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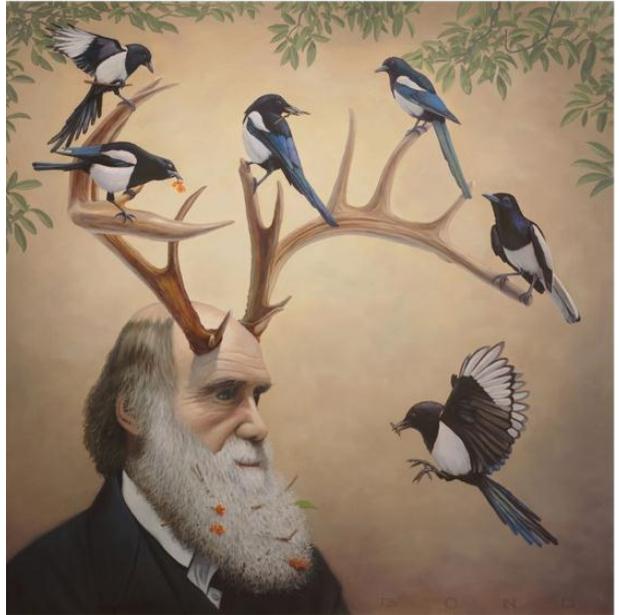
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# Presuppositions and shared knowledge in perception and production of business text

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## Abstract

The study aims to investigate presuppositions and shared knowledge in perception and production of business text via comparative qualitative research methods. This study shows that in the perception and production of a business text in Kazakh, Russian and English, each business communicator has the sum of specific (communicative-pragmatic, encyclopaedic and linguistic) presuppositions and shared knowledge, which is characteristic of a given socio-professional and sociocultural context. In conclusion, a business specialist owns a set of professional and business skills, taken in a specific business context, which make this professional business community of communicants unique in their own way.

**Keywords:** Business, Correspondence, Presuppositions, Knowledge, Communication.

## Presuposiciones y conocimiento compartido en percepción y producción de textos de negocios

### Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar presuposiciones y conocimientos compartidos en la percepción y producción de textos

comerciales a través de métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Este estudio muestra que en la percepción y producción de un texto comercial en kazajo, ruso e inglés, cada comunicador comercial tiene la suma de presupuestos específicos (comunicativo-pragmático, enciclopédico y lingüístico) y conocimiento compartido, lo cual es característico de un determinado socio- contexto profesional y sociocultural. En conclusión, un especialista en negocios posee un conjunto de habilidades profesionales y comerciales, tomadas en un contexto comercial específico, que hacen que esta comunidad comercial profesional de comunicantes sea única a su manera.

**Palabras clave:** negocios, correspondencia, presunciones, conocimiento, comunicación.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As most researchers assert presuppositions and shared knowledge indicate a prior assumption implicitly created by speakers, which are needed for the correct and careful interpretation of a statement. Despite the fact that there is more or less general agreement that presupposition is a universal property of a language, there are various suggestions regarding its phenomenon. Generally speaking, presuppositions and shared knowledge are often associated with specific linguistic forms, such as cleft constructions, definite descriptions, and specific intonation contours demonstrated to be a function of the role of these constructions in encoding the topic-comment structure of a sentence (OLGA, BEZUGLOVA & KUZNETSOVA, 2016).

Regarding the features of presuppositions and shared knowledge of interlocutors in business communication, it should be

noted that any utterance arising in the memory of business professionals is not an exact reflection of reality, but in fact it always contains additional information, reasoning and reconstruction based on presuppositions and shared knowledge about a particular object or phenomenon. In this case, presuppositions and shared knowledge are understood as the fund of general knowledge, extralinguistic and linguistic knowledge of interlocutors, necessary for the explication of implicitly expressed information. Consequently, the specificity of perception and generation of a business text is always determined by the individual cognitive space of business professionals, representing a kind of organized fund of their knowledge and ideas, a system of norms, evaluations, relationships (GURYANOV, ZAMALETDINOV & YARMAKEEV, 2017).

