

## HARMONIZATION OF COMMUNICATION IN PROFESSIONAL SETTING

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**Abstract.** The 21<sup>st</sup> century has introduced many changes in modern workplaces which have become multilingual and multicultural. The present paper sheds light on selected aspects of workplace discourse, revealing that backstage communication in a professional setting plays a very significant role in establishing and maintaining effective subject-bound transaction and/or interaction between the partners involved in communication. The theoretical framework of the paper is designed to consider recent contributions in professional communication research supported by some seminal theoretical writings on linguistic ecology that explore the role of language in natural interactions that occur among people working for multinational companies. The linguistic politeness theories are taken into account when cases of communication harmonization in a professional setting are examined. The empirical part of the paper deals with a qualitative discourse analysis of authentic electronic data collected in a multilingual company in Riga, Latvia. The study concludes that a present-time multilingual workplace exhibits a direct relationship between the use of language and power equilibrium, which vividly characterises contemporary communication in a professional setting. Pragmatic strategies employed can enhance the harmonization of communication in order to avoid the risk of miscommunication.

**Key words:** harmonization of communication, professional setting, linguistic ecology, pragmatic strategies

### INTRODUCTION

For national and multinational economy growth, the European society puts forward three mutually related priorities (Barroso, 2010). They are *smart growth*, i.e. economy development based on knowledge and innovation, *sustainable growth*, i.e. more competitive economy development, and *inclusive growth*, which is based on high level employment that fosters social and territorial cohesion (ibid.). Now, businesses tend to move from a top-down structure to a horizontal structure of organization, which means that emphasis is placed on both performance and communication, because ‘new communication contexts and needs emerge, and language moves away from the language as a static entity’ (Agnouri, 2013: 564-581). Besides, the concept *job of life* has changed completely, as employees prioritize different values, such as flexibility, job security, and strict boundaries that are set to establish work-home balance.

Workplace has become 'commodified, where commodification attributes commercial (economic) channels of communication' (Appadurai, 1986: 13). Moreover, communication has played one of the most significant roles in company performance. Particular workplaces establish their discourses, which build on the relationship between languages, culture, and identity established in a professional setting. *Workplace discourse* is understood as an umbrella concept for professional, institutional, organizational and business discourses, and 'it can be used to encompass their tasks' (Koester, 2010: 7). In line with the recent developments of new institutional and business contexts, research conducted on workplace discourse is concerned with examining not only the professional activities of individuals but it also deals with the analysis of linguistic and social contexts in which professional performance is accomplished. Many monolingual companies shift to multilingual companies, and the notion of culture becomes 'fluid, contextually dependent, and created by actors within a group who may hold conflicting assumptions and world-views' (Weislinger and Trauth, 2002: 309). Besides, it is assumed that workplace discourse is based on in-house rules and regulations set for profession-related interaction/transaction; it has job-related goals to be attained in communication. If so, then seemingly, commodified workplace attributes value not only to the goods produced and services provided but also to the language used for instrumental purposes, which means that the contemporary demands formulated for the language used in professional contexts shift the emphasis from language for general purposes to specialist language acquisition (COM, 116, 2005: 5).

We can state that professional language awareness is one of the dominant requirements on the employability agenda. Today, workplace demands both job-related subject skills, known as hard skills, and interpersonal skills, known as soft skills. New skills are expected to be adapted to new professional settings where people are used both to work collaboratively and be flexible in order to adapt to ongoing demands of workplaces. In this context, it can be argued that professional language knowledge 'is understood as a series of skills and competences that carry specific economic capital' (Wodak and Krzyanowski, 2011: 621-639).

In view of the significance of professional language mastery, which is expected to be applied in the workplace, the present paper deals with selected aspects of workplace discourse examining some pragmatic strategies that can be considered to enhance harmonization of communication in a professional setting in order to avoid the risk of miscommunication in a multilingual company.

