

Language of Meetings

OBSAH

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■ Setting the goal

Tématem této lekce jsou obchodní schůzky, schůze a zasedání. Podíváme se podrobněji na fráze a typické výrazy používané v různých rolích, ve kterých můžeme na schůzkách vystupovat. Tato kapitola je poněkud více zaměřená na fráze, protože jazyk používaný na obchodních setkáních je velice specifický a vyžaduje alespoň znalost základních obrátů. Co si tedy odnesete na konci této kapitoly:

- rady a ukázky, jak svolat schůzku
- jak napsat program plánované schůzky
- fráze pro použití na schůzkách
- vyzkoušíte si, jak reagovat v různých situacích, které mohou během setkání nastat
- dozvíte se, jak shrnout výsledky jednání
- ... a více

■ Basic expressions and vocabulary

Interrupting – přerušování

Sorry to interrupt but ...
 Can I just butt in a minute?
 Just a minute ...
 Hang on a second
 Could I come in here?

Giving Opinions – vyjadřování názoru

I (really) feel that ...
 In my opinion / view ...
 I reckon ...
 The way I see it ...
 As far as I'm concerned ...
 If you ask me, ... I (tend to) think that ...

Asking for Opinions – ptaní se na názor

Do you (really) think that ...
 How do you feel about ...?
 What are your thoughts/ views?

Commenting on Other Opinions – komentář názorů druhých

I never thought about it that way before.
 I never considered that.
 Good point!

I get your point.
I see what you mean.

Agreeing with Other Opinions – souhlas s jiným názorem

That's (exactly) the way I feel.
I have to agree with ...
I totally agree.
I'm completely with you on that (point).
I'd go along with that.

Disagreeing with Other Opinions – nesouhlas s jiným názorem

I'm with you up to a point, but ...
I see what you're saying but ...
I kind of agree with you but ...
I totally disagree!
That's absolute tosh / nonsense!

Asking for Verification – ověřování porozumění

Do you mean that ...?
Is it true that ...?
Are you serious?!

Asking for Clarification – žádost o vysvětlení

I'm afraid I don't quite follow.
I'm not sure I'm with you.
Sorry, you've lost me ...
What do you mean exactly?
I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you're getting at.

Asking for Repetition – žádost o zopakování

Sorry. I didn't catch that.
Sorry. I missed that. Could you say it again, please?
Could you run that by me again?
Could you go over that again?

Clarifying Listener Understands – kontrola porozumění

Have I made that clear?
Do you know what I mean?
Do you see what I'm getting at?
Are you with me?
Let me put it another way ...

Requesting Information – žádost o informace

I'd like you to ... (+ base verb)
Would you mind ... (+ verb + ing)
I wonder if you could ... (+ base verb)

Correcting Information – oprava informací

Sorry, that's not quite right.
That's not quite what I had in mind.
That's not quite what I meant.

Advising and Suggesting – rady a návrhy

We should ... (+ base verb)
Why don't you ... (+ base verb)
How/ What about ... (+ verb + ing)
I suggest/ recommend that ... (+ verb + ing / subject pronoun)

Real-life situation

Tom: John, could you review the results of the survey on leisure sporting activities again? We need to plan out our proposal for this Thursday's business meeting.

John: Sure, Tom. I've summarized the results in the handout, broken down by consumer age groups and sporting activities. The survey was administered to 350 men and women between the ages of 18 and 55 years old, and the results have been compiled in the following age groups: 18 to 26, 27 to 35, 36 to 45, and 46 to 55. According to the results, the most active group involved in sporting activities are those between 18 and 26 years old, followed by those 36 to 45 years old.

Tom: Okay.

John: As far as particular sports are concerned, people in these two groups cited jogging as their favorite recreational sport followed by skiing, tennis, swimming, and cycling.

Tom: And what about these groups broken down by gender?

John: Oh, Tom, thanks for bringing that up. Men appear to be slightly more active than women in the 18 to 26 year-old age group, but women seem more active in the other three groups.

Tom: Hmm. Based on what you have said, I think we should consider targeting the 18 to 26 year-old age group more in the future. I also feel we should consider expanding our line of athletic shoes, particularly jogging and tennis footwear. We also have to come up with a more appealing slogan aimed at this age group.

John: I see what you mean. However, when these results are compared with the survey carried out three years ago, we can see a growing trend among older consumers--those 14, I mean 46 to 55--who are becoming more conscious and concerned about staying fit. I believe this trend will continue, so we should focus on this group instead.

