform” social roles through carefully regulated acts of self – presentation (Goffman, 1959, p. 17). Educational contexts amplify these performative mechanisms through ritualization, institutional visibility and asymmetrical structures of legitimacy. Our study develops the concept of “pedagogy of presence”, understood as a symbolic-communicative paradigm structured around visibility, representational authority and relational mediation in contemporary educational environments. The analysis integrates perspectives derived from sociology, communication studies, semiotics and educational sciences, in order to investigate the symbolic mechanisms through which pedagogical authority becomes socially intelligible and institutionally legitimized.

The theoretical architecture of the paper draws primarily upon the sociological frameworks elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman, complemented by contributions from communication theory, nonverbal interaction studies and symbolic representation analysis. Particular attention is directed toward the relationship between symbolic capital, pedagogical visibility, communicative performance and professional protocol. Within this conceptual configuration, protocol appears less as a rigid normative structure and more as a codified form of institutional communication regulating legitimacy, symbolic predictability and professional representation. The final section proposes several typologies of pedagogical presence specific to contemporary educational environments, formulated through the intersection of symbolic authority, communicative performance, relational positioning and digital visibility. These configurations reflect the progressive diversification of pedagogical identity under the pressure of institutional transformation, media exposure and changing cultural expectations regarding the public role of the teacher.

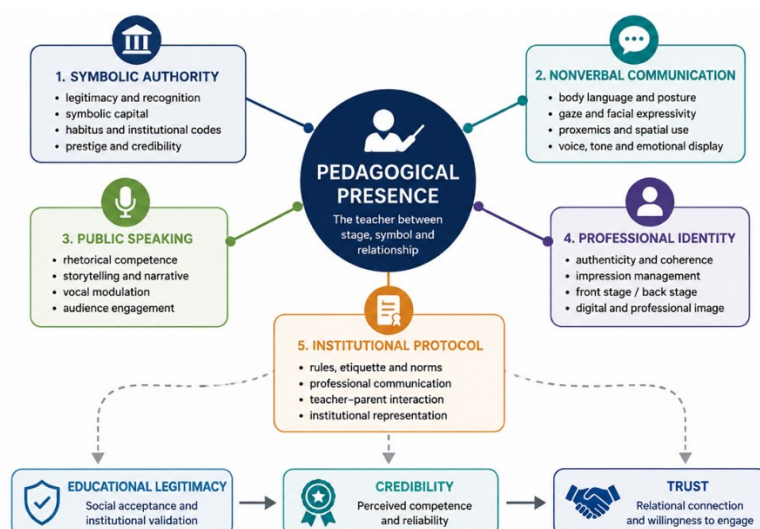


Figure 1. Architecture of pedagogical presence (own source)

The model illustrates the conceptual structure of pedagogical presence as developed in this study. Symbolic authority, nonverbal communication, public speaking, professional identity, and institutional protocol interact to generate educational legitimacy, credibility, and trust within contemporary educational environments.

Symbolic power and educational legitimacy

Educational institutions operate through highly codified systems of symbolic recognition that regulate authority, prestige and social legitimacy. Within these structures, the teacher occupies a strategic position, situated at the intersection of institutional validation, cultural capital and communicative influence. Pedagogical authority develops through complex processes of symbolic production in which language, ritual, representation and social positioning generate forms of legitimacy perceived as natural, coherent and socially acceptable.

The sociological perspective elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu provides an essential interpretative framework for understanding the symbolic mechanisms underlying educational interaction. Bourdieu conceptualized symbolic power as an invisible form of domination exercised through systems of meaning, classification and recognition that become internalized within social practice. Symbolic structures function efficiently precisely because they are perceived as legitimate rather than coercive. As Bourdieu stated, “symbolic systems are instruments of knowledge and communication” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 47), participating in the production of social order through mechanisms of cultural legitimization and representational control. Educational

space reproduces such mechanisms continuously. Institutional authority circulates through symbolic markers capable of generating prestige and pedagogical credibility: academic discourse, linguistic refinement, ceremonial interaction, professional etiquette, spatial organization and ritualized conduct. These configurations gradually form a pedagogical habitus – a structured system of dispositions regulating professional behavior, communicative reflexes and symbolic positioning within educational environments. Habitus therefore exceeds the level of personal style, functioning instead as a socially constructed grammar of pedagogical legitimacy. From this perspective, educational interaction acquires a strong performative dimension. The teacher embodies institutional authority through visible and intelligible codes that organize the perception of competence, discipline and professional status. Vocal control, discursive precision, corporeal posture, proxemic regulation and ritualized interaction contribute to the symbolic intelligibility of authority within the classroom. Educational legitimacy thus emerges through a continuous process of representational stabilization in which professional presence becomes culturally codified and socially recognizable. The relationship between symbolic capital and pedagogical authority becomes particularly visible in contexts marked by institutional instability or weakened educational prestige. Under such conditions, formal status alone proves insufficient for sustaining legitimacy. Symbolic authority increasingly depends upon communicative coherence, interpretative competence and the capacity to regulate relational dynamics through credible forms of self-representation. The teacher's image transforms into a strategic educational resource, capable of mediating trust, engagement and symbolic recognition. Recent educational research has further demonstrated that communication functions not merely as a channel of information but as a producer of institutional legitimacy, parental trust and symbolic authority, particularly in educational environments characterized by strong community involvement and public visibility (Birescu Iacob, 2025).

