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NATIONAL STEREOTYPES OF COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOR IN VIRTUAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract. The article is devoted to cross-cultural issues of virtual business communication. The urgency of this research is in finding out the causes of failures in virtual business communication between Russian and Vietnamese business partners. In the aspect of intercultural communication, national stereotypes of communicative behavior (hereinafter NSCB) that impede the effective business communication of Russian and Vietnamese speakers have been identified. In the aspect of virtual communication, based on linguistic and cultural analysis, the specifics of electronic business letters in Russian, English and Vietnamese is revealed. The results of the study indicated the following reasons of failures in virtual intercultural business communication: lack of direct interactions between business partners – speakers of different languages; representation of communicative intentions in written form; peculiarities in NSCBs, reflected in the national language; cultural differences in NSCBs of business partners; each language has its own means of verbalizing the communicative intentions associated with the NSCBs of the native speaker of that language. The study resulted in distinguishing the types of speech and etiquette violation in virtual business communication between Russian and Vietnamese partners, which might help in lessening communicative misunderstanding and achieving extra-linguistic goals of communication.

Key words: commercial letters, cross-cultural business communication, business culture, virtual communication, communicative behavior, national stereotype.

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НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ СТЕРЕОТИПЫ КОММУНИКАТИВНОГО ПОВЕДЕНИЯ В УСЛОВИЯХ ВИРТУАЛЬНОЙ БИЗНЕС-КОММУНИКАЦИИ

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена изучению проблем виртуального межкультурного бизнес-общения. Актуальность проведенного исследования заключается в выявлении причин коммуникативных неудач бизнес-партнеров России и Вьетнама. Установлены и охарактеризованы национальные стереотипы коммуникативного поведения, препятствующие эффективному общению носителей русской и вьетнамской лингвокультур. В аспекте виртуальной коммуникации на основе лингвокультурологического анализа определена

специфика электронных деловых писем на русском, вьетнамском и английском языках. Полученные результаты позволили установить причины коммуникативных неудач: отсутствие непосредственного взаимодействия между бизнес-партнерами – носителями разных языков; выражение коммуникативных намерений исключительно в письменной форме; наличие национальных стереотипов коммуникативного поведения и обусловленных ими различий в средствах вербализации коммуникативных намерений. Проведенное исследование дало возможность систематизировать виды нарушений речевых и этикетных норм в общении русских и вьетнамских бизнес-партнеров, что может способствовать решению проблем, связанных с достижением экстралингвистических целей общения.

Ключевые слова: коммерческое письмо, межкультурная бизнес-коммуникация, бизнес-культура, виртуальная коммуникация, коммуникативное поведение, национальный стереотип.

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Introduction

In recent years, under the general influence of global economy development, Russia has been paying more attention to economic cooperation worldwide, including Vietnam, especially after Vietnam signed The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Kyrgyzstan and members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which officially comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia in May 2015. Increasing joint business activities between Russia and Vietnam require their participants to know the national stereotype of communicative behavior of each other. Additionally, the development of a number of modern means of communication nowadays helps business activities be conducted mainly by exchanging commercial letters via e-mail, electronic trade platforms, social networks (i.e. via virtual communication). However, unlike the communication in reality, where the purposes of communication can be achieved through face-to-face interactions between participants, in virtual communication most of communicative intentions are conveyed mainly by texting (writing). Meanwhile, every language has its own ways of expressing communicative intentions, which makes realization of communicative goals complicated, as business partners from different cultures could face mutual misunderstanding in virtual business communication.

The article offers analysis of business letters, which represents some features of national stereotypes of communicative behavior (NSCB) in virtual business correspondence with the practical aim – to reduce challenge in virtual business communication between Vietnamese and Russian partners.

Materials and research methods

The materials used in this research consist of about 2500 electronic commercial letters in Russian, English and Vietnamese, which were written and exchanged via email by Russian and Vietnamese business partners (the original orthography and punctuation are preserved in sample letters). Dealing with these authentic electronic business letters in different languages and their logical interpretation with intention to discover points of cultural misunderstanding that occur in the process of virtual business correspondence between Russian and Vietnamese business partners made it possible to distinguish generalization of NSCBs of native speakers of these languages in virtual business communication.

