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## **Liolita Bernotienė, Aleksandras Kaprizkinas**

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### LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS IN BUSINESS DISCOURSE

#### **Anotacija**

Verslo diskursas neatsiejamas nuo jam būdingo metateksto, traktuotino kaip anksčiau sukurtų tekstų pagrindu susiformavusi paradigma, kuri yra taikoma siekiant panašių (arba identiškų) pragmatinių tikslų panašiose (arba identiškose) socialinėse situacijose ir atlieka abipusiškai suprantamas komunikacines funkcijas. Tyrimo tikslas yra nustatyti santykį tarp verslo tekstų komunikacinės funkcijos ir dominuojančių lingvistinių strategijų, verslo dokumentuose taikomų realizuojant tokias komunikacines funkcijas, kaip informavimas, įtakos darymas ir referavimas.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: lingvistinės strategijos, komunikacinės funkcijos, verslo tekstai, informacinė funkcija, įtikinanamoji funkcija, referavimo funkcija.

### Abstract

Business discourse is unidentifiable apart from its own specific metatext that is to be treated as a text which incorporates a paradigm of previously produced texts for similar (or identical) pragmatic purposes under similar (or identical) social conditions in order to perform intended mutually intelligible communicative functions. The purpose is to establish a relation between the communicative types of business texts and dominant linguistic strategies that are applied in order to realise the communicative functions of informing, persuasion, and reporting in institutional business communication.

KEY WORDS: linguistic strategies, communicative functions, business texts, informative function, persuasive function, reporting function.

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The world of business is unique, with its own rules and terminology; therefore, it is unidentifiable apart from its own specific business discourse which is referred to in this article as business metatext. Due to the fact, that discourse in general is a term with multiple interpretations we shall assume the definition which is provided by Barbara Johnstone as basic: “[...] *discourse usually means actual instances of communicative action in the medium of language, although some define the term more broadly as meaningful symbolic behaviour in any mode.*” (Johnstone 2008, 2).

Francesca Bargiela-Chiappini defines business discourse as: “*Everything related with how people communicate in commercial organisations.*” (Bargiela-Chiappini 2009, 3). The communication process within the business community is performed due to the commonly shared business metatext which is based on intertextuality, i.e. the participants of the communicative acts share (i.e., use and recognize) a common knowledge of characteristic vocabulary and established structures relating them to particular business situations.

The main function of intertextuality, as defined by J. Kristeva, was to: “*... designate the general property of texts, which allows to show interconnect- edness between them, and thanks to which, texts or their parts can in various ways obviously or implicitly refer to each other.*” (Theory of Intertextuality: [www.fixed.ru](http://www.fixed.ru)). In other words, *metatext* is a text, which incorporates a paradigm of previously produced texts for similar (or identical) pragmatic purposes under similar (or identical) social conditions in order to perform the intended mutually comprehensive communicative functions.

Literature has the most vivid examples of intertextuality; however, even a newspaper article, an article in a journal or an essay by a student

will possess features of intertextuality if the author relied on other texts while writing. This is supported by J. S. Stepanov, who states that: “*Every text possesses intertextuality: other texts are present in every text on different levels in more or less recognisable forms. Each text represents a new fabric, which was woven from old quotes.*” (Stepanov 2001, 36).

Even though various manifestations of intertextuality have been known for a long time, the emergence of the corresponding term in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is quite justified. Moreover, that the considerably increased availability of works of art and the development of mass media have led to a strong semiotisation of human life. This has led to a concept, that if it is possible to create something new, then for the approval of the novelty it is necessary to compare it with something which has already been proven valuable. Nowadays, art and even everyday semiotic processes have become considerably intertextual. The theory of intertextuality developed mainly during the research of intertextual connections in literature, but it is no longer the case. Intertextuality is now applicable to every verbal and written genre; furthermore, intertextual connections are being made in spheres such as arts, architecture, cinema, music, theatre, and business.

To continue, owing to intertextuality, international links between different texts all around the globe are being established, which allows for people in different commercial organisations from different countries to understand the references from their counterparts on the other side of the world. That is why business texts of a specific sphere will share the same types of intertextuality irrespective of the country. This is attributed to the fact, that the same spheres of business in different countries will still be going on about their daily operations similarly or the same way as their counterpart in another region or country.

