

Communication Between Cultures: Verbal Communication

跨文化交际之言语交际

To some Chinese people, promise and commitment are more related to the desire to be courteous and to please than to the actual act or the real intent of fulfilling the promise or commitment.

语言和言语是两个不同的概念。语言是由声音和意义结合而成的符号体系，比如：汉语、英语、法语等。任何一种语言都是由语音、词汇和语法等组成的一个完整的符号体系。言语是指人们对语言的运用，指人们在运用语言的过程中说的话和书写的文字。尽管它们的概念有所不同，但两者却存在着辩证关系。在言语交际过程中，只有双方确立情感意识中心，缩小“自我”和“角色”之间的距离，承认不同的文化背景及其差异，增强理解和信任，才能实现交际的目的。在跨文化商务交际中，更要考虑民族特点、文化差异等问题。只有这样，才能通过语言促进沟通，建立良好关系。一位刚到美国的中国企业经理，被美国朋友请去作客。中国企业经理来到这位美国人家里后，觉得其房屋陈设很奇怪。突然他发现一个台子上竟摆着一尊泥塑的孙悟空，他很兴奋，连忙问女主人：“你怎么会有这尊孙悟空？是从中国买的吗？花了多少钱？用的是人民币还是美元？”女主人只是笑了笑，没有回答。这位中国企业经理没有再问下去。他不知道美国人的价值观念与中国人有许多不同，价钱的高低往往与身份密切相关。他无心提出的价钱问题，却使得这位美国人不知如何回答是好。所以，并非会说话写字就能完成言语交际。交际者还必须考虑民族特点、文化差异、语言的语义层面和语用层面，否则交际便无法顺利完成。本章主要包括两方面的内容：口语交际和书面交际。两部分内容主要强调：只有说遵循说的规矩，写遵循写的规则，才能达到成功交际的目的。

1. Verbal Communication 言语交际

The term “verbal” has been used since the 16th century to refer to spoken, as opposite to written, communication. But the word “verbal” used here includes spoken communication as well as written. Therefore, verbal communication refers to the communication that is carried out either in oral or in written form with the use of words. (Xu, 1997) Verbal communication is the transferring of thoughts between individuals via spoken or written messages. (Du, 2004)

Verbal communication is at the core of what most of us do—whether you are building a business, dealing with difficult situations, revitalizing a team, coping constructively with complaints or creating an exceptional customer service climate. The essential actions taken by managers and staff happen almost entirely through verbal communication. It sets the emotional tone and builds relationships that ultimately determine the performance culture of a workplace. If verbal communication is not effective, coordination will break down, relationships will suffer, mistakes will multiply and productivity will fall.

Verbal communication is characterized by the following three attributes.

Verbal communication can express all kinds of ideas we want to express. For example, as a development department manager, if you have an idea about market development, you can talk it over with your assistants to see how they feel about it. In addition, you can also hold a meeting to discuss it with all the other members in your team, or you can send a questionnaire to those concerned for a feedback.

Verbal communication can keep and disseminate information. In business, if the manager you want to contact is not in the office, you can reach him through the telephone, or leave a message if he has a voice mail. E-mailing is one of the most effective and economic ways for business communication, which may account for the fact that many businesspeople bring along laptop computers wherever they go.

Verbal communication can be clearer and more efficient than other ways. As a matter of fact, we have many different ways of communication, which can work well in a given area, at a given time, but none of them is comparable to verbal communication. Suppose you want to share some business news with your friends abroad, the best way to let them know it clearly is through verbal communication.

Verbal communication occurs when people are chatting with their friends, discussing an issue in a group, making a public speech, etc. Skillful and effective verbal communication involves careful choice of language that takes into account logical and emotional effects, objective and subjective factors, and the needs of the message sender and receiver, especially when they come from different cultural backgrounds. For instance, if you want to be an effective communicator, you have to adapt your material and your manner to the person (or persons) with whom you are talking. Find out what interests the person (or persons) you are talking to, possibly before you meet.

