

21世纪高等教育系列规划教材

外贸英语函电

陈芳 黄毅○主编



北京师范大学出版集团

BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING GROUP

安徽大学出版社

014012387

H315-43
156

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北航

C1698737

788810410

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

外贸英语函电/陈芳,黄毅主编. —合肥:安徽大学出版社,2013.8

21世纪高等教育系列规划教材

ISBN 978-7-5664-0654-5

I. ①外… II. ①陈… ②黄… III. ①对外贸易—英语—
电报信函—写作—高等学校—教材 IV. ①H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2013)第 139924 号

外贸英语函电

WAI MAO YING YU HAN DIAN

陈芳 黄毅 主编

出版发行:北京师范大学出版集团

安徽大学出版社

(安徽省合肥市肥西路3号 邮编 230039)

www.bnupg.com.cn

www.ahupress.com.cn

印 刷:合肥现代印务有限公司

经 销:全国新华书店

开 本:170mm×240mm

印 张:15.5

字 数:280千字

版 次:2013年8月第1版

印 次:2013年8月第1次印刷

定 价:27.00元

ISBN 978-7-5664-0654-5

策划编辑:朱丽琴 龚婧瑶

责任编辑:朱丽琴 龚婧瑶

责任校对:程中业

装帧设计:陈 耀 李 军

美术编辑:李 军

责任印制:陈 如

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反盗版、侵权举报电话:0551-65106311

外埠邮购电话:0551-65107716

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前言



随着国际贸易的迅速发展,国际商务交流更加频繁,国际贸易专业人才的需求也与日俱增。良好的外贸英语函电写作能力是开展外贸业务的必备技能。

《外贸英语函电》是适合外贸从业人员的一本实用性较强、紧贴外贸发展新趋势的教材。

本教材系统介绍了外贸业务中常用的信函、传真、电子邮件写作的基本知识。按照外贸业务操作流程,依次介绍相关信函的写作技巧、注意事项以及在写作中常用的重点单词和句型。

本教材结构合理、内容全面、实用性强、贴近现实。

结构合理——本教材模拟外贸交易流程,连贯性较好,将英语技能和国际贸易实务知识紧密结合。各个章节既有注重基础知识的样信,也有拓展知识的选学信函。

内容全面——本教材共分 18 个单元,涵盖外贸英语书信写作原则与格式、业务关系的建立、资信调查、询价与回复、寄送形式发票、报盘与还盘、订单及其履行、促销、支付方式、包装、运输、保险、投诉与理赔、电子信函、交易会、其他常用信函以及电子商务。

实用性强——本教材结合外贸实际,选取大量经典书信,注重实用性、实践性和可操作性。各章节选取重点句型和词组,加强学生基础写作能力锻炼,使得学生能够举一反三。

贴近现实——微信、电子语音信箱等相关先进交流工具的普及,使得外贸函电生动起来,而听力又是大多数学生的弱点。本书将各个单元重点句型整理作为听力素材以练习的形式出现,旨在加强学生交流能力。本书扩充了电子邮件、交易会等单元内容,以便更好适用目前外贸发展新态势。

本教材可以作为国际贸易、市场营销、电子商务、经贸英语、企业管理和人力资源管理等经济管理类专业本科、高职高专以及成人教育的教学用书,同时也可以作为工作在外贸第一线的商务人士的参考用书。

编者

2013年6月

Contents



Unit 1 Business English-writing	1
Introduction	1
Exercises	19
Unit 2 Establishing Business Relations	21
Introduction	21
Specimen Letters	23
Vocabulary	25
Notes	26
Useful Sentences	29
Exercises	30
Optional Letters	33
Unit 3 Status Enquiry	35
Introduction	35
Specimen Letters	36
Vocabulary	38
Notes	38
Useful Sentences	41
Exercises	41

Optional Letters	43
Unit 4 Enquiry and Reply	45
Introduction	45
Specimen Letters	46
Vocabulary	48
Notes	49
Useful Sentences	51
Exercises	52
Optional Letters	54
Unit 5 Sending Proforma Invoice	56
Introduction	56
Specimen Letters	58
Vocabulary	59
Notes	60
Useful Sentences	61
Exercises	62
Optional Letters	64
Unit 6 Quotation, Offer and Counter-offer	66
Introduction	66
Specimen Letters	69
Vocabulary	71
Notes	72
Useful Sentences	73
Exercises	74
Optional Letters	76
Unit 7 Orders and Fulfillments	78
Introduction	78
Specimen Letters	80

