

跨文化交际中商务英语邮件的礼貌言语研究

学校编码: 10384

分类号 \_\_\_\_\_ 密级 \_\_\_\_\_

学号: X2007111011

UDC \_\_\_\_\_

厦门大学

硕士学位论文

跨文化交际中商务英语邮件的礼貌言语研究

Study on the Politeness in Business English Email  
in Cross-Cultural Communication

陈少姿

陈少姿

指导教师姓名: 林晓英 副教授

专业名称: 英语语言文学

论文提交日期: 2012年4月

论文答辩日期: 2012年 月

学位授予日期: 2012年 月

指导教师: 林晓英 副教授

答辩委员会主席: \_\_\_\_\_

评 阅 人: \_\_\_\_\_

2012年4月

厦门大学



## 厦门大学学位论文原创性声明

本人呈交的学位论文是本人在导师指导下,独立完成的研究成果。本人在论文写作中参考其他个人或集体已经发表的研究成果,均在文中以适当方式明确标明,并符合法律规范和《厦门大学研究生学术活动规范(试行)》。

另外,该学位论文为( )课题(组)的研究成果,获得( )课题(组)经费或实验室的资助,在( )实验室完成。(请在以上括号内填写课题或课题组负责人或实验室名称,未有此项声明内容的,可以不作特别声明。)

声明人(签名):

年 月 日



## 厦门大学学位论文著作权使用声明

本人同意厦门大学根据《中华人民共和国学位条例暂行实施办法》等规定保留和使用此学位论文，并向主管部门或其指定机构送交学位论文（包括纸质版和电子版），允许学位论文进入厦门大学图书馆及其数据库被查阅、借阅。本人同意厦门大学将学位论文加入全国博士、硕士学位论文共建单位数据库进行检索，将学位论文的标题和摘要汇编出版，采用影印、缩印或者其它方式合理复制学位论文。

本学位论文属于：

（        ）1. 经厦门大学保密委员会审查核定的保密学位论文，  
于     年     月     日解密，解密后适用上述授权。

（        ）2. 不保密，适用上述授权。

（请在以上相应括号内打“√”或填上相应内容。保密学位论文应是已经厦门大学保密委员会审定过的学位论文，未经厦门大学保密委员会审定的学位论文均为公开学位论文。此声明栏不填写的，默认为公开学位论文，均适用上述授权。）

声明人（签名）：

年     月



## Abstract

Business English email plays an important role in international business communication. It not only passes business information rapidly, but also accelerates cross-border business transactions and the establishment of good business relations. Therefore business English email is required to be well constructed with courtesy to meet its functions. Since politeness is one of the significant principles in business email, researchers have performed investigations and studies on the application of the Politeness Principle in business English email. However, different cultures may have different perceptions of the politeness. Research on application of the Politeness Principle in business English email from a cross-cultural communication perspective is necessary.

This paper intends to provide a study on politeness in business English email from a cross-cultural communication perspective. The author collected and chose eighty business English emails written by professional business persons from different countries as the research data, instead of specimens from textbooks. The first-hand materials provide authentic and reliable data for the analysis. Meanwhile, we adopted the new way of classifying cultural groups as either an information-oriented culture or a relationship-oriented culture. Qualitative and quantitative analyses are used to analyze and discuss the application of the Politeness Principle and its maxims in business English email.

The study is carried out in three parts. The first part presents the definition and classification of business English email, which is classified into four types of email, collaborative email, convivial email, competitive email and conflictive email; then it reviews the previous studies on business English email. A theoretical framework is provided. Pragmatic theories are put forward by politeness theories and speech act theories, and the cross-cultural communication theories consisting of Hall's cultural theories, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and Cateora and Graham's classification of cultural groups, which divide the cultures into an information-oriented culture and a relationship-oriented culture. The second part conducts the qualitative and

quantitative analyses on the collected data. It first introduces the research methodology and data collection. Detailed language analysis of the observance of the Politeness Principle is carried out on sixteen representative business emails from two cultural backgrounds. Finally the frequency of the use of the Politeness Principle in various types of email is computed. The third part discusses the results of the data analysis. The study finds that in business English email, the writers from both cultures observe the Politeness Principle, but generally, writers from relationship-oriented culture use maxims of the Politeness Principle more frequently than writers from the information-oriented culture. Also in the four types of email, different preferences in using maxims of the Politeness Principle are found between the two cultures. Finally we discuss the impact of cultural differences on the similarities and differences between the two cultures in employing the Politeness Principle in business English email.

This research examines the observance of the Politeness Principle and its maxims in business English email from a perspective of cross-cultural business communication. It testifies to the fact that the observance of the Politeness Principle exists in business English email, and points out the similarities and differences on the application of the Politeness Principle among different cultures. This research may also serve as the reference for cross-cultural business communication teaching and cross-cultural language teaching. As time and samples are limited, further research is necessary to enrich this study.

