

# Instructing students in a proficient written intercultural business communication

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**Abstract** - The paper under consideration deals with the peculiarities of written intercultural business communication from the point of view of its proficient characteristics. The authors have analyzed the notions of “utterance”, “text”, “discourse” and revealed the parameters that are important for a written text to be assessed as a means of a good background in order to be able to determine how proficient a written business language is. Dependence has been revealed between the proficient parameters and the process of realizing effective intercultural communication.

**Keywords** – a proficient written intercultural business communication, utterance, text, discourse, proficient characteristics.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The modern trends of education in the social, political and economic conditions of our country cover enhanced requirements for professional formation of future specialists, including the development of communicative abilities. Nowadays, there is a necessity to form demand for intercultural communication in students studying a foreign language. The consolidation of the world economies has made business communication the top field of study.

Lately, the written form of intercultural communication has attracted greater attention of investigators. Modern surveys are indicative of it. According to N. Medvedeva, “the growing complexity of all spheres in people’s lives has placed language proficiency with a focus on writing skills among the most important elements in a specialists’ professional repertoire. The ability to write and move with ease across discourse boundaries is an important requirement of successful professional communication” [1]. As a rule, a commercial correspondence in a foreign language is the basic means of communication, besides it is the most economical, quick and efficient way of sending and receiving information.

The written form priority in business communication is conditioned by a number of factors. One of the most advanced ones is the factor of the expanded use of technology.

Thus, the importance of intercultural written communication aimed at the formation of professional competence is evident and doubtless. Business correspondence being one of the written communication forms makes provision for various spheres of human activities

and makes up the basis of diplomacy, commerce, international economy, scientific and cultural co-operation.

However, the scientists note that “not all international students who speak English as a second language are adequately equipped with the language skills they need to succeed” [2].

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

The significance of the given problem determines the necessity of an operational approach to the formation of knowledge, skills and communicative abilities. Training students in a written business communication anticipates their acquiring the abilities to create a proficient utterance.

With regard to the necessity of studying the subject of investigation, it is important to give consideration to the features of the notion of “a proficient written utterance” from the point of view of linguistic and psycholinguistic theories and identify the relations existing between the notion and the realization process in the intercultural communication.

The results of written speech studying are represented in linguistics, psychology and psycholinguistics in such a diversified fashion that it is quite advisable to analyze all the points of view, not only to review the available ones oriented at our investigation. This step would allow the investigators to determine the initial positions leading to the achievement of the goal set in the article.

## I. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before getting down to the problem consideration, it is necessary to analyze the notion of “utterance” which is a component of the concept under investigation i.e. “a proficient utterance in a written speech”. The notion under consideration has been found out to be far from being simple. Thus, Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication treats an utterance as “any uninterrupted stretch of speech (or sometimes writing) produced by an individual on a particular occasion” [3]. O.S. Akhmanova gives the following definition in the Dictionary of Linguistic Terms: “an utterance is a message unit possessing its notional wholeness that can be accepted by the partner in the given conditions of linguistic communication” [4]. A linguistic encyclopedic dictionary renders “utterance” as “a unit of a speech act: be it a text between pauses completed in a sense relation (or even a whole speech or a novel)” [5]. Being oriented at the participants of a speech

act (characterizing the position of a speaker and anticipating a definite reaction of a partner) is rendered as the main feature of an utterance.

Some scientists associate the notion of “utterance” with the notion of “text”. Thus, the explanatory dictionary by S.A. Kuznetsov gives the following definition: “A text is some words and sentences in a certain connection and order forming some utterance ...” [6]. R.K. Potapova also offers some definitions to our consideration in which the notions of “text” and “utterance” are closely connected: 1) “a text is a structure of any complete and orderly utterance which is independent and correct from the grammar point of view, whether it is oral or in writing; 2) a text is a unity that can be split into utterances; 3) an utterance is a minimum product of a text activity anticipating psychic, physiological, mental and linguistic capacities of a speaker (writer)” [7].

In the context of the present discussion, it is necessary to give consideration to the notion of “a discourse” which is adjacent with the notion of “a text”.

In the opinion of Beaugrande, R, from an author’s point of view, a discourse is a process of coding the information with regard to lexical, grammar and syntax-oriented standards anticipating stylistic, genre, sociocultural, psychological and emotional factors, the cohesion and coherence facilities being used in order to achieve the purpose of communication, i.e. to make the information understandable for its receiver. From the point of view of a receiver, a discourse is a process of the information decoding in correspondence with the lexical, grammar and syntactical standards, stylistic, genre, sociocultural, psychological and emotional factors being taken into consideration. The used cohesion and coherence facilities are very important as a means of a communicative purpose achievement, i.e. in order to receive an author’s information[8].