The object of this research is to focus on the linguistic strategies of the business documents, respectively to the communicative function they are supposed to perform. To satisfy the requirements of business communication more than 60 types of administrative documents are used in commercial organisations. Materials for the present linguistic research of the business discourse samples were taken from the primary resources indicated in the reference list. The list of analysed business documentation samples includes the following: commercial transactional documents;

invoices; business letters of apologies and inquiries, persuasive letters; marketing, apology, appreciation, request, and application rejection e-mail letters; office and department memorandums; Employee Evaluations Report, Evaluation Scores Report, and American Affluents' Annual Expenditures.

The most evident communicative functions of the business texts distinguished in the above listed business documents are as follows:

- the informative function,
- the persuasive function,
- the reporting function.

The motivation for this research is the fact that these functions, however, not always appear in isolation, i.e. the texts can perform more than one function at a time. So different communicative functions of business texts can overlap, moreover, a diversity of linguistic strategies is employed to contribute to one or another function. So, the purpose is to establish a relation between the communicative types of business texts and linguistic strategies that are applied in order to realise the communicative functions of informing, persuasion, and reporting in institutional business communication.

Therefore, in order to achieve the above mentioned goal several methods shall be used:

**Analytical** – the main features concerning intertextuality of the business texts and each of the communicative functions shall be analysed and presented.

**Comparative** – the linguistic strategies of business texts will be compared to the ones presented in the theories about each communicative function, in order to reveal the linguistic strategies that are actually employed for the texts to perform a specific intended communicative function.

**Empirical** – method based on data collection and on language corpora connected to the topic of analysis.

Furthermore, in this research the following main tasks have been drawn:

- to identify the linguistic features of business metatext;
- to distinguish communicative functions in specific business texts and relate them with the linguistic strategies;

- to establish hierarchical relationship among the communicative functions;
- to identify the dominant communicative function.

### The Definition of Business Metatext

Intertextuality was analysed first in order to understand its role in business discourse. However, due to the nature of business texts i.e., the features of metatext present within them and the importance of intertextuality, the analysis cannot be performed by separating independent communicative functions. It was observed from the empirical material that the informative, persuasive, and reporting functions can all be characterized by the overlapping linguistic strategies, with the informative function, most of the time, being the dominant one.

As business discourse is directly related to the pragmatic purposes of communication in commercial organisations, metatext shared within the documents eliminates ambiguities and economizes time, ultimately, making intelligibility effective and mutually accessible. Thus business communication mostly relies on templates of both lexical and standard syntactic structures, as it is presented in A. Burov's statement: "*In a general view metatext can be defined as a text, which purpose is to analyse the structure, properties, methods, and laws necessary for the construction of some other text.*" (Burov 2010, 1). In other words, the meaning of metatext is to comprehend and apply the generally accepted codes, interpret, and explicate them so that we may understand the nature and essence of language, language phenomena, and natural principles of text construction in specific social environments. Metatext is realised through metatext elements, which provide correlation within the text in order to simplify the understanding of a subject and to find new basis of describing it. In business discourse such elements would be **structural patterns, terminology, sentence structures, word combinations, etc.** In addition, Lori Harvill Moore has an identical opinion concerning communication within a business environment: "*The messages should be based on common experiences to improve comprehension – or message decoding. All communication within the company, whether verbal or written, is always conducted within the context of the existing organizational structure.*" (Moore 2013, 12). In busi-

ness documents the mentioned attributes of communication maybe found in the vocabulary, character of composition, arrangement of the parts of the text, allocation of paragraphs, and fonts. Moreover, without meta-text any sphere of business would have difficulties in effective and disambiguated communication as documentation or terms that would be used, and provided without any glossary or explanation would simply break the chain of communication. Moreover, when transferred through multiple channels the meaning of a message can be distorted because of filtration and multifarious interpretations, so it is namely the metatext that creates openness to feedback, i.e., the ability to provide sufficient feedback to the subordinates in terms of receptiveness and responsiveness.

The analysis of linguistic strategies of  
the communicative functions.