The main method used in this research is linguocultural analysis that consists of studying the linguistic and cultural characteristics of business letters and making their interpretative analysis. The research conducted is based on difficulties faced by Russian and Vietnamese speakers in the process of business communication via e-mail. Having considered complexity and possible incomprehension, the authors managed to highlight causes of failures in virtual communication due to differences in their national stereotypes of communicative behavior and offered theoretical provisions on linguocultural specificity of business letters in Russian and Vietnamese, finally, typical features of virtual business correspondence were described as the NSCBs of Russian and Vietnamese business partners in virtual business communication.

Results and discussion

The concept “national stereotype of communicative behavior” (NSCB)

The concept of *communicative behavior* was first used in Russian linguistics and defined by I.A. Sternin as a set of communicative standards or traditions of an individual or a group of people that are united by age, gender, profession, some other social marks. Close to it stands the term *national communicative behavior*, a set of standards or traditions of communication of a linguistic and cultural community [Sternin, 2000a]. In the work of Yu.E. Prokhorov there were some other terms introduced – *stereotype of verbal communication* and *stereotype of speech behavior* as representative communicative patterns of a socio-cultural group or an ethnic that can be realized in their verbal behaviors [Prokhorov, 1996]. The linguistic aspect of communicative behavior was considered as a combination of verbal and nonverbal actions of an individual or a group of people that is regulated by the communicative standards or socially excepted traditions [Prokhorov, Sternin, 2006]. Following the ideas of Yu.E. Prokhorov and I.A. Sternin, the term *national stereotype of communicative behavior* (hereinafter NSCB) is defined in this study as a model of communicative behaviors of an individual or group of people, through which we can identify their social and national group reference.

A good example of NSCB and its influence on communication is the phenomenon of smile in the Russian national culture. It is known that Russians hardly smile when communicating with strangers in public places such as banks, supermarkets or service centers and it is a NSCB of the Russians [Arapova, 2007; Camille, 2018; Sternin, 2000b]. This feature may have a ruinous effect on business communication in case when Russians communicate with American or Asian business partners. For instance, in Vietnam if bank officers or cashiers in supermarkets do not smile to their customers, it can be understood that they don't like their clients or are not happy in their jobs. That is the reason why Vietnamese usually misunderstand the communicative intentions of Russian business partners. From the point of the Vietnamese view, Russians are too severe and

unemotional in business communication. According to I.A. Sternin and M.A. Arapova, the smile of Russians tends to be used to demonstrate sincerity, it is not considered vital in achieving commercial or social goals in communication. In reality, Russians believe that communicative behaviors in business should be strict, serious and demonstrate their reliability.

There are some verbal differences that mark NSCB in communication. The Vietnamese usually make the question “How old are you?” when they communicate for the first time with those who seem to be at their same age. That is because in Vietnamese culture the difference in age of the participants in communication determines the way, in which they address each other and behave themselves. For instance, the younger (even only one year) has to address the elder by *Bì*, but can not by *Tì* (in Russian). There are some variations of addressing the younger to the elder in Vietnamese, that depend on difference in age and gender, the speaker may choose *anh* (older brother), *chị* (older sister), *cô* or *đì* (aunt), *chú* or *bác* (uncle), *ông* (grandfather), *bà* (grandmother), etc., which will have a strong influence on the mode of communication. In particular, the younger must demonstrate more respect toward the elder and will use an equivalent to a Russian *Bì*, but the elder will address him by *Tì*, in Vietnamese different pronouns will be used: *em* (younger sister or brother), *con* (daughter or son), *cháu* (niece or nephew) and so on [Nguyen Vu Khyong Ti, 2010]. If Russians do not acknowledge this Vietnamese NSCB, they (especially Russian women) could feel displeased or have a negative impression on Vietnamese when being asked how old they are, because, according to the Russian culture of communication, it is not nice to ask about the age of interlocutors, especially of women.

Thus, knowing NSCBs is very important in business communication, especially in cross-cultural situations with unpredictable impressions and perceptions about the partners. On one hand, it helps to avoid cultural shocks as well as undesirable misunderstandings by choosing more tolerant reaction while responding. On the other hand, being aware of the differences in NSCBs the partners can modulate or coordinate their communicative behaviors.