In addition, cultural factors need to be considered in verbal communication. A word may have rich culturally-created connotative meanings in one language, while it is seldom used with the same meanings in another. Lions in English culture are the symbols of courage, danger and power. They are considered the king of animals. But lions do not have such a connotative meaning in Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, it is tigers that convey similar messages.

So, as we can see, verbal communication is connected with culture to a great extent.

1.1 Language and Culture 语言与文化

Language, in its most basic sense, is a set of symbols and the rules for combining those symbols and rules that are used and understood by a large community of people. Human beings are the “culture bearing animals” because they have the capacity for symbolic communication. Language is a means to express and exchange thoughts, concepts, knowledge and information as well as to transmit experience and knowledge. Based on cognitive processes, subject to social factors and historical change and development, it refers to a specific form of expression that is restricted to human beings, and differs from other possible languages, such as animal communication and artificial language through creativity. Dogs bark to warn, and birds sing to attract prospective mates. More intelligent animals can also learn to respond to verbal signals like “sit” and “stand,” but humankind has the unique ability to assign meanings to those sounds. Only human beings can invent words like “happy,”

“sunshine” and “next week,” and agree that they are symbols for certain concepts, thoughts or feelings.

Language is closely related to culture. From a dynamic view, language and culture interact with each other and shape each other. Language is the carrier of culture which in turn is the content of language. We can dig out cultural features from language and explain language phenomena from cultural perspective. Language does not end at meaning; the use of words is associated with culture.

Language is part of culture. Culture, in turn, enriches and influences language. Different cultures **generate** different languages. Chinese Mandarin only exists in the background of Chinese culture. The same is true in other languages. A symbolical-abstract language is the dominant sign of any culture. The language of any group is directly connected to the culture of the group. When people from different societies interact, it is natural that some cultural differences may exist, including language differences. The origins of Chinese and Western cultural differences mainly lie, among other factors, in social structure. Society is a basic ground on which a culture originates and develops. For thousands of years, about 75 percent of the Chinese lived in villages and the rest in small towns. A community generally consists of families descended from one ancestor, bearing the same surname and obeying the dictates of a **patriarch**. In the community, people know each other well, keeping track of each other's lives, being aware of happenings in each other's households and having a genuine concern for each other's well-being. Therefore, familiarity, consideration for each other's comfort and health, and an interest in each other's business and activities are found in the life of the Chinese people. That is why when Chinese people meet, they often exchange greetings such as “Have you eaten yet?” “Where are you going?” “Where have you been?”, etc. But in America, there is a saying “good fences make good neighbors,” revealing that they tend to keep a safe distance from each other.

generate v. 造成, 使存在 patriarch n. 家长, 族长
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1.2 Semantics in Intercultural Communication

语义学与跨文化交际

Semantics is a system that associates words to meaning. It is the study of the meaning of words. The most convenient and thorough source of information about the semantics of a language is the dictionary, which defines what a word means in a particular language. That a baby is being taught to name the parts of the body is a good example of semantics in action. Someone points to or touches the baby's nose and simultaneously vocalizes the word "nose." Essentially, the baby is being taught the vocabulary of a language.

Words have two major dimensions of meaning, their **denotation** and **connotation**. Denotation is the literal meaning or definition of a word—the explicit, particular, defined meaning. Dictionary definitions are denotative meanings. Connotation is the suggestive meaning of a word—all the values, judgments, and beliefs implied by a word, the historical and associative **accretion** of the “unspoken significance” behind the literal meaning. Many words have evaluative implications behind them, conveying a positive or negative attitude toward the things they name. Frequently, the same word can be misunderstood by people from two countries because of their different cultural backgrounds. For example, “red” in Chinese implies “happy,” “auspicious,” “joyous” and “flourishing.” The Chinese use red lanterns, red antithetical couplets, red dresses, red candles, red flowers and the like when they are in celebrations. In English, red is usually associated with something undesirable, e.g., “red flags” denotes “danger;” “in the red” means “deficit in finance.” The English expression “green with envy” is not found in Chinese collocation of “green;” rather, in Chinese “red” is used instead, as in the expression “He got a red-eye illness.” which means “He is green with envy.”

denotation <i>n.</i> 意义, 本义
connotation <i>n.</i> 言外之意, 含义
accretion <i>n.</i> 增长物

Certain knowledge of general semantic principles can play an essential role in understanding and improving intercultural communication. When something happens to us, we internally process the events with a customary perception of the event; but the perception does not necessarily equal to the event. The map is not the territory! Our internal representation or perception creates in us a positive or negative response. Whether it is negative or positive is dependent on how we process the information

we receive from a given event. It is important for us to remember and understand that events and information are neither bad nor good. Our different perceptions simply reflect the ways we perceive them.