#### The Informative Function

The informative function, as we see, must adhere to the traditions of the official style of the literary language, and the official style mainly revolves around accuracy, clarity, and the ability to express one's thoughts in a uniform way by employing the already tested language cliché formulas used in that specific sphere of business. As a result the texts which perform the informative function mostly are the business documents that are handled within the administrative division of a company, such as: memos, e-mails, and transactional documents, etc. In business environments the value of information is very high, and as Y. V. Daniushina states: "*The vital role of communication (communicating information) in business and management is widely recognized. ... Business is interested in enhancing the effectiveness of communication.*" (Daniushina 2010, 243). Therefore, each of the administrative documents used in a business environment must provide only useful and relevant unambiguous information.

The following categories of business texts chosen for analysis are as follows: transactional documents, e-mails, and memos. What we see here, are the major categories of documents, and the type of linguistic strategies dominantly used within them.

Table 1

**Linguistic Strategies of the Informative  
 Communicative Function**

<b>Informative Business Texts</b>	<b>Linguistic Strategies</b>
1. Transactional Documents	Accuracy, clarity, effective communication, cliché phrases, official style, simple and complex sentences, repetition, logicity, neutral tone, requisites.
2. E-Mail	Official style, emphasised official register, efficiency, standardisation, neutral tone, accuracy, clarity, complex sentences, logicity, brevity, respectfulness, common terms, objectivity.
3. Memos	Accuracy, precision, professionalism, official style, specific phraseology, conciseness, complex and simple sentences, enumeration, clarity, respectfulness, imperative form, neutral tone.

It is important to note, that even though all of the analyzed texts perform the informative communicative function which is realized by such major strategies as accuracy, objectivity and standardization of both lexis and especially form, there is also a secondary function available in most of them with evident secondary attributes of reporting or persuasiveness.

Table 2

**Communicative Functions of Informative Business Texts**

<b>Informative Business Texts</b>	<b>Communicative Functions</b>	
	<b>Primary Function</b>	<b>Secondary Function</b>
1. Request for Quotation	Informative	Reporting
2. Quotation	Informative	Reporting
3. Proforma Invoice	Informative	Reporting
4. Terms and Conditions of Sale	Informative	None
5. Apology E-Mail	Informative	Persuasive
6. Appreciation E-Mail	Informative	None
7. Application Rejection E-Mail	Informative	None
8. Office Memorandum	Informative	Reporting
9. Department Memo	Informative	Reporting

## Persuasive Function

In psychology of communication persuasion is defined as: “... *the ability to induce beliefs and values in other people by influencing their thoughts and actions through specific strategies.*” (Hogan 2004, 20). In other words, when a person receives a piece of information directly or indirectly, it is recommended that he or she try to understand that information, afterwards select the essential information and reject the false, systemize the acquired information, and then develop an assessment, and based on the results of these steps come up with a decision. Persuasion is the main part in any advertising or negotiating process, discussion, and argument, regardless of the difficulty or intensity of that process. On the other hand, the persuasive function is realised by the sender of information with the aid of various communication tactics. The tactics most regularly employed assumes the form of *statements, advice, warnings, threats, and requests*. Where a statement employs urgency, advice is based on implications, request is based on similar world views, and warnings and threats rely on emphasising the negative consequences of a specific action. Nowadays in a business environment persuasion assumes the form of a requirement, and when performing any type of communication within a corporation we must make our speech, written or otherwise, convincing. Therefore, as stated by Brian O’C. Leggett: “*The skill of persuasion is for us to identify what matters to people, what the common ground is, to build our credibility, to invent the right argumentation, and create the right emotional environment.*” (Leggett 2006, 3). The usage of linguistic strategies within the major categories of a persuasive communicative function may be seen bellow (table 3).

Three categories of business texts have been chosen for the persuasive communicative function, such as: e-mails, advertisements, and business articles or journals, and as we see here the situation is the same with most of the texts from each category having a secondary informative communicative function (table 4).