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital offers significant explanatory value in this regard. Symbolic capital derives from socially recognized forms of prestige, distinction and credibility accumulated through educational, cultural and communicative practices. Within pedagogical environments, symbolic capital manifests through academic reputation, rhetorical competence, intellectual refinement, ethical consistency and institutional visibility. Such elements structure the perception of authority independently of administrative hierarchy, producing forms of recognition grounded in symbolic legitimacy rather than bureaucratic control. Language occupies a central position within these

processes. Educational discourse functions simultaneously as a pedagogical instrument and as a mechanism of symbolic differentiation. Linguistic registers, rhetorical strategies, conceptual precision and communicative rhythm participate in the codification of professional identity. According to Bourdieu, “language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 37). Educational communication reflects asymmetrical relations of legitimacy, through which institutional authority becomes symbolically naturalized. The symbolic dimension of pedagogy extends beyond verbal interaction toward ritualized educational practices and institutional ceremoniality. Academic conferences, examination procedures, evaluative discourse, forms of address and professional etiquette contribute to the construction of symbolic coherence within educational systems. Such practices stabilize institutional identity while simultaneously reinforcing the legitimacy of pedagogical authority. Symbolic predictability generates professional intelligibility. These mechanisms acquire increased complexity within digitally mediated educational environments, characterized by permanent visibility and accelerated representational circulation. Symbolic authority now develops across hybrid communicative spaces, where institutional presence intersects with online exposure, media representation and public discursivity. Educational legitimacy depends upon the teacher’s capacity to maintain symbolic coherence across multiple environments of interaction and visibility. Pedagogical presence emerges, under such conditions, as a form of symbolic mediation structured through communicative competence, representational control and institutional intelligibility. Authority circulates less through explicit domination and increasingly through symbolic recognition, relational credibility and performative consistency. Educational interaction thereby reveals itself as a profoundly semiotic process, organized around visibility, interpretation and legitimacy.

The teacher as symbolic representation

The symbolic dimension of pedagogy extends beyond institutional authority toward broader mechanisms of cultural representation and social intelligibility. Educational presence functions through a dense network of signs, codes and interpretative structures that continuously shape the public perception of the teacher. Within this semiotic configuration, the pedagogical figure acquires the status of symbolic representation, mediating values, norms, hierarchies and cultural expectations through communicative and corporeal visibility. The teacher occupies a highly exposed representational position within

educational environments. Gesture, attire, posture, spatial conduct, vocal rhythm and interactional style participate in the production of symbolic meaning, generating recognizable forms of pedagogical identity. Such elements structure interpretative expectations before the educational discourse itself becomes cognitively processed. Pedagogical visibility therefore operates through mechanisms of symbolic anticipation in which representation precedes content.

Semiotic perspectives developed by Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco offer relevant interpretative instruments for understanding these dynamics. Social interaction unfolds through systems of signs that organize meaning and cultural intelligibility. Barthes emphasized the ideological force of representation, observing that symbolic structures produce socially normalized meanings through processes of cultural codification (Barthes, 1972, p. 109). Educational presence reflects similar mechanisms. The teacher becomes readable through symbolic conventions associated with authority, competence, refinement, emotional regulation and institutional legitimacy. Pedagogical representation develops through continuous acts of symbolic encoding. Professional attire, proxemic regulation, ceremonial interaction and rhetorical precision contribute to the construction of a recognizable educational identity capable of stabilizing authority within relational space. Such symbolic codifications frequently operate at a pre-reflexive level, becoming internalized as natural expressions of professionalism and pedagogical legitimacy. The body itself acquires strong representational value within educational interaction. Corporeality functions as a communicative interface through which authority, openness, distance or vulnerability become publicly articulated. Educational presence thus develops through forms of embodied communication structured around movement, posture, gesture and expressive discipline. The pedagogical body becomes institutionally intelligible.

This perspective allows the articulation of the concept of "pedagogical corporeality", understood as the symbolic organization of bodily presence within educational environments. Pedagogical corporeality regulates visibility, relational accessibility and interactional hierarchy through codified forms of conduct and expressivity. The educational act unfolds not only through conceptual transmission, but also through symbolic mediation performed corporeally and spatially.

The representational dimension of pedagogy becomes particularly visible in ritualized educational contexts. Entering the classroom, initiating evaluative interaction, addressing students, moderating institutional events or participating in academic ceremonies involve highly codified forms of symbolic conduct. Such ritualization stabilizes

institutional order while simultaneously reinforcing pedagogical legitimacy. Educational environments continuously produce symbolic coherence through repetitive interactional structures that naturalize authority and relational hierarchy.

