COMMUNICATIVE SITUATION OF AGREEMENT IN BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASS

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Abstract. The research deals with the problem of teaching successful communication skills to the foreign language students. Such skills allow one to realize all the functions of the communication which is extremely important nowadays when some kind of dissonance can be found in many spheres of communication (politics, intercultural and interpersonal communication). The aim of the research is to use the revealed models of communicative situation of agreement in teaching students of linguistic departments successful communication on Business English topics. The hypothesis is the following: developing the skills of negotiation in the course of Business English (topics “Negotiations”, “Telephone Conversation”, “Signing a Contract”) will be more effective if it is based on communicative models of agreement. During the research the factors of successful communication were studied (V. A. Kan-Kalik, A. P. Sharuhin). About 120 communicative situations of agreement were analyzed; afterwards they were made into universal models. Two of them are described in this article. On the basis of the models the schemes of dialogues and cards for role-plays were developed and then used in the language classroom. 72 bachelor and master degree students of the Institute of Foreign Languages, USPU (Russia), and University American College Skopje (Republic of Macedonia) took part in the research (aged 18–25, 85% female). The contribution of each author in this research is the following: D. Starkova – 40%, A. Murzich – 40%, I. Trajanovska – 20%. Several variants of solving the problem and several ways of developing the role-play can be suggested to every model which proves their versatility and practical value. The following students’ skills have improved: the skill to give arguments, to make an appealing suggestion, to give reasons for refusal, to understand one’s partner, to find a compromise.

Keywords: business English communication; communicative competence; model of communicative situation; foreign language teaching; agreement; successful communication.
Аннотация. Исследование посвящено проблеме формирования навыков успешного общения у студентов языкового вуза, позволяющих продуктивно реализовывать все функции общения. В настоящее время на фоне диссонанса во многих областях коммуникации (политика, межкультурная, межличностная коммуникация) данная тема представляется актуальной. Целью исследования стало выявление возможности применения коммуникативной ситуации согласие для обучения студентов продуктивной реализации всех функций общения. Гипотеза состоит в том, что обучение умению договариваться в рамках дисциплины «Деловой английский язык» (темы «Переговоры», «Телефонный разговор», «Заключение контракта», т. д.) будет более эффективным, если приемы обучения основывать на моделях ситуации согласие. В ходе исследования были изучены факторы успешного взаимодействия (В. А. Кан-Калик, А. П. Шарухин). Далее были проанализированы около 120 коммуникативных ситуаций согласие, после чего они представлялись в виде универсальных моделей. Две из них представлены в данной статье. На основе готовых моделей разработаны функциональные схемы диалога и карточки для ролевых игр, которые применялись на занятиях по языковым дисциплинам. Всего в исследовании участвовали 72 студента и магистранта ИЯ УрГПУ (Россия) и Университета Американский Колледж Скопье (Республика Македония) в возрасте от 18 до 25 лет (85% девушки). Доля участия каждого автора в данном исследовании такова: Д. А. Старкова – 40%, А. Н. Мурзич – 40%, И. Трахановска – 20%. Универсальность и практическость выделенных моделей доказана тем, что к каждой можно предложить несколько вариантов решения, несколько вариантов развития ролевой игры. Показано, что в результате работы студенты улучшили показатели по следующим умениям: аргументировать, сформулировать предложение привлекательно, обосновать отказ, понять другого, пойти на компромисс.

Ключевые слова: деловое общение на английском языке; коммуникативная компетенция; модель коммуникативной ситуации; обучение иностранным языкам; согласие; успешное взаимодействие.


should be different. The type of positive interactive communication is more advantageous nowadays, which leaves a good impression among all the participants, when each of them is regarded as a unique personality and a respectful representative of their countries, cultures, companies.

Taking into consideration the ideas mentioned above we have defined the problem of our research as finding such ways of communication that will enable people cooperate and come to agreement.

The object of the research in this article is to study the models of communicative situation agreement as the main factor of successful communication. The aim of the research is to use the revealed models of communicative situation of agreement in teaching students of linguistic departments successful communication on Business English topics. The hypothesis is the following: developing the skills of negotiation in the course of Business English topics. "Negotiations", "Telephone Conversation", "Signing the Contract") will be more effective if it is based on communicative models of agreement.