The purpose of this paper is to identify presuppositions and shared knowledge of business professionals in the perception and production of business correspondence composed in Kazakh, Russian and English. The choice of Kazakh, Russian and English as the main ones for the analysed business correspondence was predetermined by their special significance in the modern Kazakhstani business community (ZHARINA, 2006). Since we believe each business communicator has the sum of specific (communicative-pragmatic, encyclopaedic and linguistic) presuppositions and shared knowledge, which is characteristic of a given socio-professional and sociocultural context (MUYAMBIRI & CHABAEFE, 2018).

## 2. METHODS

In this study, the material for the analysis was authentic texts of modern business correspondence in three languages (Kazakh, Russian and English), i.e., commercial proposals, letters of inquiry, commercial letters of invitation, letters of notification, letters of order. The choice of these types of business texts is primarily due to the high frequency of their use in the daily work of employees of business companies and organizations in the modern Kazakhstan business community, as well as the possibility of wider access to these types of business correspondence (GARCÍA-CARPINTERO, 2017). With regard to business correspondence, the following presuppositions and shared knowledge of business professionals should be highlighted, contributing to the construction of effective two-way business communication (CAPONE, 2017: AHRABI-FARD, 2017: BASKIN, 2018: MELO, SOBRINHO, FILHO, FELICIANO, & MACIEL, 2018).

- Communicative-pragmatic presuppositions (CPP): knowledge of the characteristics of the flow of the communicative act and pragmatic attitudes associated with the peculiarities of the disclosure of the author's idea, semantic presupposition, etc.;
  
- Linguistic presuppositions: (LP): the information presented is understandable to both business communicators, as representatives of a certain social and national-cultural society;

- Encyclopaedic presuppositions (EP): a set of factual knowledge, possessing a sign of referential or related to the actually existing facts of reality, professional knowledge in the field of business, etc.

It should be noted that, in general, the above-mentioned presuppositions and shared knowledge implemented in business discourse is a part of the general prepositional knowledge base (PKB) divided into universal and specific components. At the same time, under the universal components of the business community’s prepositional knowledge base, we understand such parameters that form the general linguistic link of the discursive process regardless of the cultural and linguistic environment and national consciousness of the participants in the business discourse. In turn, the national-deterministic prepositional knowledge that forms the national-cultural component of the business discourse, formed on the basis of specific language phenomena, the cognitive base of the communicator and the national culture (Figure 1), can be attributed to the specific components of the prepositional knowledge base.

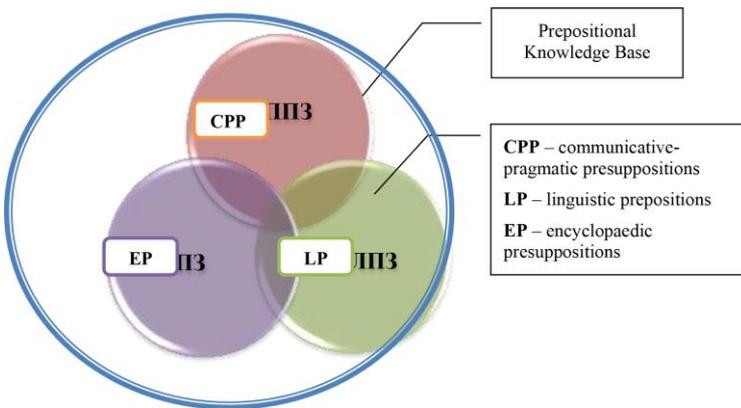


Figure 1: Prepositional Knowledge Base of Business Communicators

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

We started the study of business correspondence with analysis of features of communicative-pragmatic presuppositions which business specialists possess when producing and perceiving business texts. The essence of the data of presuppositional knowledge lies in the fact that, first of all, for a business communicator it is necessary to determine the general theme and genre originality of the planned business correspondence (KARTTUNEN, 2016). The thematic focus of considered business correspondence is associated with the emerging problems of the supply of raw materials, i.e., scrap and waste of ferrous metals. Considering the current situation, the author of a business communication asks to consider the possibility of selling scrap metal generated in the process of production activities. In this regard, the author also asks to inform them about the decision taken at the specified addresses. That is why for the implementation of the communicative goal, the compiler of business correspondence chooses the next business genre, i.e., the letter of inquiry.