It is generally known that such factors as social categorization and othering, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, biases and prejudice can cause miscommunication and/or misunderstanding and might result in communicative conflicts in multilingual professional settings. For the purposes of this study, selected theoretical contributions which pertain to the domain of linguistic ecology and workplace discourse analysis are taken into account. Besides, the study tests some aspects found in several seminal theories in pragmatics to formulate the pragmatic strategies that can be applied to harmonize communication in the workplace.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1 LINGUISTIC ECOLOGY: INTEGRATIONALIST APPROACH TO LANGUAGE USE

Linguistic ecology roots in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Its theoretical foundations build on the research conducted in the areas of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (e.g. Trim, 1959; Haugen, 1972). The early contributions in the areas mentioned developed research interest in exploring language application in societal contexts and settings rather than language being de-contextualized. Thus, they indicated to a multidisciplinary nature of language use in language setting and referred to it as *language ecology*. In the 1990s, the concept *ecolinguistics* appeared as a synonym for the concept *linguistic ecology*, and currently both concepts are used in theoretical writings (Rozina and Karapetjana, 2018: 279-295).

Considering recent theoretical and empirical contributions in linguistic ecology (e.g. Stibbe, 2015), it can serve as a new *paradigm* in the linguistic research when both the language applied in social contexts and the ecological contexts in which societies live are examined. Taking into account the core underlying principles of the linguistic ecology paradigm, we can assume that it can be employed to explore the role of language in natural interactions occurring among people working for multinational companies. Blommaert states that linguistic ecology focuses on the study of language use in the globalized world of 'changing language in a changing society' (cited by Solly, 2016: 21).

Recent writings on linguistic ecology (e.g. Stevens, 2012; Cox, 2012; Stibbe, 2015) acknowledge that it 'is about the language that influences how we think about the world; how we think about the world has an influence on how we act' (Stibbe, 2015: 1). The scholar argues that 'people are inspired through the language to be more than to have more' (ibid.: 2). It should be added that it is the language which is used for instrumental purposes to shape an individual's mind, and it is the language that helps people to construct 'the stories we live by' (ibid.). Thus, we can presuppose that linguistic ecology is concerned with the study of how language is referred to the environmental objects and how it is used to relate to the actions people take when they function in multicultural environments.

Being a linguistic paradigm, linguistic ecology highlights the role of language in human interaction and applies an *integrationalist approach* (Derni, 2008) to the language study. It is concerned with the analysis of features that represent different disciplines and explains the linguistic findings both qualitatively and quantitatively. Being a socio-linguistic paradigm, linguistic ecology relates the study of language to the environmental context in which it is used. It determines the relations between *what* is said or written and the *circumstances* under which the linguistic forms are used in sociological, ideological and biological dimensional relationships. This paradigm allows defining three types of communicative relations at the intra-, inter- and extra- interactional

levels. Finally, the above discussion allows us to claim that the concept *linguistic ecology* can be related to the concept *linguistic environment* and, consequently, to the concept *professional setting* when tackling language-related issues in social sciences, such as economics and politics, for example.

Considering the above-stated, it should be emphasized that professional communication discourse is established in a specific linguistic and professional environment. Koester (2010) notes that workplace contexts determine interactional and transactional performance held between professionals and laypeople. Thus, in professional communication, doing work means establishing and maintaining good relationships with clients and colleagues to have work-related tasks accomplished. *Professional communication* can perform a variety of functions. Being 'more or less transactionally and relationally oriented, it can have orientation to transactional objectives or work-related outcomes' (Schnuer, 2013: 3). To characterize social life and language used in professional communication, Goffman (1969) employs the theatrical metaphors *frontstage* and *backstage*. He claims that professional communication features are present in the place where the performance is given, i.e. at the frontstage or in 'the areas where the impression is fostered by the performance', i.e. at the backstage (Goffman, 1969: 93-97). According to Koester (2010), frontstage performances include an audience, while backstage interactions are not accessible for an audience. The scholar notes that workplace contexts determine interactional performance held between professionals and lay people, for example, employer-employee communication. Backstage encounters relate to communication that is held between colleagues.

