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Philological Readings

FUNCTIONAL AND STYLISTIC PARTICULARITIES OF ENGLISH PARTNERSHIP AND PROPOSAL LETTERS

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to the urgent problem of unification in stylistic framework of the partnership and proposal letters in English. The main purpose of the study is to determine the set of functional and stylistic means which form the basis of the examined letters. The methods applied are a contextual, component, statistical analysis and a continuous sampling technique which are aimed at finding out the most common structures reflecting stylistic particularities. 200 samples of English partnership and proposal letters are analyzed. The letters are described according to the determined stylistic categories which present precise basis for classification. The key stylistic means displaying norm and variation in business epistolary such as professional terminology, architectonics, background knowledge of respondents, sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic markers are designated and the examples of these means in English partnership and proposal letters are given. The patterns of structural and functional organization are identified and presented in a form of dicteme division. The etiquette formulae, pragmatic focus and realization of partners' intentions are considered to reflect the tone of the letter. The functioning of the language facts systems and the syntactical occurrence due to the pragmatic environment are examined. The intensity of modality appearance is revealed and the reasons for the use of metaphor and epithet are presented.

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Keywords: Business epistolary, dicteme, dynamic norm, functional variation, modality, structural and functional organization.



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1. Introduction

There is an increasing share of international business correspondence in the economic sphere at the present time. This fact actualizes the problem of identifying the building and interpreting criteria in English-language business letters. Any such letter is put in the certain circumstances and the content varies according to the stylistic particularities of the communicative case. The business letter functioning performance depends on the choice of the language formulae and the reasonable structural organization aimed at getting the addressee's positive reaction.

2. Problem Statement

The scientists, such as Arputhamalar and Kannan (2016), Cui (2013), Goloshapova and Mitrofanova (2017), Pudikova (2018) examined functional and stylistic particularities of English business epistolary. However, the problematic aspect is that the characteristic of business epistolary is presented collectively without determination of stylistic features of partnership and proposal letters.

3. Research Questions

There are several problems that demand our special consideration: to establish stylistic categories for describing the type of partnership and proposal letters; to outline the priority stylistic means which represent the norm in partnership and proposal letters and the sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic markers which indicate variation in the letters mentioned; to determine the structural and functional organization of partnership and proposal letters; to analyze lexical and syntactical layout of English partnership and proposal letters; to estimate the intensity of the modal constructions and the speech expressiveness means appearance.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine functional and stylistic framework of the modern English partnership and proposal letters comprehensively and determine lexical, syntactical and speech expressive means which reflect the type of the examined letters.

5. Research Methods

The most suitable research methods are: contextual analysis, component analysis, statistical analysis, continuous sampling method. The data of the study include 200 samples of partnership and proposal letters extracted from three modern English tutorials: "English Business Letters" (King & Cree, 2003); "Business Letters for All" (Naterop, Weis, & Haberfellner, 2005) and "Communicating in Business" (Insley, 2016).

6. Findings

Business letters, being the form of the document genre, comply with the specific criteria: speech stereotype and clichiness; accuracy in transferring information without misinterpretation; exhaustive information volume; neutral means of expression.

Nevertheless, business letters also contain a pragmatic potential, informativeness, cohesion and coherence which characterize it not only as a document, but also a text. Hence, both linguistic and functional-pragmatic approaches are suitable while studying written business communication. The basic communication functions are laid in business epistolary text: influence, bridge-building and interaction.

Thus, business epistolary is the form of written business communication which obtains the attributes of a document and a text, communicative functions and the set content according to the pragmatic aim.

6.1. Stylistic categories which describe the type of partnership and proposal letters

Five key categories have been determined to give an entire characteristic of business letters: the subject matter; the function; the addressing focus; the addressing scope; the number of issues (Hartley & Bruckmann, 2007).

In the category of the subject matter the partnership and proposal letters refer to commercial sphere, in the addressing focus – to the outside correspondence, in the addressing scope – to the common letters. The difference appear in the function category where the partnership letters don't require an answer and express an agreement, and the proposal letters require an answer and express impulse for an action. By the number of issues the partnership letters touch on one issue and the proposal letters touch on many issues.

