

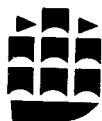
English in Business

Book 1 **R. S. de Schiffrin**
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English in Business

Book I

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THE AUTHORS

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Book I of *English in Business* aims at:

1. enabling the learner to make a steady advance in the use of the English language of the present time;
2. laying the foundation of the technical knowledge that should be at the disposal of the graduate of a commercial school, namely,
 - a. the ability to communicate and receive simple messages concerning everyday activities,
 - b. the capacity to make simple translations into English,
 - c. the skill to write simple commercial letters in the import-export trade.

Comments for Teachers

It should be borne in mind that English operates at different levels of usage which, in general, can be classified into *formal*, *informal* (or general conversation) and *colloquial*. The *formal* level appears in writing and in lecturing; also in conversation (in given circumstances). The difference between the *informal*, or ordinary conversation, level and the *colloquial* level depends on the degree of familiarity between the speakers. The different levels co-exist in the language of a native speaker. But a native speaker's control of his own language will save him from using a certain expression or intonation pattern at the wrong time. A non-native speaker with a limited degree of ability in English is lacking in the command of the different levels of usage unless he is made aware of them.

This course requires such an awareness, (1) as regards differences in the exchange of speech between equals and non-equals; and (2) with reference to the level of usage required by business correspondence. Throughout Comments for Teachers we discriminate between the different levels.

Teachers should be careful to warn students to keep clear of the so-called 'commercialese', as opposed to 'a commercial style'. 'Commercialese' is very ornamented and overpolite; it is old-fashioned, adds nothing to the sense of the letter and is even likely to cause ill-humour in the reader. On the other hand, teachers should encourage students to memorize certain simple formulas acceptable in 'a commercial style' characteristic of our time.

Examples of 'commercialese':

'Thanking you in advance...'

'Trusting to be favoured with your esteemed order...'

'Awaiting your early reply...'

Examples of acceptable simple formulas:

‘We thank you for your enquiry...’

‘Will you please send us full details...’

‘We were glad to receive your order...’

In ‘commercial style’ as well as in ‘general style’ in speech and writing it may be rewarding to discourage any tendency to the overstatement common in certain languages. This includes the use of exclamation marks, an excess of adjectives and words like *very*, etc.

The framework of this book is as follows:

1. an *Introductory Revision Section*;

2. five sets of five *Units* each. Model set:

UNIT 1. Part I. Vocabulary Lesson.

Part II. Some special difficulties of the English language.

UNIT 2. Part I. Verbal Form.

Part II. Commercial Correspondence, or Methods of Payment in the Import-Export Trade.

UNIT 3. Part I. Phrasal Verbs.

Part II. Phrasal Verbs.

UNIT 4. Part I. Patterns and Structures.

Part II. Commercial Correspondence, or Methods of Payment.

UNIT 5. Part I. Connectors.

Part II. Commercial Correspondence, or Methods of Payment.

General Remarks:

(1) Between *three and four 40-minute class periods* should be devoted to each unit (Parts I and II). Part II should not, as a rule, take more than one class period. It is Part I that requires more attention, and therefore more time, since it includes most of the language difficulties in the material covered by this course.

(2) *Linguistic problems and subjects* have been graded through the 25 Units according to:

a. the criterion of probable *differences in structure* between English (the target language) and the student’s own language. First come the structures within this language course that offer less difficulty to most students of English as a foreign language; then those that offer more difficulty.

b. the criterion of *frequency*.

(3) *Commercial correspondence* in English (a serious obstacle to the second-language learner) has been dealt with very cautiously. The criterion here has been that of *attainability*; hence:

- a. the various parts of a business letter are presented in isolation;
- b. a limited selection has been made among the various kinds of commercial letter. Only the following appear:
 1. letter to foreign supplier asking for information;
 2. reply to enquiry supplying requested information;
 3. reply to enquiry (temporary situation does not permit exports);
 4. purchasing order;
 5. letter of acknowledgement of order with advice of despatch;
- c. each kind of letter is used in two units:

First presentation—

- (i) introduction of letter;
- (ii) testing of partial control of patterns that have been drilled in connection with that particular kind of letter.

