

SECTION III. ETHNOLINGUISTICS AND CULTURAL LINGUISTICS

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COHESION AS A STRUCTURAL SEMANTIC FEATURE
IN THE TEXT OF BUSINESS LETTERS (BY THE EXAMPLE
OF THE FRENCH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES)

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Abstract. This article deals with the structural semantic problems of the textual organization of the business letter in French and Russian. The authors of the article study the cohesion phenomenon in the business letter text and draw a comparative analysis for the phenomenon in languages under study.

The cohesion in the text of a business letter is represented in the textual interrelation of separate parts and sentences with the help of lexical, morphological and syntactical means. Two types of the linear cohesion are peculiar to the business letter: semantic linking и semantic overlap.

The authors describe several levels of the semantic linking in the text of a business letter: lexical, grammatical и syntactical (coherence). The semantic linking at the lexical level is represented by reduplications and repeats; at the grammatical level – by the abidance by the grammar rules in writing business letters in the French and Russian languages; at the syntactical level – by the coherence means (language ties, language connectors).

The authors develop the notion of the semantic overlap and note that the phenomenon under study borders with the semantic repetitions and coincides with them in case if the lexical unit is replaced with a synonym.

Key words: official language, business letter, business society, office work, the French language.

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СВЯЗАННОСТЬ КАК СВОЙСТВО СТРУКТУРНО-СМЫСЛОВОЙ
ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ТЕКСТА ДЕЛОВОГО ПИСЬМА
(НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ ФРАНЦУЗСКОГО И РУССКОГО ЯЗЫКОВ)

Introduction

Writing the text of the business letter in the French and Russian languages is an extremely difficult task. There are such important goals before the writer of business messages as the competent drawing up of letters and following basic communication rules of business correspondence. The communicative success is totally dependent on compliance with the rules of writing the business letter. An improperly formatted business letter will not reach its communicative purpose, cause misunderstanding on the part of the recipient, and as a result, non-cooperation.

Unfortunately, even with large amounts of business correspondence patterns, there may be cases of communicative failure. This is due to the fact that the pattern reveals only the structure of a business

letter, the sequence of presentation of information. However, a particular challenge when writing business messages to the sender is a competent and consistent presentation of the ideas and proposals with coherent and logical transitions from one thought to another. Therefore, structural and semantic components of writing - cohesion and integrity- take an important place in the study of the characteristics of business correspondence.

The Objective

This article attempts to describe the phenomenon of coherence in the text of business correspondence, taking into account peculiarities of the French and Russian language. The basis for the actualization of this problem is the examples of communication failures, the main reason of which is the formation of semantic gaps, caused by the

inability of the communicants to achieve consistency and reasonableness of expressions, as well as coherent transitions from one problem to another.

The Main Part

Characteristic for the business letter from the standpoint of structural and semantic organization is cohesion – the ascertaining feature of the text, expressed in text correlation of separate parts and sentences via lexical, morphological or syntactic means, as well as the supertext cohesion expressed lexically and syntactically by means of the inserted phrases. Cohesion in the business letter plays an important role, because it gives you the opportunity to take the text of the business letter as a part of the discourse, to correlate it with the preceding context, cohering some of the messages in one global discourse.

According to V. Radchenko, the means of language content of business letters are cohered linearly, i. e. the separate parts of the text are linked directly to each other, depend on each other or reciprocally interpreted. The scholars identify two types of linear cohesion: semantic linking, implying logical and semantic relations between parts of the text, and semantic overlap, being partial identity of a semantic component of the previous message [1].

Semantic linking is represented at all levels in the text of the business letter irrespective of the language, at the lexical and grammatical levels.

Nous vous envoyons ci-joint le catalogue d'échantillons de nos derniers produits.

Мы вам также отправляем каталог с образцами нашей новой продукции. (We are also sending you the catalogue of the samples of our new production)

It is seen from the examples that the use of lexical units in the sentences of business letters have semantic causation, at the same time, each unit of the lexis of the business letter determines positioning the following lexical unit after it. The usage of lexical units in the text of the business letter follows grammar rules of the language in which the business letter is written.

At the lexical level in the business letter in Russian and French the presence of repetitions indicate semantic coherence. There exist several types of repetitions in business letter:

1. Complete lexical repetition (the use of identical words and expressions):

Lors de l'enregistrement de mes bagages, j'ai procédé à la déclaration de la valeur de mes bagages par le biais d'une déclaration spéciale d'intérêt. Le vol s'est parfaitement déroulé. Néanmoins, arrivé à destination, je n'ai pas trouvé mes bagages. Après avoir effectué des recherches, le personnel de la

compagnie m'a informé que mes bagages enregistrés avaient subi un retard d'acheminement et qu'ils me seraient restitués au plus vite.

