

高等学校应用创新型人才培养系列教材

国际经济与贸易专业

Effective Business English Written Communication (有效商务英语书面沟通)

[中] 杨伶俐

[美] 乔纳森·朗 (Jonathan Lang)

编著

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内容简介

本书是一本涵盖面广且又具有一定深度的介绍商务环境下英语书面沟通的教材。本书不仅注重突出商务英语写作的语言特点、风格和原则,而且融合国际贸易流程、商务管理与营销等商科知识。

全书共分为六大部分:第一部分是沟通商务沟通的总体介绍,以及商务英语写作七大原则的阐述与详细例证;第二部分为商务营销写作;第三部分为国际贸易实务函件写作;第四部分为国际商务合同写作;第五部分涉及企业内部的商务英语书面沟通;第六部分是商务信函和传真的标准格式。

本书为全英文,使学习者处于全英文浸泡环境内,更好地体验地道的商务英语特色。每章有大量的例子进行阐述,以利于学习者模仿学习各类文件、信函的体例结构、常用句型与表达方式。每章后配有思考和练习题,帮助学生巩固商务英语写作与沟通的能力。

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前言



本书旨在使学习者在商务环境中能够用英语有效地进行商务书面沟通,以达到商务交际目的。

本书的设计集合了英语语言学、教育学、传播学、国际贸易实务、市场营销学和管理学等多学科理念,最大的特色在于其实用性和复合性。本书不仅注重突出商务英语写作的语言特点、风格和原则,而且融合国际贸易流程、商务管理与营销等商科知识。这样可帮助读者避免语言和商务知识的脱节,使其写作不再流于表面的语言形式,而是言之有物,并具有商业人士必须具备的专业思维,且能体现读者的商务实践能力和解决问题的能力。

全书共分为6大部分24章。第一部分是沟通与商务沟通的总体介绍,以及商务英语写作的七大原则的阐述与详细例证。第二部分为商务营销写作,主要包括公司简介、广告、传单、新闻稿、推销函和往来函等。读者通过这一部分的学习可掌握如何塑造企业形象,如何宣传和推广产品或服务。第三部分为国际贸易实务函件写作,主要涉及进出口贸易中买卖双方在不同环节的沟通,从询价、报价、订货、运输到投诉和调停等相关信函都予以详细阐释。第四部分为国际商务合同写作,主要介绍国际销售合同、合资企业合同、代理协议和特许经营协议等,旨在让读者通过合同更深入了解业务内容及相关商务法律方面的知识和语言特点。第五部分涉及公司企业内部的商务英语沟通,主要介绍备忘录和电子邮件、报告、会议纪要、商务建议书和创业计划书等。第六部分是商务信函和传真的标准格式。

本书编者中一位从事商务英语教学工作多年,另一位为美籍商务英语教学专家。所有章节全英文阐述,语言地道,使读者能更好地体验商务英语特色。每章均有大量的例子,利于读者模仿学习各类信函的结构、常用句型与表达方式。章后配有思考和实操练习,帮助学生提高商务英语写作能力与沟通技巧。

由于编者水平及时间所限,书中难免会有瑕疵和纰漏,真诚欢迎专家和读者提出宝贵的意见和建议,以使本教材能更好地满足学习者的需求。

杨伶俐

2018年4月

于对外经济贸易大学

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Part One

An Overview of Business English Written Communication

This part is composed of five chapters (1-5). The first two chapters are about what is communication, verbal communication and business communication and the basic elements surrounding these concepts, attempting to let learners be aware of the large picture of business communication before going into the details of the writing. It also acts as a warm-up section. The three chapters that follow focus on the specific 7 C's principles of business written communication. Each principle is given an in-depth analysis supported by numerous examples, aiming to let learners know what is effective business writing exactly and how effectiveness can be achieved. With these principles in mind, business writers have a set of basic criteria which can guide their specific writing practice.

Chapter 1 Understanding communication

Objectives

By the end of this chapter you should be able to

- understand the elements of communication;
- understand the characteristics of communication;
- understand barriers to communication;
- understand ethics in communication.

What is communication?

Communication is extremely complicated. Trying to generate an all-encompassing definition of communication is extremely difficult due to the immense amount of variables involved in communication, so it's best to start by examining the elements of communication and the characteristics of communication before coming up with a definition. We then have to look at whether the communication is intended or unintended, direct or indirect, and whether we are aware of the fact that communication has taken place. For the purpose of this text, we will primarily focus on written communication as it applies to the business world, but a real-world example may illustrate concepts better.

