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Alla ISHCHUK,

orcid.org/0000-0001-7825-4295
PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of the Germanic Languages
Mykhailo Dragomanov State University of Ukraine
(Kyiv, Ukraine) allaishchuck@hotmail.com

Olha KERNOZHYTSKA,

orcid.org/0009-0003-5012-1652 Senior Lecturer at the Department of the Germanic Languages Mykhailo Dragomanov State University of Ukraine (Kyiv, Ukraine) o.a.kernozhytska@udu.edu.ua

Lubov TRETIAK,

orcid.org/0009-0003-9410-6008 Associate Professor at the Department of the Germanic Languages Mykhailo Dragomanov State University of Ukraine (Kyiv, Ukraine) lubovtretiak@gmail.com

NAVIGATING ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

This article delves into the intricate landscape of ethical communication in contemporary business environments, shedding light on its evolution, foundational principles, and practical implications. With globalization exerting a profound influence on societal dynamics, including language, the imperative for effective cross-cultural communication has become increasingly paramount. The heightened prevalence of multicultural business relations underscores the necessity for a common language, with English emerging as a lingua franca in professional settings worldwide. However, the inadequacies of General English for business communication have propelled the development of Business English, offering refined linguistic frameworks tailored to the intricacies of professional interactions. Despite its pivotal role, Business English remains a relatively new area of academic inquiry, prompting scholars to scrutinize its distinguishing features and contexts of use. Through a comprehensive literature review, this article elucidates various conceptualizations of Business English, positioning it within the broader framework of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). Additionally, it explores the notion of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) and its implications for communication across diverse cultural contexts. Ethical considerations form a central theme throughout the discourse, emphasizing the importance of honesty, fairness, and cultural sensitivity in professional interactions. The authors offer practical insights for enhancing ethical communication practices in business writing, encompassing linguistic nuances, cross-cultural adaptation, and adherence to formal communication standards. The study concludes by outlining future research directions, including the exploration of cross-cultural communication dynamics and the ethical implications of emerging technologies on business communication. Overall, this article helps navigate ethical challenges in contemporary business communication, offering valuable insights for professionals striving to uphold integrity and clarity in their interactions.

Key words: Business English, ethical communication, cross-cultural communication, professional interactions, multicultural business environments, ethical frameworks.

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Алла ІЩУК,

orcid.org/0000-0001-7825-4295 кандидат філософських наук, доцент, доцент кафедри германських мов Українського державного університету імені Михайла Драгоманова (Київ, Україна) allaishchuck@hotmail.com

Ольга КЕРНОЖИЦЬКА,

orcid.org/0009-0003-5012-1652 старший викладач кафедри германських мов Українського державного університету імені Михайла Драгоманова (Київ, Україна) o.a.kernozhytska@udu.edu.ua

Любов ТРЕТЯК,

orcid.org/0009-0003-9410-6008 доцент кафедри германських мов Українського державного університету імені Михайла Драгоманова (Київ, Україна) lubovtretiak@gmail.com

ВИРІШЕННЯ ЕТИЧНИХ ЗАВДАНЬ У ДІЛОВОМУ СПІЛКУВАННІ

У даній статті розглядається складний контекст етичної комунікації в сучасному діловому середовищі та висвітлюється її еволюція, засади та практичні наслідки. В умовах глобалізації, що має глибокий вплив на суспільну динаміку, зокрема і на мову, потреба в ефективній міжкультурній комунікації набуває дедалі більшого значення. Зростаюче поширення мультикультурних ділових відносин підкреслює необхідність спільної мови, а англійська мова стає офіційною мовою у професійному середовищі в усьому світі. Однак через недостатню придатність загальновживаної англійської мови для ділового спілкування з'явилася ділова англійська мова, яка пропонує вдосконалену лінгвістичну базу, пристосовану до тонкощів та особливостей професійного спілкування. Незважаючи на свою ключову роль, ділова англійська мова залишається відносно новою сферою наукових досліджень, що спонукає науковців ретельно вивчати її відмінні риси та контексти використання. У даній статті представлено різні концепції ділової англійської мови, які розглядають її в ширшому контексті мови для спеціальних цілей. Крім того, досліджується поняття ділової англійської мови як мови міжнародного спілкування та її значення для комунікації в різних культурних контекстах. Етичні міркування є центральною темою даної наукової розвідки, зокрема підкреслюється важливість чесності, справедливості та культурної чуйності у професійній взаємодії. Автори пропонують практичні поради щодо вдосконалення етичних комунікаційних практик у діловому письмі, включаючи лінгвістичні нюанси, крос-культурну адаптацію та дотримання професійних комунікаційних стандартів. У висновках окреслено майбутні напрямки досліджень, зокрема вивчення динаміки міжкультурної комунікації та етичних наслідків новітніх технологій для ділового спілкування. Загалом, ця стаття допомагає орієнтуватися в етичних питаннях сучасної ділової комунікації, пропонуючи фахівцям практичні інструменти для оцінки та впровадження етичних комунікаційних стратегій у бізнес-контексті, дотримуючись принципів етичності у своїх взаємовідносинах.