The symbolic figure of the teacher has nevertheless undergone significant transformation under contemporary conditions of digital exposure and communicative acceleration. Traditional representations associated with intellectual distance, formal authority and institutional solemnity increasingly intersect with new expectations centered around accessibility, emotional intelligence, performative expressivity and online visibility. Educational identity becomes fragmented across multiple representational environments requiring permanent adaptation and symbolic recalibration. Digital platforms intensify these dynamics substantially. Educational visibility now circulates beyond classroom boundaries through social media interaction, institutional promotion, virtual teaching environments and public digital discourse. The teacher's image acquires unprecedented exposure, generating new tensions between professionalism, authenticity, symbolic coherence and public accessibility. Symbolic representation becomes permanently negotiable. Such transformations have contributed to the emergence of increasingly fluid pedagogical identities structured through visibility, communicative adaptability and representational multiplicity. Educational legitimacy now depends upon the capacity to maintain coherence across heterogeneous symbolic environments characterized by different relational expectations and interpretative frameworks. Pedagogical presence evolves into a continuous process of symbolic regulation. These developments support the necessity of approaching pedagogy through the broader analytical framework proposed here as the "pedagogy of presence". Educational interaction appears increasingly organized around symbolic mediation, representational intelligibility and communicative performativity. The teacher emerges less as a static institutional figure and more as a dynamic symbolic configuration continuously negotiated within relational, cultural and mediatic space.

Nonverbal communication and pedagogical presence

Educational interaction develops through multiple layers of communication operating simultaneously within the pedagogical environment. Verbal discourse occupies only one dimension of this interactional architecture. A substantial part of educational meaning circulates through nonverbal configurations capable of regulating authority, emotional climate, relational proximity and symbolic legitimacy. Pedagogical presence emerges through a complex

orchestration of visual, vocal, spatial and corporeal signals that structure the perception of credibility and professional coherence. Research in communication theory and interaction studies has repeatedly emphasized the interpretative force of nonverbal communication within social relationships. Albert Mehrabian observed that attitudes and affective meanings are frequently decoded through vocal tone and facial expression rather than through lexical content alone (Mehrabian, 1972, p. 53). Educational environments intensify these mechanisms due to the asymmetrical and highly visible nature of pedagogical interaction. Students continuously interpret emotional regulation, authority and authenticity through subtle communicative indicators embedded within gesture, posture, rhythm and vocal modulation. Pedagogical authority develops partially through corporeal intelligibility. Bodily conduct regulates the symbolic architecture of interaction by organizing distance, accessibility, dominance or relational openness. Proxemic positioning, eye contact, movement within classroom space and gestural precision influence the perception of competence and emotional stability. Educational communication acquires strong spatial dimensions structured around visibility, orientation and corporeal presence. Contemporary educational communication research also emphasizes the importance of relational engagement, emotional resonance and meaning-making processes in sustaining pedagogical interaction, particularly in early educational settings (Birescu Iacob, 2026).

The concept of proxemics elaborated by Edward T. Hall offers a particularly relevant analytical perspective in this context. Spatial organization functions as a cultural mechanism regulating interactional hierarchy and relational dynamics. Classroom positioning, territorial distribution and movement patterns contribute to the symbolic codification of pedagogical authority. Excessive distance may generate emotional fragmentation and communicative rigidity, while uncontrolled proximity risks destabilizing professional hierarchy. Educational space thus requires continuous relational calibration.

Kinesics similarly occupies an important role within pedagogical interaction. Ray Birdwhistell conceptualized bodily movement as a structured communicative system capable of transmitting culturally intelligible meanings (Birdwhistell, 1970, p. 81). Gestural economy, expressive coherence and postural stability influence the symbolic readability of educational presence. Fragmented movement, visual avoidance or excessive corporal tension may weaken authority by generating perceptions of uncertainty or communicative inconsistency. The voice itself functions as a major symbolic instrument within educational environments. Vocal rhythm, intonation, tempo, pauses

and acoustic intensity regulate attention, emotional climate and interactional hierarchy. Pedagogical discourse unfolds through a sonic architecture capable of generating involvement, discipline, trust or symbolic distance. Vocal modulation contributes directly to the performative construction of educational authority.

These dimensions become especially significant in relation to emotional regulation. Educational presence frequently depends upon the capacity to maintain expressive coherence under conditions of pressure, conflict or institutional exposure. Facial microexpressions, tension management and vocal stability participate in the symbolic negotiation of professionalism and authority. Paul Ekman demonstrated that emotional expression functions through partially universal systems of facial coding capable of influencing social interpretation and relational response (Ekman, 2003, p. 14). Educational interaction continuously mobilizes such interpretative processes. Nonverbal communication also contributes to the production of symbolic predictability within pedagogical environments. Recurrent interactional patterns stabilize relational expectations and generate forms of communicative coherence perceived as professional reliability. Ritualized greeting formulas, controlled gesturality, consistent posture and regulated emotional expressivity create recognizable symbolic structures that reinforce pedagogical legitimacy. Educational authority thereby acquires corporeal continuity. Romanian communication studies have similarly explored the symbolic dimensions of nonverbal interaction. Septimiu Chelcea emphasized the interpretative complexity of corporeal communication and its influence upon interpersonal perception (Chelcea, 2008, p. 92), while Mihai Dinu analyzed the semiotic density of gesture, voice and relational expressivity within communicative processes (Dinu, 1997, p. 141). Such perspectives support the understanding of pedagogy as a communicative practice structured through multilayered symbolic mediation rather than exclusively through verbal instruction. Contemporary educational environments further intensify the relevance of nonverbal communication due to increased visibility and media exposure. Online teaching, recorded lectures, digital conferences and hybrid educational formats amplify the visual dimension of pedagogical interaction. The teacher's image circulates continuously through screens, cameras and virtual interfaces where corporeal readability becomes central to symbolic legitimacy. Educational presence develops increasingly through technologically mediated forms of visibility requiring advanced communicative reflexivity. Pedagogical presence depends upon the integration of verbal precision, corporeal coherence, emotional regulation and symbolic intelligibility

into a stable communicative configuration. Educational authority circulates through embodied performance. Visibility itself becomes pedagogical language.

