

*Modern International Business
Communication*

主编 杨晋

当代国际商务函电

**Contemporary International Business
Communication**

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内容提要

本书讲授当今信息时代国际商务沟通的理念及其在具体涉外商务信函写作和沟通中的应用。结合典型国际商务和职业场合案例,系统讲解高效商务沟通的方式、技巧和信函写作。课文内容举一反三、实用性强。本书适用于双语教学、英语教学以及有一定英语基础的专业人士自学。

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前 言

信息技术领域科学技术的飞速发展使国际商务的沟通方式发生了巨大的变化。电子商务的日益普及给人们带来极大的便利的同时,也给人们的国际沟通能力提出了极大的挑战。

许多涉外工作人员每天需要处理来自世界各地、通过不同媒介发来的大量信息,需要与不同人种、操不同语言、属不同文化背景的商务人员进行沟通,而沟通的效果常成为商务及职业场合胜败的决定因素。事实上,当今的国际商务竞争在很大程度上体现在跨文化沟通能力的竞争,而这种竞争又具体表现在思维方式和语言表达方面。

为了使商科学子、涉外企业家、经管人员及从业人员增强国际商业沟通能力和英语表达能力,本书吸取英美沟通专业的专家提倡的最新沟通理念和沟通方式,根据涉外商务和职业场合的需要,系统地阐述了国际商务沟通的通用规则,各种跨时区、跨地域、跨文化的信函写作方式,并编写了典型范例。同时,摒弃了陈旧古板的商业套语,使商务函电写作和沟通更适合当今高效率 and 换位思考的要求和理念,以助于实现同国际接轨。

本书将现代英美沟通理念和方法融入英语语言的学习中,尤其是每课加入的“优化沟通效果”(Communication for Results),意在使学生和读者领悟现代英美职业人员的思维习惯、表达方式、沟通语气,并增强英语语感。另外,意在使学生不仅能够表达出意思,而且懂得如何表达才能达到预期的效果。

作为商业和财经类大学重点课程教材,本书可用于双语教学和英语教学,以便培养学生直接用英语思维的习惯,从而提高表达效果。书中内容用于培养涉外复合型人才的主要教程,在近年教学实践中取得了显著的成效。

本书多年来用于天津财经大学精品课程“英文商务写作”教材,每课附有启发性的问题和相关练习及参考答案,使学生能够掌握信件、备忘录、合同及报告等国际商业文件的写作方法,同时精于对各种沟通媒介(如书面、电子和口头)的选择。

本书由天津财经大学教师杨晋主编(全部课文及第11、15、16、17、18、19、20课练习),参编人员为该校教师:鲍杉(第1、2课练习)、杨玮(第3、4课练习)、张建东(第7、13课练习)、张秋英(第6、8课练习)、韩华(第9课练习)、李军育(第10课练习)、张君(第12课练习)、韩子钰(第14、5课练习),该校教师骆媛负责本书教学多媒体课件设计。。全书由杨晋统稿,美籍专家 Sonia R. Crockett 主审。

编者
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Lesson One

The Principles of Effective Business Communication

Business communication refers to all the messages that are sent and received for business purposes. In international business communication among people from different countries, messages can be transmitted by written and electronic correspondence (such as letter, memo, fax, e-mail) or through oral media (such as telephone, voice mail, teleconferencing).

Effective communication in international business can help you reach a deal, improve customers' satisfaction, promote the sale of your products, keep a good impression of your company and enhance your work efficiency. In addition, the correspondence and information exchanged during communication are often important documents kept for evidence of business arrangements. Whether a message is effectively produced can make the difference between success and failure of the business. Therefore, skills in effective communication are essential for business personnel.

The golden rules of effective business communication can be boiled down to the following 6 points:

1. Express ideas clearly

Clear expression is to insure that your reader will understand with little effort and be free from doubt and misunderstanding. On the other hand, you can only get the response you need quickly from your reader when your meaning is crystal clear.

Clearness can be achieved by:

(1) Use familiar words with precise meanings. *e. g.* :

Instead of writing	Write
We have bimonthly direct cargo services sailing from Shanghai to San Francisco. ("Bimonthly" can mean either twice a month or every two months.)	We have two direct cargo services sailing from Shanghai to San Francisco every month. <i>or</i> We have direct sailing from Shanghai to San Francisco every two months.

