# FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

**Sokolets I.**
*Kyiv National Linguistic University*

Стаття присвячена актуальним проблемам ділового спілкування в умовах глобалізації. Висвітлюються структурні та лінгвістичні аспекти найтиповіших різновидів ділового спілкування, а також мовленнєві кліше, якими мають володіти учасники ділових переговорів, зустрічей та презентацій для успішного досягнення поставленої мети.
*Ключові слова:* ділове спілкування, ділові переговори, зустрічі, презентації, структурні особливості, мовленнєві кліше.

The article deals with the problems of business communication in today's globalized world. It analyses structural and linguistic aspects of the most typical forms of business interaction. The work focuses on the functional language the participants of business interaction should be fluent in and use in negotiations, business meetings, presentations and other forms of business communication to achieve the aim of communication.
*Key words:* business communication, business negotiations, meetings, presentations, structural peculiarities, speech formulae.

Much of the English communication takes place within business circles. Business communication is a process of transferring and understanding of information between different parties and people for the purpose of carrying out business activities, to promote a product service, or organization, and to establish understanding of information within the business. Modern tendencies of globalization in today's business world require a high level of communicative proficiency and this exactly where linguistics and business coalesce, so efficient and effective interaction focuses on the language. If participants are not fluent in the language used for interaction, misinterpretations may occur. Therefore it is important to control the flow of interaction and to use proper vocabulary in all types and forms of business communication, including meeting and conferences, presentations and lectures, seminars, interviews, social and cultural affairs and personal discussions. The structure and functional language of the most typical forms of business communication are discussed thereinafter.

Meeting is the gathering together of a group of people for a controlled discussion with a specific purpose. It is essential in establishing relations for future business and in negotiating deals.

The meeting is controlled by the chairman to reach a successful conclusion, achieve its purpose and make sure that the maximum amount of business is conducted in the minimum amount of time. The chairman, who is addressed "*Chairman*", "*Mister Chairman*" or "*Madam Chairman*" needs a certain amount of language to get things started, keep them going and lead them to a conclusion.

A typical business meeting usually consists of the following parts: introduction, reviewing past business, discussing items, and finishing the meeting.

In introduction, while opening the meeting, the chairman welcomes the audience and introduces the participants saying:

- *Good morning, ladies and gentlemen / colleagues!*
- Shall we start / make a start / get started?
- *If we are all here let's start / make a start / get started;*
- *I think we should start / make a start / get started;*
- First of all, let me introduce…;
- *Would you like to say a few words about yourselves?*

E. g. Chairman: *Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! If we are all here, let's get started. First of all, I'd like you to join me in welcoming Jack Peterson, our Southwest Area Sales Vice President.*

Jack Peterson: *Thank you for having me, I'm looking forward to today's meeting.*

<u>Margaret Simmons</u>: *May I also introduce my assistant, Bob Hamp?*

<u>Chairman</u>: *Welcome, Bob. I'm afraid our national sales director, Anne Trusting, can't be with us today. She is in Kobe at the moment, developing our Far East sales force...* [2, p. 137].

An introduction may include a small talk which helps people get to know each other better, establish a polite and friendly atmosphere, and it also gives time for a quiet observation.

E. g. <u>Chairman</u>: *Susan, I'd like you to meet Mary Nelson, this is Susan from our Sales Department.*

<u>Susan</u>: *Hello. How are you? Pleased to meet you. Mrs. Nelson, may I ask where you are from?*

<u>Mary Nelson</u>: *Yes, sure. I am from Ukraine. From Odesa.*

<u>Susan</u>: *Oh, I've heard, that's the Black Sea's gateway to Ukraine. Odesa is a crossroad of cultures, languages and trade.*

<u>Mary Nelson</u>: *Yes, that's right...*

In <u>reviewing past business</u> the following phrases can be used:

• Let's go over the reports from the last meeting ...;

• Let's summarize the main points of the last meeting;