Ключові слова: ділова англійська мова, етичне спілкування, міжкультурна комунікація, професійна взаємодія, мультикультурне бізнес-середовище, етичні норми.

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Problem Statement. Globalization continues to have a profound impact on various aspects of society, including language, leading to increased multicultural business relations and a growing need for a common professional language, notably English. Practical use of English is almost a prerequisite worldwide, with English serving as a lingua franca (Kosanovic & Milun, 2013: 95), underscoring the importance of communication skills for business professionals (Louhiala-Salminen, 1997), and facilitating effective communication in multinational settings (Talbot, 2009).

However, it became evident that General English was not optimally suited for business communication. Consequently, Business English emerged as a specialized branch of language, offering refined linguistic frameworks to mitigate misunderstandings in business interactions. In the contemporary era of international globalization and rapid development in multicultural professional communication, scholars worldwide pay close attention to Business English trying to delineate its distinguishing features to set it apart from General English and scrutinize its contexts of use, circumstances, and precise methodologies. Despite its pivotal role, Business English remains relatively under-researched outside teaching (Pierini, 2014), even as English's importance in international business communication grows due to globalization (Kerkeb, 2013).

The **aim** of this article is to delve into the evolution, foundations, and practical implications of ethical communication in modern business contexts. It seeks to achieve this by exploring the historical roots of ethical communication, addressing contemporary challenges, examining ethical frameworks and models, and discussing their practical implications in business writing. The **object** of the study is ethical communication in business contexts, while its **subject** covers the role and practical implications of Business English in fostering ethical communication practices within multicultural business environments.

Literature review. Throughout the 20th century, scholars diligently studied Business English, developing rules and patterns for its effective use. As the field progressed, these frameworks adapted to accommodate diverse cultural perspectives. Definitions of Business English vary, ranging from its linguistic elements in business activities to its role in written communication. Merriam-Webster presents it as both a stylistic adaptation and a form of English instruction for non-native speakers, while other sources emphasize its relevance to written correspondence.

Business English is often seen as a subset of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), within the broader field of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) (Swales, 2000). ESP encompasses English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), and English for Professional Purposes (EPP), the latter specifically targeting managers with business and technology courses (Dudley-Evans, St John, 1996). Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) is suggested as a more encompassing term, widely used by non-native speakers across industries (Wu, 2013). Additionally, Rogerson-Revell (2007) introduces English for International Business (EIB), distinguishing between its use by native and non-native speakers in business settings. Pierini's research (2014) underscores the interconnectedness between General Discourse (GD), Economic Discourse (ED), and Business Discourse (BD), positing them as manifestations of the same language used in diverse contexts. General discourse spans everyday life, while ED operates within academic contexts, and BD within the workplace. Business English (BE) emerges as the practical manifestation of BD, incorporating aesthetic and emotive elements depending on genre.

Key points of the study. The exploration of ethics in human communication traces back to ancient times (notably with Plato's dialogue 'Phaedrus'). Over centuries, this inquiry has evolved into a distinct subfield within the discipline of human communication,

dedicated to understanding and explicating ethical communication practices.

In contemporary professional communication, language must adapt to address current challenges, ensuring that effective business decisions are informed by appropriate information. Effective communication in the business sphere necessitates mutually understood conceptual frameworks and a shared language.

Wittgenstein's concept of 'language-games' underscores the importance of a common discourse for facilitating communication. His notion of 'the use of language' emphasizes the need for clear language that conveys shared meaning, serving as an essential prerequisite for ethical discourse (Wittgenstein, 2009). However, challenges arise with deconstructionist interpretations of language, where meanings become subject to individual interpretation rather than authorial intent, posing significant challenges for ethics.

The 20th century witnessed a pivotal discussion on ethics, marked by a global recognition of the imperative for ethical considerations across various domains. In the professional realm, attention to ethical behavior in business communication has heightened, with language playing a central role in reflecting contemporary challenges. Defining key terms such as 'ethics', 'professional ethics', 'ethical behavior', 'ethical communication', and 'ethical discourse' is paramount for clarity in research. Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is concerned with reflective choice, moral principles, and the outcomes of ethical decisions (Wheelwright, 1935). Researchers provide varied perspectives on ethics, with Johannesen (2002) defining it as the discussion of judgments regarding the appropriateness and morality of actions across communicative, political, social, and personal realms. Similarly, Drucker (1981: 2) emphasizes a singular ethics applicable universally to individuals.