Tom: I see your point. Well, let's meet again on Wednesday to iron out more of the details of this proposal.

■ Stages of a meeting

Calling a Meeting

There are a number of ways that you may call or be called to a meeting. Some meetings are announced by email, and others are posted on bulletin boards. If a meeting is announced at the end of another meeting, it is important to issue a reminder. A reminder can also come in the form of an email or notice. Verbal announcements or reminders should always be backed up by documented ones. The date, location, time, length, and purpose of the meeting should be included. It is also important to indicate exactly who is expected to attend, and who is not. If you are planning on allocating someone to take on a certain role, make personal contact with that person to inform them of his or her duty.

Sample Email:

To: cathy@vertigo.com
cc: gery@vertigo.com; bob@vertigo.com; carol@vertigo.com
From: david@vertigo.com
Subject: Meeting

Hi Everyone,

We will be having a meeting next Thursday from 1:00 PM-3:00 PM in Room 2. All supervisors are expected to attend.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the upcoming trade fair. As you probably have heard, this could be our busiest and most demanding time. Please make arrangements to have other staff members cover your duties during the meeting.

Thank you,
David

Writing an Agenda

In order to keep the meeting on task and within the set amount of time, it is important to have an agenda. The agenda should indicate the order of items and an estimated amount of time for each item. If more than one person is going to speak during the meeting, the agenda should indicate whose turn it is to “have the floor”. In some cases, it may be useful to forward the agenda to attendees before the meeting. People will be more likely to participate in a meeting, by asking questions or offering feedback, if they know what is going to be covered.

Sample Agenda:

1. Welcome, Introduction: David and Carol (5 minutes)
 2. Minutes from previous meeting: Jane (10 minutes)
 3. Fair trade preparation: David (15 minutes)
 4. Staff allocation: David (15 minutes)
 5. Operation details: David (15 minutes)
 6. Possible challenges: David (if time allows 10 minutes)
 7. Feedback from last year: Everyone (15 minutes)
 8. Vote on staff picnic: Everyone (15 minutes)
 9. Questions/ Closing remarks/ Reminders: Everyone (5 minutes)
- Opening a meeting

Opening a Meeting

Whether you are holding the meeting or attending the meeting it is polite to make small talk while you wait for the meeting to start. You should discuss things unrelated to the meeting, such as weather, family, or weekend plans. Of course you will not talk to every attendee of a A.G.M. However, you can talk to a neighbouring person or at least greet the chairman.

John: Hi Tom. How are you?

Tom: Great thanks, and you?

John: Well, I'm good now that the warm weather has finally arrived. I really can't stand such long winters.

Tom: I know what you mean. I thought winter was never going to end.

John: And how about your golf clubs? Have you dusted them off yet?

Tom: Funny you should ask. I'm heading out with my friend for the first round of the year tomorrow.

Welcome

Once everyone has arrived, the chairperson, or whoever is in charge of the meeting should formally welcome everyone to the meeting and thank the attendees for coming.

- Well, since everyone is here, we should get started.
- Hello, everyone. Thank you for coming today.
- Thank you all for coming at such short notice.
- I really appreciate you all for attending today.
- We have a lot to cover today, so we really should begin.

John: *Well, since everyone is here, we should get started. First I'd like to welcome you all and thank everyone for coming, especially at such short notice. I know you are all very busy and it's difficult to take time away from your daily tasks for a meeting.*

Introductions

If anyone at the meeting is new to the group, or if there is a guest speaker, this is the time when introductions should be made.

- I'd like to take a moment to introduce our new colleague.
- I know most of you, but there are a few unfamiliar faces.
- Martin, would you like to stand up and introduce yourself?

Comments and Feedback

During the meeting, participants will comment, provide feedback, or ask questions. Here are some ways to do so politely:

- If I could just come in here ...
- I'm afraid I'd have to disagree about that.
- Could I just say one thing?
- I couldn't agree with you more.
- Jane, could you please speak up. We can't hear you at the back.
- We don't seem to be getting anywhere with this.

Closing a Meeting

There are different reasons why a meeting comes to an end. Time may run out, or all of the items in the agenda may be checked off. Some meetings will end earlier than expected and others will run late. The odd time, a meeting may be cut short due to an unexpected problem or circumstance. Here are a variety of ways to adjourn a meeting:

- It looks like we've run out of time, so I guess we'll finish here.
- I think we've covered everything on the list.
- I guess that will be all for today.
- If no one has anything else to add, then I think we'll wrap this up.

