

The Importance of Euphemism in Business English

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Abstract: Euphemism has a multitude of applying forms and dynamic approaches in business English. This paper analyzes and introduces the importance of euphemism in Business English, concentrating on the study of the euphemistic expression and its communicative functions.

Keywords: Euphemism; Business English; Literature

1. A General Introduction to the Topic

Euphemism can be called a sugarcoated reality, just as Neaman (1990:1) defining it, “substituting an inoffensive or pleasant term for a more explicit, offensive one, thereby veneering the truth by using kind words”. In the process of intercommunication, because of the politeness principle, people tend to use words which are implicit, gentle, elegant and euphemistic, instead of those which are awkward, outspoken, vulgar and excitant, so much so that it helps talkers to overcome the psychological barriers, to minimize or exclude various unpleasant associations.

Meanwhile, as an effective communication strategy, euphemisms are more than delivering nasty things in pleasant words. It is also the cognition of people’s self- deficiency, as well as a kind of cognition of yearning for beauty. Some linguists call euphemism a literal performance, and this performance is free of damage in terms of expression. By using equivocal and tacit words, euphemism moderates the impact of the fact of the body itself.

Business English mainly includes commercial language in the business trade, law language in the contract, advertising language in commercial ads, etc. Compared to general English, business English has a distinct style, a standard form and professional vocabulary and expression. As is universally agreed, all those make business English remarkable, including the courteous reception with an ardor, refined words and clauses, as well as euphemistic and friendly mood.

2. The significance of the study

In an era in which globalization goes on deeper and wider, there is an urgent need to follow the thread of the latest trends so as not to fall behind. With the economic interaction across the world moving on more frequently, the significance of the handling of business English is, in no slight degree, vital and as plain as daylight. In the learning of a language, more attention should be paid to the use of euphemism. The learning of euphemism in business English can help people get a better understanding of the pertinent linguistic knowledge. People’s success or promotion has much to do with the ability to use euphemisms. Undoubtedly, the research in this field contributes to the prosperity of economic operations. By warding off intolerance, indignity and offensiveness, euphemism helps business people broaden a wider range of sources of customers and assure the plain sailing of the business.

On this account, this paper, to all intents and purposes, attempts to highlight the important position of euphemism occupied in the domain of the business field.

3. Literature Review

Euphemism comes from a Greek word and has a long history of usage. As a figure of speech, euphemism is exceedingly traditional. However, the study of the application of euphemism in business English has not been one of the active issues until the 1980s. With the mounting popularity of business English and the rapid development of cognitive linguistics, the research on the issue has just begun to raise people’s interest. The pertinent theoretical construct is still in an elementary stage and direct literary studies are rare. To some

extent, the theoretical research of the application of euphemism in business English lags behind practice.

What's more, undoubtedly, euphemisms in the business English emerge continually in the current civilized age. It is extremely hard to conduct a study on the issue comprehensively and exhaustively. At the same time, the difficulty gives zest to the study.

In recent years, some pertinent papers and books are available for reference. The linguists and scholars strive for a new view in this field and make a precious achievement. For instance, *Business English Rhetorical Art or Techniques Contemplated in the Light of Various Theories*, written by Li Taizhi, makes a dynamic study of euphemistic techniques in business English and analyzes the general rhetorical measures and effects. The book, in my regard, does a quite good work in researching the issue because it, through the concrete account under different branches of linguistics, presents a clear context with effective analytic skills. *Practical English Rhetoric*, which is attributed by Lu Xu, explores specific methods applied in business English with abundant examples. It successfully builds an euphemistic structure. Those methods, however, mainly belong to the lexical and grammatical devices.

Certainly, there are also books about both the subjects of euphemism and business English contributing to the development of the issue. *A Comparative Study of Chinese and English Language and Culture in Cross-Cultural Communication*, which is one of the works of Liu Mingge, introduces readers in great details an overall view of the application of classified euphemisms, which contains intercultural factors and both Chinese and English customs. *Sociolinguistics and English Learning*, a writing of Ji Meiling, from the perspective of sociolinguistics, shows cultural norms and values of euphemism in application, as well as the inner psychological cause of the use of this sugarcoated reality. All these books give people help to familiarize with the unique language form, which are instrumental to the further acknowledgement.

