

Original Paper

The Pragmatic Function of Vague Language in Business Letters

Guided by the Relevance Theory

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Abstract

Trade between China and foreign countries is increasingly frequent. As the medium of communication, business letters are playing a more and more important role in trading. It is easy to find that vague language is widely used in business letters. The successful use of vague language requires the recipient to be able to infer the writer's intention correctly. This paper takes business letters collected online and offline as corpus, and will analyze the vague language from two aspects, that is, lexical aspect and syntactic aspect. Based on the analysis finally summarize the three main pragmatic functions of vague language in business letters, namely intent expression, self-protection and politeness.

Keywords

vague language, business letters, relevance theory, pragmatic functions

1. Introduction

The earliest study of vague language comes from Lakoff, who proposed the concept of hedge in his masterpiece, *Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts*. In China, the study of vague language began in the late 1970s. Wu Tieping is usually considered as the first one who started systematic research on linguistic vagueness in China. His article *A Preliminary Research on Fuzzy Language* is regarded as the earliest paper applying the vague theory on the systematical analysis of vagueness in language, which marks the beginning of vague linguistics in China. Just as Lu Ling described in *fuzzy linguistics from multiple perspectives* that “diplomacy, as a special occasion, the two sides of the speaker should not only achieve a certain purpose, but also avoid conflict and dispute” (Lu, 2010). English business letters have always been written with specificity, conciseness, and clarity as the writing principles, and the “7C principles” that have been followed for a long time make people think that vague language should be avoided as much as possible in business letters writing. However, through the observation and analysis of a large number of business letters, it is easy to find that vague

language widely exists in all kinds of business letters, and it can greatly improve the flexibility of language expression and make business letters more polite and decent (Zhou, 2013). Indirect motivation for using vague language in business writing style is politeness, while the direct and fundamental motivation is not to convey politeness, but to make the recipient realize the communicative intention of the correspondent, that is, to obtain contextual effects (Zhou, 2003).

Since the concept of “vagueness” was put forward, people have conducted systematic research on vague language. Business letters often required to be clear and rigorous, and followed the 7C principle, so the study of vague language in business letters is often ignored. However, vague language has pragmatic functions that concrete language cannot express. The correct use of vague language can smooth communication between the two sides of trade, reduce conflicts, so as to achieve cooperation. Therefore, this paper will summarize the pragmatic functions of vague language in business letters by analyzing a large number of vague language in business letters. This study is very helpful for people to better understand and better use of vague language in the process of trading.

2. Brief Introduction of Vague Language and Relevance Theory

2.1 Vague Language

The systematic study of vague language has a long history. Firstly, the research on language at home and abroad mainly focuses on the semantic field. In recent years, some scholars in linguistics have studied the pragmatic function of vague language. The frequent use of vague language in human verbal communication has aroused the increasing attention and profound discussion of vague phenomena in language by scholars at home and abroad.

The definition of the vagueness is essentially a vague concept. Scholars have discussed this issue from their own interests and have produced different viewpoints. So far, there has been no agreement on the definition of the term of vagueness. However, from the definitions of these scholars, we can see the common features of vagueness.

Pierce is often considered the founder of the concept of vague language. He tried to in a rigorous way to describe the concept of vagueness, his expression is as follows:

“A proposition is vague where there are possible states of things concerning which it is intrinsically uncertain whether, had they been contemplated by the speaker, he would have regarded them as excluded or allowed by the proposition. By intrinsically uncertain we mean not uncertain in consequence of any ignorance of the interpreter, but because the speaker’s habits of language were indeterminate; so that one day he would regard the proposition as excluding, another as admitting, those states of things. Yet this must be understood to have reference to what might be deduced from a perfect knowledge of his state of mind; for it is precisely because these questions never did, or did not frequently, present them that his habit remained indeterminate” (Peirce, 1902).

