

UP-TO-DATE BUSINESS ENGLISH READINGS

新世纪 商务英语阅读 (4)

主 编 叶兴国

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上海交通大学出版社

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内 容 提 要

本教材共分四册。本书共 15 个单元,每个单元由课文、词汇和短语、注释、练习、补充阅读课文和参考答案等几部分组成。课文均有一定难度。词汇和短语从详。注释包括背景知识和语言难点。练习主要是为了检查和提高读者的阅读能力。全书内容涉及国际商务及世界上的一些重大事件和热点问题,如香港回归,国际互联网的影响,环境保护和可持续发展,对克隆技术的态度,中美关系,区域经济合作,世界贸易组织,欧盟和欧元,知识经济,电子商务,跨国公司,国际投资,市场营销,跨文化交际和东南亚金融风暴等。

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前 言

随着我国改革开放和市场经济的不断推进,社会对经贸专门人才的需求已发生了变化。培养复合型国际商务人才已经成为高等学校在新世纪的重要任务之一。经贸界和英语教学界已经形成共识:商务英语是复合型国际商务人才必须具有的知识结构的重要组成部分。商务英语教学从来没有像今天这样显得如此重要。为了使學生能适应 21 世纪经济全球化趋势,和全方位、多层次、宽领域的对外开放格局,更新英语泛读课内容已刻不容缓。为此,我们编写了《新世纪商务英语阅读》。

在编写过程中,我们力求体现国际商务和内容新颖两大特色。根据大外贸的格局,以及外经贸企业的集团化、实业化、国际化进程,选材时充分考虑了涉外经贸类专业的知识结构和人才规格的共同点。选用的文章大多是英语国家近几年出版或发表的,内容涉及国际商务及世界上的一些重大事件和热点问题,如香港回归,国际互联网的影响,环境保护和可持续发展,对克隆技术的态度,中美关系,区域经济合作,世界贸易组织,欧盟和欧元,知识经济,电子商务,跨国公司,国际投资,市场营销,跨文化交际和东南亚金融风暴等等。选材尽量兼顾知识性和可读性。

本教材共分四册。每册 15~18 个单元,每个单元由课文、词汇和短语、注释、练习、补充阅读课文和参考答案几部分组成。课文均有一定难度。词汇和短语从详,以减轻学生课外查词典的负担。注释包括背景知识和语言难点。注释留有余地,以便于教师课堂检查和讲解。部分难点留在练习中加以解决。练习的设计主要是为了检查和提高学生的阅读能力。对于疑难句子,要求学生通过翻译来加深理解。

《新世纪商务英语阅读》主要供高等院校涉外经贸类专业学生使用。可以根据学生的英语程度,在一、二年级或二、三年级使用。每周2课时,每学期18个教学周,共四个学期。本书也可供具有相当英语水平的国际商务从业人员自学和参考。

本教材由叶兴国教授、罗国梁教授和徐雅琴教授等10位教师编写。研究生邹囡囡和唐庆编写了本册个别单元的初稿。本教材正式出版前已在上海对外贸易学院12个涉外经贸类本科专业和双学位一、二年级学生中试用。在试用过程中编写人员设计了专门的调查问卷收集学生的反馈意见。任课教师王光林副教授和朱建中同志给本教材提出了一些意见和建议。

本教材的编写得到了上海对外贸易学院的资助。上海对外贸易学院副院长王兴孙同志一直关心本书的编写。上海交通大学外国语学院院长郑树棠教授拨冗审阅了书稿并提出了指导性意见。上海交通大学外国语学院俞理明博士、陈永捷教授、周国强教授和胡全生教授分别审阅了第一至第四册并提出了宝贵的修改意见。他们深厚的英文造诣和严谨的治学态度给我们留下了深刻的印象。在此,一并表示衷心感谢。

由于编者水平有限,书中难免有错误和不妥之处,我们恳切希望使用本教材的教师、学生和其他读者批评指正。

编 者

2000年1月

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Unit 1

Key to Good Relationships: Be Fair to Yourself and to Others¹

I. Being Fair Requires Being Assertive

Rita was 48 when she first became a grandmother. She was desperate to see the new baby and had been planning for months to take the necessary time away from her busy schedule. She was a governor of the local school, and involved in helping to raise funds for a kidney machine. Her husband, Daniel, buried himself in his work.

Rita telephoned her daughter-in-law, Karen, hoping to be asked to visit. Karen chatted happily about the baby's sleepless nights, and feeding schedules. Rita started to worry that the invitation she wanted was never going to come. She listened, waiting to be asked. Then she said, "You must be frantic," and "I know there's no time to think of anything else with a new baby around." She talked about her husband's busy life, saying "He sometimes says he can't do without me." The message she wanted to get across was how useful she could be.² The message Karen heard was that Rita had no time to spare. So Karen said questioningly, "I suppose you couldn't leave Daniel on his own?" Rita answered, "I sometimes think he hardly notices I am here." Both Rita and Karen wanted the same thing? and they did not get it because they both beat about the bush. Neither was able to state what she wanted in clear language. Neither was fair to herself.

