The Role of Phrasal Verbs in Business Communication

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Abstract

This paper illustrates the role of phrasal verbs in business communication (a business environment). With the world's economy becoming increasingly global, the desire and ability to compete in the global economy are some of the greatest challenges facing business today. Organizations will want to negotiate, consider joint ventures, adapt products for an international market. All of this involves communication, which is crucial to business and, therefore, communication skills are vital. A discussion about business communication should consider a wide array of elements, such as: verbal communication, nonverbal communication, paralanguage (intonation, tone of voice, pitch), the personal psychological traits of the people involved in that business, their attitudes, perceptions and behavior, the speakers' status, their managerial qualities, qualifications, knowledge, skills and abilities, experience, interests and needs, the general economic, social and even political context. This paper mainly focuses on the use of phrasal verbs (and collocations) in this type of communication.

1. Introduction

An organization is 'a collection of individuals who have been brought together to carry out tasks to achieve set aims' (Dimbleby, Burton, 2007, p. 130). It is a group that has certain characteristics, as follows: it is established by an individual or group of people; it develops formally structured relationships between people; it sets objectives that the people in the organization are seeking to achieve; it manages human, financial, technological, and natural resources; effective communication is essential.

Communication, which is typical of any human being (see Buzarna-Tihenea, 2019, p. 140), in an organization is needed for: exchanging information; exchanging opinions and options/giving and seeking information; organizing and clarifying ideas, making plans and proposals; making and executing decisions, evaluating results. Furthermore, team communication is essential in an organization, especially in the English language, and, for this purpose, more and more employers assess the applicant's skills in this regard (see Buzarna-Tihenea, 2021, p. 226). It depends on the number of people, a shared purpose, the interdependence of group members, the presence of regular interaction and communication. Thus, relationships and collaboration can be boosted through communication while personal and joint needs can be met.

2. Literature review

The importance of communication is stressed by Nickerson *et al.* (2017, p. 148) who propose "more integration of mobile learning resources into business communication training". Due to the new social media and technology, approaches to communication have diversified and led to investigations into multi-communication (MC) practices (see Cameron & Webster, 2011; Turner & Reinsch, 2010). Gimenez (2014, p. 2) refers to MC as "the act of holding multiple conversations at the same time", "'conversation' including not only face-to-face but also electronically mediated communication (e.g., talk over the telephone, email, and instant messaging [IM])". The same

author mentions four "key skills": "Thematic threading" ("the ability to decide what messages can be dealt with simultaneously based on their topic"; "Presence allocation" ("requires communicators to allocate their presence over a number of simultaneous communication instances"; "Media packaging" ("the ability to decide what media to combine on the basis of their real or perceived compatibility"; "Audience profiling" ("concerns ways in which similar needs of diverse audiences can be grouped together to be dealt with more efficiently") (Gimenez, 2023, p. 89).

Guy Cook (2000) refers to three levels or fields of communicative competence: grammatical competence (knowledge of the lexicon, syntax, and semantics), strategic competence (strategies for effective communication) and sociolinguistic competence (depending on the context).

The bottom line is that communication should consider the topic under discussion, providing and receiving new information, coherence and cohesion, style and register and even rhetorical effectiveness.

When teaching business communication, teachers should be reflective researchers who select and then evaluate and rethink their approaches, attitudes and methods of presenting new business subject matters to their students. Learners must become partners in the process, while teachers become mentors, coaching and guiding the students to become autonomous learners. They are expected to be more independent, to make choices, and even to initiate learning activities.

3. Research methodology

The methodology that we have selected for our study to be carried out next year will consist of an experiment devised for students in the economic field. The hypothesis could be: a reality-like context and appropriate teaching and learning methods can help students get accustomed to speaking for specific business purposes and getting ready for work life.

Both the control and the focus group will study the same texts and the same explanations will be provided to them (see Table no. 1 and Table no. 2). Nevertheless, the activities/procedures/games prepared for the focus/experimental group will be different and heavily relied on *roleplaying* by creating various business situations, or a(n online) business meeting, conference; *crossword puzzles* created by teachers or students, using dictionaries or software; *to guess the right words* when being provided with definitions; *Seize the Keywords*, based on memorization; *Scrabble*; *First Letter, Last Letter* ("The first person writes or says a word, and the next person has to come up with another word using the last letter or the last few letters of that word […] For example, the first student says "promotion." The next student takes the last letter "n" and might say "negotiation," and so on."; Playing *Twenty Questions* with business-related topics ("One student draws a card with a word on it. This can be a person, a thing, an event, or a situation. […] Then, the other students have 20 chances to ask questions and find out what word is written on the card. For more information, go to https://bridge.edu/tefl/blog/games-teaching-business-english/.

In the table below we have selected some of the most frequently used phrases/collocations that should be studied in class and practised for expressing personal opinions, describing personal experiences, asking for clarifications, expressing agreement or disagreement, summarizing the group's discussion, etc.

