

Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Awareness in Business English Negotiation Teaching of Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract—With the development of the economy, there have been more and more international business exchanges and thus the importance of English has become prominent. The international business activities have become more frequent in the context of the current global economic integration, so it is important for the students to understand the multiculturalism of other countries and have the ability to communicate with people from different regions. As a compulsory course for Business English majors in higher vocational colleges (HVC), business English negotiation aims to cultivate the students to be the inter-disciplinary talents who can not only be proficient in English but also have a good knowledge about how to do international business. Business English majors in HVC are required to know the cultural differences among different countries and master the negotiation knowledge, business knowledge as well as linguistic knowledge that will be used in the negotiation of international trade. Therefore, the cultivation of students' intercultural awareness should be valued in the classroom teaching of business English negotiation.

Keywords—*intercultural communication awareness; business English negotiation; teaching*

I. INTRODUCTION

With the promotion and the further development of the market economy, some enterprises and organizations in China have had more and more international business activities. Social development has brought people together, and the current international situation has provided a broader field for business negotiations. Business negotiations play an extremely important role in international business activities. Therefore, the question of how to conduct efficient intercultural business negotiations should be valued. The course of business English negotiation in HVC requires the students to master the important skills that are used in international business negotiations, and know the impact of cultural differences on international business negotiations. Hence special attention should be paid to the cultivation of the students' intercultural awareness in the teaching.

II. CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS

At present, there are more than 400 kinds of cultures in the world and people's understanding of culture is not the same. One view is that as the development of globalization, people's ideas, habits and lifestyles will be similar to each other, and all cultural differences will be integrated, dissolved, and finally disappeared. Another view is that cultural differences exist objectively. The unique traditions and customs of a country shape the unique attitudes and behaviors of the people. Maybe one nation is 99% similar to another, but there is a 1% difference. This 1% difference determines that there is another nation, and it determines the cultural differences and cultural conflicts between the two nations. National culture can explain many differences between negotiators from different countries in attitudes and behaviors in international business negotiations. These cultural differences and cultural conflicts are mainly reflected in their language, non-verbal communication, religion, time concept, political environment, personality, negotiation style, negotiation methods, negotiation strategies and tactics.

A. Differences in Political Environment

The political environment mainly includes social systems, political beliefs, national ideology and political systems. Due to the differences in history, society, cultural conditions and political environment, China's administrative system is quite different from that of the western countries. China implements the socialist system, while the western countries implement the capitalist system, which directly leads to the large differences in the political environment between China and the West. The differences in the political environment and the relationship between the countries where the two parties are negotiating will directly affect the outcome of international business negotiations. If the relations between the two countries are good during the negotiations, then they can be honest with each other and the disputes will be easier to resolve. On the contrary, the two sides will be more restricted in the negotiation process. It is more difficult and less likely for the two parties to come to an agreement.

B. Different Ways of Communication

Cultural communication is the communication among people under different cultural backgrounds, and communication is the key to business negotiation. The main categories of communication are verbal communication and non-verbal communication. The language of a country reflects the ideological character of its culture. Language runs through the whole process of the business negotiation, and the successful use of language affects the success or failure of negotiation to a large extent. Language art is a bridge to the success of negotiations. In business negotiations, the proper use of language art can make the other party more inclined to listen to you. Moreover, the sweet words can also ease tension and form a peaceful atmosphere, which contributes to the success of the negotiations. In business negotiation, language art is an effective tool to express one's ideas and persuade others, and it is also the key to handling interpersonal relationships in negotiations. The changes in interpersonal relationships between the two parties are mainly reflected through language communication. Business negotiation is essentially a process in which negotiators use language to convey ideas, exchange opinions, and ultimately persuade each other. Therefore, language plays an important role in business negotiations. Non-verbal behavior is an act that transcends language and is considered meaningful in business negotiations, including body language, clothing, physical contact, time concepts etc. They have different meanings in different cultures. A gesture, behavior, or even clothing may have completely different meanings because of different cultures, environments, and occasions so that the two parties cannot communicate with each other during the negotiation. For example, the Chinese believe that staring at someone shows disrespect, while Americans think that it is a way to show respect.

Therefore, we must not only pay attention to the communication methods, but also overcome cultural barriers to understand the non-verbal behaviors of people in different countries in business negotiations.

C. Different Time Concepts

Due to the cultural differences of different countries, people in different cultures have different time concepts. In international business negotiations, negotiators also have many differences in the control of the time limit for negotiations. For Asians, they usually consider the time limit in terms of the negotiation circumstances. The Chinese would think about vested interests and hidden interests of long-term cooperation first, and they will spend time in establishing a harmonious atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust, then they will promote the success of the negotiation. While the Americans have a strong sense of time, they cherish the time and take it seriously. They are used to dividing the tasks into small ones and then complete them one by one. In the process of business negotiation, they will move on to substantive negotiations after five or six minutes of simple courtesy. According to the characteristics of various national cultures, scholars divide the time utilization methods into the multiple time utilization method

and the single time utilization method. People in many high-context countries adopt multiple time utilization methods. For example, people in the Middle East and Latin America use this method more often, and they focus on the multiple use of time. Yet people in low-context countries prefer single time utilization method such as Germans, North Americans, etc. They pursue speed and efficiency, have a strong sense of competition, and focus on spending special time on special things. The above classification of time concept shows the dramatic difference between the East and the West. Different societies have different understandings and utilization methods of time, which restricts people's behavior patterns.

D. Different Personalities and Negotiation Styles

Due to different social cultures and religious ethics, there is a big difference between Chinese and Western people in the personalities and negotiations styles. Chinese are introverted, modest, patient and conservative. Westerners, especially Americans, are extroverted, straightforward, and behave in a way that reflects their emotions. In the negotiations, Chinese often use subtle hints to make substantive requests, and do not reject the other party directly. They believe that a flat refusal will make people embarrassed and humiliated, and may damage the mutual relationships. They think highly of the friendship and can make an exception in the favor of old friends. While Westerners, especially Americans, are full of energy and more straightforward when presenting opinions and expressing their attitudes. Moreover, they pay more attention to the practical benefits and attach great importance to the legality and compliance rate of the contract. Once the contract is signed, it cannot be breached. Otherwise the compensation and liquidated damages must be paid strictly in accordance with the breach clause of the contract. There is no room for further negotiation. The above differences in personalities and the negotiation styles are actually a matter of cultural differences.

III. SIGNIFICANCE IN THE CULTIVATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AWARENESS

Intercultural communication is one of the main characteristics against the background of economic globalization. The reason is that there are obvious differences in business habits, consumer psychology, and business values formed by people in different economic, political, and cultural environments. All these issues should be considered comprehensively to improve the success rate of transactions in foreign-related activities. As for the significance of cultivating intercultural communication awareness, it can be specified as follows:

First, the impact of cultural exchanges on foreign exchange activities is more obvious. Since China's accession to the WTO, both economic status and political status have been greatly improved. China has participated in many international activities, such as the APEC, the Olympic Games and the World Expo held in recent years. The key to the success of these activities is the benefit from foreign exchange activities. Participation in these activities requires contact with people from different cultural backgrounds, and

participants should have intercultural awareness, otherwise it is likely to lead to failure. Therefore, intercultural communication can play a prominent role in foreign exchange activities.

Second, culture can play a role of "lubricant" in business activities. Taking business negotiation as an example, since the two sides of the negotiation come from different cultural backgrounds, if they do not understand the other culture, they will make mistakes in minor details. It is well known that Chinese people are greatly influenced by the Han culture. They emphasize the "big first and then small" as the negotiation method, and they focus on the big picture. Americans tend to negotiate substantive issues directly, and they don't spend much time on non-principal issues. If these cultural characteristics can be mastered in the negotiations, the success rate of negotiations can be improved.

Third, intercultural awareness is the one that business English majors in HVC must have. Taking the recruitment information in the current social enterprise as an example, the applicants are usually required to have a certain level of English and to ensure strong communication ability. Business English majors in HVC should have the ability to use the expertise they learned to solve practical problems in international business negotiations. The cultivation of intercultural communication is not only an important requirement for satisfying business activities, but also a concrete embodiment of the individual comprehensive quality of the students.

IV. CULTIVATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AWARENESS IN TEACHING

The course of business English negotiation fosters the students' capability in business English negotiation, trains their English communication abilities and cultivates students' understanding of different cultures. Intercultural issues are important because in international business negotiations, understanding the cultural traditions and backgrounds of the opponents can achieve the advantages of the negotiation. Moreover, this course is conducive to students to understand the differences between different cultures, strengthen the critical thinking ability, and improve their humanistic quality. To this end, teachers can adopt flexible and diverse teaching methods.

First, teachers can inspire students' curiosity and interest in cultural differences. When introducing the theory of intercultural differences, teachers can add a large amount of materials on the basis of textbooks, such as texts, figures, charts, etc., so that students can have a strong perceptual understanding of the theory, and they can be familiar with the influence of cultural differences on international business negotiation.

Second, teachers should teach students in accordance of their aptitude and combine the teaching with students' activities. For example, teachers can provide students with typical cases to make an analysis, and ask them to discuss the causes and solutions of these cases after group discussion. Teachers can also make full use of multimedia to broadcast some negotiation videos in a targeted manner to improve

students' theoretical and practical skills in intercultural aspects.

Third, teachers can design negotiation activities and require students to conduct simulated negotiations to test their mastery of the knowledge they have acquired in class and their ability to express themselves in English. Teachers can also encourage students to apply the business knowledge and business practices they learned in the classroom.

Fourth, teachers should cultivate students' critical and innovative thinking. For different intercultural theories, heuristic and argumentative teaching methods, such as questioning, discussion, and debate, can be adopted to strengthen students' understanding of different cultures. The views on textbooks and intercultural theories should not be accepted rigidly, because the actual situation of cultural differences and business negotiation strategies will change with the development of the times.

V. CONCLUSION

The same behavior may have very different meanings in different cultural contexts. Under the premise of improving the quality of their own business culture, teachers should constantly infiltrate the awareness of business culture to enhance students' intercultural communication skills, and train students to become compound business English talents that conform to the development of the times.

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