

Pearson New International Edition

Intercultural Business Communication
Lillian Chaney Jeanette Martin
Sixth Edition

PEARSON®

Pearson Education Limited

Edinburgh Gate

Harlow

Essex CM20 2JE

England and Associated Companies throughout the world

Visit us on the World Wide Web at: www.pearsoned.co.uk

© Pearson Education Limited 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying in the United Kingdom issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

All trademarks used herein are the property of their respective owners. The use of any trademark in this text does not vest in the author or publisher any trademark ownership rights in such trademarks, nor does the use of such trademarks imply any affiliation with or endorsement of this book by such owners.

PEARSON[®]

ISBN 10: 1-292-03966-3

ISBN 13: 978-1-292-03966-4

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed in the United States of America

Written Communication Patterns

From Chapter 7 of *Intercultural Business Communication*, Sixth Edition. Lillian H. Chaney, Jeanette S. Martin.
Copyright © 2014 by Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved.

Written Communication Patterns

Objectives

Upon completion of this chapter, you will

- know the guidelines for writing international messages in English.
- be familiar with letter formats commonly used by U.S. business firms and how they differ from formats used in other countries.
- understand how facsimiles are commonly used for communicating between U.S. firms and those in other countries.
- understand how writing tone and style vary from culture to culture.
- understand cultural differences in other types of written communication such as the résumé and related job-search documents.

Many U.S. companies correspond with foreign corporations; it is important, therefore, to be aware of differences in the format, tone, and style of written communication. Research results show that 97% of outgoing international correspondence is sent in English, with about 1% each in Spanish, French, and German. Percentages for incoming international messages are similar: 96% are in English with the remaining 4% divided between French, German, and Spanish (Green & Scott, 1992). Because English is used for most international written messages, making these messages as clear as possible is important. Understanding the business communication practices of the culture you are writing to will help you to communicate effectively.

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH

International English is English for businesspeople who deal with cultures whose native language is not English or for whom English may be a second language; it is limited to the 3,000–4,000 most common English words. An excellent reference is Collin, Lowi, and Weiland's

Beginner's Dictionary of American English Usage (2002). In order to use international English, three cultural factors are important: an understanding of business communication in the other culture, an idea of how business communication is taught in the other culture, and a knowledge that content errors are more difficult than language errors for people in another culture to discern.

Content errors are **lexical errors** and refer to errors in meaning. **Syntactic errors** are errors in the order of the words in a sentence. A native speaker of a language will discover the syntactic errors in a sentence much easier than the lexical errors.

EXAMPLES OF LEXICAL ERRORS

We baste (based) this opinion on our many years of experience.
Thank you for your patients (patience).
The device omits (emits) a high-pitched signal when it is receiving.
We realize that your office will be closed on this wholely (holy) day.
It is there (their) material.
We except (accept) your invitation to dinner.

Business communication is not necessarily taught in other countries as it is in the United States. The course may not contain any information on the theory of communication and what happens between the sender and receiver. Many of the business communication courses being taught in a country that desires to do more business with the United States are simply translation courses.

Guidelines for “internationalizing” the English language have been developed to enable both native and nonnative speakers of the language to write messages clearly to decrease the possibility of misunderstanding between people of different cultures. The following guidelines were adapted from those developed by Weiss (2005) and Riddle and Lanham (1984–1985); they are important for situations in which both cultures speak English as well as for situations in which English may be a second language for one or both of the communicators:

- Use the 3,000–4,000 most common English words. Uncommon words such as “onus” for “burden” and “flux” for “continual change” should be avoided.
- Choose words that have only one meaning. The word “high” has 20 meanings; the word “expensive” has 1. When it is necessary to use words with multiple meanings, use only the most common meaning.
- Select action-specific verbs and words with few or similar alternate meanings. Use “cook breakfast” rather than “make breakfast”; use “take a taxi” rather than “get a taxi.”
- Avoid redundancies (interoffice memorandum), sports terms (ballpark figure), and words that draw mental pictures (red tape); also avoid what Winston Churchill called “adverbial dressing gowns” (thoroughly understand or utterly reject—just use “understand” and “reject”).
- Avoid using verbs containing two or more words (take offense at); also avoid making verbs out of nouns (impacting the economy and faxing a message) and nominalizations or “smothered verbs” (have knowledge of).
- Avoid wordy expressions for time, such as interval of time (interval) and three weeks’ duration (three weeks).

