On Grammatical Metaphor in Business English Negotiation

Fanyu Mao
PhD School of Foreign Languages, Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics,
332000, China
E-mail: 1397904832@qq.com

Shougang Zhang
PhD School of Management and Business Administration,
Szent István University Gödöllő, Hungary
School of Business, Xi'an Siyuan University, Xi'an, China
E-mail: zsg771126@sohu.com

Abstract
According to the functional grammar of Halliday, an analysis of grammatical metaphor is made in international business negotiation with the use of examples. Based on ideational and interpersonal grammatical metaphor, the metaphorical expressions of ideation, mood and modality are analyzed in business English negotiation and the textual function is explored so as to study the features of business English negation and come to a conclusion that grammatical metaphor contributes to the understanding and application of business English negotiation discourse.

Keywords: grammatical metaphor, ideational metaphor, interpersonal metaphor, business English negotiation

I. Introduction

With the deepening of global economic integration and the growing regional economic trade, international business negotiation has become an indispensable activity in economic area. The provision of goods and services is conducted through trade relations and people often make use of metaphors in their negotiations. We can use the other person's use of metaphors to "hear" what they are really saying, as well as to understand their true thoughts or feelings. (Schneider, A..2006) We can listen out their true intentions and attitudes, which can help us deal with the present situation. Therefore, metaphors play an important role in business English negotiation. At present, scholars home and abroad have done a lot of research on pragmatic strategy in business English negotiation and acquired abundant achievements. However, there are few studies on grammatical metaphor in business English negotiation. In this respect, the author makes an explorative research on grammatical metaphor existing in business English negotiation from the perspective of systemic functional grammar in order to grasp the features of English and provide some suggestions for foreign trade enterprises.

2. Grammatical Metaphor

Metaphor is the fundamental characteristic of language and is an indispensable foundation for human language or thinking. M.A.K. Halliday proposed the concept of grammatical metaphor, according to the pure function embodied in the language. By applying the concept of metaphor of rhetoric to linguistic research, he opened up a new perspective for metaphor research. He believes that grammatical metaphor can be divided into conceptual metaphor and interpersonal metaphor. Conceptual metaphor means that a process can be used to refer to another process with the corresponding transformation of functional elements in the metaphorical clauses; interpersonal metaphor refers to the metaphor of modality and mood (Halliday, 2000). On this basis, Martin points out that grammatical metaphor should also include discourse metaphor, that is, the grammatical metaphor exists between the connected sentences in the discourse. Systemic functional linguistics holds that the meaning of words does not change in the process of metaphorization of language, but that their grammatical traits change. One of the important concepts used to analyze grammatical metaphor is its form: congruent form and metaphorical form. Grammatical metaphor is

a deviant form of the congruent form. Undoubtedly, it is both a semantic variant and a form variant. (Luo Zaibin, 2016). Grammatical metaphor, as a special form of language expression, is the specific characteristic of the text style.

3. Grammatical Metaphor in Business Negotiation

Halliday believes that the use of language is to achieve a certain function in a specific situation. Business English is a variant of social function in English and the application of English in business activities. By the constraints of the context, there exists grammatical metaphor in business English expression, which is different from other forms of language expression. The grammatical metaphor in business English not only conveys information, but more importantly, through the process of this information transmission, it will influence each other to make the appropriate responses.

3.1. Conceptual Grammatical Metaphor

According to Halliday, ideational functions refer to people talking about their experiences in real life with language, describing events or situations that occur around them. As the concept is to show human experiences, its main manifestation is the system of "transitivity", which consists of three components: participants, processes and circumstances. Processes are the core components of transitivity, including material, psychological, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential processes. One of the manifestations of conceptual metaphor in business English is the metaphorization of each process in transitivity system. With the emergence of metaphor, the process has been changed accordingly, and a process can be metaphorically transformed into another process. At the same time, with the process change, such functional roles as participants, circumstances, etc. also change, thus the corresponding changes in the lexical grammar level.

