

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46991/AFA/2024.20.1.50>

WRITING PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

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A business correspondence is a written communication between two parties in a trade. During business correspondence exchanges, both parties' points of view, as well as ideas and information must be communicated. An efficient exchange of business correspondence can assist domestic manufacturers and foreign customers in establishing or maintaining long-term friendly relationships. It is undeniably critical to learn how to write effective business letters. The present article focuses on the characteristics of the language used in business correspondence, specifically, its lexical and structural characteristics. The analysis shows that the key to establishing successful business communication lies in using concise language, simple structure and unitary contents.

Keywords: *business correspondence, formal and informal style, stylistic features, business communication.*

Introduction

Letter writing is a significant part of communication and an intimate part of experience. Each letter writer has a distinct writing style, way of expressing thoughts, facts and opinions. It should be noted that the routine in writing official business letters necessitates certain accepted idioms, set phrases, fixed patterns, grammar, and even a specific arrangement of the text on a sheet of paper. As a result, certain skills must be acquired via practice, and writing intricacies must be carefully and properly learned. According to L. Nyzhnikova, letter writing serves as a record of events, facts, and grievances, as well as a means of communication and contact. So, in order to write a perfect letter, it is vital to feel the spirit and trend of the style. Doing business means working out agreements with other people, sometimes through elaborate contracts and sometimes through nothing but little standard forms, through exchanges of letters (Nyzhnikova, 2011).

The language of business, professional and semi-official, is formal, courteous, tactful, concise, expressive, and to the point. A neatly arranged letter will certainly

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Received: 23.10.2023

Revised: 07.11.2023

Accepted: 28.11.2023



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make a better impression on the reader, thus good letters make good business partners. Clarity of expression comes from clarity of thought.

In business correspondence, vocabulary is an important aspect which can influence the effect of communication. The vocabulary of business correspondence takes on a more professional aspect. In business correspondences, practitioners use a large number of terminology and jargons, which are required to be used actually, professionally, and properly. Due to the unique industry characteristics of business correspondence, its language form, vocabulary and content are related to the professional knowledge. As far as international trade, business talks, economy, finance, marketing, and insurance are concerned, each area has its own professional vocabulary. Thus, a large quantity of terminology is used from different fields. For example: in international trade, there are, “standby credit”, “cost, insurance and freight”, “free on board”, “partial shipment”, “blank endorsed”, “marine bills of lading”; in insurance, “all Risks”, “free from particular average”, “war Risk”, “with average or with particular average”, “force majeure”, and etc. (Xiaoying & Runhui 2008). In international business activities, the differences of language and culture may create misunderstandings easily. The use of a single professional term, or a clear concept will enable the writer to describe accurately all the aspects of business activities and create relevant documents, letters, agreements, and contracts avoiding ambiguity and omissions. So, terminology is widely used in business correspondence.

Usage of ordinary words

Business letter writers use words that convey their meaning, and nothing more. It is wrong to use words simply because they look impressive and you want to try them out, or because you like the sound of them. There is a tendency in business writing to use unnecessary, obscure words rather than their ordinary equivalents, perhaps out of a feeling that the obscure words are somehow more impressive. Using a long word where a short one can be used is not preferable. For example, instead of saying ‘*notwithstanding*’, words like ‘*despite, still*’ can be said. There is a creeping tendency to include unnecessary phrases like *with regard to, with respect to, in reference to*, and so on, instead of *about*.

Letter writers should avoid using a foreign phrase or jargon if they can think of an ordinary word which means the same thing. For example, writing *modus operand* instead of *method*, or *soi-disant* instead of *so-called*. Using legal jargon or terms of art in a letter to a client or another non-lawyer is not right, unless it is unavoidable.

Special usage of general words

Some common words have been given entirely different meanings in foreign trade. For example, in the status inquiry letter, the word “confidence” means top-secret. Thus, it extends to the adjective “confidential”, it “meant to be kept secret and not told to or shared with other people” (Ganzhou, 2007).