The notion of discourse has unique features of its own. “Discourse” is compared with “text” by a number of authors (Schiffrin, D. 1994, N.D. Arutyunova 1990, Ye.V. Kovshikova 1997, Ye.S. Kubryakova 2004, etc.) with regard to the characteristics of dynamics, statics, completion, incompleteness. A text is treated as a static completed product and it is not considered in the situation of communication, whereas a discourse is considered to be a dynamic though not always a completed speech event conditioned by a situation: a discourse is “speaking submerged in life” [9]. In other words, “text” is static and completed, whereas “discourse” is dynamic and not always completed. In this connection, it is worth to be marked that “discourse” is not in a contradiction with “text”, though it is “an implementation of a communicative approach to studying a text” [10]. With this approach in mind, we can say that a discourse is a text supplied with the circumstances that are important for the communication the text is being realized in.

The last statement shows that the notion of discourse is wider than that of a text as a discourse possesses some extralinguistic parameters along with linguistic characteristics that are text-specific. It is a textual unity in the aggregation with extralinguistic, that is pragmatic, sociocultural and other factors. Besides, unlike a text, a discourse, first of all, is an example of realizing certain communicative intentions in the context of a given communicative situation and also with regard to a certain partner being a representative of another

culture expressed by linguistic and non-linguistic aids that are proper in the given situation [11].

On the whole, it can be noted that the notion of “discourse” can be defined basing on the analysis of a speech fragment as a process anticipating the number of participants in the event, their knowledge in the given communicative situation. The notion of “text” correlates with the analysis of a speech fragment as a product, and in this case, in the opinion of M.K. Bisimliyeva, the attention is mainly paid to formal aids of its parts connection” [12]. Thus, a text is “a special result of a speaking process” [13]. L.V. Kaplich confirms the above and offers to use the term of “text” while mentioning a product of speaking activities, its characteristics, features, while the term of “discourse” is to be used while mentioning the process of an utterance forming [10].

Thus, as for a text linguistics position, “text” should be given consideration to not only as a self-sufficient and autonomous result or product but mainly as the process of a speech activity characterized by a certain social and cultural context which is discourse [14].

The above-given approaches allow us to make a conclusion that the categories of “text”, “utterance” and “discourse” are closely interrelated and have much in common. As a result, all three categories are equally important to us.

The analysis has shown that the category of text is most strongly in demand (with regard to the frequency of occurrence). Consequently, in order to assess the linguo-didactic realization of a proficient written utterance, which is important for our investigation, it is necessary to give consideration to such categories as “text” (written), “qualifications of the text”, “realization of the text”, the categories being exposed to the most widely examination at present. The suggested logic of material presentation allows us to define the subject matter of the text (in general) and relate its revealed proficient parameters to a written utterance in a foreign language.

The analysis of linguistic and methodological literature devoted to the text (Z.Ya. Turayeva, I.R. Galperin, O.I. Maskalskaya, N.D. Zarubina, G.I. Bubnova, N.K. Garbovski, G.V. Kolshanski, O.S. Akhmanova, T.A. Kazaritskaya, L.V. Kaplich, etc.) makes it possible to state that the point of a proficient written text to be called into being has already been raised. Thus, for example, T.A. Kazaritskaya writes in a paper by hers that “to train writing in the most general sense is to train writing a proficient text” [15]. A.N. Vasilyeva marks that a proficient written text is one of the main components of a speech culture on the whole. She describes the process of writing a proficient text in detail emphasizing its difficulties and showing some possible ways of their overcoming [16]. L.V. Kaplich puts forward the same demand of a necessity to formulate the requirements to a proficient written text with regard to the theory of communicative competence. In her opinion, a proficient text facilitates a successful written communication and is indicative of a high level of a writer’s communicative competence [10]. In a paper of hers, O.L. Kamenskaya treats the problem of necessity and staging in generating an “authentic text” which can be considered as such in case of the author’s being able to make a recipient understand the expressed (the author’s) idea [17]. A conclusion can be made that the “authenticity” of the text in

such interpretation is in direct correspondence with its “proficiency”. Having in mind a proficient academic text, Radayev V.V. pays special attention in his paper to “...the structure of the work, content conditioned connection of the parts (even if they are written in different styles), and the logical transitions between them”. If the text is not quite clear, it means most probably that the views have not been assimilated quite well by the author. V.V. Radayev [18].