However, Goffman (1969) acknowledges that a marked distinction between front- and backstage communication cannot always be observed since workplace discourse often demonstrates an overlap between the two stages of professional communication. For example, the discussion of financial forecasts held between professionals reveal backstage features. The backstage communication mode between employers-employees might take place before frontstage communication when employers analyse a particular job-related case with an employee. As a result, mixing backstage and frontstage communication at a workplace may result in communication problems since the backstage language 'consists of reciprocal first-naming, cooperative decision making, profanity [...], the use of dialect or substandard language; the frontstage language can be taken as the absence of this' (ibid.: 111).

## 2 HARMONIZATION OF COMMUNICATION AND FACEWORK

Drawing on Kant's four logical functions of reason, the linguistic philosopher Grice postulated the *cooperative principle*, which formulates (idealistically enough) good standards for communication. In this context, Grice (1975) proposed four categories of the cooperative principle, known as maxims, such as: *maxim of quantity* (make your contribution as informative as necessary for the current purposes); *maxim of quality* (make your contribution that is true); *maxim of relevance* (make your contribution relevant); *maxim of manner* (be clear,

brief, and orderly; avoid ambiguity). It should be stressed that communication is hardly ever homogenous and/or direct, because much depends on how information communicated is interpreted by the hearer. Thus, the Gricean cooperative principle can be considered only as a mechanism that explains how communication is organized, how/if interlocutors' communicative purposes are achieved, what the contribution of each interlocutor is and if there is enough evidence for the facts mentioned to be true, what the manner of communication is: whether it is brief and orderly or ambiguous and obscure; how relevantly the information has been communicated. Sperber and Wilson (1995) state that 'Grice's ideas [...] can be seen as an attempt to build on a common-sense view of verbal communication by making it more explicit and exploring its implications' (cited by Cutting, 2006: 131).

In line with the above discussion, the present paper presupposes that the presence of the *harmonization* aspect in communication can be explained by taking into account the existence or violation of the Gricean principle even if 'a linguistic utterance is generally full of semantic ambiguities, and is open to a wide range of figurative interpretations' (ibid.). As a result, the paper adopts the cooperative principle which constructs a theoretical basis to examine communicators' informative intentions; the effect of communicative behaviour in a professional setting in order to understand how/if accepted general standards of communication in the workplace are satisfied.

It should be taken into account that the cooperative principle by Grice and the politeness principle by Lakoff (1973) 'operate variably in different cultures, in different language communities, among different social classes' (Leech, 1983: 10). The Lakoffian *politeness principle* 'contends that interactional partners carry a wide descriptive power of language in use if they follow politeness principles, known as Rule 1: *don't impose*, Rule 2: *offer options*, Rule 3: *encourage feelings of camaraderie*' (cited by Rozina and Karapetjana, 2011: 30-32). As the research interest of the present study is in the analysis of communication that occurs in professional settings, the above-mentioned principles by Grice and Lakoff are considered when analysing naturally occurring exchanges in a professional context for the communicative consensus reaching purposes. It is not arguable that consensus reaching is one of the central goals in professional communication and 'to attain this goal, communicators are expected to use certain linguistic politeness strategies and obey specific terms and conditions, which according to Grice 'account for cooperativeness and mutual attention to meet the needs of other people' (ibid.: 28). Drew and Heritage (1992) emphasise that professional communication is efficient if it presents such constituents as specified goal orientation, allowable contributions, the use of professional language, and asymmetry, i.e. power, status and knowledge differences.

On the other hand, harmonization of communication in the workplace can be viewed from the perspective of the face theory by Brown and Levinson (1987), which explains that 'any linguistic action performed by the speaker simultaneously reflects the speaker's *own face* [...]; similarly, any linguistic action



performed by the speaker reflects on the hearer's face so that it either upholds or undermines the *other's face*' (ibid.: 41). Brown and Levinson state that 'every member of a society has face, which refers to one's public self-image, and when the speaker decides to commit an act which potentially causes the hearer (or the speaker) to lose face, the speaker will tend to use a politeness strategy in order to mitigate the risk' (ibid.: 59-60). The scholars offer *face* varieties, such as *positive face* and *negative face* and comment that certain speech acts can pose a threat to one's face. According to Friedrich (2016: 22), 'positive face, shows solidarity, and a common goal, negative face is related to emphasizing the importance of other's time, apologizing in expressing oppositional views' and alike. Friedrich marks that face-threatening acts perform two main language functions, namely, 'negative face tries to minimize the potential face threats, while positive politeness tries to reach commonality between interlocutors' (ibid.). Thus, Facework may be related to the speaker's self-confidence with 'the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions and to be approved' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 13). The factors mentioned constitute the subject of sociological dimension analysis if the concepts of *power*, *distance* and *status*, known as factors of *power-distance-imposition*, are examined to observe general standards of communication and the context of interaction in order to infer the communicator's particular informative intentions.

