Research on pragmatic failure in Business English based on cultural awareness

Yangye Xu

Shandong Vocational College of Foreign Affairs Translation, Weihai, Shandong, China

ABSTRACT: Business English is an important part of business negotiation. From the perspective of cultural differences in various countries, the pragmatic failure in the negotiation process is inevitable. This paper introduces the manifestation pattern of pragmatic failure in English, and establishes a hierarchical structure by the use of AHP, of which the target layer is the most prone areas of pragmatic failure; the criteria layer is the fuzzy words, people's names, tense and mood; the scheme layer is the food culture, traditional culture and etiquette culture, and also evaluates the most prone areas of pragmatic failure in these three aspects. The results show that, the probability of pragmatic failure for the food culture in Business English is the highest, followed by the etiquette culture. Under the premise of combination with the actual situation, this paper analyzes the rationality of the model.

Keywords: Business English; culture; pragmatic failure; hierarchical analysis

1   INTRODUCTION

With continuous strengthening of China's national strength, the international business negotiation gradually increases. English is an official language of international business negotiation. Its pragmatic failure affects the results of business negotiation. Due to differences in the geographical location in various countries, their customs and beliefs are also different. Translation in business negotiation is an important task. Flexible translation is a top priority to ensure rapid, time-saving and effort-saving translation [1]. Business English is involved in multiple areas of culture, such as food culture, etiquette culture and so on. During translation, objective and accurate representation, and rigorous logical structure are essential. Thus, in Business English, the pragmatic failure is inevitable. The scholar, Cheng Xin points out that the cross-cultural pragmatic failure mainly includes direct correspondence between English and Chinese, inappropriate conversion of expression structure and difference in cultural values [2]. Some scholars believe that the pragmatic failure in Business English is related to the mental culture. Philosophically speaking, Chinese culture should be classified into the humanistic culture, but Western culture should be classified into the scientific culture [3]. Chinese stresses feeling,

and complies with the entirety, while English has a higher requirement on the language logic, and focuses on individuals. These differences also result in pragmatic failure in Business English. Of course, the manifestation pattern of pragmatic failure is not single, for example, the failure in using modal words, personal pronouns, language tense and so on [4]. In this regard, this paper will use the mathematical theory to analyze the most prone areas of pragmatic failure in Business English.

2   MANIFESTATION PATTERN OF PRAGMATIC FAILURE IN ENGLISH

The manifestation pattern of pragmatic failure in English mainly includes inappropriate use of fuzzy words, unclear coreference of personal pronouns, faults in using tense and inappropriate use of modal words.

(1) Inappropriate use of fuzzy words

Fuzzy words refer to the words used to express the general meaning, but without a clear limited range. However, unclear limited range is determined by the features of objective things and the degree of public understanding of things. Inappropriate use of fuzzy words is likely to lead to failure in business negotiation [5]. Taking "bimonthly" as an example, it has two

meanings: on the one hand, it refers to "twice a month"; on the other hand, it refers to "once every two months". In the negotiation, the deadline in all aspects is very important. If such fuzzy words are used in the necessary link of date limitation, it may lead to failure in business negotiation.

(2) Inappropriate use of personal pronouns

In business negotiation, to express some opinions, there is a need to take into account each other's position, and properly handle various issues [6]. In Chinese exchange, "we are good at delivery service". If it is translated into English directly, it should be "We are proud of our delivery service." In the negotiation, the use of the first personal pronouns will leave a grandiose impression on others, and fail to comply with the principle of courtesy, and is not conducive to successful negotiation.

(3) Inappropriate use of tense

From the perspective of Chinese, the expression mode is mostly the active tense. However, the expression tense of English is mostly passive tense. During the negotiation, to express the other's fault, from the perspective of Chinese thinking, it may use the active tense. However, the active tense of Chinese thinking is likely to violate the etiquette principle of English, thus angering others, and leading to the failure in the negotiation.

(4) Inappropriate use of mood

To express the analytical language, the Chinese will use "if ...then" and other conjunctions. However, there are many virtual performance words in English. The manifestation pattern of each virtual word is different in use. During business negotiation, it is likely to inappropriate use of these virtual words, resulting in failure in the negotiation.

