

Critical Discourse Analysis of Business English Negotiations

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ABSTRACT. *This paper starts from the foundation basis, critical discourse analysis. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, this paper hopes to analyze the corpus of business English negotiations to explore the relationship between implicit power and ideology, to find the status and dominant relationship of both parties in business negotiations. In addition, it aims to figure out how power and ideology affect the use of language, how language is used to reinforce these, and finally reveal the language characteristics of business English negotiations.*

KEYWORDS: *Business english negotiation, Critical discourse analysis, Language features*

1. Introduction

With the in-depth development of world globalization, business contacts are in constant increase and closer connections. Therefore, business English has gradually developed with the rise of world trade. As a specialized foreign language, business English shows vitality due to the rapid development of world economy and trade. Besides, many scholars have carried out research on business English in recent years. In fact, most of these studies analyze business activities and language itself, less from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Several corpora in this article are selected from Yin Xiaoying and Yang Runhui's *Foreign Trade English Correspondence* and Wang Xingsun's *New Import and Export English Correspondence (Revised)*. And the corpus are labeled for easy analysis. These corpus are the representative corpus of typical business English negotiation. In actual negotiation applications, business negotiation is a very long process.

Therefore, this article hopes to analyze the corpus of business English negotiations to explore the relationship between implicit power and ideology, to find the status and dominant relationship of both parties in business negotiations. In addition, it aims to figure out how power and ideology affect the use of language, how language is used to reinforce these, and finally reveal the language characteristics of business English negotiations.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

As mentioned above, Critical Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary study that believes that language is a form of social practice. The research of critical discourse analysis mainly focuses on the principles of critical discourse analysis. Therefore, it is obvious that there are particularities in the analytical techniques of critical discourse, which makes them try to find the uniqueness of the discourse theory of social concepts, and they adopt a “critical” attitude towards society. It can be summarized as several assumptions:

- 1) Society can be seen as a whole, any specific phenomenon must be analyzed in its broad social background;
- 2) The study of social criticism is to reveal what ideology conceals. This ideology is regarded as universal and plays an important role in maintaining the status quo;
- 3) Critical research is not only to produce knowledge to let you know what society is, but also to teach people why and what should be;
- 4) People based on critical theoretical ideas can make the world a better place;
- 5) This kind of change is fundamental, such as eradicating oppression and liberating all mankind.

On the basis of the above assumptions, critical theorists have realized the fact that the method of critical discourse analysis requires real interdisciplinary and multi-faceted integration, such as discourse, lectures, social cognition, power and social connections between cultures. It studies the larger unit than the sentence, the text and meaning behind the grammatical structure. This includes the choice and use of languages related to politics, even economy, and context.

Scholars of critical discourse analysis hold a relatively open view of their goals: exposing hegemony, revealing hidden ideologies, equipping people with critical language awareness, and instilling educational applications of critical discourse analysis. Therefore, they are committed to solving various existing social problems, focusing on oppression, injustice and inequality. Such as discrimination, gender discrimination, differences in advantages and disadvantages, and so on. Critical discourse analysis sets its critical target as the power class. They make and maintain laws, while tolerating or ignoring social inequality and injustice.

3. Critical Discourse Analysis of Business English Negotiations

International business activities include other aspects such as business meetings, business negotiations, business exchanges, and marketing. Knowledge involves business activities such as management, trade, law, and accounting. Because of the variety of activities, business English is divided into oral and written texts. In business activities, it is basically the final implementation of the written text. For example, the signed written contract is used as the basis for trade, and the meeting

minutes are used as data for archiving and so on. Therefore, written text materials in business English are very important and determine the interests and rights of businesses. This article selects the negotiation texts, the link of bargaining in order to discuss some important details of the transaction, such as agreements on prices, packaging, transportation, and contracts. This is the most significant part of the entire business negotiation. Several corpora of quotation, offer, counter-offer, and order acceptance are selected for specific analysis.

3.1 Analysis of Transitivity

According to Halliday, transitivity systems can be divided into six process types, classifications and participants in past experience. Same meanings can be expressed by different transitivity systems. This process and participants are together important clues in language ideology. For example, some choices can be put on the surface or act as a proxy behind the scenes. Criticism Sexual exploratory language can express reality, and transitivity analysis is of great use.

Table 4 -1 Quantities of Each Type of Processes in the Sample Letters

	Mater.	Relat.	Verb.	Ment.	Exsit.	Beh.	Total
1	10(72%)	2(14%)	0	2(14%)	0	0	14
2	17(77%)	3(14%)	0	2(9%)	0	0	22
3	7(50%)	2(17%)	0	4(33%)	0	0	13
4	13(72%)	4(22%)	0	1(6%)	0	0	18

As is shown in the table above, the material process (the process of “doing”) occupies the most prominent position, and then the relationship process (the process of “being”) and the psychological process (the process of “induction”) also occupy a considerable proportion, while speech process, existence process and behavior process are almost none.