To consolidate, the paper argues that harmonization of communication in a professional setting should be viewed considering the perspective of the cooperative principle because professional discourse is much based on such features as factuality, informativeness, relevance and precision of interlocutors' communicative behaviour. On the other hand, Facework and the linguistic politeness principle are significant in professional communication because they explain the *social factors* of communication (distance-power) and reveal the *context factors* of a communicative situation that can act as constraints on message interpretation.

### 3 PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN MULTILINGUAL INTERACTION

The present-time professional communication makes an essential part of everyday business environment, which is established on a very broad scale due to globalization processes. This has resulted in numerous shifts in technologies applied for communication and norms observed in communication. It is argued that 'the concepts, such as *network*, *making connections* have become highly valued and are common forms of understanding the world, society and social relations' (Bouvier, 2016: 6).

Besides, non-native professional language users have to be aware that native professional language users do not always *implicitly* mean what they *explicitly* say. Therefore, those who perform in multilingual settings are expected to know the language strategies that pertain not only to the English language as a *lingua franca*, but they also have to be aware of the impact of the communicator's

mother tongue on the use of the English language for instrumental purposes in the workplace. Consequently, communication in multilingual context demands the linguistic strategies that are applied in different language functions, such as checking, confirming, denying, and rejecting, e.g. delivery dates, contractual involvement, orders, and money transfers with accuracy, especially when the stakes are high.

Furthermore, there always remain the linguistic aspects that cannot be translated. When communicating in multilingual environments, interlocutors are expected to apply specified linguistic strategies in appropriate situational contexts. However, it often happens that target language users translate a message from the source language, i.e. mother tongue, into the target language without paying attention to the fact that the communicative conventions of the latter are quite different, which might result in communication failure, known as pragmalinguistic failure.

Spencer-Oatey (2000), for example, claims that pragmalinguistic failure can be produced across at least three often intersecting pragmatic domains, such as *illocution* when an utterance is perceived as face threatening due to the strategy the language user employs, which might be either too direct or too indirect, *style*, which means that an utterance is perceived as inappropriate due to an inappropriate choice of lexis, syntax, terms of address, ritualised formulae, and honorific language (Spencer-Oatey, 2000: 19-20). Thomas (1983) notes that pragmalinguistic failures are likely to occur if non-native language users transfer speech acts, linguistic strategies or utterances from their native language directly to the target language. She claims that 'an inappropriate transfer of a direct speech act in which a native speaker would use an off-record strategy or indirect assessment of the linguistic statement (cited by Brown and Levinson, 1987: 216) might cause communication failure. According to Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1990), pragmalinguistic failures in multilingual communication in a globalized and diverse workplace can be a result of conflicting communication styles, because people working for multinational businesses differ in terms of culture, language used for instrumental purposes, age and alike. This indicates that multilingual communication should be based on a synergy of different linguistic and paralinguistic communication styles, degrees of register not to hinder communication in the workplace. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1990: 6-24) contend that 'a mismatch of communication styles may also lead to poor outcomes in [...] intercultural organizational settings'.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Taking into account the linguistic ecology perspective, methodology of the study was developed. Raw data were collected by Karimova (2018) and their descriptive analysis was carried out to examine the underlying mechanisms

that govern written communication and illustrate the use of the English language as a lingua franca in written communication for professional purposes in the selected multilingual professional setting. An *integrationalist approach* (Derni, 2008) to the professional language study was applied to examine how the language is employed in the relevant environmental context. To test how the harmonization process can be established and how definite informative intentions of communicators are met in the professional setting, the study was guided by the *cooperative principle*. To understand factors governing professional communication (e.g. *social factors* of communication, i.e. distance-power, or/and the *context factors* of communicative situation that might act as constraints on the interpretation of an informative message), selected aspects of *face theory* were taken into account. The primary research interest concerned the study of external text features; thus, a meta-level analysis was conducted. To illustrate the use of selected linguistic features in the social context of language use, the study was also concerned with a linguistic analysis at a micro-level.