Rita's husband, Daniel, was very different. He was a hospital

consultant. He told others exactly what he wanted without bothering to find out anything about their perspective. He had a junior doctor, Richard, of whom he thought very highly. Daniel was quite often away at conferences and he would tell Richard to look after those of his patients he was most concerned about.³ Daniel would burst into Richard's office, without knocking, holding a pile of patients' record. "You will see these patients at the clinic next Thursday" and dumping the files on Richard's desk, he would turn on his heels and walk out.⁴ Richard felt he was being treated like a servant, not like the competent doctor he was. Things came to a head when Richard booked his skiing holiday for February. He had negotiated the timing with his colleagues — the other junior doctors — so that his holiday did not clash with theirs, following the normal procedure. When Daniel heard of Richard's holiday times, he was furious. They coincided with his own holiday and he had come to rely on Richard to cover his difficult patients. He marched into Richard's office and told him point blank that he could not take his holiday in February. He brooked no discussion. Richard felt he had little choice, and he changed his holiday time. Six months later he had found a different job, and Daniel lost the junior doctor he most respected.

Most of us will recognize aspects of ourselves in either Rita or Daniel — even in both. Their stories illustrate how different kinds of unfairness prevented them from building up the kinds of relationships that are rewarding for all concerned. It is easy to be unfair either to oneself or to others, and surprisingly difficult to find the middle ground on which we can stand up for ourselves without putting others down.⁵ We tend to be better at this in some situations than in others: we may be decisive, open-minded, and assertive at work but passive at home. Being fair depends on being able to be assertive.

II. What Is Assertiveness?

Assertiveness is a skill based on the idea that your needs, wants, and feelings are neither more nor less important than those of other people: they are equally important. You should, therefore, make claims for yourself appropriately, honestly, and clearly. Learning how to do this helps ensure that you do not come away from situations feeling bad about yourself, or leaving others feeling bad.

The alternatives to assertiveness are either passivity or aggression. If you adopt the passive approach, you will either fail to get what is your due or become manipulative: "I am useless at anything mechanical, I'll only make a mess of it." "I'm sure you'd do this better than me." "I just can't go on — I've got such a headache." Out of frustration, passive people may cry to get their way. The aggressive approach becomes overbearing: "Get this done right away," "Like it or not, my parents are coming to supper," "That's your concern. It's nothing to do with me." Aggressive people may fail to listen to what others say, or dismiss the views of others as irrelevant. Neither passivity nor aggression are ultimately satisfactory,⁶ both because of the bad feelings they engender and because they are unfair: and in the long term, they usually fail to get you what you want. Michelle who went along with the crowd to an Indian restaurant, though she hated curry, ended up feeling resentful and inadequate. Brian who demanded angrily that a project should be scrapped and started again from scratch ended up feeling stressed and alienated. It is not that Michelle needs to learn about assertiveness and Brian needs something else, but rather that assertiveness provides a more effective solution to both kinds of problems. Assertiveness is about being fair both to yourself and to others.

Assertiveness Involves Claiming Your Rights

You are entitled to your own feelings and opinions. Other people

may want you to feel and think differently, but this is their problem, not yours. If you value yourself and trust your own feelings, you will express yourself to others effectively. The strange thing is that other people will then value and trust you more than if you bend over backward to try to please them.⁷ Passive people, and a surprising number of aggressive people, want to be liked by everyone. This is rarely possible and it is usually counterproductive to try to be liked by all the people you meet. Instead of focusing on being liked, focus on being fair.

Study the “Assertive Rights” given in the following list. They express the freedom you have to be yourself. Do you agree with them?

- To say “I don’t know.”
- To say “no.”
- To have an opinion, and to express it.
- To have feelings, and to express them.
- To make my own decisions, and deal with the consequences.
- To change my mind.
- To choose how to spend my time.
- To make mistakes.

Assertiveness as a Balancing Act

Assertiveness skills can be seen as providing three kinds of balances;

1. The balance between aggression and passivity
2. The balance between yourself and others
3. The balance between reflecting and reacting

The balance between aggression and passivity. Aggression and passivity reflect two extremes, neither of which makes for good relationships. Assertiveness provides a better way because it helps people to make their own point of view known while recognizing and accepting the views of others. It is essential to understand the differences between passivity, aggression, and assertiveness. The

following three stereotypes crystallize the main differences.

Roger was a passive person. He tried to please others and avoid conflict; he found it difficult to make decisions, and constantly criticized and blamed himself. He never accepted compliments and tended to foster guilt and frustration in others, who saw him as a bit of a pushover.⁸ He was liked but not much respected because people knew he could be pushed around, and he seemed not to respect himself. He did what those around him wanted and put his own interests last. When talking to others he cast his eyes down, and there was a note of pleading in his voice. His conversation was filled with such phrases as: "Would you mind if. . .," and "Maybe you could. . .," and "Sorry, sorry."

Bruce was an aggressive and extremely competitive person. He readily confronted others, talking loudly and forcibly, and tended to belittle others by picking on their thoughts, actions or personal qualities. He often offended people and they tended to avoid him. Few people liked him because he was too aggressive, always out to win and minimizing the contributions made by others as if he deserved to take all the credit.⁹ His conversation was peppered with such phrases as: "You'd better. . .," "That's stupid. . .," "Typical!" and "or else. . ."