Later, Professor Zadeh, an expert in cybernetic at the University of California, published his first paper on “fuzzy set” in the Journal of information and control, and put forward the concept of vagueness theory, which laid the foundation for vagueness linguistics to become a new discipline. Many linguists in China have also studied vague language mainly from the perspective of pragmatics. Professor Wu Tieping of Beijing Normal University first introduced vagueness theory into the field of linguistics in his article *a preliminary study of vague language*. He defined vagueness as “in human language, many words express concepts without precise edges, that is, they are so-called vagueness”. Then, the research of vague language in China has gradually developed and become a new field of language research. Channell in her book *vague language* analyzed ten pragmatic functions of vague language. Such as withholding information, persuasion, self-protection, power and politeness, informality and atmosphere and so on. She believed that “people choose vague language as a language strategy for the purpose of expressing politeness, providing appropriate information and self-protection, which reflects different pragmatic functions” (Channell, 1994). Sperber and Wilson’s relevance theory provides a convincing explanation and description of vague language phenomena. It believes that “vagueness appears in loose talk and is a part of natural language” (Sperber & Wilson, 1991).

As business letters involve the interests of enterprises, Business English letters require accurate and rigorous language expression. In order not to cause unnecessary misunderstanding, enterprises should avoid using language that will cause ambiguity. However, in business communication activities, vague language plays a very important and even irreplaceable role. The correct use of vague language can better express the intention of the writer, reduce risks to protect their own interests, and show politeness. Therefore, enterprises should appropriately use vague language, give full play to its positive pragmatic role, and promote cooperation among enterprises.

2.2 Relevance Theory

In 1986, French linguist and philosopher Dan Sperber and British linguist Deirdre Wilson put forward the relevance theory. They pointed out that “language communication is an ostensive-inferential behavior process. Ostension is the process in which the speaker needs to clearly show the informative intention, and inference is the process in which the listener understands the discourse according to the speaker’s ostensive behavior. Language communication is based on the optimal relevance. In order to minimize the efforts made by the listener in the process of understanding the speaker’s utterances, the speaker should let the listener obtain the optimal relevance from ostension, so as to further understand the speaker’s communicative intention” (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). It provides a new way to the study of human communication and information transmission.

Vague language itself is not good or bad. The important thing is how to use vague language reasonably to complete the communication task and improve the communicative effect. The communication view of relevance theory regards verbal communication as an ostensive-inferential cognitive process, and the realization of cognition lies in its relevance. Therefore, verbal communication guided by the relevance theory is a purposeful and dynamic process, which is ostensibly expressed by the speaker and inferred

by the listener. According to the relevance theory, every explicit communicative act should be assumed to have the optimal relevance, that is, the sufficient contextual effect obtained after making effective efforts in discourse understanding. In English Business letters, in order to achieve the optimal relevance, the writer must express the communicative intention in a way that is easy to be understood.

Vague language in business letters can be used in many forms, both lexical and syntactic. Writers often use vague language to convey a specific intent, and expect the hidden meaning could be understood by the receiver, that is, the use of vague language should achieve the optimal relevance. This paper will analyze a large number of vague language in business letters from different aspects and summarize the main pragmatic functions of them.

3. Case Analysis of Vague Language in Business Letters

The following section intends to analyze the pragmatic functions of vague language in business letters from the following two aspects: lexical vagueness and syntactic vagueness.

3.1 Lexical Vagueness

Vague words widely exist in the process of language use. Vague verbs, adjectives, adverbs, quantifiers and prepositions are vague language at lexical aspect.

3.1.1 Verbs

“Verbs are used in Business English letters to express the writers’ assessments of the truth of the propositions expressed and the bases on the judgments” (Xiong, 2011). In international Business English letters, the senders use vague verbs to show their attitudes towards the aspects of dilemma. Verbs such as “believe” can be used to express one’s personal statement. Vague verbs can also be used to express suggestions, such as “ought to”, “should”, “shall”, “demand” and so on. To show psychological actions, we can use vague verbs like “regret”, “hate” and so forth. To express an attitude we can use vague verbs like “hope”, “recognize”, “want”, “wish” and “like”. To show changes we can use vague verbs like “improve”, “strengthen”, “change” and so on. The following are some examples:

(1) We *regret* to say that there is no possibility of our cutting the price to the extent you indicated. By using the vague verb “regret”, the writer euphemistically expresses his rejection of the opponent’s counter-offer. It is better than rejecting the other party directly and decisively. Through a polite rejection, it not only preserves the face of both sides, but also creates conditions for continued cooperation in the future. So “regret” shows the pragmatic function of politeness.

(2) We *hope* the above payment terms are acceptable to you and look forward to your confirmation.

The writer uses the vague verb “hope” in this sentence intends to persuade the other side to accept the above payment terms. The writer thinks the payment terms he puts forward are reasonable, and implicitly suggests the recipient to accept his request. So “hope” shows the pragmatic function of intent expression.