Table no. 1 Vocabulary for group discussion

Personal opinion	In my opinion/view; The way I look at it/see it; It seems/appears to me that;
	If you ask me; From my point of view/viewpoint; My assessment is that; I have a feeling/It's my feeling/impression; What is your judgment of/What is your view of/conclusion about/feeling about/opinion of/ impression of/ assessment of?; How do you view? What do you think about? How do you assess?
Personal experience	I had a similar experience; I faced a similar situation; I had the same problem/I was in a similar situation; Let me tell you what happened to me once in a situation like the one we're discussing.
Hypothetical situations	Let us assume/suppose/imagine/presume; Assuming that; Working on the assumption that; Given a situation in which.

Role-playing situations	Put yourself in Tom's position/place/shoes. What would you do? Suppose you were in Tom's position/place/shoes. What would you do? Imagine you are in Tom's position/place/shoes. What will you do? If you were in Tom's position/place/shoes, what would you do?
Clarification	Let me make myself clear/Let me clarify what I just said/Let me make that clearer; I'm having trouble understanding your idea. Could you please clarify it?; I don't follow you. Could you please clarify what you mean by…?
Explanation	Let me explain/Let me expand on this/Let me elaborate on this/Let me clarify this point; Can you please explain how this plan will be put into operation?; Would you expand on your idea?; Would you elaborate on your plan?; What is the justification for your request for an increase in funds?; What is the rationale behind a reorganization of the department?; How would/do you explain/interpret/account for these facts/events?
Agreement/Disagreement	Does everyone agree with Tom's proposal?; Do you go along with Tom's proposal?; Do you accept this view?; Before we go on to/move to/take up the next question/problem/point, do we all agree?; Is there anyone who disagrees?; Are we all in agreement?; I agree with Tom's proposal; I don't/can't agree with this idea; Does anyone have a different idea/opinion/viewpoint?; Can you think of another alternative?
Summary	Let me summarize; Let's review what we've discussed today; Let's briefly go over; In short,/To sum up,/In summary,/To summarize, we have agreed upon the following conclusions about; Before we go on to the next question/point/topic, let me give you a rundown of what we've covered; let's quickly review what we've talked about; let's briefly go over what we've discussed; let me summarize what we've covered; let's recapitulate our conclusions; let's see what we agree on; Let's see where we stand so far/to this point/up to this point; Let me give you a brief sketch of what I'm going to say; Let me outline for you what we're going to discuss; Let me give you an overview of what we discussed at our last meeting; Let me give you a short summary of what … Let me give you a rundown of what … Let me summarize briefly what …

Source: (Nădrag, 2011, pp. 46-56)

Teaching English for economics and especially business communication involves a complex process of practising general vocabulary, specialized terms, phrasal verbs and idioms. In Table no. 2 we provide a set of phrasal verbs used in business communication.

Table no. 2 Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
bring up	mention or introduce a subject	He often brings up that boring subject.
call back	return a telephone call	I am busy, but I will call you back as soon as possible.
call up	telephone	She will call us up when the plane lands.
carry out	complete an action	The economic crisis/pandemic prevented them to carry out the investment plan.
cross off	remove an item from a list	She fought with her colleagues and they crossed her name off their present lists.
figure out	solve a problem by reasoning	They tried to find a solution but they couldn't figure it out.
hand in	submit, turn in	The reporter finished his article and handed it in to the editor.

look over	examine	I will look over your papers and tell you my opinion on that project.
point out	call attention to	He pointed out that he would not change his decision.
put away	store in drawers	He put away all his papers in order to clean his desk.

Source: (Nădrag, Gălbează (Buzarna-Tihenea), 2018, pp. 98-102)

4. Findings

As the world's economy is becoming increasingly global, business language does not have to be dull. It should be articulate, concise and precise. We are hopeful that the outcomes of our research will stress some principles that must be obeyed, such as thinking thoroughly while communicating/conveying information, being an active listener, being brief, to the point, managing conflict, giving feedback, taking advantage of communication resources.

5. Conclusions

All the issues discussed above reveal that there are several pillars that have to be taken into consideration when planning, announcing, implementing, and communicating a piece of information or a change initiative. First, we have to remember that there is no one perfect way to communicate change and that we should start by asking ourselves what exactly change is and why it is necessary. Another important element is represented by the fact that we should know what results we want. Based on these elements, the next step is represented by the inclusion of communication strategies at the very beginning of the discussions about change. Moreover, important bits of information should be shared with employees as soon as possible. We should not forget that quantity is fine, but quality and consistency are crucial. Another pillar is represented by the employment of a variety of communication pathways and tools, in order to make sure that the information reaches its recipients. In addition, we should not confuse communication with elements such as process-visioning, chartering change teams, planning, endless Power Point presentations. Last but not least, we should provide people with more opportunities to share concerns, ask questions, and offer ideas.

6. References

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