*The problems of cross-cultural
business communication
via virtual correspondence*

As mentioned above, in virtual business communication almost all business activities are conducted mainly via e-mail without face-to-face interactions between business partners. Consequently, advantages of paralanguage factors such as communicative space, body language (gestures, facial expressions, intonation, timbre, pauses of speech, ect.) are not applied. In the absence of ability to visualize the appearance and communicative behavior of counterparts, the language of a business correspondence will be the only means of impression. Thus, when receiving Letter 1, a Vietnamese partner could think that his Russian partner is an excitable person.

In this letter, the statements *I early told you in the skype conference about the requirements of the table. I need the codes UKP* show that the sender of this letter is very irritated, because *in the second table there are not these codes*. This makes the addressee of the letter (a Vietnamese speaker) feel uncomfortable as if he did something seriously wrong. Actually, the excitability was confirmed as a character of Russians by R.D. Lewis. According to Lewis, Russians easily get angry especially in disgruntled situations.

Nevertheless, he also approved that they can control themselves very quickly after that [Lewis, 2006].

The verb *Прошу* is used for making a request. When it is translated into English as following: *I ask* and into Vietnamese *Tôi yêu cầu*, it makes the tone of this letter sound like an order. Besides, if the translation is more qualified by using the imperative mood of the verb following the verb *Прошу*, it will become *Provide the table with codes* in English and *Cung cấp bảng này với mã code* in Vietnamese, which makes the letter sounds compulsory.

Therefore, combining the above mentioned facts, Vietnamese business partners (in this letter are the addressees with email addresses: *ltl@globalrustrade.com* and *amisu.exim@gmail.com*) feel as if they are not treated as an equal partners in this business co-operative relationship, although in this situation they play the role of clients (buyers), who, according to business culture in Vietnam, are considered as God. Furthermore, in case of business letters sent to a group of addressees, such a letter breaks the principle of face-work in business communication. According to this principle, participants in communication should keep the face (honor) for their counterpart in the situations of negative communication or conflicts [Kim, Guan, Park, 2012; Oetzel, et al., 2001; Vương, 2009, tr. 53; Walsh et al., 2003].

Letter 1

Literally translated into English	Original letter in Russian
<p>20.10.2017, 17:58 Kisetov Stanislav Vladimirovich <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru> To: ltl@globalrustrade.com Cc: 'eeb@globalrustrade.com', 'amisu.exim@gmail.com', Prikhno Alexandr Nikolaievich</p> <p>Dear colleagues, I early told you in the skype conference about the requirements of the table. I need the codes UKP. In the second table there are not these codes. I ask you to / Please provide the table with codes.</p> <p>Best regards, Kisetov Stanislav</p>	<p>20.10.2017, 17:58 "Кисетов Станислав Владимирович" <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru> Вам и ещё 3: ltl@globalrustrade.com Cc: 'eeb@globalrustrade.com', 'amisu.exim@gmail.com', Прихно Александр Николаевич</p> <p>Уважаемые коллеги, Я ранее Вам сообщил в скайп конференции требования к таблице. Мне нужны коды УКП. Вторая таблица списка кодов не имеет. Прошу Вас предоставить таблицу с кодами.</p> <p>Best Regards, Kisetov Stanislav</p>

Hence, the problem of cross-cultural business communication via virtual correspondence is that the language used by the addressers to express their communicative intentions in business letters could be taken into consideration.

In Letter 2 written by a Russian partner, there are some more examples of difficulties of Vietnamese partners in comprehending communicative attitude of the Russian partner due to the difference in the language features of business correspondence in Russian and Vietnamese.

In this letter there are some phrases that may be appreciated as standard in Russian, but when translated into English and Vietnamese, they will seem quite strange to a Vietnamese:

1. Часть позиций выпало по причине их полного отсутствия.

