

BUSINESS DISCOURSE AND SOCIOPRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

Jabborov Ilyosjon

Senior Teacher Angren University

+998937372792

ijabborov4@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In any business conversation either it is negotiation or a small talk it always based on its purposes. Any small change in the tone or a phrase may just scare the partner. It can create a chaos in the business world. Imagine if Elon Musk says that Gucci is not his favourite perfume. The stock exchange for Gucci is going to decline and the market goes upside down. That is why the behaviour and manner in the business world is essential. They all show the social relationship between participants. As we all know sociopragmatics is the branch of pragmatics which studies how social factors (for example status, gender, cultural background, power distance) indicate what is appropriate to say, to whom and what situation (Leech, 1983. Thomas, 1995).

Keywords: Sociopragmatics, face, relationship, positive face, negative face, off-record, pragmatics.

INTRODUCTION

In sociopragmatics business discourse is a social drama and its participants consistently manage:

- Hierarchy and power (who is controlling and to whom we must obey)
- Face and reputation (how can I be in safe distance from getting humiliated or humiliate other)
- Social distance (how close we are with our colleagues)
- Cultural expectations (what kind of behaviour is accepted in the certain group of people or how we should avoid bad consequences of cultural unexpected situations)

Face and politeness in business discourse

Any person who is negotiating in a business has two fundamental face needs:

Face type	Definition	Business example
Positive face	The desire to be liked, respected, approved of, and treated as a member of the in-group	An employee wills their manager to acknowledge their hard work
Negative face	The desire to be free from imposition, not to be coerced or interrupted, to have autonomy	A manager does not want to be bothered with trivial questions; a subordinate does not want to be micromanaged

In most business cases daily routines are face threatening acts (FTA)s. The samples can be when a person gives an order to the other one this is a negative face threatening. The reason is that the order giving person is limiting the other one freedom. When we criticize a colleague

we are threatening his or her positive face. It means we are not respecting him or her. When we refuse the request of a person we are threatening both faces of that person. Because he just feels rejected and humiliated.

Politeness Strategies as Social Management

In their book Brown & Levinson (1987) show five different strategies for controlling face threats. In business cases, these are not about "being nice" but about providing working relationships:

- Bald on-record is the case when high power just shows itself and they show efficiency over relationship. The example can be when a CEO says to his assistant "Bring the file now."
- Positive politeness (it often shows solidarity) when there is low social distance the things may seem as somebody wants to be seen as a friend or team member "We're all in this together, so could you help me with..."
- Negative politeness (it shows deference, the one avoids imposition).

It is mainly about high power difference or large social distance;

The one may require respect for autonomy "I'm sorry to bother you, sir, but if you have a moment..."

- Off-record (this one is indirect) it often indicates uncertainty, people avoiding direct responsibility "It's quite cold in here." (meaning: please close the window)
- Avoid the FTA it has very high risk, it is better not to say anything at all, for example, a junior employee stays silent when a senior manager makes an obvious mistake.

Key sociopragmatic insight can be like: The same business goal (e.g., asking someone to finish a task) requires a different politeness strategy depending on the social relationship. Asking a close teammate is different from asking the company president.

Face in Hierarchical Business Cultures

In high-power-distance cultures (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Uzbekistan, Russia), negative politeness is crucial when speaking to superiors. In these eastern countries everybody tries to respect others face. It is rarely seen somebody is showing a disrespect to a business partner. A subordinate must show deference through:

Avoiding direct eye contact (in some cultures) looking directly at one's eyes may put the other one in an uncomfortable situation that is why eastern people do not make eye contact with the partners or their friends it is different than western people making business

Using titles and last names. This is a good thing when we address someone like "Mr Jabborov please we can now move to the next issues."

Framing requests as humble inquiries: "Would it be possible for you to consider..."

In low-power-distance cultures (e.g., Denmark, Israel, USA), positive politeness and even bald on-record can be acceptable across ranks. In these countries people can address the partner as they are very close. A subordinate might say to a manager: "Hey, can you look at this when you get a chance?"

Failure to read face needs leads to social breakdown. A Western manager who gives direct orders in Japan may be seen as arrogant; a Japanese manager who uses indirect hints in the

USA may be seen as indecisive. When it comes to make a decision it is consulted with important people in the company. In Asia challenging a boss or superior is disrespectful.

Social hierarchy and power distance

Defining Power Distance (Hofstede, 2001)

Power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of an organization accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Power actually shows the place of the people and it allows to make a correct decision in the company. Power distance is the key factor for the assignments are done on time by workers. They are natural because there is always a person who has the control that is the reason people respect power. And in western culture the workers address the boss by first name like “Mr Ilyos, the manager is looking for you.”

When it comes to make a decision it is not consulted with important people in the company. And the only superior people decide what should be done or not.

In the West workers and the people in the committee can criticize the manager and challenging is considered norm.

In conclusion it is better to say respect is always upfront in the business. The business discourse is wide topic and everything is looked from the perspective of FTA. The business is done with carefully and paying attention to the context, place and the individual. Avoiding making a wrong move is the key factor.

REFERENCES

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