Written Communication Patterns

- Be aware of words with a unique meaning in some cultures; the word “check” outside the United States generally means a financial instrument and is often spelled *chéque*.
- Be aware of alternate spellings in countries that use the same language, such as theatre/theater, organisation/organization, colour/color, and judgement/judgment.
- Avoid creating or using new words; avoid slang.
- Use the formal tone and correct punctuation to ensure clarity; avoid the use of first names in letter salutations. If you know the other country’s salutation and closing, use them. End with a closing sentence that is thoughtful.
- Conform to rules of grammar; be particularly careful of misplaced modifiers, dangling participles, and incomplete sentences.
- Use more short, simple sentences than you would ordinarily use; avoid compound and compound-complex sentences.
- Clarify the meaning of words that have more than one meaning.
- Adapt the tone of the letter to the reader if the cultural background of the reader is known, for example, use unconditional apologies if that is expected in the reader’s culture.
- Try to capture the flavor of the language when writing to someone whose cultural background you know. Letters to people whose native language is Spanish, for example, would contain more flowery language (full of highly ornate language) and would be longer than U.S. letters.
- Avoid acronyms (ASAP, RSVP), **emoticons** (: -o), and shorthand (U for “you” and 4 representing “for”) in writing letters, faxes, or e-mail messages.
- If photocopies to other members of the organization are appropriate, be sure to send them a copy or ask who should receive copies.
- Remember that numbers are written differently in some countries; for example, 7,000 may be written 7.000 or 7000. In addition, money designations are also often written differently.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR

The Associated Press, London, June 19, 1999—A comma in the wrong place of a sales contract cost Lockheed Martin \$70 million, the *Financial Times* reported Friday. An international contract for the U.S.-based aerospace group’s C-130J Hercules had the comma misplaced by one decimal point in the equation that adjusted the sales price for changes to the inflation rate, the London-based newspaper said. In Europe, commas are used instead of periods to mark decimal points. “It was a mistake,” the newspaper quoted James A. “Micky” Blackwell, president of Lockheed’s aeronautics division. But the customer, who Lockheed refused to name, held them to the price. “That comma cost Lockheed \$70 million,” said Blackwell.

WRITING TONE AND STYLE

The tone and writing style of correspondents from foreign countries are usually more formal and traditional than that typically used by U.S. companies. When the tone and style differ greatly from that used by the recipient, the intended positive message may be negatively received.

Authors of business communication textbooks in the United States recommend using the direct approach for beginning good news, direct request/inquiries, and neutral messages.

Written Communication Patterns

You should use the indirect approach for bad-news messages. The direct approach means that you begin with the good news or other pleasant ideas in the good-news message, begin with the request or inquiry in request/inquiry messages, and begin with the most important idea in neutral messages. When using the indirect approach, beginning with a buffer is recommended. A **buffer** is a paragraph that tells what the letter is about with a pleasant tone but says neither yes nor no.

Park, Dillon, and Mitchell (1998), in their research comparing U.S. and Korean business letters, concluded that both U.S. and Korean letters used direct and indirect request strategies. In both countries, the structure used for direct requests was “Please” plus the imperative (*Please let us know the shipment date*). The structure for indirect requests, however, differed. Korean letters seemed to prefer “wishful” requests (*We hope you will replace the damaged shipment*). U.S. letters avoid “wishful” requests; they call for a specific action (*Your replacing the damaged shipment will be appreciated*).

In the United States, we also teach using a “you approach” or “reader orientation”; however, in a collectivistic country, you should use an inclusive approach such as “we” or “our” to avoid making the reader lose face or be singled out. In a collectivistic culture, it is improper for one person to be addressed because the whole team is responsible for the outcome.

Women writing to men internationally must be very careful about the tone and word choice. Women have to make an exceptionally good impression if they are to be taken seriously. Flattering statements when written to a man must be carefully worded so they cannot be interpreted as flirtatious. Compliments should be given from the company or the department rather than from the woman directly. Many countries do not consider women as serious businesspeople and would regard a woman as too assertive if she used firm and direct words. Direct words such as “expect” or “require” should be softened to “would appreciate” (DeVries, 1994).