E .g. <u>Chairman</u>: *Let's get started. We're here today to discuss ways of improving sales in rural market areas. First, let's go over the report from the last meeting which was held on June 24th. Right, Tom, over to you.*

<u>Tom Robbins</u>: *Let me just summarize the main points of the last meeting. We began the meeting by approving the changes in our sales reporting system discussed on May 30th. After briefly revising the changes that will take place, we moved on to a brainstorming session concerning after sales customer support improvements. You'll find a copy of the main ideas developed and discussed in these sessions in the photocopies in front of you. The meeting was declared closed at 11.30...* [2, p. 136].

Then the chairman defines the objectives of the meeting:

• *Our objective today is to...;*

• *I've called this meeting to look at the question of...;*

• *By the end of this meeting we should have...*

E. g. <u>Chairman</u>: *Let's get down to business. The objective of our meeting today is to brainstorm the ideas for more effective sales techniques...* [2, p. 137].

• *The agenda is introduced in such a way:*

• *Have you all seen a copy of agenda?*

• OK. As you can see from the agenda, there are ... items;

• *Firstly..., secondly..., thirdly..., finally...;*

• *I suggest we follow the agenda.*

E .g. <u>Chairman</u>: *Have you all got a copy of the agenda? If everyone has got a copy, let me first explain the purpose of the meeting in detail...* [2, p. 138].

<u>Discussing items</u> the following phrases can be used:

• *Before I begin the report...;*

• How do you feel about?

• *I suggest we go round the table first ...;*

• *We have been focusing too much on ...;*

• *The way I see things ...;*

• *I'm afraid I can't agree with you.*

E .g. <u>Chairman</u>: *Before I begin the report, I'd like to get some ideas from you all. How do you feel about rural sales in our sales districts? I suggest we go round the table first to get all of you input.*

<u>John Ruting</u>: *In my opinion, we have been focusing too much on urban customers and their needs. The way I see things, we need to return to our rural base by developing an advertising campaign to focus on their particular needs...* [2, p. 136].

During the meeting the chairman may also hand over to another person, bring people in and encourage hesitant speakers, or stop people talking, etc. :
- *Right, Jeremy, over to you;*
- *One at a time, please!*
- *We can't all speak at once. John first, then Mary, then Max...;*
- *Well, thank you. I think that's clear now. Could we have some other opinions?*
- *Right, thank you, Peter. I think we've all got the point now. Okay John, thanks. Susan, I think you wanted to say something?*

E .g. Chairman: *We haven't heard about you yet, George. What do you think about this proposal? Would you like to add something?* [2, p. 144].

If there are some misunderstandings the chairman should ask for the repetition or clarification of information, prevent irreverence, or even paraphrases:
- *Sorry. I didn't hear what you said. Would you mind repeating it, please?*
- *Sorry. I didn't quite follow you. Could you go over that again, please?*
- What exactly do you mean by...?
- *I'm afraid that's outside the scope of this meeting;*
- *In other words...;*
- *So you mean...*

E.g. Chairman: *Keep to the point, please. So, if I understand you correctly, rural customers need special help to feel more valued...* [2, p. 137].

Finishing the meeting the chairman should summarize the discussed items, control decision - making and close the meeting, using the following linguistic units:
- *To sum up then...;*
- *So, to summarize what has been said so far...;*
- *I'd like to propose the following amendment;*
- *Can we take a vote on the proposal?*
- *All those in favor. Right. All those against. Right. Thank you.*
- *Right. That just covers everything;*
- *I'd like to thank Marianne for coming over from Munich.*

E .g. Chairman: *Before we close, let me just summarize the main points:*
*Rural customers need special help to feel more valued.*
*Our sales teams need more accurate information on our costumers.*
*A survey will be completed to collect data on spending habits in these areas.*
*The result of this survey will be delivered to our sales...* [2, p. 136].