English	<i>Some of the items have been left out due to complete shortage</i>
Vietnamese	<i>Một vài sản phẩm đã bị bỏ đi do hoàn toàn thiếu hụt (đơn đặt hàng)</i>

2. Есть вопросы по выбранному ассортименту:

English	<i>There are questions about the selected items:</i>
Vietnamese	<i>Có một số câu hỏi về các sản phẩm đã được lựa chọn</i>

3. Обсудите данный вопрос с клиентом

English	<i>Discuss this issue with the client</i>
Vietnamese	<i>Hãy thảo luận vấn đề này với khách hàng</i>

Letter 2

Literally translated into English	Original letter in Russian
<p>23.10.2017, 16:33 Kisetov Stanislav Vladimirovich <stanislav.kisetov@unicnf.ru>: To: ltl@globalrustrade.com, 'eeb@globalrustrade.com' Cc: 'tea@ic-cc.ru', 'ibi@globalrustrade.com', Prikhno Alexandr Nikolaievich</p> <p>Dear colleagues, Global Rus Trade Some of the items have been left out due to the complete shortage (maybe of orders). There are some questions about the selected assortment: – I highlighted items, which, in my opinion, is not suitable for sale in Vietnam due to the short shelf life. – About 2 months for delivery (from 30 to 50 days) + distribution to TT (2 weeks) + possible downtime during shipping, clearance at customs, etc. force majeure (2 weeks). – For products with the shelf life of 8 months or less, it already takes more than 1/3 of the shelf life upon arrival in Vietnam, taking into account of all above listed factors. – Discuss this issue with the client. From our side, I do not see the sense in importing such an assortment. We suppose that the minimum shelf life should be from 9 months. – In this case, caramel is a suitable product since it has a shelf life of 15 months. It is ideal for hot countries.</p> <p>Best Regards, Kisetov Stanislav</p>	<p>23.10.2017, 16:33 "Кисегов Станислав Владимирович" <stanislav.kisetov@unicnf.ru>: Вам и ещё 4: я (ltl@globalrustrade.com), 'eeb@globalrustrade.com' Cc: 'tea@ic-cc.ru', 'ibi@globalrustrade.com', Прихно Александр Николаевич</p> <p>Уважаемые коллеги, Global Rus Trade, Часть позиций выпало по причине их полного отсутствия. Есть вопросы по выбранному ассортименту: – Выделил заливкой ассортимент, который, по моему мнению, не подходит для реализации во Вьетнаме по причине коротких сроков хранения. – До 2 месяцев доставка (от 30 до 50 дней) + дистрибуция по ТТ (2 недели) + возможный простой при отгрузках, таможне и т.д. форс мажор (2 недели). – Для продукции со сроком годности в 8 месяцев и меньше это уже более 1/3 по факту прибытия во Вьетнам с учетом всевозможных факторов. – Обсудите данный вопрос с клиентом. С нашей стороны не вижу обоснованного смысла даже пытаться импортировать такой ассортимент. Считаем, минимальный срок годности от 9 месяцев. – Карамель в данном случае, подходящий продукт т.к. 15 месяцев срок годности. Для жарких стран подходит идеально.</p> <p>С уважением, Кисетов Станислав</p>

The first phrase *Some of the items have been left out due to complete shortage*, in opinion of Vietnamese, is not nice for clients to receive, as it is a negative answer about the absence of products, which the clients had taken time to choose carefully from the list that the seller had sent to them. In this situation, according to the etiquette of business communication in Vietnam, the sentence should be written as following: “*Sorry for this inconvenience, but unfortunately, some items that you chose are currently out of stock or not available in store because of being eliminated due to the shortage of orders* (then the seller should provide the list of these unavailable items so that clients don’t waste their time to choose them again).

The second phrase *Есть вопросы по выбранному ассортименту* (in Russian) applies the possessive structure in Genitive case “*у кого есть что*” – “*someone has something*” with the omission of possessive pronoun “*у кого*” (*someone*). Thus, when translated into English, it becomes *There are some questions about the selected assortment* and into Vietnamese *Có một số câu hỏi về các sản phẩm đã được chọn* that sounds rather rude to Vietnamese speakers because of the absence of the subject of the activity in the sentence. In Vietnamese, this kind of sentence is used only in the situations of extreme arguments, in which interlocutors neither want to address one and another by personal pronouns nor look at each other as if they are speaking to the air and don’t pay attention to the presence of their counterpart. Therefore, when reading such a sentence, Vietnamese business partners feel that Russian partners don’t respect them or don’t want to build a business relationship with them. Unfortunately, this structure is rather popular in Russian. According to Vietnamese etiquette, this sentence should be written as following: *Tôi có một số câu hỏi về các sản phẩm đã được chọn* (*I have some questions about the selected items*) with the presence of subject I.

