

The Word and Business Should Always Be Consistent

Gulnara DIASAMIDZE*

“The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee.
And I will pay more for that ability.”

John D. Rockefeller

Abstract

The article views the official-business style of the modern literary language and emphasizes the necessity of its linguistic study for pedagogical applications. It also offers some assignments developing, together with linguistic competence (business vocabulary and terminology, business style) the socio-cultural competence. This is particularly important for those people who strive to occupy a rightful place in society, have a prestigious job, and enjoy the respect of public.

Key words: business Russian, official-business style, documents.

Introduction

Young experts possessing the necessary technical knowledge, but having a poor vocabulary, unable to select appropriate words for clear expression of thought and having difficulty in the correct formulation of the obtained information, undoubtedly lose competition to their colleagues, who have strong literacy skills.

Low level literacy skills represent a serious obstacle in the performance of one's duties. People with such skills are often forced to carry out their professional activities without having a clear idea of the specific nature of communication as a particular type of interaction between people, its cultural norms, peculiarities of correct speech, its functional styles, and the stylistics of the modern Russian language (when communication occurs in Russian).

Besides, under the conditions created currently, the demand on experts on the labour market and his/her competitiveness are largely dependent on his/her literate, professional speech, ability to communicate effectively, knowledge of linguistic manipulation, and persuasion. Business Russian not only helps students to acquire the knowledge of the Russian language, but also familiarizes them with business communication psychology and the specific nature of the speech culture.

Niederhoffer and Pennebaker (n.d.) view three experiments the results of which offer substantial evidence that individuals in dyadic interactions exhibit linguistic style matching (LSM) on both the conversation level as well as on a turn-by-turn level.

Daniushina (2010) even suggests establishing a separate branch of Applied Linguistics – Business Linguistics, a multidisciplinary synergic field for researching the use of

language and communication in business. She writes that business is an important sphere of human activity – it concerns almost everyone. And the sublanguages of business and business communication have their specific properties that require linguistic examination. Many researchers have noticed that business text possesses specific characteristics distinguishing it from other kinds of text (scientific, publicist, fictional, etc.). Business discourse reveals its own communicative, pragmatic, lexical, syntactic, textual, composite, visual-graphic, normative, genre-stylistic and other features.

In Russia, the study of the language of business and business discourse / communication is a young but very promising branch of philology. Some important research has been done by T.Nazarova (2007 - business vocabulary), E.Malyuga (2008 - functional pragmatics of intercultural business communication), T.Shiryayeva (2006 - cognitive models of business discourse), K.Tomashevskaya (2000 - analysis of contemporary economic discourse), A.Zinovieva and Y.Daniushina (2009 - intercultural business communication), and others. These studies can lay a good linguistic foundation for teaching business communication in Russian.

Thus, from the first year of learning, a foreign student not only learns the language of the host country, but also becomes aware of the basic concepts of the culture of the national character, and gradually understands the picture of the world of the bearers of the target language, which influences the linguistic level and predetermines the specific nature of functional styles, including the language of official-business communication.

*An Associated Professor at International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia;

E-mail: gdiasamidze@ibsu.edu.ge

Official-Business Style

The official-business style is a style of documents, international agreements, state acts, legal laws, decrees, charters, instructions, official correspondence, business papers, etc. Many types of business documents have generally accepted certain forms of representation and disposition of the material, and this, undoubtedly, facilitates and simplifies their use. It is not by coincidence, that in this or that case of business practice, blank forms are used which only need to be filled out. Even addresses on envelopes are written in a certain order (differently in different countries, but in a well-established manner) and this has an advantage both for the senders and the post office employees. Therefore, all speech clichés, which simplify and accelerate business communication, are totally appropriate there.

According to Nordquist (2012), systemic functional linguistics is the study of the relationship between language and its functions in social settings. It studies the peculiarities of various functional styles, including official-business.

The use of a socio-cultural approach at the lessons of business communication in the Russian language is seen “as the most acceptable from technological point of view”, since the knowledge of specific nature of different cultures facilitates the avoidance of generalizations and stereotypes. It is desirable that students possess not only linguistic, but also intercultural knowledge, understand cultural codes of the partner’s language, etiquette, names of realia of the modern society, and business advertising. The issue of the role of stereotypes which may negatively affect the outcome of business communication regardless of actual goals, the possibilities and the readiness of communicators is important. Socio-cultural competence gives an idea of the loyalty as well as the falsity of such stereotypes which reduce intercultural distance in situations of business communication. The formation of socio-cultural competence is achieved as a result of the combination of facts of language and culture, when the learning process is formed within the framework of dialogue of cultures. From the content of the subject “Russian as a foreign language: Business Communication” we can outline blocks oriented on the development of socio-cultural competence, which cover typical situations of business communication. They can be divided into written and oral modules, modules “Reading” and “Listening Comprehension”. Official-business style genres perform informational, instructive, and determining functions in various areas of activities. Therefore, the primary form of the implementation of this style is writing. The contents of the conversation may be forgotten, incorrectly remembered, wrongly understood and even intentionally distorted. But if the text is saved in a written form (and recorded in due form), anyone who reads it can be sure of the accuracy of information contained there. There are a num-

ber of circumstances, when saving of written information is not only desirable, but also necessary. Despite the differences in the content of separate genres, their complexity level, official-business speech has the following common stylistic features: the accuracy of formulation, not allowing the possibility of various interpretations; formulation activities; stereotyped, standardized formulation; officiality, strictness of expression of thought, as well as objectivity and logic common also for scientific speech.

The author’s individuality is not demonstrated in the official-business style. This style is very reserved, hardly penetrable for other styles of speech. Definite forms of documents are established in it.

Official-business speech does not reflect individual experience (it deals instead with social experience), as a result of which its vocabulary is maximally generalized from semantic point of view, i.e. one’s acutely peculiar, specified, inimitable style is eliminated, and typical, standardized style is brought to the forefront. Legal essence is important for the official document, therefore, advantage is given to generic concepts, for example, arrive (drive, fly, come, etc.), vehicle (bus, airplane, taxi etc.), populated place (village, city, district, etc.), and so on. When mentioning a person, nouns denominating a person by a sign predetermined by some relation or action are used (teacher T. S. Ivanova, University Rector A.I. Vezhbitskaya, etc.).

The assignments developing the socio-cultural competence include:

1. Exercises based on juxtaposition of linguistic and cultural facts of the native and foreign cultures, identification of their common and distinguishing features.
2. Various types of exercises using authentic material. For example, listening to authentic business and commercial news. Various types of exercises with advertising texts activating reading and listening comprehension skills can be outlined separately.
3. Role play, problematic-communicative assignments.
4. Assignments designed to form the skills of the correct use of nominations of education institutions, professions and companies, payments as well as personal nominations.

Conclusion

Exercises are designed to reinforce and activate learners’ verbal skills on the basis of learning business vocabulary within their communication needs. Students who have formed a socio-cultural competence possess skills which are important for business discourse:

1. can formulate their own expression within the learned topics in Russian, using the arguments appealing to the Russian reality.
2. understand the principles of organization and can produce a coherent oral or written language in accordance

with the socio-cultural situation of business communication.

3. understand the general idea of publicist texts containing commercial and business topics.

4. possess necessary information about etiquette.

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