1.3 Pragmatics in Intercultural Communication 语用学与跨文化交际

Pragmatics is the study of the effect that language has on human perceptions and behaviors. Pragmatics is the study of how speakers use the language to reach successful communication. It studies language as it is used in a social context. By learning pragmatics, we can understand how to communicate properly. For example, when you are doing homework with your classmates and somebody says: "Do you have an extra pen?" You know that you should give the person a pen rather than simply answer "Yes."

Language can be used to perform many tasks: to address people, to compliment people, to make a request, to extend an invitation, to declare a man and a woman husband and wife, and even to sentence a criminal to death. Our everyday communication is filled with such pragmatic use of language, but the realization of speech act is different from culture to culture. So a good mastery of grammar of one language does not mean that a successful communication will be carried out. When the speech behavior is not appropriately done, misunderstanding and even conflict will be brought about between communicators.

How to address people. There are different terms of address in Chinese and English which can be equally misleading for Chinese learners of English or English learners of Chinese. For instance, in China "Tongzhi" was once used for all people irrespective of sex, position or marital status, which means "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Miss," or "Ms." in English speaking communities. "Shifu" is another Chinese term of address frequently used to show respect for strangers, which roughly equals "Sir" or "Madam" in English. In addition, Chinese has a much more extended system of kinship than English does. Terms such as "uncle," "aunt," "grandpa," and "granny" are used as honorific titles for senior people or strangers, which would be puzzling to English native speakers.

Different perceptions of titles. There is significant difference in how Chinese

and Americans view titles. Americans, in contrast not only to Chinese but to many Europeans, tend to regard titles as trivial unless they have a clear idea of what kind of work a person does and what his responsibilities are. The Chinese always seem expected to let people know their titles, for example, “senior engineer”—a title that says nothing about what a person’s contributions are. For Americans it’s what you actually do that counts, not where you fit on organizational chart. Your professional role defines you. The Americans treat titles like “vice president for marketing” and “sales manager” as meaningful. Nonetheless they will not use them to address a person, even if reduced to “manager” or “vice president.” But, the use of respectful titles such as “Manager Zhang” or “Director Wang” to indicate people’s influential status is typical of Chinese culture.

How to show gratitude. In the Western countries, people tend to verbalize their gratitude more often and accept thanks more directly and frankly than Chinese people. Westerners say thanks anytime, anywhere and to anybody, even among their own family members. On the contrary, Chinese people rarely say thanks to their close friends or family members. In addition, Westerners tend to accept others’ expression of gratitude by saying “I’m glad to help” or “I’m glad to be of help” or “Glad that I could help.” Chinese people, on the other hand, are likely to feel embarrassed when they express their gratitude or hear others’ expression of gratitude. They may just say nothing for being helped and reply to “thanks” with “no, no” for having helped.

Conversation topics. Privacy, as a value and psychological concept, has been given different meanings in different cultures. According to the traditional Chinese values, privacy is of group-orientation, and the individual in the same group would not have much conscience of privacy. However, in the Western world, especially in the United States, keeping privacy has been seen as the symbol of independence and personal value. In a conversation, Westerners seldom or never ask questions related to privacy, such as age, money, marriage, health, and family. On the contrary, those kinds of questions are frequently asked in dialogs between two Chinese. Let’s look at the following conversation between a Chinese and an American. Linguistically speaking, the sentences are grammatically correct, but if you take a pragmatic view, they are inappropriately worded. It is rude to ask Westerners so many questions about privacy. To them, such a kind of conversation concerning privacy is not communication, but an inspection taking place at customs or police station.