During the meeting the participants are encouraged to ask different types of questions, the examples of which are presented in the table below.

| Type of question | | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Overheard | General question to the whole group | *What are the figures for the last quarter?* |
| Direct | Questions to the specific individual | *Jeremy, what is the current budget?* |
| Factual | Asking for facts, data or information | *When will the system be installed?* |
| Leading | Questions that suggest answers | *I suppose you are pretty busy?* |
| Encouraging | Questions that help respondents | *I'd be interested to hear about...* |
| Ambiguous | Questions that suggest two or more answers | *Is it a good move to make the investment now?* |
| Controversial | Questions that suggest two or more answers and are likely to lead to disagreement | *Are managers born or made?* |
| Provocative | Questions to incite people to answer | *What do you feel about the claim in the press that we have wasted the company's money?* |

|  | Type of question | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Provocative | Questions to check individual knowledge | *Could you give us an example of...?* |
| Closed | Questions with the answers "yes" or "no" | *Do you think we can solve this problem?* |
| Supportive | Questions showing that the questioner agrees with the respondent | *So you feel this is pretty important?* |
| Redirected | Questions directed at the leader, but returned to the group. | *(person A- person B)* *What is "globalization"?* *(person A- person B)* *John, how would you define "globalization"?* |

Questions help find out more information, learn other people's opinions, develop a discussion or make a decision etc. By consciously applying techniques the expected outcome of the meeting may be gained more effectively.

Negotiation is the one of the most challenging areas of business communication. It is a dialogue between two or more people or parties, intended to reach an understanding and resolve points of difference, gain advantage in the outcome of the dialogue or to produce an agreement upon the courses of action, to bargain for individual or collective advantage and to craft outcomes or to satisfy various interests of the parties involved in the negotiation process. Each party involved in negotiating tries to gain an advantage for themselves by the end of the process, using different styles of negotiations.

*Accommodating style* is used by the negotiators who enjoy solving the other party's problems and preserving personal relationships. Accommodators are sensitive to the emotional states, body language, and verbal signals of the other parties. They can, however, feel taken advantage of in the situations when the other party places little emphasis on the relationship.

*Avoiding style* is chosen by the negotiators who do not like to negotiate and don't do it unless warranted. When negotiating, avoiders tend to defer and dodge the confrontational aspects of negotiating; however, they may be perceived as tactful and diplomatic.

*Collaborating style* is selected by the negotiators who enjoy negotiations that involve solving tough problems in creative ways. Collaborators are good at using negotiations to understand the concerns and interests of other parties. They can, however, create problems by transforming simple situations into more complex ones.

*Competing style* is used by the negotiators who enjoy negotiations because they present an opportunity to win something. Competitive negotiators have strong instincts for all aspects of negotiating and are also strategic. Because their style can dominate the bargaining process, competitive negotiators often neglect the importance of relationships.

*Compromising style* is used by the negotiators who are eager to close the deal by doing what is fair and equal for all parties involved in the negotiation. Compromisers can be useful when there is limited time to complete the deal; however, compromisers often unnecessary rush the negotiation process and make concessions too quickly [3, p. 140].

Success of negotiations depends on effective conducting of all its elements: starting with preparation and opening (introduction), through clarifying positions and dealing with conflict (main body), bargaining and concluding.

Introduction starts with the welcoming and customary greetings, the main function of which is to introduce the newcomers in the negotiation process:

- *On behalf of... I would like to welcome you to...;*
- *It's my pleasure to welcome you to...;*
- *Welcome to...;*
- *How do you do?*
- *Nice to meet you;*

- *First of all let me introduce ...;*
- *Would you like to say a few words about yourself?*

E .g. <u>*Mr. Smith:*</u> *I'm very glad to welcome you. It's a great pleasure to see you here. Let me introduce the participants of our meeting...* [3, p. 58].