In the third example *Discuss this issue with the client* the imperative form of verb is used, which, as mentioned above, makes it sound like an obligation. It is not appropriate for business communication, especially with potential clients, because they will feel that the addresser (seller)

is at the position of a ‘superior’ and it is not fair (efficient) for them to join in this business. In our opinion, the imperative form of verbs should be used only in the contexts, where the addresser is at a higher status than the addressee, for example, the employer to his employees, but it is not wise to use it in cross-cultural communication. According to the requirement of business letters in English and Vietnamese, a letter of request or inquiry should be written in a happy and polite manner with the use of an interrogative sentence model [Cecil, 2010; Kamalipour, Greidina, 2017; Trong, 2009] like *Could you please discuss this issue with the client*, or at least by expressing a desire: *I would like you to help me discuss this issue with the client*.

Thus, in virtual cross-cultural communication, business letters play the role of the representative of a company or an enterprise and the characteristics of the text used in them could be understood as NSCBs of this representative. In order to increase the efficiency of virtual business communication with Russian partners, some Russian stereotypes of communicative behavior typical of business correspondence should be distinguished.

Representation of Russian stereotypes of communicative behavior in virtual business correspondence

According to the requirement of genres of business letters in the Russian, the language used in them should be standard, accurate, clear, formal, informative, concise, impersonal and neutral (i.e. do not use statements or words expressing emotion as well as assessment) [Burova, 2010; Le Thi Phuong Linh, 2020; Nguyen Tkhi Bik Lan, 2006; Trofimova, Kupchik, 2010; Uskova, 2006; Uskova, Trushina, 2002; Vasilyeva, Uskova, 2016; Veselov, 1990].

The analysis of business letters composed by Russian partners and delivered as virtual correspondence aimed at distinguishing some features of the Russian NSCB, resulted in making a list of the following characteristics: being dominant, uncompromising, adherent to their principles, explicit in expressing intentions and requirements. Some explanations on how these features get their lexical implementation follow below.

Being dominant. The tendency of dominance in communication by Russian partners is usually realized in their business letters with the way they use language to express requests or communicative intentions. Letter 3 is an example.

In this letter, the statement *I ask you the next time to write the proposal for samples with the product codes, with the correct names* leads the readers (Vietnamese) to understanding that Russian partners don't treat them fairly.

In fact, this NSCB is caused by the influence of the imperativeness of business letters in Russian, which was formed in the 16th –

18th centuries, when the genres of official letters appeared during the process of building and strengthening the state-legal relations of the Moscow state. The business correspondence style requires standardization of using language in official documents [Kiyanova, 2007]. As a result, the cliché such as *We ask you to (Просим Вас ...)*; *Request to sign (Просьба подписать ...)*; *We are writing to you with a request (Обращаемся к Вам с просьбой ...)* are still widely used and characterize business letters in Russian (see Letter 4 and 5). Typical of official correspondence in Russian is the use

Letter 3

Literally translated into English	Original letter in Russian
25.09.2018, 15:23 Kisetov Stanislav Vladimirovich <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru>: To: ltl@globalrustrade.com, 'eeb@globalrustrade.com' Cc: 'tea@ic-cc.ru', 'ibi@globalrustrade.com', Prikhno Alexandr Nikolaievich Colleagues, hello. In the attachment you will find the expanded list of products ordered by the company. I ask you the next time to write the proposal for samples with the product codes, with the correct names. Otherwise, it is impossible to work. The process takes minutes with codes without codes takes hours. Thank.	25.09.2018, 15:23 "Кисетов Станислав Владимирович" <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru>: Вам и ещё 4: я (ltl@globalrustrade.com), 'eeb@globalrustrade.com' Cc: 'tea@ic-cc.ru', 'ibi@globalrustrade.com', Прихно Александр Николаевич Коллеги, здравствуйте. Во вложении дополненный список по продукции, которую заказала компания. Прошу Вас в следующий раз писать заявки на образцы с кодами продукции, с верными названиями. Иначе невозможно работать. Процесс занимающий минуты с кодам без кодов занимает часы. Спасибо.

