

# **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND SELF-DISCLOSURE**

## **AS ASPECTS OF A SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING**

### **(STATING A RESEARCH PROBLEM)**

#### **Abstract:**

The paper states a problem of business communication and language teaching in the times when technological advances in communication inevitably exert their influence on the way people speak. Efficiency of business negotiations heavily relies on the speech etiquette and level of self-disclosure while negotiating. While business communication prescribes a specific code of linguistic behavior, the necessity to establish a relationship of mutual trust between the parties brings about the desire to self-disclose. A proper level of self-disclosure and business style of verbal communication are equally important, along with grammar and vocabulary of a second language. It seems imperative to take these facts into account while teaching English to university students majoring in management, international relations and other fields.

#### **Key-words:**

Business communication, self-disclosure, speech etiquette, second language acquisition, foreign language teaching.

Communication is a crucial aspect of human life. It plays a major role in all kinds of interaction between people, be it personal or business. The ability to put ideas across and to communicate properly helps to effectively maintain relationship with other people and organizations. Therefore, teaching foreign languages proves to be an extremely complicated and multifaceted job involving a number of aspects and dictating a teacher to cover – more or less – all of them. In the modern fast changing age it becomes crucial not only to teach students so as to help them acquire necessary linguistic competence in a second language (demonstrated in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills), but also educate them in etiquettal niceties and cultural differences between their native language and the one being acquired. The times of digital transformation turn the task of language teaching into even a more challenging one than it used to be, since modern technologies in communication exert great influence on people's speech and behavior.

The language of text messages and Internet chats is gradually leaking into our everyday speech. The principle of economy (when speakers try to make their utterances as efficient as possible) leads to various kinds of reductions, contractions and abbreviations, which, in turn, tend to be increasingly used in writing and affect the way the words of a language are pronounced. The classroom situation shows that it is happening more and more frequently, making it possible to speak of a new task set to a language teacher, a task of explaining to students what is appropriate in formal and business communication and what should be avoided. Such etiquettal aspects of a language acquisition are hard to teach, practise and make them automatic, though not taking them into consideration seems to lead to negative results in any formal or business setting.

As business communication is mainly performed for the commercial benefit of the organization represented by negotiators, it is even more goal oriented than people's everyday social interaction. Moreover, it imposes stricter restrictions on what people should or should not say and how they should verbalize ideas, statements and proposals. On the other hand, establishing mutual trust is hardly impossible without creating a discursive identity on the sides of negotiators, thus disclosing themselves. In relation with this, arises the question of how much communicators can reveal their personalities in business communication.

According to Newstrom and Keith Davis (2002), Business Communication is a multi-dimensional, dynamic and interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts and systematic understanding of scientific theories and practical aspects. To achieve their goal, speakers should be (1) specific, (2) clear [for Confucius - 'In language clarity is everything'], (3) simple, (4) logical, (5) objective, (6) politically correct, to name just the most important moments. However, while the rules of business communication etiquette are well-established and clear and dictate us to avoid personal pronouns and expressions, effective communication can be achieved by establishing affiliation with one's interlocutor, which means that communicators cannot avoid self-disclosure in business communication.

Some attempts have been made to formulate rules of self-disclosure which can be applied to Western societies, while there is hardly any information concerning the East (here I mean the traditional division of the world into the West and the East). For example, Berger and Bradac (1982) emphasize that we should not disclose (1) intimate information, (2) negatively-valued information and (3) should not disclose excessively. Breaking these rules in an inappropriate situational context can lead to a serious loss of face and impede effective communication, let alone business interaction or negotiations.

Even bearing these facts in mind, a speaker cannot avoid disclosing him(her)self through speech, which can be done unintentionally and intentionally. We disclose ourselves unintentionally as ethnicities (by the language we speak), as males or females, as residents of different regions and localities, as members of specific social groups, cultures and subcultures. This self-disclosure is hard to control, though in business communication it might be important, if not vital for the positive outcome of negotiations, especially in a multicultural environment.

On the other hand, intentional self-disclosure, i.e. any information exchange that refers to the self of a speaker, plays a major role in establishing and maintaining an effective relationship, which also contributes to building effective and lasting business contacts. The concept of self-disclosure is interdisciplinary, it lies within two fields – social-psychological and linguistic – and can be considered within these two frames. From the linguistic point of view self-disclosure is connected with pragmatics and the theory of speech acts, namely with disclosive speech acts such as self-praise and third-party complaints. Discursive self and self-disclosure through self-praise and complaints in microblogging has been studied by D.Dayter (2016), who based her research on the Ba-Twit corpus and annotation scheme. However, there are no studies available at present that aim at considering self-disclosure in negotiations and other formal settings, as well as those trying to research into a proper balance between self-disclosure and business etiquette.

Hence a question which deserves serious attention and field study is how much we can disclose ourselves without negatively affecting the results of business communication.

#### References:

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