3.2 Analysis of Nominalization

According to Fowler, nominalization is a basic syntactic transformation of a small sentence, which has a wide range of structural results and provides a lot of ideological opportunities. The two underlying meanings of nominalization are mystification and reification. On the one hand, nominalization can remove some elements, such as participants, time and modality; on the other hand, when being nominalized, behavior and quality can be presented by the state of affairs.[1]

Here are some typical conversions:

(1) Delivery is to be made within 45 days of receipt of order and payment by irrevocable letter of credit available by sight draft or by cheque with order.

(2) We have decided to accept the 10070 trade discount you offered and your

proposal for payment to be made by sight L/C, but would like these terms to be reviewed in the near future.

(3) We would appreciate delivery within the next six weeks, and look forward to your acknowledgement.[3]

Based on the examples above, the process of nominalization is obviously much less than that of transitivity, but these processes of nominalization are also very important. Conciseness and clearness should be the basic requirements of the writing rules for business negotiation letters and it is obvious that these samples are very short. Generally speaking, a letter has only one paragraph. However, another writing rule for business letters is that they must be complete. It is very important for the writer to include all the necessary information in a letter of limited text. It is common that simple but very precise transitive words are adopted to describe actions. In addition, sometimes some authors also use some nominal expressions. When processes and characteristics are nominalized, they can express the state of affairs, and this feeling of real existence is difficult to change. For example, in sentence (3), "Acknowledgement" can be replaced by the small sentence "You will acknowledge our letter." And when the whole article is heavily used by a pattern of words, which is difficult to be changed. Therefore, this is the function of nominalization.

Another effect of this specific use of nominalization is that it can hide power relations and the author's attitude. For example, in sentence (1) and sentence (2), the use of the noun "payment" can be changed to the small sentence "We pay for the goods to you." Of course, in business trade, the buyer pays the seller to purchase the product. But if expressed as "We pay for the goods to you.", it will reflect the strength gap between the buyer and the seller. In the previous transitivity analysis, we found that in business negotiations, the writer always tries to hide the power gap between the two parties, and the process of nominalization can well conceal this power gap.

3.3 Analysis of Modal Word

Modality refers to Halliday's meta-function and interpersonal function. According to Halliday's theory, meta-functions include three functions, conceptual functions, interpersonal functions and textual functions. The interpersonal function is closest to the analysis of this article. What is interpersonal function? Interpersonal function refers to the function of language that reflects various interpersonal relationships, that is, people use language to communicate with others, thereby establishing or maintaining interpersonal relationships with others, influencing others' behavior and also expressing their views on the world. The core of this function is tone and modality. Halliday believes that in verbal communication, speakers not only express their own opinions, but also affect the attitude or behavior of listeners.[2]

What is modality? Modality is a syntactic and semantic category used to reflect the speaker's subjective attitude towards what he says. The first functional element

of spoken language is limitation. For example, there are two auxiliary verbs in “Someone may have heard the shot”, but only the first one is limited. The limited function can only be used when there is a small amount of spoken language. These auxiliary verbs can be divided into two main categories: “be”, “have”, “do”, expressing tense, while “can”, “may”, “shall” and “ought to” expressing modality and so on.[4]

Modality means approximate choice, which is the dimension of discourse and the need to transform society. It is often embodied in the form of auxiliary verbs, such as “can” and “would”. Sometimes verbs can have the same effect. Modality is a very rich field in grammar. In the modal system, there are more modal clauses than modal clauses, because modalities express tendencies and obligations, and they can play a role of encouragement and mobilization. If the commodity exchanged is information, the effectiveness of this model depends on the possibility and authenticity of the information. It depends on the wording here, which one is the specific choice, such as “possible/probable/certain” and “sometimes/often/always”. If the product is a commodity or a service, the modality is related to how confident the speaker is when the transaction finally succeeds. The more confident the speaker, the more positive the word used, such as “permissible/advisable/obligatory” and “ability/willingness/determination”.

4. Conclusion

In summary, from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, some pieces of corpus are analyzed through three aspects: transitivity, nominalization and modal words, so as to find out the relationship between power and ideology implicit in it. As a form of writing, business letters can easily be overlooked for the power relations contained in them. Therefore, this article, through analysis, recognizes the status and dominant relationship of the two parties in the negotiation, how power and ideology affect the use of language and how language is used to reinforce these, revealing the linguistic features of Business English.

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