Public speaking and the performative dimension of teaching

Pedagogical interaction unfolds through forms of public communication structured around visibility, discursivity and symbolic influence. Classroom dynamics, academic presentations, institutional events and digital teaching environments position the teacher within a permanently exposed communicative framework that requires rhetorical control, expressive coherence and interactional adaptability. Teaching develops through performative mechanisms capable of organizing attention, emotional engagement and symbolic credibility within educational space. The performative dimension of pedagogy derives from the fundamentally public nature of educational discourse. The teacher speaks before an audience, regulates interactional rhythm, negotiates authority and maintains symbolic control over communicative space. Such dynamics exceed the technical transmission of information, involving instead complex forms of staging, mediation and rhetorical embodiment. Educational discourse acquires scenic architecture.

This perspective resonates strongly with the dramaturgical sociology elaborated by Erving Goffman, who conceptualized social interaction through metaphors of theatrical performance, role enactment and impression control. Goffman argued that individuals construct socially intelligible identities through “performances” designed to regulate audience perception (Goffman, 1959, p. 32). Educational environments intensify these performative mechanisms through asymmetrical authority structures and continuous public exposure. Pedagogical presence depends upon the capacity to sustain expressive coherence within highly visible interactional contexts. Public speaking occupies a central position within this configuration. Vocal regulation, rhetorical precision, discursive rhythm and narrative structuring influence not only cognitive reception, but also symbolic legitimacy and relational climate. Educational discourse functions simultaneously as informational transmission and symbolic performance. Attention, credibility and emotional engagement emerge through rhetorical orchestration. Contemporary educational communication increasingly incorporates techniques associated with performative rhetoric and persuasive discourse. Storytelling, strategic pauses, vocal modulation, conceptual framing and emotional resonance participate in the production of pedagogical impact. Such mechanisms facilitate interpretative accessibility while simultaneously reinforcing symbolic

authority through expressive competence. The teacher becomes architect of communicative atmosphere.

The growing influence of digital educational culture has further amplified these dynamics. Online lectures, recorded courses, conferences and hybrid teaching formats expose pedagogical discourse to expanded audiences and accelerated visibility. Educational communication now unfolds within environments shaped by audiovisual expectations, performative immediacy and fragmented attention economies. Discursive monotony generates rapid disengagement, while expressive coherence stabilizes symbolic presence within digitally mediated interaction. These transformations have contributed to the emergence of what may be conceptualized as "performative pedagogy" – an educational configuration structured around rhetorical visibility, communicative embodiment and symbolic engagement. Performative pedagogy does not imply theatrical artificiality or superficial spectacularization. Rather, it reflects the increasing importance of expressive mediation in educational environments characterized by informational saturation and communicative acceleration. The distinction between performativity and theatrical excess becomes particularly important in this context. Educational legitimacy depends upon symbolic coherence rather than performative exhibitionism. Excessive dramatization risks destabilizing credibility by transforming pedagogical interaction into a spectacle detached from intellectual substance. Symbolic authority requires equilibrium between rhetorical expressivity and conceptual density. The voice acquires strategic significance within such dynamics. Vocal modulation regulates educational tempo, emotional atmosphere and interactional hierarchy. Silence itself functions rhetorically through tension management, emphasis and symbolic control over communicative rhythm. Educational discourse develops through acoustic architecture capable of structuring interpretative focus and relational engagement simultaneously. Rhetorical competence also contributes to the production of pedagogical memorability. Concepts articulated through narrative framing, metaphorical density and emotionally intelligible discourse generate stronger forms of cognitive anchoring and symbolic resonance. Educational communication thereby acquires aesthetic dimensions linked to discursivity, rhythm and expressive style. The pedagogical act unfolds through communicative texture as much as through informational content.

Romanian communication theory similarly emphasized the relationship between rhetoric, symbolic influence and public discursivity. Mihai Dinu analyzed communicative performance as a multilayered process involving linguistic precision, expressive control and symbolic

intelligibility (Dinu, 2007, p. 214), while Dumitru Borțun highlighted the strategic role of image and public representation within contemporary communicative environments (Borțun, 2013, p. 67). Such perspectives support the understanding of educational discourse as a sophisticated form of symbolic mediation structured through rhetorical presence and relational performativity. Pedagogical authority circulates through communicative embodiment, rhetorical coherence and symbolic expressivity. Educational presence acquires scenic dimensions regulated through discursivity, visibility and interactional control. Teaching increasingly operates through performative intelligibility.