3 PRAGMATIC FAILURE IN CULTURAL FIELD

The cultural fields involved in pragmatic failure in English in business negotiation include Chinese traditional culture represented by the drama, the food culture represented by recipes and etiquette culture and so on. The following will use AHP to analyze the most prone areas of pragmatic failure in these three aspects.

3.1 *Principle of Analysis Hierarchy Process (AHP)*

AHP can solve the decision problems related to more complicated and ambiguous problems [7]. To use this method to construct the model generally requires four steps:
1) To establish a hierarchical structure program;
2) To construct each level of matrix used for judgment;
3) Single hierarchical arrangement and consistency test;
4) Total hierarchical arrangement and consistency test;

5) The following content respectively illustrates detailed process of each step.

3.1.1 *Hierarchical structure*
The problems solved by *AHP* should be hierarchical, methodical and logical. Only in this way can we construct a hierarchical program. The elements in the complicated issue can be formed as a plurality of progressive layers according to their properties, degree of membership and relationship. Last layer of elements is capable of playing a dominant role. Under normal circumstances, these levels are divided into three categories:

(1) Top layer: this layer contains only one factor, which is usually the ultimate goal of the researched issue. This layer can also be called as the target layer.

(2) Middle layer: this layer involves in an intermediate process to achieve the target, which may be a plurality of layers, containing a plurality of multi-layer criteria to be considered. It can also be called as the criteria layer.

(3) Bottom layer: this layer contains a variety of methods and means available for achieving the target. It can also be called as the measure layer or scheme layer.

The number of layer of the hierarchical structure is related to the degree of complication of the researched issue and the analyzed detailed requirements. Generally, the number of layer is not limited, and the factors dominated by each element in each layer are no more than nine. Hierarchical structure is shown in Figure 1.
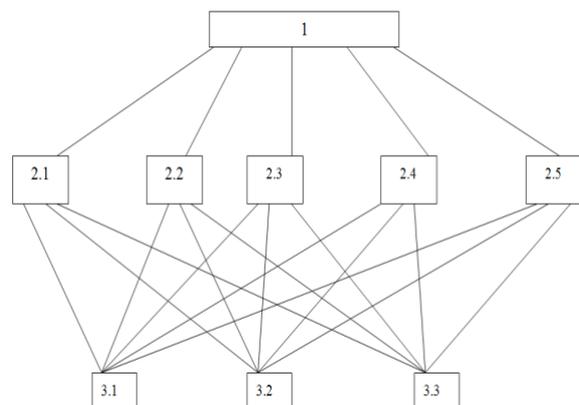

Figure 1. Hierarchical structure chart

In Figure 1, the first layer is the target layer, that is, the ultimate goal of the researched issue; the second layer is the criteria layer, that is, the intermediate process of the researched problem; the third layer is the scheme layer, that is, various reference schemes.

3.1.2 *Construction of judgment matrix*
The structure between each layer is capable of expressing the relationship between factors, but the proportion of each factor of the middle layer in the evaluation of the target is basically not the same. In the

mind of evaluators, each factor has a certain proportion.

In determining the proportion of various factors, there is a need to compare with the degree of influence of n factors on the factor $X=\{x_1,\ldots,x_n\}$. *Saaty*, et al proposes the pairwise comparison with the factors, and constructs the method of comparison matrix. That is, to select two factors, x_i and x_j every time, a_{ij} is used to express the proportion of the degree of influence of x_i and x_j on Z All of the comparison is expressed by the matrix A=$(a_{ij})_{n\times n}$. A becomes the judgment matrix between Z-X. As can be seen from the matrix, if the proportion of the influence of x_i and x_j on Z is a_{ij}, the proportion of influence of x_j and x_i on Z is $a_{ji}=\dfrac{1}{a_{ij}}$.

According to the theoretical knowledge of linear algebra, if the matrix A=$(a_{ij})_{n\times n}$ meets $a_{ij}>0$ and $a_{ji}=\dfrac{1}{a_{ij}}(i,j=1,2,\cdots,n)$, then the matrix A is a positive reciprocal matrix.