Elements of communication

Communication is basically comprised of three elements: the sender, the receiver and the message.

- **Sender**—The sender is the one who emits a message.
- **Receiver**—The one who receives and interprets the message.
- **Message**—The message is the interpretation of the compilation of stimuli. (I know this is kind of a vague definition, but you'll understand as the text continues.)

Let's examine some examples to enhance our understanding:

Example 1A. You walk into a store to buy an article of clothing, and you don't see the particular article of clothing you desire in your size. You walk up to the sales associate and ask them if they can assist you in finding the article of clothing in your size.

The communication is very straight-forward and easy to interpret. The sender is you because you address the sales associate. The message is, "Do you have the article of clothing in my size?" The receiver is the sales associate.

Example 1B. Let's complicate the situation a bit to illustrate other elements of communication. As you ask the sales associate, they turn and reply gruffly, "All we have is on the display." As they reply, you smell a heavy stench of garlic on their breath, and their teeth are black and rotten.

Now we've added some dynamics to the communication that illustrate the complexities of communication. We've added interaction between two entities. We've also added some other stimuli that are emitted; the gruff tone, the stinky breath and the black teeth. We've also added the interpretation of the stimuli that are emitted, received and interpreted. As humans, we are huge sensory receptors. We are constantly being stimulated by data that our brain interprets, and it is the interpretation of those stimuli that constitutes the message. You may be asking yourself what this has

to do with business writing, and, hopefully, you'll see as we progress.

Elements of communication (Continued)

- **Medium/Channel**—The communication medium or channel is the method used to communicate. In this particular example, we have sight, sound and smell; all forms of nonverbal communication. We also have verbal communication which adds more complexity because we have both spoken words and the tone used to send the message.
- **Encoding**—Encoding takes place on the part of the sender, and it involves identifying stimuli and compiling that stimuli so that it transmits a message. In this case, the sales associate consciously compiled the words into a sentence to transmit the message that all of the store's stock of that particular item of clothing was on display. Subconsciously, the sales associate also encoded that they had recently eaten garlic and that there was an issue with their oral hygiene.
- **Decoding**—Decoding takes place on the part of the receiver, and it's the interpretation of the stimuli that is emitted from the sender. In this case, you are the receiver and you interpreted, or decoded, a variety of stimuli that was sent both consciously and subconsciously by the sender. You've interpreted that the store does not have the item of clothing you were seeking in your size, the sales associate had recently eaten garlic and that there was also an oral hygiene issue with the sales associate.
- **Noise**—Noise is any aspect of communication that may impact the way in which stimuli is interpreted. It can take place on the part of both the receiver and the sender, and generally results in some type of unintended or misinterpreted communication. The sales associate's gruff response may have been due to a number of factors; they could be having a bad day, they may be upset with their job or life circumstances or their stomach may be upset due to eating too much garlic. An intended, conscious communication message of any employee should be to reflect the company in the best light. Additional noise could be attributed to lack of training or lack of understanding the importance of positive customer relations. These are examples of internal noise. External noise can also be present that impedes communication. Examples of external noise include physical sounds that impact hearing as well as other external elements such as extreme cold that may impact both the ability and desire to communicate.
- **Feedback**—Feedback is basically the response provided by the receiver. This can be conscious, subconscious, intended, unintended, verbal or nonverbal. The direct conscious feedback or response was provided by the verbal answer to your request for assistance. If you made any facial gestures, nods, body movements, or articulated speech, you would be providing feedback to the sender, the sales associate.
- **Stimuli**—Stimuli is anything that intentionally or unintentionally can be interpreted as a message. In this case, the smell of garlic or the blackened teeth are stimuli that send a

message. This aspect is extremely important to be cognizant of in business due to the fact that the impression others have of you can impact your career; you want to understand and control as many stimuli as you can to project a positive impression of yourself. Business attire and deliberate professionalism are stimuli intended to elicit positive interpretation from the receivers to further enhance your career.

As you can see, we've gleaned a lot from the very brief encounter outlined in example 1. That's why it's so difficult to find an all-encompassing definition of communication. All of the little nuances involved in interactions are complicated to, first of all, identify and, secondly, interpret correctly. That's why it is so important to understand the concept of stimuli, nonverbal communication and unintended messages. Communication that consists of a message that is crafted in such a way that it is received with the exact same meaning as it was intended to be received is the crux of successful communication. A lot of this has to do with your ability to understand the nature of stimuli, the capabilities of the people you're communicating with and all of the "noise" involved in the communication process.