Because of those books, the initial understanding of euphemism as an important means of communication can be gained. Furthermore, works related to business English do also act a crucial role in learning the issue, especially a set of applied writings of business English. For example, *The Writing of Temporary Business English (2005)* by Weng Fengxiang, with diverse and specific applications, establishes professional codes and requirements of business English writing and highlights the distinguished features in business communication.

Regrettably, although a large number of pertinent papers explore the topic, actually, all things considered, few can make an all-round analysis and classification of the concrete application of euphemism in commercial communication. They neither discuss the issue from all the main perspectives nor deal with the presentation sufficiently.

So much so that, this paper tries to elaborate upon the flexible use of euphemism in business communication, emphasizing the euphemistic importance in application. Combining the linguistic connotation with commercial customs, this paper is supposed to be a help in improving the application and development of euphemism applied in business English and bringing to light its communicative effects. Moreover, in light of the limitation of scope of euphemistic expressions, this paper also aims to raise people's awareness of using euphemisms.

4. Importance of Euphemism in Business English

Business English belongs to the function language. Due to its usage for specific purpose, on one hand, business English, no matter the written form or the spoken one, has a certain speech formulae and text structure; on the other hand, it uses professional vocabulary and foreign trade terms, as well as some half-professional glossary. A host of euphemistic strategies used in business English provide one of the main measures of attracting customers, promoting the sales of products and obtaining the commercial chance.

Euphemizing is a common phenomenon in the development of the language. Just as Hugh Rawson (1974: 326) points out: "... they (euphemisms) are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plain-spoken, even through a day without using them." Psychologically, it is a reflection of social civilization, as well as a need for communication and interests. As the substitution of unhappiness and unpleasantness, euphemism has significant social influence in purifying the language by avoiding or glossing the reality. In promoting human relationship and helping people carry on communication smoothly, euphemisms naturally win a great favor with people in the circle of business.

From the perspective of pragmatics, the language has its economic utility. Language's economic utility lies in the economic effectiveness achieved by the use of the language. In the commercial activities, it is very significant for both sides of business to attain unity through the communication, in an effort of to gain economic interests. The ambiguity of the language in business communication can reflect the spirit of friendly cooperation and the strategy of flexible mechanisms. The fuzzy expression of euphemism helps people

accept the speaker's opinions willingly.

Euphemism, as an expression of modesty, has another characteristic of beautification, for the speaker deliberately condescends himself or herself and raises the listener's position. People resort to euphemism to seek the ideology of a commercial atmosphere and reduce the conflict involved in the everyday business. To a large extent, it can be said that the application of euphemism conforms to the mentality of deceiving each other in economic interests.

All in all, in the process of business communication, euphemism helps business people form a positive atmosphere and build a harmonious commercial relationship and finally get the expected interests, through its role as a sugar-coated reality. Without the communicative function of euphemism, it will be hard to get rid of or cushion the shock of the direct statement or speech in trade negotiations, business letters and other daily business communication.

5. Conclusion

In business, some critics condemn euphemism as demoralizing for it cheats customers. Because of the fact that euphemism is very much a part of the language, others consider it a precious necessity in communication. But there is no denying that euphemisms have been rooted in the social life and they are hard to replace. Reflecting the social and cultural value from the day it came into existence, euphemism has the function of lubricating the communication and helping strengthen the social stability.

Besides, a good linguistic knowledge of euphemism helps improve the intercultural communication among multi-background people. To succeed in learning the language and doing commercial activities, a full view of the issue is of great significance.

Through the introduction, the author sincerely hopes that this paper may be helpful for readers' comprehension of the euphemistic application of business English and people could come up with valuable opinions.

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