



新体验商务英语系列教材

# 新编商务英语函电

Up-to-Date International Business Correspondence

束光辉 主 编  
东 刚 副主编

清华大学出版社 · 北京交通大学出版社



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## 内 容 简 介

本书是“新体验商务英语系列教材”之一,全书共分14个单元,主要内容包括:外贸函电的文体、结构和原则,与对方建立商务关系函,询购函,答复函,报价函,订购与确认函,付款函,包装函,装运函,保险函,索赔投诉函,代理函等。本书用英文编写。所有信函文本均来自进出口实务的各个环节,同时文本的选择还兼顾了外贸函电的得体性。本书所收录的信样较为详尽,信函种类丰富,新颖实用,写作风格多样,能让学生学到真实的函电写作技巧。同时,本书对各种写作技巧的介绍也非常详尽,它们均采用国外较新的函电写作材料并体现了国内商务函电的写作特点。此外,本书还对这些信函及文本的典型句型进行了提炼和总结,有利于学生更好地掌握和应用。

本书的主要读者对象为具有较好英语基础的经贸专业的学生和英语专业二、三年级的学生,也可用作外企白领阶层的自学参考用书。

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# 序

进入 21 世纪,随着全球经济一体化进程的加快,我国与世界的经贸联系更加紧密,贸易形式更趋多元化。与此相伴的是,中国的商务英语教学与研究也发生了巨大的变化。这至少表现在以下几个方面:第一,如今,商务英语已是一个相当大的概念,它已从最早的一门单一的“外贸英语函电”课程发展到了涉及金融、保险、国际企业管理、国际经济法、海外投资与企业合作等多领域的学科;第二,对商务英语学习的需求持续旺盛,不仅几乎全国所有的高校都开设了商务英语专业或课程,而且越来越多的企业在职人员要求学习商务英语;第三,对商务英语的研究也已提高到一个新的层次。

为了适应新的形势,许多高校都正在对一些传统的经贸英语类课程进行调整、改革和扩充,以培养新型的国际商务专业人才。这就向教材建设提出了更高的要求。教材不仅是教学内容的表现,更体现了人才培养的规格。纵观过去有一些教材,我们便不难发现,无论从内容上还是体例上,它们都已远远落后于当今国际经贸发展的形势,例如大多围绕语法、词汇和翻译等来展开,缺乏商务英语专业的实践性和语言的真实性,难以满足工作的需要。而另一些教材则又过于突出“专业”的内容,把商务英语教材混同于国际商务专业教材。因此,编写能适应时代要求的国际商务英语教材显得尤为重要。正是在这样的背景下,由束光辉老师主编的“新体验商务英语系列教材”面世了,它体现了“贴近时代,融合语言与专业”的编写理念,是一次积极而大胆的尝试。

该系列教材共包括《新编进出口贸易实务》、《新编商务英语写作教程》、《新编商务英语函电》、《商务汉英翻译教程》、《经贸报刊选读》、《新编跨文化商务沟通》6 部教材。它们在内容设计和编写形式上具有如下特点。

## 1. 融专业性与语言技能于一体

该系列教材在编写上突出了以培养学生的实际工作能力为目标的思路,所选材料涉及了商务环境的各个方面,均能反映出商务工作实践性的特点,同时也体现了语言技能系统化培养的精神。该系列教材通过拟定各种商务环境,将商务知识和语言技能融合在一起,使学生的语言应用能力在更接近于真实的商务实践中得以提高。

## 2. 选材新,贴近时代

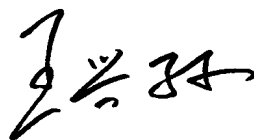
该系列教材在材料选择上参考了国内外最近几年出版的教材和其他相关材料,充分

吸收了国内外最新的教学科研成果,体现了国际商务活动不断变化的特点和商务领域专业性的特点,具有鲜明的时代特征。同时,该系列教材的许多文本、范例和研究材料均来自于近年来各类商务实践,体现了商务英语的真实性和实践性。

### 3. 练习形式多样,针对性强

该系列教材的练习将语言技能训练与商务环境较好地结合在一起,通过各种题型,对所涉及的商务环节和领域,有针对性地进行训练。这不仅能巩固学生所学的专业知识,而且还将提高他们的语言技能。