Thus, we can see that the authors of the papers above approach the definition and meaning of a text “proficiency” in different ways. In this connection, it seems reasonable to treat surveying different interpretations of a written text as a kind of a linguistic education oriented at revealing a text proficiency, that is the features that are important for a text to be characterized as a proficient formation.

It has been established that qualifying a text with regard to its proficiency parameters is far from being a goal in itself for different authors. The analysis of approaches to studying the category of “text” allows us to state that its “proficiency” is most often looked upon as an immanent characteristic of a text. Therefore, one can make a conclusion basing on a text definition, that the authors indicate at its proficiency essence directly or indirectly. In order to confirm this, the following wording can be given intended for revealing proficient parameters of a text.

N.D. Zarubina considers a text to be a speech product in a written form generated by a communication participant, it is completed and correctly arranged [19]. Consequently, with regard to the given definition the proficiency of the text shows itself in the completeness and correctness of its arrangement in accordance with the type of production.

A.N. Vasilyeva is of the opinion that a text is an independent, integral, goal-seeking complicated structure of speech generated by one author. It is supposed to possess a number of characteristic features such as self-sufficiency, integrity, goal-seeking, complicity [16].

In accordance with the definition offered by V.P. Purtseladze, a written text has been represented as an independent one, original and different from an oral form of a speaking activity manifestation [20]. Consequently, the scientist particularly emphasizes such features of proficiency as self-sufficiency, originality, singularity as compared with an oral text.

I.R. Galperin gives the following definition: “A text is a goal-oriented speech product containing an indefinite number of grammar structures (sentences) and having a definite meaning at that which is different from the indices of meaning characterizing these grammar structures” [21]. There is an important point in this definition. The author emphasizes that a combination of a group of sentences (i.e. a text) is capable of acquiring its own meaning that is different from “indices of meaning” related to separate sentences contained by this group. A text is not just a sum of sentences, it is a speech fragment of greater importance possessing a special self-sufficient meaning. Consequently, regarding these all, wholeness, self-sufficiency, integrity (with regard to uniting some number of sentences) and meaningfulness are the proficient characteristics of a text.

The problem of writers’ observing the above parameters of proficiency was raised more than once with regard to

methodology of foreign languages training, the case involving the production of utterances in a foreign language (N.A. Shchetkova, Ye.G. Skosorenko, L.V. Kaplich). In the papers mentioned, it has been emphasized that the proper attention to these characteristics guarantees the proficiency of both written and oral verbal activities. This is why they have to be the object of training efforts beginning from the earliest stage of acquiring a foreign language.

Thus, surveying linguistic and linguo-didactic literature devoted to text (I.R. Galperin 1981, N.S. Valgina 2003, A.A. Kazantseva 2004, L.V. Kaplich 1996, Ye.S. Kubryakova 2004, S.N. Musulbes 2005, N.B. Khokhlova 2003, A.V. Yung 2004, etc.) allow us to state that each text is assessed with regard to a whole complex of criteria, the basic constituents of the criteria being:

- 1) information-structural features, such as coherence, logic, precision, perspicuity and availability;
- 2) tone (stylistic) qualities (correctness, clarity, speech culture) [22].

Besides, a number of authors emphasize: wholeness (I.R. Galperin 1981, L.V. Kaplich 1996, S.N. Musulbes 2005, Nguen Tkhi Bik Lan 2006, etc.), intended addressee (Ye.V. Beloglazova 2001, O.P. Vorobyova 1993, A.A. Kazantseva 2004, Ye.S. Kubryakova 2004, Z.Ya. Turayeva 1997, etc.), sociability, completeness (I.R. Galperin 1981, Yu.M. Lotman 1970, Yu.A. Sinitsa 2002), meaningfulness (L.V. Kaplich 1996, L.P. Tarnayeva 2000), composition statefulness and rating inside a certain type (Yu.A. Sinitsa 2002) etc.

All the above parameters belong to a full degree to the sphere of written text analysis. Basing on their correlation with the specificity of written business communication, it is possible to come to the conclusion that the same criteria must be characteristic for a business proficient written text. In other words, “a literal perception and understanding a message meaning” leading to the achievement of an intercultural business written communication as a goal are possible only in the case of a business letter possessing the indicated proficient characteristics.

Moreover, the peculiarities of the business atmosphere in a written communication impose certain obligations on the parameter system of business writing. The obligation revealing is facilitated by a number of papers devoted to investigating business communication texts. The following parameters of business writing are considered to be special with regard to the investigators’ papers:

- objectivity (M.M. Isupova 2003),
- completeness and optimality of information, logic and argumentativeness of presentation, precision and laconism of wording (Ye.V. Kovshikova 1997).