<u>Main body</u> is where the negotiating process is in full swing and where the terms of the agreement are discussed. Suggesting the procedure the participants of negotiation may say:

- *I would like now to begin by suggesting the following procedure (agenda);*
- *To start with, I think we should establish the overall procedure;*
- *As our first order of business, can we agree on a procedure?*
- *Does that fit in with your objectives?*
- *Is that compatible with what you would like to see?*

E .g. <u>*Mr. Smith:*</u> *OK, well, how about starting with the contract itself? Then we could move on to the product range, sales trades and discounts. How does that sound for the morning session?* [3, p. 59].

Clarifying proposals the participants of negotiations should be able to review the previous session, move on to the next point, put forward future possibilities, seek clarification, define a proposal more specifically, and reassure:

- *At our last meeting, we discussed...;*
- *Perhaps you will recall that during our last discussion we decided that...;*
- *We foresee...;*
- *We envisage...;*
- *Could you clarify one point for me?*
- *It involves...;*
- *Let me reassure you that...;*
- *I can promise you that...*

E .g. <u>*Mr. Smith:*</u> *Could you now move on to the next subject? Let's discuss our existing IT Department...* [3, p. 59].

Exploring the zone of bargaining and options negotiators may summarize positions, confirm a negotiating position or respond to a proposal:

- *Would you care to summarize your position up to this point?*
- *Is that an accurate summary of where you stand?*
- *Would you say that is a fair representation of your position?*
- *Regarding your proposal, our position is...;*
- Our basic position is...

E .g. <u>*Mr. Smith:*</u> *As far your proposal is concerned, we think it is possible to concentrate all our funds there.*

E.g. <u>*Mr. Smith:*</u> *Can we summarize your position up to this point?*

Entering the critical phrase, participant of business negotiations may identify, analyze the obstacles, and ask for concession or further information:

- *The main obstacle to progress at the moment seems to be ...;*
- *The main thing that bothers us  is ...;*
- *One big problem we have is...;*
- *What exactly is the underlying problem here?*
- Let's take a closer look at this problem;
- *In return for this, would you be willing to...?We feel there has to be a trade-off here;*
- *Would you like to elaborate on that?*
- *Could you go into more detail on that?*

E .g. <u>*Mr. Smith:*</u>  *I would like to analyze these problems with IT Department and get to the bottom of the problem...* [3, p. 58].

Conclusion usually consists in either singing the contacts or in an agreement to continue the negotiation later on or, if the worse comes to the worst, removal from the contracts. Closing the negotiation business negotiators should be able to check, delay, accept or look for options:

- *Let's just confirm the details, then;*
- *Let's make sure we agree on these figures (dates);*
- We would have to study this. Can we get back to you on this later?
- *We'll have to consult with our colleagues back in the office. We'd like to get back to you on it;*
- *We are happy to accept this agreement;*
- *This agreement is acceptable to us;*
- I believe we have an agreement;
- *Just for the sake of argument, what if...; Can I ask a hypothetical question? Suppose that...*

E.g. *Mr. Parker: Fine. We are happy to accept this agreement. Then our contract may be prepared or signing. We'll ask your experts and layers to do it. I don't think it will take long to come up with it.*
*Mr. Manson: Let it be so...* [3, p. 58].

Communication strategies used by the parties to achieve success include structuring and controlling information, asking the right questions, obtaining feedback, maintaining a positive atmosphere, avoiding personalization and making proposals and counter proposals.

A presentation is a way of communicating ideas and information to a group of people. It may be informative, instructional, persuasive, decision-making etc. Business presentations play an important role in a modern business setting: businesspeople give about 30 presentations a year in order to inform or instruct, to enlighten or convince the audience in such specific business situations as, for instance, sales (to sell products, services or ideas), training (to teach participants a variety of skills, including sales techniques, time management, stress reduction, negotiation, leadership), entertainment (to inform the audience, build a positive image, and create goodwill) or image building (to introduce the company).