3.1.2 Adjectives

Adjectives are widely used in business English letters to make information uncertain, tentative, or less precise. Depending on the different properties of adjectives, they have the following functions to denote vagueness the first is to express the degree: large, small, big, high, little, more, firm, best, further, huge; the second is to display the characteristic of the goods: poor, serious, good, defective, bad, unacceptable, damaged; the third is to modify the price of the goods: competitive, high, low, reasonable, cheap, rational, dear, expensive, unacceptable; the last is to clarify people's attitudes: glad, pleased, unsatisfied, disappointed, content, sorry. The following are some examples:

(3) We are indeed *sorry* you find our prices too *high*. This sentence uses two vague adjectives, which are "sorry" and "high". Word "sorry" implicitly shows the writer's refusal attitude. The reason for the rejection is that the other party's price is too high. The whole sentence is not to directly force the other party to reduce the price, but to express the price is too high in a tentative method. The writer through using these words to provide a ostension of lower the price, and the other party can easily infer the writers thought through these two words. So "sorry" and "high" show the pragmatic function of intent expression.

(4) A *suitable* settlement will be reached in Qingdao.

This sentence uses the vague adjective "suitable". It does not directly propose what the settlement is like, but promises the other party that he will give a suitable settlement. This not only expresses writer's determination to solve the problem, but also reduces his risk in trading. So "suitable" shows the pragmatic function of self-protection.

3.1.3 Adverbs

Vague adverbs traditionally associated with epistemic meaning are always employed for vagueness. Vague adverbs can be divided into the following groups as degree-showing: generally, considerably, firmly, quickly, extremely, deeply, substantially, strongly, broadly, thoroughly, entirely, especially; time-showing: promptly, sometimes, quickly, early, immediately, soon, late; possibility-showing: perhaps, maybe, probably; frequency-showing: typically, often, usually, rarely, always, commonly. For example:

(5) As we *generally* require payment by irrevocable letter of credit available by draft as sight, we cannot make any arrangement contrary to our usual practice, *especially* for a new customer.

In example fifth, the writer of these sentences use vague words and phrases such as "generally", "especially for new customers" to avoid giving any specific information. From the information conveyed, it is difficult for the recipient to reason without knowing whether there is actually such a policy, or whether the content of the policy is what the writer says it is. However, if we remove the vague statement in the letter, though it not affecting the author's main intent, could seriously damage the relationship of both sides. It is easy to find that "generally" and "especially" show the pragmatic function of self-protection.

(6) As you *probably* know, the same furniture available at present made by several Guangdong factories is of good quality and the price is 10% lower than yours.

The furniture company with the lower price in example six may not exist, but “probably” reduces the writer’s responsibility even if the information is unreliable. It is also easy for the recipient to infer that the company may actually exist or not. Therefore, “probably” shows the pragmatic function of self-protection.

3.1.4 Quantifiers

Quantifiers are widely used in Business English letters to tell the number of the products and other things. There are singular quantifiers: a mass of, a bit of, a load of, a touch of, a great scale of, a scrap of, a consignment of; plural quantifiers: lots of, oodles of, masses of, bags of, boxes of, humps of, loads of, varieties of, humps of; while types as some, many, umpteen, several, few and a few belong to vague quantifier. For example:

(7) We have received *a lot of* inquiries from other buyers and they feel satisfied with our price; some have made orders; some are ready to make orders.

In example seventh, by using “a lot of”, the writer implicitly revealed that his goods were very popular, because many people inquired and placed orders. In this way, it can persuade buyers to buy their products and achieve the purpose of marketing. So “a lot of” shows the pragmatic function of intent expression.

(8) In order to reach the limit you required in your specifications, we would have to install *a large amount of* special equipment at our plant, and this would not be possible before January next year without interrupting our normal production.

In example eighth, the writer intends to decline a customer’s order. During the process of delivering the bad news, the writer has tried the means of vagueness to convey an understandable reason as well as saving the customer’s face without sacrificing the future business relationship. The current order has to be reduced because “a large amount of special equipment” has to be installed, and “normal” production will be interrupted. So “a large amount of” shows the pragmatic function of intent expression.