It is indicated by M.M. Isupova, that these properties are indicative of business writing dependence both on the sphere of their “ideal” existence, i.e. a discourse, and on the sphere of being available, i.e. a sphere of business [23].

Let us give more detailed consideration to the discourse properties indicated and represent them in the comparison of “a written text/discourse – a written business text/discourse”.

Coherence is considered to be the main feature of written discourse. It is expressed as “a series of semantically attached

utterances forming a discourse” [24]. The linguo-semantic unity of a written business discourse is achieved due to such aids of coherence that not only “turn a set of separate ideas into a text, but also invigorate the degree of their effect on a recipient”[24].

Along with the coherence, the feature of integrity (wholeness) is also considered by investigators to be among proficient characteristics of all written discourses, a business discourse including. It can be related to coherence, but it does not depend on it. The integrity of a text is identified as a global connection of text components at the content level. It is facilitated by keywords and their substitutes [22]. As regards a business letter discourse the wholeness is connected with its composition statefulness, the latter being expressed with the structure of an utterance corresponding to a certain scheme.

In O.L. Kamenskaya’s opinion, a written discourse “is really at work only while being in the interrelation with the intended recipient”, the information being anticipated by the author and being received by the recipient can partly be omitted in the process of the interrelation or it can partly be added and digested [17]. Consequently, an address intention approach has been recognized as one more proficient characteristic which is particularly important with regard to a business written discourse, as far as due regard for a certain recipient facilitates success and mutual understanding of the partners in their professional activities [25]. Such a position becomes particularly significant with regard to business written communication in the conditions of intercultural contacts. In this case, the achievement of intercultural communication purpose is facilitated by mastery of “a set involving both linguistic and extralinguistic aids conditioned by the specificity of the national and cultural mentality of a foreign communicant [25].

Above all this, it is necessary to emphasize the role of such parameter as a situational approach in business correspondence. Its significance is determined by the fact that any discourse comes into being and is functioning in a certain linguo-cultural community. Therefore, the understanding of a foreign communicant text activities and the construction of a proficient written business discourse is possible only on the basis of the acquired system of cross-cultural background knowledge, that is characteristic for this or that culture connected with another language (Yu.A. Sinitsa 2002). As a result, situational features of communication and the characteristics of communication participants first of all come to the foreground following this approach.

Text interpretability belongs to a number of content-related proficient parameters. From the point of view of V.I. Karasik (2006), this parameter is a more precise version of the intended address approach and shows itself in more frequent categories of precision and clarity.

The parameter of precision is in the closest connection with the previous characteristic: it is necessary to represent extremely clearly and in distinct terms the contents of a business letter, its objective part being developed with complete precision concerning each certain business: to be precise with the communicator in the conditions of a business communication means to organize the text of a business letter in a way for it to be understandable while being decoded by a generalized recipient possessing certain status characteristics and residing in a particular social situation. Explicitness and

unambiguity of a discourse written language is achieved due to a subjective and communicative precision that is facilitated both with the precision of facts and the words used and the precision of the author’s concept realization in the document. Thus, it is the given proficient feature of a business discourse functioning in the conditions of the intercultural communication that facilitates the co-occurrence of an author’s intention and the intended recipient’s interpretation, the “effect of recurrent reading having been eliminated” (B.A. Lapidus 1986, I.G. Ulyanova 1997) for it comes into being as a result of a written text in a foreign language being not understood to the full.

Information value rates among the leading characteristics of a business letter and is a factor of efficiency of a notional acquisition and a message adequate interpretation.

In this regard, it should be marked that more often than not the information value of business letter texts is not in correspondence with the document consumer-oriented capacity and is not a synonym of useful information, unlike private letters. It is connected with a requirement to business communication of being laconic in working while this is, as it is indicated by N.Yu. Chigridova, somewhat in contradiction with “the strategy of information completeness”. At the same time, the availability of this characteristic anticipates that a communicant has to “proceed from time and material saving, linguistic and paralinguistic facilities and simultaneously dose the information with regard to its necessity and sufficiency, as well as to take into consideration the presuppositions and ideas of the intended recipient with regard to the category of a letter.”[26]. This tendency is connected with the general rule of a language economy, while in the case of intercultural business written communication it is connected with a shortened physical extent of a speech message, its greater semantic capacity and smaller size. Therefore, information in business messages should not be excessive though it should be complete enough as it is one of the main conditions facilitating “communicative efficiency” (N.D. Golev 2000) of a business letter.

