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## **Cooperative Strategies in Communication with Customers in Small Russian Companies**

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This article addresses two intertwined aspects of language and national culture in communication as work. With the development of market economy and strengthening of competition good customer service has become one of the main conditions for successful business. This study examines cooperative strategies in communication of the employees, who provide services or sell goods in small Russian companies, with consumers. Examining records of the conversations revealed that the extent of cooperativeness in companies differs; it can be as minimal as very high. The results suggest that the frequency of strategies use depends on the area where the company works, corporate code, staff education and foreigners in the company management. In recorded conversations a wide variety of cooperative strategies is utilized. Quantitative analysis showed that the most common strategy is concern for customers' interests, wants and needs. Often the nature of such concern is commercial, but sometimes shop assistants attend to the customers' needs in personal, family lives, give an advice. The employees also seek agreement, utilize feedback markers, discourse prompts, solidarity in-group identity markers, emphasize approval and mitigate disapproval. Some cooperative strategies are used to prevent and to smooth a conflict, for instance, to mitigate refusal or a tactless question. The joke also harmonizes the interaction. The results indicate that the choice of cooperative strategies can be explained by both the universal rules of polite interaction (P.Grice; G. Leech; J.House & G.Kasper; P.Brown & S.Levinson; R.Watts; R.Rathmayr) and by the conventions of Russian culture with its small horizontal distance.

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