When narrowly defined, ethics originates as a branch of philosophy focused on the study of ideal human behavior and ways of being. In our context, ethics refers to a set of rules of conduct or moral code, particularly concerning professional ethics and ethical behavior. Professional ethics, as articulated by Bilous (2017), encompasses rules and regulations based on moral values, guiding the behavior of experts within their specific professional activities and circumstances. It involves adherence to moral laws and principles, as well as compliance with codes of honor established within professional organizations. General ethics and professional ethics maintain a dialectical unity, with professional ethics specifying the application of general ethics within particular

occupations. The University of Queensland (eProfessionalism, 2023) defines professional ethics as the standards of personal and business behavior accepted within a profession, often established by professional organizations to ensure adherence to sound ethical principles. Ethical behavior entails actions consistent with societal perceptions of good values, including honesty, fairness, equality, dignity, diversity, and individual rights.

Ethical behavior, characterized by honesty, fairness, and equity, is fundamental in interpersonal, professional, and academic relationships. It respects the dignity, diversity, and rights of individuals and groups. Central to ethical behavior is ethical communication, especially crucial in business contexts. Ethical communication adheres to socially acceptable codes of conduct, presenting only truthful information without deception or violation of others' rights. It encompasses ethical discourse, emphasizing clarity and honesty in communication practices. To understand the notion of 'ethical discourse', it is essential to distinguish it from 'moral discourse'. Bertman points out that Ricoeur views ethics as personal, concerning individual aims for conduct, while morality relates to social norms expressing ethical aims (Bertman, 1978). In contrast, Habermas (1987) associates 'authenticity claims' with 'ethical' discourse, distinct from truth and rightness claims.

Establishing a common understanding of terminologies in business ethics necessitates ethical conversation, incorporating a normative element. Normative ethics, seeking rational analysis, requires objective and dispassionate language to facilitate rational discourse. The discourse of ethics, constructed through language, influences behaviors and patterns of thinking. Developing a suitable framework for ethical analysis applicable to a business context poses a contemporary challenge. Business communicators may find mastering moral philosophy jargon time-consuming, especially amid time constraints and modern lifestyles. Exploring new forms of knowledge for ethical analysis, particularly those aligned with social sciences, remains an avenue for further exploration.

Tilley (2005) outlines a structured approach to ethics known as the 'ethics pyramid'. The pyramid revolves around three core concepts: intent, means, and ends. Intent stands as the foremost consideration in assessing ethicality, with ethical communicators prioritizing honesty and truthfulness from the outset. Means cover the tools or behaviors used to achieve desired outcomes. It is crucial to differentiate between good, bad, and neutral options within this spectrum of behavioral choices. The final tier, ends, represents the desired outcomes of our actions. The ethicality of

these outcomes depends on their impact on both the source and the receiver of the message or behavior. To evaluate the ethics of behavior, Tilley (2005) proposes three key questions addressing ethicality, alignment with established codes of ethics, and personal acceptance of potential reversed outcomes. Although not mandatory for every scenario, these questions provide a helpful framework for ethical deliberation. Ultimately, ethical decision-making entails striking a balance between intent, means, and ends to ensure ethical conduct.

Business writing plays a pivotal role in evaluating job performance, distinct from personal or academic writing. It entails establishing a favorable reputation and credibility, whether communicating internally with colleagues or externally with customers. The credibility of information sources must be rigorously questioned to avoid reliance on potentially misleading or false data. While some employers have corporate codes of ethics, adherence to legal regulations governing business conduct is imperative, even in their absence. Business emails represent a ubiquitous form of professional communication, requiring adherence to ethical norms encompassing politeness and acknowledged etiquette (Іщук О., Іщук А., 2021). Modern email etiquette emphasizes the importance of clear subject lines, classic fonts, and professional salutations (Pachter, 2013). In the realm of business communication, linguistic aspects play a crucial role in conveying professionalism and clarity. For instance, subject lines should be clear and direct, addressing recipients' concerns or business issues to increase the likelihood of email opening. Additionally, maintaining classic fonts and avoiding overcrowding emails with technical terms or long words enhances readability and professionalism. Politeness is underscored in salutations, with informal greetings like 'Hey' or 'Yo' discouraged in favor of 'Hi' or 'Hello'. Furthermore, considering its potential misinterpretation in professional exchanges, the cautious use of humor is advised. Proofreading emails (and other written communications) is essential to avoid mistakes that could negatively impact recipients' perceptions.