A corpus of authentic materials developed in a professional setting was collected in 2018; it consists of 55 electronic messages (about 5000 words) written by a Riga-situated company that employs native language speakers (Latvian) and Lithuanian- Russian- and Norwegian-language speakers. To comply with the paper volume restrictions, this study has limited itself to examining only three written communication cases from a qualitative study perspective. No text editing was done, only the names of the interactants were changed.

## DISCUSSION

Case 1 presented below demonstrates how ambiguity in interaction may be created, i.e. specific information is requested, but an irrelevant answer to the request is provided. The sender asks to improve the report and supply it with specified information. In general, the answer received relates to the main topic of the email, but it does not provide the factual information requested. Following the *cooperative principle*, maxims of relevance and quality are not observed in the message written by the information receiver. In his turn, the receiver provides the sender with the information that might hardly meet the expectations of the communication partner. Besides, the case under analysis demonstrates that maxim of manner is violated, because ‘if the speaker gives the [...] required units of information, but they are either too curt or long-winded in conveying them to the listener, then maxim of manner is broken’ (Grice, 1975).

### Case 1

Dana’s message:

*Good afternoon.*

*The report for 01.01.2018 contains more than 12540 PNRs. Would it be possible to regenerate this report and get the updated version?*

*Dana*



Din's response:

*Hi Dana,*

*Reports usually come at 3 pm Oslo time. I will resend the report asap.*

*Today I am out of the office.*

*Best,*

Din

From the perspective of face theory, Din's response to Dana's message demonstrates that he imposes certain power on Dana; he emphasizes how important time is for him but does not consider the value of the interlocutor's, i.e. Dana's time: 'today I am out of the office'. Thus, Din upholds his *own face* and undermines the *other's*, i.e. Dana's *face*. Considering the rules of the Lakoffian *politeness principle*, Rule 1 (*don't impose*) and Rule 2 (*give options*) are not observed, thus, a consensus is put at risk.

In the above-referred case, to avoid potential miscommunication, several linguistic strategies should be applied to mitigate the negative effect of interaction, for example, more accurate and precise information about Din's absenteeism could be provided or options offered concerning Dana's request (Rule 2, *politeness principle*) might solve the situation arisen, for example, 'Today I am out of office, however, I will look into this matter tomorrow morning and will come back to you as soon as possible and provide you with the information requested'.

As regards the illocutionary effect created in Case 1, Dana uses a too direct communicative strategy and, thus, the whole utterance in the text can be perceived as a face threatening act. The utterance can be seen as an inappropriate one as well due to its ambiguous statements, for example, 'the report for 01.01.2018'. Register-wise, it seems to be a mix between the use of formal modal auxiliary 'would' vs the informal verb 'to get', the formal verb 'to regenerate' vs the informal verb 'to get'. Besides, addressing the interactant in a written mode of communication by 'good afternoon' testifies to inaccurate use of ritualised linguistic formula to start written interaction. From the perspective of linguistic politeness, the function of a polite request, expressed through the use of 'would it be possible to regenerate this report and get the updated version' is performed.

Considering the use of language forms and structures applied by the message sender Dana, it can be presupposed that the language structures in English were generated by a Latvian-origin interactant. Besides, it can be seen from the examined transaction that such social factors as power-distance relationship govern the professional communication in the company under analysis.