Although Germans use the buffer occasionally, they are usually more direct with negative news. Latin Americans do not use buffers; they avoid the negative news completely, feeling it is discourteous to bring bad news. This practice of omitting buffers was confirmed in research of communication in Latin America conducted by Conaway and Wardrope (2004). Thus, U.S. Americans must be able to read between the lines of letters from Latin American businesspeople. The Japanese begin letters on a warm, personal note, which is an inappropriate way of beginning a U.S. letter. The Japanese try to present negative news in a positive manner, a quality that has sometimes caused a U.S. counterpart to feel that the person was deceitful. In research conducted by Azuma (1998) to determine Japanese strategies for writing negative messages compared to U.S. strategies, findings revealed that the three areas present in Japanese letters but absent in U.S. letters were comments about the weather or seasons, congratulations to the recipient on his or her prosperity or success, and requests for forgiveness or understanding.

The Japanese begin a letter, regardless of the type of news, with a statement about the season: “It is spring, and the cherry blossoms smile to the blue sky.”

Islamic people use the phrase, “God willing” (*Inshallah* in Arabic).

A way to show respect is to include common phrases of the country that help make the recipient feel comfortable. Most nations consider politeness to be a very important quality in business encounters. A compliment showing knowledge of the cultural heritage of the country is also appreciated.

U.S. businesspeople tend to be very direct in discussing business and do not want to waste anyone's time. However, showing politeness and a little small talk is considered the proper way of doing business in most countries in the world.

Also, what U.S. persons view as a request can appear to be boasting, obnoxious, or arrogant in another culture because of the way the request is phrased.

In the United States, ending negative messages on a positive note is important, although the French do not consider this important. Beginnings and endings of French business letters are very formal, but endings tend to be somewhat flowery: "Sir, please accept the expression of my best feelings." The French organize some types of business letters differently. They recommend apologizing for mistakes and expressing regret for any inconvenience caused. U.S. business letter writers, on the other hand, avoid apologies and simply state objectively the reason for the action taken. Endings of German letters tend to be formal (Kilpatrick, 1984; Varner, 1987, 1988).

An awareness of the differences between the format, tone, and style of written communication can go far in building goodwill between cultures. If you receive a letter in which you are addressed "Dear Prof. Dr. Judith C. Simon," you need to be able to read past the unimportant style or tone differences and look for the meaning in the letter. The overuse of politeness is very common for many cultures and should not distract U.S. readers. However, as a writer, keep these cultural differences in mind to avoid sounding harsh and insensitive to the reader.

British writers assume less shared knowledge than Finnish writers (Lampi, 1992). Politeness strategies differ when a group of Dutch businesspeople use their native language or use English. The type and frequency of the use of politeness change when a second language is used. (Geluyckens & van Rillaer, 1996)

U.S. letters tend to be shorter than letters written in other cultures. As a sign of friendship, U.S. businesspeople should change the tone of their letters when writing to businesspeople in another culture. The **parochialism** or ethnocentrism that so many U.S. people display in their writing to other cultures can easily be tempered with knowledge of the person to whom they are writing.

LETTER FORMATS

Letter formats used by other countries often differ from styles used by U.S. businesses. Some countries, such as France, still use the indented letter style with closed punctuation. Latin American countries prefer the modified block format, which features the date and closing lines beginning at the center and paragraphs beginning at the left margin (Conaway & Wardrop, 2004). The preferred styles in the United States are the block (all lines beginning at the left margin) and modified block (date and closing beginning at the center and paragraphs blocked). Writing styles use either standard punctuation (colon after the salutation and comma after the closing) or open punctuation (no punctuation after either the salutation or the closing).

The French tend to use the indented style for business letters. The French place the name of the originating city before the date (*Norvège, le 15 décembre 2—*). (Use the overstrike function,

Written Communication Patterns

symbol function, or multinational insert function of your word processing software to type special marks used in other languages.)

The format of the inside address may vary. In the United States, the title and full name are placed on the first line; street number and name on the second line; and city, state, and ZIP code on the last line. The format used in Germany puts the title (*Herr, Frau, or Fräulein*) on the first line, full name on the second line, street name followed by the street number on the third line, and ZIP code, city, and state on the last line. Spanish-language writers also place the recipient's title (*señor, señora, señorita*) on the first line above the person's name (Conaway & Wardrope, 2004). The street number also follows the name of the street in Mexico and South America.