Presentations can be categorized according to their purpose that help determinate their content and style. The types of presentations, their general purpose, gole and characteristic features are presented in the table below.

| General Purpose | Types of Presentation | Characteristics of the Presentation | The Goal of Presentation |
|---|---|---|---|
| To inform | Informative | – Emphasis falls on informative content about the subject.<br>– The speaker analyzes the audience to determine how much they already know about the topic.<br>– The speaker seeks to make the subject interesting to listeners. | Expanding the listeners' knowledge or helping them acquire a specific skill. |
| To persuade | Persuasive | – The speaker takes a definite point of view concerning the subject and presents information needed to get point across.<br>– The speaker selects, arranges the material to appeal to the particular opinions of listeners. | Trying to change what the audience thinks or does. |
| To inspire | Inspirational | – Remarks are centered on a public event that is taking place or recently occurred.<br>– The speaker organizes remarks to express accepted values that are represented by the event. | Striving to depend on existing appreciation for particular ideas, people or events. |
| To entertain | Entertaining | – Speakers rely on such options as telling something or stressing the funny aspects of the subject. | Captivating the listeners. |

All types of presentations must be logically organized and include such components as introduction, main body or text, and summary or conclusion.

Introduction should hold the listener's interest and establish the theme of the remainder of the presentation. During introduction listeners form their initial impression of the speaker and the topic. That impression, favorable or not, will affect how they react to the rest of the speaker's remarks. To be most effective, the introduction should accomplish several purposes such as to win attention, to promote good will and credibility, to give a thesis statement and a preview of the whole speech.

Using a starting statement, referring to something that is in listeners' mind, quoting an apt, saying or anecdote, asking for a response are important in promoting favorable attention.

Welcoming the audience the presenter may say:

- *Good morning, ladies and gentlemen;*
- *Good morning, colleagues!;*
- *Good afternoon, everybody.*

E.g. *Presenter: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen! Nice to see you. How many of you expect one day to start your own business? How many of you have all the cash available to capitalize that business when you start?* [1, p. 50].

In most cases speakers needs to state the main idea clearly at the very beginning of the remarks so that listeners know exactly what the presenter is trying to say. The introduction should summarize the main idea, identify the supporting points, indicate the order in which those points will be developed, and give instructions about questions:

- *I am going to talk today about ...;*
- *The purpose of my presentation is to introduce our new range of...;*
- *Do feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions;*
- *I'll try to answer all of your questions after the presentation ;*
- *I plan to keep some time for questions after the presentation.*

E.g. *Presenter: As a loan officer at Dominion trust which specializes in small-business loan. I make decisions on requests from entrepreneurs like you, applying for start-up money. To start with, I'll describe the progress made this year. Then I'll mention some of the problems we've encountered and how we overcome them. After that I'll consider the possibilities for further growth next year. Finally, I'll summarize my presentation...* [1, p. 51].

The bulk of any presentation, the body, should be devoted to a discussion of three or four main points in the outline. To show how the ideas are related in an oral presentation the speaker must rely more on words. For the small links between sentences and paragraphs, one or two traditional words are enough. Throughout the presentation the speaker must continue trying to maintain the audience's interest relating the subject to the audience's needs, using clear, vivid language, explaining the relationship between the subject and familiar ideas.

Starting, finishing a point and referring to what will be or have been said the presenter may say:

- *Those are the main points on...;*
- *That's all I have to say about....;*
- *Now we've looked at/dealt with...;*
- *Now let's turn to/move on to;*
- *I'd like now to consider/examine;*
- *As I said at the beginning...;*
- *I told you a few moments ago that...;*
- *I'll do that later;*
- *I'll return to this point in a few minutes.*

E.g. *Presenter: First, let's consider your experience. You must show that you can hit the ground running.*

*1. Demonstrate what experience you have in your proposed business.*

*2. Include your resume when you submit your business plan.*

*3. If you have little experience, tell us whom you would hire to supply the skills that you lack.*

*B. My second suggestion, then, involves preparation. Have you done your homework?*

