

 商务英语学习精品系列

BUSINESS

商务英语 书面沟通

——商务英语写作修辞失误与纠误

■ 李太志 编著



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商务英语书面沟通

Comment On Business English Writing

——商务英语写作修辞失误与纠误

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·北京·

内 容 简 介

本书从几个方面对商务英语写作,特别是对商务英语写作修辞失误进行了评论分析,并做了相应的改善升级,希望帮助广大商贸工作者提高商务英语书面交际与沟通的能力。

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前 言

随着国际商务信息传递方式和语言的现代化,商务英语写作与时俱进,摒弃传统信函使用的那些过时的、晦涩的商业行话(commercialese or jargon)或过程式化的公文文体(stereotyped officialese),转而崇尚简洁直白和自然朴素的写作风格。例如,像信函开头用的“*We beg to acknowledge...*”和结尾用的“*Awaiting your reply, I remain...*”,这些过去十分流行的正式用法,现已不合时宜,显得古板陈旧或过于繁琐。

然而,现在高校使用的许多商务英语写作教材仍充斥着传统写作风格的样例,对学生和商贸工作者产生了较大的负面影响。

商务英语写作须有明确而敏感的写作修辞意识来指导有效的商务英语写作。具有商务英语写作修辞意识意味着对指导和监控信函、合同、广告、说明书、报告等商务英语应用文写作的修辞原则和要求的敏感,包括对不同文体及其体现不同文体特征的写作修辞方法、写作修辞现象和语言表达手段的敏感,也包括区别有效写作(effective writing)与写作修辞失误(writing and rhetorical errors)的能力,等等。商务英语写作修辞意识的内容不是抽象的,而是由许许多多具体的语言表达手段、写作修辞方法、写作修辞现象以及它们体现的写作修辞原则和倾向等组成的一个可以比较、选择,进而加以优化的写作修辞系统。

为了更有效地进行商务英语书面交流与沟通,树立明确的商务英语写作修辞意识,本书拟从以下七方面对商务英语写作,特别是对商务英语写作修辞失误进行评论分析,并做现代化、专业化、

行业化的完善升级。

1. 对违背商务英语写作修辞写作原则或受汉语表达习惯影响而发生的商务英语写作修辞失误进行评论分析,培养并树立有效商务英语写作修辞意识(Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3);

2. 对请求函、求职函及履历表、代理函、销售函、社交函等不同信函的写作修辞失误进行评论分析,培养有效地对外商务英语交际与沟通的能力(Unit 4, Unit 5, Unit 6, Unit 8, Unit 9, Unit 10, Unit 11);

3. 对几种侧重点不同的履历表的填写进行了评论分析,培养有效地展现自己、推销自己从而成功求职的能力(Unit 7);

4. 对备忘录、商务报告等文体的写作修辞失误进行评论分析,培养在企业或组织内部有效地商务英语交际与沟通的能力(Unit 12, Unit 13);

5. 对购销合同的格式、文体特征等进行评论分析,熟悉并初步掌握起草商贸合同的方法(Unit 14);

6. 对产品说明书的写作特征与失误进行评析,熟悉并初步掌握起草产品说明书的方法(Unit 15);

7. 对商务演讲的文体特征与失误进行评析,熟悉并初步掌握起草商务演讲稿的方法(Unit 16)。

出于上述宗旨,本书既可供热心研究商务英语写作修辞的同仁参考,又可为即将从事对外商贸工作和正在进行对外商贸工作的精英们学习。笔者相信,对商务英语写作修辞失误进行评论分析,并做相应的改善升级,将会大大提高商务英语书面交际与沟通能力。

本书撰写过程中参考或引用了一些专家的研究成果,在此致以衷心的感谢!同时,恳请读者对书中存在的疏漏之处给予批评指正。

李太志

2012年底

Contents

PART I DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE BE WRITING SKILLS

Unit 1 Awareness for Effective BE Practical

Writing 2

1.1 Awareness for Effective BE Practical Writing 3

1.2 Role of Awareness for Effective BE Practical
Writing 5

Unit 2 Comment on the Correct Use of BE Practical

Writing Principles 13

2.1 Comment on the Use of the KISS Principle 13

2.2 Comment on the Use of the Businesslike
Poisé for BE Writing 17

2.3 Comment on the Use of the Six C's 19

2.4 Comment on the Use of Modern
Terminology 22

Unit 3 Errors Resulting from the Negative Impact

of the Chinese Language 27

3.1 Run-on Sentences 27

3.2 Dangling Modifiers 30

3.3 Luxurious Phrases 33

3.4 Too Many Verbs 33

PART II EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Unit 4	Seven Steps to Effective BE Letter Writing	40
4.1	Comment on the Layout of BE Letters	41
4.2	Comment on the Writing Approach	50
4.3	Comment on the Style of the Original Letter and Make Your Revision	52
Unit 5	Comment on Routine & Non-Routine Request Letters	57
5.1	Routine Request Letters on Catalogues & Replies	57
5.2	Non-Routine Request Letters on Various Things & Replies	62
Unit 6	Comment on Application Letters	72
6.1	Comment on the Unsolicited Application Letters	72
6.2	Comment on the Solicited Application Letters	74
6.3	Compare the Tone of the Application Letters	76
Unit 7	Comment on Résumé	81
7.1	Comment on Peter Johnson's Résumé	82
7.2	Compare the Following 2 Résumés	84
Unit 8	Comment on Persuasive Sales Letters	92
8.1	Unsolicited Sales Letters for Product/ Service Promotion & Replies	92
8.2	Solicited Sales Letters for Product/ Service Promotion & Replies	100
Unit 9	Comment on Complaint Letters	110