6.2. Norm and variation in partnership and proposal letters

The notion of norm and variation has been studied quite thoroughly and presented in the scientific works of the Russian and foreign linguists. However, the stylistics and pragmalinguistics progress has led to the necessity of detecting the typical functional units in the written texts immersed into discourse. The communicative aspect of norm and variation is of the special interest while studying the partnership and proposal letters where these issues exist implicitly.

In this paper we use the term “dynamic norm” which was suggested by Skvortsov (1980). Functional and stylistic aspect is realized in dynamic norm and variation is allowed. “Norm can't be set by the final number of facts and is inevitably represented in two lists – obligatory and allowable (additional). This is a source of normative variation, i.e. options within the norm” (Skvortsov, 1980, p. 30). In summary, we understand dynamic norm as a set of obligatory language means and their functional patterns with natural stylistic variation due to the communicative circumstances and the non-linguistic factors (Osyanova & Volnova, 2017).

Dynamic norm in English partnership and proposal letters is presented by the following components: professional terminology (“real estate purchase”, “property”, “loan balance”, “payroll”, “cost summary”, “annuity quotation”), etiquette formulae, architectonics, background knowledge of respondents (“In response to your recent request...”, “Our proposal will outline how we will solve your

problems...”, “A mutual acquaintance mentioned...”) (King & Cree, 2003). The typical feature of the aforesaid genre is also a monologic dialogue that assumes the time and space separation of communicators.

Functional variation reflects the way stylistic means act in language communication and defines the patterns in using equal as well as different stylistic means for the same expressive stylistic purpose (Cui, 2013). Existence of functional variation relates to the texts functioning in society and the presence of the addressor's communicative intentions for addressee's behavior regulation.

The sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic markers indicate communicative variation in partnership and proposal letters. The pragmalinguistic markers include: the specific mutual realization of partners' intentions in correspondence and the strategic position of pragmatic intention in a letter aimed at implicit influence on addressee. Etiquette formulae have been detected as the most relevant sociolinguistic markers in data analysis.

6.3. The structural and functional organization of partnership and proposal letters

The key blocks of partnership and proposal letters include: the letterhead, the introductory part, the main part, the conclusion (Yerokhina, 2014).

As the analysis has shown the ancillary part (the letterhead, the introductory part and the conclusion) is placed precisely within architectonics and separated from the main part. It enables to transfer business information without complications. The letterhead has only informative function and contains the neutral expressions to avoid misinterpreting of targeted information.

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December 3, 2009 (Insley, 2016, p. 311)

The introductory part has not only informative, but also bridge-building and image-forming function, which is reached by using etiquette formulae.

Etiquette block in partnership and proposal letters reveals the addressor's intention to establish mutually beneficial links and consists of at least two syntactic units: “Please feel free to contact us should you have any queries at any stage. We look forward to a happy relationship during this exciting project” (Insley, 2016, p. 321). Etiquette formulae in partnership and proposal letters differ by transferring multifunctionality, i.e. the strategies of reward and motivation: “Thank you for taking the time to talk to me last week. I am therefore pleased to propose a cost effective solution that I believe will minimize your in-house burden” (Naterop et al., 2005, p. 132).

Stylistic discrepancy has been found between etiquette formulae of the introductory part and the conclusion. The formal type of appeal, such as “Dear Mr./Mrs.”, “Respected Sir”, “Dear ladies and gentlemen”, combines with the less formal final etiquette formulae, such as “Yours sincerely”, “Yours faithfully”, “Sincerely”, “Best regards”. Only 10% of all samples contain formal phrases, such as “Yours truly”, “Yours faithfully”. The explanation is that the partners are aimed at reducing formalization and

building the relations of trust. That complies with the pragmatic intention of the partnership and proposal letters.

