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# The Linguistic Features of Business English on Cross-Border E-Commerce in the New Situation

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**Abstract:** With the strengthening of the trend of economic globalization and the support of national policies, the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce industry has become an important driving force to promote the development of China's foreign trade economy. As an important medium of business communication, business English plays an important role in the development of cross-border e-commerce. Professional and practical business English helps to promote the development of cross-border e-commerce industry and enhance the market competitiveness of cross-border e-commerce industry. This paper briefly summarizes the development potential and prospects of cross-border e-commerce industry from the development of cross-border e-commerce, and mainly analyzes the linguistic features of business English on cross-border e-commerce in the new situation from the aspects of vocabulary, syntax and discourse. In the new situation, vocabulary presents the new characteristics of inclusiveness and absorptivity, colloquial and conciseness. Rich in tone and emotion and information conveyed by paralinguistics are main features in terms of syntax, and make clear the safety of epidemic prevention in discourse. Finally, we hope to give full play to the communicative function of business English and promote the high-level development of cross-border e-commerce. At the same time, it also points out the deficiency of a small number of samples and hope that future research can break through the limitations, so as to further explore this field and draw deeper conclusions.

**Keywords:** Business English, Cross-Border E-Commerce, Language Features

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## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of information technology and Internet economy, the boom of cross-border e-commerce industry has brought new development opportunities for China's foreign trade and related industries, and gradually become an important driving force to promote China's economic development. At the same time, the development of China's cross-border e-commerce industry is facing multiple challenges at home and abroad. Strengthening the core competitiveness of cross-border e-commerce and promoting the high-quality development of cross-border e-commerce is an urgent problem to be solved in the current cross-border e-commerce platform.

Business English is a practical language, which acts as an important medium of international transaction cooperation, and serves the process of commodity trading in all aspects of

business activities. In cross-border e-commerce transactions, business activities communicate through business language to improve the success rate of cross-border e-commerce. The application of professional business English in cross-border e-commerce is conducive to the e-commerce platform to show its advantages in the increasingly competitive international market and foreign trade, and to promote high-efficiency, high-quality business activities.

With the implementation of "The Belt and Road Initiative", international industrial cooperation set off an upsurge, cross-border e-commerce industry has ushered in new opportunities with the continuous blessing of policy, market and other aspects. This paper analyzes the new linguistic features of business English on cross-border e-commerce in the new situation from the aspects of vocabulary, syntax and

discourse, which is of great benefit to enhance the competitiveness of cross-border e-commerce platform, and to promote economic development.

## 2. A Summary of the Development of Cross-Border Electronic Commerce

Cross-border e-commerce generally refers to e-commerce activities in which transaction subjects belonging to different customs areas reach transactions, pay and settle accounts through e-commerce platforms, and deliver goods and complete transactions through cross-border logistics. Compared with traditional business transactions, cross-border e-commerce has a lower transaction cost and stronger interaction. In the process of transaction, buyers and sellers discuss transaction information with the help of network platform, settle transaction funds through different payment methods, and cross-border e-commerce platform closely combines buyers and sellers to gradually form a complete cross-border e-commerce transaction industry chain.

The development of cross-border e-commerce in China can be roughly divided into three stages. The starting stage is the cross-border e-commerce 1.0 stage, which takes online display and offline transactions as the foreign trade information service mode, and one of the representative platform is Alibaba. The development stage is to realize the cross-border e-commerce 2.0 era with the combination of transaction, payment, logistics and other links. With the in-depth development of the new round of scientific and technological revolution and the upgrading of consumption, the digital transformation of the world economy has accelerated, the development of cross-border e-commerce in China has entered a 3.0 era of transformation, and the cross-border e-commerce industry chain has been gradually completed. E-commerce platform continues to upgrade and expand [18].

According to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce, the global economy has been hit hard by the COVID-19 epidemic and experienced a great turmoil. However, the cross-border e-commerce industry has gone against the trend and has become an important support for China's foreign trade economic growth. There is a promising potential market and development for global e-commerce. Cross-border e-commerce has gradually become a new trade field in international competition [9].

In the general environment of realizing the new pattern of comprehensive reform and opening up in China, the General Administration of Customs pointed out in July 2020 to support cross-border e-commerce to explore online and offline integration models. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 accelerated the process of offline trade. With the proposal and implementation of the *14th five-year Plan for the Development of Electronic Commerce*, cross-border e-commerce has entered a new stage of digital trade, accelerating the high-level development of cross-border e-commerce, seizing the development opportunity of

cross-border e-commerce, and promoting international cooperation in the digital field.

