
Abstract

This dissertation deals with German-Swedish business communication. On the one hand, the aim was to investigate German and Swedish businessmen's perceptions and opinions concerning their business contacts and to find explanations for their perceptions. On the other hand, the purpose was to analyze authentic oral business communication between German and Swedish businessmen in order to find out if the occurrence of exemplary phenomena mentioned in the interviews can be proved by analyzing oral business communication between German and Swedish businessmen. For the investigation, an interdisciplinary approach has been chosen – first of all an indirect approach consisting of interviews followed by a direct approach of authentic oral business communication analysis.

For the indirect approach, 37 semi-structured interviews (about 38 hours) with businessmen dealing with German-Swedish business contacts were conducted and analyzed mainly in qualitative terms. According to their descriptions, the interviewees were grouped as *German businessmen* and *Swedish businessmen* respectively and their descriptions were thematically categorized. In addition, when describing their German-Swedish business contacts, the businessmen often used stereotypes and took their personal experiences as a pervasive truth. Hypotheses concerning possible cultural differences occurring in German-Swedish business communication were proposed on the basis of the conducted interviews and of conversation analysis literature.

For the direct approach, authentic oral business communication was analyzed. The research material consisted of five business discussions (80 minutes) conducted at different trade fairs, of which three were discussions between German and Swedish businessmen in German and two between Swedish businessmen in Swedish. In these business discussions, facework activities – from the interview results a substantial finding, which is realized in different ways by German and Swedish businessmen – were analyzed. The aim was to find out which general politeness strategies (on-record, off-record, positive politeness, negative politeness) the different groups (German native speakers, Swedish native speakers and Swedes who speak German as a foreign language) preferably use. Furthermore, the different speakers' preferences in using general politeness strategies were analyzed as well as the different groups' preferred linguistic realizations of positive and of negative politeness strategies. The analysis revealed no noteworthy differences in the usage of general politeness strategies between the three groups. However, the analysis showed that the different groups realize positive and negative politeness strategies by different linguistic means.

A comparison between the analysis of oral business communication and the interviewees' descriptions showed contradictory findings concerning the use of general politeness strategies. The linguistic realizations of some of the positive and negative politeness strategies however corresponded with the interview results. Therefore, the hypothesis is that some linguistic realizations of positive and negative politeness strategies shape the picture of the 'other', which was expressed in the interviews in a stereotypical way.

Title: „In Schweden ist die Kommunikation weicher“. Zur deutsch-schwedischen Wirtschaftskommunikation unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Imagearbeit.

Language: German

Written by: Margit Breckle, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, Department of German, 2004.

Key words: Germany, Sweden, German, Swedish, intercultural, communication, business communication, intercultural business communication, German-Swedish business communication, interview, categorization, category, stereotype, cultural difference, conversation analysis, facework, politeness strategies, positive politeness strategies, negative politeness strategies