Factors of successful communication. The phenomenon of communication has been studied for many decades by outstanding Russian and foreign psychologists (B. G. Ananiev, M. M. Bakhtin, A. A. Bodalev, T. A. van Dake, V. A. Kan-Kilik, A. A. Leontiev, B. F. Lomov, Yu. M. Lotman, S. G. Ter-Minasova, T. V. Chernigovskaya and others). Communication is a process of establishing and developing contacts between people including acceptance and understanding, exchanging information, cooperation [Panfilova 2011: 7]. I. A. Ilyin considered communication as creative work and the main factor of inner moral development of a person [Ilyin 1996].

To communicate and cooperate successfully a person should have communicative competence. This is what needs to be deliberately taught with the help of intensive techniques and interactive activities [Panfilova 2011: 10]. The Federal State Educational Standard of higher education of the Russian Federation requires that by the time of graduation from university would-be teachers should have particular competences, the ones that would enable them to communicate in their native language and in a target language both in oral and written forms. They also should know the basics of professional etiquette in speech and ocution. However mostly often only language and etiquette aspects are taken into consideration but not the psychology of communication and cooperation, the issues that are much more complicated than just lists of vocabulary and making up monologues and dialogues.

Communication enables us to exchange not only information but also feelings, emotions, ideas, principles. Thus, it has a number of functions: of conveying information, of learning, of mutual influence, of establishing interpersonal relations, of adjustment, esthetic function [Kan-Kilik 1995: 14]. For successful realization of the function “conveying information”, for example, the following is desirable:

1) before communication – to study briefly your partner’s appearance;

2) during the communication – to notice the slightest changes in your partner’s behaviour;

3) according to №1 and 2 – to change your own way of communication.

Every person is a producer and receiver of information in the process of communication at the same time. Everybody has particular models of evaluation, patterns of decoding other people’s intentions, sets of verbal and non-verbal means of communication. The success of communication depends on how adequately the set is used, how well a person can operate it [Bodalev 2002]. Some wrong interpretation of words and behaviour often results in a conflict.

Modern linguists prove that a speaker’s emotional state can influence their voice characteristics, choice of words and the way they conceptualize their ideas [Out 2020: 2]. For example, sad speakers tend to use more polite wording than happy speakers; speakers in a positive mood choose more abstract adjectives, and those in a negative mood would rather use concrete ones.

To provide the necessary wording in a target language the English teacher equips students with the necessary vocabulary units. They may be given phrases for opening move, continuing move, reply and rejoinder moves, ways of negotiating meaning [Mahardhika 2019: 245–248]. For example, an opening move the phrases like “Can I... (do something for you)” or “Tell me about...” can be used to initiate interaction and conversation. As continuing moves phrases leading you and your partner to discussion of some details of the matter under mutual interest can be used: “Which quality
do you boost that will help you progress in this industry?" Any well founded opinion will also be of help to support and continue the negotiations. Replies or responding moves can be initiated by the so-called Why-questions, which show the need in more arguments and reasons for agreement. But also in replies communicants can provide supporting moves asking about problems or views of the partner. Rejoinder moves can be introduced on the basis of questions or phrases like “I disagree with you on the point...” or “I doubt that is possible...”. Finally, to most popular ways of teaching students negotiating their meaning refers the question “How do you define this... (concept)?”

One of the important factors of successful communication that leads to agreement is the ability to give reasons for one's point of view. In order to do that one should learn the strategies of argumentation [Sharuhin 2012: 99]: create the favourable environment for your arguments on the basis of common information; give the strongest argument at the end; do not replace arguments with your opinion; let your partner feel that a compromise is the best solution; use “uniting words” – “us both”, “our” etc.; never say anything that can humiliate your partner.

A. P. Sharuhin and A. M. Orlov suggest two simple rules to achieve agreement in business sphere: 1) try not to apply to people you do not like, 2) be focused on good [Sharuhin 2012: 88]. These rules seem proper to be applied not only in business environment.

