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**Philological Readings**

**THE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS OF BUSINESS INTERACTION  
IN THE ORENBURG REGION**

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*Abstract*

The article is devoted to the phenomenon of business interaction and aimed at searching for the effective ways of communication in the Orenburg region. The specifics of business interaction in the Orenburg region lie in its cross-cultural environment which is proved by coexistence of some original cultures and the region's orientation to the development of economic relations with the neighbouring and distant foreign countries. Literature analysis and knowledge synthesis on the subject allowed clarifying the notions of "communicative strategy" and "communicative tactics; providing a brief overview of communicative strategies' classifications; describing the cultural peculiarities of interaction with Kazakh and German businessmen who represent the «Asian» and, contradicting to it, the «European» behaviour model accordingly. This made it possible to formulate the tactics of business interaction with these two nationalities. Teaching business interaction can be fulfilled in the course of solving communicative-interactive tasks in real and modelled situations. Cross-cultural character of communicative-interactive challenges involves study of partner's cultural views and values, orientation to them in the course of business interaction. The results can become the foundation for making up and developing a set of communicative-interactive business challenges of cross-cultural character.

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**Keywords:** Business interaction, communicative-interactive tasks, communicative strategies and tactics, cross-cultural environment, Orenburg region.



## 1. Introduction

Business development in the Russian Federation is one of the most important state objectives today. It is obvious that achieving this task is highly dependent on business interaction between companies. Being located on the border, the Orenburg region is a cross-cultural area. Furthermore, the ever-increasing number of investors and contacts with foreign partners explains the international character of business interaction in this territory. The sophistication of socio-cultural communication makes it essential to train business staff in effective interaction in an open-minded way to understand the importance of culture in the atmosphere of globalization and international integration in a multi-ethnic society, the ability to work in cooperation with partners, avoiding conflicts and making decisions in non-standard situations. However, the problem of teaching business subjects effective interaction and specifics of the Orenburg region as a cross-cultural environment are not studied enough in pedagogics.

## 2. Problem Statement

The phenomenon of business interaction lies in the sphere of interests of pedagogics, psychology and linguistics. Business interaction is a process of partner's common activity based on personal entrepreneurs' experience and their vision of forms of relationships in economics (Titova, 2006). The efficiency of business interaction is measured by its productivity, i.e. the achievement of desired targets in the course of communication with the partner, generation, accumulation and mutual sharing of resources (Titova, 2006). It is also distinguished by the degree and character of a subject's communication. According to Titova (2006), the principal notions describing business interaction in the sphere of economics are «competitiveness» and «partnership». Partnership is the most complicated but productive mean of interaction in business which requires the usage of the most effective types of communication: cooperation, agreement, dialogue (Platova, 2014). Therefore, effective business interaction can be possible on the condition that subjects have the necessary interactive skills and experience. Among such skills are the abilities to listen to a partner and to understand his position; to share the partner's role; to analyze and evaluate oneself and the partner adequately in the process of interaction (Platova, 2015). In cross-cultural conditions it is essential for business communication to consider the partners' life ambitions, ideals, interests, value orientations, national and cultural peculiarities; to make decisions and settle conflicts; to choose adequate tactics, strategies and principals of interaction in accordance with the situation. Therefore, effective business communication becomes possible with business interaction experience which is the result of mastering particular knowledge, analysing and evaluating the events, working out and increasing the optimal behaviour way. An important role in this is a positive interaction experience and the ability to find mistakes in case of unsuccessful communication, i.e. reflexion (Platova & Osiyanova, 2014).

The subtleties of interaction in the Orenburg region are connected with the presence of different cultures and nationalities (Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Mordvins, Chuvash, Germans, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Belarusians), many of which retain their own views and principles. Thus, all business subjects unwittingly take part in cross-cultural communication. Some business partners have a fundamental discrepancy in value orientations (Datsuk, 2015).

Furthermore, the region is situated on the borders with Tatarstan, Kazakhstan and Bashkortostan. Such an area undoubtedly gives additional vectors for development of business, trade and market relationships. One of the high-priority goals of the region today is the spread of foreign economic ties with the countries of “near and far abroad” and the attraction of foreign investment.

This objective reality of a unified socio-cultural space existence is not realized as such in most cases although it includes the stereotypes of different cultures’ representatives, alternative ways of thinking and cross-cultural behaviour and other linguistic, cultural and ethnic controversy. Therefore, an important challenge for the business society is to overcome the situations in which language and ideological diversity impedes the achievement of agreement, mutually advantageous decisions, and cooperation development. On the contrary, knowing, understanding and accepting your business partner’s cultural peculiarities contributes to enhancing the chances of successful business interaction and disappointment and conflict minimization (Le Baron, 2003). The tacit international business rules and laws are often of no use in a small business sector as its representatives are explicit cultural patrons. It can be reflected in the norms of thinking and world perception and is dependent on life style (a countryman or an urban-dweller); social self-determination (a leader, an organizer, an adviser, a performer); gender relations; religious views; communication style acceptance (confrontation; cooperation; adaptation; dominance) (Platova, 2018).