**Key words:** Politeness Principle; Business English Email; Information-oriented Culture; Relationship-oriented Culture

## 摘要

英语邮件是国际商务交流的重要沟通方式之一，不仅迅速及时传递各种信息，得体礼貌的商务英语邮件还能促进跨国间的贸易往来和良好商务关系的建立。礼貌是商务英语邮件写作的一个重要原则，研究者对礼貌原则在商务英语邮件中的运用也做了调查和研究，而不同文化对礼貌有不同的理解，从跨文化沟通的角度对礼貌原则在商务英语邮件中的使用的研究很有必要。

本文试图从跨文化沟通的角度对商务英语邮件进行礼貌言语研究。作者收集并筛选八十封来自不同国家作者的商务英语邮件，而非来自原有教科书中的范例，作为本研究的数据进行分析和研究，这些第一手资料提供了更真实可靠的分析数据；同时采用较新颖的文化分类方式-信息导向文化和关系导向文化，并通过定量和定性的分析方法，来分析和讨论商务英语邮件中礼貌原则及其各准则在不同文化邮件中的应用。

本文的论述分为三大部分。第一部分首先讨论商务英语邮件的定义及分类，将其分为合作类，和谐类，竞争类和冲突类四类邮件，并回顾了商务英语邮件的研究成果。接着阐释了全文的理论基础，包括语用学的礼貌理论和言语行为理论，以及跨文化沟通方面的霍尔的文化理论，霍夫斯坦德的文化维度理论，凯特奥拉和格雷厄姆的文化分类方式—信息导向文化和关系导向文化，在此基础上搭建了研究的理论框架。第二部分具体对所收集的语料进行定量和定性分析。首先描述了研究方法和语料收集。接着运用礼貌原则针对两种文化的四类邮件，详细分析十六封代表性的邮件，再统计出礼貌原则在各类邮件中出现的频率。第三部分提出数据分析结果。发现在商务英语邮件中，来自两个文化的作者都运用了礼貌原则以达到更有效的沟通，但总体来自关系文化的邮件运用礼貌原则的频率更高。在四类邮件中，两种文化作者有着不同的使用偏好。最后讨论了文化差异与对礼貌原则使用存在不同偏好的影响。

本实证研究从跨文化商务沟通角度分析礼貌原则及各准则在商务英语邮件中的使用情况，证实了礼貌原则的使用存在于商务英语邮件中，并且不同文化间邮件运用礼貌原则及其各准则的遵循存在差异。本研究可以作为跨文化商务沟

通及跨文化语言教学的参考。由于研究时间及取样有限，还需进一步证实和丰富本研究的结论。

**关键词：** 礼貌原则；商务英语邮件；信息导向文化；关系导向文化

厦门大学博硕

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One Literature Review .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.1 The Definition of Business English Email.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 Classification of Business English Email.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.2.1 Classification Based on the Process of the International Business Transaction .....	7
1.2.2 Classification Based on Communicative Goals.....	9
<b>1.3 Previous study on Business English Email.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter Two Theoretical Framework of the Study .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.1 Pragmatic Perspective.....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1.1 Politeness Theory .....	15
2.1.2 Speech Acts Theory.....	20
<b>2.2 Cross-cultural Communication Perspective .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.2.1 Edward T. Hall's Concepts about Culture .....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.2.2 Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions.....	26
2.2.3 Cateora and Graham's Classification of Cultural Groups: Relationship-oriented versus Information-oriented Cultures .....	31
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter Three Research Methodology and Data Collection .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.1 The Methodology of the Present Study .....</b>	<b>35</b>

3.2 The Description of the Data.....	36
Summary .....	37
<b>Chapter Four Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.1 Application of the Politeness Principle in Business English Email.....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1.1 Application of Tact Maxim and Generosity Maxim .....	39
4.1.2 Application of Approbation Maxim and Modesty Maxim .....	41
4.1.3 Application of Agreement Maxim.....	42
4.1.4 Application of Sympathy Maxim .....	42
<b>4.2 Case study of the Politeness Principle in Business English Email .....</b>	<b>43</b>
4.2.1 Politeness Principle in Convivial Email .....	43
4.2.2 Politeness Principle in Collaborative Email .....	50
4.2.3 Politeness Principle in Competitive Email .....	57
4.2.4 Politeness Principle in Conflictive Email.....	66
<b>4.3 Comparison and Analysis.....</b>	<b>74</b>
4.3.1 Distribution of the Use of the Politeness Principle in the Two Cultural Groups .....	74
4.3.2 Distribution of the Politeness Principle in the Four Types of Business English Email .....	76
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Chapter Five Results and Discussion.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>5.1 Results and Discussion in the Use of the Politeness Principle in the Two     Cultures.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>5.2 Results and Discussion in the Use of the Politeness Principle in the Four     Types of Business English Email .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>95</b>

# 目 录

摘要.....	I
引言.....	1
<b>第一章 文献回顾 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
介绍.....	5
1.1 商务英语邮件的定义及其功能.....	5
1.2 商务英语邮件的分类.....	7
1.2.1 基于国际商务流程的分类.....	7
1.2.2 基于交际目标的分类.....	9
1.3 商务英语邮件的研究回顾.....	12
总结.....	14
<b>第二章 理论框架 .....</b>	<b>15</b>
介绍.....	15
2.1 语用学理论.....	15
2.1.1 礼貌理论.....	15
2.1.2 言语行为理论.....	20
2.2 跨文化交际理论.....	24
2.2.1 霍尔关于文化的概念.....	24
2.2.2 霍夫斯坦德的文化维度理论.....	26
2.2.3 凯特奥拉和格雷厄姆的文化分类方式——关系导向文化和信息导向文化.....	31
总结.....	33
<b>第三章 研究方法和语料收集 .....</b>	<b>35</b>
介绍.....	35
3.1 研究方法.....	35
3.2 语料描述.....	36
总结.....	37

