



新体验商务英语系列教材



商务英语函电与合同

International Business
Correspondence and Contract

◆ 主编 束光辉 ◆ 副主编 东 刚



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内 容 简 介

本书共 15 个单元, 主要包括: 商务英语函电的文体、结构和格式, 与对方建立商务关系函, 询购函, 报价函, 订购与确认函, 付款函, 催款函, 包装函, 装运函, 保险函, 投诉索赔函, 代理函, 以及合同等。本书中所有的信函文本均来自进出口贸易实务的各个环节, 同时文本的选择还兼顾了商务英语函电的得体性。本书所收录的信样较为详尽, 而且种类丰富、新颖实用、写作风格多样, 能够让学生学到真实的商务英语函电写作技巧。同时, 本书对各种写作技巧的介绍也非常详尽, 并且均采用国外较新的商务英语函电写作材料并体现了国内商务英语函电的写作特点。此外, 本书还对这些信函及文本的典型句式进行了提炼和总结, 有利于学生更好地掌握和应用。

本书可供英语专业学生、商务英语专业学生及具有较好英语基础的其他经贸专业学生作为教材使用, 同时也可用作从事相关工作人员的自学用书及参考用书。

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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,人们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也迫切需要学习商务英语;第三,外语界对商务英语的研究也提高到了一个新的层次。

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。纵观过去的一些教材,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,编写能够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。

该系列包括《进出口贸易实务》《现代商务英语写作》《商务英语函电与合同》《商务报刊选读》《商务英语汉英翻译教程》《跨文化商务沟通》等教材。它们在内容设计和编写形式上具有以下特点。

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理念。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。

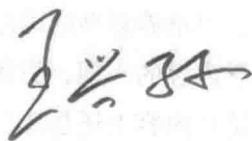
2. 选材新，贴近时代

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。这不仅能够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
原副主任

2016 年 3 月

前言

商务函电写作是从事国际贸易工作者必备的业务技能之一，它涉及国际贸易实务、惯例、相关国家的风俗文化及语言修辞等诸多方面。本书包括下列内容：商务英语函电的文体、结构和格式，与对方建立商务关系函，询购函，报价函，订购与确认函，付款函，催款函，包装函，装运函，保险函，投诉索赔函，代理函，以及合同等。本书几乎全部用英文编写。所有信函文本均来自进出口贸易实务的各个环节，同时文本的选择还兼顾了商务英语函电的得体性，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，而且种类丰富、新颖实用、写作风格多样，能够让学生学到真实的商务英语函电写作技巧。同时，本书对各种写作技巧的介绍也非常详尽，并且均采用国外较新的商务英语函电写作材料并体现了国内商务英语函电的写作特点。此外，本书还对这些信函及文本的典型句式进行了提炼和总结，有利于学生更好地掌握和应用。

本书的另一个特点是，它克服了国内教材重语言形式、轻语言运用能力之弊端，突出学生商务英语函电写作交际能力的培养，通过拟定国际贸易实务的有关环节，让学生有针对性地进行写作训练，以使他们的写作更具有真实性和得体性。

本书的主要读者对象为英语专业学生、商务英语专业学生及具有较好英语基础的其他经贸专业学生，同时也可用作从事相关工作人员的自学用书及参考用书。

本书由束光辉担任主编，东刚担任副主编。其中，束光辉编写了第1、2、7、8、9、10、11、12、13单元的课文、练习及本书的所有附录，东刚编写了第3、4、5、6、14单元的课文和练习。

本书的编写与出版得到了北京交通大学语言与传播学院领导的大力支持及北京交通大学出版社张利军编辑的热情帮助，在此一并表示衷心的感谢。

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Unit 1

An Overview of Business Letter Writing

商务信函写作概览

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.¹ 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.² 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.³ 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 words 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

You’d better use:

now
prefer
here

from the point of view

as

in view of the fact that

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, understand 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.⁴ By courtesy we mean treating people with respect and friendly human concern. Effective writers visualize the reader before starting to write.⁵ 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 9th, 2015.

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.⁶ 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.

The above sentence does not clearly explain whether Oct. 1 is included or not and should be changed into:

This contract will come into effect from and including October 1, 2015.

(3) This product is absolutely the best one on the market.

This is the overstatement of the fact, and the sentence should be changed into:

This product is the best one we can supply.

(4) We assure you that this error will never occur.

Similarly this sentence can be changed into the following:

We will do all we can so that we may not repeat such an error.

1.2 The Style and Tone of Business Letter Writing

1.2.1 Conversational Style

A good letter should reflect the personality of the writer and needs to be pleasing to the reader. In a good letter a conversation is held. People who write with a sense of personal contact have a better chance to make what they say interesting and convincing than those who feel they are writing letters.⁷ Whatever you talk about in a letter, the language you use should be the same as if you met the person on the street, at home, or in the office. Such a language is warm and natural. It is also the language we use most and understand best.

But when faced with a writing task, many of us tend to change character. Instead of writing in friendly, conversational language, we write in stiff and stilted words. There is a misconception that big words and difficult words are preferred in business letters, but the result of such words is a cold and unnatural style — one that does not produce the goodwill effect you want your letters to have.

1.2.2 Avoid the Archaic Language of Business

Early English business writers borrowed heavily from the formal language of law and from the flowery language of the nobility.⁸ From these two sources they developed a style of letter writing that became known as the “language of business”. It was a cold, stiff, and unnatural style, but it was

generally accepted throughout the English-speaking world, for instance, “wherein you state as per your letter”, “take the liberty of”, “acknowledge receipt of”, etc.

Obviously the tone is cold, out of date, and a good writer should take care to give up such stale expressions.

1.2.3 Use Positive Language and Avoid Anger

People enjoy and react favorably to positive messages. A positive tone builds the reader's confidence in the writer's ability to solve problems and strengthens personal and business relationships. Positive words are usually best for letter goals, especially when persuasion and good will are needed. Positive words emphasize the pleasant aspects of the goal and tend to put the reader in the right frame of mind.⁹ They also create the goodwill atmosphere readers seek in most letters.

When confronted with frustration, writer sometimes may lose temper and get angry, but rarely is anger justified in letters, because it destroys goodwill. Most of comments made in anger take many forms like sarcasm, insults and exclamation, and do not provide needed information.

The effect of angry words is to make the reader angry. With both writer and reader angry, the two are not likely to get together on whatever the letter is about. A tactful writer can refer courteously to the subject matter to avoid jeopardizing goodwill.¹⁰ But when pleasant, positive words have not brought desired results, negative words may be justified.

1.3 Preparation before Writing

As a writer, you should make preparation for your creative works before taking up the pen. Generally speaking, the following should be borne in mind.

1.3.1 Studying Your Reader's Interest

It means that you should think of what your reader thinks.

To achieve this, you should “put yourself in your reader's shoes” and try to imagine how he will feel about what you write.¹¹ Ask yourself constantly, “What are his needs, his wishes, his interests, his problems to be solved, and how can I meet his requirements.”

1.3.2 Planning What You Will Write and Writing Effectively

In order to plan what you write better and to write effectively, you should draft an outline before writing. Every language has its own features. For Chinese students, English is a foreign language. They had better learn to think and write directly in English and draft an English outline before writing.