The minutes of a meeting

First thing we have to mention is that notes and minutes are the same thing. Minutes are more formal and are often required by organizational bylaws. When writing the minutes of a meeting make sure you answer the following 10 questions:

1. When was the meeting?
2. Who attended?
3. Who did not attend? (Include this information if it matters.)
4. What topics were discussed?
5. What was decided?
6. What actions were agreed upon?
7. Who is to complete the actions, by when?

8. Were materials distributed at the meeting? If so, are copies or a link available?
9. Is there anything special the reader of the minutes should know or do?
10. Is a follow-up meeting scheduled? If so, when? where? why?

Minutes need headings so that readers can skim for the information they need. Your template may include these:

Topics
Decisions
Actions Agreed Upon
Person responsible
Deadline
Next Meeting
Date and Time
Location
Agenda items

Reading

How to prepare for your first business meeting in China

You are set to enter the Chinese market, are done with your market research and now is the time to meet your potential Chinese business partners. However, before meeting them, you should familiarize yourself with some negotiation tactics and knowledge to secure yourself a higher chance of success.

If you do not understand Mandarin, engage a good interpreter to ensure your message is conveyed accurately and you do not misinterpret any of their messages. You should expect your interpreter to be familiar with your industry work and to be familiar with both your native language and the Chinese language industry jargons. Remember to provide your interpreter the relevant information that is required for him to effectively execute his task. If possible, before each meeting, spend some time to discuss with your interpreter what you want to achieve out of the negotiations.

As a foreign business entering the Chinese market, it will be advantageous for you to make things as convenient as possible for the local partners. For instance, if you have any information which you might want your potential partners to understand, remember to translate it into Chinese for their convenience and that also includes your name cards.

For a start, you may consider recording the meeting conversations either openly or secretly. Though it might be an ethical taboo in your culture, it does have the advantages of helping you or the interpreter to recall any information that was missed out in the meetings.

Leverage on your interpreter to pick up simple Chinese to be used in meetings. It can be a good ice breaker or a good closing. Words like “Thank you”, “How are you?”, “Welcome”,

“Pleased to meet you” or even some candid phrases like “You are handsome or pretty!” can be used to create a good impression.

Since this is the first meeting in person, some of the discussions may be held over lunch or even a tea drinking session. Therefore, using the chopsticks effectively or some simple tea knowledge can help to improve their impressions on you.

Sometimes you may find your potential partners reacting negatively during the meetings. Do not be alarmed - it may be that some Chinese, depending on their provincial lingo, may converse much louder along with hand movements. Do clarify with your interpreter.

Depending on the level of communication before the first meeting, you may find yourself not moving forward much in terms of business discussions. Do not feel discouraged as Chinese believes in consensual decision making and may need to report to their superiors on the findings before any decisions can be made. Furthermore, to do business with the Chinese, “Guan Xi” or relationship is also important. Thus this relationship needs to be built over time and cannot possibly be of immediate effect after the first meeting.

Thus, you must be prepared to make subsequent return visits to finalize the details and to build up the “Guan Xi”. Do not hasten to send emails after the meeting to finalize the details, as it may be misrepresented as the potential partners having the bargaining power. It is alright to return to your home country and then decide how you should play your cards in choosing the right partners. However, if your firm is prepared to make substantial investments into China, a local representative office will be of a long term benefit to aid your firm in facilitating business operations.

As a foreign business, you may also be a part of their “Mian Zi” or face building. Therefore, photo taking with these partners can help to provide a testimonial to Chinese small medium companies to show their counterparts that their firm is of value to foreign partners. In addition, you can request your interpreter for written meeting minutes, but do let him or her know in advance of this request so they can prepare for it.

Lastly, if you are not confident in entering the Chinese market or to source for the right Chinese partners, a good Chinese market research firms should be to support you to perform the market research, arranging your China business trips, interpretation services and lastly market entry into China.

http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Desmond_Wang

Questions

Check your understanding by answering the following questions.

1. What do you do if you don't understand Mandarin?
2. Is the something “ileagal” the article suggests to use at a meeting?
3. Why is it a good idea to learn a few phrases in Chinese?
4. What does “Mian Zi” mean and what does it require you to do?

■ A bit of grammar

There are a number of ways to add emphasis to your sentences in English. Use these forms to emphasize your statements when you are expressing your opinions, disagreeing, making strong suggestions, expressing annoyance, etc.

Use of the Passive

The passive voice is used when focusing on the person or thing affected by an action. Generally, more emphasis is given to the beginning of a sentence. By using a passive sentence, we emphasize by showing what happens to something rather than who or what does something.

