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## ORAL BUSINESS DISCOURSE AND THE PROBLEMS OF ITS TEACHING TO FOREIGN STUDENTS

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**Abstract.** The paper presents the peculiarities of teaching dialogue and polylogue speech to the foreign students who study Business Russian along with the factors to be taken into consideration in speech production. As an example for analysis, a polylogue used in the teaching process was selected to give grounds for the scenario approach and business role-play.

**Keywords:** Business Russian; dialogue; polylogue; discourse; scenario; business role-play.

Oral business discourse is a complex dialectical unity that contains a diverse information. During its formation, the following factors are taken into consideration: the communicative role of the speaker and the listener (who speaks and whom is the message addressed to) and, as a result, their speech behavior in certain types of dialogue / polylogue; the nature and type of influence on the speaker / hearer that depend on the nature of relation (the type of relations between them) and on the form of communication being direct / indirect (in this case - by phone), the pragmatic vector of communication and, at least, verbal expression of speaker's intentions. The author, according to the model proposed by O.V. Leshchak [1], considers the discourse as a functional-pragmatic type of linguistic activity, i.e. a variant of the linguistic activity specified by social psychological, individual, stylistic, topical, time-space, and activity factors that are the most important. The main aims of business communication are the informative and affective ones that are realized in a certain type of activity - the business activity, which has its own communication participants, who possess status and role characteristics, and typological genres of communication along with related behavior norms, linguistic among others, for these participants.

The aim of professionally-oriented teaching of foreign language (in this case - Business Russian) is the acquisition of the two global competences at the same time - a cognitive-communicative competence (from a functional viewpoint) and a discursive competence (from a pragmatic viewpoint) that are essential for efficient communication in all situations of professional experience. Therefore, this paper is devoted to a range of lingua-didactic issues connected with Business Russian teaching. The fact that Russian Business discourse is taught to foreign students is of great importance for the research; this

implies the right coding and decoding of utterance that can be different in various languages. According to N.I. Zhinkin, the base component of the thinking process is some USC, a universal subjective code, i.e. the language of intellect in what an idea of speech is being formed and then expanded to utterance. Zhinkin's theory considers this USC as international, and this is a prerequisite for understanding of foreign speech. A motif always precedes the formation of a speech act (L.S. Vygotski), which, in its turn, forms a communicative intention - readiness for utterance [2: 73]. It should be mentioned that utterance has generic forms (M.M. Bakhtin), which are present in human consciousness in the form of certain frames or, more precisely, scenarios (determined as activity frames). The complications for teaching of speech acts (responsivity / dialogicity) in oral business discourses consist in: a) teaching of a foreign language, that is why the processes of coding during passing information and its perception do not always coincide even for closely related languages, for example the Russian and Polish languages; b) teaching of a business discourse, i.e. business communication, within the frames of which the peculiarities of pragmatics of utterance of business discourses are taken into account; c) teaching of verbal discourse with all features of oral contact interaction provided; d) the cultural component of communication on the intercultural level.

Various types of speech imply different utterances [Ibid: 81]. Hence, clichés, terms, and terminological phrases, sometimes official language expressions, even business-slang, are widely used in oral business communication. They should exist in the memory of speakers and be used in certain oral genres of business communication according to given scenarios.

In the process of business communication, we are always governed by certain motifs, and realize a specific task; here the choice of language forms wholly depends on the tasks to fulfill. Therefore, we modify the way of speech-thinking and utterance according to forms of speech realization, linguistic aims and objectives, and the topic of such communication. In this case various types of discourse are being formed; that is why, when mastering Business Russian, the students should distinguish the types of discourse along with their specific features, work on terminology and expressions, summarize, present topics, and form their own discourse. On the basis of the discourse, the students should deal with grammar, syntactic, and stylistic forms of word expressions predetermined by certain type of discourse. Such work precedes the process of teaching of speech to foreign students, namely formation of dialogues and polylogues in the framework of the Business Russian communication.