Contents

Vocabulary	83
Notes	83
Useful Sentences	85
Exercises	87
Optional Letters	88
Unit 8 Sales Promotion	90
Introduction	90
Specimen Letters	91
Vocabulary	93
Notes	94
Useful Sentences	96
Exercises	97
Unit 9 Terms of Payment	101
Introduction	101
Part I Remittance and Collection	102
Introduction	102
Specimen Letters	104
Vocabulary	106
Notes	107
Useful Sentences	111
Exercises	112
Optional Letters	113
Part II Letter of Credit	115
Introduction	115
Specimen Letters	118
Vocabulary	121
Notes	122
Useful Sentences	124
Exercises	126
Optional Letters	128

Unit 10 Packing	131
Introduction	131
Specimen Letters	135
Vocabulary	137
Notes	137
Useful Sentences	139
Exercises	140
Optional Letters	142
Unit 11 Shipment	144
Introduction	144
Specimen Letters	148
Vocabulary	150
Notes	151
Useful Sentences	154
Exercises	155
Optional Letters	157
Unit 12 Insurance	159
Introduction	159
Specimen Letters	162
Vocabulary	165
Notes	166
Useful Sentences	168
Exercises	169
Optional Letters	172
Unit 13 Claim and Settlement	174
Introduction	174
Specimen Letters	176
Vocabulary	178

Contents

Notes	179
Useful Sentences	181
Exercises	182
Optional Letters	183
Unit 14 Electronic Correspondences	185
Part I Telex and Fax	185
Introduction	185
Vocabulary	192
Exercises	193
Part II E-mail	193
Introduction	193
Specimen Letters	195
Unit 15 Trade Fairs	197
Introduction	197
Specimen Letters	198
Vocabulary	200
Notes	201
Useful Sentences	204
Exercises	205
Unit 16 Other Forms of Business	207
Introduction	207
Specimen Letters	208
Vocabulary	210
Useful Sentences	210
Exercises	211
Unit 17 Other Common Letters	213
Introduction	213
Specimen Letters	215

Vocabulary	218
Notes	218
Useful Sentences	219
Exercises	220
Unit 18 E-business	222
Introduction	222
Specimen Letters	223
Vocabulary	227
Notes	228
Useful Sentences	230
Exercises	231
参考文献	233
后记	235

Unit 1



Business English-writing

Introduction

Business communication is concerned with the successful exchange of messages that support the goal of buying and selling goods or other services. There are many forms used in communication, including letters, telegrams, telexes, cables and electronic correspondence. But it is clearly seen that the business letter is still the main carrier of business communication. So it is of great importance for students to master the skills of reading and writing a good business letter that presents ideas interestingly and clearly to enable readers to understand with the least possible effort.

Essentials of Business Letter-writing

The purposes of business communication are to obtain complete understanding between the parties involved, and elicit the responses required. Broadly speaking, the functions of a business letter are to ask for or to deliver business information, to make or to accept an offer, to deal with matters concerning various business. Business letter-writing does not differ from any other forms of creative writing. A good command of English is one of the important bases of good business letters. What you write should be free from grammatical blemishes, and also free from the slightest

possibility of being misunderstood. In this unit two tasks should be finished. Firstly, you should know 7C's principles for a good business letter, i.e. Consideration, Courtesy, Clarity/Clearness, Conciseness, Concreteness, Correctness and Completeness. Secondly, you should learn the basic knowledge of business English letters, that is, the layout and styles.

1. Consideration

Here consideration means that you prepare every message with the receiver in mind and try to put yourself in his or her place. The interrelation of the letter sender and receiver profoundly affects communicative effect. Firstly, it helps to use you-attitude instead of I-attitude. The native English writers lay great emphasis on consideration, which we call the "you-attitude". "You-attitude" is not so simple as only to use "you" instead of "I" or "we". That is, to see things from their points of view, visualize them in their surroundings, see their problems and difficulties and express your ideas in terms of their experience. "You-attitude" can help to avoid an awkward situation, and promote cooperation between the trade parties. For example, early attention will be given to your requests. You can say "You earn 5% discount when you pay cash." instead of "We allow 5% discount for cash payment." Secondly, try to discuss problems in a positive way and avoid discussing problems in a negative way. For example, instead of saying "We close at 5 p. m.", you can say "We are open till 5 p. m.". The receiver will feel better.

2. Courtesy

Courtesy means to show tactfully in your letters the honest friendship, thoughtful appreciation, sincere politeness, considerate understanding and heartfelt respect. It stems from sincere you-attitude, it is not simply politeness with mechanical insertion of "please" and "thanks". The courteous writer should be sincere and tactful, thoughtful and appreciative. Courteous messages help to strengthen business friendship, as well as make new business friends. If conciseness conflicts with courtesy, you should make a little sacrifice of conciseness. Answer letters in good time and write to explain the reasons if you fail to do it promptly. Promptness is one of the

most important things in being courteous. Punctuality will please your customer who dislikes waiting a long time for a reply.