3.1.5 Prepositions

Prepositions are usually used to prescribe the time, such as within (this year), in (this month), by the middle of, without (further delay), on or about. For example:

(9) We have affected the shipment on August 10 by S.S. “Victoria”, which is about to arrive your port *before* the end of this month.

The writer provides the recipient with the arrival time by using the vague prepositions “before”, which extends the deadline for the arrival of ships, so the risk of the seller is reduced. The recipient can also easily infer the range of arrival time. So “before” shows the pragmatic function of self-protection.

(10) For your information, there is C.D.S. m/v “Seal”, which is scheduled to sail from China port to European main ports on or *about* 20 August.

The writer provides the recipient with the departure time by using the vague prepositions “about”, which extends the deadline for the departure of ships, so the risk of the seller is reduced. The recipient can also easily infer the range of arrival time. In this way, “about” shows the pragmatic function of self-protection.

3.2 Syntactic Vagueness

Vagueness at syntactic aspect actually rests on the syntactic relations within a sentence or among sentences. This is also called grammatical or structural vagueness. Some commonly used means of syntactic vagueness are presented as the following four forms.

3.2.1 Plural Forms Used for an Unclear Reference

If the writers are not willing to specify a person or a thing, they can use plural forms to generalize it. For example, “the parties concerned”, “other countries”, “some people”, “relevant parties” and so on. For example:

(11) Though the workers are speeding up the production, *the buyers* still have to wait.

Writer uses plural form “buyers” to hide the amount of the buyers, the name of the buyer may be there are only two buyers, not a lot of. So in this way, it reduces the authenticity of the message and thus reduces the responsibility of the writer. Through this expression, the recipient can infer that because the other party’s factory has stepped up its work, but its own goods still need to wait, because there are many other buyers waiting. So “the buyers” shows the pragmatic function of self-protection.

(12) It has been noticed that *our competitors* have increased their market share in the last month.

In this example, the writer does not identify the various competitors one by one, but uses a vague plural form. By reducing the specificity of information, it reduces its responsibility for the authenticity of this information. The recipient can also infer from this the fact that the competitor’s market share has increased. So “our competitors” shows the pragmatic function of self-protection.

3.2.2 Vague Passive Structure in Business Letters

In international trade, the two parties involved in the trade may make many mistakes due to some negligence and mistakes. When claiming compensation, making complaints or giving feedback, the use of passive sentences lacking the sender of the action can well avoid the embarrassment, and make the words more polite and euphemistic. Such as “It is believed that.”, “It is said that” and “we are told that” are commonly used to hold back the source of information. For example:

(13) We note from your letter of July 3 that the price quoted by us for the subject goods *is found to be* on the high side.

In this sentence, the passive form “is found to be” turns the actor of the action to the other party. It implicitly points out that the other party thinks the offer is too high but actually the offer is reasonable. In this way, the seller protects its own interests. So in this example, “is found to be” shows the pragmatic function of self-protection.

(14) We regret to point that so many goods *have been damaged* before they are delivered to door.

This example is to express the buyer's dissatisfaction with the damaged goods. By using passive sentence, the writer omits the doer of the action. It does not directly blame the seller's improper transportation caused the damage of the goods. This saves face for both parties and also avoids embarrassment. So in this example, passive structure shows the pragmatic function of politeness.

3.2.3 Other Sentence Patterns

The strategy of using specific sentence patterns includes using dependent clauses and complex sentences. Sentence patterns such as "I am afraid that", "I think that", "It seems that", "you'd better that" and "it is possible that" can be used to realize vagueness. For example:

(15) Such being the case, ***we are afraid that*** we cannot accept your request.

The writer puts the unpleasant idea in a complex sentence to deemphasize it, so that vagueness makes the idea less offensive. In this sentence, instead of rejecting the request directly, the writer chooses to use a vague expression, which the recipient can infer the meaning of refusal. This refusal is in a polite way. This kind of euphemistic expression not only well reflects the writer's apology but also saves the recipient's face. So in this example, "we are afraid that" shows the pragmatic function of politeness.

(16) In view of the above, ***we would suggest that*** you accept our price of US\$500 per metric ton without any delay.

The writer through using a sentence pattern "we would suggest you" to send a kind reminder to the buyer. It is in order to persuade the buyer to accept his offer. So in this example, "we would suggest that" shows the pragmatic function of intent expression.