(2) Avoid wordy expressions, jargon and clichés. *e. g.* :

Instead of writing	Write
in due course	today, tomorrow (or a specific time)
We wish to inform you that the meeting is put off.	The meeting is put off.
Attached please find the latest catalogue.	Enclosed is the latest catalogue.

Instead of writing	Write
at this point in time	now
have the capacity of	can
in view of the fact that . . .	because

2. Keep the message concise

Before writing a business letter, for instance, you must have a clear and definite purpose in mind. Do not try to cover everything in your letter. Narrow the scope and keep to the point. Eliminate any unimportant and irrelevant sentences, phrases or words as they can make your message too long, or even worse, it may distract your reader from your main purpose and weaken your major points.

However, conciseness does not mean writing exclusively in short sentences or omitting necessary detail. It means making every word count. Compare the following examples.

Wordy with irrelevant information	Concise and to the point
I know you've had gorgeous spring weather, with sunny skies and fine days. But here in the U. S. it's been a spring of another color. We've been hammered with storms, flooding, and even late snow. Travel over here has been a nightmare, which is why you'll find my expenses a bit high this month.	Enclosed are my expense statement and receipts for March 2006. My expenses are higher than usual this month because unusual weather stranded me in Chicago for nearly five days. The airport was closed for four days, and we were forced to sleep in the terminal wherever we could find room.

3. Adopt a reader-focused approach

No matter what purpose your message has, it is the reader who decides whether you will achieve the result you intended. Consequently, it is important to put your reader first. To achieve this you must, first of all, have a clear picture of your reader when you prepare your message so that you will be able to adapt your tone, style and content to your readers' needs and establish a good relationship with them. Ask the following questions to learn about your reader.

(1) Who is my reader?

Try to put yourself in your reader's position and think from his/her point of view. In intercultural communication you have to adapt to your reader's way of expression, their culture and custom.

(2) What is the relation between my reader and me?

The answer to this question will help you adopt an appropriate tone and style. If the reader is a colleague with whom you've kept long-term friendly relations, for instance, you may use a direct approach and a less formal style. On the other hand, if it is a new customer you have had no contact with before, you may adopt a more formal style.

(3) What do my readers want to know, and what is already known?

Readers want relevant and accurate information in order to reach a certain goal or solve a certain problem. They don't want you to repeat what they have already known.

(4) What interests or motivates them?

In writing a persuasive message find out good reasons and evidence that is most persuasive to your readers. Write about the benefits your readers can receive if they accept your idea.

(5) What will be or might be the reaction of my readers to my message?

If you predict that your readers' reaction will be negative, that is, they will be displeased with, uninterested in your message, use an indirect approach — give your evidence or reasons before the main idea. Whereas, if your readers are likely to be positive to your message, use a direct approach — start a letter with a clear statement of the main idea followed by reasons and explanations. e. g. :

Direct	Indirect
We have to raise the prices of our goods because of the sharp increase in the price of raw materials.	As the prices of raw materials have sharply increased, we have to raise the price of our goods.

4. Get the right tone and style

In business messages, the tone most appealing to your reader is a tone that is friendly but efficient, a tone that makes your reader feel there's someone at the other end of the message who is taking notice and showing interest in his/her concerns. For this purpose write in a natural, friendly and sincere way instead of an impersonal, written style.

The trend in today's business writing is that people prefer style that is less formal and more natural. In many countries such as the US, business letters are often written in conversational style that looks like face-to-face talk.

Consider the following methods to write in the right tone and style.

(1) Active voice and passive voice

Sentences in active voice are easier to read and understand than passive voice. People using active voice sound more responsible and honest, while using passive voice seem to try to hide themselves behind the message. It is advisable to use active voice in routine messages.

Passive voice	Active voice
Our plan has been changed.	We've changed our plan.
Damaged goods can never be exchanged.	We cannot change damaged goods.
The new measures are considered by the managers to be effective.	The managers consider the new measures effective.
Problems have been found in this contract.	The contract has problems.
It is necessary that payment be effected next month.	We shall effect payment next month.