In cross-cultural communication, miscommunication often arises due to differences in cultural norms (Ishchuk A., Ishchuk O., 2023), particularly in written communication where body language cues are absent. Adapting the message to the recipient's cultural background or familiarity level is crucial to mitigate misunderstandings. According to Pachter (2013), understanding the cultural context is essential, especially regarding high-context and low-context cultures. High-context cultures, such as Japanese, Arab, or Chinese, prioritize building personal relationships before

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engaging in business transactions, often leading to more personal communication styles. Conversely, individuals from low-context cultures, like German, American, or Scandinavian, typically prefer concise and direct communication, focusing on efficiency. In some cultures, directness in email correspondence is valued. However, this approach may be perceived as rude or offensive when communicating across cultures and languages, particularly if the recipient is not fluent in the sender's language. Therefore, adopting an indirect and polite tone can enhance cross-cultural communication effectiveness. For instance:

Direct: This idea won't work. Indirect: Perhaps there is another perspective we should explore for this idea.

By adjusting the tone to suit the recipient's cultural preferences, the likelihood of eliciting a positive response increases. Additionally, considering the recipient's role (colleague, client, or superior) and the desired formality level of the message further enhances communication clarity and effectiveness.

To uphold ethical standards in written communication, it is essential to consider the level of formality and tailor the message accordingly to maintain professionalism and clarity. In Business English, three levels of formality are recognized: a) formal level includes textbooks, official reports, academic articles, essays, business letters, contracts, and official speeches; b) semi-formal level encompasses day-today interactions with colleagues and teachers, popular magazines/books, interviews, and conversations with authority figures or respected individuals; c) informal level pertains to interactions with friends and casual online communication.

Maintaining politeness is essential, and it is advisable to refrain from offering direct criticisms or expressing negative comments directly.

This approach won't work. \rightarrow Perhaps we could explore alternative strategies to achieve our goals.

In formal written business communication, intricate sentence structures are frequently employed, emphasizing the significance of proper grammar and sentence structure.

Formal: According to the latest market analysis report, it is evident that the implementation of innovative strategies can significantly enhance organizational productivity and profitability in the long term.

Less formal: Based on the recent market analysis, using new strategies can really boost how well our company does and make more money in the future.

Phrasal verbs are commonly avoided, with preference given to their formal equivalents: The company ran out of stock. \rightarrow The company depleted its stock.

Similarly, contractions are not typically used in formal writing. It is better to use their full forms: I'll be there by 9 a.m. \rightarrow I will be there by 9 a.m.

Idioms, slang, and text speak should also be avoided in formal communication: We made a killing of that deal. \rightarrow We generated significant profits from that deal.

Thanks 4 the update. \rightarrow Thank you for the update. Furthermore, it is important to avoid overly expressive language, bureaucratic language, and decorative phrases, focusing instead on clear and essential communication. In contemporary business email correspondence, maintaining a neutral tone is generally preferred. While some emails to colleagues can adopt an informal tone, especially in longstanding working relationships, it is crucial to strike a balance between informality and professionalism. Informal emails often resemble spoken language, incorporating everyday words and conversational expressions such as 'Don't forget' or 'Catch you later'. However, when communicating with clients or senior colleagues, maintaining proper grammar and a more formal tone is essential. Minor grammatical errors may be overlooked in informal correspondence but are generally unacceptable in formal settings.

Furthermore, disregarding formal styles of written business communication may inadvertently lead to being perceived as an unethical communicator. Utilizing fallacies or rhetorical tricks, which rely on style over substance, can deceive readers and detract from the clarity and effectiveness of the message. Such practices undermine ethical communication behavior by obscuring the central message or twisting facts for personal gain. Therefore, it is imperative to avoid fallacies and prioritize substantive arguments to uphold ethical communication standards.

Conclusions. This study underscores the vital role of ethical communication in modern business contexts. By examining its evolution and practical implications, we emphasize the necessity of honesty, fairness, and cultural awareness in professional interactions. Language intricacies significantly shape ethical discourse, from linguistic formality to crosscultural sensitivity. Moving forward, future research avenues include delving deeper into cross-cultural communication dynamics to uncover nuanced best practices in diverse business environments. Additionally, exploring the ethical implications of emerging technologies like AI and virtual reality on business communication presents an exciting area for investigation. Furthermore, studying the influence of ethical leadership on fostering a culture of integrity within organizations is paramount.

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