### **3. Research Questions**

Cross-cultural character of business interaction in the Orenburg region makes it essential to:

- study cultural peculiarities of real and prospective Orenburg business partners;
- describe strategies and tactics of business interaction with representatives of different cultures;
- work out a set of communicative-interactive challenges for teaching effective business interaction in cross-cultural environment.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to identify the principal ways of efficient business interaction in the cross-cultural environment of the Orenburg region.

### **5. Research Methods**

The present study is carried out with the help of the following research methods:

- theoretical (literature analysis; synthesis of knowledge on the research problem);
- experimental (interview, conversation, questionnaire; observation).

### **6. Findings**

The notion “communicative strategy” is closely connected with communicative aim. Communicative strategy is a deliberately chosen way of communicative behaviour aimed at achieving a long-term business target and is realized with the help of corresponding communicative tactics in the

course of communicative moves. Artym (2013) describes the strategy as a realization of the overall situation, determination of development direction and influence organisation in order to achieve the goals of communication. The driving force behind the strategy is a person's communicative intention, subordinating the choice of communicative means.

Most researchers single out two main types of strategies depending on the character of interaction: cooperative and confrontational (O.S. Issers, Y.T. Rytņnikova, I.P. Tarasova), although this separation has a conditional nature (Mikhailova, 2016).

Cooperative communicative strategies are focused on achieving collaboration, partnership and compromise in the course of business interaction. These strategies involve success orientation, constructive dialogue, reflexion, mutually advantageous decisions and presuppose that every participant contributes to communication in accordance with common aim. Depending on the communicative situation cooperative strategies can be used for collaborative relationship maintenance, confrontation reduction and neutrality keeping (Raduk, 2013).

Confrontational communicative strategies are contrasted with the cooperative ones (Yermanova, 2014). The general notions describing these kinds of strategies are opposition, conflict, annoyance, threatening, humiliation, insistence, discourtesy, ultimatum, and blackmail. Confrontational strategies are mainly directed towards the speaker's interests and ignore the category of politeness (Safina, 2017), while cooperative strategies are concentrated on interests of all communicative participants.

Some researchers single out the strategies of distancing and manipulation as well. The first ones are focused on building up communicative barriers between interaction participants, while the last ones represent the kind of psychological influence on the interlocutor (Safonova, 2015); imposition of pragmatic intentions, relations, guidelines in order to change his/her behaviour (Safonova, 2015).

In the context of business interaction cooperative strategies are regarded as more common and advantageous for long-term perspective. This is due to the principle of cooperation which, being the basis of effective interaction operates in conflict situations of varying degrees (Raduk, 2013).

Any strategy is implemented in communicative tactics. Communicative tactics are a set of speech actions and communicative moves, relevant to a concrete communicative situation and aimed at achieving the definite objective in the course of realization of one single strategy. In this regard it is necessary to underline flexibility and adaptability of tactical actions to the changing situation. Artym (2013) defines communicative tactics as speech techniques that enable a speaker to achieve a communicative goal in a specific situation. Communicative tactics are flexible and dynamic, as they are corrected in the process of communication.

There is a multitude of communicative tactics' classifications depending on the scientific approach, type of communication, its aspects and objective. The characteristic feature of business interaction in the Orenburg region, as it has been noted, is a cross-cultural environment demanding study of the socio-cultural peculiarities of business partners. Thus, drawing on the classification of cultures by Akizhanova and Satenova (2013) described the Kazakh cultural values in the context of business negotiations. This research identified the following peculiarities of business interaction with Kazakh representatives:

1. While negotiating it is essential not to focus on a single personality, but to aim at opinion of a group of company's representatives. If possible, group negotiations should be organized. It can be explained by the Kazakh collectivistic spirit. Advertisement or production that is focused on individual success and development will not be appreciated (Akizhanova & Satenova, 2013). Vanity and emphasizing one's own advantages are also regarded negatively.

2. Discipline and display of respect to the older generation, authorities and Motherland are the necessary requirements for building relationships with this country.

3. Benevolence and hospitality are common Kazakh qualities both in social and business spheres (Akizhanova & Satenova, 2013). Consequently, the banquets demonstrating guest's reverence are appreciated while fulfilling business interaction.

4. The negotiations should not be held during Ramadan – the month of compulsory Muslim fasting. In case it is impossible to avoid negotiations in this period, it is necessary to remember about the traditional ban on smoking, eating and drinking.

5. The basis of success in business interaction with Kazakh representatives is the interpersonal relationships that should have been built since the beginning of negotiations. For instance, in the first meeting it is common to give a present in memory of the visit.

6. Smiling is one of the controversial non-verbal means of communication in cross-cultural interaction (Akizhanova & Satenova, 2013). Bearers of Kazakh culture don't welcome smiling during business interaction. The higher subject's social position is, the more serious he/she should appear.