Jack Magrite
VP, Product Development
Carter Clarice Pharmaceuticals
9100 Circle Drive
Elizabeth, NJ 07202

Subject: Meeting to discuss the business proposal of CRM module

Dear Mr. Magrite, (King & Cree, 2003, p. 27)

Pragmatic focus (or rheme) is placed in the conclusion of examined letters and contains the directives-requests expressed explicitly: “If you find the conditions of the following fee proposal acceptable, please fill out the client details document, sign the fee proposal in the relevant places and at the bottom of each page and return by hand, mail or fax” (King & Cree, 2003, p. 107) or implicitly: “If you wish to discuss this proposal further, I can be contacted at the centre on 5999 1111 during business hours, or on my mobile 0101 010 010 at any time” (Naterop et al., 2005, p. 156) = Contact me on this number to discuss the proposal.

Sincerely,

Charleese Elaganz
Owner
Elaganz Salon and Spa
555-555-5555
Char@ElaganzSalon.com
www.ElaganzSalon.com (Insley, 2016, p. 323)

We have applied the term “dicteme” to make an adequate structural and semantic division of the main part of examined letters. Dicteme, as well as paragraph, possesses its own theme (microtheme) but differs by being the universal unit both for oral and written text (Goloshapova & Mitrofanova, 2017). Paragraph may include several dictemes separated by special textual and syntactical means.

Four crucial functional and sign speech aspects are found in dicteme: nomination, predication, thematisation and stylization (Flowerdew, 2012). Nomination implies designation of the common situation expressed in dicteme. Predication correlates designation with reality. Thematisation determines the function of dicteme within the content of the whole text. Stylization presents the content in a form of connotation which influences the interlocutor in compliance with the communicative aim of the speaker (Pudikova, 2018).

The analysis has shown that the main part of the English partnership and proposal letters contains five dictemes. Each of them correlates with the concrete sample and is presented in table 01.

Table 01. Dicteme based division of the main part of the English partnership and proposal letters

Dicteme name	Sample
Presentation of addressor	I, Mathew Adams, the senior business manager at White Grains Private Limited
Company achievements	Our platform has managed to attract more than 10000 customers in the first 6 months of its launch.
List of proposed products/services	White Grains Private Limited is an online clothing Store which sells clothes and accessories.
Further addressor's actions in case of maintaining partnership	If you agree to the idea, then we can discuss further details by setting up a meeting.
Hope for cooperation	I hope that we will be able to work together in a manner that is advantageous for the both of us.

In spite of the fact that the interlocutors represent a subject and an object at the same time in verbal communication (Yerokhina, 2014), the research has shown that only addressor can realize his pragmatic intentions in the partnership and proposal letters. As a rule it's expressed in a form of necessity to follow the instructions that are beneficial for addressor what is mostly applied in dicteme "list of proposed products/services": "Please find enclosed a proposal offering your company the opportunity to distribute and sell two of our new supplement products... You will find that recommending these two formulas in combination with your medicines will enhance patients' health and physicians' satisfaction with your drug products and your company.;" "We would like to introduce and offer you participation on the project "PATHS TO EXPERIENCE," which focuses on linking practice and theory – commercial sector and education sector." (Naterop et al., 2005).

6.4. Lexical and syntactical layout of the partnership and proposal letters

Medial stylization has proved to reflect the functioning of language norm in the examined letters. Composition is built on simply structured sentences with reservation of semantic specificity of the context (Chan, 2018). The neutral lexical units replace the clichés used in official documents, i.e.: "I, we" instead of "one, the undersigned"; "to use" instead of "to utilize"; "according to" instead of "as per"; "to send" instead of "to forward"; "to believe, to consider" instead of "to deem". The unreasonably complicated constructions and pretentious words and phrases are also simplified, i.e.: "now, currently" instead of "at the present time"; "because" instead of "for the reason that"; "in case" instead of "in the event that"; "to begin" instead of "to commence"; "to try" instead of "to endeavor" (Arputhamalar & Kannan, 2016).