For instance:

1）A. There is a good market for your T-shirts in the eastern part of our country (existential)
B. Your T-shirts can find a ready market in the eastern part of our country (psychological)
2) A. If he wants to make any changes，we can make minor alternations then (behavioral)
B. If he wants to make any changes，minor alternations can be made then (material)

Another manifestation of conceptual metaphor in business English negotiation is "nominalization", the most powerful means of constructing grammatical metaphor. The use of nominal metaphor in business English negotiation plays an important role in the negotiation discourse. Semantically, grammatical metaphor is "thingness" and grammatically nominalization. In this way, the verb showing a process and adjective feature in congruent form are metaphorically converted into nouns. Their role is no longer a process or attribute in a clause, but a "thingness" in the form of noun phrases.

For example:

3）A. You are requested to answer immediately without fail.
B. A prompt answer would be highly appreciated.
4）A. Please ship the goods before August 15 so that we can catch the selling season.
B. Please effect shipment of the goods before August 15 so that we can catch the selling season.

In the above example, sentence A is congruent form, while sentence B the metaphorical. The verb showing the process in sentence A is changed into a noun in sentence B. With the transformation of congruent form into the metaphorical one, the verb showing experiential meaning in lexical-grammatical level in ideational function is changed into noun and thus the experiential meaning is abstracted. Sentence B is objective and factual without the involvement of any specific person, thus avoiding blaming others, protecting the reader's self-esteem and helping the speaker politely convey the unfavorable information. After the process of nominalization, other sentence

components will be changed correspondingly, such as participant of "the goods" in B is changed into the modifier of the noun "shipment".

3.2. Interpersonal Grammatical Metaphor

As a tool of human communication, language plays a variety of functions in human social activities. Besides ideational function, M.A.K. Halliday holds that a clause has an interpersonal function in which people use language to express their identity, attitude and his inference of things in communication with others. The social relationship between the speaker and listener can be displayed in the social communication process. In the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics, interpersonal metaphor contains the mood and modality system. Appropriate business English communication pays much attention to the choice and use of mood and modality, in addition to correct vocabulary and grammar.

3.2.1. Mood System of Grammatical Metaphor

The function of the mood system is to express what people want to achieve through speech. The mood system divides the English sentences into declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences, the basic function of which is statement for declarative sentences, questions for interrogative sentences and command for imperative sentences. Although there exists a "congruent" relation between mood and its function, in the course of practical communication, "there is not necessarily corresponding relations between mood and speech function in that one speech function can be reflected through different moods and vice versa." (Chang Chenguang, 2001) For example, the narrative mood, in addition to the declarative function, can also be used to express questions and requests. The request can also be achieved with interrogative mood in addition to imperative one. Therefore, mood metaphor is produced through the transference of one mood domain to another.

In the business discourse, on the one hand, the speaker gives the recipient information about the company and the product or service; on the other hand, the speaker requires the recipient to take action to purchase the product or service. In business English communication, much attention should be paid to the choice and use of mood with courteous diction and gentle mood.

Please compare:

5) A. Make similar inquiries at your end.
   B. We suggest you make similar inquiries at your end.
   C. Meanwhile，may we suggest that you make similar inquiries at your end?

In example 5, sentence A is an imperative sentence with a rather tough mood. It violates the communication principle of equal cooperation to impose one's own thoughts on the other party. Sentence B is still too straightforward, not as aggressive as sentence A, though. Sentence C is an interrogative sentence, which makes the speaker polite and humble through "inquiry", avoiding the straight and domineering posture.

3.2.2. Modality System of Grammatical Metaphor

Modal expressions involve almost all aspects of business activities and various stages of the transaction process. A modal system is a semantic system that expresses speaker's judgment or evaluation of things. Halliday divides the modality system into modality and modulation. Modality shows speaker's judgement of the possibility of proposition, including probabilities (possible, probable, certain) and usuality (sometimes, usually, always) while modulation shows speakers' judgement of proposal, including duty (allowed, supposed, required) and tendency (willing, keen, determine). Modality, used to exchange information, and modulation, used to convey the exchange of goods and services need to be realized through clauses in lexical-grammatical level, displaying the function of probability, frequency, duty and obligation, etc.. In addition, the modality can also be expressed from the subjective and objective perspectives, which is called orientation of modality: explicit and implicit subjective; implicit and explicit objective. It is pointed out that the expression of explicit objective and objective are metaphorical. In international business negotiations, modal

auxiliary verbs are one of the main means of expressing interpersonal functions such as courtesy, elegance and rules, and their function of expressing emotions helps to achieve the purpose of business activities.