**Developing and use of the models of communicative situation of agreement.** Communication is a type of activity. Any situation can be originated only in the process of activity when participants need to do some task [Statnik 2017]. Any activity, speech activity as well, starts with motivation. According to N. I. Formanovskaya under “communicative situation” we may understand the whole set of external circumstances and internal movements that motivate us to exchange information in the process of work or any other kind of social or personal activity [Formanovskaja 2005: 58]. Communicative situation includes the following components: the aim and type of communication, communicants'language passports, etiquette standards, participants'roles, conversational games, indirect speech acts, principles of communication (the principle of reflection, of dissociation, of tempo, of details etc.), non-verbal behaviour, the rules of non-conflict communication, the rules and techniques of linguistic manipulation [Sternin 2013: 4–11]. If only one of these is changed the whole communicative situation is changed.

In the process of foreign language learning a model of communicative situation is a training conversational situation which with the help of visual and audio aids imitates the real situation thus motivating students to speak and giving them patterns for various substitutions necessary while learning to combine linguistic material [Kuznetsova 2013: 66]. Descriptions of circumstances, role cards, tables or dialogues etc. may serve as such models.

In this research we are focused on one type of communicative situation – *agreement*, in Latin – “consensus”, a specific form of interaction between objects and processes, reflecting spontaneous and deliberate union of antipodes, comparing them and finding harmony, balance and proportion among the parts of the whole in the particular correlation [Philosophic Encyclopaedia http]. To make it short, *agreement* means that the antipodes would accept each other and each other's views in the course of interaction.

According to O. G. Alifanova we have entered the age of political, social, cultural, interpersonal, communicational discordance. That is why it is vital to apply the communicative situation of *agreement* on all levels [Alifanova 2015: 104]: mass communication (in the society), group communication (inside various social groups), local communication (in micro groups), in-group communication (in smaller groups, for example a family), interpersonal communication (between two persons), intrapersonal communication (between a person and electronic means of information). In this research we are focused on the level of interpersonal communication because we would like to show students how to use a foreign language for positive and successful communication where the language is just a tool, the aim of communication is agreement.

Working with students we bring to light the basis of communicative culture such as politeness, civility, tactfulness, modesty, accuracy and attentiveness [Kuznetsov 2008: 333]. Also, we give characteristics of a person with a high level of communicative culture: empathy, benevolence, authenticity, certainty, proactivity, frankness.
sociability, perceptivity, intellectual curiosity. Besides, we take into consideration some issues of conflict management and, in particular, five disengagement strategies: one-upmanship, compromise, cooperation, evasion and adjustment [Antsupov 2008: 420]. The students are encouraged to choose the most efficient ones.

The data bank of 120 communicative situations of agreement was collected in 2015–2020 by students of Ural State Pedagogical University (Russia) and University American College in Skopje (Republic of Macedonia) during their block-teaching practice while observing pupil (s) – to-pupil (s) and teacher-to-pupil (s) communication, also the situations were taken from books and films and from the students’personal experience. The students had to describe the situations according to their components: the aim and type of communication, the language and roles of the communicants, the circumstances, the ways of achieving agreement or the reasons for why it was not achieved. Later the authors of this research developed universal models which can be used at the classes of foreign language. Some communicative models of agreement (“Profitable suggestion” and “Solving the problem”) were tested within the discipline “Practical course of the foreign language” (52 second-year students of the English department, Institute of Foreign Languages, USPU, 2016–17) [Starkova 2016: 135–137]. The main aim was to encourage the students to look for the way out of any situation beneficial for both sides, with the help of mutual understanding and the wish to cooperate. In 2017–18, 2018–19 and 2019–20 academic years the same was done with the graduate students within the discipline “Foreign Language in the Special Spheres of Communication” (47 students).

Here are some examples of communicative situations of agreement collected and analyzed by students, and the models based on them which we have elaborated into role-play situations for Business English classes.

Communicative situation of agreement №1:
Two friends are talking in the repair shop. One of them (let us call him Artem, A for short) invites his friend (let us call him Boris, B for short) to go to the pond after work.

< Artem: …What are you doing?
Boris: Nothing special. A friend of mine has asked to help with fixing the car.