Мы бы попросили Вас серьезно обсудить вопрос веса с Вашим поставщиком, поскольку это не только вопрос потери веса, но также и то, что мы несем дополнительные расходы за фрахт, поскольку мы оплачиваем заявленный вес и рассчитываем наши расходы на аренду на основе 20 т на контейнер, что означает, что мы потеряли несколько сотен долларов по фрахту и в связи с чрезмерной платой за аренду контейнеров. (We would ask you to seriously discuss the issue of weight with your supplier, as this is not just a matter of losing weight, but also the fact that we have additional costs for freight, because we pay the declared weight, and estimate our rental costs on the basis of 20 tons per container that means that we have lost a few hundred dollars for freight and due to the excessive fees for the rental of containers.)

Thus, we see from the examples that the text of business letter abounds with lexical repetitions, such as the repeated use of words (French) *bagages, declaration*; (Russian) *вопрос, веса, поскольку*.

2. Partial lexical repetition (repetition of the root morpheme):

In the examples given above, such partial lexical repetitions are found (French) *enregistrés – enregistrement*; (Russian) *вес – веса, фрахт – фрахту, контейнер – контейнеров, потери – потеряли*, that is indicative of the frequency of this phenomenon in the text of business letter.

3. Semantic repetition which implies the use of synonyms and synonymic constructions, for example:

Par courrier en date du (date), le trésor public de Paris m'a transmis un avis de majoration d'une amende de stationnement de 11 euros, majorée à hauteur de 33 euros. Je me trouve actuellement dans une situation financière difficile et je me trouve dans l'impossibilité d'acquitter cette dette, a fortiori son montant majoré. En effet, j'ai subi la perte de l'emploi daté du (date) et je suis encore impayable dès lors. C'est la raison pour laquelle je n'ai pas procédé au paiement de l'amende dans les délais impartis.

Как уже сообщалось по телефону, мы установили закупленные у Вас обеспыливающие фильтры для пересыпки химикатов. Служба охраны окружающей среды при замерах установила, что содержание пыли в воздухе переупаковочной станции на 20% выше нормы. На основании изложенного мы заказываем экспертизу оборудования. (As previously reported by phone, we have found the purchased dedusting

filters for suction of chemicals. The environment conservancy after measurements has set that the content of dust in the air of the repacking station is by 20% above the norm. Based on the stated above we are ordering the examination of the equipment.)

The role of semantic repetitions in these examples is played by the words and expressions of one semantic class, such as, (French) *amende de stationnement – cette dette, je me trouve dans l'impossibilité – je n'ai pas procédé*; (Russian) *обеспыливающие фильтры – оборудования*.

4. Affix-semantic repetition, in which the words with different roots link the affixes similar to semantics: (French) *impossibilité – impayable*; (Russian) *пересылки – перепуковачной*.

So, 4 types of repetitions which are the reflection of semantic coherence at the lexical level are inherent in the business letter.

At the grammatical level in French semantic linking is reflected in positioning the words of the sentence in strict order, agreement of adjectives and participles in gender and number, verb conjugation, the use of prepositions, articles, etc.:

Je sousigné (nom prénom) déclare que mon foyer fiscal a connu une baisse égale ou supérieure à 30% de ses revenus au cours des trois derniers mois. En effet, je joins à la présente les documents justifiant de mes difficultés financières actuelles.

So, in this example there is a direct order of the words ((parenthetic word) + subject + predicate + objects), the verbs-predicates agree in person and number with the subject (*je sousigné declare, mon foyer fiscal a connu, je joins*), as well as participle/adjectives with the main word (*difficultés financières, derniers mois*) etc., which is indicative of observance of the rule of semantic linking when writing a business letter in French.

In the Russian language this phenomenon is reflected in the preferred use of the direct word order in the sentence, verb conjugation depending on the subject, agreement of adjectives and adverbs in gender, number and case, noun declension in gender, number and case, etc.:

Как уже говорилось в нашем телефонном разговоре, калий, поставленный Вами, не соответствует требуемому качеству. Мы заметили, что парафин на поверхности калия не имеет обычного беловато-желтого цвета, а имеет более темный оттенок. В связи с качественным недостатком мы вынуждены вернуть весь материал обратно. (As mentioned in our telephone conversation, potassium, supplied by you, does not meet the required quality. We have noticed that the paraffin on the surface of potassium

does not have the usual whitish-yellow color and has a darker hue. Due to the lack of quality we have to return all the material back.)

In the examples in Russian the sender also follows the direct word order (*калий не соответствует, мы заметили*), agrees the adjectives with the nouns (*темный оттенок*), sticks to the rule of declension of adjectives and nouns in cases in conformity with preceding prepositions and verb government (*с качественным недостатком, не имеет обычного беловато-желтого цвета*) etc., which is indicative of following the rules of semantic linking when writing a business letter in Russian.

At the syntactic level the semantic coherence covers the whole text of the business letter generating logical links between separate sentences following one after another, and also between the sentences of the whole letter in general. Note that at the syntactic level, semantic linking is possible within one sentence as well, either compound sentence or complex sentence. For example:

Ce compromis de vente stipulait une condition suspensive, laquelle consistait en l'obtention d'un prêt destiné à financer cette opération. Je suis au regret de vous informer qu'il ne m'a été accordé aucun crédit par les établissements bancaires et les organismes prêteurs auxquels je me suis adressé. Je suis donc contraint d'abandonner le projet d'acquisition de votre bien et vous libère de toute obligation de vente à mon égard.

