

Book review

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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In today's increasingly competitive business environment, in order to be successful, communication is one of the most significant functions for all kinds of business firms to master, and it is particularly essential for firms doing business internationally. This book comes at the right time, as business communication is absolutely necessary in an era where international communication is increasingly frequent and sound communication is particularly important.

This book comprises 11 chapters. Chapter 1 provides some useful background information about the latest developments of written and spoken communication in the workplace and outlines the structure of the book. Chapter 2 on the features of business communication presents the purpose and nature of business English, and typical differences and features of business English with some examples, which will acquaint readers with the appropriate style for workplace communication to make communication effective.

Chapter 3 first explores seven principles to ensure readability for writing effective email messages. Next, there is an examination of some common errors in email writing made by second language learners, with special attention to the wrong use of lexical words. It is followed by the analysis of three concluding tips for sending email, including mobile device considerations, good impression consideration and email etiquette. It then goes on to introduce the emerging use of enterprise social media, including its definition and four main features. This chapter ends with a section devoted to the perception of employers and employees towards use of social media.

Chapter 4 deals with conveying negative and goodwill messages. Thus, it is largely concerned with an introduction to a framework for analyzing negative messages, two different approaches (direct approach and indirect approach) in conveying negative messages and four explanation types (casual, referential, ideological and penitential accounts) used in conveying negative messages. Some authentic examples are analyzed for an understanding of negative messages. In addition, this chapter also provides an important introduction to goodwill messages and engages with different types of goodwill messages. It sets out some contents and structures of goodwill messages, including initial thanks, initial congratulation, initial sympathy and initial invitation. Finally, two authentic examples adapted from a 'thank you message' and 'a sympathy message' are analyzed.

Chapter 5 examines sales correspondence and job application messages. This chapter begins by discussing persuasive strategies, including Aristotle's three modes of persuasion (ethos,

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pathos and logos) and six weapons of influence (reciprocation, commitment and consistency, social proof, liking, authority and scarcity). There follows a brief description of steps to prepare for persuasion and two approaches in preparing persuasive messages with case analysis. This chapter ends with an introduction of seven moves for writing sales letters and its linguistic features, and seven structural moves of a letter of application and some strategies of promoting oneself and language use.

The central concern of Chapters 6 is enquiry and invitation messages. This chapter opens with a brief review of previous studies about enquiry messages and then points out how to make enquiry messages effective with an analysis of some authentic examples. Later, it sets out to explain invitation messages. The emphasis falls on the move structure of invitation messages. Particular emphasis is also placed on semantic categories involved in the persuasive moves. Finally, it provides a move structure comparison between sales correspondence and invitation messages.

Chapter 7 is devoted to formal business reports and proposals. It shows an overall structure of business reports, which contains introduction, methodology, findings/discussion, conclusions and recommendations. And it makes excellent use of three mini-reports to illustrate the structure. It also looks at the use of hedging devices in discussing findings with a sample text. It then introduces how to write the conclusion and recommendations. More importantly, it suggests some essential skills for describing trends in a report and comparing and contrasting the numerical data in tables and charts. Finally, it discusses the needs for a proposal and the content and structure of a proposal followed by an analysis of an authentic proposal.

Chapter 8 focuses on making oral presentations. Here this chapter states how to plan your presentation, including knowing your purpose and audience. Later, it gives a good account of how to organize your presentation, which contains two important parts of introduction and conclusion. Moreover, it introduces some steps to prepare for a persuasive speech, the use of a figure of speech and the avoidance of fallacies. It also gives detailed practical guidance on how to deliver your presentation, focusing on engaging the interest of the audience and speaking in a natural spoken style. It concludes with a summary of five factors related to presentation skills, which cover clarity/understandability of the structure, presentational structure, the type/level of information provided, persuasiveness of the entrepreneurs' presentation and the entrepreneurs' personal characteristics.

Chapter 9 elaborates on informal English and English for socialization, with a focus on small talk. It first explains the roles of small talk with two examples of movie extracts. It then provides a succinct analysis of the small talk at work sub-corpus. It also presents some expressions used for small talk involving ten different topics, which the reader can use in daily communication. In addition, it introduces the use of slang and informal expressions, listing 20 slang items and some common English idioms/slang/informal expressions for effective communication. At last, the role of non-verbal communication is discussed.

Business meetings and negotiations is the subject of Chapter 10. It goes to great lengths to introduce the challenges and difficulties in having meeting, particularly the language difficulties and cultural-related difficulties. Some subjects such as role of the chair, openings/closings and transition of meetings, turn taking, topic progression and authentic language use in meetings are briefly discussed. It then gives a description of the discursive practices as indexed by common clusters in meetings, which are categorized into discourse-making practices and interactional practices. It especially explicates five main interpersonal language categories in meetings, including pronouns, backchannels, vague language, hedges and deontic modality. It also delves into the minutes writing, concentrating mainly on seven common questions about minutes writing. Finally, this chapter focuses its attention on negotiations by investigating negotiation outcomes, ways to negotiate effectively, five phases of negotiation and tips for negotiation.

Chapter 11 is about employment and appraisal interviews. It presents an introduction of employment interviews, exploring in detail the structured behavioural employment interviews. And it treats the appraisal interviews at length with authentic examples of task-oriented behaviour and relation-oriented behaviour. Finally, it deals with the issue of four techniques required in interviews, including questioning technique, from standardization to interaction, leadership activity as a gatekeeper and three levels of listening/critical listening.

This book is a much-needed comprehensive guide, which serves to introduce the realities of communication in business to students, professionals and practitioners. The formatting and layout of this book are carefully considered. Each chapter opens with some thought-provoking questions for reflection and closes with a series of stimulating post-reading activities. Moreover, it is amply illustrated with authentic examples, which are presented in great detail and sometimes accompanied by tables. For this, this book succeeds in combining a strong emphasis on the theoretical introduction and practical examples, with detailed background information on business communication. Therefore, the author should be commended on these. However, readers could have been navigated through some useful websites or videos on business communication for visual learning and a conclusion could have been added at the end of each chapter.

Finally, this book may be a self-study textbook for anyone interested in business communication, and it is in fact a particularly valuable reference for communication-focused practitioners and learners.