Table 3

### Linguistic Strategies of the Persuasive Communicative Function

<b>Persuasive Business Texts</b>	<b>Linguistic Strategies</b>
1. E-Mails	Specific lexis, official style, complex sentences, strictness, respectfulness, professionalism, phraseology, emotional colouring, brevity.
2. Advertisements	Understandable, capacious, memorable, persuasive, intriguing, presence of images (multimodality), colourful words, conciseness, official or unofficial style, emotional colouring, complex and simple sentences, enumeration, phonetic expressive means (alliteration, onomatopoeia).
3. Business Journals and Articles	Official or unofficial style, professionalism, specific phraseology, persuasiveness, emotional colouring, complex sentences, enumeration.

Table 4

### Communicative Functions of Persuasive Business Texts

<b>Persuasive Business Texts</b>	<b>Communicative Functions</b>	
	<b>Primary Function</b>	<b>Secondary Function</b>
1. Persuasive E-Mail	Persuasive	None
2. Request E-Mail	Persuasive	Informative
3. Inquiry E-Mail	Persuasive	Informative
4. Reprimand E-Mail	Persuasive	Informative
5. Amazon Advertisement	Persuasive	Informative
6. PayPal Advertisement	Persuasive	Informative
7. Dropbox Advertisement	Persuasive	Informative
8. Business Journal Advice	Persuasive	None
9. Business Article Advice	Persuasive	None

### Reporting Function

Lastly, the reporting function is a tool used within a company for control and evaluation of its activities. This function is primarily found in business reports, which provide the information that managers in any position rely on while making administrative decisions. The information consists of what is happening in the division, company, and business.

As is stated by Alan Thompson: “A business report conveys information to assist in business decision-making. The business report is the medium in which to present this information.” (Thompson 2005, 163). Business reporting is a method of collecting and systemizing financial and non-financial information, based on the analysis of which managers are able to make decisions for achieving their goals. Furthermore, administrative decisions within an organisation are made on the grounds of the data provided in such reports. The dominant linguistic strategies within business reports are presented below:

Table 5

**Linguistic Strategies of the Reporting Communicative Function**

<b>Reporting Business Texts</b>	<b>Linguistic Strategies</b>
1. Business Reports	Recognised text construction formulas, accepted abbreviations, uniform arrangement of material, table of contents, list of figures, list of tables, syntactic parallelism, lexical uniformity of speech, repetition, specific phraseology, distinct terminology.
2. Evaluation Reports	
3. Annual Expenditures	

As the texts possessing the reporting communicative function are presented according to the table based information for convenience, and most of the time individual parts of a report are taken out, only one category of texts was chosen for analysis, namely, business reports.

Nevertheless, we may see that the majority of the analysed reports still possess secondary attributes of the informative function and are not purely of the reporting nature. It is consistent with the two presented tables above.

Table 6

**Communicative Functions of Reporting Business Texts**

<b>Reporting Business Texts</b>	<b>Communicative Functions</b>	
	<b>Primary Function</b>	<b>Secondary Function</b>
1. Business Report	Reporting	Informative
2. Employee Evaluations	Reporting	Informative
3. Evaluation Scores Report	Reporting	None
4. Annual Expenditures	Reporting	None
5. Table Based Reports	Reporting	None

Having viewed all of the information presented in the tables it was obvious that the dominant function is the informative one, even though most of the time it does not perform the main function in a text but the secondary one, still it is the most common communicative function in business texts.

Furthermore, the performed analysis regarding the linguistic strategies allows to determine that even though a diversity of linguistic strategies in the texts of the same communicative function is available, the majority of the strategies were recurrent among the texts of the same function. This may be seen from the presented tables where texts of the informative function mainly possess such strategies, as: accuracy, official style, simple and complex sentences, logicity, and a neutral tone. Whereas the persuasive function revolved around the official or unofficial style, emotional colouring, multimodality, professionalism, specific phraseology, and specific lexis. On the other hand, texts of the reporting communicative function dominantly employ such recognised text construction formulas, as: accepted abbreviations, syntactic parallelism, repetition, and lexical uniformity of speech. These strategies are dominant within the texts and serve to build up a specific communicative function.

Table 7

### Dominant Linguistic Strategies in Communicative Functions

Communicative Functions	Linguistic Strategies
1. Informative	Accuracy, official style, simple and complex sentences, logicity, and a neutral tone (objectivity).
2. Persuasive	Official or unofficial style, emotional colouring, professionalism, specific phraseology, and specific lexis, multimodality.
3. Reporting	Recognised text construction formulas, accepted abbreviations, syntactic parallelism, repetition, and lexical uniformity of speech.