The author distinguishes a prepared speech (that the students work out during classes and at home) and a spontaneous speech to be achieved at higher levels of language mastering. Nonetheless, both prepared and spontaneous kinds of speech are multi-level structures that include informative, pragmatic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, extralinguistic and properly linguistic levels.

Besides the aforementioned peculiarities of business speech such as the use of clichés and terminologization, we should also mention the outnumbering amount of simple (on the basis of Slavonic languages) or even complex sentences with subordinate clauses (participles, gerunds, and gerundives) common in written business language. A common feature of oral business discourse is also some coincidence with journalist style and informal language. A foreign specialist should be acquainted and have a proper use of such features of oral business discourse as: outnumbering of short sentences (speed of speech reactions), the use of special terms and appropriate phrases, activity of clauses of different kinds and ways of expression (with parenthetical phrases), a wide use of questions and emphasis, the use of verbs that outnumber nouns, frequent use of personal pronouns and particles, variety of verb forms, a freer word order in comparison to the written language.

Business speech implies a simultaneous interaction of the speaker and hearer with the changes in their roles in polylogue and dialogue. The role of a hearer is not less important than that of a speaker, the comprehension should be reflexive and be accompanied by reactions of agreement / disagreement, astonishment etc. and their verbal expression. Foreign students are often taught to use compensatory strategies of listening comprehension: to elaborate on all they hear, to state it precisely and paraphrase (to check appropriate understanding), to make statements on all they hear (agree / disagree, to show surprise or doubt etc.) and summarize. The author of this paper agrees with M.C. Lubimova that the speech of the speaker and hearer embodied in a discourse is modeled in the form of frames that are considered conceptual and prototypical models (cognitive-semantic structures), on which a discourse is based and which direct the participants' behavior. The frame situation is formed by representations of a prototypical situation and its elements, the roles and grounds of which are fixed [3: 8].

Taking into consideration all that was mentioned above, the author strongly believes that during the process of teaching of oral business discourse we should apply the scenario approach proposed by V.I. Shlyakhov [4] for different levels of teaching of the Russian standard language. Such approach lies in cognition and naming of the scenarios for speech interaction along with teaching of such interaction. The researcher emphasizes the lack of appropriate textbooks for such scenario approach. The author of this paper has tried to correlate such approach with the teaching of business interaction and broaden it in her own textbook written with a co-author for teaching Business Russian on advanced level.

The principles of the scenario interaction are presented below in detail. During business talks, negotiations, or in other genres of business communication, the addressee should be aware of what to say and to conduct a framework of conversation. In traditional teaching methods a situation prin-

ciple was used but nowadays such approach is reconsidered and stated more precisely, which leads to reconsideration and elaboration of the notions such as *frame*, *scenario*, *situation model*, *cognitive model*, and *discourse* that are often substitutive. According to M. Minski who proposed a frame theory, frames are models of stereotype (often repeatable) situations. A situation in such approach is understood in common sense, i.e. it can be action, judgment, image, story etc. For the aims of this research, it is important that a frame represents not one and only situation but most characteristic and basic moments of a range of similar situations regarded to one class. The frame is also defined as a cognitive structure that is based on cognition of knowledge of typical situations and connected expectations, features and relations of real or hypothetic objects, the way of information preservation in human mind. In its turn, a scenario is a dynamic frame that contains a standard consequence of events predetermined by some repeatable situation [6].