9.1	Comment on the Complaint Letter	110
9.2	Comment and Make Improvement on Complaint Letters	111
9.3	Compare and Comment on the Two Complaint Letters	114
Unit 10	Comment on Agency Letters	119
10.1	Comment on the Agency Letter	119
10.2	Make Improvement on Agency Letter	121
10.3	Compare and Comment on the Two Agency Letters	123
Unit 11	Comment on Social Letters	129
11.1	Comment on Social Letters	129
11.2	Comment on Invitation Letter & Its Reply	131
11.3	Comment and Improve the Following Resignation Letter	132
PART III INTERNAL COMMUNICATION		
Unit 12	Comment on Memos	137
12.1	Comment on Memo Writing and Make Improvement	137
12.2	Comment on Memo Writing and Make Improvement	139
12.3	Compare the Conversation with the Memo on the Same Subject	140
Unit 13	Comment on Reports	147
13.1	Comment on Report Writing and Make Improvement	148
13.2	Comment on Report Writing and Make Improvement	150

13.3	Compare the Following Two Reports	153
------	---	-----

PART IV MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATION

Unit 14	Comment on Contracts	164
14.1	Comment on the Following Sales Contract	164
14.2	Comment on the Following Purchase Contract	166
14.3	Compare the Following Contract in English and Chinese Version	169
Unit 15	Comment on Product Instructions/Descriptions	182
15.1	Comment on Product Instructions/Descriptions	183
15.2	Comment and Make Improvement on Product Instructions	185
15.3	Compare the Following Instructions in English and Chinese Version	186
Unit 16	Comment on Business Speeches	193
16.1	Comment on the Following Business Speech	194
16.2	Make Comment & Improvement upon the Following Speech	196
16.3	Compare the Following Speech in English & Chinese Version	198
Keys to Exercises	204
Appendixes	245
References	251

PART I

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE BE WRITING SKILLS

Unit 1

Awareness for Effective BE Practical

Writing

One of the surprisingly sad facts is that many textbooks for BE practical writing in China are full of sample letters, which are composed of long and complicated sentences made up of long and learned words. And some of the popular theories for BE letter writing still advocate the use of the formal style in writing long sentences and using hackneyed and stereotyped words and expressions of greater length than is required. As the BE learners are greatly impressed and affected by the above BE letter writing style, the natural effect is that they tend to write very long sentences by using very formal words without knowing that they belong to the traditional BE writing style and that they should have been thrown away into waste-paper baskets. In order that they can be exposed to the appropriate and effective BE practical writing style characterized by plentiful use of short sentences and short words which naturally lead to building a sweet tone in communication, the BE learners should be told about the necessity and importance for developing the awareness for effective and efficient BE practical writing.

1.1 Awareness for Effective BE Practical Writing

Awareness for effective BE practical writing is just the consciousness made up of the ideas about what are the appropriate principles and rules for effective and efficient BE practical writing and the abilities of knowing how to apply the right approaches and tones in BE practical writing. In detail, the awareness for effective BE practical writing is gradually acquired by learning how to distinguish and select the right sound, spelling, word, phrase, sentence, voice, tone, approach, organisation of text, principle, etc. from more than forty opposite pairs. Awareness for effective BE practical writing seems to be abstract, but it is a concrete consciousness as is shown in the above. Below are the opposite pairs which are available in BE practical writing for the writers to make rhetorical optimization of.

A. Pairs of Opposite Rhetorical Phenomena & Language Forms on Dimensions of Sound, Form & Meaning

words of same syllables	vs	words of different syllables
harmonious sounds & rhymes	vs	commonplace sounds & rhymes
repetition of same sounds in balance	vs	commonplace & natural sounds
deviated sound	vs	normal sound
big/capitalized letters	vs	small letters
acronym/abbreviation	vs	full-form word
abnormally-spelt word	vs	normally-spelt word