Representative cumulation makes the most part of the English partnership and proposal letters as the terms' replacement may cause incorrect interpretation of presented information. As a result, iteration is frequent: "I am aware that the RoseRock Health Club has unused space on the second floor. I believe that space is the perfect size for a new Elaganz Salon and Spa" (Naterop et al., 2005, p. 143).

At the same time, retrospective cumulation is widely spread and provides elimination of excessive iteration (Sing, 2017). The words like "hereby", "therefore", "hence", "however" link phrases and sentences.

Syntax of the examined letters includes the subject-predicative link of the nominative collocations where the secondary part of the sentence reveals the content of the group of the subject and the predicate. Despite the tendency to decrease the usage of the complex sentences in business correspondence due to

their complicated perception, this type of syntax makes up most of the English partnership and proposal letters. The object clause with conjunction “that” or without conjunction is the most common: “Our market analysis of the property and overview of the market as well as the situation of the seller indicate that it is in the best interest of both you as the lender and the Smiths to accept this buyer’s offer”; “I am confident we can come up with a plan that will save you money” (Insley, 2016, p. 318). The analysis has also shown that paratactic relation with conjunction “and” combines information about a product or a service with amplification of perlocutionary effect of expression: “Peter and Martha are a men and women clothing manufacturer in the country and we request you to sell your clothes to an online market through our platform.”; “We share the same customer base, and adding a Spa to your facility would increase business for both of us” (King & Cree, 2003, p. 16).

6.5. The modal constructions and the speech expressiveness means in stylistic framework of the partnership and proposal letters

The main stylistic trait of the English partnership and proposal letters is concluded in realization of modality as an opportunity category by the modal verbs “may” and “would”.

The verb “may” (19,2%) expresses opportunity for acting or non-acting according to the circumstances in the adverbial clause: “Should you find the above data insufficient in any respect, we shall be glad to send you any further information you may desire” (King & Cree, 2003, p. 62).

The verb “may” expresses obligation in the specific context (Medvedeva, 2014). For instance: “Extra coil tubing may be delivered only at wooden and metal drums, covered by wood outside” (Naterop et al., 2005, p. 129). The lexical unit “only” limits the range of options in this example and creates uncompromising conditions for the deal together with the verb “may”. The verbs “to be to” or “shall” can replace the verb “may” without the breach of the meaning.

The verb “would” (80,8%) is used as the modal verb and expresses intention, readiness for something: “We would promote your practice as one who supports our efforts” (Naterop et al., 2005). Moreover, the verb “would” refers to the introductory phrases and is used to express politeness: “We would like to...”, “We would appreciate...”, “We would be grateful...”.

The particularity of the English partnership and proposal letters is the presence of such speech expressive means as epithet (37,1%), metaphor (33,5%) and metonymy (29,4%). These means make addressee pay attention to the most important ideas and details. It is worth noting that the proposal letters differ by the spread usage of epithet, which is necessary for full and expressive presentation of the goods, services or a company, whereas metaphor prevails in the partnership letters, which is the stylistic tool for approach to the spoken words in an implicit form. The effect of live communication with addressee and focusing his attention on the whole content of the letter are achieved by application of the stylistic devices mentioned.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion we should state that the English partnership and proposal letters are classified according to five stylistic categories: the subject matter, the function, the addressing focus, the addressing scope, the number of issues. Dynamic norm is presented by the following means: professional

terminology, etiquette formulae, architectonics, background knowledge of respondents. Functional variation is reflected in multifunctionality of the etiquette blocks, the addressor's one-way intentional direction and the placement of rheme in the conclusion of the letter. Division in thematic blocks within the structure of the main part of the examined letters is realized by five dictemes: presentation of the addressor, company achievements, list of proposed products/services, further addressor's actions in case of maintaining partnership, hope for cooperation. The language particularities concern neutral lexical units, simplified constructions, representative and retrospective cumulation. Syntactical organization includes subject-predicative and paratactic links in the sentences, prevailing of the complex sentences with the object clause. The modality is reflected in the verb "would" in the meaning of intention and the verb "may" in the meaning of opportunity, less obligation. Metaphor prevails in the partnership letters and epithet is more common for the proposal letters.

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