However, under circumstances when you want to point out your reader's faults and mistakes but don't want your message to sound accusing, or when you want to tell your reader what to do but don't want your message to read like an order, use passive voice, which helps you avoid using the word "you" and makes your message sounds more courteous, considerate and objective. Compare the following sentences.

Sentences with "you"	Sentences without "you"
You shouldn't load this kind of goods on deck.	This kind of goods cannot be loaded on deck.
You must not wash the wool sweater in hot water.	The wool sweater shrinks if washed in hot water.
You should never use that kind of paper in the copy machine.	That kind of paper does not work well in the copy machine.
You have to meet the deadline if you want your goods to be shipped before the end of the month.	The deadline must be met if the goods are to be shipped before the end of the month.
You must correct all these copies by noon.	All these copies must be corrected by noon.
You lost the shipment.	The shipment is lost.

(2) Emphasize the positive

As the saying goes "Every cloud has a silver lining", focus on the positive side rather than on the negative. Stress what can be done rather than what cannot be done. Your message will sound more sincere and friendly if you make your reader feel hopeful and optimistic.

Negative	Positive
We never exchange damaged goods.	We are happy to exchange goods that are returned to us in good condition.
It is impossible to fill your order this month.	Your order will be filled next month.
We apologize for inconveniencing you during the remodeling of our workshop.	The renovation now under way will enable us to serve you better.

(3) Use "you" attitude

Use "you" or "your" instead of "we" and "our", or "I" and "my". This "you" attitude shows that you see a problem or a matter from your reader's perspective. It shows your warmth and concern to your reader, while "I" or "we" attitude creates an impression of selfishness.

"We" attitude	"You" attitude
To help us process your order, we must ask for another copy of the inquiry.	So that your order can be filled promptly, please send another copy of the inquiry.
We offer T-shirts in different colors and styles.	Select your T-shirts from different colors and styles.
We allow 5 percent discount for payment within 10 days.	You earn 5 percent discount if you pay within 10 days.

(4) Be courteous

Writing in a polite and considerate tone is more effective to get your reader's reply and acceptance. Courtesy also involves a prompt reply after receiving a message seeking information from you. It is impolite to keep your reader waiting.

Impolite	Polite
Your letter is not clear at all. I cannot understand it.	If I understand your letter correctly, . . .
You should give us more details on your products.	Will you give us more details on your products?

5. Have a good command of English

Foreign language is often used in international business, and English is the most widely used language. Good sentence structure and correct usage of grammar, spelling, words and punctuation in your letter leave a good impression of you and your company on your reader. Moreover, it improves readability of your letter and avoids ambiguity.

Poor punctuation	Good punctuation
We are sending you under separate cover two bags of samples for the goods you ordered by air as instructed.	We are sending you, under separate cover, two bags of samples by air for the goods you ordered.
Incorrect place of modifiers	Correct place of modifiers
Our new model desk is suitable for busy executives with thick legs and large drawers.	With its thick legs and large drawers, our new model desk is suitable for busy executives.
Please inform us the earliest shipment we can have as soon as possible.	Please inform us as soon as possible the earliest shipment we can have.
Incorrect use of noun and pronoun	Correct use of noun and pronoun
After two-months slump, we increased the sales.	After two months slump, sales increased.
Working as fast as possible, the goods are ready to be shipped.	Working as fast as possible, we have got the goods ready to be shipped.
Being a qualified expert in this field, I'm sure you can do the job.	Being a qualified expert in this field, you can surely do the job.

6. Have a good command of business knowledge

Business letters are often related to some special fields of knowledge, it is, therefore, important to learn business practices and special terms. For instance, some widely used abbreviations may involve complex business procedures and practices; some words and expressions that look familiar to you may have meanings quite different from what you have learned in everyday usage. Correct and

accurate usage is the precondition in writing effectively. Let's look at a few examples:

(1) Short forms that are widely used and accepted in business practice

Ex-works (Delivery at the factory)

Ex-warehouse (Delivery at the warehouse)

F. O. T. (Free on truck)

F. O. B (Free on board)

F. A. S. (Free alongside ship)

C. I. F. (Cost, Insurance, and Freight)

(2) Special terms which are often misunderstood

A good example is "short delivery", which means that the delivered quantity of goods is less than that stipulated in the contract. It was once mistakenly misunderstood for "quick delivery".