Caroline was assertive. She said clearly what she wanted, and made the claims she wished to make while listening to others and recognizing their claims too. She could express her feelings strongly when she wanted to, and she could also cope calmly with disagreements. Caroline was easy to get along with whether you like her or not. People felt they could trust her, and communicate with her well even when feeling confused or angry. It was easy to laugh with Caroline. In her conversation she used phrases like: "I think. . .," "I believe. . .," "What do you think?" and "How could we work that out?" The assertive person uses the word "I". The

others focus on “you”. The focus on “you” is damaging because it rarely changes anything — we do not have much control over others — and because it usually builds up resentment. The focus on “you” lays the blames at the other person’s door, and one way or another, the other person is likely to strike back. By focusing on “I” you are taking responsibility for yourself, and leaving others to take responsibility for themselves.

No one behaves in exactly the same way all the time. Aggression comes more naturally when one is angry or after being frightened — for example, by someone stepping carelessly into the road in front of your car. Feeling low and unconfident makes people withdraw and passive. No one can behave assertively all the time, but we can increase the frequency of doing so. Assertiveness is a skill, or set of skills. But underlying these skills is an attitude about yourself.

Low self-esteem, thinking badly about yourself, makes it extremely difficult to be fair. How can you be fair if you believe that you “don’t count” or “don’t matter,” or if you fear that your weaknesses will become glaringly obvious unless you keep on trying to win? Or if you believe that failure is always just round the corner? The ability to stand up for yourself appropriately — and to make sure that your relationships, however unequal in social or other ways, reflect your assertive rights, depends on having a healthy, well-functioning basis for your self-esteem.

The balance between yourself and others. When it comes to your right to have feelings and opinions, you are just as important as other people. The interesting point is that there are two sides to this lesson. One side is that you are not less important than other people; the other side is that other people are not less important than you. Passive people usually value themselves less than others, and this often shows in what they say: “I’m sure you’re right”; “I’ll

leave that up to you”; and so on. With aggressive people it is often not so simple. Some are aggressive because they undervalue others. They ride roughshod over the opinions of others and treat them as if they did not matter. They say things like: “That’s completely irrelevant”; “Stop complaining and get on with it”; or “You can take it or leave it.” But aggressive behavior can also come from feeling inferior oneself, especially for people who have learned to “hit before they get hit.” Those who have been bullied, or repeatedly treated badly, may be vulnerable and readily hit out, verbally or physically, in order to protect themselves. Assertiveness is about recognizing the symmetry between yourself and others, and valuing all people — even when you disagree with them and have completely different feelings. It is not about liking everyone (we all have likes and dislikes), but about how to negotiate with them fairly. Assertiveness makes it unnecessary to resort to subterfuge or to adopt unnecessary armor in order to protect yourself. It helps both you and others to recognize and respect your mutual rights.

The balance between reflecting and reacting. Assertiveness may sound like a thoughtful, laborious, and rather unnatural kind of activity. It is not so much about reflecting instead of reacting, but about finding the balance between the two.¹⁰ If someone makes you angry — for example by borrowing something precious to you and damaging it — you might explode with a tirade of expletives, and end up saying many things that have little bearing on the present incident: “You are such a careless idiot. I don’t want anything more to do with you ever.” The opposite extreme might involve thinking about how upset they must feel, avoiding making a scene, and hiding your feelings of anger under a veneer of friendly smile. You might even accept part of the blame: “I should never have lent it to you.” The balanced, assertive response would involve expressing your anger clearly and appropriately, focusing your anger

on the behavior rather than the person: “That was a really careless thing to do” rather than “You’re completely irresponsible.” Then you can follow up by finding out how the other person feels (Embarrassed? Remorseful? Unconcerned?) in order to decide how to resolve the difficulty, taking into account how you wish the relationship to continue after this hiccup.

Assertiveness Builds Strength

The skills of assertiveness help you to build the stamina and strength to stand up for yourself, and so they also strengthen your relationships by placing them on an equal and robust footing. Linda was a high-school teacher; with her own teenage children at home, who found that as soon as she set foot in her home, her family would begin to make demands on her. Because she was tired, she often snapped back and was irritable, and then the tension would quickly escalate. She decided to make use of assertiveness skills. She explained that she was tired when she came home and needed a few minutes peace and quiet. She said she would make herself a cup of tea and take it into the sitting room, where she would drink it slowly by herself before joining the fray once more. At first her family continued to make the usual demands and interruptions assuming that she would soon return to her old familiar, and irritable self. But she persisted, chasing them out of the sitting room if necessary, until the new ways became second nature,¹¹ both for her and for her family.

Risking even small changes takes courage — for an aggressive person as much as for a passive one. “Giving way to feelings,” and “allowing your heart to rule your head” are only too readily labeled as signs of weakness. But taking the risk helps people to build confidence and self-esteem, and to take pleasure in feeling stronger. Being fair to yourself in this way also demonstrates your worth — to yourself and to others. It shows that you are worth considering and