Although U.S. letters always place the date before the inside address, the French sometimes place the date after the inside address. In their letters, the inside address is typed on the right side with the ZIP code preceding the name of the city (74010 PARIS); in U.S. letters, the inside address is on the left. The punctuation style used in French letters differs from that used in U.S. correspondence; the salutation is followed by a comma rather than a colon or no punctuation, which is used in standard and open punctuation styles of U.S. letters. The complimentary close is rather formal in French business letters; the writer's title precedes the writer's name. Care should be taken to format the inside address and the envelope address exactly as it is shown on the incoming correspondence.

Guidelines for addressing the envelope if you do not have an address to copy are as follows:

Mr./Mrs./Ms./or appropriate title plus first, then last name

Street number followed by street name

ZIP code information placed sometimes before and sometimes after the city

The country name typed in full capital letters (whether the country and city are at the beginning or at the end of the address determined by the collectivistic or individualistic nature of the society)

Examples:

Herr Hans-Dieter Duden	JAPAN, Tokyo	Mr. John R. Smith
Bosch Gmbh	Hachioji-shi	2350 Walnut Grove
1600 Bretton Due	47-25 Nanyodai	Memphis, TN 38152
GERMANY	Nakamura Yoko	USA

Dates are written differently also. Although people in the United States would use "January 5, 2—," in many other countries, the date would be written as "5th of January 2—" or "5 January 2—." Numerals should not be used for both the month and the day as it is difficult to know which numeral is the day and which number is the month.

U.S. business letters are single spaced, but in many other countries, they may be either single spaced or double spaced. In U.S. letters, the name of the writer is typed four lines below the complimentary close with the title placed on the next line. In German letters, the company name is placed below the complimentary close; the writer signs the letter, but the writer's name

Written Communication Patterns

and position are not typed in the signature block. In Japan and China, the surname is always placed before the given name (such as Smith Jack rather than Jack Smith).

Depending on how international the Japanese, Chinese, or Far Eastern businessperson is, he or she may switch the names to make you comfortable.

Example: Wu Chei will change his name to Chei Wu (surname last) to please you.

Salutations and closings are more formal in many other countries. Salutations for German letters are the English equivalent of Very Honored Mrs. Jones and in Latin American countries, My Esteemed Dr. Green. Complimentary closings are often the English equivalent of Very respectfully yours (Kilpatrick, 1984; Varner, 1987, 1988).

DIPLOMATIC TITLES

Written Forms of Address and Salutations

Title and Address Form	Salutation
AMBASSADOR	
His/Her Excellency (name)	Excellency: (or)
The Ambassador of (country)	Dear Mr./Madame Ambassador:
CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES	
The Honorable (name)	Dear Sir/Madame:
Chargé d'Affaires of (country)	Minister:
The Honorable (name)	Dear Sir/Madame:
The Minister of (country)	Dear Mr./Madame Minister:
CONSUL GENERAL	
The Honorable (name)	Dear Mr./Ms. (name):
Consul General of (country)	
CONSUL	
The Honorable (name)	Dear Mr./Ms. (name):
Consul of (country)	

Source: Put your best foot forward: Europe (p. 54) by M. M. Bosrock, 1995, St. Paul, MN: International Education Systems.

Samples of Japanese, French, Spanish, and Chinese letters that have been translated into English from the native language are shown, respectively, in Figures 1 through 4. Samples of a British and a U.S. letter are shown, respectively, in Figures 5 and 6.

Written Communication Patterns

	AZ409 April 7, 2 ---
Showa Machine Works Ltd. Attention of Sales Department	5-1 Moriyama Maguro Moriyamaku, Nagoya 463 Asumi Trading Co., Ltd. President: Nobuaki Iwai
Allow us to open with all reverence to you:	
<p>The season for cherry blossoms is here with us and everybody is beginning to feel refreshed. We sincerely congratulate you on becoming more prosperous in your business.</p> <p>We have an inquiry from a foreign customer and shall be very happy to have your best price and technical literature for the item mentioned below:</p>	
<p>Wire Drawing Machine 6 units for Taiwan</p>	
Specifications:	
1. Finished sizes:	0.04 mm to 0.10 mm
2. Spooler:	Single
3. Speed:	Min. 1500 meters/min.
4. Type of spooler:	Expanding arbor
5. Capstan:	Must be covered with ceramic
6. Dimension of spool:	Flange diam. 215 mm Barrel diam. 163 mm Bore diam. 97 mm Traverse 200 mm
<p>The above are all the information available for this inquiry. We ask you to recommend a machine that can meet these specifications.</p> <p>We shall be very pleased if you will study the inquiry and let us have your reply as soon as possible. We solicit your favor.</p>	
<p>Let us close with great respect to you.</p>	