4. Pragmatic Functions of Vague Language in Business Letters

Channell analyzed ten pragmatic functions of vague language in her book vague language. Such as withholding information, persuasion, self-protection, power and politeness, informality and atmosphere and so on. Through the above analysis of the vague language from the two aspects, it is not difficult to find that vague language used in English business letters also show various pragmatic functions. The main pragmatic functions of vagueness are summarized as follows.

4.1 Intent Expression

In English Business letters, in order to reduce the recipient's misunderstanding or ambiguity of the content, and avoid causing conflicts between the two parties, the writer often uses accurate words to convey the information. However, sometimes it is better to use vague language than precise language to convey the writer's intention. In English business writing, the writer uses vague language to give the recipient an ostension. The recipient can infer the writer's various intents through combined these vague language with certain context. For example, in price negotiation, order letter and cargo shipment letter, it is necessary for sellers to limit the scope of price figures, dates, etc. These intents are often expressed through vague language. So that the recipient can easily infer the scope of price figures, dates, etc. In order to achieve the optimal relevance effect and enable the recipient to better understand, the writer must carefully choose vague language when expressing a certain intention. So that the listener can

make correct inferences about the language. Taking following letter as an example:

(17) Dear Jean,

I regret having to tell you this, but due to a corporate program of cutbacks, your services will have to be terminated. The effective date will be on May 31. This cutback *is being made* company-wide and will affect *about* 150 salaried employees. *Seven or eight* will be laid off in this branch. When let go, seniority was the primary factor. However, headquarters management has determined that certain occupations will be affected more than others.

We are sorry to see you leave and will certainly provide a good reference when you need it.

Sincerely,

The above letter is aimed at stating the reason for dismissal of an employee. The writer tactfully uses vague preposition “about” and vague quantifier “seven or eight” to hide dismissal information of the company, because he would not like to let the employee know the exact number of employees having been dismissed. The writer also uses passive sentence like “the cutback is being made” to avoid mentioning the name of the decision-maker. Vague language is adopted by writers to withhold information. So it is not only conducive to persuading employees to accept his or her dismissal, but also conducive to the maintenance of the corporate image, as well as the long-term development of the enterprise.

4.2 Self-protection

As we know, in order to achieve the optimal effects of communication between two trading parties, business letters need to use concrete and accurate language expressions. However, sometimes accurate expressions often lead to absolute nature of expressions, so as to put the other party on the back foot, leaving no room for maneuver. Appropriate use of vague language can not only effectively protect self-interest, but also reduce the responsibility of utterance to be taken by the writer and deepen the mutual understanding. Take the following letter as an example:

(18) Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your order of August 15 and we are pleased to learn that you intend to give our Canned Luncheon Meat a trial sale in your market.

While we appreciate your good intention, we regret being unable to accept your request for payment by D/A 60 days' sight. As we *generally* require payment by irrevocable letter of credit available by draft as sight, we cannot make any arrangement contrary to our *usual* practice, *especially for a new customer*. May we suggest that we do business on the basis of payment by L/C first and leave the matter to be discussed later.

We hope the above payment terms are acceptable to you and look forward to your confirmation.

Yours faithfully,

The above letter rejects payment by D/A. The seller doesn't want to accept D/A payments, so he uses vague words and phrases like “generally”, “usually” and “especially new customers” to avoid giving

any specific information. Recipients don't know whether there is really has such a policy or not, whether the content of the policy is as the writer mentions. Thus, these vague statements provide a reasonable excuse for the writer not receiving payment terms from D/A. However, if the vague statement in the letter is deleted, it will not only affect the expression of the main intention, but may also seriously damage the relationship between both sides. Therefore, the vague language has the function of avoiding crisis and self-protection in business activities.

In business cooperation between two enterprises, it is inevitable that some confidential business information that cannot be disclosed will be involved. In this case, if the enterprise uses inappropriate language and directly refuses the request of the other party, the cooperation between the two parties may become deadlocked and hinder the smooth operation of business activities. At this time, enterprises can use vague language appropriately to replace words that are inconvenient to say directly, so as to "fuzzy" the information and leave a buffer space for both companies to negotiate a better settlement. As He Ziran says, "The use of vague language not only allows the speaker to deal with it flexibly, but also allows the hearer to comprehend at will, which not only weakens the stimulus intensity of language, but also reduces the blindness of speech acts" (He, 1985).

