The Language of Business

A Course of English for Business Men and Students of Commerce

Angela Mack

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Harper & Grant Ltd make office equipment. They have problems — an export dead-line to meet, a clash over management policy — and triumphs — a new market won, a labour dispute resolved. Angela Mack uses these situations to teach the English of modern business in a fresh and entertaining way.
Each of the 24 units in the course includes a recorded dialogue followed by short sentence drills.

Photography Robert

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Contents

Preface

'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.

How to use this Course

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

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.

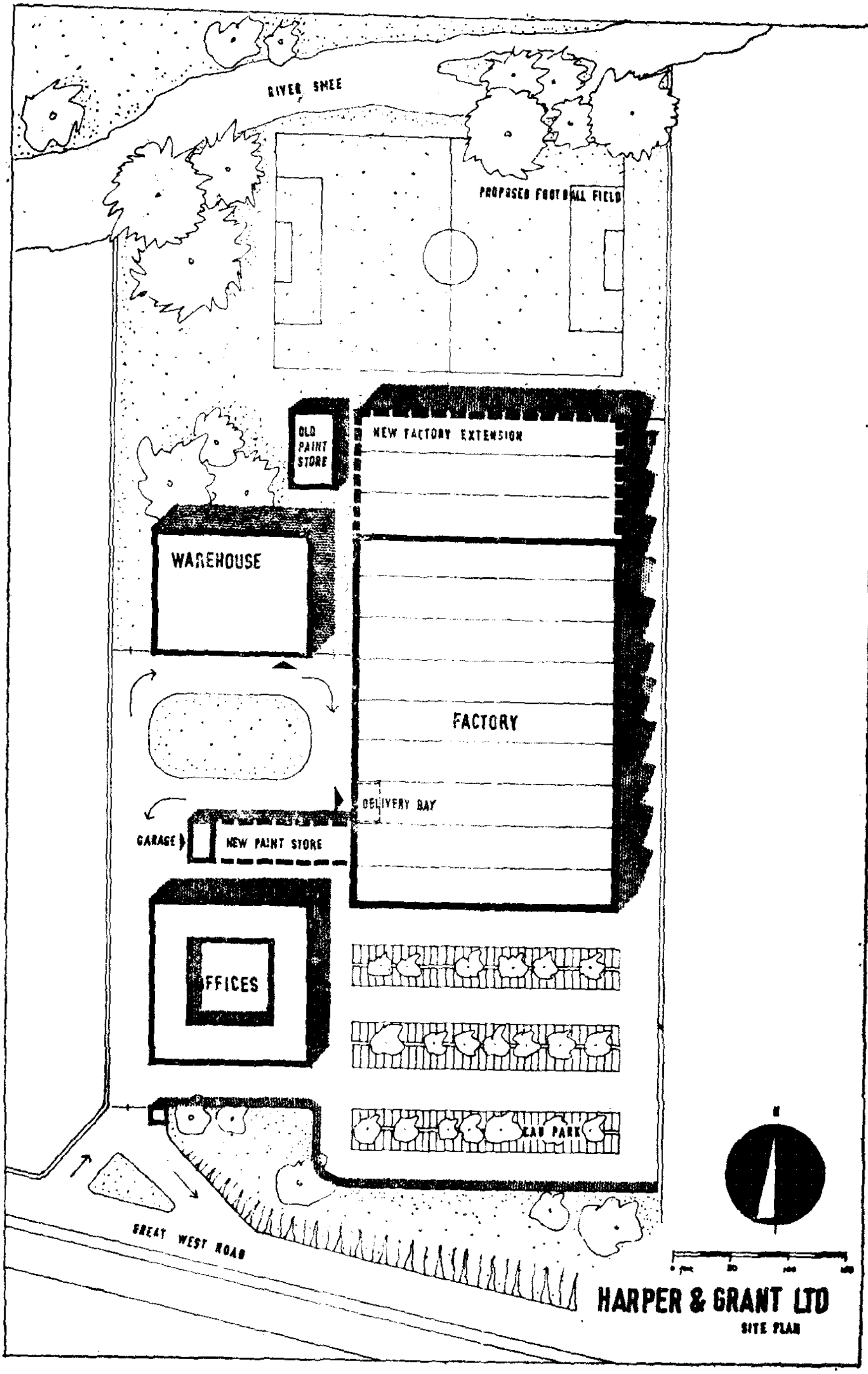
The factory consists of *workshops* where the actual making of a desk or filing cabinet is done. These are divided into the *Tool Room, Works*

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 everyday 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.


RIVER SHEE
PROPOSED FOOTBALL FIELD
OLD PAINT STORE
NEW FACTORY EXTENSION
WAREHOUSE
FACTORY
DELIVERY BAY
GARAGE
NEW PAINT STORE
FFICES
CAR PARK
GREAT WEST ROAD
N
HARPER & GRANT LTD
SITE PLAN

Unit 1
New Markets are Vital

In this episode, the Managing Director[1], Hector Grant, has to make a decision about allowing his young Sales Manager[2], John Martin, to go on an expensive fact-finding tour of a country in Africa called Abraca.

First we hear John Martin discussing with Peter Wiles, the Production Manager[3], an article he has just read in *The Times* newspaper about the recent discovery of oil in Abraca. He thinks that the firm should find out whether it would be possible to export to Abraca, and in particular to the capital city, Djemsa, where a lot of new government offices are shortly to be built. He wants to go there at once and try to open up a new market[4]. Hector Grant (or H.G. as his staff generally call him, using his initials) remembers a disastrous attempt a few months ago to export to a country in South America when the firm lost a lot of money. He is inclined to be cautious, a bit worried about the difficulties involved, and the expense. So we discover some of the points which have to be considered by a firm wishing to export.

(*In Peter Wiles's office*)

JOHN MARTIN **Hello, Peter! Have you seen the article in *The Times* this morning about Abraca? It says here that income *per capita*[1] is rising fast.**

PETER WILES **I can't keep up with all these newly independent countries. Is Abraca the country that's just found a lot of oil?**

JOHN **That's the one. Apparently they're going to build a lot of new offices in the capital, Djemsa, and I think it might be a good market for our furniture and office equipment.**

PETER **Ah, the export market. Well, you know what H.G.'s views are on that!**

JOHN **But we must export more, Peter. You really must try and help me to convince Mr. Grant that we're crazy not to look for more foreign business. Will you back me up?**

PETER **Yes, of course I will; but you know what the boss thinks about exports. He thinks it's all a big waste of time and money for very little profit. Anyway, I'll do what I can.**