Second presentation—

- (i) reinforcement through reading;
- (ii) comprehension questions;
- (iii) testing of students' automatic control of special patterns.

(4) The *Introductory Revision Section* aims at:

- a. reinforcing basic material;
- b. opening the way for the acquisition of new vocabulary and new sentence patterns.

It may be rewarding to use revision exercises as Intonation and Pronunciation Drills. For this purpose, once each exercise has been completed the following procedure is recommended:

- a. the teacher reads out all the sentences at normal conversational speed;
- b. the teacher reads out the first sentence two or three times;
- c. the students repeat the same sentence without reading (individual or choral work);
- d. the teacher reads out the second sentence two or three times, etc.

(5) In the margins a selection of items of lexical interest with their phonological transcription have been included where appropriate.

The aim of this is:

- a. to give due importance to the phonetics and phonology of English

within the description of the language material covered by this course;

- b. to call the students' attention in one more way to lexical items that may be of use to them in an office.

The symbols used correspond to those adopted by the International Phonetic Association, and the pronunciation in general follows that given in Professor Daniel Jones's *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (Eleventh Edition, 1960).

(6) *Preliminary Drills* precede Reading and Oral Drills. In all units (both Parts I and II), when so stated and otherwise, Preliminary Drills isolate structural items and patterns which are likely to offer difficulty and present them within a context which is either familiar to or easily controlled by the students.

(7) To do *Reading and Oral Drills*:

- a. the teacher reads each dialogue separately at normal conversational speed;
- b. teacher-student reading of the dialogue:
 1. the teacher impersonates one character;
 2. a student impersonates the other;
- c. student-student reading;
- d. if possible, students repeat without reading.

(8) *Pronunciation and Intonation Drills* are meant to aid students to gain control of the most elementary patterns of English intonation. No attempt is made to go into the complex intonation system of English; only the essential recurring types of intonation are given:

- a. a falling intonation for statements and answers, except to avoid finality or to turn a command into a request;
- b. again, a falling intonation for special questions, i.e. questions containing an interrogative word (*who*, *what*, etc.);
- c. a rising intonation for general questions, i.e. questions requiring as answers *yes* or *no*;
- d. an additional rise or fall in longer sentences with more than one tone group.

The tonetic symbols ↓ ↑ are those used by A. S. Hornby in his textbooks.

A relative high-level pitch is marked by the symbol ˉ.

A stress-mark ˈ has sometimes been added to help students acquire the rhythm which is characteristic of English speech. In *Special Pronunciation and Intonation Drills* the stress-mark is used to em-

phasize the difference between phrasal verbs and verbs with a prepositional group, unless the rhythm of the sentence causes suppression of the stress.

Pronunciation and Intonation Drills can be made use of in the following way:

- a. the teacher reads each statement or question separately at normal conversational speed several times;
- b. the teacher should call students' attention to the correspondence between intonation marks and intonation patterns.

The use of different intonation patterns in the student's first language, especially in questions, may represent a serious problem for the learner. A fall in many questions in English should be properly brought to the students' attention.

(9) There are various kinds of *Exercises*:

- a. for drilling purposes. These do not require a great deal of comprehension. Object: to form correct speech habits by fixing a certain verbal form or pattern within a certain context;
- b. for testing purposes, requiring comprehension:
 - (i) fill-in-the-blanks exercises;
 - (ii) combine-to-form-sentences exercises;
 - (iii) question-and-answer exercises;
 - (iv) follow-up exercises which are a revision of material taught in previous units.

(10) Five *Tests* follow the Revision Lessons:

- a. to test basic material that should be within the students' control;
- b. to test new material;
- c. to test fluency by supplying the pictures of the corresponding vocabulary unit. Students should be allowed to use their imagination freely.