4.3 Politeness

Polite and decent language is important for both parties to establish and maintain a good cooperative relationship. International business involves the economic interests of both parties, so it is inevitable that there are some differences and contradictions among their transactions. At this time, it is not appropriate to criticize or refute the other party too directly, but use indirect ways to make suggestions and ideas, so as to achieve the communicative purpose of allowing the other party to accept their own views and meet their own requirements. This not only protects their own interests, but also helps to facilitate the transaction between the two sides. So in this case, using polite vague expression in business letters is essential. Taking following business English letter as an example:

(19) Dear Margie,

We've received your counteroffer of April, 20 and **regret to** find that you think the price offered by us for the squeezer MZ-681A is on the high side.

We feel regretful that your counteroffer is not in keeping with the current market and is too low to be acceptable. We have received **a lot of inquiries** from **other buyers** and they feel satisfied with our price; some have made orders; some are ready to make orders. **We believe** our price is fixed at **a reasonable level**. As you know, since your last order, price for raw materials has been increased **considerably**. Retailing price has also been increased by 5%. Accepting your counteroffer will mean a great loss to us, let alone profit. To be frank with you, if it weren't for our long and good relations, we wouldn't consider making you a firm offer at this price **lower than what is offered to others**. We feel very sorry that we can't satisfy your counteroffer for the time being.

If you should later see any opportunity to do better, please let us know. We will make sure

that all your inquiries will receive our prompt attention. We are looking forward to cooperating with you again.

Yours faithfully,

This is a business letter refusing to counteroffer. In this letter, the writer uses a lot of vague language to politely show his refusal attitude. Through expressions such as “regret”, “we feel regretful that”, which is totally convincing and acceptable without being aggressive and rude through appropriate use of vague language. “We believe” and “reasonable level” vividly show the writer’s thought that they regard their offer reasonable, and the offer shall not be discussed under any possible condition. Vague phrases as “a lot of inquiries” and “other buyers” in the sentence give a prescription of the writer’s confidence and firm stand. In the meantime, the writer show his sincerity for cherishing the business cooperation since the raw material has increased “considerably” and the offered price is for “our long and good relations”. Furthermore, “if you should” leaves the customer a sense of urgency to call it a deal at the present price as soon as possible. Through the choice of vagueness in language, the writer’s emotion is clearly stated while not violating the customer’s face. At last, the writer claims that all the inquiries will receive our “prompt attention”. By using these vague words, the writer tactfully shows his refusal intent to other party’s counteroffer and suggested the other party to accept his offer. It is also help to maintain long-term cooperation with the other party. All these vague expressions, which functions as the “lubricating oil”, help promote long-term cooperation between both parties, and ensure the interests of both parties.

All in all, if the sender’s language expression is too straightforward, it will be blunt, easily arousing the disgust of the recipient, and adversely affect the achievement of the communicative purpose. Therefore, some expression of the sender should be as indirect and euphemistic as possible, so as to conform to the politeness principle of business communication and achieve the expected communicative purpose.

5. Conclusion

In Business letters, the requirement of language is to be accurate and rigorous, so as to avoid any misunderstanding and disputes. However, in many cases, vague language is more helpful for writers to express his intention. In order to make the reader takes the minimal effort to understand the meaning of vague language, the writer should try to increase the relevance between vague language and reference. Through the above analyze of examples, we have a basic understanding of the use of vague language, and its pragmatic functions are remarkable. However, if the vague language chosen by the writer does not accord with his communicative intention and his discourse meaning, it will lead to misunderstanding and confusion. In business activities, there is much vague language in business English letters. In order to make full use of the pragmatic functions of vague language, the writer should choose vague language reasonably according to different contexts to provide optimal ostension. The recipient can take the minimal effort to understand the writer’s intent.

All in all, vague language plays an important role in the process of writing English business letters. Vague language can better convey the writer's intention, make the expression of business English letters more flexible and polite, and enable enterprises to properly avoid risks and safeguard their own interests, finally help to smooth the process of cooperation between enterprises. But at the same time, writers also need to be very careful when using vague language. Excessive use of vague language will cause semantic ambiguity, exaggeration of facts, ambiguity and other problems. Enterprises should appropriately use vague language to make Business English letters more accurate and appropriate, so as to play vague languages positive communicative role and promote cooperation between the trading parties.

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