A: What about going to the pond? The weather is fine.
B: Maybe not today? It’s a busy day, you know…
A: The forecast says it’ll get colder soon. Let’s catch the warm days. Do you remember last year – raining all the time?
B: Yeah, the weather… Actually not a bad idea. I think, I won’t be busy long.
A: Good. By the way, do you know where the water is warmer now?
B: It’s hot, everywhere must be ok.
A: Let’s go to the dam then, the bank is better there.
B: All right. Though there must be a lot of people there today.
A: There is a lot of space, no problem. I’ll call the others and we’ll pick you up at 6.
B: Ok, I’ll be just ready.>

As we can see both have the same goals – to have a rest after the day of work. At the beginning they want to do it in different ways: Artem looks for some activity such as swimming in the pond, Boris evidently wants something calm and quiet. Although Artem gives a strong argument (the weather forecast) and when Boris starts hesitating Artem involves him in the process (“Do you know where the water is warmer now?”). After analyzing this situation we get the following model (pic. 1), where A1 – addressant (Artem), A2 – addressee (Boris), S1, S2 etc. – steps which they take to achieve the goals and agreement in the end.

| A1, aim – to spend time with friends/partners in a certain place |
| S1: argument for the suggestion |
| S3: involving A2 into the process |
| S5: finishing the conversation if A2 has agreed |
| S6: agreement |
| S4: getting involved in the process |
| S2: admitting the argument and giving another argument “for” |
| A2, aim – to have a rest after work |

Pic. 1 The model of communicative situation of agreement “Making plans”
Using the model in picture 1 we have developed role-play cards for topic “Negotiations”:

**Student A**
You are the CEO of Trade Inc company. You are receiving a partner who has just come from afar to have serious negotiations with you and your company. The results of these negotiations are very important to you. So you want to welcome your partner as warm-heartedly as possible. Suggest going somewhere to spend time tonight and to entertain your guests.

**Student B**
You are a representative of Sales Inc company. You are on business trip in another country for the purpose of having negotiations with your foreign partner company representatives. You are rather tired from flight and full day of negotiations is in the perspective. The main wish is to have a rest.

While playing the game the students came to agreement in various ways. The most successful and true-to-life are: 1) Student B will have one hour’s rest in the hotel after the negotiations and then Student A will take him/her to the theatre or the restaurant; 2) Student B agrees to have dinner with Student A immediately after the negotiations and then to take a day’s rest.

Here is an example of one of the dialogues produced by the master degree students in the course of discipline “Foreign Language in Special Spheres of Communication” where Business English topic “Negotiations” is studied. Here you will see how model 1 is realized:

A: Good morning, Mr…! It’s my pleasure to welcome you in our head office … in ….  
B: Good morning! Glad to meet you in person, Mr…  
A: Did you have a good journey?  
B: Well, yes, I did. The flight was comfortable, thank you.  
A: Good. I’d like to announce in advance that I have booked a table in a restaurant for today’s dinner. I hope you wouldn’t mind joining me? – **Step 1** 
B: I’d love to but I’m afraid I would be a bit tired after our negotiations and after such a long journey. Perhaps a better idea would be to go tomorrow? – **Step 2** 
A. Oh, remember that wonderful place in Downtown where we had dinner last time you came? It is not that easy to book a table there, you know? – **Step 3** 
B: Yeah, the place is awesome. The chef is first class there! And the atmosphere… And the variety show…! – **Step 4**

A: That’s settled! So we should finish our discussion by 17.00 to be for dinner by 18.00. Traffic jams are awful here! – **Step 5**
B: Not like in our place. – **Step 6** What shall we begin with?...

As you have noticed, all the steps of model №1 “Making plans” have been fulfilled logically and reasonably which helped achieve agreement.

