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BUSINESS ENGLISH WRITING

By *Liu Yongqiang*

刘永强 编著

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自序

加入 WTO 后, 中国大陆与其他国家与地区的经贸交流更加密切。国内企业失去了政府的关税保护, 国外企业的产品与服务纷至沓来, 极大推动着国际商务的发展。商务英语作为企业参与国际竞争及交流的工具, 其教与学面临着严峻的挑战。如何事半功倍, 培养出具有较高商务英语写作水准的专业人才, 成为英语教学必须努力解决的难题。笔者从事商务活动及教学十多年, 深感理论与实践相结合的重要性。鉴于商务英语教学中一些迫在眉睫的问题, 笔者撰成《实用商务英语写作》, 力求将商务英语教学、实践和国际贸易法规于一炉, 使广大商务人员及有志于此的大学生们一册在手, 能较快掌握商务写作的基本知识, 迅速应用到实际工作中去。

本书共分五部分。第一部分介绍各种文、函、电的写作原则、步骤、格式, 包括信件、报告、备忘录、会议记录、电子邮件等。第二部分演示如何应聘外贸公司。第三部分为商务谈判, 介绍国际商务谈判各环节, 如询价、要约、承诺、资信调查、定单及其执行、合同成立等。第四部分为催款和支付方式。第五部分论及投诉及索赔。总体上看, 本书具有如下几个特点:

1、将国际商务英语的写作与国际商务实践有机结合。以商务实践的环节为主线, 来安排各类文函的写作, 提炼写作原则, 规范语言使用, 演示如何在商务中操作。而同类教材仅罗列一些文函, 进行词汇等微观语言的操练。

2、将函电写作原则、步骤与范文相结合, 予以评说。评说或为笔者实践所得, 或为余暇感悟。读者一目了然, 使用标准文函时, 自能举一反三, 有的放矢, 解决各种复杂的实际问题。

3、将每章中的内容加以综合, 在个案中演示各种函电的实际操作。这些案例多取材于法官判例及易出问题的环节, 提示读者如何用函电来操作实务, 还配有中文说明或英文评论以方便阅读。

4、国际商务文函具有法律效力。针对一些学生基础知识不扎实, 故每章都给予法律提示, 就语言的法律效力, 对如何避免因语言使用不当引起国际纠纷作出提示。

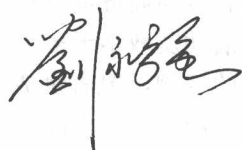
5、操作要点总结和强调每章中的重点环节。随后的参考用语为读者提供可资应用的各类文、函、电用语, 便于实例操作。

笔者在写作过程中, 以国际贸易法学为准绳, 凭藉长期从事大学英语、剑桥国际商

务英语证书考试等课程的教学经验，努力将英语语言、国际经济法知识、商务实践融会贯通，为读者提供既有一定的学术参考价值又有实践意义的指导教材。本书适用于涉外经贸人员，英语系、国际商务系和外贸专业的学生及其他英语爱好者，可以作为高校教材使用，也是实际商务操作的指南。

草稿完成后，西门子电站自动化有限公司商务经理吴蓉、高级工程师许立昌就英语与涉外商务实践提出了许多中肯的意见；南京大学法学院曾昭华教授审核了法律提示部分；南京化工大学钱小明老师鼎力相助；定稿前承蒙南京师范大学外国语学院院长程爱民教授的指导；另外，本书参考和引用了一些公司的资料和图片。在此深表谢忱！

光阴荏苒，笔者历时五载，潜心于此，知难而进，数易其稿，力求有所认知，裨益于商务英语的教学与实践，但限于功底仍薄，仓促成书，错陋之处在所难免，尚祈同行专家及广大读者不吝批评指正，以使笔者能够学有长进，日新又新，再版时作出修改。



2001 年 1 月

Introduction 导言

This book deals with the language application in the fields of international business and services, serving the purposes to carry out every step to undertake international business transactions. This book falls into five parts as follows:

Part I Forms of Business Correspondence

Part II Employment

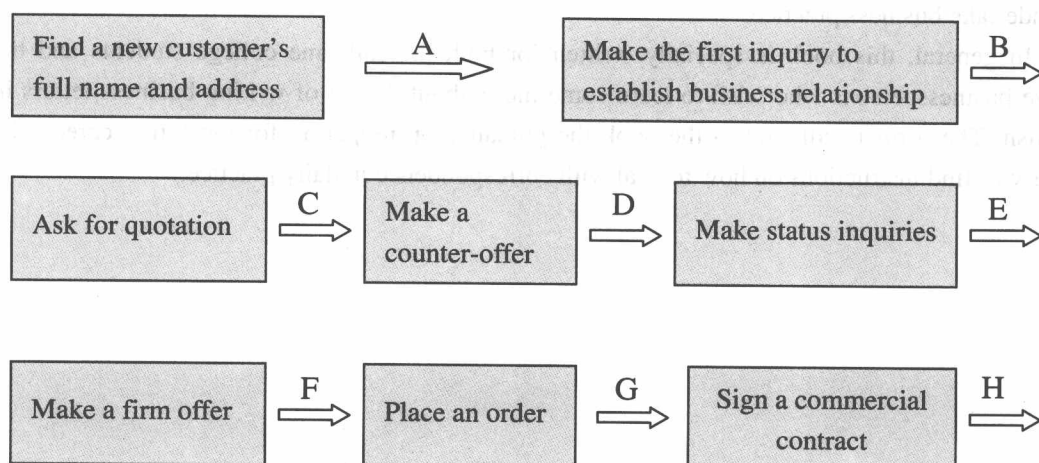
Part III Business Negotiations

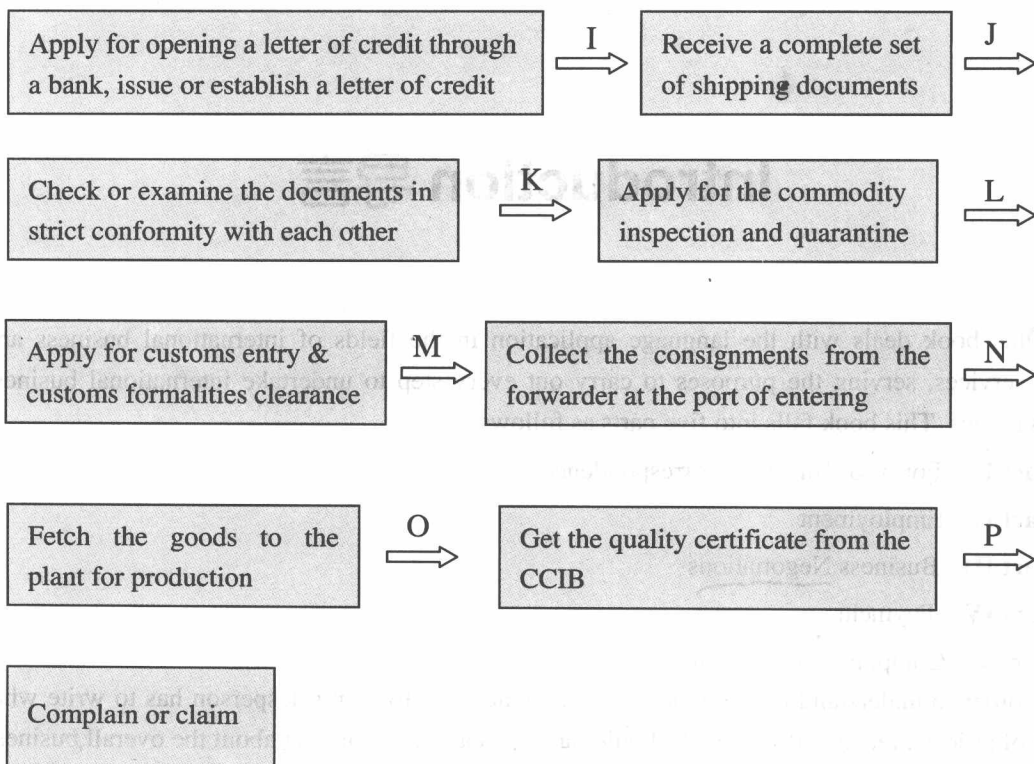
Part IV Payment

Part V Complaints and Claims

In order to understand that in what kind of situations a foreign salesperson has to write what kind of articles, readers of this book should have a clear understanding about the overall business proceedings. And as a result, they know what kind of articles is necessarily written at different stages of business transactions. Therefore a careful study on the procedures of foreign trade is necessary to the readers of this book. These proceedings are introduced as an example of an import business.

Procedures for import business:





Readers of this book will find rules and steps for writing all kinds of commercial correspondence to carry out import and export business transactions involving the above-mentioned procedures. In addition, samples with author's comments are also presented for readers' reference. In order to avoid separating the letter writing from the business practice, there is a section of comprehensive case studies, in which the author demonstrates how to write letters to undertake business practice.

In general, this book is specially written for both the full-time college students and the active businesspersons who wish to learn some more about the art of writing business letters in English. The former will find in the book the guidance on preparing for the future career; the latter will find instructions on how to deal with correspondence in daily practice.