According to V.I. Shlyakhov's definition, who developed the phenomenon of "scenaricity" in communication in and teaching of a foreign language, a scenario is a macro-unit of discourse [7: 5]. *The scenarios of speech interaction* are, on the one hand, a "compressed cognitive model (scheme) of speech behavior that is preserved in the long (-range) memory and, on the other hand, a verbal materialization of such model by communication participants" [Ibid]. He states that the knowledge of pragma-linguistics and discourse analysis should be used to broaden the knowledge of regularities of scenario behavior in the teaching process; he considers the information about scenario interaction of people as the teaching content. The level of language mastering should be taken into account to carry out a list of scenarios for elementary, intermediate and advanced levels filled with variously complicated pragma-linguistic material (according to spiral principle) [7: 10-11]. It should be noted that, in V.I. Shlyakhov's opinion, it is related to standard communication; he takes into consideration and analyzes the scenarios on the basis of literary works with their literary and aesthetic stylization. The novelty of approach proposed in this paper lies in its discursive-activity characteristics that imply specifying of scenario modeling for communication in regard to the type of activity and of discourse.

Hence, a scenario is an activity frame. Teaching of dialogue and polylogue speech to foreign students is essential to carry out the scenarios in the framework of which business role-plays according to the produced genres of business communication and the level of language mastering are developed. Such play activity has high motivation and becomes one of the main instruments to arrange the teaching process [8: 197].

To carry out a scenario, it is first suggested to analyze the appropriate discourses of monologue, dialogue, and polylogue types along with their main constituents, role and status characteristics of their participants, intentional direction of the discourses, strategies and tactics used, i.e. to

analyze of the discursive event of business type from the pragma-linguistic viewpoint. Below, the author shows a polylogue to be carried out on the advanced certificate level of Business Russian. The students should do the following exercise:

*Прочитайте сценарий совещания, проходящего в офисе компании, в котором принимают участие менеджер по логистике, директор отдела логистики, сотрудники отдела. Совещание касается повышения качества обслуживания клиентов. Проанализируйте его. Обратите внимание на интенции говорящих и способы их языкового выражения.*

The following algorithm of analysis of a business conference is suggested - the students should distinguish and justify: 1) the type and aim of the activity for this situation of business communication; 2) the role and status characteristics of its participants; 3) the type of discourse (monologue, dialogue, polylogue) and its genre; 4) the structure of discourse; 4) the directional aim of the discourse, its strategies and tactics. We should note that the activity and discursive functions of the participants in a polylogue can change - that is why their relations are established. The students should also find and determine utterances for appropriate intentions.

The roles of every participant of a business conference are distinguished in the polylogue. The business conference is started by the logistics director with appropriate clichés and expressions that show the following intentions - greetings: *Добрый день, господа!*; briefing into the main subject of the business conference: *Сегодня мы встретились, чтобы обсудить вопрос повышения эффективности работы службы доставки нашей фирмы*; along with the aims and objectives in this concern: *Перед отделом логистики стоят две основные задачи - удовлетворить требования компаний-клиентов по уровню и качеству обслуживания и сократить собственные расходы, связанные с логистикой*. Next, the director appeals to the conference participants to present opinions on the discussed topic: *Я хотела бы выслушать ваши мнения по этому вопросу, обсудить, что уже сделано в этом направлении, и узнать, что вы собираетесь сделать в ближайшее время*. After introductory words, every participant of the business conference presents his or her own opinion on the discussed topic, gives grounds and certain facts etc. For example, the logistics manager, while briefing on the work already done, notices that: *Однако, как мне кажется, мы должны основное внимание уделить обслуживанию клиента и профессиональному росту наших кадров*. This statement contains the following pieces of information being implied - maybe, in this regard, not everything is functioning well or it would be perfect to make it function better. However, giving an answer to this, one of the employees from that department disagrees: *Возражаю против такой формулировки; я хотел бы отметить как плюс нашей компании имеющиеся у нас высококвалифицированные кадры. Квалифицированные кадры -*

наш самый главный ресурс. Сотрудники принимают активное участие в поиске новых возможностей совершенствования системы логистики. В начале каждого месяца составляются планы, в конце месяца с помощью контрольных цифр подводятся итоги, и если в технологической цепочке отмечается сокращение затрат, это отражается на зарплате. Сотрудники отдела вовлечены в систему разностороннего мотивирования, так что работа идет "на результат". Another employee also does not totally agree with the manager (Светлана Котова, руководитель отдела закупок): Я хотела бы добавить, что мы выходим навстречу потребностям клиента. И об этом свидетельствуют конкретные факты... (next certain numbers and facts are mentioned to give grounds for such statements). After employees' opinions have been presented, the director who holds the business conference decides to state precisely everything that was said by the employees.