Lastly, as a generalization of the above analysis the following **results** were established:

1. Metatext of business discourse is a paradigm realised through distinct linguistic strategies. In other words, repeatedly employed structural templates, terminology, word combinations and sentence structures in business texts guarantee the realisation of intended consistency of business communication functions.

2. The informative communicative function follows careful rules of formality, accuracy, official style, simple and complex sentences, and logicity, i.e. the strategies which promote the efficiency of communication within the office environment.
3. The persuasive communicative function relies on the following communication tactics, such as: official/unofficial style, emotional colouring, multimodality, professionalism, specific phraseology, and specific lexis, moreover, that persuasion mostly is an inseparable component of any advertising or negotiating process, discussion, and argumentation, regardless of the difficulty or intensity of that process.
4. The reporting communicative function is realized in administrative decision-making, and the reporting texts mostly employ dominantly recognised text construction formulas and templates, accepted abbreviations, syntactical parallelism, repetition, and lexical uniformity of speech.
5. Business texts are constructed to perform both primary and secondary communicative functions, so none of the communicative functions usually occurs in isolation. The informative function holds a dominant role among business texts.

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## Liolita Bernotienė, Aleksandras Kaprizkinas

### VERSLO DISKURSO KOMUNIKACINIŲ FUNKCIJŲ LINGVISTINĖS STRATEGIJOS

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojamos institucinių verslo tekstų kalbinės strategijos, taikomos tam, kad tekstas atliktų pageidaujamą komunikacinę funkciją. Be to, tiriamas ryšys tarp komunikacinių verslo tekstų ir kalbinių strategijų, taikomų komunikacinėms funkcijoms realizuoti, kad būtų nustatyta, kokios kalbinės strategijos yra dominuojančios kiekvienai funkcijai.

Verslo diskursas neatsiejamas nuo jam būdingo metateksto, traktuotino kaip anksčiau sukurtų tekstų pagrindu susiformavusi paradigma, kuri yra taikoma siekiant panašių (arba identiškų) pragmatinių tikslų panašiose (arba identiškose) socialinėse situacijose ir atlieka abipusiškai suprantamas komunikacines funkcijas. Tyrimo tikslas yra nustatyti santykį tarp verslo tekstų komunikacinės funkcijos ir dominuojančių lingvistinių strategijų, verslo dokumentuose taikomų realizuojant tokias komunikacines funkcijas, kaip informavimas, įtakos darymas ir referavimas.

Tyrimo metu nustatyta, kad verslo diskurso paradigma (metatekstas) realizuojama tokiomis strategijomis, kaip pasikartojantys verslo dokumentų struktūros šablonai, terminija, žodžių junginiai ir specifinės sakinių struktūros. Visos šios priemonės garantuoja siekiamų verslo komunikacijos funkcijų įgyvendinimą.

Informatyvioji komunikacinė funkcija pasireiškia formalumu, tikslumu, oficialiu stiliumi, sintaksiškai sudėtiniais sakiniais ir logiškumu, t. y. tokiomis strategijomis, kurios leidžia palaikyti nuoseklų ir vienareikšmį bendradarbiavimą verslo aplinkoje, nuo ko priklauso ir pati verslo sėkmė.

Įtikinamoji funkcija pagrįsta kalbos emocionalumu, daugiamodalumu, specifine frazeologija ir leksika, juolab kad ši funkcija yra neatsiejamas bet kokių verslo derybų, diskusijų ar argumentų ir reklamos komponentas.

Referavimo funkcija įgyvendinama ir patys verslo ataskaitų tekstai rengiami laikantis griežtų teksto konstrukcijos šablonų, pripažintų trumpinių, sintaksinio paralelizmo, pakartojimo ir leksinių standartų.

Verslo tekstai dažniausiai atlieka ne išskirtinai vieną komunikacinę funkciją, bet kelias iš karto. Informatyvioji funkcija dominuoja visuose verslo tekstuose ir yra susijusi ne tik su įtikinamąja, bet ir su referavimo funkcija.