In the letter of establishing trade relationship, the following words are often used: opportunity, establishment, advantage, appreciate, catalogue, materialize, etc. In the letter of enquiry and offer, the words competitive confidence, satisfactory, available, immediately and many others are used. Let us illustrate the use of the word *discharge* as an example, which is usually regarded as a noun or a verb, and its general meaning is unloading:

- *Routine duties of the Joint Venture Company are to be discharged by the general manager appointed by the Board of Directors.*
- *Party A agrees that the expiration of this license shall not discharge party B from its obligation.*
- *Mr. Smith, chartered accountant, has been appointed as liquidator to wind up the business and will discharge all the firm’s liabilities and receive all payments due to it.*
- *Party B shall check the quality of each discharge in accordance with the contract.*

Four meanings of the word “discharge” can be noted in these sentences. The first meaning is ‘doing everything that is necessary to perform and complete a particular duty’, the second is ‘exempting’, the third is ‘repaying’, and the last meaning is ‘emitting’. Actually, many common words get a specific professional connotation by many methods such as extension, conversion, words adding. But in business correspondence, it means printed matters, including leaflets, instruction, product catalogue, price list, etc. (Insley 2016).

Conciseness and formality of vocabulary

Brevity is the characteristics of business English. Business activities are binding on a clear objective and business language shows its strong purpose. In today’s society, with the growing trade competition, both sides want to reduce cost and improve efficiency. The use of modern communication tools brings pressure for concise words to save space and time. A concise letter should be written in a simple and natural way, directly to the point. Wordiness, flowery words, and the

over-frequent use of conjunctions (such as “and”, “but”, “however”, etc.) should be avoided.

Another feature of concise words is the wide use of abbreviations. Initials abbreviations are one of the most common methods in business correspondence writing. Usually, these abbreviations are technical terminology or abbreviations of a company or an organization. For example, L/C (=letter of credit), B/L (=Bill of Lading), FOB (=Free on board), CIF (=Cost, insurance and freight), CFR (=Cost and freight), and IBM (=International Business Machines), P&G (=Procter & Gamble), HP (=Hewlett-Packard). Clipped words mean to abbreviate and intercept a part of the word, mainly the suffix, prefix of the word. For example, biz (=business), Corp (=corporation), Ad (=Advertisement), PC (=piece), NO (=Number), etc. Abbreviations are used to avoid lengthy explanations, to simplify the process of transaction, and improve work efficiency. Thus, abbreviations and clipped words are frequently used in business correspondence and documents.

Business correspondence is required to be expressed accurately and clearly. While there are specific regulations or commitments of product type and transaction in certain file or agreement. Therefore, words should be regulated more rigorously.

Business correspondence belongs to the formal style, so words must be formal. The following three factors contribute to the formality of business correspondence:

- ✓ We normally write in a casual tone to our friends but in a formal tone to business partners. More formal terms are replacing the fundamental lexicon or conversational English. For example, “inform” and “advise” replaces “tell”; “duplicate” replaces “copy”; “dispatch” replaces “send”; “purchase” replaces “buy”; “certify” replaces “prove”, etc.
- ✓ Verbs are used to replace verb phrases. For instance, “continue” replaces “keep on” “go on”; “supplement” replaces “add to”.
- ✓ The simple preposition and conjunction are replaced by the prepositional phrase. For example, “in accordance with” replaces “according to”; “for the purpose of” replaces “for”; “in the case of” replaces “if”; “with reference to” replaces “with regard to” replaces “about”, etc. These words have the feature of being accurate in meanings and they make business correspondence writing more formal.

Grammar in business letters

Letter writers should avoid negative structures where possible. There is a tendency in much business and legal writing to try to soften the impact of what is being said by using not un- (or not im-, il-, in-, etc.) formations such as: *not unreasonable, not impossible, not unjustifiable, not unthinkable, not negligible*. Such structures make what you are saying less clear and definite. They become very hard to follow when more than one is used within a single sentence, e.g.: *It is not impossible that this matter will have a not inconsiderable bearing upon our decision*. Translated into ordinary English, this reads: *It is possible that this matter will have a considerable bearing upon our decision*.

Usage of active verbs rather than nominalizations is preferable: *consider* instead of *give consideration to*; *oppose* instead of *be in opposition to*; *contravene* instead of *be in contravention of*. A verb has become buried in a noun in the larger sentences known as nominalizations. The usage of nominalizations lengthens and makes writing less lively. As an example: “*We have agreed that the materials will be considered by our firm*”. This sentence would be better worded as follows: “*We agree that the materials will be reviewed by our firm*”. However, there are times when nominalizations are appropriate in business writing (Nyzhnikova 2011).