To implement the author's intention, in particular, in the absence of detailed information about the addressee in the case of establishing new business contacts, business professionals also turn to communicative-pragmatic presuppositions, which is traditionally expressed in the use of various language techniques and tools. Such texts of business correspondence contain the maximum content of aesthetically and emotionally marked vocabulary, which, according to

the authors of the letters, will have the greatest perlocutive effect on the addressee (BLOME-TILLMANN, 2019).

As the analysed corpus showed, the addressees, when creating an initiative business correspondence, design the cognitive image of their addressee, a potential client or partner company. It is worth noting that the most effective technique in this situation for the Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking audience is the use of emotional and expressive vocabulary, reflecting the scale and recognition of the company at the regional and world levels: «Қазақстан Республикасында және Орталық Азияда ірі мамандандырылған кәсіпорын», «87 жылдық сенімді әріптес атағы», «крупнейшие производители». As the analysis showed, the specific characteristics of propositional knowledge base include the fact that Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking business correspondents use aesthetically and emotionally marked vocabulary less often than their English-speaking colleagues (GUNDEL, 1985).

Another common way of expressing pragmatic meaning by business communicators in the texts of business correspondence is the so-called semantic presupposition. By placing the main thesis in a subordinate clause, the author of a business report presents this thesis as a well-known truth and fact that does not require proof. This method can be illustrated, for example, in the texts of commercial proposals for the provision of services:

(1) Узнайте, почему выбирают именно нас при организации ответственных и важных событий.

(2) Learn more about why you should use BISAM Central Asia market research.

In the following example (1), the author tries to prove that it is his companies that are trusted by the most serious customers in organizing responsible events. Using the subordinate clause, the addressee (Example 2) also tries to convey to the recipient the idea that it is their company that is ready to provide the necessary services. The subordinate clause «жылына 600-ден астам клиенттер бізді неліктен тандайтынын», «почему выбирают именно нас при организации ответственных и важных событий», «why you should use BISAM Central Asia market research» contain a clear presupposition большинство клиентов выбирают услуги данной компании.

In addition, in accordance with the specifics of semantic presupposition, it remains true even when the judgment is rejected, for example, «Do not learn more about why you should use BISAM Central Asia market research». Consequently, by means of semantic presupposition, the compilers of business correspondence manage to avoid using complex convincing arguments in favour of the main thesis, since in the business text it is already presented implicitly and is

understood by the reader as a definite fact that does not require proof (ABUSCH, 2002).

When analysing linguistic presuppositions, the author and recipient of business correspondence are considered by us as representatives of a certain social, professional, and national-cultural community. This is expressed in the use by each business communicator of certain linguistic structures for constructing a business text and filling it with background information in accordance with its context. The studied business texts are aimed at the target readership, mainly consisting of professionals and specialists in this particular professional field. When constructing these business correspondence texts, the writer assumes that his addressee knows the meaning of such specific concepts, сортты және фасонды илемдер (long products), өңірлік индустрияландыру картасына (regional industrialization map), естественные монополии, подъездные пути, подвижный состав, вагоно-час, etc.

We see a similar picture in business correspondence in English as well. For example, the addressee in the business message can reveal the essence of the activity of a core group of the organization, whose main duty is to maintain direct contact with the main national company and perform basic coordination functions. Obviously, the meaning and essential details of this business text (for example, one-face-to-the-customer principle, senior advisors will be fully understood only by a professional expert competent in business and possessing all the

necessary professional knowledge, specialized terminology, i.e. owning appropriate linguistic presuppositional knowledge.