Данное соглашение о продаже оговаривает условие, приостанавливающее его исполнение, коим является получение необходимой ссуды для финансирования данной операции. Должен сообщить, что в получении требуемой суммы мне было отказано. Поэтому я вынужден отказаться от приобретения вашего товара и освободить вас от обязательств договора в моем отношении. (This agreement to sell sets out the terms of suspending its execution, which is the receipt of the necessary loans to finance this operation. I must inform you that I was refused in the receipt of the required amount. Therefore, I am forced to abandon the purchase of your product and release you from the obligation of the contract in my regard.)

Our examples illustrate that at the syntactic level semantic linking is represented by the indicators of correlation of the sentences (semantic ties, indices and connectors). We find in our examples 2 types of connectors: anaphoric links and logical semantic ties. Anaphoric links are represented by personal (*я, мы, вы, Вы, je, nous, vous*) and demonstrative (*ce, cette, данный, этот*) pronouns and adjectives, that are often

repeated in the text of the business letter. The pronominal adjectives also indicate the presence of anaphoric links: *votre, mon, notre, vous/Vous, мой, наш*.

In the French language, unlike the Russian language, this type of connection is also expressed by definite and solid articles, for example: *l'obtention d'un prêt, les établissements bancaires, les organismes prêteurs*. This phenomenon is determined by grammatical differences of the Russian and French languages.

Logical and semantic ties are represented by bond-conjunctions, parenthetic words, relative pronouns functioning as an object or subject in compound sentence. For example, the conjunctions introducing the idea that develops and supports the preceding one: *par ailleurs - вместе с тем, en outre - кроме того, de plus - более того, d'autre part - . впрочем, вместе с тем*.

Semantic overlap is often found in the business letter, especially at the lexical level, when one lexical unit is substituted by a synonymous unit or one relates semantically to it, for example:

Par acte authentique en date (date de l'acte), j'ai conclu, devant vous, un contrat de vente avec Monsieur (nom et prénom de votre cocontractant).

Je souhaiterais aujourd'hui me procurer une copie de cet acte authentique afin de faire valoir les droits découlant de cette convention, et en demander l'exécution forcée.

Нотариально удостоверенным актом от (дата) я заключил в вашем присутствии договор купли-продажи с (указать имя и фамилию участника договора).

Я хотел бы, чтобы сегодня мне была доставлена копия данного акта, чтобы отстоять права заключенного договора и потребовать его исполнения.

(By notarially authenticated act (date) I have signed in your presence the sales contract with (insert name of the participant of the contract).

I would like to see today I was delivered a copy of the act, to defend the right of the concluded contract and to demand its implementation.)

In this example, the semantic overlap is found in order to avoid additional repetitions. So, for example, we see that instead of the word combination «*cette convention*» the author of the letter uses the pronoun «*en*» in the letter in French, and in the letter in Russian the word combination «*заключенного договора*» is substituted by the pronoun «*его*».

Note that semantic overlap is contiguous with semantic repetitions and coincide with them when, instead of the substituted lexical unit, a synonymous unit is used.

Cohesion of the linear type helps to convey the whole meaning of the message, to describe a situation, to establish and maintain the dialogue between the communicators, with the further exchange of thoughts and ideas, which makes the letter coherent, as a result.

In summary, we note that the cohesion is expressed in the text correlation of separate parts and sentences via lexical, morphological or syntactic means. The linear type of cohesion expressed by semantic linking and semantic overlap in the text is peculiar to business letters. To the most common types of cohesion in the business letter in the Russian and French languages we refer repetitions, anaphoric bonds and connectors represented by conjunctive and adverbial expressions.

Summary

The analysis of the factual material has shown that two types of linear cohesion are characteristic to business letter: *semantic linking (coherence)*, implying logical and semantic relations between parts of the text, and *semantic overlap* being a partial identity of a semantic component of the preceding message. We have found out that at the grammatical level in French semantic linking is reflected in the strict word order in the sentence, the agreement of adjectives and participles in gender and number, conjugation of verbs, the use of prepositions and articles. In Russian, this phenomenon is also reflected in the preferred use of the direct word order in a sentence, the conjugation of verbs, depending on the subject, the agreement of adjectives and participles in gender, number and case, declension of nouns in gender, number and case. The study has shown that at the lexical level in the business letter in the French and Russian languages the presence of repetitions indicate the semantic coherence: complete lexical, partial lexical, semantic (the use of synonyms and synonymous constructions) and affix-semantic repetitions. At the syntactic level, semantic coherence affects the whole text of the business letter, making logical links between separate sentences. The analysis of the factual material proves the presence of anaphoric links and logical-semantic binding elements that help to achieve the accuracy and consistency of presentation. The semantic overlap occurs in business writing mainly at the lexical level, when one lexical unit is substituted by a synonymous one or by a semantically related word to it.

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