- *Reports are expected by the end of the week.*

In this example, attention is called to what is expected of students (reports).

Inversion

Invert the word order by placing a prepositional phrase or other expression (at no time, suddenly into, little, seldom, never, etc.) at the beginning of the sentence followed by inverted word order.

- *At no time did I say you couldn't come.*
- *Hardly had I arrived when he started complaining.*
- *Little did I understand what was happening.*
- *Seldom have I felt so alone.*

Note that the auxiliary verb is placed before the subject which is followed by the main verb.

Expressing Annoyance

Use the continuous form modified by ,always', ,forever', etc. to express annoyance at another person's action. This form is considered an exception as it used to express a **routine** rather than an action occurring at a particular moment in time.

- *Martha is always getting into trouble.*
- *Peter is forever asking tricky questions.*
- *George was always being reprimanded by his teachers.*

Note that this form is generally used with the present or past continuous (he is always doing, they were always doing).

Cleft Sentences: It

Sentences introduced by ,It is' or ,It was' are often used to emphasize a specific subject or object. The introductory clause is then followed by a relative pronoun.

- *It was I who received the promotion.*
- *It is the awful weather that drives him crazy.*

Cleft Sentences: What

Sentences introduced by a clause beginning with ,What‘ are also used to emphasize a specific subject or object. The clause introduced by ,What‘ is employed as the subject of the sentence as is followed by the verb ,to be‘.

- *What we need is a good long shower.*
- *What he thinks isn't necessarily true.*

Exceptional Use of ,Do‘ or ,Did‘

You have probably learned that the auxiliary verbs ,do‘ and ,did‘ are not used in positive sentences – for example: *He went to the store.* NOT *He did go to the store.* However, in order to emphasize something we feel strongly these auxiliary verbs can be used as an exception to the rule.

- *No that's not true. John did speak to Mary.*
- *I do believe that you should think twice about this situation.*

Note this form is often used to express something contrary to what another person believes.

Exercise 1

Fill in the correct forms of the verbs in brackets using the passive voice.

1. A recipe for this type of frozen treat _____ (bring) to ancient Rome.
2. A type of ice cream _____ (invent) by the Chinese many centuries ago.
3. By the 1200s, a second type of ice cream _____ (discover) in China.
4. By the seventeenth century, cream _____ (use) in the recipes for a richer dessert.
5. First, the waffles _____ (twist) into a cone shape.
6. Fruit and ice _____ (combine) to make a refreshing treat.
7. Ice cream _____ (sell) at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.
8. Ice cream _____ (serve) by the President's wife in the White House in the early 1800s.
9. In addition to fruit and ice, milk _____ (use) in this second recipe.
10. Not enough dishes _____ (bring) by the ice cream vendor.
11. Recipes for ice cream _____ (bring) to America by European immigrants.

12. The first public ice cream shop _____ (open) in 1832 by a former White House cook.
13. The ice cream cone _____ (create) many years later, in 1904.
14. The ice cream vendor talked with the waffle-maker and an agreement _____ (make).
15. The people at the World's Fair _____ (delight) by this delicious combination.
16. The waffles _____ (use) as serving dishes for the ice cream.
17. Then, the ice cream _____ (place) inside the cone.
18. This frozen dessert _____ (call) FROGURT.
19. This frozen dessert _____ (think) to have been developed by the Chinese but recent research shows that it was first made in India.
20. This recipe _____ (introduce) to Europe by the famous explorer Marco Polo.

■ Getting better

Business Social Talk

Jack: Hi Suzy. How are you today?

Suzy: Hi Jack. I'm fine, and you?

Jack: Great, thank you. Remember, the meeting is at 3 o'clock.

Suzy: Excuse me, which meeting?

Jack: Which meeting?! The meeting with the boss!

Suzy: Are you sure there is a meeting today?

Jack: Suzy, Suzy, every month there is a meeting with a boss. This month that meeting is this afternoon.

Suzy: Calm down. OK, there's a meeting this afternoon. What time is it?

Jack: Suzy, this is important. The meeting is at three o'clock sharp!

Suzy: Thank you Jack ... By the way, what time is it now?

Jack: It's quarter past eleven.

Suzy: It's time for lunch!

Jack: Lunch, now? Lunch time is at twelve.

Suzy: Well, I'm hungry now.

Jack: You're funny Suzy. This is an office.

Suzy: I'm hungry ... it's just a snack ...