Other business terms such as "Clean bill of lading", "All risks", and "With particular average", have specific meanings in international business practice. Incorrect usage and misunderstanding may result in disputes and loss.

New Words and Phrases

correspondence [ˌkɒrɪˈspɒndəns] *n.* 1) communication by the exchange of letters 通信联系

2) letters written or received 信件

transmit [trænzˈmɪt] *v.* send; convey 传送

Iron transmits heat. 铁传导热。

enhance [ɪnˈhɑːns] *v.* to make greater in value, beauty, or reputation 提高; 增进

Making dialogues in English can enhance students' practical application of English.

用英语做对话能增强学生的英语实际应用能力。

to enhance friendship 增进友谊

personnel [ˌpɜːsəˈnel] *n.* (used with a pl. verb) persons employed by an organization, business, or service 全体员工; 职员

golden [ˈɡəʊldən] *a.* 1) having the color of gold 金色的

golden crops 金色的庄稼

2) marked by peace and prosperity 兴隆的, 昌盛的

a golden age 兴盛时期

3) of the greatest value or importance 绝好的, 重要的

golden rules 重要规则

intercultural communication 跨文化交流

distract (from) *v.* to take (a person, a person's mind) off what he/she is doing 分散(注意力等), 使分心

My attentions are distracted from my study. 我的注意力从学习中分散了。

free from 没有……的, 免除……的, 不受……拘束的

The advantage of the packing is that it keeps the goods free from dust.

这种包装的优点是它使商品不染灰尘。

He seems to be naturally free from flu. 他似乎天生不会得流感。

concise [kən'sais] *a.* clear and succinct 简明扼要的

respond [ri'spɒnd] *v.* reply 响应, 答应, 反应

Students responded by warm applause. 学生报以热烈的掌声。

ambiguous [æm'bigjuəs] *a.* open to more than one interpretations 含糊的, 模棱两可的

The meaning of this letter is ambiguous. 这封信的意思不清楚。

wordy ['wɔ:di] *a.* using more words than necessary 话多的, 唠叨的, 冗长的

a wordy speaker 唠叨的讲话人

jargon ['dʒɑ:gən] *n.* the specialized or technical language of a trade 行话

cliché ['kli:ʒei; kli:'ʒei] *n.* a trite or overused expression 陈词滥调

eliminate [i'limineit] *v.* to get rid of; remove 除去, 删除

to eliminate errors 消除错误

to eliminate the false and retain the true 去伪存真

irrelevant [i'reləvənt] *a.* unrelated to the matter at hand 不相关的

an irrelevant comment 毫不相关的评论

count [kaunt] *v.* 1) to recite numerals 计数

Let's count one two three. 我们来数1、2、3。

2) to have importance 有价值

Their opinions count for little. 他们的观点没有价值。

strand [strænd] *v.* 1) to drive or run ashore or aground 使搁浅

2) to be brought into or left in a difficult or helpless position 困住

I was stranded in the strange town without money or friends. 既无钱, 也无朋友, 我被困在了这个陌生的城镇。

persuasive [pə'sweisiv] *a.* having the power to persuade 有说服力, 易使人信服的

a persuasive argument 令人信服的论点

a persuasive evidence 有说服力的证据

courteous ['kɔ:tiəs] *a.* characterized by gracious consideration toward others 有礼貌的, 谦恭的

renovation [ˌrənəu'veɪʃən] *n.* 革新

punctual ['pʌŋktjuəl] *a.* acting or arriving exactly at the time appointed 准时的, 严守时间的, 按期的

to be punctual for the class 准时上课

punctuality [ˌpʌŋktju'æləti] *n.* 准时; 守时

stipulate ['stɪpjuleit] *v.* to lay down as a condition of an agreement 规定

The contract will stipulate a price and a date of payment. 合同将规定价格和付款日期。

appealing [ə'pi:liŋ] *a.* having the power of attracting or of arousing interest 有感染力的, 引人注意的

appealing scenes 引人注目的场景

refer to *v.* 1) to mention 提到