7. The general respectful address to the prospective Kazakh partner is "first name + sir /madam ("myrza / hanim)") or "first name + father's name". The last form came into usage due to the influence of the Russian language on the Post-Soviet territories (Akizhanova & Satenova, 2013).

Cultural aspects of business interaction in every Asian country are undoubtedly unique and specific and demand careful studying. However the rules of business interaction with Kazakh representatives listed above can be relevant to some other countries of Asia too, thus, forming the so-called "Asian behaviour model" which contradicts the "European behaviour model" in many ways (Platova, 2018).

For instance, the peculiarities of business interaction with Germany, one of the leading investors in the Orenburg region, areas follows:

1. Identity development, subjective position, personal success, one's own increased status – the most important values in modern western business. The principal orientations of business interaction with the partners of "western conscious" are creativity and uniqueness in production and promotion.

2. The partner's status and age do not as a rule have any decisive role in the course of business interaction. Youthfulness denotes the openness to new ideas and endeavours while maturity is associated with subject's extensive experience.

3. Thorough preparation, logical and consistent speech based on facts will produce a positive effect in the negotiating process with German partners. Jokes, anecdotes, usage of slang and conversational language are not acceptable in business interaction with the representatives of this culture.

4. While implementing interaction it is important to remember about the hierarchy of German business. Consulting or negotiating with deputies, for example, for time-saving, is not advisable.

5. Being based on strict and categorical ethic (Akizhanova & Satenova, 2013), the “European behaviour model” allows the development of a purely professional relationship. In German culture both gift-giving and hugging of any kind are not acceptable.

6. In western culture smiling doesn’t only denote benevolent attitude to the partner, it also demonstrates his / her success, social well-being, calmness, stability and reliability. That is why “a smile” is a compulsory condition of successful business interaction in Europe.

7. The traditional international form of addressing is “Mr / Mrs + surname”. Western businessmen don’t often even try to remember the names of numerous partners, thus, retaining the official character of communication and not allowing interpersonal relationship development.

The principal cultural differences between Asian and European countries refer to the specifics of business interaction with their representatives and prove the necessity of subject’s preparing for it.

Teaching business representatives effective interaction in a cross-cultural environment of the region is possible through multiple participation in real and modelled situations of cross-cultural interaction in the course of meeting business challenges (Platova, 2018).

Interactive business challenge is a problem of professional character with the fact details of the surrounding reality (Platova, 2018). Working in pairs / groups and having different aims, interaction subjects should make a common decision, come to an agreement about the question.

Teaching business interaction in a cross-cultural environment involves meeting similar challenges in different circumstances. It is natural that one and the same challenge demands using different methods and ways of interaction with Kazakh and German representatives that should correspond to the business partner’s cultural views and value orientations.

Although existing in a situation of sociocultural opposition, interaction subjects do not always realize it. With the set of interactive challenges they can conceptualize the real contradictions of different co-existing cultures. Besides, for self-determination in the choice of values and new ways of activities, subjects need to develop their interactive skills of analysis and self-analysis, ability to make up common decisions and to settle conflicts.

Moral and ethical attitude towards situations of interaction, value orientations, life aims and ideals, principles of communication are reconsidered in the course of meeting business challenges. It is necessary to emphasize the uniqueness of cross-cultural experience and its activity orientated nature. The content of personal cross-cultural experience is based on the contradictory points of view; discrepancy of meaning; hierarchical, cultural and value differences; communication condition changes. It is also essential for interaction subjects not only to gain common experience of meeting professional challenges, but to take part in the reflexive analysis of the interactive process and its results.

## **7. Conclusion**

Effective business interaction in the cross-cultural environment of the Orenburg region, thus, implies knowing and accepting partner’s cultural values and ideals; orientating towards them in the course negotiation. The most advantageous communicative strategies, aimed at long-term collaboration and partnership, are cooperative ones. The choice of communicative tactics depends on partner’s ethnic and cultural affiliation.

Summing up the cultural peculiarities of business interaction with the two biggest foreign partners of the Orenburg region, we can identify the following communicative tactics (Table 01).

**Table 01.** Communicative tactics of business interaction with Kazakh and German partners

№	Kazakh partners	German partners
1	Do not demonstrate your personality	Demonstrate the uniqueness of your personality
2	Show respect to the older generation, authorities, Motherland	Do not pay attention to the age or status of your partner
3	Be benevolent and hospitable	Prepare your speech thoroughly, avoiding informality
4	Avoid negotiations during Ramadan	Do not negotiate without “chef-partner”
5	Develop interpersonal relationship (for example, by giving presents)	Do not allow informal interpersonal relationship
6	Don't smile during business negotiation	Smile while negotiating
7	Address to your partner first name + sir /madam (“myrza / hanim”) or “first name + father's name”	Address to your partner “Mr / Mrs + surname”

The further research prospects are connected with studying cross-cultural peculiarities of other nationalities representatives, who are the real or potential partners of the Orenburg businessmen; describing the tactics of interaction with them; working out a set of communicative-interactive tasks for teaching subjects business interaction in cross-cultural environment.

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