Impression management and educational identity

Contemporary educational environments expose pedagogical identity to continuous processes of public interpretation, symbolic negotiation and representational evaluation. Educational legitimacy develops within increasingly visible interactional frameworks where professional credibility depends upon communicative coherence, relational regulation and symbolic consistency across multiple contexts of exposure. Under such conditions, impression management becomes strategically significant within the architecture of pedagogical presence. The concept of impression management elaborated by Erving Goffman offers an essential analytical framework for understanding the mechanisms through which educational identity becomes socially intelligible. Goffman conceptualized social interaction as a dramaturgical process structured around controlled self-presentation, symbolic performance and audience perception. According to his perspective, individuals regulate social interaction through carefully organized expressive conduct intended to stabilize specific impressions within relational space. "When an individual appears before others," Goffman observed, "his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have" (Goffman, 1959, p. 13).

Educational interaction intensifies these dynamics substantially, due to the asymmetrical distribution of authority and the ritualized nature of pedagogical space. The teacher occupies a highly exposed symbolic position requiring continuous regulation of discourse, emotional expressivity, corporeal conduct and relational accessibility. Pedagogical identity develops through permanent processes of symbolic calibration structured around institutional expectations, cultural norms and communicative visibility. The distinction proposed by Goffman between "front stage" and "backstage" behavior has a particular relevance within educational contexts. Classroom interaction, academic conferences, institutional ceremonies and digital

teaching environments constitute highly codified performative spaces in which professional identity becomes publicly enacted. Symbolic coherence depends upon the capacity to maintain stability across these visible arenas while simultaneously managing the tensions generated by emotional fatigue, institutional pressure and communicative overexposure. Educational identity emerges less as a fixed professional essence and more as a dynamic representational construction negotiated through interactional performance. Vocal regulation, rhetorical precision, emotional discipline, visual presentation and relational conduct contribute to the stabilization of pedagogical credibility. Professional presence develops through symbolic continuity. In educational contexts involving minority-language and bilingual instruction, professional identity is additionally shaped by the teacher's role as a cultural mediator and linguistic model, which amplifies the importance of symbolic consistency and relational credibility (Birescu Iacob, 2024)

These processes have become increasingly complex under conditions of digital mediation and permanent online visibility. Social media platforms, institutional promotion strategies, virtual teaching environments and public digital discourse have profoundly transformed the representational ecology of the teaching profession. Educational identity now circulates simultaneously across physical and virtual spaces characterized by different interactional expectations and symbolic codes. The teacher's image consequently undergoes continuous public reinterpretation. Personal visibility, professional discourse, online interaction and institutional affiliation intersect within expanded frameworks of symbolic exposure capable of influencing pedagogical legitimacy. Educational professionalism increasingly depends upon the management of hybrid identities structured through academic authority, relational accessibility and digital representation. Similar conclusions were reached in a study examining communication and image construction within educational institutions, where symbolic coherence, communicative rituals and public visibility were identified as key factors contributing to legitimacy and trust (Birescu Iacob, 2025). Such transformations generate significant tensions between authenticity and strategic self-presentation. Excessive performative control risks producing artificiality and symbolic rigidity, while uncontrolled exposure may destabilize professional authority through the erosion of relational boundaries and institutional coherence. Educational interaction therefore requires advanced forms of representational reflexivity capable of regulating visibility without generating communicative fragmentation.

The symbolic dimension of impression management becomes particularly visible in relation to emotional regulation. Educational environments frequently demand controlled affective expression under conditions of evaluative pressure, institutional conflict or relational instability. Emotional discipline participates directly in the construction of pedagogical legitimacy by generating perceptions of competence, stability and symbolic reliability. Educational authority circulates partially through affective intelligibility.

Professional image similarly functions as a strategic symbolic resource within pedagogical interaction. Dress code, discursivity, etiquette, punctuality, ceremonial conduct and digital presence contribute to the codification of educational identity within institutional environments. Such elements generate forms of symbolic predictability that reinforce professional credibility and relational trust. Image operates as a mechanism of institutional intelligibility rather than superficial aesthetic projection. Romanian communication studies have repeatedly emphasized the strategic role of public image within contemporary communicative structures. Dumitru Borțun analyzed image construction as a process of symbolic positioning structured through credibility, coherence and relational perception (Borțun, 2005, p. 118), while Camelia Beciu explored the relationship between public representation, discourse and social legitimacy within communicative environments shaped by media exposure and symbolic competition (Beciu, 2011, p. 76). Such perspectives support the understanding of pedagogical identity as a representational configuration continuously negotiated through symbolic interaction. Educational presence develops through complex processes of communicative self-regulation, symbolic mediation and interactional performance. The teacher operates within a permanently visible relational field where authority depends increasingly upon representational coherence, emotional intelligibility and symbolic adaptability. Pedagogical identity unfolds through impression architecture.

Typologies of pedagogical presence in contemporary education

The diversification of educational environments, communicative practices and representational expectations has generated increasingly heterogeneous forms of pedagogical presence. Traditional teacher typologies structured exclusively around authority, methodology or personality no longer possess sufficient explanatory capacity for contemporary educational contexts marked by symbolic exposure, performative visibility and digital mediation. Pedagogical identity currently develops through multidimensional configurations shaped by

communicative style, relational positioning, symbolic capital and representational strategy.