Regarding the pragmatic analysis of the sender's message at a meta-level, it shows that the created business-related discourse presents the message as informative as requested (the maxim of quantity). The professional domain-related requests are offered in a relevant way and benefit the purpose of communication participants (maxim of relevance). Although much of business discourse follows standard formats and phrases, a high quality text (maxim

of quality) is ensured due to observing such discourse features as: a clear communicative focus, concise and relevant information forwarded to the information recipient, sufficiently accurate and coherent information organization, professionally appropriate style of instruction (maxim of manner). However, the study shows that the lexical and stylistic level units and linguistic expressions that have ambiguous meanings or that are used in a too formal register in the text under analysis might result in misunderstanding and, thus, should be avoided. For example, the request ‘would it be possible to regenerate this report?’ could be expressed in a more mitigated form, such as ‘could you kindly revise the report, please’.

The text analysed illustrates that a non-native English language speaker has transferred the relevant linguistic strategy from the source language (Latvian) indirectly to the target language; thus, an appropriate use of indirectness ‘would it be possible to...?’ has worked in favour of saving the interactant’s face.

At the pragmatic level, Case 2 examines the linguistic strategies applied in the interaction at a workplace. The analysis demonstrates that *maxim of quantity* can be observed only partly in the text constructed by the information recipient Alexander, who, in fact, provides the message sender Anita with the information concerning the amount and ticket number, but the request for assistance is left without any attention. Thus, *maxim of quantity* is partly violated.

### Case 2

Anita’s message:

*Hello.*

Could you help us to fix these bookings (PPDCZL; YJLNCQ) please? The amount and ticket number is missing.  
Thank you!

Alexander’s response:

*Hello!*

*The amount and ticket number should be added via GAS tool.*  
*Alexander*

Examination of the text constructed by the message sender Anita reveals that the text breaches the expected norms of business correspondence etiquette: no proper salutation, no farewell, and no name written at the end of the message. Besides, the sender’s impatience to have the task done in the shortest possible time can be inferred from the exclamation mark at the end of ‘thank you’. On a linguistic level, the inaccuracies in the use of vocabulary and punctuation might result in communication failure. The irrelevant reply to the message by Alexander demonstrates that the obscurity of expressions, ambiguity, and irrelevance may result in time- and cost- ineffective communication in a professional setting. Thus, inability to understand ‘what is meant by what is said’ (Grice, 1975) causes

not only the semi-violation of *maxim of quantity* because the contribution has not been as informative as required but also of *maxim of relevance*, which, in their turn, can result in communication failure.

Concerning Case 3, it should be admitted that the texts produced by the Latvian origin language users Inga and Marta demonstrate language imperfections, such as direct translation from the Latvian language into English without observing the rules and conventions for writing in the target language (e.g. 'I cannot wait to visit the other offices; I do not see the benefit of continuing to include all groups in this communication for now; I am disappointed to read that questions, expectations and suggestions are received in this way; you will understand why I sent the advice'), direct translation from the Norwegian language into English without observing fixed rules of word order in English, e.g. 'I will be happy to clarify further next week with you'. The above-referred examples demonstrate that the language used for instrumental purposes does not observe the strict normative rules of the target language. Consequently, the indicated cases and the ones that can be observed in the email sequences seen above may result in different interpretation of the intended message; thus, there is a possibility that the communicated information can be perceived differently by different representatives working for this multinational company.

### Case 3

#### Marta's message:

*Hi again Inga,*

*I have read below message from Karina and still believe that the tone of your message to the booking agents was not adequate. However, I do not see the benefit of continuing to include all groups in this communication for now. I will be happy to clarify further next week with you, your STL and Mindaugas when I am back in the office.*

*Thanks,  
Marta*

#### Inta's response:

*Hello All,*

*Thank you Marta. I am disappointed to read that questions, expectations and suggestions are received in this way. I also support a constructive and mutually respectful communication, especially when it is based on facts, not emotions.*

*As to your example about my e-mail, I do not have the authority to completely override the email sent by Karina Brodahl from TOS (i.e. from Norwegian). Please have a look at the email below, so you will understand why I sent the advice and why it wasn't a must-do instruction. Who am I to override Karina?*

*Inta (IN)*

Inta's follow-up response:

Hello All,  
Mindaugas,

*Many thanks for your thorough and accurate response. I fully support and agree with all your comments and particularly appreciate your appeal for understanding with regards to the fact that QCs are also in the process of learning on the job. All possible issues (i.e. the need to be accurate and grammatically correct in the comments) have already been addressed with the QA team so they are aware and currently working on it. [...]*

*I cannot wait to visit the other offices (will let you know ASAP when this can be done).*

Inta,

Office manager's Miriam's response:

Hello All,  
Mindaugas,

*Many thanks for your thorough and accurate response. I fully support and agree with all your comments and particularly appreciate your appeal for understanding with regards to the fact that QCs are also in the process of learning on the job. All possible issues (i.e. the need to be accurate and grammatically correct in the comments) have already been addressed with the QA team so they are aware and currently working on it [...]. In line with Mindaugas's input about the need to support the new QA process, I must express my concern about messages like the outlined below. The tone of this message is not acceptable [...]. Let me assure you that all procedure requirements come directly from Norwegian. QA team is simply delivering our expectations (not always an easy task). We rely on RW management to help supporting Norwegian's values and procedures in a constructive and effective fashion. The below message does not accomplish such expectation [...]. Once again, I would like to thank you all for the great work that you do every day and for all your efforts to support Norwegian's goals.*

Krgds, Miriam

At the pragmatic level, Case 3 demonstrates several instances of the Gricean maxim violation, e.g., the office manager Miriam's response 'the below message does not accomplish such expectation' hardly displays the use of *maxim of quality*, i.e. it does not specify what exactly was not accomplished, or what the expectations of the top management have been; thus, it lacks adequate evidence to meet the goals or requirements, consequently, can be misinterpreted. On the other hand, the instance observed in Inta's response to Mindaugas reveals an accurate message communicated; the contribution is made as informative as required; it is relevant and meets the receiver's expectations, it avoids obscurity

of expression and is brief and orderly. In other words, *maxims of quantity, relation and manner* have been fully observed in this instance of communication.

Taking into consideration face theory, it should be admitted that several instances of upholding *one's own face* and undermining *the other's face* can be observed, e.g. 'Let me assure you that all procedure requirements come directly from Norwegian. QA team is simply delivering our expectations (not always an easy task). We rely on RW management to help supporting Norwegian's values and procedures in a constructive and effective fashion.

The statement 'I would like to thank you all for the great work that you do every day and for all your efforts to support Norwegian's goals.' demonstrates that only the Norwegian company's values should be supported and encouraged, but nothing is said about uplifting, e.g. the Latvian or Lithuanian values.

Summing up the analysis of the above extracts, the paper has attempted to demonstrate that both text-internal (linguistic) and text-external (pragmatic) factors constitute a solid ground for harmonizing communication in the workplace. At a meta-level, several aspects of the collected research data were examined to explore how communication harmonization in the workplace can be promoted considering the theoretical writings formulated by the cooperative principle, face theory and the politeness principle.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that the linguistic ecology perspective concerned with the analysis of professional communication established in the workplace goes beyond the study of purely linguistic structures at the semantic level. The paper has demonstrated that understanding the pragmatic meanings of utterances in the social context means avoiding potential for miscommunication, if a) the information communicated is as informative as required, i.e., the professional domain-related interaction is carried out in a relevant way and is performed for the benefit of the communication participants, b) a profession-related business discourse follows standard formats and phrases, i.e., a high quality text observes such discourse features as: a clear communicative focus, concise information delivered to the information recipients, sufficiently accurate and coherent information organization, professionally appropriate style of interaction.

The circumstances, in which language users establish their linguistic behaviour in such a way that the language is perceived only as a conventional grammatical construction, seemingly do not ensure harmonious information flow. At a micro-level analysis, communication in a professional setting requires precision and accuracy in the use of the linguistic strategies and forms to create the interaction as informative as required. On the other hand, considering the mechanisms underlying the cooperative principle, the politeness principle and Facework can result in a positive collaboration between interactants, thus, resulting in the harmonization of communication.

As a result, it can be concluded that harmonization of communication in a professional setting takes place if interactional partners' face is upheld, if the information communicated is as informative as required, if it is professional domain-relevant, and conducted so that it meets the purpose of the communication participants.

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