The conversation took place at the first meeting between a Chinese businessman and an American businessman in China.

The Chinese: What's your name?

The American: My name is John Ports.

The Chinese: Where are you from?

The American: I'm from New York, the USA.

The Chinese: How old are you?

The American: (*Hesitating.*) I'm 40.

The Chinese: Are you married?

The American: (*Hesitating again.*) Yes, I am.

The Chinese: How many children do you have?

The American: Three. Two sons, one daughter.

The Chinese: Where do you work now?

The American: I work in an international business.

The Chinese: How much do you earn a month?

The American: (*No reply.*)

The Chinese: Are your children and wife in China or the USA?

The American: In the United States.

The Chinese: Will they come to see you in China?

The American: Yes, they will come next year.

Being modest. Being modest is one of the traditional virtues of the Chinese people. They are modest when communicating with others. They often decline praise to show modesty. They often reply with pleasant modesty, when they are praised for their appearances, clothes, etc. in intercultural communication. However, Americans like praising people. Receiving such a reply of refusal, Americans often wonder whether they have made a wrong judgment or not.

On a wedding, when an American met the bride, he said to the bridegroom: "How beautiful your wife is!" Then the bridegroom answered: "*Nali* (where), *nali* (where)." The foreigner was so surprised and he thought: Why Chinese act so strangely. I've said the bride is beautiful, but why he asked so specifically?

Then he answered, "Everywhere is excellent! Face, nose, mouth, body, all are beautiful!"

This story shows a negative pragmatic transfer resulting from insensitivity to cultural differences: "*nali*" is a word which the Chinese use to express their modesty.

2. Oral Communication 口头交际

Language facilitates group cooperation and allows information and knowledge to be transferred from individual to individual, from place to place, and from generation to generation. It also allows for the accumulation of knowledge. This process began, of course, orally. Long before writing was developed, groups of people told stories to educate the young and to preserve the history of the group.

Oral communication is the ability to compose, critically analyze, present, and deliver information through oral interactions. In business, oral communication, whether in face-to-face situations or telephone conversations, serves many important functions. People learn the history of an organization and its culture primarily through the stories people tell, and relationships are forged or broken, primarily by what and how things are said.

Speaking effectively is extremely crucial for success in a formal working environment. It has been proven that employees spend more time speaking than writing, talking on the phone, conversing informally with colleagues, conducting meetings, or making sales presentations. Research also reveals that the higher an employee moves within an organization, the more important speaking skills become. Clarity of oral communication and well-developed interpersonal skills, when interacting in a group or one-to-one, are among the qualities that make us more successful businesspeople or professionals.

Clearly, effective oral communication is important in all aspects of one's career. Many businesspeople owe their success to their ability to give good presentations and to participate confidently in discussion, while both are initially a major source

of anxiety for most of us. As with any behavior-based skill, there are those who are “gifted,” but that doesn’t mean effective discussion techniques, *charismatic* public speaking and presentation skills can’t be learned. Through learning the techniques we will also develop the ability to understand how the communication process works, so that we can adjust our approach to suit our purpose.

2.1 Oral Presentation 演讲

Oral communication involves expressing and sharing ideas and information as well as influencing others through verbal and nonverbal symbols. Oral presentations effectively inform and persuade because they convey *immediacy*. This immediacy allows the speaker to reveal his ideas and attitudes toward the topic effectively and helps to *forge* audience’s immediate response to the presentation. Although oral presentations employ the same *rhetorical* principles, strategies of organization, audience analysis, and audience accommodation that written presentations do, they are not identical.

charismatic a.
有魅力的
immediacy n.
直接, 立即
forge v.
使形成
rhetorical a.
修辞学的

Generally, there are three basic communication goals for giving oral presentations in business communication: to inform—to provide others with new information, to persuade—to modify attitudes and behaviors or to reinforce already-existing attitudes and behaviors, and to build goodwill.

