

# The Language of Business

A Course of English for Business Men  
and Students of Commerce

Angela Mack



# The Language of Business

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**Angela Mack**

*Illustrations by*  
**MARTIN AITCHISON**

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'The Language of Business' is a course for students of English who already have a working knowledge of the language and want to learn up-to-date business terms. It is a serial story in dramatised form about a manufacturing company. A small firm has been chosen so as to make it possible to survey the whole of its activities. Each incident deals with a different department of the business and brings out its characteristic words and phrases in a lively and interesting way. The episodes have been recorded, together with practice sentences for repetition aloud.

The author, Angela Mack, is a co-director of the International Language Centre at International House, Paris. Angela Mack combines a knowledge of business and writing with wide experience of teaching English to overseas students.

The adviser on business practice is Henry Best, Sales Manager of an engineering company with world-wide connections.

The language of business is a matter for students of English who already have a good knowledge of the language and who are learning to use it in business terms. It is a matter of fact that in the United States about a million business men are small boys who have chosen to make it their business to study the English language. They are not the same as the other students of the language who are not interested in the business side of the language. The English language is a world-wide language and it is a matter of fact that in the United States about a million business men are small boys who have chosen to make it their business to study the English language. They are not the same as the other students of the language who are not interested in the business side of the language.

The author, Angela Allen, is a co-director of the International Language Centre at London. She has been in the business of teaching English for many years and has a wide experience of teaching English to business men.

The author on business practice is Henry Best, Sales Manager of an engineering company with world-wide connections.

## How to use this Course

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The material of the course is arranged in twenty-four teaching units, each consisting of an introduction, the text of a recorded dialogue, notes on any special terms used in the dialogue, specimen letters or reports on the same topic, the text of the sentences on the records for learners to practise speaking and, finally, some written exercises.

We recommend that the material should be studied according to the following 'steps'. Each unit should be fully understood before going on to the next. In other words, the student should resist the temptation to listen to several dialogues first just to see what happens. The linguistic function of the 'steps' is to enable the student to hear, repeat and read the vocabulary of business English the maximum number of times. When the student feels confident that he has 'captured' the material in the episode, that is, that he can use it himself, he should then go on to the next dialogue.

**Step 1:** Read the introduction to the unit. This gives the *story line* (a summary of what happens). Each unit deals with a particular department, such as 'Accounts' or 'Advertising', with its special vocabulary and expressions.

**Step 2:** Listen to the dialogue on the disc. Do *not* follow the printed text in the book as you listen at this stage, even if you find it difficult to understand everything. (*See note on next page.*)

**Step 3:** Listen to the dialogue again with the printed text in front of you.

**Step 4:** Study the explanation of the special terms and the typical situational phrases.

**Step 5:** Listen to the dialogue again (preferably without the text).

**Step 6:** Repeat the practice sentences.

**Step 7:** Complete the written tests which follow each dialogue (answers on page 232, Key to Exercises).

**Step 8:** Read the letter, report, memo, etc., which is included in each unit. If possible, get a native English speaker to read it to you as a dictation.

**Note on Step 2:** It is important to increase your comprehension of spoken English at *normal speed*. It is much easier to understand what is said when you see it written. But when you meet English business men you will need to know what they are saying immediately. Listen to the dialogue in a relaxed way. Do not worry if you cannot understand much of it at first, listen to it again. It will gradually become clearer, and you will be surprised how much the correct pronunciation of new words will remain in your mind with this repetition. It is *most important* to hear the correct pronunciation before you see the word in the text. Otherwise you will get what is called 'interference', that is, you may try to pronounce a new *seen* word in the way of your own language; the combination of letters you are used to will 'interfere' and prevent you making the correct sound in English. So listen first *without the printed text*. Listen to it as many times as you like.

## The History of the Company

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The company of Harper & Grant Ltd. was started forty-two years ago by Ambrose Harper and Wingate Grant. Wingate Grant died many years ago, and his son Hector, who is in his fifties (aged between fifty and sixty) is the present Managing Director. Ambrose Harper is the Chairman. He is now an old man, semi-retired, but he still comes in to the office regularly to attend the board meetings and keep an eye on the business.

The company started by making steel wastepaper bins for offices. With the increase in smoking, these were considered much safer than the old type of basket made of cane or straw, because there was less likelihood of fire (but, strangely, we still continue to use the expression 'wastepaper basket', as well as 'bin'). Old Mr. Grant, the present Managing Director's father, put the business on its feet when he captured a big contract to supply government offices with steel wastepaper bins. He always said that luck, or happy coincidence, turned a business into success or failure. He was rather like Napoleon, who always asked if an officer was lucky before giving him a higher command. Mr. Grant Senior used to tell the story that, in the week before he landed his contract, a cane wastepaper basket had caught fire in a government department, the fire had spread rapidly and destroyed a number of irreplaceable documents.

From wastepaper bins, Harper & Grant began to manufacture other items of office equipment: desks, chairs, cupboards, filing cabinets and smaller objects, such as filing trays, stapling machines and so on, until now when there are fifty-six different items listed in their catalogue. Today, nearly all the items produced by this company are made of pressed steel. The steel arrives in sheets from a steel works in South Wales. It is then cut by machinery into the required pieces; these pieces are then pressed into shape and fixed together by *welding* (joining two metal parts by heating so that the metals flow together), or by drilling holes in the metal and securing the two pieces with a *bolt* or a rivet.

The factory consists of *workshops* where the actual making of a desk or filing cabinet is done. These are divided into the *Tool Room*, *Works*



*Stores, Press Shop, Machine Shops, Assembly Shop, Paint Shop, Inspection, Packing and Despatch Departments.* There is also the *Warehouse* where finished articles are stored pending, waiting for, sale.

The firm has a history of slow, steady growth. Hector Grant firmly believes that he knows the best way to run a business. However, his nephew Peter Wiles (son of Mr. Grant's sister), who joined the company six years ago and is Production Manager, and John Martin, appointed two years ago to be Sales Manager, are more adventurous. They want to treble Harper & Grant's business over the next few years and are certain that, with modern business techniques and increased exports, they can achieve this.

Modernising a business to increase its profitability and competitiveness is a complicated affair. It requires a management team which is aware of such aids and tools of efficiency as electronic data processing, O.R. (Operational Research), D.C.F. (Discounted Cash Flow), budgetary control, corporate planning, P.E.R.T. (Project Evaluation and Review Technique), automation, etc. We shall be dealing with some of these words and expressions as the series goes along. Business management is a rapidly developing science (some call it an art), and new techniques and words, very often of American origin, are used more and more in every-day business conversation.

A small business cannot possibly afford to have on its staff experts in every modern management technique. It usually hires expert advice from outside consultants and bureaux. On the other hand, it is important that members of a firm's management are aware of the more sophisticated techniques they might call on to solve particular problems. Inevitably while this changeover from the old way to the new is taking place, there are often difficulties and conflict. But Harper & Grant Ltd., like their rivals, must get right up-to-date and enlarge their business, or they will be outpaced by a firm whose business organisation is better than their own.