FIGURE 1 Japanese Letter

Written Communication Patterns

Marie Portafaix 7, Avenue Felix 75541 Paris	Mr. Pierre DESBORDE Professor d'économie politique IUT BB Commercial Techniques Doyen Gosse Place 38000 GRENOBLE
MTP/GM/05.22	Paris, 25 September 2---
Sir,	
We are in receipt of your letter and have given our best attention to your request.	
We are unhappy to inform you, we are not able to give your proposition a favorable report.	
As a matter of fact we are grateful for the interest and your support, but we must consider essential publications hereafter for the media.	
We want to renew our regrets and thank you for your belief. Sir, be assured our sentiments are the best.	
	Public Relations Director Marie Thérèse PORTAFAIX

FIGURE 2 French Letter

Zapatería Elegante, S.A. May 5 Avenue Caracas, Venezuela	8 June 2---
Esteemed clients and friends:	
Permit us to communicate to you that the fabric of the shoes of Miss Modalo that were ordered has been discontinued. Therefore much to our regret we will not be able to serve you in this situation.	
We always want to fill your catalog requests, and if you find another model from the enclosed catalog that you like we would be very glad to send them.	
We regret your loss and hope to be able to serve you on another occasion as you deserve.	
Very cordially yours,	
CIA. LATINOAMERICANA, S.A.	
José Mendoza Lopez General Manager	
FAL/age	
Enclosure: 1 catalog	

FIGURE 3 Spanish Letter

Written Communication Patterns

The Japanese have a traditional format beginning with the salutation followed by a comment about the season or weather.

A kind remark about a gift, kindness, or patronage will follow. Then they include the main message and close with best wishes for the receiver's health or prosperity (Haneda & Shima, 1982). Japanese who are doing business internationally are adjusting and changing the way they write. They are using a shorter seasonal greeting and writing the business message sooner. Studies show that Japanese businesspeople are using both deductive and inductive writing patterns (Kubota, 1997).

In the letter from France, notice the "we" attitude and manner of indirect apology; note also the way of explaining the situation and the format: typing the surname in all capital letters. The date, salutation, and closing also differ from the U.S. letter.

EXAMPLES OF SEASONAL GREETINGS

January—I feel my body frozen as severe cold days continue.

Full scale "Winter Shogun" has arrived. (An analogy between Shogun and nature is used.)

February—Hope you are coping with the last phase of the cold season.

Cold winter still remains strong.

March—Spring has just begun on the calendar, but the cold wind reminds us winter is not over yet.

Glad to smell the soil covered by snow for a long winter.

April—Buds of cherry tree are getting large.

Spring has arrived and every field is covered by hundreds of flowers.

May—Wind blowing over the field feels like a beginning of the summer.

Flapping wind kite in the sky looks great.

June—Rice paddy fields are ready to be planted.

Continuous rain ended, and it is a beautiful day.

July—It was the hottest day of the year.

It is a season of summer festivals and people having fun.

August—Indian summer is still around this week.

Keeping a lot of summer memories in my heart.

September—Hope you are in good health with the cool weather.

The sun is still strong and casting shadow reminds me the summer season is not over.

October—It is autumn, when the sky is blue and people have an appetite.

The smell of Matsutake reminds me of fall.

November—The tree on the boulevard is bare of leaves.

All mountains are burning with crimson foliage.

December—Frost is on the ground and breath is white.

The year is almost over.

Source: M. Tsuji, personal interview, October 27, 1998.

Written Communication Patterns

Similarities and differences between the Spanish letter and the U.S. letter include the date, salutation, and closing.

The letter from China in Figure 4 is shown as it was received; notice how the syntactic errors develop when people are not writing in their native language. Also notice that the writer has used the U.S. format in deference to another culture.