Informative Presentations. Informative presentations include talks, seminars, proposals, conferences, and meetings where presenters share their expertise, and information is exchanged. In a business context, it might be the supervisor explaining new forms, products, regulations, or filing procedures to employees. During the sales process, the salesperson may provide information on the product or service to a prospective customer through informative presentation. In a retail situation, newly hired salesclerks may attend an informative presentation on selling techniques or loss prevention.

Persuasive Presentations. There are the presentations in which we attempt to convince the audience to buy our products or services, to support our goals or concepts, or to change their minds or attitudes. Persuasive presentations, which are sometimes called transactional presentations, are often motivational. In a

business context, a supervisor may make a presentation on teamwork in order to motivate employees to support new cooperative efforts within the company structure. It may be a situation in which the **board** ask the shareholders to support changes in the way **dividends** are distributed. It could be that the distribution arm of an organization makes suggestions about packaging changes that would reduce shipping costs, or the marketing department tries to sell top management on a new promotional campaign.

board	n.
董事会	
dividend	n.
股息, 红利	
roast	v.
取笑, 嘲弄	
residual	a.
剩余的, 多余的	

Goodwill Presentations. Goodwill presentations, which usually take the form of after-dinner speeches, are often designed to be entertaining, for example, by “**roasting**” the top salesperson. Sometimes they are ceremonial, for example, when introducing a new officer.

The purpose of goodwill presentations is pretty obvious—to build goodwill, to make people feel good about themselves, and to build respect for the organization and/or the product, as well as for peers, colleagues, and superiors.

Once we make clear the goal of the presentation and make a clear picture of our audience and speech setting, we should think over how to convey our intentions to the audience effectively, which is a process of encoding. For most of the presentations, we usually realize the process by two steps: speech writing and then delivery. The former aims at designing a presentation, while the latter focuses on speaking out the content of presentations in front of the audience in verbal and nonverbal language.

The following steps or tips are of help on how to make an effective oral presentation.

Analyze your audience. It is natural that we will have different audiences for our business presentations. They can be American visitors, local businesspeople, university students, or government officials. Facing different audiences, we have to choose different styles for our presentations. For example, German businesspeople have a habit of getting down to business at the beginning of their presentation, while American businesspeople often begin their presentation by telling a joke.

Reduce your residual message. Make all your efforts to make your point clear. Try to focus on the idea you want your listeners to take away with them. Make each

idea a single clear sentence and determine your rhetorical

purpose accordingly. Usually, people will get bored by the residual message. Most European businesspeople just come

to the point, and American businesspeople get bored by speakers' *beating about the bush*.

beat about the bush
旁敲侧击

Restrict your main points to three. Add as many supporting ideas under each point as your time limit allows, but it is quite advisable that you keep three to seven points in one presentation and focus on up to three main points. On the one hand, you will make yourself well understood. On the other hand, your audience can keep their interest and patience from beginning to end.

Design your introduction. In the introduction, establish credibility, arouse audience interest, and orient the audience to your talk. Provide a clear statement of the purpose of presentation and an introductory summary. You can tell a personal story, an anecdote, or a humorous story which will catch your audience's attention immediately. In doing so, you have to make clear whom you are speaking to. Are they American, Japanese, or German? Cultural difference will cause misunderstanding about the same story.

Your pattern of organization must be absolutely clear to your audience. Because business presentations often ask for financial decisions instead of applause, the pattern of organizing your presentations must be absolutely clear to your audience. Consider, therefore, handing out an attractive outline of your major points. The page may contain especially persuasive charts and tables or a list of terms new to the listeners.

Conclude the business presentation with a call to action. At the end of the presentation, you can ask for the decision that the audience can help complete or some type of action to forward the sale, etc. For example: "Based on the evidence we have reviewed today, I recommend acquisition of Herder Printing by the company within the next 60 days. I will remain after the meeting to talk with those of you who wish to help draft a resolution to the Board of Directors regarding this most attractive acquisition."

Deliver your presentation confidently from beginning to end. When you begin your presentation, greet your audience and create a comfortable atmosphere

by starting with small talks. After you feel prepared and comfortable, start your presentation. Maintain your confidence throughout the presentation.