Style and language of business letters

The official business style is not uniform. It might refer to commercial, legal, administrative, international, or social relationships. Production, trade, management, legislation, politics, social action, and international relations are all areas where business speech is used. Official business style can take written (business correspondence, legal texts, documentation, etc.) or spoken (meetings, negotiations, interviews, presentations, speeches, and so on) forms. The formal business style can be further broken into sub-styles such as legislative, diplomatic, and administrative-clerical. All of the aforementioned sub-styles have distinct characteristics, communicative forms, and language clichés. The special nature of formal business communicative activity and information transmitted need a specific structure of business texts. The structure of formal business texts should be precise and straightforward. Business letter paragraphs are typically short, with some being only one sentence long. Business letters are not read in the same way that articles, reports, or other extensive information or analysis are. To allow the reader to read the letters more quickly, absorb and recall the relevant facts or concepts, business correspondence writers are advised to use relatively short paragraphs of three to eight lines in length. Paragraphs with only one sentence are typical and entirely appropriate in business communications. The basic guideline is

to examine each paragraph of a letter to determine its purpose, content, or function. Any paragraph that includes many topics should be modified and divided into two paragraphs. Each section of the discussion - each issue of the letter - should be included in its own paragraph. Strategically significant information should be highlighted in business letters. Information in the first and last lines of paragraphs is more easily read and recalled. Information presented in the middle of lengthy paragraphs is easily disregarded or forgotten. As a result, critical information should be displayed in prominent locations. If some unfavorable or bad things must be mentioned, a decent and acceptable method is to place them in locations that receive less attention. Concision, laconism, and economical use of language means characterize formal business style. The key prerequisites of this approach are objective character and credibility of information. Subjective opinion and emotional terms are not permitted in official written papers. Because the statement is frequently delivered on behalf of an organization or officials, it is customary to employ impersonal address in formal business communication.

Regulation of relations and communication according to strictly defined standards resulted in the emergence of standardized formal speech and business style (Blake, 2015). Writing styles can be the following: Passive/Impersonal Style; Modern Business Style; Informal/Colorful Style.

Passive/Impersonal Style. This style is filled with jargon and clichés and is difficult to read. This style is effective for routine correspondence. This outdated style not only invites miscommunication, but also results in unnecessarily long messages.

Modern Business Style. This style uses the active voice, strong verbs, and short sentences. This style typically results in concise messages that are clear and professional. It is a good style and works well with external audience.

Informal/Colorful Style. This is good for communicating with people you know very well, or for communicating good news to those you are familiar with. The language of this style is characterized by personal, conversational tone, active voice, strong verbs, colorful adjectives, parallel structure and precise, everyday words.

A traditional problem of business correspondence is its tendency to be pompous, obscure, and verbose. This problem is often worsened by a failure to simplify or explain complex legal jargon for the benefit of laypersons. To write an effective business correspondence, we should keep in mind why we are writing it, understand the reader's needs, and then clearly write what we need to say. Every business correspondence should be clear, humane, helpful and as friendly as the topic allows. A business letter is not intended to entertain its recipient. It is written primarily to state a specific purpose or message and, eventually, to elicit a reaction

or response from its intended recipient. Business implies that you are serious, and the message you send should make it clear that you are serious.

Conciseness is an absolute must in business letter writing. It should state the sender's intent in as few words as possible. People tend to set aside letters that will take them more than a few minutes to read in the office, with all of the paperwork. A business executive from a large corporation, for example, does not have the same patience as a person working abroad who is homesick for news from his or her family. As a result, business letters must be concise. Because we want to avoid using unnecessary words in business letters, we often write them in the active voice. There is, however, a significant difference between conciseness and abruptness.

In his efforts to be cordial, the writer must not forget to be convincing. Conviction is required to persuade the recipient of the letter that the sender is eager and sincere in his desire to do business with the former, or that he is determined to carry out the contents of the letter. Keep in mind that you are writing for a specific purpose. Put it in simple, everyday language. Do not use words that are overly technical or pompous. Begin your letter by stating your goal.

Then, you should include some minor details that are required to achieve the letter's purpose. It is not enough, for example, to indicate in an application letter what position you are applying for. What good is it if you simply state that you are applying for a specific position in a company without mentioning your qualifications? In other words, completeness is essential.