## 3. The Linguistic Features of Business English on Cross-Border E-Commerce in the New Situation

As a combination of business and English, business English is more professional than general English. To some extent, business English can be regarded as a "lingua franca" in cross-border e-commerce transactions, that is, people without a common mother tongue and cultural background choose a common language to solve communication differences [2]. Its professionalism and practicality can provide language services for the cross-border e-commerce industry, promote the transaction of goods, and play a key role in cross-border e-commerce transactions [13].

Business English is an important medium of cross-border e-commerce transactions, serving the process of commodity transactions. Its main purpose is to conduct business activities through language communication, improve the success rate of commodity transactions and promote the growth of economic benefits. With the vigorous development of e-commerce industry, the linguistic features of business English have been widely studied and explored by scholars. With time going by, the linguistic features of business English on cross-border e-commerce show new features in the new situation. It is fundamentally different from the traditional face-to-face and written communication [1]. Cross-border e-commerce online communication is in the form of written discourse with computers as the medium, lacking intonation [4]. Therefore, this paper mainly analyzes the linguistic features of business English on cross-border e-commerce in the new situation from the aspects of vocabulary, syntax and discourse.

### 3.1. New Features of Vocabulary

The research on the vocabulary characteristics of business English mainly focuses on its professionalism [9], conciseness [3] and archaism [11]. The first is professionalism, in the international trading market of cross-border e-commerce, professional business language communication can reduce communication errors and ensure the progress of business activities; The second is conciseness, in the process of trading, short terms and acronyms are used widely to improve efficiency and promote trading efficiency [7]. Moreover, archaism is another vital feature of business English. In professional business letters and contracts, some archaic words are used to show rigor. For example, as per (by), inter alia (among other transactions), and so on [16].

With the strengthening of the trend of economic globalization and the continuous development of Internet technology, the e-commerce industry is developing rapidly. However, the normalization of COVID-19 epidemic and the outbreak of instability have greatly affected the development of cross-border e-commerce industry, and new lexical features of cross-border e-commerce English have emerged.

### 3.1.1. *Inclusiveness and Absorptivity*

With the progress of the times and the development of politics and economy, business English in comprehensive language disciplines continues to absorb new English vocabulary derived from the cultural customs of different countries. A variety of words are constantly emerging in business English. For example, e-commerce, The Belt and Road, etc.

In addition, COVID-19's epidemic-related words are mentioned in e-commerce transactions. Affected by COVID-19 epidemic, cross-border e-commerce platform ushered in opportunities, but also faced with many difficulties. Before the outbreak of epidemic, the trade modes of cross-border e-commerce were rich and diverse. After the outbreak of virus, logistics, supply chain and other links were seriously affected, transport costs increased, while masks, sanitary products and other related goods ushered in a consumption peak.

In order to provide clearer and more appropriate services, epidemic related words will appear in the online communication of e-commerce platform, marketing promotion, after-sales service and so on. For example, "COVID-19", "virus", "pandemic", "live broadcast" and so on.

### 3.1.2. *Colloquial and Conciseness*

Although most of the business English vocabulary is highly professional, with the development of Internet technology, the new model of cross-border e-commerce brings new ways of foreign trade. With the change in correspondence and communication, buyers and sellers gradually use more convenient and efficient ways of communication, such as e-mail and e-commerce platform online communication. Computers and networks have gradually become the main means of communication. Online communication discourse on cross-border e-commerce platform is a kind of business discourse which relies on computer as a medium, which has the characteristics of both oral discourse and written discourse [4].

Different from the professional and concise terms in business English, young people often use acronyms or acronyms to communicate in cross-border e-commerce transactions, so as to bring in the customer's sense of intimacy and enhance the customer's goodwill.

For example, "plz (please)", "OMG (oh my god)", "THKs (thanks)", "where (whr)", "LOL (Laugh Out Loud)", and so on.

### 3.2. *New Features of Syntax*

Business English sentences are rich in levels and rigorous. The coexistence of long and short sentences is a prominent feature of the sentence structure of business English. The structure of long sentences is complex and the ideographic meaning is complete [14, 15]. The structure of short sentences is simple and concise. Short sentences are often used in business letters and telegrams, and long sentences are often used in formal business contracts [12].

In order to attract the attention of buyers, cross-border e-commerce tend to use lively rhetoric to stimulate consumers' desire to buy, such as exaggeration, personification, etc. [5].

Affected by the epidemic, suppliers are difficult to start work, international logistics delays, affecting e-commerce transactions, cross-border e-commerce operations should actively communicate with customers to explain the situation.