Generally speaking, there is much more to know about making a successful presentation in terms of verbal communication. Besides, nonverbal means will also help. When you stand in front of your audience, you can make good use of postures and gestures, project your voice and maintain eye contact, which will help your audience understand you better. Sometimes your points can be conveyed more effectively this way.

2.2 Telephone Calls 打电话

Making calls is one of the major means of everyday communication among people. It is also very important in international business. It is efficient and convenient for businesspeople to send and receive information through calls. Nowadays, more and more foreign joint-venture companies and foreign-owned companies can be seen in China. Meanwhile, Chinese companies also invest in foreign countries. In such an environment, Chinese businesspeople have opportunities of meeting foreign businesspeople from all over the world. Most foreign businesspeople have a habit of using telephones for what they are going to do before or after business, most frequently for making appointments.

However, cultural differences exist even in making calls. For instance, in France it is required that all calls begin with an apology for disturbing the answerer. The French are also expected to begin the call by checking that they have reached the right number, identifying themselves, and then chatting with whoever answers the phone, if this person is known to them. Only after some conversation may callers indicate their wish to speak with the person they actually call to speak to.

In the U.S. the callers apologize only when they feel they have called at an inappropriate time; they often ask for the intended addressee without identifying themselves or conversing with the answerer, even when that person is known to them; and they behave, in general, as though the person who has answered the phone is just an extension of the instrument itself.

A French woman attempted to converse with the American acquaintance who answered her phone call. However, he asked whom she wanted to speak to, and handed the phone over directly without allowing her to continue.

In China, the callers usually repeat “Hello” before they start to talk. Sometimes the caller does not tell directly who he is when the caller believes that the answerer knows him. This often makes trouble, as voice does not tell everything. Very often, the Chinese answerers first ask directly “Who are you?” when they pick up the receiver and begin to talk. So many foreigners are quite surprised by the way the Chinese communicate on the phone. They think it abrupt and impolite.

Kathy and David, a couple from the U.S., signed a one-year contract to work in China. Both were extroverted and soon made some Chinese friends.

Before long, people started calling them at home. David was sometimes away on business trips, and if someone looked for him, Kathy would often find the conversation awkward.

“Where did he go?” the caller typically would ask.

“Can I pass any message?” Kathy asked politely, trying to avoid the question.

“Is he out of town?” the caller was usually very persistent.

“Yes, can I help you in any way?” Kathy tried to be polite, but she could not help feeling uncomfortable.

In the case given, the Chinese and Americans hold different attitudes toward the questions asked on the phone. To the Chinese, “Where is he?” or “Where did he go?” are not offensive at all. The caller may not necessarily be interested in finding out exactly where the person is; the questions are asked simply as a way to carry on the phone conversation before hanging up. However, to the Americans, questions about where someone is are not just seen as rude, but threatening. An American woman would never admit to a stranger on the phone that her husband is out for several days. Such an admission could make her vulnerable to an attack. A person’s *whereabouts* and schedule are considered private and most Americans would never share such information with an unknown caller.

whereabouts *n.*

所在之处

3. Written Communication 书面交际

Written communication is the communication by means of written symbols, either printed or handwritten. Surprisingly, the cave dwellers that inhabited the earth millennia ago had a simple solution when it came to the challenge of communicating in written form across cultures. They used **pictographs**—carved or drawn pictures describing a simple concept or event. No words, no alphabet, no chance of lost subtleties and confused meanings. Gradually, over the years, the pictures became symbols, and the symbols became “letters” to represent sounds. The Egyptians used **hieroglyphics**—a combination of pictographs, **ideographs** and **phonograms**—and later became the first to use pictures to represent sound in addition to ideas and objects.

pictograph *n.*
古代石壁画
hieroglyphics *n.*
象形文字
ideograph *n.*
表意文字, 象形文字
phonogram *n.*
表音符号
memorandum *n.*
备忘录

Letters, **memorandums**, and reports are the primary written means of exchanging information in business. Without written communication, orders would not be fulfilled, supplies would not be received, letter of credit would not be established and new techniques would not be devised. Therefore, writing skill is what any business firm would require of their staff, ranging from top executives to office clerks.

