

Open Market Bargaining in Taiwan: A Facet of Chinese Business Culture

CAROLINE HWANG
ANNIE CHANG

National Taipei University of Technology, Taipei, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Taiwanese shoppers, especially housewives, like to bargain in open markets. During the bargaining process, both the buyer and the seller have to make concessions and utilize pragmatic strategies in order to arrive at both parties' eventual satisfaction. Curious about this issue, we observed bargaining speech events in Taiwan and discussed them in this article to show: (i) the most common bargaining strategies used in Taiwan and (ii) how a special cultural context, Chinese New Year, can influence Taiwanese bargaining strategies. The result reveals that Taiwanese interactants prefer to use positive politeness for the purpose of forming a tie with each other to facilitate bargaining. On the other hand, Taiwanese people are inclined to use indirect speech act when refusing the other party's request in order to avoid confrontation. In addition, since the spirit of Chinese New Year is to wish good fortune by saying lucky words and preventing quarrels, believed to bring misfortune, interactants choose not to argue with each other and the seller tends to make a compromise with the buyer more readily. As a result, during the Chinese New Year shopping season buyers are more aggressive to bargain and sellers are more concessive. And the probability of successful bargaining increases. At regular times (represented by the second dialogue), however, similar but somewhat different strategies are used by both the buyer and the seller to have their face-saving wants met and their illocutionary goals reached at the same time.

Keywords: Bargaining, open market, speech event, positive face, Chinese new year