B. Pairs of Opposite Rhetorical Phenomena & Language Forms on Dimensions of Word, Sentence, Paragraph & Text

long words	vs	short words
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popular words	vs	learned words
static words	vs	dynamic words
single verbs	vs	phrasal verbs
special use	vs	common use
metaphorical use	vs	ordinary use
commendatory	vs	derogatory
positive	vs	negative
formal words	vs	informal words
concrete	vs	abstract
concise	vs	redundant
written words	vs	colloquialisms
archaisms	vs	words in contemporary use
long sentences	vs	short sentences
simple sentences	vs	compound/complex sentences
active	vs	passive
balanced	vs	non-balanced
loose	vs	periodic
normal order	vs	inversion
loose paragraph	vs	periodic paragraph
long paragraph	vs	short paragraph
one-sentence paragraph	vs	multi-sentence paragraph
listing	vs	stating
comparative	vs	contrastive

C. Pairs of Opposite Writing Tones & Approaches

You-attitude	vs	We-attitude
positive	vs	negative
personal	vs	impersonal/businesslike
inductive	vs	deductive
direct	vs	indirect

D. Pairs of Writing Principles & Their Oppositions

conciseness	vs unnecessary repetition
accuracy	vs ambiguity
incomplete	vs complete
correct expression	vs wrong expression
unity	vs disunity
coherence	vs lack of logic or coherence
emphatic	vs unemphatic
courteousness	vs discourteousness

1.2 Role of Awareness for Effective BE Practical Writing

Directed and guided by the awareness for effective BE practical writing, writers of BE letters, reports, plans, notices, etc. shall be able to choose the right choice from the more than 40 pairs of opposite words, phrases, sentences, writing approaches, tones, etc. to do effective and efficient BE writing. For example, writers with the above-mentioned awareness shall be able to distinguish the following pairs of sentences and judge which sentence will be more appropriate for the right reader, occasion, situation, time, purpose, etc.

①a. Thank you for talking with me on the phone last week regarding job opportunities.

Cf. ①b. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for talking to me on the phone last week about job opportunities with your firm.

[**Comment**] Traditional BE writing is full of clichés(陈词滥调;冗余的套话) which are old-fashioned and produce a very dull

effect. The expression, “I wish to take this opportunity to . . .”, is a typical example of clichés, which should be deleted to be in conformity with the writing principle—KISS (Keep it short and simple). (Taylor, 2007: 32-33)

②a. We are sorry to tell you that we do not have in stock any of the articles you said in your order of November 15.

Cf. ②b. In reply to your order of November 15, we regret to advise you that we do not have in stock any such articles as you described.

[**Comment**] The underlined words in Sentence B are formal learned words, so the sentence is appropriate in a letter written to new customers whom you are not familiar with. In comparison, the words used in Sentence A are more popular and natural words, which are frequently seen in plain modern BE writing.

③a. We are pleased to place an order for the products specified below: . . .

Cf. ③b. We would like to place an order for the following products: . . .

[**Comment**] Sentence A makes use of more formal words and expressions than Sentence B, so the formal Sentence A is a good one in an order letter for new customers. Words used in Sentence B seem to be more colloquial and natural, so the informal style is just suitable for e-mails written to close business associates.

In the following, let’s read and compare the different effects created by the different choice of the given pairs of words or expressions before and after the slashes.

Dear Mrs Denton,

Thank you/**Thanks** for your letter dated October 21.

As I am sure you will appreciate/**understand**, I am most upset/**very sorry** to learn/**hear** that you were unable to/**couldn't** locate my suitcase. As I indicated/**pointed out** in my original letter, the suitcase contained many/**a lot of** documents that I require/**need** for my work/**job**. I have had been obliged/**had to** contact/**get in touch with** my publishers to obtain/**get hold of** copies of documents that your airline mislaid/**lost**.

Naturally/**Of course**, I will complete/**fill in** the claim form, but it is not easy/**I find it difficult** to estimate/**guess** the value of the documents. Approximately/**About** half of them are irreplaceable.

I trust/**hope** that in the meantime you will continue to look/**are still looking** for my case. Should you find /**If you find** it, please contact me immediately/**straight away**.

I look/**am looking** forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Buik

[**Comment**] The words or expressions before and after the slashes are synonymous in meaning, but not in style. The words or expressions before the slashes are just popular ones which are very common in BE letters, but the style of the words or expressions after the slashes are informal, or even colloquial, so they are usually used in letters written to close friends.

As can be concluded from the above, writing is a rhetorical process of optimization, in which writers should possess the abili-

ty to make the right selection from pairs of words, phrases, sentences, organizations of text, approaches, tones, voices, principles, etc. to do more effective and efficient BE writing or written communication.

Exercise

- 1. What is awareness for effective BE practical writing and its role in BE written communication? Comment on the different stylistic effects produced by the following pairs of words or expressions.**

Phrasal Verbs	Single Verbs
reach a conclusion about	conclude
give consideration to	consider
conduct a discussion of	discuss
create a reduction in	reduce
engage in the preparation of	prepare
make an assumption of	assume
make a discovery of	discover
perform an analysis of	analyze
take action on	act
make a decision	decide
make an adjustment	adjust
make a payment	pay
make a referral	refer
provide an assistance	assist

- 2. Read and compare the different patterns of textual organization and their effects.**

<Letter 1>

Dear Susan,

The idea of starting an on-line toy store did not seem worka-