3.1 Business Letters 商务信函

Letter writing is a very important activity in day-to-day business and personal life. A manager will write a sales letter to customers. A secretary of a company needs to send out an official invitation letter. A purchasing assistant may need to prepare an invoice. In fact, if we are not able to produce well written, effective letters, it will hinder intercultural business communication both directly and indirectly. It does not necessarily imply that having a good standard of English is enough. An important point that needs to be remembered is that correspondence is a two-way effort to communicate a message between the writer and the receiver.

A good business letter is brief, straightforward, and polite. If possible, it should be limited to one single-spaced typewritten page. Because it is so brief, a business letter is often judged on small, but important, matters: format, grammar, punctuation, opening and closing.

In intercultural business communication, we have to write many kinds of letters. We will write a letter of recommendation to make a clear and specific recommendation about someone, a letter of appreciation to thank someone such as a senior level professional or official, a letter of introduction to introduce yourself or your business to another party, a letter of thanks to express your appreciation to another party on your personal level, a letter of apology to **salvage** a relationship after your organization has made a mistake, a letter of congratulation to someone for an outstanding achievement, a letter of **condolence** to express sympathy to another party in the case of the death of someone close to the recipient, a letter of termination to end an employee's job or a contractual arrangement or obligation, a letter of complaint to deal with a problem when other attempts have failed, or a letter of invitation to invite your clients or customers to special business events.

salvage v. 挽救 condolence n. 吊唁

In order to write a good business letter, you have to master some effective skills.

A good first impression. Try to create a good first impression with the salutation at the start of the letter. Make sure the person's name and title are correct. Use "Dear Sir/Madam" if you don't know the person's name.

Stating your purpose. You should state the purpose of your letter in the first paragraph, for example, "As per our phone conversation, I am writing to provide the information you requested." There are many other reasons for writing a business letter, such as inquiry, request, apology or complaint. The purpose will determine the style and tone of your letter.

Ending the letter. In the last paragraph, you can include some closing remarks like "Please contact us if you have any further questions." If you are enclosing documents, you can add "Please find enclosed..." or "I am enclosing..." at the end of the letter.

Referring to future contact. You should also refer to future contact at the end of the letter, e.g. "I look forward to seeing you next Thursday."

Closing the letter. The closing of a letter depends on your relationship with the reader. "Yours faithfully" is more formal than "yours sincerely," while "best regards" is used if the reader is a close business contact or friend.

Sign your name. You should add your signature (sign your name by hand) after the close, and then type your name and position underneath.

Check for errors. You should always proofread the letter carefully before you send it, by checking for errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. As a final check, ask yourself if the letter is clear, concise, correct, courteous, concrete, convincing and complete.

3.2 Business Memos 商业便函

A common form of interdepartmental communication in business is the memorandum, usually called memo. Memos are written by everyone from junior executives and engineers to CEOs. Hence, it is essential to master this basic communication form.

A memo is a hard-copy (sent on paper) document. It is used for communication inside an organization, usually short. A memo contains “To,” “From,” “Date,” “Subject Heading” and “Message” sections. You must remember that a memo does not need to be signed, but sometimes having the sender’s name at the bottom is more friendly, and having the sender’s full name is more formal.

Memos should have the following sections and content: 1) A “To” section containing the name of the receiver. For informal memos, using the receiver’s given name, e.g. “To: Andy”, is enough. For more formal memos, use the receiver’s full name. If the receiver is in another department, use the full name and the department name. It is usually not necessary to use “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss” or “Ms.” unless the memo is very formal. 2) A “From” section containing the name of the sender. For informal memos, indicating the sender’s given name, e.g. “From: Bill”, is enough. For more formal memos, use the sender’s full name. If the receiver is in another department, use the full name and the department name. It is usually not necessary to use “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss” or “Ms.” unless the memo is very formal. 3) A “Date” section. To avoid confusion between the British and American date systems, write the month as a word or an abbreviation, e.g. “January” or “Jan.” 4) Subject heading. It identifies the topic of the memo. It must be brief and clear. 5) The message. A well-organized memo message should contain the purpose of the memo, a problem and its solution.