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Chapter 1

Business Letters 商务信件

Nowadays, in an age of electronics, people tend to make phone calls for the purpose of communication, instead of writing letters in daily life. The rapid development of telecommunication makes telephone, ^(teleks) ~~telex~~ and fax even more popular, and seems to have decreased the importance of letters. Nevertheless, letters are still retaining their importance in this age of electronic communication and they are still written in an overwhelming number in international business. Business executives are supposed to write so good business letters as to carry out business routine efficiently. This chapter is intended to develop skills in writing such good business letters.

Section 1 Advantages of Letters 信件的优点

Business letters are still popularly written because letters have the following advantages over other means of communication:

1. No time limits for writing 写作无时限

When writing letters, the writer can take his time to state the matter in question in greater detail. For one thing, the writer is justified in giving full details and even in repeating some key points to assist the reader to draw adequate attention to the matters, while making a telephone call or sending a telex message the writer may feel that he must ^{1. xol/kwt/} ~~compress~~ ^{enough} the message to avoid a recital of numerous details. For another thing, the writer can write the letters in whatever time he likes, while when making a phone call or sending a telex, he must "get off" the line as soon as possible. And for the last thing, when writing or answering letters, the writer has enough time for reflection. The writer has time to think about exactly what he wishes to say and to make a draft of his letter. He has time to consider the impression that his words will make on the reader. In a difficult matter, the reflection and writing may be spread over two or three days. On the other hand, anyone who contacts others by telephone or by telex expects an immediate or at least a quick response. As a result anyone who replies by telephone or by telex has to think and to act under pressure.

2. Convenience for reading at anytime 阅读无限制

It is convenient for the recipient to read letters at any time, or for an unlimited number of times. Because letters are definitely permanent records of what has been communicated, the recipient of letters can read them whenever he or she wants to, as long as it is kept on file.

3. Possession of the most legally binding force 最具法律效力

Letters are the most effective documents with legally binding force. Letters may be presented as evidence in a court of law if there is a dispute between two business parties. For this reason, many companies take refuge in writing letters to confirm not only what has been said on the telephone but also what has been said during a face-to-face discussion. Messages sent by telephone are not so convincing as messages sent by letters because the person taking the call may unintentionally or intentionally distort the messages when he makes a note of the telephone conversation. Consequently, it may be one of the parties to a transaction or both of them who require that what happens between them be expressed in permanent binding forms of business letters.

4. Anyone can be reached 能达任何人

A letter may reach anyone in the world as long as there are post services. Sometimes, it is very difficult to speak to certain business people, because they withdraw themselves behind a screen of receptionists, telephone operators, secretaries, personal assistants and clerks. Such "difficult" persons can not be reached by a telephone call or a visitor. However, they can almost always be reached by letters.

5. Convenience for sending statements and tables 便于送图表

Letters can be used to send statements of account and lengthy tables of statistics. Telephone or telex can not be used to send such information conveniently and confidentially, but they can be sent easily and confidentially as a part of a letter or as an enclosure attached to the letter. A facsimile system can easily transmit such information, but it is less confidential than transmission by letters.

Even though writing letters is a slow way of communicating, it is very this slowness that produces a higher degree of accuracy, whereas the haste with which the telex messages are often composed tends to result in oversights and errors. Letters are both indispensable and essential as a means of communication in international business.

Section 2 Rules and Steps for Writing Business Letters 写作原则和步骤

● Rules for Writing Business Letters 写作原则

Even though different people may have different ideas about writing letters, there do exist some rules for writing business letters. Writers of business letters have to follow these general

guidelines:

1. Be clear 清楚明白

A letter should indicate exactly what the subject matter is. Don't put more than one subject in a letter. Be sure not to put more than one idea in a sentence or more than one topic in a paragraph, i.e., one point in one paragraph. Never mix different ideas in one paragraph. Select a topic sentence then decide the relevant in the same paragraph. The presentation of the message should also be clear and intelligible, so that the reader can see without difficulty what the points of the letter are, and what he should think or do accordingly.

2. Be relevant 中肯切题

A letter should contain all the relevant information and nothing irrelevant. It is very hard for a writer to make a judgement about what is relevant and what is irrelevant. Whether certain information is relevant or not depends on the subject discussed and the occasion on which the letter is written. Generally, even though the following information is relevant, they should be handled with varying degree of confidentiality:

- personnel matters such as the appointment of senior staff
- company's finances except those that have to be disclosed by law
- visits made by directors to other companies
- company's plans to expand its business or to purchase property
- the writer's opinions of other companies and their products or services
- tenders
- security procedures and installations
- admission of failures or mistakes on the part of the writer's company.

3. Be concise 简明扼要 (kən'saɪs/)

Many business executives believe that conciseness is the most important writing principle, because a wordy message requires more time and money to type and to read. Conciseness is saying what you have to say in the fewer possible words without sacrificing completeness and courtesy. To achieve conciseness, try to observe the following suggestions:

- Omit common expressions *omit/省略*
- Avoid unnecessary repetition and wordy statements
- Include only relevant facts with courtesy *礼貌的言行*
- Organize effectively.

4. Be courteous 礼貌周到

Courteous messages help to strengthen present business friendships, as well as make new friends. Courtesy stems from the sincere you-attitude. It is not merely politeness with mechanical insertions of "please", "thank-you", "your kind inquiry", and "your esteemed order", and "your valued custom" etc. To be courteous the considerate communicator should take the following advice:

- Be sincerely tactful, thoughtful, and appreciative

- 1'iriteit/ 激怒, 刺伤 / bi'itl/ 轻视, 藐视
- Omit expressions that irritate, hurt, or belittle / bi'itl/ 轻视, 藐视
 - Apologize good-naturally, inject a courteous tone, and “ring true”.

The following is considered to be impolite. The writers of letters had better avoid using them.

| | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------|
| we deny your claim | | we do not believe | | |
| we find it difficult to understand | | we insist 反对 | | |
| you neglected /failed to/forgot/misunderstood | | you must | | |
| you should know | | you are delinquent | | |
| your ignoring | | your credit refusal | | |
| your neglectful attitude | | your disregard for | | |
| you lack of communication | | we are forced | | |
| your delinquent account (拖欠帐款) | | | | |
| confusion | delinquent | deny | disagreeable | exasperate |
| ignorance | impatience | incompetent | incredible | inexcusable |
| inference | insincere | insinuate | intolerable | insulting |
| irresponsible | irritated | neglect | objection | obnoxious |
| offensive | unbelievable | uncooperative | | |

Avoid using some words indicating racial discrimination. If the writers of letters have to use them, they have to make some changes:

| Say | Instead of | Say | Instead of |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
| businessperson | businessman | business employees | businessmen |
| chairperson | chairman | supervisors | foremen |
| sales representative/person | salesman | spokesperson | spokesman |
| stock clerk | stockboy | worker/employee | workman |

5. Be correct 准确无误

Correctness not only refers to correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling, but also emphasizes the accurate facts, and figures, nonsexist expressions. Avoid using following phrases with vague ideas:

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| a great deal of time | bad | good | large |
| small | majority | minority | less most |

For example, saying that she types in the fast rate of 85 words per minute, is more believable than saying she is a fast typist.

6. Be short 简短精悍

By being short, it means not only keeping letters short and simple but to the point, but also using short words and short sentences. Short words, for example, although “experiment” and “test” do have slightly different meanings, “test” may have more impact. Too many long

sentences are a common fault of business letters. Short sentences can improve the readability of letters. Many sentences are too long because they mix two rather different points. If this happens, break these sentences into two to make them short so that the overall readability improves. But long sentences also have their advantages, for they can add qualifications to the main ideas and keep the whole construction compact, as long as they are not obscure and confusing. Therefore, short sentences may be mixed in with longer ones.

7. Be complete 内容完整

Business letters should include all terms and conditions of a transaction. When answering other's letters, the writer should make replies to all the problems put forward in the letters.

(træ'n'zækʃən) → 办理, 业务, 交易.

● Steps for Writing Business Letters 写作步骤

A good letter is a letter which is well organized. Therefore, writers of business letters should take careful steps to get the letters well structured before writing. When preparing for writing a letter, these steps are advisable:

1. Give the letter a heading to help the reader to understand what the letter is about.
2. Write down the aim. Why this letter is written? To whom the letter will be sent?
3. Always try to plan ahead.
4. Assemble the points in order of importance.
5. Arrange the points in order of decreased importance. Numbering each paragraph may help the reader to understand better.
6. Write a first draft, leaving space for additions, changes and revisions.
7. Revise the first draft in terms of information, English, and styles to see whether it covers all the essential points. Is the information relevant, correct or complete? Are the grammar, spelling and punctuation correct? As far as the style is concerned, the letter should look attractive, sound sincere and natural, clear, concise and courteous.
8. Decide in what person the letter should be written before starting to write a letter.

Business letters are normally written in:

- the first person singular (sɪŋɡjʊl) 单数.
- the first person plural (plʊədl) 复数
- the impersonal passive. (pə'sɪv) 请柬的.

When the singular first person is used, the person should be the senior employee in the company who has the right to express his ideas of the firm as a whole. A junior employee had better associate himself with the firm by using the first person plural form. The main advantage of these both styles is that the letters are of personal elements. The third style appears less personal and less friendly than either of the other two styles.

9. Polish the letter to get the final version. 版本, 形式.

ˈpɒlɪʃ / 抛光
★ 精英