



## SOME LEXICAL FEATURES OF BUSINESS FRENCH

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the lexical features of the business French language. The specificity of business correspondence in general is highlighted.

### KEYWORDS

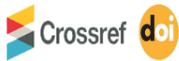
Lexical system, lexical composition, business correspondence, word, speech formulas.

### INTRODUCTION

Business correspondence is characterised by strong word combinations.

Many of them belong to professional terminology. There is a high degree of use of terms, to which a large layer of nomenclatural vocabulary adjoins: titles and positions. A large number of abbreviations are used.

The homogeneity of the stylistic colouring of the vocabulary of business writing is achieved by the high frequency of procedural vocabulary (with a generalised meaning), which represents a specific action, subject or attribute in the text of a document in an official legal interpretation. Terms and procedural



vocabulary account for 50% to 70% of all word usage in individual document genres.

The use of swear words and generally lowered vocabulary, colloquial expressions and slang expressions is not allowed in the texts of documents, nevertheless the language of business correspondence includes professional slang words: personnel officer, payroll etc. The use of such vocabulary in business letters is just as inappropriate as the use of clericalisms in everyday conversation, because it is reserved for the oral sphere of communication only.

When looking at the lexical features of business letters in French, there is a standardised use of politeness formulas.

The politeness requirement can be interpreted differently, depending on the culture in which the communication in question takes place. In the West, including France, the observance of politeness is an important tool to achieve one's goal, to establish a certain tone of the relationship. A change in the tone of letters can be perceived as a signal of alarm or even rejection. Conciseness is another essential requirement when drafting a document. Although the requirement for brevity and politeness cannot be interpreted unambiguously in the written business culture of different countries and companies, it is recognised as essential by all researchers. Compliance with the established norms of politeness, the limitations and requirements that exist on the length of a document are absolutely necessary to establish communication between correspondents.

In French more forms of politeness are used than in Russian, at the beginning, at the end and in the body of the letter. Only for the end of the letter there are dozens of polite forms, from banal and prim and proper to ornate expressions, which are difficult to translate into Russian due to the lack of equivalents.

Some of them even sound like vestiges of the 18th century. However, according to experts, the simplest forms of politeness are the most common in business communication, for example:

bien cordialement;

sincèrement a vous; respectueusement.

Overloaded expressions distract the reader's attention from the content of the letter. But depending on the occasion, more classic forms of politeness can also be found in French letters, such as

acceptez, cher Monsieur, mes (sincères, respectueuses, etc...) salutations (les plus cordiales...);

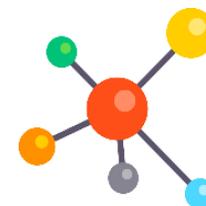
recevez, cher monsieur, l'expression de ma parfaite considération; veuillez croire, cher monsieur, à l'assurance de nos sentiments;

je vous prie d'accepter mes sincères salutations.

In French, as in other languages, new words are constantly appearing under the influence of technical evolution and foreign words. But it takes a long period for these words to adapt in the language and be recognised by the speakers. The field of business is most susceptible to borrowings from other languages.

Neologisms often make it possible to simplify or shorten a phrase by using one word instead of a whole expression in French. Nevertheless, the saving of words in oral speech is due to the need for speed of expression, while in written speech there is a risk of making understanding difficult by shortening the phrase.

The source of neologisms in business French was and still is English. In French, these new hybrids from the two languages are called «franglais». These can be



English words adapted from the French grammar, or invented words based on English equivalents: affichable, briefer, digital, doubonner, faxer, lister, manager, optimiser, performant.

Sometimes it can be difficult to replace an unambiguous English concept with a French word. In this case, preference is given to words already known in English, rather than newly created and composed of two languages.

In addition to the process of enriching the vocabulary of business communication with words from English, there is a process of neologisms formation by expanding the meaning of words: these are the so-called "semantic neologisms". Many terms, in addition to their traditional meanings, acquire new connotations under the influence of Anglo-American culture. There is a shift in the meaning of words which had a slightly different connotation in French. Such semantic multiple meanings cause difficulties not only for people learning French, but even for native speakers. For example:

- The verb *initier*, the traditional meaning of which is 'to inform, introduce, initiate', is now often used in the more familiar English sense of 'to begin, to undertake' (from *initiate*). In Russian there is a similar term: *initiate*;
- The adjective *sophistiqué*, in addition to its original meanings 'elaborate, intricate, counterfeit, fake, mannered', is now often used in the meanings noted in English - 'improved, complex';
- The noun *décade*. Traditionally in French it means a ten-day period, but is now taking on an English meaning of a period of ten years (the French equivalent of *décennie*).

The enrichment of the vocabulary of business French with neologisms nowadays also takes place through abbreviations, e.g:

ANPE: Agence national pour l'emploi; ASSEDIC: Associations pour l'emploi dans l'industrie; c/c: Compte courant; ESSEC: École supérieure des sciences économiques et commerciales; SMIC: Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance.

Often the ambiguity of an abbreviation can cause difficulties in translation, compare: AR can mean both *aller-retour* and *accuse de reception*.

Compared to Russian, French has stricter rules for addressing the addressee. If the recipient and the addressee are on an equal footing, "Monsieur" or "Cher Monsieur" is the correct way to address the person if they have known each other for some time. You should avoid addresses such as "Mon cher Monsieur" or "Cher Monsieur Dubois".

### CONCLUSION

The superior is addressed simply as "Monsieur" but not as "Cher Monsieur". If a man writes to a woman, he addresses her as "Madame," "Chère

Madame". Never "Chère madame Dupont" is used, except to those below. The simpler addresses for women are usually "Madame", "Chère Madame", "Ma chère Marie-Thérèse" (but never "Ma Chère madame Dupont").

As more friendly relations are established, the style of address is simplified. The reason for all the above-mentioned lexical features is the unification of official documents in the modern stage of development. It is seen as a choice of one linguistic variant from several possible ways of conveying the same information. The most important aspect of unifying document texts is the use of language formulas - fixed expressions, collocations, sentence patterns derived from years of experience, terms, accepted abbreviations, conventions and units of measurement provided for in state standards.



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