Memos have a twofold purpose: to bring attention to problems and to solve problems. They accomplish the purpose by informing the reader about new information like policy changes, price increases, or by persuading the reader to take an action, such as attending a meeting. Regardless of the specific goal, memos are most effective when they link the purpose of the writer with the interests and needs of the reader.

3.3 Business Report 商务报告

There is one key difference between reports and most other forms of business writing. With many other forms of business writing, you can be a little creative and put your own idea in your words; in a report you must not. Not in theory, anyway. In a report, we're supposed to report, not **embroider** or influence. Just state the facts, nothing but the facts.

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Within a business context, the main purpose of a report is to communicate ideas and information to your reader(s) so that they can extract specific material quickly and accurately. The best reports are written in a style that is clear with a logical structure which is easy to follow, and is concise and comes to the point.

There are a number of different types of business reports including: general business report, business plan, business proposal, marketing plan, strategic plan, business analysis, project report, project analysis, project proposal, project review, financial plan, financial analysis, and others.

For the sake of a good business report, we need to learn some techniques or tips for business report writing.

Confirm exactly what the client wants. This is a very important initial step. We have to be sure that everyone is talking about the same thing in terms of final outcome and expectations. We need to answer the following questions in our report: What issues must it address? What direction/guidance is it expected to give? What exactly will it contain? What bottom line are they looking for?

Determine what type of report is required. This is another very important initial matter to clarify. There are a number of different types of business reports. Do they want a business plan, a business proposal, a strategic business plan, a marketing plan, or a financial plan? Know exactly what type of report is expected from the outset.

Conduct the initial research. This stage may be as simple as collecting and reading a few background documents supplied by the client, or it could involve developing questionnaires and conducting detailed interviews with the appropriate people. It will vary with situation.

Write the Table of Contents first. Drafting the Table of Contents (TOC) before we start writing the actual report is the single key to developing a successful business report. This should be more than just a rough draft TOC. It should be a carefully thought out breakdown of exactly what we imagine the TOC will look like in the final report.

Carry out additional researches. If any additional research is required, do this extra information gathering before we sit down and start to actually write the report. In that way, we will have all of the information needed at hand once we begin the writing process.

Summary

Verbal Communication

1. Verbal communication includes oral communication and written communication.
2. Verbal communication can express all kinds of ideas we want to express. It can keep and disseminate information, and can be clearer and more efficient than other ways.
3. Semantics is a system that relates words to meaning. It is the study of the meaning of words. Frequently the same word can be misunderstood by people from two countries because of their different cultural backgrounds.
4. Pragmatics is the study of the effect that language has on human perceptions and behaviors. Pragmatics is the study of how speakers use the language to effect successful communication.
5. Language is the cornerstone of a culture. Language is part of culture. Language and culture interact and interplay.

Oral and Written Communication

1. Generally, there are three basic communication goals for giving oral presentations in business communication: to inform, to persuade, and to build goodwill.
2. Making calls is efficient and convenient for businesspeople to send and receive information in their intercultural communication. Most foreign businesspeople have a habit of using telephones for what they are going to do before or after business, most frequently for making appointments.
3. Written communication is the communication by means of written symbols, either printed or handwritten. Letters, memorandums, and reports are the primary means of exchanging written information in business.
4. Letter writing is a very important activity in day-to-day business and personal life. A good business letter is brief, straightforward and polite.
5. A memo is a hard-copy document. It is used for communicating inside an organization, usually short. A memo contains "To," "From," "Date," "Subject Heading" and "Message" sections.
6. In a report, we're supposed to report, not embroider or influence. Just state the facts, nothing but the facts. The best reports are written in a style that is clear with a logical structure which is easy to follow, and is concise and comes to the point.

Exercises

I. Match the terms with their definitions.

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|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| A. pragmatics | B. language | C. semantics |
| D. verbal communication | E. memo | |

1. () It is carried out either in oral or in written form with the use of words.
2. () It is the study of the meaning of words, a system that relates words to meaning.