For example:

6）They must have got wet after they arrived in Hong Kong. (possibility)
7）This offer must be withdrawn if not accepted within five days. (obligation)

The modality can be expressed metaphorically, that is, modality can be realized by clauses. Sentences 6) and 7) can be rewritten as the followings:

It is certain that they had got wet after they arrived in Hong Kong.
It is necessary that we withdraw this offer if it is not accepted within five days.

In addition, the nominalization (like the possibility/ likelihood / probability / certainty of ...) is another way to generate modal metaphors. Through nominalization, the modality is constructed into a "thing", thus covering up the source of modality and becoming an orientation of explicit objective. The existence of English modal metaphors has important social and cultural significance. Complex modality systems are often directly related to different communicative needs, complex interpersonal relationships and subtle social practices. In order to achieve a particular purpose or effect, the speaker sometimes deliberately uses an explicit subjective orientation to emphasize the uncertainty of opinions and judgements to show courtesy and respect for the other party and sometimes uses an explicit objective orientation to objectify their judgments or assertions and hide the source of real modality.

4. The Function of Grammatical Metaphor in International Business Negotiation

Nominalization is an important means to realize conceptual grammatical metaphor. A large number of nominalization appears in the written discourse of business English negotiation, which makes the discourse more concise, formal and objective. It can be said that the higher the frequency of nominalization, the higher the formality of style. On the basis of the classification of Halliday 's grammatical metaphor, Huang Limin (2011) found that there are two unique forms of grammatical metaphor in scientific and technical discourse, that is, a single adjective and noun can act as environmental component. As a result, nominal metaphor in the business English negotiation is also quite extensively used and has the following functions:

4.1. Function of Conceptual Metaphor

4.1.1 To Improve the Simplicity of Business Negotiations

One of the functions of noun metaphor is to make the discourse more concise. Through nominalization, the original clauses are "packaged" into a noun phrase and a few clauses are "packaged" into one clause. The number of clauses decreases while the amount of information in each clause increases, thus making the discourse more concise and more compact.

E.g:

A. You fail to pack the goods in the seaworthy cartons. As a result, the goods are damaged during transit.
B. Your failure to pack the goods in the seaworthy cartons results in the damage of the goods during transit.

The verb "fail" and "damaged" in sentence A are changed into nouns of "failure" and "damage" in B, making a complex sentence into a simple one. Therefore, nominalization can express more information with fewer words, thus condensing information, improving information density and making the text more concise. At the same time, after nominalization of verb "fail", the original colloquial expression becomes abstract written language, making the text more formal.

4.1.2. To Strengthen the Objectivity of Business Negotiations

Nominalization is conducive to the expression of objective truth and facts. Nominalization turns the process into a participant, thereby omitting the logical participant, which makes the discourse more objective.

E.g:

A. Only if you execute our order punctually can we receive the goods on time.
B. Punctual execution of the order will ensure punctual receipt of the goods.

After the nominalization in sentence B, such relatively subjective participants as "you" and "we" are omitted so that the sentence is unaffected by the emotional factors of the actor, which makes the semantic expression more objective and real.

4.2. The Function of Modality Metaphor

In business negotiations, the key to interaction between negotiators lies in their words and attitudes. A word or a tone can affect the reaction of both sides, having both subtle and absolute influence. Business negotiation requires courtesy, reflecting the strategy and stability. The use of modality in business English is conducive to the realization of its communicative purpose.

4.2.1. Courtesy Function

Since "language is an important means of expressing courtesy" (HE Ziran, 1997), politeness strategies are often achieved through language. Modality is the judgment of validity of its proposition from the speaker's point of view, or the obligation of the other party in command, or the expression of personal intention in the proposal. So the appropriate use of modal expression in communication is to make the words more euphemistic, polite and courteous. Lakoff (1993) argues that polite factors prevail in determining the validity of conversations in certain types of verbal communication. G. Leech (1983) made an in-depth and meticulous research on politeness in speech acts and put forward the "politeness principle" in his book of "pragmatic principles".

