

Pragmatic Competence Study on Students of Business English Major

Taking the Course of "International Business Negotiation" as an Example

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ABSTRACT

The cultivation of pragmatic strategies and abilities is the fundamental purpose of modern foreign language teaching. For students of Business English major, it is necessary to have professional knowledge of English, but it is also very important to develop pragmatic strategies and abilities. From pragmatic perspective and based on the framework of pragmatic competence theory, this study takes the course of "International Business Negotiation" as an example, and 44 students in 2018 School-enterprise Cooperative Class of Business English major in School of Foreign Languages of Taishan University are selected (these students learned "International Business Negotiation" course in the second semester of Grade Two) to finish an online text negotiation about a sales instance, and these text negotiations constitute the corpus. And the study mainly interprets and analyses students' pragmatic competence and levels in negotiation talks, and explores effective pragmatic strategies and skills in "International Business Negotiation".

Keywords: pragmatic principles, "International Business Negotiation", Business English major

I. INTRODUCTION

Adopting internet to carry out "International Business Negotiation" is the demand of the age. Since the emergence of "Internet +" in 2012, it has aroused wide concern from the whole society. We must use the thinking mode of the internet to deeply integrate the innovative achievements into various economic and social fields, and form a new form of economic development with the internet as the infrastructure and implementation tool. As an ordinary teacher who has enterprise experience and is in the front line of higher education, no matter from the actual work situation of enterprises or from the observation of graduates, the author deeply felt the surging tide of the internet, so teachers should learn to reasonably use of the internet means to deal with huge amounts of internet resources, such as large data computing platform, integration of existing resources, real scenario simulation, real-time interaction, problems leading, process inspection, data analysis, so as to find the students' weak and demanding points, stimulate their interest, improve the students' sense of presence and engagement, realize the

subjectivity of the students, improve the efficiency and effect of "International Business Negotiation", have a deep understanding and reasonable grasping of enterprise present situation and the trend of the demand for talent, and to cultivate the real talents for the society.

"International Business Negotiation" has strong applicability and practicality, and it is of great guiding significance to study it. "International Business Negotiation" is a cross-cultural business communication based on English, which emphasizes more on language output function and integrates relevant knowledge in sociology, management, linguistics, psychology, economics, marketing, business etiquette and other fields. However, the essence of language courses is not highlighted in the current "International Business Negotiation" class, which is more trapped in the dilemma of explaining business terms. So, according to the current and future economic environment and the actual demand of the enterprise, students should not only master the basic principles of "International Business Negotiation" and the basic theory, but also reasonably use the internet means to collect and organize the necessary pragmatic knowledge, integrate various pragmatic methods and strategies, effectively use information statement and language exchanges to solve real business problems,

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and communicate with people of different cultures and different backgrounds through constant training.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Good pragmatic competence is the fundamental purpose of foreign language learning, and it is of great necessity to study pragmatic competence in "International Business Negotiation". Pragmatics studies the proper expression and accurate understanding of utterance meaning in different contexts, and seeks for and establishes the basic principles and criteria for the proper expression and accurate understanding of utterance meaning in communication. With the deepening of the study, the perspective and space of pragmatics research are deepening, that is, the methods and principles of pragmatics are not only widely applied to the core disciplines of linguistics, but also widely applied to all fields related to the understanding of discourse, such as literature, rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and so on. Due to the importance of pragmatic competence, many domestic scholars have made a lot of meaningful investigations on different subjects: such as He Ziranian, Yan Zhuang (1986), Wang Dexing (1990), and Hong Gang (1991), etc. International business English negotiation is a process of communication and psychological game based on speech and conversation in real context. In business English negotiation, negotiators often use complex and unnatural speech act, such as polling, request, persuasion, warning, rejection, agreement, suggestion, and so on, the selection, use and understanding of these speech acts will be influenced by psychology, environment and cross-cultural factors, thus increasing the difficulty outside of the business negotiations to both sides. Due to the particularity of business English major students in the future, the possession of the pragmatic competence determines the success or failure of cross-cultural communication, so the pragmatic competence investigation to them is necessary. This paper will study the communication skills used in "International Business Negotiation" from the perspective of pragmatics, and discuss how to appropriately use the pragmatic strategies and techniques of cooperation, relevance, politeness, euphemism, vague language and humor in "International Business Negotiation".

III. A SURVEY OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

From the perspective of pragmatics, this study will take the pragmatic competence theory as the framework to study the communication skills used in "International Business Negotiation". It mainly interprets and analyses students' pragmatic competence and levels in the online text negotiation, and explore the effective pragmatic strategies and skills in "International Business Negotiation". In order to find a more realistic corpus, a negotiation case is set up in this research: Chinese

(Haier) Company sells 50,000 washing machines to foreign (Best Buy) Company at a price of \$180-\$190 per unit. Please start negotiations on the above contents.

The text negotiation contents of 44 students in 2018 School-enterprise Cooperative Class of Business English major in School of Foreign Languages of Taishan University were selected as the research objects. The 44 students finished the online text negotiation in pairs, with no less than 25 conversation rounds per person, and a total of more than 1,100 conversation rounds. Through text analysis, the common pragmatic failure in "International Business Negotiation" of the students in Business English majors and the causes of errors will be clear. Through specific examples, the reasonable strategies and skills of the cooperative principle, politeness principle, relevance principle, euphemism, vague languages and humor in "International Business Negotiation" can be explored, so as to establish the reasonable teaching ideas and teaching methods in the future business negotiation teaching, and provide guidance for the effective and reasonable negotiation to the students in the future job.

IV. STUDY OF PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES IN "INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS NEGOTIATION"

According to the text analysis results, students have certain communication skills in the negotiation process, and can basically avoid grammatical and lexical mistakes. In the text conversation of "International Business Negotiation", although they can express the meaning of relevance, politeness, conciseness and orderliness, they are still deficient in accurate expression. It can be seen that, students majoring in Business English cannot master pragmatic strategies well, and their pragmatic knowledge is relatively deficient. This study will discuss effective pragmatic strategies in "International Business Negotiation" from the following aspects by combining students' negotiation texts.

A. *Relevance principle*

Relevance theory holds that, any explicit communicative activity means that the activity has the best relevance. In terms of communication, what both sides say must be related to the whole topic and what the other side says before; It is the information that is related to each other that makes people understand the speaker's intention, that's the relevance principle. In order to achieve the efficiency of business negotiation, what the negotiator says must be related to the whole topic and what the other side says before. During the negotiation, the failure to achieve the maximum relevance of words is likely to lead to the failure of business negotiation. For example, in the following price negotiation between the two parties, the buyer wants to reduce the unit price by taking advantage of the large quantity ordered by himself, while the seller

talks about the delivery date of the product. Obviously, the seller's answer is not relevant to the topic.

Buyer: If we place our order in excess of five thousand units. What discount on the unit price could we receive?

Seller: Before I answer that, could you tell me what you were thinking about in terms of delivery dates?

B. Cooperative principle

In all communication activities, in order to achieve a specific purpose, there is a tacit understanding between the speaker and the listener, that is a principle to be observed by both parties, and this principle is called the cooperative principle of conversation (Cooperative Principle) by The American philosopher Grice. In other words, in order to ensure the smooth progress of the conversation, both parties must abide by the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Like other verbal communication, business negotiation is always a cooperative conversation. The speaker and the listener can understand each other and cooperate with each other to promote the success of verbal communication. And mutual understanding between the two parties is the premise and foundation of the principle of cooperation. Otherwise, the expected interactive purpose is difficult to achieve. The so-called maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner mean that, what is said should meet the amount of information required in communication to ensure the authenticity of the spoken words, be relevant to the topic of dialogue, avoid obscurity and ambiguity, and try to be concise and orderly. From the following examples, we can see a violation of the principle of cooperation. If the speaker doesn't mean the meaning conveyed in his words, such a situation should be avoided.

Example 1: The buyer gives the price of the product and asks for the consent of the seller, but the seller's answer is obviously an irrelevant answer, and it breaks the correlation criterion in the principle of cooperation.

Buyer: Our proposal is \$180 per unit price. If possible, we would like to continue our discussions with you and reach an agreement.

Seller: Here, Miss Rebecca, please try the tea I've prepared for you. It's a carefully prepared drink. I hope you'll like it.

Example 2: The buyer proposes to extend the product warranty period, but the seller fails to give a clear answer, and it breaks the mode criterion in the principle of cooperation.

Buyer: I understand that your products have a one-year warranty period. Can we extend the warranty period of our products to three years if we cooperate for a long time?

Seller: Well, madam, first of all, I explained to you that the quality of our products is guaranteed and the possibility of problems after sale is very small.

C. Euphemistic strategy

That means, to express unpleasant or disrespectful facts in the form of hints and vague words in order to achieve a euphemistic method of slurred rhetoric. In business negotiations, it is inevitable to encounter unfriendly, inappropriate or controversial statements. Euphemism can be adopted to avoid confrontation. In the following example, example 1, the buyer makes a price request on the controversial topic of the seller's price, but the seller refuses directly, which is obviously unpleasant. In example 2, according to the purchase quantity of the buyer, the seller gives the price adjustment, although the buyer is dissatisfied with the price, he sticks to his position by adopting the principle of euphemism to avoid conflicts.

Example 1:

Buyer: We are glad to see that you have reduced your price by \$2. We still can't accept the price of \$188. Well, we can make a deal at \$185 based on the prices of similar washing machines. Is that ok with you?

Seller: We firmly refuse to accept your offer of \$185.

Example 2:

Seller: Please wait a moment. For the order quantity of 10000 units, we can offer you 195 dollars for a washing machine, which is the biggest discount we can offer at present. You know, our selling price is \$200 a set.

Buyer: We have heard about your company's brand. However, we understand that the price of other companies' washing machines similar to model 086 is only 185 US dollars.

D. Politeness principle

Six politeness strategies, including appropriateness, generosity, praise, humility, agreement, and compassion, explain some of the problems that cooperative principles cannot explain in practical contexts. In international business English negotiation, in order to ensure the smooth progress of the negotiation, both parties must abide by the pragmatic politeness strategy, and at the same time, take the factor of "degree" into consideration and use the politeness strategy appropriately.

Example 1: The buyer made a request for cooperation on some products, but the seller's answer was too direct and did not follow the principle of politeness, which was not conducive to the continuation of the negotiation.

Buyer: Can we choose some of these products in this cooperation?

Seller: It is a pity that our cooperation is limited to the negotiation of traditional washing machines.

Example 2: The buyer suggested to the seller that the overseas market of new products could be expanded through this cooperation. Although the seller refused, he first expressed his gratitude to the buyer, which was conducive to the continuation of friendly negotiations.

Buyer: This is a very good opportunity to expand the overseas market of new intelligent washing machines. Why not give it a try?

Seller: Thank you very much for your liking, but we have no plans to expand this model to overseas markets at present.

E. Humorous strategy

Vivid and humorous words can create a friendly conversation atmosphere. In the serious business English negotiation, humorous strategy can ease the tense atmosphere and make the agreement easier to reach. In the following example, the buyer defused the sharp question of price with humor.

Seller: This washing machine is our latest product. For this model of washing machine, we offer you a unit price of \$190 CIF San Francisco.

Buyer: Friend, are you kidding us? Your price is really too high.

F. Vague strategy

It is a strategy in which the central meaning of a language is clear but the limits are uncertain. In business English negotiation, vague language strategy plays a lot of positive roles, such as improving the flexibility of communication to improve the efficiency of negotiation, enhancing communication skills to leave speech space for the speaker himself, and so on. In the conversation below, the buyer comes up with various reasons to persuade the seller to make a bargain, but the seller responds with some, a vague phrase that leaves room for his words.

Buyer: The price of washing machines on the market is generally not high, and there are many alternatives, if our cost is too high, the corresponding price will be raised, then we cannot guarantee the sale of washing machines. And we also asked other companies about the prices of washing machines.

Seller: The quality of washing machines on the market is uneven. Although some companies are relatively cheap, they cannot guarantee their quality.

V. CONCLUSION

By analyzing the negotiation process of students in the specific context of "International Business

Negotiation", it can be seen that, appropriate pragmatic strategies are very practical in successful "International Business Negotiation". The analysis of pragmatic strategies in "International Business Negotiation" provides a directional guidance for pragmatics theory applying in business English negotiation, and helps to establish a reasonable teaching idea and method in future business negotiation teaching. At the same time, this study is also a working process-oriented research method, which provides practical guidance for students to conduct efficient and reasonable negotiation in their future job.

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