The use of specific official business phraseology and idiomatic expressions can be attributed to a specific component of linguistic presuppositional knowledge. For example, the following examples of phraseological and idiomatic expressions were found in the texts of business correspondence Kazakh: қиын-қыстау жағдайда (be stranded), абыройын төгу (lose credibility), etc., in Russian – отложить в долгий ящик, держать руку на пульсе, сделать на совесть, etc., in English –calculated risk, blue-chip company, carry weight, get two bites at the cherry, carve out a niche, etc.

The characteristic of encyclopaedic presuppositions of business communicants lies in the use of factual knowledge that has a sign of referentiality or relating to actually existing facts of reality. Consider these features in the examples below:

(3) «[Компания-1]» АҚ Басқарма басшысының орынбасары

[Аты-жөні] мырзаға

Құрметті [Аты-жөні] мырза!

«Компания-2» медициналық сервистік компаниясы ЖШС,  
Сізге өзінің шынайы ілтипатын және әріптестік үшін  
ризашылығын білдіреді!

«Компания-2» Сіздің 2014 жылғы 12-наурыздағы № 25-284 хатыңызды қарастырып, 2014 жылғы 6-қаңтарда № АППС/01/14/371 «Компания-1» АҚ Астана қаласы, Сығанақ к. келісім-шарт құрды. <...>

Бас директор [Аты-жөні]

As the above example showed, the business relationship between the first and the second company has already been established, as also indicated by the signed agreements mentioned in the letter. The recipient of the letter, when addressing the deputy chairman of the board, having as much information as possible about the addressee and the subject of the letter, notifies the management of the service company in order to resolve issues not provided for by the contract. This can also be observed in a business letter in Russian. As we see, the participants in business communication are characterized by a common knowledge base of the presuppositional knowledge base, which is understood as the presence of preliminary information and knowledge, common everyday and professional experience. This can be explained by the long-term acquaintance of business communicators, reciprocal interests, joint long-term professional activity, short-term joint experience, which is important only for this statement.

#### **4. SUMMARY**

Based on the foregoing, several inferences can be drawn. First of all, at the level of presuppositions and shared knowledge, business communicators, when perceiving and producing texts of business correspondence, are capable of evoking the entire amount of specific professional and business knowledge taken in a specific business context, taking into account the characteristics of both the addressee and the addressee. Possessing the appropriate presuppositions and shared knowledge, business communicators have the opportunity to build a locative act by giving it a certain illocutionary effect, i.e. for the recipient to realize their plan, it is necessary first to select a certain genre of business correspondence, its subject matter and content, including an algorithm for its interpretation within the business discourse.

When constructing a business text, presuppositional knowledge allows the business communicator to relate this business message to the realities of reality, which contributes to the adequate placement of textual units of the business discourse realization in the sequence that corresponds to the implementation of the author's intention. The presuppositions and shared knowledge of business correspondents are factual because they contain only factual, non-fictitious knowledge.

In this regard, to create and understand business correspondence texts, it is important to know the socio-cognitive characteristics of the

linguocultural code of the language used to convey the message. Since the same fact of reality can cause completely opposite evaluative interpretations not only among representatives of different linguocultures, whose interests can be diametrically opposed, but even from the point of view of the same individual at different times and under different circumstances.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Therefore, for successful business communication, it is necessary to possess not only the appropriate language competence, but also the presuppositions and shared knowledge that form a solid basis for business communication between specialists. In other words, from the standpoint of sociocognitive communication theory in the methodology of discursive analysis, the exit into extralinguistic spheres and the search for cognitive, social and cultural explanations of the motives for discursive practice is inevitable, which is especially pronounced in the sociocultural context of writing business correspondence of the languages in question.

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