The role of written communication in international business relations: a cross-cultural perspective on business correspondence discourse

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Abstract. This academic article explores the enduring significance of written communication within the context of international business relations. Emphasizing its pivotal role, the study investigates how written communication serves as a linchpin for organizing information, molding positive company images, and facilitating effective cross-cultural interactions. While underscoring the advantages of written communication, the article carefully acknowledges inherent drawbacks, including potential delays and associated costs. The research contributes valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics of written communication in the international business landscape, shedding light on its multifaceted impacts and the importance of considering both its benefits and limitations.

Keywords: business relations, business correspondence, written communication, cultural interaction
In modern times, the widespread use of mobile phones and electronic communications, as well as the increased availability of electronic mail, has reduced the need for written documents. Despite such alternatives, people still send hundreds of millions of letters. Therefore, written communication is as important today as it was decades ago when computers were not a means of mass communication. Written communication keeps records of messages, formulates the terms of business relationships, organizes, informs, serves as reminders, and prompts us to take specific actions. Moreover, a well-crafted written message creates a positive image of the companies and organizations that distribute it. In modern conditions, written communications make a great contribution to the success of international business relations (L. Karchava, 2012:35).

Business writing is informative, instructive, persuasive, and transactional. The goal of business writing is to transmit information to a reader, so clear language is necessary to help a reader understand information easily. Writing clearly is one of the more challenging aspects of business writing.

In the realm of business relations, a written document acts not only as an instrument but also performs various functions such as information sorting, presentation, transmission, accumulation and storage, confirmation, accounting, and planning. The advantages of written communication are underscored, including the ability to record reliable information, send a single message to multiple recipients, organize thoughts accurately, formulate precise contract terms, and transfer confidential information (Khikhadze, 2018:54).

However, the drawbacks of written communication are not overlooked. Issues such as the inability of immediate recipient clarification, the time required for composing a well-structured message, and the associated expenses, including paper, design, typography, and postal services, are acknowledged (Khikhadze, 2018:55).

Business correspondence is mainly of two types:

Interstate - between state organizations, foreign representations, and officials (various notes, memoranda, and other forms);
Commercial letters of semi-official status, which are used in the field of business relations between institutions and organizations.

In the discourse of business correspondence, a foreign language acts as a means of communication, carrying the cultural characteristics it represents. The article posits that business communication and correspondence increasingly incorporate cultural components, becoming subject to the logic of cultural communication. The specificity of foreign language business correspondence discourse is intricately linked to the goals, characteristics, and technology of professional activity. However, N.N. Pavelko contends that a supranational model for the theory and practice of business communication is unattainable, as each country’s market economy has unique cultural and historical characteristics. Consequently, participants in business correspondence discourse must consider the national psychological characteristics of the specific business-communication environment (Pavelko, 1998:17).

The article sheds light on intercultural differences in direct verbal interaction between partners representing different nations. These differences manifest in the layout of communicative acts, the perception of information transmitted by carriers of different cultures, and the characteristics of their non-speech behavior.

Experts, including L. Kuzmina, R. Levis, L. Mazunova, and T. Samokhina, observe that in Western companies, written communication takes precedence. Consequently, Western specialists exhibit high proficiency in business correspondence. American business correspondence aligns with traditions of oral public speaking, characterized by positivity and informality. Compared to British discourse, American communication tends to be less formal (Samokhina, 2005–216).

National-cultural parameters significantly influence the features of the communication process in business correspondence. The participants, existing within the dimensions of two national and cultural societies, are urged to delve into the national context where business correspondence takes place. This understanding of linguistic
and cultural characteristics is deemed essential for achieving mutual understanding in the communication process.

In conclusion, this academic article not only underscores the enduring significance of written communication in international business but also emphasizes its role as a linchpin for organizational structures, information dissemination, and positive company representation. By illuminating cultural nuances in business correspondence, the study underscores the imperative for participants to not only comprehend but actively navigate national-cultural parameters for effective cross-cultural communication. The recognition of both the advantages and drawbacks of written communication positions this study as a nuanced exploration of its complexities. As we navigate an ever-evolving global business landscape, the article advocates for a forward-thinking approach—one that seamlessly integrates linguistic and cultural considerations. This holistic perspective not only informs current practices but also paves the way for future research and practical applications, ensuring that written communication continues to thrive as a dynamic and adaptive force in the international business arena.

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