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As a communicator, encoding, decoding and feedback are critical for successful communication. To illustrate the importance of interpretation and feedback, let's continue on with example 1 with a couple more interactions that may change the entire dynamics of your interpretation of the situation.

Example 1C: After receiving the gruff response from the sales associate, you feel put-off and turn to walk away. As you're about to walk away, the sales associate says, "I'm really sorry to reply in such a gruff manner, but I have bone cancer in my jaw. I recently received treatment, and it's impacting my professionalism. If you're interested in anything else, I'd be happy to assist you. Please accept my apologies for my unprofessionalism."

Now you can understand the importance of interpretation of stimuli and the importance of feedback. On the part of the sender, they realized that the message they sent may have been misinterpreted as reflecting unprofessionalism. They were well-aware of their physical condition, and found it necessary to add some context to the situation. As a receiver, what were you thinking? Did you interpret all of the stimuli correctly, or did you jump to conclusions? The stimuli you received may have not been interpreted correctly, and by the sales associate adding context to the situation, you were able to develop a deeper, more accurate understanding of the situation as a whole.

From the entirety of example 1, we can now understand the characteristics of communication:

Characteristics of communication

- Communication is **dynamic**—Communication is something that is ever evolving, it is not

static. Example 1 illustrates that there was fluid information exchange between the two participants.

- Communication is **interactive**—The participants in example 1 interacted with each other. Even though some of the communication was nonverbal, it involved interaction of the two participants and involved a variety of stimuli sent by multiple communication channels.
- Communication is **complex**—It is not always easy to interpret the stimuli we receive correctly. There are many variables that impact how messages are sent, or how they are received.
- Communication is **contextual**—Communication is defined by the circumstances surrounding the situation. Without the sales associate explaining the situation fully, we would not have understood details behind the communication and we would not have elicited the proper understanding of the situation.
- Communication is **irreversible**—Once we communicate something, it is difficult to take it back. You can't "unsee" something or "unhear" something; the stimuli left an impression on you. The sales associate could not take back their gruff reply, but they attempted to clarify any misunderstanding.
- Communication is **learned**—When we interpreted the stimuli in the above mentioned example, we relied on experiences we had to develop an understanding of the situation. We may have seen black teeth before, we may understand that poor oral hygiene may result from illness or disease, but we may have never experienced a similar situation. We have now learned not to jump to conclusions without verifying the underlying facts while communicating. We learn how to interpret stimuli in our own way, and we all may have a different perspective on communication that has taken place.

Definition of communication

Now that we have a better understanding of both the elements of communication and the characteristics of communication, we perhaps can define communication in a way that properly reflects communication and is easy to understand. *Communication is the transference of a message from one entity to another entity.* Even though many people may experience the message, each recipient, or receiver, receives the information and interprets it in their own personal way. Some messages are consciously sent, while other messages are transmitted without the sender fully understanding what's being received; you would have to get into another person's mind to know exactly what they're thinking.

In summary, the elements of communication include: sender, message, receiver, medium/channel, encoding, decoding, noise, feedback and stimuli. The characteristics of communication are: dynamic, interactive, complex, contextual, irreversible and learned. Both of these lists may not encompass every characteristic or element of communication, but they do assist us in

understanding what communication actually is: the transference of a message from one entity to another.

Barriers to effective communication

The essence of effective communication is that a message is received in the exact way it was intended to be received. This seems far easier than it actually is. There are nearly infinite variables to communication, and it's nearly impossible to identify all of them let alone consider them when constructing communication. The nature of all of this involves the individuality of the participants involved in communication. Each of them has their own, personal set of circumstances that have shaped them into who they are. These circumstances that developed us impact both the way we construct messages and the way we interpret messages received. The best we can do is to identify potential areas of risk that may contribute to the distortion of how messages are interpreted by both the sender and receiver. These risks are also known as barriers, and include both physical and psychological barriers.



Culture—Entire books have been written about intercultural communication, and the barriers of culture are more prevalent than one might expect. It is true that we are all human, but the presumption that we are more similar than dissimilar in our thinking and behavior is faulty. We have all been raised differently, and we all think differently. Even within your own culture, numerous differences in peoples' thoughts, values and perceptions exist. Without education of differences in cultures, it is very difficult to understand the breadth and depth of differences. Some of the barriers to intercultural communication include:

- **Avoidance of the unfamiliar:** It is natural for individuals to feel reticent about attempting to communicate with individuals from another culture. People stick to what they know and avoid what they don't.
- **Uncertainty reduction:** People are not sure what to say to foreigners, or how foreigners think, so to avoid uncertainty, they shy away from communication with foreigners.
- **Withdrawal:** If you have attempted to communicate, and you find it difficult to communicate, you may withdraw from communication. Difficulty breeds lack of desire.
- **Stereotyping:** Stereotypes are generalized assumptions about cultures. They are necessary to develop understandings about different cultures, but may be misleading or offensive if the stereotypes are not applicative and negative in nature.
- **Prejudice:** Prejudice is negative, rigid and irrational thoughts about a group of people. This can lead to communication that is skewed to follow those beliefs or thoughts about a group of people.
- **Racism:** Racism is the belief that one race is superior to another, and this belief may lead to discomfort or skewed communication.
- **Misuse of power:** When people believe they are from a dominant or superior culture, they

may attempt to control the situation and not allow “free” communication.

- **Culture shock:** Culture shock is the anxiety and stress associated with communicating with foreigners. This anxiety is a barrier to effective communication.
- **Ethnocentrism:** Ethnocentrism is the belief that your own culture, beliefs, values etc., are better than those of other cultures. It’s natural to believe what you’ve been taught is best, but in reality, all cultures are different and viewing one as better than another is not proper in effective intercultural communications. Cultures are different, and the assumption that one has to be, or is, superior is faulty.

Noise—As discussed earlier, noise is anything along the communication chain that may distort the intended meaning of the message. It can affect both the generation of the message as well as the interpretation of the message as it is received. It can be external in nature in situations where actual physical noise or other physical conditions exist that impede the communicators from hearing or communicating to their fullest capacity. It can also be internal in a sense that the communicator may be physically ill, tired, stressed or may be experiencing any other physical condition that may impede the communicator’s ability to interpret properly.

Role—Role involves the communicator’s position regarding the hierarchy present in the communication process. This barrier involves superiors and subordinates, or perceived superiors and subordinates, and relates to the hesitancy and problems involved in communicating between hierarchal ranks. Not all cultures have open communication between varying levels of organizational hierarchy, but this factor of communication between roles should be considered regardless of the degree of communication that exists between varying management levels.

Bias—Bias involves a skewed interpretation due to a conceived or preconceived notion about a communicator. It can be cultural in regards to nationality, and it can be cultural in regards to corporate culture. Finance people think differently from engineers, and they have different responsibilities; engineers want high quality while finance employees want to control costs. The bias can also be personal in the case of just not liking someone from past encounters. Bias has to be considered and minimized whenever it is identified.

Misinterpretation—Misinterpretation is exactly as it sounds; someone has incorrectly interpreted a message. It is the roll of all parties involved in the communication process to validate the meaning of the message. Misinterpretation is quite common, and it’s best for parties to clarify the intended meaning of the message before jumping to conclusions. There are often times simple explanations for why a message is misinterpreted, and communication of the misunderstanding will assist in the development of the communication skills of the communicators.

It can be seen that there are scores of barriers to effective communication. Because

we are unaware of other's personalities, bias or any other thought processes that may create misinterpretation of a message, it is not uncommon for communication errors to occur. If we are cognizant of the breadth and depth of potential communication barriers, we can attempt to minimize their impact by constructing messages that avoid potential barriers. Communicators have to exert concentrated efforts to ensure the message they send is received in the way it was intended to be received, and all parties are responsible for ensuring effective communication takes place.

Additional cultural barriers to communication-East vs West

Since the target audience of this textbook is predominantly Chinese, and this text is written in English for writing in English, it's important to understand the cultural differences between Eastern cultures and Western cultures are considerably large. We observe other cultures, and we see cultural differences in behaviors, customs, rituals, arts and other aspects of culture that are visibly identifiable. What observers are not seeing is the underlying characteristics of culture that are not observable. These invisible culture traits are the thought processes and value systems that determine observable behaviors; we can't see what others are thinking. Since these thought process and value systems are fundamental in the development of cultures and represent the basis for behavior, in terms of importance, we see far fewer differences than actually exist. It's important to understand this when communicating between cultures.

Inductive reasoning vs Deductive reasoning: Eastern cultures are said to prefer the inductive reasoning style while Western cultures are said to prefer deductive reasoning. It's extremely important to understand how this will impact communication between cultures. Inductive reasoning is "topic delayed" while deductive reasoning is "topic first." When Easterners communicate with Westerners and delay the topic to the end of the communication, Westerners consider this type of communication to be disorganized and confusing; they think Easterners are unable to organize their thoughts. Westerners are trying to get a contextual grasp on the situation and expecting to be verbally cued at the beginning of the communication. Without this cue, Westerners have difficulty trying to determine what is actually being communicated. Easterners are said to use inductive reasoning to establish a "shared thought process" in which the communicators think together to achieve a mutually understood conclusion. This is a major barrier to communication between Easterners and Westerners that must be considered when communicating between cultures.