However, because big companies receive so many letters, let alone application letters, the big bosses sometimes just scan the contents of the letter. They do not always thoroughly read letters. As a result, it is critical for business writers to adhere to proper format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation for easy reading. If a personnel manager scans an application letter and notices something wrong just by glancing at it, he will either file it under the pile of letters or, worse, discard it immediately. Business letters represent the individuals who write them as well as the companies that send them. This is why correctness in business letter writing should be emphasized.

A correct business letter is one which is typewritten or computer-encoded on a plain, white bond paper measuring 8 1/2 x 11 inches with 1-inch margin on all sides. Observe symmetry when writing the contents: the whole body should neither be too high or too low as to exceed the 1-inch margin. It should cover the center page of the paper or should focus on the middle eye level. A correct business letter also means free of erasures. Spelling, grammar, punctuation and form should always be checked and double-checked before being sent. Aside from checking your grammar, your letter must also stay focused and Coherent on one subject.

Inspection standard of the five Ws

The five Ws principles also are the features of business correspondence. They are as follows: Who, What, Where, When and Why. Take an order letter for example, it must be specified “What you want”, “When you need the goods”, “to whom and Where the goods to be sent”, and if we make negative answer for requirement of the counterpart, we need explain “Why”. So, when we finish a letter, we can use these five Ws principles to check (Krivchikova 2015).

Idioms and colloquial language

It is important to try to adopt the right tone in the letter. The right tone is one of professional neutrality. It is right to avoid language which is too informal or colloquial. At all times, and particularly when writing to parties on the other side of a case from the client, the letter writer should avoid any tinge of personal animosity. When seeking the right tone, certain things should be avoided: 1) **Contractions**. A contraction involves shortening a word by using an apostrophe, e.g. *I can't and I won't*. This is too informal for most business contexts. 2) **Slang**. This should be avoided, 1) because using it is unprofessional, and 2) because it may not be understood. 3) **Correct, formal term**, e.g. not *a fake (person)* but a *charlatan*. 4) **Colloquialisms, proverbs, common metaphors**. They are unprofessional and may be misunderstood. 5) **Throwaway informality**. It is important to retain a quality of professional gravity in the tone of writing. 6) **Sexist language**. It is inappropriate to use the personal pronouns *he* or *his* in a letter or document to refer to a person whose sex might be either male or female. One option is to use *he/she* and *his/her*. English also has a number of gender-neutral words such as *person*, and gender-neutral pronouns such as *anyone, everyone, and no one*. However, it does not have gender-neutral singular personal pronouns, except *one*, which is generally unsatisfactory for most purposes in business correspondence. A good compromise strategy is to use the plural pronoun *they* and the possessive form *their*, in the sense of *he/she* and *his/her*. Other methods that can be employed to avoid using *he* or *his* in such cases include: deleting the pronoun reference altogether if possible; changing the pronoun to an article like *a* or *the*; using *who*, especially when he follows if; repeating the noun instead of using a pronoun (Nyzhnikova, 2011).

Prepositions. Special care should be taken when using prepositions. Minor differences in preposition usage can have a big effect on the meaning of a sentence, e.g.: *The goods shall be delivered in seven days* means that the goods are likely to be delivered on the seventh day. *The goods shall be delivered within seven days* means that the goods shall be delivered no later than the seventh day. Or: *The*

goods shall be delivered on 7 June means that the goods will arrive on that date. *The goods shall be delivered by 7 June* means that the goods will arrive no later than that date. Such apparently minor differences may be of critical importance when trying to reach agreement on business issues.

Spelling. Businessmen are trained to pay attention to detail. Therefore, spelling mistakes in a letter are likely to be noticed and will create a very bad impression. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar should all be checked carefully. In any case, certain kinds of mistakes will slip through such a check, e.g.: Where a word may be spelt correctly but is the wrong word: *I saw it their (instead of I saw it there)*. Where a compound word is incorrectly split into two words or two words are incorrectly combined to form a valid compound word: *the good will of the company (instead of the goodwill of the company)*.

Titles, names, and addresses. The correct title in the address and salutation are as important as spelling your correspondent's name correctly (nothing creates a worse impression than a misspelt name) and writing their address accurately. If you do not know your correspondent, it is not right to assume that they are one sex or the other, i.e. *Dear Sir/Madam* rather than *Dear Sir or Dear Madam*. Better still, before you write, telephone the organization at which that person works and find out from the receptionist the sex of the intended recipient.