Letter 4

Literally translated into English	Original letter in Russian
01.11.17, 15:04 Kisetov Stanislav Vladimirovich <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru>: To: me (ltl@globalrustrade.com), 'amisu.exim@gmail.com' Cc: 'eeb@globalrustrade.com', 'ibi@globalrustrade.com', 'tea@ic-cc.ru', Prikhno Alexandr Nikolaievich Good day. Completion of requested information is needed , please. In fact, send full details on requested information. I will further send it for checking. Thank.	01.11.17, 15:04 "Кисетов Станислав Владимирович" <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru>: Вам и ещё 5: я (ltl@globalrustrade.com), 'amisu.exim@gmail.com' Cc: 'eeb@globalrustrade.com', 'ibi@globalrustrade.com', 'tea@ic-cc.ru'П, Прихно Александр Николаевич Добрый день. Нужна полная запрашиваемая информация, пожалуйста. По факту вышлите полные данные. Я отправлю далее на проверку. Спасибо.

Letter 5

Literally translated into English	Original letter in Russian
<p>07.11.17, 14:20 Kisetov Stanislav Vladimirovich <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru> To: me (ltl@globalrustrade.com), 'amisu.exim@gmail.com' Cc: 'eeb@globalrustrade.com' 'ibi@globalrustrade.com' 'tea@ic-cc.ru'</p> <p>Colleagues, The letter of credit should be in the amount of the payment currency, i.e. in dollars or euros. The request to clarify the currency with the client and convert dong into the mentioned amount.</p> <p>Best Regards, Kisetov Stanislav</p>	<p>07.11.17, 14:20 "Кисетов Станислав Владимирович" <stanislav.kisetov@uniconf.ru> Вам и ещё 5: я (ltl@globalrustrade.com), 'amisu.exim@gmail.com' Cc: 'eeb@globalrustrade.com' 'ibi@globalrustrade.com' 'tea@ic-cc.ru'</p> <p>Коллеги, Аккредитив нужен в сумме валюты платежа, – т.е. доллары или евро. Просьба уточнить у клиенту валюту и перевести донги в указанную сумму.</p> <p>Best Regards, Kisetov Stanislav</p>

of modal verbs of obligation, such as *нужно* (should, it's necessary), *надо* (ought to, need to), *необходимо* (must, it's necessary), *придется* (have to).

It's necessary to notice that using the modal verbs of obligation and the imperative forms of verbs in business letters in Russian is not a good choice for virtual cross-cultural business communication because it makes the letters sound like commands for foreign business partners to do something. In order to avoid misunderstanding and communicative error, from our point of view, these grammatical structures shouldn't be used in virtual cross-cultural business correspondence by Russians.

Being uncompromising. Being uncompromising is observed in the process of virtual business communication with Russian partners through the fact that Russians usually use the phrases such as *На наш (мой) взгляд* – *In our (my) opinion*, *С нашей (моей) точки зрения* – *From our (my) point of view*, *По моему (моему) мнению* – *according to me*, etc. to express their opinions or assessments. For examples:

– *Выделил заливкой ассортимент, который, по-моему мнению, не подходит для реализации во Вьетнаме по причине коротких сроков хранения.*

– *Считаем, минимальный срок годности от 9 месяцев.*

– *Весовые конфеты – по моему мнению, товар также только для ТС или ТТ с кондиционерами.*

– *Я бы не советовал начинать работу с ассортиментом, со сроком годности менее 12 месяцев, если поставки планируются не самолетом. Для поставок контейнером только 12 месяцев для нового товара.*

This feature of Russians is also confirmed by Yu.E. Prokhorov and I.A. Sternin, who affirmed that Russians love to argue, to give personal opinions aiming at contributing to appropriate judgments [Prokhorov, Sternin, 2006]. It is necessary to notice that the verbs *argue* or *dispute* in Russian are understood in a positive way as providing reasons, evidences or opposing views in order to bring out the best solution for a problem. Unfortunately, in Vietnamese, if a person is said to be in an argument with another, it could be understood that he is getting stuck in a rather drastic conflict.