PART I

1. General Remarks:

- a. As in other vocabulary units (Units 6, 11, 16, 21) the title, 'at the office', indicates the subject-matter of the set of five units.
- b. Like all vocabulary units, this one serves several purposes at the same time:
 - (i) to introduce new vocabulary in a given situation;

Unit 1

- (ii) to recall basic patterns. The student should have acquired a command of these in previous language courses especially where structural grading of English has been the guiding principle. Preliminary Drills are meant to facilitate this revision;
 - (iii) to permit conversation practice through questions and answers, and through description of the situation in the text in the students' own words.
 - (iv) to allow situation acting through memorization of the text with different students playing different roles.
- c. Here, as well as in other units, teachers should feel free to introduce new vocabulary items that a given class situation may call for. Vocabulary items can be taught with the aid of pictures, or through translation, or within simple sentences.
2. In the text, under pictures 1 and 3 the level of usage is colloquial (e.g. *boss, well done, hard luck*): conversation between equals and friends.
In the text, under pictures 2 and 4 the style is more formal: conversation between employer and employee.
 3. Remind students that *how do you do?* is used when an introduction is made. *How are you?* is a conventional greeting; never used when an introduction is made.
 4. *I thought that was the Personnel Manager's job:* *that* is here a demonstrative pronoun. The strong form /ðæt/ should be used.
 5. *Pompous*: too formal or dignified in manner.
 6. *Well done*: formula used to express approval or praise. Like so many idiomatic expressions it cannot be interpreted by a literal translation of the component words.

PART II

1. General Remarks:
 - a. As Part II in all vocabulary units (6, 11, 16, 21) it deals with certain difficulties that seem to be common to learners of English as a foreign language at this level.
 - b. Some of the material covered consists of deceptive cognates, i.e. words similar in form and different in meaning:

economic economical

Other material relates to matters of sentence structure where English usage is complicated, as in the choice between plain infinitive, *to*-infinitive, and *-ing* form to follow particular verbs.

They made her *type* the report three times.

2. *The government's new economic plan*: The case-contraction of the genitive ('s) is here used almost with the character of an adjective. This use is very frequent in the business world in connection with nouns like *bank, government, company*, etc.
3. *It's the first time I've . . .*: This pattern seems to offer great difficulty to some students. Hence, it appears twice: in Unit 1 (as a special problem); in Unit 24 (contrasted with *it's high time . . .*).

PART I

Unit 2

1. General Remarks:

Here, as in all other units in which a new pattern is taught the following procedure is advisable:

- (i) Create orally a situation which will naturally lead to the use of the new pattern and which at the same time will round off the situation.

Mary is a typist. She isn't happy with her job. She has to work hard and her pay isn't good. She's learning shorthand. If she learns shorthand well she *might* get a better job.

- (ii) Ask several students to repeat the sentence in which your target item is. Purpose of repetition: correct pronunciation, correct intonation, use of the new item within a correct structural context.
- (iii) If the class is very alert, produce other examples in which the same item appears, then write the table on the board, use a question-and-answer technique to practise, or give call-words as indicated below.
- (iv) If the class is not very alert, after repetition of
If she learns shorthand well she *might* get a better job,
write the sentence on the board, and ask a student to read it.

- (v) Give different subjects as call-words for students to build up new sentences with the same pattern:

She You Helen and Mary Father We Your boy-friend	might get a better job.
---	-------------------------

- (vi) Do the same drill with parts of the predicate:

She might get	a better job. a longer holiday. a nice flat.
---------------	--

- (vii) Rub off sentence. Give another sentence with the same pattern. Give call-words and make students build up new sentences.
- (viii) Ask questions or make students ask each other questions; the pattern should always be in the answer.

2. *May, might*:

- Present { *May* (possibility).
She may get a better job at another office.
My generous Uncle Toby may give me £5.
Might (greater doubt, more remote possibility).
She might get a better job at another office.
My mean old aunt might give me 10s.
- Past { *May have* + past participle (speculation about a past action).
Mr. Wilson may have forgotten about the appointment.
He seems to have got some money from somewhere;
his uncle may have given him some.
Might have + past participle (speculation about a past action which is no longer possible).
Mr. Wilson was very lucky, he might have been badly hurt in the accident.
She might at least have given me 5s. but I didn't even get that.