Abbreviations can be useful because they are quick to write and easy to read. But they are not worth using unless you are confident that the recipient of your letter will understand what they mean. The writer should differentiate between those abbreviations that are used internationally and those that are basically parochial. For example, the abbreviations *CIF* (or *cif*, Cost, Insurance, and Freight) and *FOB* (or *fob*, free on board) are used in international trade. However, you cannot be sure that abbreviations like *p & p* (postage and packing) and *SAE* (or *sae*, stamped addressed envelope) will be understood internationally. Similarly, purely national organizations are unlikely to be familiar to correspondents in other countries. It is important to pay attention that international organizations such as *UN*, *NATO*, or *EU* have a different acronym in other languages. Abbreviations which are used as grammatical shorthand, such as *e.g.* and *i.e.*, are usually written in lower case letters with dots between the letters. In general, abbreviations that refer to an entity, such as *UK*, *USA*, *NATO*, should be capitalized without dots between the letters (Nyzhnikova, 2008).

Polysemy of business correspondences

Polysemy is a feature of English vocabulary, especially in business correspondence. The same word in business English has different meanings. For example, the common meaning of the word "premium" is "an extra payment added

to the basic rate”. It has different meanings in the different fields of business activities. In the business contract or the insurance business, it means “an amount of money that you pay once or regularly for insurance policy”; in the financial futures industry, it means “the balance of the long rate higher than the spot exchange rate”. Now let us observe the following sentences where two meanings of the verb “establish” are used: “*We shall be glad to establish business relations with you.*” and “*The relevant L/C has been established*”. In the first sentence, the verb “*establish*” denotes starting a relationship, especially a formal one, with another person, group, or country in the first line. In the second one, it means opening or setting up a specific bill.

The adjectives “*average*” and “*common*” are frequently used in business writing. On the other hand, if a particular cargo is partially damaged, the damage is called “*particular average*”, and the “*average*” equates to “*the material and costs of ship or goods in sea transport caused by natural disaster or other accidents*”. However, while it says, “*It’s obvious that the products are below average quality*”, the definition is “*calculated by adding several amounts together, finding a total, and dividing the total by the number of amounts*”.

Businessmen regularly use the word “confirm” in their correspondence as in: “*We’d like to inform you that our counter sample will be sent to you by EMS by the end of this week. Please confirm it as such as possible so that we can start mass production*”. This means “*making a position, an agreement, etc., more definite or official*”, but in “*Payment will be made by a 100% confirmed, irrevocable Letter of Credit, available by sight draft*”, the verb “*confirm*” means “cash guaranteed”. Many words have the phenomenon of polysemy in business English, so we should pay special attention to this in business correspondence writing.

The vocabulary of business correspondence takes on a more professional aspect. Today’s business environment is much different from the way it was in the past, and there are quite a few business vocabulary words that are best used in business communications. It is required to be expressed accurately and clearly.

Conclusion

The present paper discussed two main aspects of words in business correspondence: formalness and conciseness. The general format of business correspondence has been demonstrated. The analysis enables us to conclude that concise language, simple structure and unitary contents are some of the stylistic features of business correspondence. To write an effective business letter, we should keep in mind why we are writing it, understand our reader’s needs and then clearly write what we need to say. Every business correspondence should be clear, humane, helpful and as friendly as the topic allows.

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ԳՈՐԾԱՐԱՐ ՆԱՍՄԱԿՆԵՐԻ ՈՃԱԿԱՆ ԱՌԱՆՁՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ

Մարինե Յաղուբյան

Գործառնական ոճերի շարքում պաշտոնական-գործարար փաստաթղթի ոճի տարատեսակ համարվող գործարար նամակագրությունը նշանակալի դեր է կատարում առևտրային փոխհարաբերությունների ձևավորման և զարգացման գործում: Գործարար նամակը պահանջում է յուրահատուկ լեզվամտածողություն, որն արտահայտվում է գործարար ոճին հատուկ լեզվամիավորների ամբողջությամբ: Սույն հոդվածում քննության են ենթարկվում գործարար նամակների ոճական առանձնահատկությունները, որոնք նամակներին տալիս են պաշտոնականություն, հստակություն, ճշգրտություն և արտահայտչականություն:

Բանալի բառեր՝ գործարար նամակագրություն, պաշտոնական և ոչ պաշտոնական ոճ, ոճական առանձնահատկություններ, գործարար հաղորդակցություն: