



高等院校“十三五”规划教材

English

商务英语 语用学教程

王静 编著



 南京大学出版社



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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

商务英语语用学教程 / 王静编著. — 南京: 南京大学出版社, 2016. 7

高等院校“十三五”规划教材

ISBN 978-7-305-16581-8

I. ①商… II. ①王… III. ①商务—英语—语用学—高等学校—教材 IV. ①H31

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2016)第 050608 号

出版发行 南京大学出版社
社 址 南京市汉口路 22 号 邮 编 210093
出 版 人 金鑫荣
丛 书 名 高等院校“十三五”规划教材
书 名 商务英语语用学教程
编 著 王 静
责任编辑 胡向春 董 颖 编辑热线 025-83597087
照 排 南京理工大学资产经营有限公司
印 刷 宜兴市盛世文化印刷有限公司
开 本 787×1092 1/16 印张 14.25 字数 353 千
版 次 2016 年 7 月第 1 版 2016 年 7 月第 1 次印刷
ISBN 978-7-305-16581-8
定 价 30.00 元
网 址: <http://www.njupco.com>
官方微博: <http://weibo.com/njupco>
微信服务号: njyuyexue
销售咨询热线: (025)83594756

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前 言

初次接触语用学源于硕士期间的《语用学》课堂,由于当时学习兴趣不完全在此,唯留有印象的是格莱斯的合作原则和利奇的礼貌原则。毕业后于2006年开始给英语专业本科学生讲授《英语语言学概论》课程,其中有一章题为《语用学》,主要涉及语用学的定义、研究内容、起源、发展、言语行为理论和合作原则。教学相长,开始对语用学产生兴趣。2014年给商务英语专业大三学生开设专业选修课《语用学》。作为老师,给学生一杯水,自己得有一桶水。惶恐之至,利用假期通读了何自然先生的《语用学概论》、何兆熊先生的《新编语用学概要》和Peccei的《语用学》。遴选教材时对比阅读了陈新仁教授的《新编语用学教程》和何伟等编著的《英语语用学教程》,终对语用学学科的理论框架和研究现状有了大致了解。2007年,对外经济贸易大学经教育部批准率先设立本科商务英语专业,商务英语专业建设和发展随即成为研究热点。2014年5月,中国首届商务英语语言学研讨会在对外经济贸易大学召开,与会专家学者围绕商务英语语言学理论研究的的不同方向进行了深入探讨,这对商务英语学科的发展必将产生深远影响。作为从事语言学和语用学课程教学的一线教师,编者一直在想:是否可以尝试编写一本适合商务英语专业的语用学教材,不仅包含语用学相关理论介绍,更有商务领域的实践内容。如此既能提高语言学课程的实用性,又能为各项商务专业技能提供理论支撑,使学生对所学商务技能不仅知其然,更知其所以然。这是本教程编写的主要目的。

本教程作为商务英语语用学的入门教材,考虑到读者对象的层次和阅读目的,编者尽量采用通俗易懂的语言对语用学的主要理论和要点进行简单、入门式的介绍,侧重将语用理论应用于商务实践以激发读者深入学习语用学的兴趣,起“抛砖引玉”之作用。商务实践方面,主要选取了商务信函、商务谈判、商务翻译、商务广告和商务合同等领域。语用学作为解释和研究语言现象的理



论,不仅可用于商务实践,也常出现在对影视文学作品的分析研究中。为了照顾不同的读者对象,兼顾不同的阅读目的,每章均加入此部分实践分析内容。

全书共十章,分别为导论、言语行为理论、合作原则、礼貌原则、关联理论、顺应论、指示语、前提、会话分析和结论等。每章由案例、理论介绍、实际应用(I、II)、课后练习和进一步阅读书目五部分组成。鉴于模糊语言在商务英语中频繁出现的事实,本教程在结论部分从合作原则、礼貌原则、关联理论和顺应论四个角度分别对商务英语谈判、商务英语信函和商务英语合同等领域模糊语言的运用进行了简要解析。

本书的读者对象为英语或商务英语专业本专科学生、语用学爱好者、商务英语从业人员和爱好商务英语的人士。本书还可作为非英语专业学生的英语拓展类课程参考教材。

教材付梓之际,感谢语用学启蒙老师四川外国语大学郎天万教授;感谢导师肖肃教授,老师严谨的治学风格和谦和的为人之道一直指导着我努力前行;感谢南京大学出版社以及其他为本书的审定、校对和出版提供无私帮助的编辑老师们。

由于时间仓促,加之编者自身能力所限,书中难免有疏漏和不足之处,恳请广大读者、同行学者和专家批评指正。

编者

2016年3月

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Chapter One

Introduction



A case

If someone says “Congratulations!”, how would linguists in different areas of linguistic study, such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics deal with it? And if this is what someone says to you, what would be your response?

1.1 A brief history of pragmatics

With the publication of *Course in General Linguistics*, F. de Saussure (1857—1913), Father of Modern Linguistics, put forward several distinctions in linguistic study, one of which is *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* refers to the abstract linguistic system shared by all the members of a speech community, and *parole* refers to the realization of *langue* in actual use. Therefore, *langue* is abstract and relatively stable, while *parole*, the concrete use of the conventions in language is concrete and varies from person to person, from situation to situation. In his opinion, *parole* is simply a mass of linguistic facts, too varied and confusing for systematic investigation, thus what linguists should do is to abstract *langue* from *parole*. This opinion lays down the key note for modern linguistic studies, i.e. language should be studied as a self-contained, intrinsic system; any serious study of language cannot afford to investigate language use and extra-linguistic factors should not be included.

Therefore, for more than half a century this has been the dominant tradition of linguistic study. In the late 1950s, Chomsky put forward another distinction, *competence* and *performance*, which is similar to Saussure's *langue* and *parole*, although Chomsky



took a psychological view while Saussure's perspective is sociological. This became the spirit of traditional phonology in its study of speech sounds, traditional syntax's study of sentences, and traditional semantics' study of meaning. In a word, all the linguistic elements, such as speech sounds, words and sentences, together with meaning, were studied in isolation from language use.

But gradually linguists found that it would be impossible to give an adequate description of meaning if language use is left unconsidered. Thus context walked into linguistic study and became the key factor in the study of meaning. In this process (roughly from 1930 to 1960), J. R. Firth, the leading British linguist during that period of time, should not be neglected. Influenced by the works of Malinowski, a Polish anthropologist, and of Wittgenstein, a German philosopher, Firth held the view that "We shall know a word by the company it keeps," and that "By regarding words as acts, events, habits, we limit our inquiry to what is objective in the group life of our fellows." For example, the meaning of the word *dispatch* in the sentence "They received a dispatch." cannot be determined unless the context in which the sentence occurs is restored. Once the notion of context is taken into consideration, the study of meaning shifted from traditional semantics to pragmatics.

Although pragmatics is generally considered as a branch of linguistics, we cannot ignore the contribution of philosophers in its development, and some philosophers actually related themselves closely to the study of language. In the late 1950s, John Austin, a British philosopher, put forward Speech Act Theory, which later became the core of pragmatic study. H. P. Grice, another philosopher, contributed a lot in the area of pragmatics. His Cooperative Principle plays a very important role in analyzing human beings' linguistic communication.

For the past thirty-odd years, there has been an ever-growing interest in pragmatics. The International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) has been in existence for more than twenty years, and has organized several international conferences. Two international journals, *Journal of Pragmatics* since 1977 and *Pragmatics* since 1991, are published currently. Many other publications, including textbooks and reference books as well as a *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics* (1998), have been in circulation. Besides, a large number of working papers, theses, and dissertations have appeared. In a word, pragmatics has become a discipline in its own right, and it is here to stay. Before we finish this section, it's very necessary to mention other disciplines which have participated in the study of pragmatics, contributing to the interdisciplinary branches of pragmatics. Sociology and psychology are the two typical disciplines.

Language, as a social phenomenon, is sure to arouse the interest of sociologists. In the 1960s and 1970s, the American sociologists, namely, H. Sacks, E. A. Schegloff and



G. Jefferson took a sociological view to the study of our everyday conversations, attempting to find out the common rules in organizing natural conversations. Since the 1980s, there has occurred a new trend in pragmatic study, a psychological shift. It has become popular to explain linguistic events in the realm of cognitive and mental activities, which leads to the development of relevance theory in pragmatics.

1.2 Definitions of pragmatics

The term *pragmatics* (pragma is a Latin root, which means act or action) was first introduced by Charles Morris in his book *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*. In this book, Morris referred to pragmatics as one of the three branches of semiotics (the other two are syntax and semantics). While syntax deals with the relations between linguistic signs and other signs of the language and semantics with the relations between linguistic signs and objects that are signified, pragmatics addresses the relations of linguistic signs to persons by whom they are used and understood. In his opinion, pragmatics is the study of “all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs” (Morris, 1971). Actually, this is a very broad view towards pragmatics because it is too inclusive to be of much use.

Mey (2001: 6) defines pragmatics as the study of “the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society”. This is another broad definition of pragmatics since “the conditions of society” seems to be too general a concept to be manageable.

When making a distinction between semantics and pragmatics, Davis (1991: 11) points out that “Pragmatics will have as its domain speakers’ communicative intentions, the uses of language that require such intentions, and the strategies that hearers employ to determine what these intentions and acts are, so that they can understand what the speaker intends to communicate.” From this, we can see that Davis emphasizes a lot the speaker’s communicative intentions and how to reach that.

A consistent definition with this can be found in Yule’s *Pragmatics* (2000: 3), in which pragmatics is defined as “the study of speaker meaning, the study of contextual meaning, the study of how more gets communicated than is said, and the study of the expression of relative distance”. The first area focuses on what the speaker really means (utterance meaning) rather than what the words or phrases mean in the sentence (sentence meaning). The second involves the interpretation of the speaker’s meaning in a particular context and how context influences what the speaker says. The third explores how the hearer or reader makes inferences about what is said in order to arrive at the speaker’s intention. The last area investigates how the physical, social or psychological distance



between the speaker and the hearer influences their communication, that is to say, based on how close the relationship is between the speaker and the hearer, the speaker will determine how much needs to be said and how much can be left unsaid. This definition is very clear and specific, though it is a little wordy.

At this point Grundy's explanation of pragmatics comes into play, which is shorter, but clearer. According to Grundy (2000: 3), "Pragmatics is about explaining how we produce and understand... everyday but apparently rather peculiar uses of language." This is given in a summary of what pragmatics does after the analysis of a few examples. Based on all the above mentioned definitions, we can safely give a definition of pragmatics as: **Pragmatics studies how the speaker produces and how the hearer understands what is said in a certain context of language use.** This definition tells us the three key factors in a complete linguistic communication: the speaker, the hearer and the context, which combines the former two closely together.

1.3 Two basic notions in pragmatic study

Before we go into a thorough study of pragmatics, it is of particular necessity for us to make clear the following two notions as: component vs. perspective and the scope of pragmatic study.

1.3.1 Component vs. perspective

Although philosophical inquiry never ceases, pragmatics is increasingly seen as a linguistic enterprise. Despite this common understanding, two radically different views co-exist regarding whether pragmatics constitutes a separate core branch of linguistics as opposed to phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics or it offers a perspective to the study of (every layer of) language such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics etc. This disparity leads to two camps, the Anglo-American tradition and the European continental tradition.

Scholars like Stephen Levinson, Geoffrey Leech, Georgia Green, Jenny Thomas, Peter Grundy, and the like adopt the component view. That is, they regard pragmatics as a branch of linguistics which studies meaning in the situation of language use. The European continental tradition, although less popular, is also highly influential in the world of pragmatics. Scholars like Hartmut Haberland, Jacob Mey, Jef Verschueren, etc. hold the view that pragmatics is concerned with people's use of language as a form of behavior or social action. Typically, Jef Verschueren defines pragmatics as "a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behavior" (Verschueren, 1999: 7). This serves as the representative of



the perspective view. According to this, pragmatics jumps out of the linguistic pie and stands outside to watch what is happening inside.

In a word, there are two views about pragmatic theory, the component view and the perspective view. Can we say they contradict each other? The answer is definitely no. Since people can always allow all flowers to bloom together, why bother the two views in pragmatics?

1.3.2 The scope of pragmatics

As is mentioned above, in the study of pragmatics two major traditions have been recognized; the Anglo-American tradition and the European continental tradition. The former lays much emphasis on the study of specific language phenomena while the latter does not identify pragmatics with a specific unit of analysis, but regards pragmatics as a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective to the study of language use. Within the Anglo-American tradition, pragmatics studies such topics as deixis, speech acts, indirect language, structure of conversation, politeness, cross-cultural communication, and presupposition. As for the European continental tradition, relevance theory and adaptation theory are of the most unique popularity. In this book, we may combine these two traditions into the study of pragmatics in business English, therefore, the general topics will be deixis, presupposition, speech act theory, cooperative principle, politeness principle, relevance theory, adaptation theory and conversation analysis.

1.4 Business English in general

1.4.1 Definitions of business English

The word “business” originates from an ancient Greek word, which refers to the commercial activities that people are engaged in as a means of livelihood or profit, or an entity in such activities. Generally speaking, business English refers to all the English language used in business activity. In China, business English is mainly used for foreign trade, which is also called “foreign trade English”. Business English is one kind of vocational English and is based on the general English. Since business English has a professional applicability in its special context, it has its own unique style, usage and format, which is different from other forms of English. (段梦桃, 2007)

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) regard business English as a branch of English for Specific Purpose (ESP). However, business English is quite different from the other varieties of ESP in that it is often a mix of specific content which is related to a particular job or industry, and general content which is related to general ability to communicate



more effectively. In fact, giving a definition to business English in linguistic term is really a difficult task.

Pickett (1989) defines business English as “mediating language between the technicalities of particular business... and the language of the general public”. It is generally acknowledged that business English refers to the English language used in the register of business. He (ibid: 12) depicts the following diagram which suggests two particular aspects of business communication: communication with the public and communication among business:



From the above diagram, we can see that business English (shortened as BE) is especially related to international trade covering extensive fields related with business, such as training, negotiation, shopping, inquiring, etc. Compared with GE (General English), BE requires that readers should master more capacities of business skills to communicate with the customers.

Chen (2004) gives a detailed definition for business English as follows:

(1) English that has direct relation with business.

(2) English that has relation with fields such as economics, management, and law, etc.

(3) English that is beyond personal relationship.

(4) English that is used in analyzing the features of English in business register.

Anyway, business English is closely connected with business knowledge i.e. business English has to include the information of business theories and practices, which usually consists of business correspondence, synopsis of minutes, legal documents, commercials, memoranda, reports, notices, specifications, agreements or contracts, bills and forms, business newspapers and journal articles. Business English often employs precise words and fixed structure to convey concise information. Its language is as accurate and complete



as scientific language, and as appropriate and sufficient as legal documentary language. Business English has its special features, which are often called seven Cs: completeness, concreteness, clearness, conciseness, courtesy, consideration and correctness. (廖瑛等, 2004: 21)

1.4.2 Characteristics of business English

Business English can also be characterized at different levels, including lexical, syntactic, and textual levels.

1.4.2.1 Lexical features

Business English, a comprehensive subject, involves many aspects in the trading activities. Generally speaking, BE can be classified into three kinds of styles, namely, the official document, the advertisement and the exposition. Business letters, contracts, and legal documents belong to official documents, commercials belong to the style of advertisement, while economic and trade comments, reports and speeches belong to the style of exposition. Almost all the styles share the common features as follows:

1. Simplified forms and abbreviations

With the development of international trade, there have appeared a great number of simplified forms and prescriptive abbreviations, whose meanings are fixed, with fewer words interpreting larger amount of information. For example, the abbreviation BE in business article does not refer to Business English but bill of exchange. ASAP is the abbreviation of as soon as possible, which is seldom used in daily communication.

2. Technical terms

Due to the specialized knowledge of Business English, a lot of words which contain different and special meanings are used as technical terms or terminology. They are exclusively applied in politics, economy and all kinds of scientific fields with fixed meanings.

3. Polysemy

Polysemy is a widespread phenomenon. Many words in GE bear special meanings in business situation. These words may be misleading if our understanding is confined in their common language use. For example:

- 1) The shop only allows six months' credit.
- 2) Does this item go among the credits or the debits?

In GE, credit usually means reputation and honor. If we apply this meaning into the above two sentences, we will find it is unsuitable to interpret. Actually, in BE, credit has distinctive meanings: In 1), credit refers to the approval for delayed payments for purchased goods, but in the second example, credit indicates the provision of resources



(such as granting a loan) by one party to another party. The first party is called a creditor, also known as a lender, while the second party is a debtor, known as a borrower. Therefore, we should pay great efforts to accumulate the terminology in the process of business English learning.

1. 4. 2. 2 Syntactic Features

In contrast to the diversity of its vocabulary, the distinct feature of sentences in business English is succinctness and clearness. For example, in BE correspondence, writers often adopt various types of sentences to convey their connotative messages. On some occasions, writers prefer to use short and simple sentences, while on other occasions, they choose long and difficult sentences which contain lots of details. In legal provision related to business, long sentences are largely used because more information and meanings can be conveyed by complex structures. Many subordinate clauses are combined into one complex sentence. Long and complicated sentences or compound sentences are also adopted for the purpose of accuracy and logicity. For example:

3) In order to facilitate business in consideration of the present monetary stringency, the corporation, on behalf of which I am studying this proposition, is willing to base transaction on trade by barter and import any articles, which you would ship to the United States.

This is a compound sentence composed of two clauses connected by the word *and*. Each clause has an attributive clause and besides this, the first clause includes an infinitive phrase. So it will take us more time and efforts to understand the whole sentence, needless to interpret it correctly.

In addition to the long sentences, statements and passive voice are another two distinct syntactical features. In BE letters, imperative sentences seldom appear so as to establish good environment for readers. Passive-voice sentences are used to improve the coherence of the context or to make a better arrangement of sentences. All these above factors contribute to the syntactic features of business English.

1. 4. 2. 3 Textual Features

Widdowson (1990: 49) defined discourse as “the use of sentences in combination”, while discourse analysis refers to the investigation into the way sentences are put into communicative use for social purposes. Text analysis focuses on the grammatical cohesion and frequency of occurrence of certain elements such as sentence structures and words.

As far as the textual features of BE are concerned, we need to pay special attention to the special context in which texts are implicitly used. Generally speaking, texts in