The typologies proposed in our study derive from the intersection between symbolic authority, communicative performance, institutional visibility and relational mediation. These configurations should not be interpreted as rigid categories or fixed professional identities. Educational practice frequently produces hybrid forms characterized by fluidity, overlap and contextual adaptation. The following models function primarily as analytical constructs intended to illustrate dominant tendencies within the contemporary pedagogy of presence.

Profile of presence	Core source of authority	Dominant communicative style	Main strength	Potential risk
Institutional-ritual presence	Institutional position, rules, formal legitimacy	Formal, regulated, rule-governed communication	Stability, predictability, clarity of roles	Perceived distance, rigidity, limited relational warmth
Performative-rhetorical presence	Public visibility, rhetorical competence, stage management	Expressive, persuasive, engaging, audience-oriented	High engagement, attention, motivational impact	Superficiality, risk of manipulation, image over content
Relational-empathic presence	Trust, empathy, relational availability, care	Dialogical, supportive, attentive, inclusive	Strong relationships, emotional safety, inclusion	Boundary erosion, over-involvement, role diffusion
Expert-symbolic presence	Expertise, cultural capital, professional reputation	Authoritative, coherent, content-oriented	Credibility, respect, recognition	Elitism, accessibility distance, perceived inflexibility
Digital-representational presence	Online visibility, digital identity, networked presence	Multiplatform, curated, interactive	Accessibility, extended reach, community building	Hyperexposure, loss of privacy, identity fragmentation

Note. The profiles are not mutually exclusive; most educators combine elements from multiple profiles depending on context and audience.

Table 1. Profiles of pedagogical presence in contemporary educational environments (own source).

The institutional teacher

The institutional teacher embodies pedagogical authority through symbolic stability, procedural coherence and institutional codification. Educational legitimacy derives primarily from professional rigor, academic discipline, ceremonial conduct and adherence to institutional norms regulating educational interaction. Such pedagogical presence generates predictability, symbolic order and formal credibility within educational environments. Communication within this model privileges discursivity marked by conceptual precision, rhetorical control and interactional hierarchy. Symbolic authority circulates through professional distance, ritualized conduct and the visible embodiment of institutional legitimacy. Dress code, punctuality, procedural consistency and academic etiquette reinforce the representational architecture of authority. This typology preserves strong connections with traditional representations of the teacher as guarantor of educational order and cultural continuity. Excessive formalization nevertheless risks generating communicative rigidity, emotional distancing and diminished relational flexibility, particularly within educational contexts increasingly structured around interactional openness and participatory communication.

The performative teacher

The performative teacher constructs pedagogical presence through rhetorical visibility, expressive dynamism and communicative intensity. Educational interaction unfolds through staging mechanisms capable of generating emotional engagement, attentional regulation and symbolic memorability. Voice modulation, storytelling, scenic control and discursive rhythm occupy central positions within this pedagogical configuration. Performative authority develops through charisma, rhetorical fluency and symbolic expressivity rather than through procedural distance or institutional solemnity. The classroom acquires the characteristics of an interactional stage structured around communicative atmosphere and audience engagement. Educational discourse circulates through emotional resonance and performative intelligibility. This model responds efficiently to educational environments characterized by fragmented attention and accelerated informational circulation. Symbolic legitimacy remains dependent, however, upon equilibrium between rhetorical expressivity and intellectual substance. Excessive spectacularization risks destabilizing pedagogical credibility through the transformation of educational discourse into performative exhibition detached from conceptual density.

The relational teacher

The relational teacher organizes pedagogical presence around emotional accessibility, interactional proximity and communicative reciprocity. Educational legitimacy derives from empathy, relational intelligence and the capacity to generate psychologically secure learning environments structured through dialogue and participatory interaction. Communication within this model privileges active listening, emotional responsiveness and flexible interactional dynamics. Symbolic authority circulates through trust, relational availability and affective coherence rather than through hierarchical distance. Educational interaction acquires collaborative dimensions centered around negotiation, support and interpersonal mediation. This pedagogical configuration reflects broader transformations affecting educational culture, particularly the growing emphasis placed upon emotional wellbeing, inclusivity and relational competence. Difficulties emerge, however, when excessive proximity weakens symbolic hierarchy or destabilizes institutional authority through diminished professional differentiation.

The symbolic teacher

The symbolic teacher constructs pedagogical legitimacy through cultural prestige, intellectual refinement and representational coherence. Symbolic authority develops through accumulated cultural capital manifested in discursivity, academic presence, conceptual sophistication and institutional credibility. Educational interaction acquires strong symbolic density. This typology reflects the pedagogical figure as cultural representative and intellectual mediator within educational space. Authority circulates through symbolic recognition generated by professional distinction, rhetorical elegance and epistemic legitimacy. Corporeal conduct, discursive precision and ceremonial presence contribute to the stabilization of educational prestige.

The symbolic teacher exerts influence primarily through representational force and interpretative authority rather than through coercive regulation or emotional performativity. Educational legitimacy emerges through admiration, symbolic credibility and cultural recognition. Excessive symbolic distance may nevertheless generate perceptions of elitism or communicative inaccessibility within highly relational educational environments.