Compare the following sentences:

A. We are sorry that you misunderstood us.

B. We are sorry that we didn't make ourselves clear.

A. You ought to have accepted the offer.

B. It seems to us that you ought to have accepted the offer.

3. Clarity/Clearness

In business English letters, clarity means getting your message across, so the reader will not misunderstand what you are to convey. A point that is ambiguous in a letter will cause troubles to both sides, and further exchange of letters for explanation will become inevitable, thus time will be lost. You must try to express yourself clearly. To achieve this, you should keep in mind the purpose of your letters and use appropriate words in correct sentence structure to fully convey your message. The writer should use plain, simple words. Short, familiar, conversational and straightforward expression in English is what is needed for business letters.

1) Pay more attention to choosing the concise and accessible expressions and try to avoid the words and sentences with equivocal meanings.

What does the following sentence mean?

As to the steamers sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco, we have bimonthly direct services.

A. We have two direct sailings every month from Hong Kong to San Francisco.

B. We have direct sailing every two months from Hong Kong to San Francisco.

2) Pay more attention to the position of the modifier. The same modifier will lead to different implications and functions when it is put in different position of the sentence.

A. We shall be able to supply 10 cases of the item only. The key is the item, not others.

B. We shall be able to supply only 10 cases of the item. The key is 10

cases, no more cases.

4. Conciseness

Conciseness means saying things in the fewest possible words without losing clarity and courtesy. Conciseness is often considered to be the most important principle in writing. We are living in the day when time is money, so no businessman is willing to spend great time reading your letters. Clearness and Conciseness often go hand-in-hand and the elimination of wordy business jargon can help to make a letter clearer and at the same time more concise.

To achieve this, firstly, avoid wordiness. Try to avoid wordiness or redundancy. A concise letter is not necessarily a short one. Secondly, avoid using unusual words or out-of-date commercial jargon and try to express your idea in modern English. The word "deem" means "think", but we rarely use the former, which is out-of-date. Thirdly, avoid unnecessary repeat. Fourthly, control the number of the words, and build effective sentences and paragraphs. Generally speaking, the average length for sentences should be 10 to 20 words, not over 30. A good business letter should be precise and to the point.

5. Concreteness

Concreteness means making the message specific, definite and vivid rather than general. Business letters should avoid being too general. For example, some qualities or characters of goods should be shown with exact figures and avoid words such as short, long or good. Give specific time (with date, month, year and even offer hour, minute if necessary) and avoid expressions such as yesterday, next month, immediately and etc.

In general letters, everything seems to be mentioned but actually few are fully expounded. You should use specific facts and figures, vivid and image-building words. Here shows a poor example: Validity of the sales contract No. 396 will be in July.

6. Correctness

Correctness means not only proper expressions with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling, but also appropriate tone which helps to achieve the

purpose. Business letters must be factual information, accurate figures and exact terms in particular, for they involve the rights, the duties and the interests of both sides often as the base of all kinds of documents. Correctness for business letters is surely important, if not, they may be misunderstood and followed by business troubles.

Therefore, we should not understate nor overstate as understatement might lead to less confidence and hold up the trade development while overstatement throws you into an awkward position. You can say, "This product is the best one we can supply." instead of "This product is absolutely the best one on the market."

7. Completeness

A successful business communication should include all the necessary information to the readers. It is essential to check the message carefully before it is sent out to see that all the matters are discussed, and all the questions are answered. Complete message is more likely to bring the desired result without the expense of additional message. Incompleteness will lead to the counterpart's unfavorable impression toward your firm.

Furthermore, it can help you avoid costly lawsuit which may occur if important information is missing. A complete business letter is usually checked by 5W—who, what, when, where, why (how). For example, what you want, when you get the goods, to whom and where the goods to be sent, how payment to be made.

Basic Elements in Business Letters

A business letter basically consists of seven principle parts and seven optional parts. The standard parts are: Letterhead, Inside Address, Date, Salutation, Body of the letter, Complimentary Close and Signature. The others are optional parts, including Reference Number, Subject Line, Attention Line, Enclosure, Identification Marks Carbon Copy Notation and Postscript. These parts may be unnecessary for some letters and chosen as the writer wishes. Some letters may contain one or more of the optional parts, depending on the different situation of each writing requirement.