21 世纪的中国更加开放,更加开放的中国在诸多方面都在与世界接轨。作为国际商务沟通的一个重要工具,商务英语的教学和研究理应跟上时代的发展和社会的需求。我们要更加重视并加强对商务英语教学的研究。该系列教材的编写是一次很好的探索,希望借此能进一步提高我国高校商务英语的教学和科研水平,为培养我国新型国际商务专业人才做出贡献。



中国国际贸易学会  
国际商务英语研究委员会  
副主任

# 前 言

外贸函电写作是从事国际贸易工作者必需的业务技能之一，它涉及国际贸易实务、惯例、英美风俗文化及语言修辞等诸多方面。本书包括下列内容：外贸函电的文体、结构和原则，与对方建立商务关系函，询购函，答复函，报价函，订购与确认函，付款函，包装函，装运函，保险函，索赔投诉函，代理函等。本书全部用英文编写。所有信函文本均来自进出口实务的各个环节，同时文本的选择还兼顾了外贸函电的得体性，在用词方面做到不卑不亢，应宽时宽，应严时严，表现了文本作者的写作目的和所期望达到的效果。本书所收录的信样较为详尽，信函种类丰富，新颖实用，写作风格多样，能让学生学到真实的函电写作技巧。同时，书中对各种写作技巧的介绍也非常详尽，它们均采用国外较新的函电写作材料并体现了国内商务函电的写作特点。此外，本书还对这些信函及文本的典型句型进行了提炼和总结，有利于学生更好地掌握和应用。

本书的另一个特点是，它克服国内教材重语言形式轻语言运用能力之弊端，突出学生函电写作交际能力的培养，通过拟定有关国际贸易实务的环节，让学生有针对性地进行写作，从而使他们的写作更具有真实性和得体性。

本书的主要读者为具有较好英语基础的经贸专业的学生和英语专业二、三年级的学生，此外还可供外企的白领阶层学习参考。

本书由束光辉老师担任主编，东刚老师任副主编。其中束光辉老师编写了第1、2、7、8、9、10、11、12、13单元的课文、练习及本书的附录，东刚老师编写了第3、4、5、6、14单元的课文和练习。

本书得到北京交通大学人文学院院、系领导的大力支持及出版社张利军编辑的热情帮助，在此一并表示感谢。

编 者  
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# Unit

# 1

## An Overview of Business Letter Writing

It is a valuable business asset to be able to write effectively. One reason is that a great deal of business is conducted via writing. With the wide use of fax and recent development of EDI, more and more writing is involved in every part of business. Another reason is that effective business letter writer can use their writing skill to help increase their company's sales and profits by building up good relations with customers, employees, and the public. In addition, proficiency in writing gives the man or woman in business a personal advantage over less capable writers and contributes substantially to his or her self-confidence, which is a necessary quality for business success.

### 1.1 The Principles for Effective Writing

In your English business letter writing, you need to learn and apply certain principles to effectively communicating with others. These writing principles can be summed up as 7Cs, i. e. Completeness, Clearness, Conciseness, Consideration, Courtesy, Concreteness and Correctness.

#### 1.1.1 Completeness

A practical English writing is very successful and highly effective well only when it contains all the necessary information to the readers (the counterpart or the public) and answers all the questions and requirements put forward by the readers. See to it that all the matters are stated or discussed, and all the questions are answered or explained.<sup>1</sup> For instance, when the buyers write a letter to accept an offer that the sellers made, the buyers must state his condition of acceptance in detail or quote the evidences of the offer.

In order to verify the completeness of what you write, five "Ws" (who, what, where,



when and why) and one “h” (how) should be used. For example, if what you write is a letter of order, you should make it clear that who wants to order, what he wants, when he needs the goods, where the goods to be sent and how payment will be made. If some special requirements should be presented, you could explain why you would do so.

### 1.1.2 Clearness

Clarity tells the reader exactly what he or she wants and needs to know, using words and a format that make your writings totally understood with just one reading. To achieve this, you should include illustrations, examples or visual aids to convey your information, and, above all, use simple, plain language and avoid business jargons.

Basically, the writer should keep off anything that might be misleading or avoid using the words, and sentences that are equivocal in meaning.<sup>2</sup> To meet such an end, the writer should follow the following rules.

(1) Try to use the concise and accessible expressions.

Let us look at the following sentence:

As to the steamer sailing from Shanghai to Los Angeles, we have bimonthly direct services.