*1. Talk to local businesspeople, especially those in related fields.*

*2. Conduct traffic counts or other studies to estimate potential sales.*

*3. Analyze the strength and weakness of the competition.*

*C. My last trip is the most important one. It involves making a realistic protection of your potential sales, cash flow, and equity.*

*1. Present detailed monthly cash-flow projections for the first year.*

*2. Describe What-if scenarios indicating both good and bad possibilities.*

*3. Indicate that you intend to supply at least 25 percent of the initial capital yourself.*

*The three major points I've just outlined cover critical points in obtaining start-up loans. Let me review them for you...* [1, p. 51].

The conclusion should restate the key points and summarize the overarching message that is being conveyed. It should be even shorter than introduction, not more than 5 percent of the total speaking time. The review should contain a restatement of the thesis and a summary of the main points. The presenter may use the following:

- *I'll talk about this in the next part of my presentation;*
- *I'll comment on this in my conclusion;*
- *So now I'd just like to summarize the main points;*
- *In brief, we have looked at...;*
- *That's all I have to say for;*
- *(I think) that covers most of the points;*
- *That concludes my talk.*

E. g. <u>*Presenter: Loan officers are most likely to say "yes" to your loan application if you do three things:*</u>

*– Prove that you can hit the ground running when your business opens;*

*– Demonstrate that you have researched your proposed business seriously.*

*– Project a realistic picture of your sales, cash flow, and equity...* [1, p. 52].

The final remark should be enthusiastic and memorable. Even if parts of the presentation have been downbeat the speaker should try to close on a positive tone.

E. g. <u>*Presenter: Experience, preparation, and protection, then are the three keys to launching your business with the necessary start up capital so that you can concentrate on where your customers, not your funds, are coming from ...*</u> [1, p. 53].

In addition to having an introduction, a body, a final summary and ending the speaker's presentation should include an opportunity for questions and answers. Responding to questions and comment during the presentation interrupts the flow of the argument and reduces the speaker's control of the situation. The best bet in this case is to ask the audience to hold their questions until the speaker has concluded the presentation. Whether the speaker handles them during or after the presentation the questions from the audience can be a challenge. Some questions may be confusing but the speaker can handle them effectively by:

– Starting the Ball Rolling (sometimes listeners may be reluctant to ask the first question. The speaker can get a question-answer session rolling his/her own remarks: "*One question you might have is...*" or the speaker can also encourage questions non-verbally by leaning forward as he/she invites the audience to speak up);

– Anticipating likely questions (speakers put themselves in the position of the listeners and guess which questions they may have);

– Clarifying complicated and confusing questions (speakers should be sure that they have understood the question by rephrasing it in his/her own words: *"If I understood you correctly..."*);

– Treating questioners with respect (the speaker can keep the dignity and gain the support of other listeners by taking every question seriously or even complimenting the person who asks it);

– Keeping answers focused on the goal (the speaker should try to frame answers in ways that promote his/her goal);

– Addressing the answer to the entire audience (the speaker must look at the person asking the question but address the answer to everybody);

– Following the last question with a summary (a typical summary might sound like: *"I am grateful for the chance to answer your questions. Now that's we've gone over the cost projects, I think you can see why we are convinced that this proposal can help boost productivity and cut overhead by almost 10 percent overnight"*.

Every presentation is made in some context, or to be more exact, on a certain occasion. The nature of the occasion will obviously have a great bearing on the speaker's speech. The occasion will dictate not only the content of the speech, but also the duration, the tone, and the expectations of the audience.

So, in today's globalized world, the need for effective communication, business interaction in particular, is emphasized. Language is one of the most important constituents of this process. Much of the language used to control basic forms of oral business communication is stylized, so that identical words are used on many occasions, therefore participants should be competent, fluent in job-specific language and vocabulary and use functional language in negotiations, business meetings, presentations and other forms of business communication.

**Literature**

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