The digital-representational teacher

The digital-representational teacher develops pedagogical presence across hybrid environments integrating institutional interaction, online

visibility and digital communication. Educational identity circulates simultaneously through physical and virtual spaces characterized by continuous exposure and accelerated representational mobility. This pedagogical configuration privileges communicative adaptability, media literacy and strategic image management within digitally mediated environments. Educational authority depends increasingly upon symbolic coherence across heterogeneous communicative platforms including online teaching systems, institutional promotion channels and social media interaction. Digital visibility amplifies pedagogical accessibility while simultaneously increasing symbolic vulnerability. Educational legitimacy becomes dependent upon the regulation of exposure, boundary management and representational continuity across fragmented communicative environments. Hypervisibility generates significant pressures related to authenticity, professional identity and symbolic stability.

These typologies illustrate the progressive transformation of pedagogical presence under contemporary conditions of communicative acceleration, symbolic competition and media exposure. Educational legitimacy no longer develops through singular models of authority, but through complex representational configurations requiring advanced forms of communicative reflexivity, symbolic mediation and relational adaptability. Pedagogical identity unfolds through dynamic architectures of visibility.

Professional protocol as institutional communication

Professional protocol regulates the symbolic architecture of educational interaction through codified forms of conduct, representational predictability and institutional intelligibility. Within pedagogical environments, protocol functions as a communicative structure organizing legitimacy, relational hierarchy and symbolic coherence across academic, administrative and interpersonal contexts. Its significance extends beyond formal etiquette toward broader mechanisms of institutional representation and professional stabilization. Educational institutions operate through ritualized systems of interaction designed to preserve symbolic continuity and organizational credibility. Greeting formulas, ceremonial discourse, academic dress codes, conference conduct, evaluative procedures, email etiquette and public representation contribute to the codification of professional identity within educational space. Such practices generate symbolic predictability capable of stabilizing relational expectations and institutional trust.

Protocol acquires communicative and semiotic dimensions. Educational conduct becomes institutionally readable through visible

adherence to symbolic norms regulating discourse, appearance, timing and interactional behavior. Professional legitimacy circulates partially through these codified forms of representation. Institutional communication unfolds through ritualized coherence. The symbolic force of protocol derives precisely from its capacity to naturalize professional order. Repetitive interactional structures gradually become internalized as expressions of competence, seriousness and institutional credibility. Educational environments produce recognizable symbolic grammars regulating authority and relational conduct through procedural consistency and ceremonial continuity.

This perspective resonates strongly with Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic structures as mechanisms capable of reproducing social legitimacy through embodied practice and cultural internalization. Protocol functions as a form of institutional habitus organizing communicative reflexes, relational positioning and symbolic differentiation within educational environments. Professional conduct acquires codified stability. Educational protocol simultaneously regulates visibility and distance. Excessive rigidity risks generating symbolic coldness and communicative inaccessibility, while insufficient codification may weaken institutional credibility and interactional hierarchy. Pedagogical environments consequently require dynamic equilibrium between formality, relational openness and symbolic authority.

Such dynamics become particularly visible in teacher-parent communication and institutional representation. Meetings, conferences, official correspondence and public educational events expose pedagogical identity to expanded frameworks of symbolic interpretation. Professional discourse, visual presentation, emotional regulation and ceremonial behavior participate directly in the construction of institutional image and educational legitimacy. Educational practice demonstrates that professional protocol is not limited to institutional formality but also contributes to building trust, emotional safety and communicative predictability in relationships with children and families (Birescu Iacob, 2024).

Digital communication has significantly intensified the relevance of professional protocol within contemporary pedagogy. Educational interaction increasingly unfolds through emails, online platforms, virtual meetings and social media environments characterized by accelerated visibility and diminished contextual stability. Communicative boundaries become more fragile under such conditions, requiring advanced forms of symbolic regulation and professional reflexivity. Digital protocol acquires strategic importance within educational communication. Response timing, discursivity,

visual presentation, online accessibility and virtual interactional conduct contribute to the symbolic codification of pedagogical identity within digitally mediated environments. Educational professionalism extends into virtual space.

The expansion of digital exposure has simultaneously transformed the representational relationship between private and institutional identity. Teachers currently navigate communicative environments where personal visibility and professional legitimacy frequently intersect. Symbolic coherence becomes increasingly difficult to maintain across fragmented interactional spaces characterized by permanent exposure and accelerated interpretative circulation. Professional protocol functions as a stabilizing mechanism capable of regulating symbolic continuity within heterogeneous communicative environments. Institutional credibility depends partially upon the maintenance of coherent representational practices capable of preserving legitimacy across physical and digital contexts simultaneously. Educational authority acquires procedural visibility.

Romanian educational and communication studies have similarly emphasized the relationship between institutional image, symbolic representation and professional conduct. Constantin Cucuș analyzed the formative role of educational ethos and pedagogical conduct in shaping the symbolic climate of educational environments (Cucuș, 2014, p. 228), while Camelia Beciu highlighted the influence of communicative codification upon institutional legitimacy and public representation (Beciu, 2011, p. 119). Such perspectives reinforce the understanding of protocol as a communicative mechanism structuring symbolic order and relational intelligibility.

Professional protocol ultimately reflects the institutional dimension of the pedagogy of presence. Educational authority develops through visible forms of symbolic coherence capable of organizing interactional stability, representational credibility and institutional continuity. Pedagogical presence acquires procedural form through codified communication.