Indirect vs Direct communication: Easterners typically communicate in an indirect manner. They consider the concept of "face" when communicating so they don't offend their

communication partners. Easterners are prone to show less emotion and are reluctant to directly say “no.” Westerners, on the other hand, prefer to communicate directly and have no issues with saying “no” or showing emotion. The concept of “face” is not a focal point of Western communication; they prefer to express themselves directly and value honest communication over offensive behavior. That is not to say that Eastern communication is dishonest; it considers the feelings of the communication partners greater than the importance of expressing their true sentiments. The potential result is that Easterners consider Westerners to be rude, and Westerners consider Easterners “less than honest.” A typical point of confusion is when Easterners say “we will think about it.” This is an Eastern way of saying “no” without offending the communication partner. Westerners perceive this communication to mean that the communication partner will take the topical point into consideration and report their conclusion later. The Westerner will be awaiting a response when the response has already been provided without directly stating it. The Westerner will expect a response, and when one does not arrive, the Westerner considers the communication to be a misrepresentation of thoughts and dishonest. Westerners also have no issues with showing their emotions; if they are angry with a communication, they will make the communication partner aware of their sentiments. This may be difficult for the Easterner to accept, but it is none the less a feature of some Western cultures. The concept of honest representation of thoughts, feelings and emotions takes precedence over politeness, “face” and relationship building and maintenance. It is recommended that communicators understand this and consider it for communication between Eastern and Western cultures.

Contextual orientation: Contextual orientation refers to the extent the communicators consider the context of the situation to be an influencing factor in communication. Easterners are mostly participants in collective cultures that exert efforts to maintain relationships and face. Their relationships are built on trust, and they value relationships over the expression of details. Westerners are more concerned with the results of the communication than the relationships involved in the communication process and like to have details of communication directly stated in communication. The result is that Westerners require more information to feel comfortable during the communication process. They value the results of the communication over the relationships, and require a detailed, mutual understanding of the context of the communication. This is accomplished through a more extensive communication process requiring more information exchange. As a result of this difference, Easterners may view Westerners as “too needy” in regards to information exchange. They may not understand that the Westerners are more concerned with the exactness of the communication required to achieve results in the mind of the Westerner. Westerners may consider Easterners as unwilling to communicate or unwilling to disclose all relevant facts. This potential communication barrier can cause difficulties in communication between the cultures.

Ethics in communication

Communication is an interaction between people. The message is the most important part of successful communication, but the communicators themselves are the ones communicating; we attribute context to the communication process which involves the character of those communicating. We all want to communicate with people we feel are ethical, and careful attention should be paid to the perceptions others have of you as a communicator. You want to make sure that the information exchanged in communication is perceived identically by all communicators so that misconceptions are not developed that impede future communications. The same holds true in business; we prefer to conduct business with companies we feel are ethical. Companies need to make sure they are socially responsible in all of their communications, both internally and to the public. The following guidelines should be applied when communicating to foster an environment of respect and ethical conduct.

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Convey the point without offending the audience: Sometimes this is a daunting task due to the personal nature of communication and the simple fact that we cannot please all of the people all of the time. We have to be aware of many of the differences between us and our audience that we can possibly be aware of and communicate in a manner that is non-offensive. Beyond a lack of understanding of the audience, a communicator can also be impacted by internal noise that may impede their ability to communicate as professionally as they normally would; so we have to be aware of anything that may be affecting our mental state. It is best to approach communication with a professional attitude, and diligent research of the target audience to ensure that the audience is comfortably receptive to the communication. We cannot control how others receive our communication, but we can control the amount of care we put into our communication. Part of ethical communication is fostering harmony.

Accuracy of the message is critical: One of the main concepts of ethics is that honest, accurate information has been exchanged. Sometimes situations occur in which information changes due to elements beyond our control. We must notify our partners of circumstances such as a change in schedule or availability, and we must clarify things with our communication partners. No one wants to do business with a person that is not diligent in their research or blatantly misstates facts. Once the element of trust is broken in the communication process or once a negative perception is developed, barriers will develop that hinder effective communication in the future. It is best to validate the accuracy of information before communicating so that effective communication can be achieved and maintained in either a personal or business situation. If communication is found to be a purposeful misstatement of facts, that communication may lead to the communicator being viewed as unethical.