The uniformity of speaking aids and their frequent occurrence along with the set phrases in a business letter facilitate the achievement of word economy. Standardization offers many facilities both on the technical part and with regard to perception. In particular, any standard contributes to normal people’s relations which is particularly important when communicants are meant to be the ones that belong to different lingo-cultural communities. Therefore, the document cliché is the indicator of a linguistic culture level as regards documents.

Any business letter must be well founded, that is convincing. “The art to convince” is particularly important in business correspondence, as it is conditioned by the necessity of acquiring a customer or a production consumer, a supporter or a like-minded person for business interrelations. Argumentativeness is the basic condition of a business letter being well-founded, correct and precise facts having been selected.

In connection with the requirement of clarity, precision, reasonability of a business letter narration, a necessity develops to update such a proficient parameter as logic which anticipates such features of a text as “a succession in a material narration, idea consistency, precision and sufficiency of

reasoning, a proper correlation of general and specific facts” [22]. In this connection, it should be marked that it is in business texts that a logic nature of an idea reveals itself straightforwardly, as logic distortions in business written communication being generated in the conditions of intercultural relations can result in serious distortions of truth interfering with the goal achievement in the process of intercultural communication.

Neutrality is one of the features that are generally recognized in business communication and is realized by means of a common literary vocabulary which is stylistically neutral (A.N. Vasilyeva 1990, B.N. Golovin 1988, I.B. Golub 1997, M.N. Kozhina 1990, G.P. Pleshchenko 2001, G.Ia. Solganik 2004, etc.). In its turn, this feature is connected with such characteristic as objectivity that we deal with when subjective elements have been cut fine.

Simultaneously with these parameters role, it is rightfully to indicate that the text of a business letter rates among the documents of a lower standardization level (as compared with other business papers). In the opinion of F. E. Jandt, it allows the author of a business letter to “generate a text of a copyright kind, that is, to introduce the features of an individual style into a given standard form using, for example, appellative vocabulary, exclamatory and interrogative sentences” [27]. This is connected with a business letter being characterized by more flexible possibilities of realizing communicative intentions as compared with other genres of business communication (an administrative order, a call, a notification, a certificate). This fact has also been confirmed by the observations made by N.Yu. Chigridova, who indicates that the trend of the refusal from the ceremonious and lumpy style has shown itself recently, whereas the naturalness of business communication has become the norm. The author has also revealed “the strategy of expressivity” in business letters which allows a communicant some self-actualization and emotion demonstration [26].

All the above mentioned makes it possible to conclude that such parameters as expressivity, emotionality and expressiveness are typical for a business letter. On account of this, the speech acquires an emotionally personalized and consequently a deeply influencing character. The availability of these business letter parameters points to a high speech culture of the writing person as an expressiveness is recognized to be (A.N. Vasilyeva 1990, B.N. Golovin 1988, I.B. Golub 1997, M.N. Kozhina 1990, T.P. Pleshchenko 2001, etc.) one of the basic speech peculiarities indicative of its perfection. A perfect speech is one of the conditions contributing to the participants of intercultural communication in getting an idea of each other.

The availability of expressivity and emotionality save the participants of inter-cultural communication from the so-called communicative mistakes that are a kind of a barrier, i.e. an obstacle with regard to the efficiency of intercultural written communication. Such mistakes are considered to be productive of the inability to transmit denotative information within connotative one which, among other things, expresses the emotional state of a subject.

It should be specified that the expressivity of a written business speech is of another character as compared with the oral one. This kind of expressivity can be called “intellectual – logical” one. It is generated by way of a more careful

selection of the proper language aids, more abstract vocabulary, by sentences having a more complicated structure, due to a greater logical coherence of ideas and a more distinct text articulation revealing passages.

### III. CONCLUSION

To sum up, one can note that coherence, integrity, logic, intended recipient, situational approach, interpretability of the contents, precision, information value, laconism, objectivity, argumentativeness of a case, expressivity, emotional personalization, expressiveness are proficient and integral characteristics of proficient written business discourse.

Having synthesized the information obtained, it is easy to note that the available characteristic features are integral ones with regard to a proficient written intercultural business communication. It should also be added that some other traditional linguistic characteristics of a text, such as a sequence of information, clarity, plainness, the completeness of the contents presented, etc. belong to the same group. The above-mentioned authors in their papers on linguistics are indicative of the fact and state that a text must be proper stylistically and its background assumption is to be realized appropriately by means of a corresponding speaking form. While generating a proficient text it is necessary to carry out a search for linguistic facilities that fit adequately the communicative purpose.

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