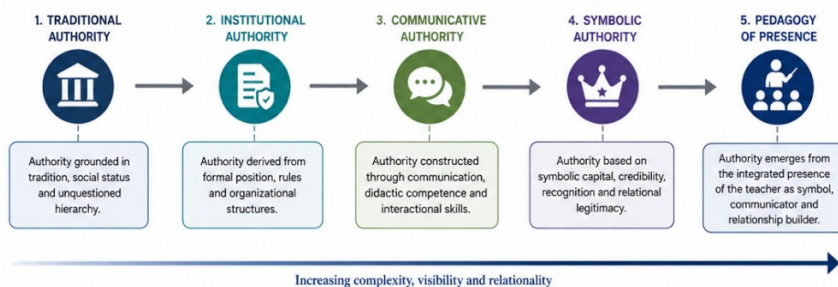


Figure 2. The evolution of educational authority: from tradition to pedagogy of presence (own source)

Conclusions

Contemporary pedagogy develops within communicative environments structured by visibility, symbolic circulation and permanent representational exposure. Educational authority no longer derives exclusively from institutional status or disciplinary hierarchy, but increasingly from communicative coherence, symbolic intelligibility and relational credibility. Pedagogical legitimacy unfolds through complex configurations integrating discursivity, corporeal presence, emotional regulation, rhetorical competence and institutional representation.

The concept of "pedagogy of presence", proposed throughout this study, offers an interpretative framework capable of articulating these transformations within a coherent symbolic-communicative paradigm. Educational interaction reveals itself as a multilayered process organized around performance, visibility and representational mediation. Teaching acquires scenic, relational and semiotic dimensions through which authority becomes publicly recognizable and institutionally validated.

The theoretical perspectives developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman provide substantial explanatory resources for understanding the symbolic structures regulating pedagogical interaction. Bourdieu's analyses concerning symbolic capital, habitus and legitimacy illuminate the mechanisms through which educational authority becomes socially naturalized, while Goffman's dramaturgical sociology clarifies the performative organization of professional identity within visible interactional environments. Educational presence consequently appears structured through symbolic production, communicative embodiment and impression architecture.

Nonverbal communication, rhetorical expressivity and professional protocol participate directly in the codification of pedagogical legitimacy. Gesture, posture, vocal modulation, ceremonial conduct and institutional etiquette generate recognizable symbolic configurations regulating credibility, hierarchy and relational accessibility. Educational communication operates through integrated semiotic systems extending beyond verbal discursivity toward broader mechanisms of representational coherence.

The typologies formulated within this paper illustrate the diversification of pedagogical identity under conditions of communicative acceleration and media exposure. Institutional, performative, relational, symbolic and digital-representational models reflect distinct forms of organizing educational presence through symbolic authority, rhetorical visibility and interactional mediation. Contemporary pedagogy rarely produces pure configurations;

hybridization and representational fluidity increasingly characterize professional educational identity.

Our article was not conceived as empirical research centered upon statistical validation or experimental methodology. Its architecture follows a conceptual-synthetic and procedural orientation situated at the intersection of educational sociology, communication studies, semiotics and pedagogical theory. This study proposes an integrative interpretative model designed to connect several dimensions frequently approached separately within educational literature: symbolic authority, nonverbal communication, public speaking, professional image, impression management and institutional protocol. Its contribution derives primarily from the articulation of these dimensions through the concept of "pedagogy of presence", understood as a symbolic-communicative configuration regulating visibility, legitimacy and relational intelligibility within educational environments. The paper advances the perspective according to which pedagogical authority develops through representational mechanisms requiring forms of professional reflexivity extending beyond methodological competence alone. Educational interaction becomes intelligible through symbolic mediation, communicative embodiment and institutional codification. This perspective is particularly relevant in early childhood and bilingual educational settings, where pedagogical presence frequently functions as a bridge between communication, identity formation and cultural belonging (Birescu Iacob, 2024).

The procedural dimension of this study emerges precisely from this integrative perspective. Rather than proposing rigid behavioral formulas or prescriptive normative structures, our paper outlines several symbolic and communicative configurations capable of functioning as interpretative and professional orientation models for contemporary educators. The proposed typologies reflect possible forms of pedagogical presence shaped by current transformations affecting educational visibility, digital exposure and institutional representation. As recent research suggests, educational communication operates simultaneously as a cognitive, relational and symbolic process, shaping both learning experiences and the social legitimacy of educational actors (Birescu Iacob, 2025; Birescu Iacob, 2026). Educational innovation acquires meanings extending beyond technological modernization or curricular reform toward refined forms of representational coherence, rhetorical embodiment and symbolic intelligibility. The contemporary teacher operates within a dense architecture of visibility where authority circulates through image, discourse, corporeality and communicative performance. Professional presence itself becomes pedagogical discourse.

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Note. Figures 1 and 2 were visually designed with the assistance of an artificial intelligence-based graphic tool. The conceptual framework, categories, interpretations, and all scientific content were developed exclusively by the author. The AI tool was used solely to support the visual representation of the authors' original ideas and did not contribute to the research design, analysis, interpretation, or conclusions.