- Наталья Ивлева: Привлекательность поставщика для клиента состоит из трех основных факторов: цена продукции, уровень сервиса и степень надежности сотрудничества. Можете ли вы с уверенностью сказать, что все эти факторы имеют место? До меня доходят слухи о случаях несвоевременной поставки товара, а также неудовлетворении всех потребностей клиента...

Next she asks for information about the pricing policy:

*Как у нас обстоят дела, например, с ценовой политикой?*

An employee of the logistics department gives the following answer: *Вопрос ценовой политики - один из самых непростых в бизнесе, поскольку строится на извечной альтернативе <...> Это трудно, но, думаю, нам удастся эффективно решать эту задачу.* In answer to the comment about the delivery delays, he shows regret and suggests how to fix it along with a request for funds to finance the project: *К сожалению, не всегда удается избежать упомянутых вами несвоевременных поставок, поэтому в этом году мы особое внимание сконцентрируем на развитии нашего грузового транспорта и поддержание его в исправности. Мы просим выделить нам на это средства. Смету расходов мы представим вам в письменной форме.*

The business conference is ended by the logistics director who thanks and asks the secretary to draw up a report.

Special attention during the analysis is drawn to the language constituent that is implied at every stage of the analysis of discourse characteristics. Working on such polylogues that precede making of own ones, the students are taught to find in them the phrases and expressions which show agreement / disagreement with all said, addition, negation, information request, argumentation, doubt, simple request etc. This takes place during the analysis of the role and status characteristics of the discourse participants. The students analyze a polylogue from the viewpoint of language means that pre-

sent intentions of the polylogue participants. These intentions can be distinguished by substitution of language means in key points of related contexts. For example, when the logistics manager notices that *Однако, как мне кажется, мы должны основное внимание уделить обслуживанию клиента и профессиональному росту наших кадров*, we can offer the students to show such intention with other language means. This can be shown in form of a question: *Считаете ли вы, что отношения с клиентами (вариант - клиентские отношения) удовлетворяют требованиям рынка (вариант - политике нашей компании)? И соответствуют ли квалификации наших сотрудников, занятых в цепи поставок, выполняемым ими функциям?* The discontent with the client service and employees' qualifications by establishing causative-consecutive relations: *Хочу заметить, что наши постоянные клиенты в последнее время не очень довольны нашей службой доставки, что связано, по моему мнению, с приемом на работу новых сотрудников, квалификации которых не были проверены нами достаточно тщательно* etc. This way the students make variants of a scenario and find how to show intentions by various language means. At this, the students try to imply and make explicit own intentions. Moreover, they are taught to distinguish the pragmatic basis for every utterance and for the whole polylogue. After the analysis it is necessary to return to the very beginning - to the issues of strategies and tactics that function in activity, and present a strategic analysis of the whole polylogue in order to see what kind of strategy is used and what tactics are chosen by every participant and by what language means it is realized; it should be also distinguished how efficient the business conference was.

Further, the work turns to a role-play. At the simplest level, the students play with a text changing strategies and tactics of the participants in the business conference. This can be made in form of an alternative version of the polylogue. For example, the participants think that something mustn't be done, or the director is not sure that something should be done. This can be connected to the discussion, for example, - to renew own transport means or it would be better and profitable to lease i.e. not to fulfill the first plan suggested at the business conference and think over some other variants. It can be also anticipated what would be next. After that the students have to continue the polylogue with other participants and suggest other ways to improve the delivery service especially taking into account the means of improvement of the client service. Next, they should make own polylogue similar to the aforementioned with a role-play but the objectives and persons are changed. Most complicated is the subject setting for the business conference and the role distribution; after it the students start the business conference off-hand. However, at such ad-lib, the students have ideas about the knowledge, skills, and qualifications necessary for concerned activities (for example, the director, manager, commercial director, staff manager, etc.).

