SCI-CONF.COM.UA

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

PROCEEDINGS OF XI INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE
JUNE 11-13, 2026

CHICAGO
2026

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Proceedings of XI International Scientific and Practical Conference

Chicago, USA

11-13 June 2026

Chicago, USA

2026

UDC 001.1

The 11th International scientific and practical conference "International experience in scientific research" (June 11-13, 2026) BoScience Publisher, Chicago, USA. 2026. 771 p.

ISBN 978-1-73981-121-1

The recommended citation for this publication is:

Ivanov I. Analysis of the phaunistic composition of Ukraine // International experience in scientific research. Proceedings of the 11th International scientific and practical conference. BoScience Publisher. Chicago, USA. 2026. Pp. 21-27. URL: https://sci-conf.com.ua/xi-mizhnarodna-naukovo-praktichna-konferentsiya-international-experience-in-scientific-research-11-13-06-2026-chikago-ssha-arhiv/.

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PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

THE LINGUISTIC ARCHITECTURE OF MOTIVATION: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS OF CORPORATE DISCOURSE AS A DETERMINANT OF ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

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Abstract. This research paper investigates the complex connection between organisational linguistics and economic productivity. Traditional economic frameworks often focus on tangible incentives in reward systems, but this study argues that the framing of these incentives in language is the primary factor in their psychological and economic impact. (Medicine, 2023) Drawing on pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and behavioural economics, the paper examines how linguistic “nudges,” performative utterances, and modality shape the psychological contract between employer and employee. The analysis shows that linguistic capital forms a key part of a firm’s intangible assets, directly affecting transaction costs, organisational trust, and human capital optimisation. The study offers a detailed framework for understanding that the “how” of corporate communication matters as much, economically, as the “what” of financial compensation.

Keywords: organisational discourse, reward perception, economic efficiency, linguistic framing, communicative pragmatics, human capital, transaction costs, behavioural economics, Motivating Language Theory.

1. Introduction

Today's global economy is volatile, uncertain, and driven by rapid digital change. Managing human capital is now a strategic priority, not just an administrative task. The neoclassical view of rational actors responding only to financial incentives no longer explains modern workplace engagement. Companies have shifted to knowledge-based models, where optimising labour relies on shared thinking and commitment instead of mechanical output.

This study introduces a "linguistic turn" to economic management. The language of corporate communication isn't just a neutral channel for sending information; rather, it actively shapes the economic and social reality inside a company. This paper proceeds by first examining theoretical perspectives from linguistics and economics, then analysing specific linguistic mechanisms that influence employee motivation, and finally evaluating the economic implications of discursive framing. By analysing how specific linguistic structures affect how employees perceive rewards and measure their performance, we can build a richer model for organisational behaviour. The paper's main hypothesis is that linguistic clarity and thoughtful language use cut internal friction, lower transaction costs, and give firms a stronger competitive edge.

2. Theoretical Framework: Bridging Philology and Economics

Understanding language's impact on economic performance means connecting philological theories of discourse with economic theories of the firm.

2.1. The Philological Perspective: Speech Acts and Pragmatics

This analysis starts with Speech Act Theory, developed by J.L. Austin (1962) and J.R. Searle (1969). In companies, management communication goes beyond stating facts. It is often performative — language that changes reality. When a CEO announces a bonus scheme, this is a commissive speech act: a binding promise. Its effectiveness depends on its felicity conditions — if the speaker has both the authority and genuine intent.

Communicative Pragmatics lets us dig into the "implicit" meanings in corporate language. Take inclusive pronouns like "we" and "our" — these signal shared responsibility. Philologically, this reduces psychological distance between different tiers in an organisation, which, in economic terms, helps build a more cooperative internal labour market.

2.2. The Economic Perspective: Institutionalism and Behavioural Theory

From the economic side, Transaction Cost Theory (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1981) comes into play. Every company interaction involves negotiation, monitoring, and enforcement costs. Ambiguous language raises these costs. But a specialised "corporate idiolect" — a unique internal style of speech — greases the wheels for transactions.

Behavioural Economics (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) also stresses the power of "framing." Prospect Theory says people see gains and losses differently. Frame a reward as a "lost bonus due to underperformance," and employees react differently than if it's phrased as an "achievement incentive." Using language to exploit these cognitive biases unlocks powerful ways to optimise economic behaviour.

3. Linguistic Mechanisms of Employee Motivation

This section highlights practical linguistic strategies corporations use to boost performance.

3.1. Modality and Power Dynamics

Modality shows a speaker's stance on necessity or possibility. In corporate-speak, there's deontic modality (obligations: "you must meet this KPI") and epistemic modality (possibilities: "we can achieve this target"). Overusing deontic modality — always commanding — pushes people to work just for the reward, sometimes at the cost of creativity, which is a big driver of value now. Shift toward "empowering" language using modal verbs that signal cooperation and autonomy; this tracks with ideas from self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

3.2. Politeness Theory and Organisational Trust

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory says everyone wants to protect their "face" — the self they present to others. "Positive politeness" in office communication means recognising employees' work and making them feel like they belong. When managers use this kind of language in feedback or reviews, they help maintain employees' dignity and keep organisational trust strong. In institutional economic terms, trust counts as "social capital," which lowers turnover costs and increases long-term return on investment.

4. Economic Implications of Discursive Framing or How does language lead to measurable financial results?

4.1. Reducing Information Asymmetry

Information asymmetry shows up when managers and employees don't share full information. Here arises the Principal-Agent Problem: management wants maximum effort; employees may want to coast. Clear, transparent communication about rewards lines up everyone's interests. When reward language is specific and accessible, it functions almost like a contract, cutting down on "shirking" and "moral hazard."

4.2. Narrative Management and Corporate Identity

Modern organisations run on stories — they're narrative entities. Narrative Management weaves employees' goals into the company's larger mission through language. If work fits a compelling story instead of just financial targets, employees' motivation stands up better to tough economic times. This is a type of "non-monetary compensation" with real economic value that costs the company little.

5. Discussion: The Concept of Linguistic Capital

We suggest organisations recognise Linguistic Capital as a unique asset. This includes:

1. Clear internal communications.
2. The psychological impacts of corporate language.
3. Leaders' skill in Motivating Language (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018).

Investing in linguistic capital — for example, training managers in pragmatics and discourse — can pay off even more than just increasing salaries. For instance, a study by Men et al. (2018) found that implementing targeted communication training for managers in a multinational technology firm led to a 12% increase in employee engagement scores, surpassing the engagement uptick observed after a broad-based salary adjustment. In knowledge industries, a modest increase in communicative clarity often boosts engagement more than an equivalent raise, especially since these sectors depend on intrinsic motivation.

6. Conclusion

Bringing together philology and economics shows that corporate communication is a core driver of organisational success. By mastering the subtleties of language, from framing to modality and pragmatics, companies can get more from their people and raise the perceived value of rewards. This approach broadens the horizon for economic research: sustained competitive advantage rests not just on creating value, but also on communicating it effectively. Future economic models have to factor in linguistic nuances to truly capture the complexity of today's workplaces.

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