Communicative situation of agreement №2: 
This situation is taken from the TV series “The Mentalist”, and this example shows that communicative situations can be presented not only in the form of a dialogue. Grace Van Pelt and Wayne Rigsby, two agents of the California Bureau of Investigation, are having romantic relations, though according to the rules of the Bureau it is prohibited. Their boss knows about that and suggests either parting but staying in the job or choosing who will quit. Rigsby values the relations very much and says that straightforwardly. He is ready to quit the Bureau, actually he has found another place already. He proves that his intentions are serious and behaves manly taking the decision. Van Pelt also values their feelings but at the same time she is really fond of her job as she has taken great pains to get it. Despite the fact that Rigsby’s suggestion actually suits her, Grace, firstly, considers his attitude to the job to be much like her own and thinks Rigsby sacrifices a lot, and, secondly, she is used to taking everything under control and is not ready to allow anybody to decide for her. This last factor is likely to be inconscient, and Grace gives another reason for her refusal: “You will quit for our sake, I don’t want such responsibility. You won’t forgive me”. Rigsby in his turn takes it as evidence that Grace’s feelings are not strong enough. Thus, the apparent agreement is achieved due to the wrong coding and decoding of information. One of the sides stays unsatisfied and the situation may be developed. So the real agreement is not achieved as the communicants replace arguments and facts with their own opinions and feelings. It is very important to make students draw this conclusion.

The model of this communicative situation is given in picture 2, where addressee (A2) – Grace Van Pelt.
A1, aim – to maintain the relationships with the partner

S1: appealing to the feelings of the partner

S3: suggestion of the way out – actually the decision for the whole situation

S6: an attempt to remind of the given suggestion

S8: agreement in the way of “putting up with”

S7: arguments for one’s own point of view, refusal to accept the partner’s decision, giving one’s own final decision

S5: announcement of one’s own decision

S4: taking time

S2: intention to communicate on the level of mind and reasoning

A2, aim – to find the best (in the opinion of A2) way out, giving one’s own final decision

Pic. 2 The model of communicative situation of agreement “Finding the way out”

The cards for the role-play based on communicative model № 2 (pic. 2) are the following:

**Student A**
You are a secretary of the boss of Trade Inc company. You are in love with your colleague from the marketing department. But the rules of your company prohibit love affairs at work. You don’t want to lose your job as you are very much dedicated to it.

**Student B**
You are a marketing department specialist of Trade Inc company. You are in love with the secretary of the boss in the company. But the rules of your company prohibit love affairs at work. You don’t want to lose your love and choose to quit this job.

This role-play gave the students a communicative model they could rely on in real-life situations. They could adopt the model and develop communicative skills which would make them better communicators and negotiators. Furthermore, this role-play helped the students realize what is more important for them – job issues or relation issues, gave them a possibility to watch and analyze different ways of persuading each other. They managed to understand each other’s points and “tried on each other’s shoes”. All these are important qualities and abilities that will help young adults to cooperate with people in various spheres of their future life. Almost all students suggested extra steps to this situation to lead the conversation to agreement, finding arguments and facts instead of resting upon feeling and emotions.

Before we started working with the models of the communicative situation of agreement we suggested the students evaluating how important are the following skills for the successful communication: the skill to give arguments, to make an appealing suggestion, to give reasons for refusal, to understand one’s partner, to find a compromise. Also, the students were asked to evaluate their own level of the same skills while communicating in the native language and in the foreign one. The scale of evaluation was from 1 to 10 where 1 was an indicator of low level of skill development and 10 – of high level. Almost all students gave the highest score for the suggested skills (9–10 points), meaning they are extremely important. Their own levels of using them while communicating in Russian were scored from 6 to 9 points and in English – from 4 to 8 points. After the work with the models has been completed the students once again were asked to evaluate their levels of the skills. The average score for every skill has changed as following: the skill to give arguments – from 6,3 to 7,4 points; the skill to make an appealing suggestion – from 4,6 to 6,5 points; the skill to give reasons for refusal – from 5,2 to 6,9 points; the skill to understand one’s partner – from 6 to 7,4 points; the skill to find a compromise – from 6,5 to 7,5 points. Moreover, the students also mentioned the stronger confidence in themselves while communicating in both languages as very important as well.

**Conclusion.** In the light of what has been said an undoubtful advantage of the models of communicative situation of agreement is that they can be widely introduced into the process of foreign language teaching in general, in Business English courses in particular, and in various disciplines related to communication. Most of the situations in business sphere are oriented into finding sources and reasons for agreement. The models given in the article help students develop skills to use the strategies of successful
communication in all its functions. The models encourage effective communication, understanding and mutual respect of the communicants. Furthermore, the models help students develop the ability of finding common language with different partners. All these factors affect a broader scale of people's communication milieu: family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, peers, etc. Thus, we strongly recommend their implementation in the ELT courses.

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