For example:

A. We cannot make a profit with those numbers.
B. How can we make a profit with those numbers? (How can we make money?)

Although we need to stick to the principle in negotiations, it is better not to give the impression of being tough. In these two sentences, sentence B is mood metaphor, using the question to express "we cannot make a profit with those numbers." The polite diction avoids being too straightforward and arrogant. Therefore it is better to use the method of "inquiry", leaving more room for consultation and making it easier to reach a trade agreement. In business negotiations, it is inevitable that there will be a situation of deadlock, but the expression of modality often makes proposition more polite and decent and easier to be accepted by the other party.

4.2.2. Self-protection Function

In the process of business negotiation, speakers must always express their views, attitudes or position. In order to avoid absoluteness and extremity, the speaker can adopt a vague strategy that can weaken the speech act so that it is not easy to be denied. "Modal or vague expression is only used when the communication is unfavorable." (Liu Boru, 2004) [7]. This grants the receiver of the speech time to consider the choice, while reducing the speaker's commitment to the views and conclusions, putting the speaker in an invincible position.

For example:

It is required that the stipulations in the relative credit be the same with the stated in the Sales Confirmation.

Through this modal metaphor, the speaker's personal attitude is "impersonal", blurring the source of the command. Through the explicit objective form of modality, the expression of modality is shown as a proposition in the form of clauses so that personal views seem to become an inherent feature or simple facts in order to make it easier for readers to accept it (Yuan Yaya, 2007). The method of "author absence" maximizes the protection of their face so as to achieve the purpose of self-protection of the speaker.

5. Conclusion

Grammatical metaphor embodies the idea of meaning evolution, an important way to reshape human experiences with language (Zhao Xia, 2012). The analysis of ideational and interpersonal metaphor and their functions in international business negotiation will help us to further understand business English as an important functional variant. The analysis of business English in business negotiations from the perspective of grammatical metaphor presents a new perspective for the study of negotiating English and helps negotiators achieve success through the appropriate use of grammatical metaphor.

References

Halliday, M.A.K., 2000. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 2nd Edition. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press

Lakoff, G., 1993. The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor. In: *Ortony, Andrew eds. Metaphor and Thought (2"d edition)*, Cambridge

Leech, G.H.. 1983. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London and New York:Longrllan

Schneider, A., 2006. *The Road to Hell is Paved with Metaphors*. Washington,D.C.

Chang Chenguang. 2001. Interpersonal grammatical metaphor in English. *Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching*, 7 (in Chinese)

He, Z., 1997. *Pragmatics and English learning*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1997 (in Chinese)

Liu, B., 2004. On Vocabulary Acquisition in the Process of College English Reading. *Journal of Chongqing Jiaotong University, Social Sciences Edition*, 3: 109-112. (in Chinese)

Yuan, Y., 2007. Pragmatic Function and Expression of Fuzzy Language in Business English Negotiation. *Hubei University, College of Adult Education,* 6 (in Chinese)

Huang, L., 2011. The Embodiment and Discourse Function of Grammatical Metaphor in Scientific Discourse. *Journal of Xiamen University of Technology*, 3 (in Chinese)

Zhao X., 2012. A Study on Grammatical Metaphor Based on Meaning Evolution Theory. *Journal of Inner Mongolia University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 7 (in Chinese)

Luo Z., 2016. On Semantic Wave of Graphicalization in Grammatical Metaphor. *Journal of Xi'an Foreign Language Studies University*, 2 (in Chinese)

Fanyu Mao (b. March 3, 1969), Associate professor in School of Foreign Languages, Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics.
Her research orientation is linguistics and business communication. E-mail: 1397904832@qq.com

Shougang Zhang (b.November 26, 1977), student in PhD School of Management and Business Administration, Szent István University Gödöllő, Hungary.
Now he also is a teacher as associate professor in School of Business, Xi'an Siyuan University, Xi'an, China.His research orientation is communication and negotiation. E-mail:285748134@qq.com