In fact, using phrases expressing individual opinions, from the point of view of Russians, aims at indicating the responsibility of the speaker for his statement. That is the reason, why in Russian impersonal structures such as *Надо* (must, have to), *Нужно / необходимо* (It's necessary to) without indicating the subject of activity, or nouns derived from verbs, for examples *Просьба* (A request) used to replace verbs of the first person *Прошу* (I request) and the third person *Просим*

(*We request*) are very popular. According to Russian linguists, the impersonal structures help to reduce individualization (in other words, to express the modesty and the collectivism) of the Russians [Kostina, Egorychev, Riger, 2013; Zaretsky, 2008].

Being adherent to their principles. Another NSCB of Russian partners in virtual business correspondence is presented through using templates such as *I ask you to do something* (*Прошу Вас что-нибудь сделать*); *Request to do something* (*Просьба сделать что-нибудь*); *We are writing to you with a request...* (*Обращаемся к Вам с просьбой...*); *Remind you that...* (*Напоминаем Вам, что...*); *We are forced to remind you of...* (*Мы вынуждены напомнить Вам о...*); *We hereby remind you...* (*Настоящим напоминаем Вам...*) in business letters. When directly translated in cross-cultural situations, especially in business communication, they sound inappropriate.

The adherence to principles of Russian business partners is formed under such requirements

of business letter style in Russian as standardization, accuracy, clarity, conciseness and formality, according to which the language used in commercial letters in Russian should consist of standard phrases or cliché. In real communication this feature is also confirmed by R.D. Lewis – Russians tend to maintain their disciplines and *keep their words* [Lewis, 2001]. Being not aware of this characteristic of Russian NSCBs, Vietnamese partners definitely faced the failure that follows Letter 6.

The reason to send Letter 6 is that the price of samples in invoice sent to a client in Vietnam is much lower than their real price for selling in the market. That is the reason why upon arrival in the Vietnam airport, the samples cannot pass the Vietnamese Customs. According to the client's suggestion, Russian partners should adjust the price of samples in invoice, but they stay adherent to their principles and as a result, the client cannot receive the samples. Such a situation repeated many times with clients from Vietnam.

Letter 6

Literally translated into English	Original letter in Russian
<p>05.06.18, 11:47 Prikhno Alexander Nikolaevich "alexandr.prikhno@unicconf.ru"</p> <p>To: me and 6 more: (ltl@globalrustrade.com), Anastasia Sukhova, Kisetov Stanislav Vladimirovich, Elena Erofeeva, Elena Tudyarova, Irina Ipatova, Nguyen Quynh Anh</p> <p>Dear colleagues, good afternoon! – When sending samples (JUST SAMPLES OF PRODUCT!!!), but not selling product upon a purchase agreement, we indicate the price, by which we can pay for samples. The market price of the product doesn't have any relation with the price samples. – We never send samples with the price for selling products. Payment for sending samples via DHL is based on the cost of samples indicated in invoice. – The real price of samples is what indicated in the invoice. – It is in this way that we send samples to all promising companies in Vietnam and not only (to this company).</p> <p>Best regards, Alexandr Prikhno Export Sales Director "United Confectioners Ltd."</p>	<p>05.06.18, 11:47 Re: Samples//DHL EXPRESS AWB#5913741050 Прихно Александр Николаевич «alexandr.prikhno@unicconf.ru» Вам и ещё 6: (ltl@globalrustrade.com), Сухова Анастасия Вячеславовна, Кисетов Станислав Владимирович, Елена Ерофеева, Елена Тудиярова, Irina Ipatova, Nguyen Quynh Anh</p> <p>Уважаемые коллеги, добрый день! – При отправке образцов (ИМЕННО ОБРАЗЦОВ ПРОДУКЦИИ!!!), а не продаже продукции по договору покупки мы указываем ту цену по которой мы можем отправлять образцы. К рыночной стоимости стоимость образцов не имеет никакого отношения. – Мы никогда не отправляем образцы по базовой цене продажи продукции. Оплату отправки образцов через DHL мы проводим на основании стоимости инвойса образцов. – Реальная цена образцов продукции – то что указано в инвойсе. – Именно по такой схеме мы отправляем образцы всем перспективным компаниям во Вьетнаме и не только.</p> <p>Best regards, Alexandr Prikhno Export Sales Director "United Confectioners Ltd."</p>