### 3.2.1. *Rich in Tone and Emotion*

The first is to use polite language. In cross-border e-commerce transactions, daily business communication is accustomed to use an euphemistic and polite tone, and sincere and decent sentences can increase the goodwill of customers and improve the possibility of successful transactions. According to the actual situation, flexible and skilled use of business language, smart and humorous communication to provide a high level of online service and high-quality after-sales service, is conducive to improving the customer purchase rate and the success rate of cross-border e-commerce transactions.

eg1: "Thanks for contacting us and sorry for keeping you waiting." [10]

eg2: "Hope my explanation is able to assist you. Please feel free to let us know if you have any further questions."

The second is to use active sentences. In the product introduction of cross-border e-commerce platform, accurate commodity information is convinced with concise sentences, meanwhile, it can also attract the interest of consumers and improve the transaction success rate. For example, "Story time!" "Today's Deals" and "Make it a World Book Day to remember!" (corpus from eBay platform), these advertisements are concise but lively, which can not only attract consumers' interest in browsing, but also increase the number of views of goods and indirectly increase the volume of transactions.

### 3.2.2. *Information Conveyed by Paralanguage*

The first is to use punctuation and capital letters. In e-commerce communication, buyers often use question marks, exclamation marks and other punctuation marks to express strong feelings, so that readers can intuitively feel emotions such as excitement, anger, doubt, etc. In addition, capital letters are widely used in e-commerce transactions to attract the attention of both buyers and sellers, intuitively mark the key points, and also express their own emotions.

eg3: What was I thinking?!!

eg4: He LOVED it.

eg5: HUGE POWER IN SMALL BODY. (corpus from Amazon platform).

The second is to use special network language symbols. Cross-border e-commerce transactions are trade activities in a special e-commerce platform to complete commodity promotion, purchase, settlement and other process mainly based on network. Due to the particularity of e-commerce transactions, which is lack of face-to-face communication. Buyers and sellers tend to communicate with the help of computer special written language symbols, which is easy to express feelings. For example, :( :) these two common language symbols are intuitive images to express emotions. :( means sad and unhappy; :) means happy and pleasure. In cross-border e-commerce transactions, using

special network language symbols to feedback the emotion and intuitive image of the goods received.

eg6: So cute and fun to build :) (corpus from Amazon platform).

### 3.3. New Feature of Discourse

A discourse is composed of multiple sentences [6]. Business texts can be seen in daily business communication of buyers and sellers. The structure of the text is coherent and organized in business cooperation [8], focusing on fixed topics, such as inquiry, counter-offer, etc. [17]. Affected by the global outbreak of COVID-19, cross-border e-commerce presents new textual features in the new situation.

Make clear the safety of epidemic prevention. The global supply chain has been disrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19, which impacted the economies of countries and accelerated the economic recession all over the world. Apart from that, panic has been generated by the spread of the accelerating of global epidemic and the increasing number of deaths. Those who are most affected by the epidemic are the cross-border e-commerce retail export sellers. In the course of the transaction, the seller should face the impact of epidemic with a proactive attitude and fully communicate and explain to the buyers who have returned goods due to the epidemic. Reply to customers positively in daily communication and advertising, give customers full confidence and a clear answer to the issue of epidemic prevention and safety of goods.

For example, the Amazon platform specially set up an Amazon and COVID-19 module, which contains FAQs about Amazon and the COVID-19 virus, where consumers can learn relevant information from these contents. Safe epidemic prevention measures can improve the goodwill of customers and possibility of the successful transactions.

eg7:

—Is it safe to receive or return orders?

—Yes. We have taken precautions to ensure the safety of our employees and customers. You can find more information on Amazon's COVID-19 blog. For guidance on Coronavirus precautions, please refer to the World Health Organization website. (corpus from Amazon platform).

## 4. Conclusion

The development of cross-border e-commerce is an important factor to promote the development of foreign trade. In the fierce international market competition, the competitiveness of China's cross-border e-commerce starves to be strengthened. As an indispensable part of cross-border e-commerce transactions, the application of business English in cross-border e-commerce transactions is gradually increasing. The linguistic features of business English on cross-border e-commerce in the new situation show new characteristics, which affect many aspects of cross-border e-commerce activities. We should master the linguistic features of business English from the aspects of vocabulary, syntax and discourse. We should make full use of the

communicative function of business English, promote the development of high-efficiency and high-quality e-commerce transactions, enhance the competitiveness of cross-border e-commerce industry, and promote the high-quality development of foreign trade economy.

From a statistical point of view, the number of samples selected in this study is small, which may lead to potential problems. In view of these limitations, the future research study can collect more platform data and absorb more and richer samples, so as to further explore this field and study the English language features of cross-border e-commerce from a broader perspective.

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