The negative of *may*, *might*, *may have* appears in the following to express possibility.

He may not come today.

They might not know.

She may not have finished yet.

May and *might* are not used in the interrogative to express possibility. The following are used as substitutes: *can*, *be likely to*, *do you think?*

Can the news be true?

Are we likely to lose the case?

Do you think she'll be able to come?

Might is the past tense of *may* only in reported speech, or when the verb in the main sentence is in the past tense.

He said he might get a better job somewhere else.

I was afraid he might get lost.

3. *Employment Agency*: This item gives teachers a chance to comment on the use of nouns as modifiers. This is uncommon in other languages. Students should be made aware of the fact that the modifying noun is not inflected—a list of *prices* is called a 'price list'.

ticket collector: a collector of tickets

ball bearings: bearings with steel balls

cardboard boxes: boxes made of cardboard

4. *Manila envelopes*: made of Manila paper, a strong kind of paper.
5. *I'm afraid*: In this case, *I'm sorry*.

1. General Remarks:

- a. As in Units 8, 13, 18, 23 phrasal verbs appear because:

(i) they are so often used by native speakers in everyday conversation. There is a tendency in the English language for phrasal verbs to replace many one-word verbs;

(ii) this feature of the English language is particularly difficult for learners of English as a foreign language.

- b. Systematization of phrasal verbs has been made on the basis of a common particle producing some similarity of meaning.

- c. In this unit, phrasal verbs have been grouped according to their meaning and to the way they pattern in sentences.

Unit 3

- d. A rule of thumb for the stressing of phrasal verbs is that both verb and particle are stressed.

He's got to 'go 'on with his 'work.

Unit 4

PART I

1. *Would you mind if I finished...* : Here the simple past tense is used after *mind*. *Do you mind if I finish...* does not appear in the text. It is up to the teacher to decide whether both forms are necessary for the progress of the class.

Possible answers to questions drilled, according to situation:

Would you mind... :

Of course not.

No.

No, I wouldn't.

Not in the least.

Not at all.

No, it's all right with me.

Would you mind if... :

Of course not.

No.

No, I wouldn't.

Not in the least.

Not at all.

No, go ahead.

No, go right ahead.

PART II

1. Date in commercial correspondence, sometimes abbreviated
4/12/19.. (4th December, 19..—U.K.)
12/4/19.. (December 4th, 19..—U.S.A.).
2. Address: In letters addressed to a firm in London, postal district initials and numbers are included.
London, E.C.2
London, W.1
London, N.6
etc.

In letters addressed to firms in the United States the name of the state follows the name of the town.

Berkeley, Cal. (= California)

Northampton, Mass. (= Massachusetts)

Notice: Washington, D.C. (= District of Columbia)

3. Salutation: This reflects the desired degree of intimacy.

a. without addressee's name it is formal

Dear Sir,

b. with addressee's name it is less formal

Dear Mr. Smith,

c. with addressee's first name it is friendly

Dear John,

d. common between professionals but less common in business—

Dear Smith,

PART I

Unit 5

1. In the examples in the text *above* is always used.

In *Children $\frac{\text{over}}{\text{above}}$ five*, *over* is preferred.

Also, *under* in place of *below*.

Avoid the common mistake *the above*. Use *the above-mentioned items* or *the items above*.

2. *Can I ask you some questions?* Here *some* means *a few* (sometimes *a little*). This question is a polite request; *any* does not occur.

Can I have some more cake?

Can you give me some salt?

Any is used in questions with *can* when *can* indicates capacity, probability or permission.

Can you understand any of these questions?

Can I take any of these roads?

As a general rule it is possible to say that *any* is used when there is uncertainty about the answer, *some* when the speaker expects an affirmative answer.

Will John bring any girls to the party? (It is uncertain.)

Will John bring some girls to the party? (I've asked John to bring some girls and I expect he will.)