Being explicit in expressing intentions and requirements. Like other stereotypes of communicative behavior, the explicitness of Russian partners in virtual business communication is also under the influence of standardization, accuracy, clarity, conciseness of business letters in Russian. This feature of Russian business correspondence could be realized through the use of fixed patterns of sentence to avoid ambiguousness in business documentation. For examples:

– ***Due to the fact that client Amisu plans to work on a letter of credit, we need to go through a non-standard checking (В виду того, что клиент Amisu планирует работать на условиях аккредитива, то нам необходимо пройти нестандартную проверку).***

– ***To continue the Skype conference, I am sending a table for filling out, which is necessary for checking the bank for the possibility to obtain a letter of credit (В продолжении скайп конференции, высылаю таблицу для заполнения, необходимую для проверки банка на возможность получения аккредитива).***

According to these examples, the explicitness in expressing communicative intentions and requirements of Russian partners could be understood in a positive way that they are frankly and honest in expressing their views as well as ideas without using many mincing words. However, in some cases, for instance, when client's proposal does not meet the seller's expectation, a frank refusal can lead to the failure in building the business relationship. For example: *United Confectionery company doesn't have any reason to offer 20% as regular discount on a product. Why 20%? (У компании Объединенные Кондитеры нет оснований в предоставлении 20% в качестве регулярной скидки на продукцию. Почему 20%?)*.

Such a straightforward answer of a Russian counterpart makes Vietnamese business partners feel embarrassed, because according to Vietnamese culture of communication, it is not kind to straightforwardly refuse someone's offers, especially of clients. Therefore, in case that a refusal is needed, Vietnamese usually choose indirect ways to express it, as it is in Letter 7:

Re: RED APRON & UNICONF

Nguyen Quynh Anh 07.08.2018, 11: 30

Dear Linh,

Thank you for your offer and efforts sending the samples to us. We regretfully have to decline the offer due to the over budget of price.

It has not been successful on this occasion but we look forward to the possibility of trading with you in next year.

Thanks again and regards

Quynh Anh NGUYEN (Ms)

Assistant to the business Manager

Les Celliers d'Asie & Red Apron Fine Wines and Spirits

Address: 18 Yen The St., Ba Dinh Dist., Hanoi, Vietnam

This letter was originally written in English by a Vietnamese partner (RED APRON) to his Russian business counterpart (UNICONF) through a Vietnamese dealer (Linh), in which we can find characteristics of the polite style of business letters in Vietnamese. However, some practical knowledge of Russian stereotypes of communicative behavior in business can help Vietnamese partners perceive the above stated refusal of a Russian partner in another way: the Russian partner would like the Vietnamese to give the reasons why the discount 20% is needed (*Why 20%?*), since his NSCB in virtual business communication is uncompromising (loving arguments).

Conclusion

The business letters under analysis showed that the majority of failures in the process of virtual communication between Russian and Vietnamese business partners are due to differences in their NSCBs, which are formed by the influence of the requirements of business letters in their native language such as standardization, accuracy, clarity, formality, informativeness, conciseness and impersonality. The study demonstrated that in virtual cross-cultural business communication, Russian partners obtain the following national stereotypes of communicative behavior:

– having tendency of dominance in communication with foreign business partners, especially with Vietnamese native speakers;

– being not easy to become compromising in business communication;

– being very adherent to their communicative principles;

– being explicit in expressing intentions and requirements.

Their awareness is required in cross-cultural business activity, as it might help foreign business partners, especially Vietnamese, avoid sad misunderstandings in virtual business communication with Russian partners.

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