<b>第四章 语料分析 .....</b>	<b>39</b>
介绍.....	39
4.1 礼貌原则在商务英语邮件中的应用.....	39
4.1.1 得体准则和慷慨准则的应用.....	39
4.1.2 赞誉准则和谦逊准则的应用.....	41
4.1.3 一致准则的应用.....	42
4.1.4 同情准则的应用.....	42
4.2 礼貌原则在商务英语邮件中应用的范例分析.....	43
4.2.1 礼貌原则在和谐类邮件中的应用.....	43
4.2.2 礼貌原则在合作类邮件中的应用.....	50
4.2.3 礼貌原则在竞争类邮件中的应用.....	57
4.2.4 礼貌原则在冲突类邮件中的应用.....	66
4.3 比较和分析.....	74
4.3.1 礼貌原则在两类文化邮件中的应用.....	74
4.3.2 礼貌原则在四类邮件中的应用.....	76
总结.....	80
<b>第五章 研究结果和相关讨论 .....</b>	<b>81</b>
介绍.....	81
5.1 礼貌原则在两类文化邮件中应用的结果和讨论.....	81
5.2 礼貌原则在四类邮件中应用的结果和讨论.....	83
总结.....	86
<b>结论.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>参考文献 .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>致谢.....</b>	<b>95</b>

## **Introduction**

The present thesis intends to provide a pragmatic analysis of the politeness in business English email from a perspective of cross-cultural communication. This chapter introduces the significance and objective of the present study, and presents the methodology and layout of the thesis briefly.

### **The Significance of the Study**

Business English email plays a key role in business English written communication. Firstly, business professionals from different countries need to communicate and exchange information in every aspect of business such as importing goods, making shipment, urging payments etc. With the advantage of its effectiveness of transmitting within a few seconds and keeping a permanent record of the message, business email becomes a vital way of cross-country communication. Secondly, either for native-speaker or non-native speaker, English has become the working language for business partners from countries all over the world. For example, a Pakistan buyer signs a sales contract with his/her French partner in English, or a Japanese importer sends English quotation email to the German counter-partner.

Many researches of written business English communication have been done on pragmatic studies, such as politeness analysis of written business English materials. However, many of the researches focus on business letters but not business emails, and the analytical materials are “specimen letters” gained from textbooks. The significance of the present study is its reliable materials, with the first-hand business English email obtained from international business companies written by business persons with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, results from the current study may provide more convincing reliable information.

According to Leech (2005), Brown and Levinson (1978), politeness is universal phenomenon, and would be observed in all society and culture. Cao Ling (曹菱, 2000:31) points out that courtesy is one of the vital principles for written business

communication. Thus, this present study assumes that politeness could be observed in business English email. For business English email in polite nature, such as establishing business relations, politeness would be observed to build stronger business relations. For the impolite business English email such as complaining the quality, politeness would be observed to reduce the negative feeling of others and save the business relations. Thus, it is significant and meaningful for the study on the observance and application of politeness in business English email no matter such email is in polite or impolite nature.

Business English email is written by people from different countries all over the world with different cultural backgrounds. Affected by various cultural values, business English email writing may have different features and preferences in observing politeness. Research has been carried out to study whether and how business English email observes politeness by comparing with different cultures. The comparisons are usually made between Chinese culture and American culture, or eastern culture and western culture. Yet, in fact the international business persons are from all over the world in any culture. The present study will adopt a new and logical way of culture division by classifying the world culture into the relationship-oriented culture and information-oriented culture, which is proposed by Cateora and Graham (2004:122-123). Thus, our study will be carried out by the analysis of politeness in business English email in the relationship-oriented culture and information-oriented culture.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

He Zhaoxiong (何兆熊, 1999:249) mentions in his book *A New Introduction to Pragmatics* the main topics for cross-cultural pragmatics, which are cross-cultural pragmalinguistics, cross-cultural sociopragmatics, and interlanguage pragmatics. One of the topics in cross-cultural sociopragmatics is to make research in the difference in observing Leech (1983:132)'s Politeness Principle and its maxims in different cultures. The present research falls in the scope of the cross-cultural sociopragmatics. The study will examine the observance and application of Leech's Politeness Principle and

Degree papers are in the "[Xiamen University Electronic Theses and Dissertations Database](#)". Full texts are available in the following ways:

1. If your library is a CALIS member libraries, please log on <http://etd.calis.edu.cn/> and submit requests online, or consult the interlibrary loan department in your library.
2. For users of non-CALIS member libraries, please mail to [etd@xmu.edu.cn](mailto:etd@xmu.edu.cn) for delivery details.

廈門大學博碩