The basic meaning of this sentence is “we have direct sailings from Shanghai to Los Angeles”, but the word “bimonthly” has two meanings, one of which is “twice a month” and the other of which is “once every two months”. You’d better not use the word like “bimonthly” of double meanings, but use the words that can express your idea clearly as follows:

- ① We have a direct sailing from Shanghai to Los Angeles every two months.
- ② We have a direct sailing from Shanghai to Los Angeles semimonthly.
- ③ We have two direct sailings every month from Shanghai to Los Angeles.

(2) Pay attention to the position of modifier.

The basic principle for using modifiers is simply to put them as close as possible to the word or words they are modifying. Naturally, if you want to discuss *a potential market*, you will want *potential* to appear right before *market*; you will not put the modifier in some distant part of the sentence.

The idea of keeping related words together — and as close together as possible — is probably the “whole idea” behind studying modifiers.<sup>3</sup> Adjectives should be placed right next to the things they describe and adverbs should be placed right next to the action or the other



modifiers they describe.

Let us look at the following sentences:

Your proposal for payment by time draft is acceptable to us under Order No. 115.

This sentence is poor in that “under Order No. 115” is too far away from payment by time draft.

(3) Pay attention to the object of the pronoun and the relations between the relative pronoun and the antecedent.

Whom or what the pronoun refers to and what is the relation between the relative pronoun and the antecedent? These should be paid attention to. Generally speaking, the pronoun and relative pronoun are used to refer to the nearest noun from themselves and should be identical in person and number with the noun referred to or modified. Let us examine the following sentence:

They informed Messrs. Smith & Brown that they would receive a reply in a few days.

In this sentence, what does the second “they” refer to, the subject “They” of the main clause or the “Messrs. Smith & Brown”? This can’t be explained clearly. It will be clear if you change the sentence into:

They informed Messrs. Smith & Brown that the latter would receive the reply in a few days.

(4) Pay attention to the rationality in logic.

At first, you must pay attention to the agreement of the logical subject of the participle and the subject of the sentence. For example:

Being a registered accountant, I’m sure you can help us.

In this sentence, the subject of the sentence is “I”, but the logical subject of the participle “being” should be “you” according to inference. In order to keep the logical subject of the participle in agreement with the subject of the sentence, the above sentence should be rewritten as the following:

- ① Being a registered accountant, you can certainly help us.
- ② As you are a registered accountant, I’m sure you can help us.

### **1.1.3 Conciseness**

Conciseness is considered the most important principle in business letter writing as we now live in a world where time is money. Conciseness means to write in the fewest possible



worlds without sacrificing completeness and courtesy. To achieve conciseness, you should avoid wordy statement and fancy language, use short sentences instead of long ones, and compose your message carefully. To achieve this, the following guidelines must be adhered to.

(1) Make a long story short and try to avoid wordiness.

Make it a rule, to use no more words and pithy sentences to express your meaning clearly and concisely. Try to use a word or phrase to express your idea as much as possible instead of using long sentences or clauses. For instance:

**You shouldn't use:**

at this time

express a preference for

enclosed herewith

from the point of view

in view of the fact that

**You'd better use:**

now

prefer

here

as

because

(2) Avoid the unusual or out-of-date words or jargons and try to express your idea in modern English.

**You shouldn't use:**

consummate

terminate

remuneration

converse

inst

attached hereto

acknowledge receipt of

awaiting the favor of our early reply

up to this writing

Take the liberty of

**You'd better use:**

complete

end

payment

talk

this month

enclosed is/are

thank you for ... I received ...

we are looking forward to your reply

so far

omitted

(3) Build effective sentences and paragraphs.

Generally speaking, the average length for sentences should be 10 to 20 words, not over 30 ones. Usually a paragraph consists of no more than 10 lines because short paragraphs encourage the readers to finish reading over the passage.

Let us look at the following sentence:

We would like to know whether you would allow us to extend the time of



shipment for twenty days and if you would be so kind as to allow us to do so, kindly give us your reply by fax without delay.

This sentence is a bit lengthy, and is too courteous in expressions, which sounds unclear in meaning. In order to express the main idea better, this sentence may be abbreviated as follows:

Please reply by fax immediately if you will allow us to delay the shipment until April 21.

### 1.1.4 Consideration

Consideration means thoughtfulness. So you should always put yourself in your reader's place, which is what people now emphasize, i. e. "You" attitude, and avoid taking the writer's attitude, i. e. "We" attitude. Therefore, you should always keep in mind the receiver we are writing to, understanding his or her problems and take the positive approach.

Let's make a comparison between the following two groups of sentences.

"We" attitude	"You" attitude
We allow a 5% discount for cash payment.	You earn a 5% discount when you pay cash.

In addition, we should try to discuss problems in a positive way rather than in a negative way. Make a comparison between the following groups of sentences and you will find which is better.

- (1) a. We do not believe that you will have cause for dissatisfaction. (Negative)  
b. We feel sure that you will entirely get satisfied. (Positive)
- (2) a. Your order will be delayed for two weeks (Negative)  
b. Your order will be shipped in two weeks (Positive)

### 1.1.5 Courtesy

Review of actual business correspondence reveals that special attention should be devoted to assuming the courtesy of business communication.<sup>4</sup> By courtesy we mean treating people with respect and friendly human concern. Effective writers visualize the reader before starting to write.<sup>5</sup> They consider the reader's desires, problems, circumstances, emotions and probable reactions to their request. Let us compare the following sentences.

- (1) We are sorry that you misunderstood us.

(2) We are sorry that we did not make ourselves clear.

In sentence (1), the party of the author is to put the blame on the customer for something, but in sentence (2), the party of the author takes the initiative to bear the responsibility.

There are a lot of language styles or ways to express courtesy, some of which will be presented here for your reference as follows:

(1) Change the commanding tone into requesting tone, that is, change the imperative sentence into general question with the word “will” or “would” at the beginning. For example:

- ① Will you tell us detailed information on your requirements?
- ② Will you please tell us more detailed information on your requirements?
- ③ Would you please tell us more detailed information on your requirements?

(2) Use the past subjunctive form.

- ① Would you send us your latest catalogues and price lists on cotton piece goods?
- ② We would ask you to make a prompt shipment.
- ③ We wish you would let us have your reply soon.

(3) Use mitigation and avoid overemphasizing your own opinion or irritating your partner.

In order to avoid overemphasizing your own opinion and irritating your partner, you should use mitigation, such as: We are afraid that ..., We would say ..., It seems to us that ..., We would suggest that ..., etc.

(4) Passive voice should be adopted accordingly.

In some cases, passive voice appears more courteous than active voice because it can avoid blaming the doer of the act. For example:

- ① You made a very careless mistake during the course of shipment.
- ② A very careless mistake was made during the course of shipment.

- ① You did not enclose the price list in you letter
- ② The price list was not enclosed in your letter.

(5) Try to avoid using the words with forcing tone or arousing unpleasantness.

Some words or expressions such as “demand”, “disgust”, “refuse”, “want you to” will arouse unpleasant feeling in audience, therefore they should be avoided or changed into some forms to express. Let us look at the following examples.



- ① We demand prompt shipment from you.
- ② We request prompt shipment from you.
- ① We must refuse your offer.
- ② We regret that we are unable to accept your offer.
- (6) Use expressions about joy and willingness, thanks and regret, etc.
- ① It is with pleasure that we have reached an agreement on all the terms.
- ② It is a pleasure for us to sign such a sales contract.
- ③ Thank you for your letter of July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006.
- ④ We are extremely sorry that we could not answer your letter in due time.

### **1.1.6 Concreteness**

Business writing should be vivid, specific and definite rather than vague, general and abstract, especially when the writer is requiring a response, solving problems, making an offer or acceptance, etc.<sup>6</sup> We need to use specific facts, figures and time to stress concreteness, for they can help write concretely and vividly. Let us look at the following sentences:

We wish to confirm our fax dispatched yesterday.

Like today and tomorrow, the word yesterday is a vague and general concept, which allows possibility for misinterpretation.

### **1.1.7 Correctness**

Correct spelling, proper grammar and punctuation will give your letter a good appearance but they are not all the factors that correctness comprises. In our business letters, you should attach great importance to this writing principle, especially when you are giving information regarding dates, specifications, prices, quantities, discounts, commission, units and figures, etc. A minor mistake in this respect sometimes means you will make no profit or even lose out. Let us look at the following sentences to see if there are anything improper.

- (1) All offers by fax are open for 5 days.

The above sentence does not clearly explain or account for specific 5 days, and should be changed into:

All offers by fax are open for 5 days inclusive of the date of dispatch.

- (2) This contract will come into effect from Oct. 1.