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EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

In the work of a manager, communication through the written variety of language is extremely important. Not infrequently, it is **the proficiency of the writer that determines the effectiveness** in communicating clear information that can be understood by all. In order to be able to develop skills in this area, it is necessary to realise the basic difference between spoken and written language. The written language should be more careful and, as such, it comes with a number of rules that help to make the text more readable. This is because the written variety is devoid of extra-linguistic context: gestures, facial expressions, body posture, the situation accompanying speech – i.e. a considerable load of information.

The author of a text must choose the linguistic means in such a way that the recipient can easily understand it, since it is the **author who bears full responsibility for the communicativeness of the message**. On the basis of research in the fields of mass communication and advertising, among others, stylistics researchers have identified seven linguistic and stylistic factors that make a text 'reader-friendly'. These are:

1. clarity
2. simplicity
3. brevity
4. dynamism
5. concreteness
6. constructability
7. appropriateness.

Clarity of style

Clarity of style is based on the natural congruence of reasoning with the flow of speech. Two themes (thoughts) should be presented in a **logical order**, linked into a coherent meaningful whole; do not develop two themes simultaneously. Each theme should be developed in a separate paragraph. It is worth anticipating the recipient's intermediate reasoning links and using a vocabulary that is appropriate to the recipient's capabilities.

Simplicity of style

Syntactic complexity of sentences should be avoided, short sentences should be used and subordinate compound sentences should also be avoided, e.g. it is better to write 'He left for Chicago. There he soon met his future wife' than 'He left for Chicago where he soon met his future wife'. Constructions without negation determiners are recommended, as constructions with the morpheme 'no/not' tend to take longer for the mind to process. Furthermore, as psycholinguistics shows, positive attitudes in communication are treated as a natural state and they outweigh negative attitudes. The simplicity of style is in stark contrast to the pretentiousness resulting from the desire to coax the reader with cheap stylistic devices.



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Brevity of style

It involves avoiding elements in the text that do not have a communicative or stylistic function. An author who writes concisely is perceived as factual. Shakespeare called the ability to write in such a way – concise yet clear – ‘the Soul of Wit’. Brevity can be achieved e.g. by the procedure of omitting an ingredient from a sentence that can be reconstructed from the context. In particular, expressions empty of meaning should be avoided, e.g. it is better to write ‘in the city’ than ‘in the city area’, ‘in May’ than ‘in the month of May’, ‘today’ than ‘this very day’.

Dynamism of style

A lively text stimulates the reader's interest and imagination. Dynamism depends mainly on highlighting the action, and therefore on saturating it with personal forms of the verb and on the length of sentences, e.g. it is better to write ‘The meeting is at eight o'clock’ than ‘The meeting was scheduled for eight o'clock’. Dynamism is important especially in forms such as storytelling and when quoting someone's utterance.

Concreteness of style

Concrete is the opposite of abstract, so in order for a text to be concrete, it is necessary to avoid e.g. generalisations and to choose words that denote names, facts, numbers, dates.

Constructability of style

It is a condition of the constructable style that it is built in a precise, coherent and expressive manner. Manoeuvres that contribute to constructability are rearrangement and repetition. The sentence formation determines what we want to emphasise. Neutral formation, for example, makes it easier for the reader to understand the text because it progresses from the known to the unknown – the opening part of the sentence is the starting point and the closing part – the development. What we perceive first affects us most strongly.

Appropriateness of style

We do not write carelessly about serious matters or solemnly about trivial ones (the principle of decorum). This means, for example, that official words should not be used to describe everyday events (‘During the break he proceeded to the canteen, where he consumed broth with noodles’) or vice versa: using colloquial expressions in an official text.

Based on: A. Wolański, *Siedem kanonów stylu komunikatywnego, czyli jak pisać, by nas czytano chętnie i powszechnie*, [in:] *Polszczyzna na co dzień*, Ed. M. Bańko, Warsaw 2006, pp. 1-33.



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