The determination of the value a_{ij} can be based on the scale table as follows:

Table 1 Scale table

Scale	Meaning
1	Indicating that two comparative elements have an equal importance
3	Indicating that the former comparative element is slightly important than the latter one.
5	Indicating that the former comparative element is significantly important than the latter one.
7	Indicating that the former comparative element is much more important than the latter one.
9	Indicating that the former comparative element is extremely important than the latter one.
2,4,6,8	Indicating that it is in the intermediate degree of the above judgment.
Reciprocal	Indicating that the ratio of the importance of i and j is a_{ij}, and the ratio of the importance of j and i is $a_{ji}=\dfrac{1}{a_{ij}}$

3.1.3 *Construction of judgment matrix*

The eigenvector W of the maximum value λ_{max} of the eigenvalues corresponding to the matrix A is normalized, that is, the rank weight of importance of the corresponding elements at the same level for some factors at the last level. This process is called as a single hierarchical arrangement. This process can reduce the interference of other factors, but inconsistency is inevitable after a comprehensive comparison of the results. If the comparison results are the same, the factors of A also need to meet:

$$a_{ij}a_{jk}=a_{ik},\forall i,j,k=1,2,\cdots,n \qquad (1)$$

The positive reciprocal matrix meeting the above formula is called as a consistent matrix. To facilitate

determining whether A can be accepted, there is a must to verify whether the inconsistency of A is very serious.

If A is a consistent matrix, then
1) A must be a positive reciprocal matrix.
2) The transposed matrix A^T is a consistent matrix.
3) Any two rows of the matrix A are proportional, are the factor is greater than 0. Therefore, $rank(A)=1$, which is the same as the column.
4) For A, $\lambda_{max}=n$ is the order number of the matrix A is n. Other eigenvalue of A is 0.
5) The corresponding eigenvector of λ_{max} is $W=(w_1,\ldots,w_n)^T$, and $a_{ij}=\dfrac{w_i}{w_j},\forall i,j=1,2,\cdots,n$, then

$$A=\begin{bmatrix} \dfrac{w_1}{w_1} & \dfrac{w_1}{w_2} & \cdots & \dfrac{w_1}{w_n} \\ \dfrac{w_2}{w_1} & \dfrac{w_2}{w_2} & \cdots & \dfrac{w_2}{w_n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ \dfrac{w_n}{w_1} & \dfrac{w_n}{w_2} & \cdots & \dfrac{w_n}{w_n} \end{bmatrix} \qquad (2)$$

A is the positive reciprocal matrix of the order n. When it is a consistent matrix, if and only if $\lambda_{max}=n$ and when A is inconsistent, $\lambda_{max}>n$. Accordingly, whether A is a consistent matrix can be tested through the relationship between λ_{max} and n.

Steps of consistency test of A:
(1) To calculate the consistency target CI,

$$CI=\frac{\lambda_{max}-n}{n-1} \qquad (3)$$

(2) To search the corresponding mean random consistency index RI. Saaty researches the values of RI. The values of RI are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Values of RI

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
RI	0	0	0.58	0.90	1.12	1.24	1.32	1.41	1.45

The values of RI are obtained from randomly constructing 500 sample matrices. The positive reciprocal matrix is constructed through randomly selecting digits from 1 to 9 and their reciprocals, in order to calculate the average value of the maximum eigenvalues λ'_{max}, and define

$$RI=\frac{\lambda'_{max}-n}{n-1} \qquad (4)$$

(3) To solve the consistency ratio CR

$$CR=\frac{CI}{RI} \qquad (5)$$

When *CR* <0.10, the consistency of *A* can be passed. On the contrary, it should be adjusted.

In this process, it also includes the total hierarchical arraignment and consistency test, which will be directly used, rather than theoretical narration due to limited space.