When working on the scenario, it is necessary to answer the following questions - what preparatory work should be done and which participant should gather information and present it at the business conference to make it efficient. The business conference ends in results discussion in order to present its efficiency and how the consensus was reached. It can be shown by various verbal representations: *Давайте подведем итоги..; Итак, большинство участников согласны с тем, что..; К сожалению, мы так и не смогли достичь договоренности по вопросу..; Таким образом, обобщая сказанное, можно констатировать...* The students should present every intention by different verbal means, the list of which along with some ways of verbal representation were given in the Lingua-didactic description of aims and content of teaching Business Russian.

Therefore, it is possible to model a wide range of discourses being formed according to (or even at further stages of education) a free scenario of oral business communication (only the topic and roles are given). In this case the students are taught to present various intentions with appropriate language means, ask questions, answer them etc. However, it is essential to select scenarios according to the education level and appropriate vocabulary. In this regard, the recommendations for their selection are presented in the Lingua-didactic descriptions suggested by the authors in the Institute of the Russian language named after A.S. Pushkin in Moscow.

For making dialogues and polylogues, the pragmatic aim-setting is very important - the participant decides on the communicative and extra-communicative aims according to which the speech act is planned, on the essence of communicative intention, on the information and its volume to convey, on the ways to convey such information to the recipient, and on the anticipated reaction of the recipient and its forms. He or she also plans the scenario and the anticipation process - how the recipient will receive the message and the reaction to it. It means that the participant thinks over and anticipates the sequence of events in the period of the pretext formation, and then forms a discourse according to the appropriate scenario in the framework of the genre filling it with necessary language means. This can be done only by the means of an activity-discourse analysis of the appropriate subjective functions what implies that the students of the Business Russian should not limit themselves with the language behavior.

Hence, we focus on the teaching of business speech from the viewpoint of the socio-pragmatic approach to description of communication what gives grounds to consider speech as activity that "as any other kind of activity is realized with instruments of the appropriate type and aims at achievement of certain practical goals: ask for something, apologize, offer meal, inform, disagree etc." [9: 55-62]. Such approach implies that the choice of language means, their stylistics, and sense are determined not only by the communication situation, personal, professional, and status characteristics of



the participants but also by a whole set of factors, among which the most important are activity aim-settings and models that distinguish appropriate field of experience along with related lingua-semiotic code.

To sum up, we should notice the following:

1) the process of teaching of business speech is carried out on the basis of original business discourses taking into consideration the language and socio-pragmatic factors of communication that are efficiently used in business plays;

2) the plays in general and the business plays in particular improve students' motivation and eliminate psychological and language barriers, they enable multiple revision of language and speech material. A play "being creative in its essence... activates the thinking activity of students and facilitates the development of a creative attitude towards the language" [10: 219]. It develops the skills of spontaneous speech and makes it possible to acquire vocabulary, phrases and expressions during the lessons and to model own utterance using a multiple revision of the material;

3) the author agrees with A.A. Leontiev that, besides a *communicative* function, a business play has also a *diagnostic* function based on the assumption that a foreign student in different communication situations "feels some inadequacy of one's own language knowledge with the communication aim..." and, as a result, there appears a *motivational* function that "makes students strive for more perfect acquisition of the communication in the Russian language" [11: 222]. The most important result of language plays is a development of the sphere of choice models and self-control, i.e. the models responsible for active acquisition of a foreign language.

Therefore, in the process of teaching of business speech, it is necessary to use a business play (made up both according to certain scenarios and in form of a spontaneous scenario) that is an instrument of intensification of the teaching process and helps us to activate the processes of autonomous thinking, creativity, and team interaction in professional activity. Moreover, the scenario approach and business plays are the first step in teaching of the Russian spontaneous speech to foreign students.

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