3.2 Evaluation Process

3.2.1 Hierarchical structure of pragmatic failure

The hierarchical structure of pragmatic failure includes the pragmatic manifestation and areas of pragmatic failure, as shown in Figure 2.
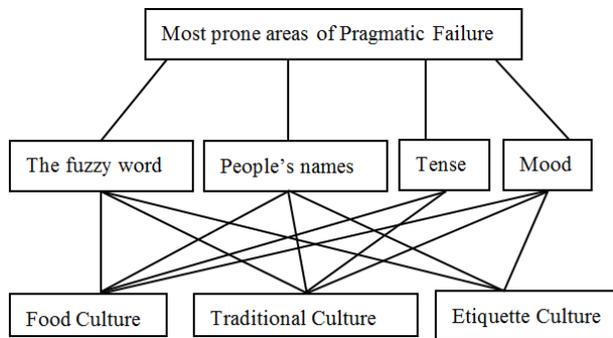

Figure 2. Pragmatic failure hierarchy diagram

Figure 2 shows that the target layer is the most prone areas of pragmatic failure, the criteria layer includes the fuzzy words, people's names, tense and mood, and the scheme layer includes food culture, traditional culture and etiquette culture.

3.2.2 Construction of judgment matrix

Data collection is completed in the form of questionnaire. 200 business negotiation translators are randomly selected to select important factors in the criteria layer. A total of 200 questionnaires are distributed, of which 184 copies are recovered, with a recovery rate of 92%. Therefore, the investigation is effective [8]. After finishing, the investigation results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Importance of factors in post-disaster reconstruction management plan

	No.	Percentage (%)	Rank
Mood	92	46	1
Fuzzy words	59	29.5	2
People's name	36	18	3
Tense	13	6.5	4

According to the data in Table 3, combined with the construction principle of judgment matrix, the comparison matrix of the target layer is constructed, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Pairwise comparison matrix of the target layer

A	B_1	B_2	B_3	B_4
B_1	1	3	5	7
B_2	1/3	1	3	5
B_3	1/5	1/3	1	3
B_4	1/7	1/5	1/3	1

The comparison matrix of the scheme layer is to compare with several schemes under one kind of influence factor. The matrix construction method is the same with the above matrix construction method, with an illustration.

Table 5. Pairwise comparison matrix of the scheme layer (B_1)

B_1	P_1	P_2	P_3
P_1	1	3	2
P_2	1/3	1	1/2
P_3	1/2	2	1

Table 6. Pairwise comparison matrix of the scheme layer (B_2)

B_2	P_1	P_2	P_3
P_1	1	5	3
P_2	1/5	1	1/3
P_3	1/3	3	1

Table 7. Pairwise comparison matrix of the scheme layer (B_3)

B_3	P_1	P_2	P_3
P_1	1	2	1/2
P_2	1/2	1	1/3
P_3	2	3	1

3.3 Evaluation results

The above hierarchical analysis process can be calculated through *Matlab* software programming. The calculation results are shown in Table 8 [9-11].

As can be seen from Table 8, the scheme 1 is the most feasible scheme. That is, the probability of pragmatic failure for food culture in Business English is the highest, followed by the etiquette culture.

4 CONCLUSION

This paper calculates the probability of pragmatic failure of Business English in different areas by the use of AHP. The calculation result shows that, the probability of pragmatic failure for food culture in Business English is the highest, followed by the etiquette culture. In terms of the food culture, it is diffi-

Table 8. Calculation results

Target layer		B_1	B_2	B_3	B_4	Total weight
Weight of target layer		0.4643	0.2389	0.1887	0.1081	
Single hierarchical arrangement of target layer	Food culture	0.5396	0.6370	0.2970	0.6370	0.5276
	Traditional culture	0.1634	0.1047	0.1634	0.1047	0.1430
	Etiquette culture	0.2970	0.2583	0.5396	0.2583	0.3294

cult to express China's "characteristics dishes", for example, couples lobe, kung pao chicken and so on. Therefore, combined with the actual situation, the model established in this paper can accurately evaluate the pragmatic failure of Business English in various areas. In addition, the model can also be applied to research the pragmatic failure of other languages. Of course, in different evaluation systems, the proportion of various factors is different. Therefore, there is a need to re-set the proportion.

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