April 5, 2---

Prof. L. S. St. Clair
71 South Perkins Extd.
Memphis, TN 38117-3211

Dear Prof. St. Clair:

I've received your letter of Jan. 30 and your report passed on to me by Dr. Jones of CSU, Long Beach. Thank you deeply for your kindness to let me have it. I have perused it and found it very creative and enlightening, I especially admire your servant and ingenious analysis. I fully support your suggestion to establish course in intercultural business communication. Never has it been so important to globalize business communication education as it is today. It is time now to join our effort in this important area.

I made a report on the development of BC in the U.S. at a convention in Chicago last month.

You are welcome to visit China and help us with the development of business communication in China.

Sincerely,

Feng Xiang Chun
Vice President

FIGURE 4 Letter Written in English by Chinese Writer

As shown in Figure 5, the British do not use a period after Mr, Mrs, Ms, or Dr. The British are very conscious of forms of titles and addresses and expect others to use them appropriately (Janner, 1977). The British class system is becoming less rigid; how you address someone is less

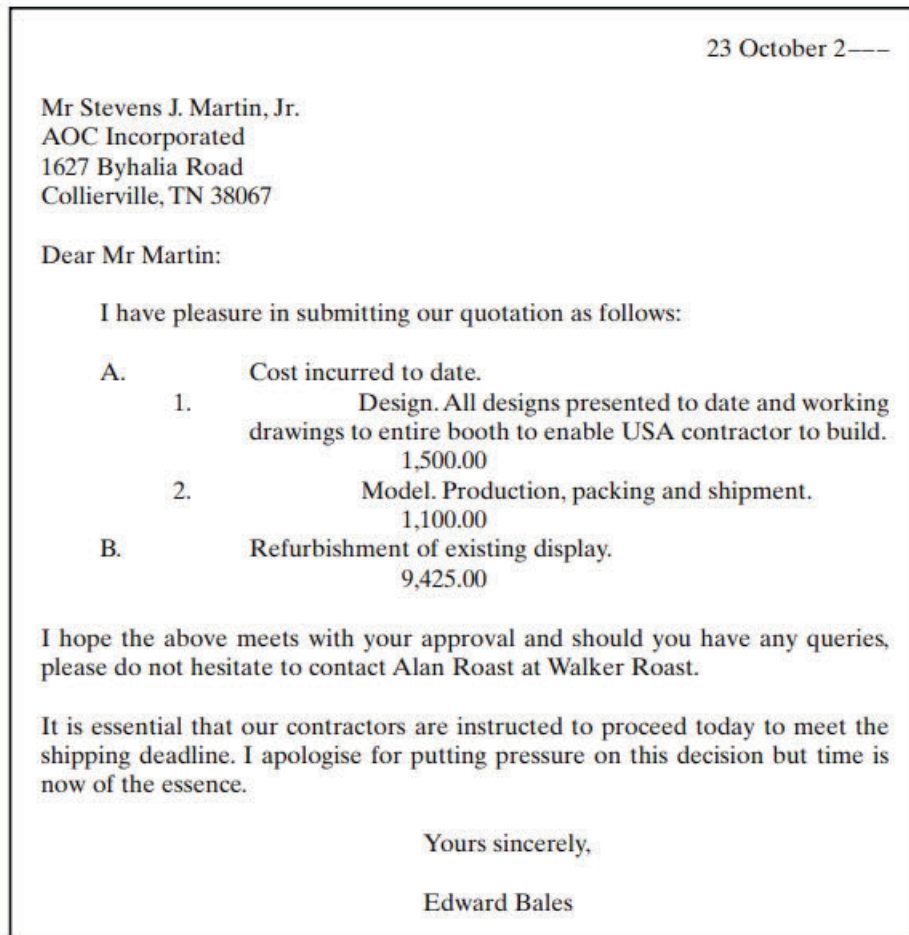


FIGURE 5 British Letter

formal than a few years ago. However, if you do not know someone well, you need to use his or her title and surname. When writing about someone in a letter, you should include after the name, the abbreviations for military and civil orders and decorations, highest degree or diploma, professional memberships, and professions. In the typed signature line, include in parentheses the title you prefer to use, such as Ms. (Scott, 1998).

In the example of a U.S. letter that conveys bad news (Figure 6), notice the use of a buffer in the first paragraph, which does not suggest a negative message. In the second paragraph, the bad news is placed in a dependent clause to deemphasize it. The letter ends with an action close, avoiding any reference to the bad news. The letter style is blocked with standard punctuation.

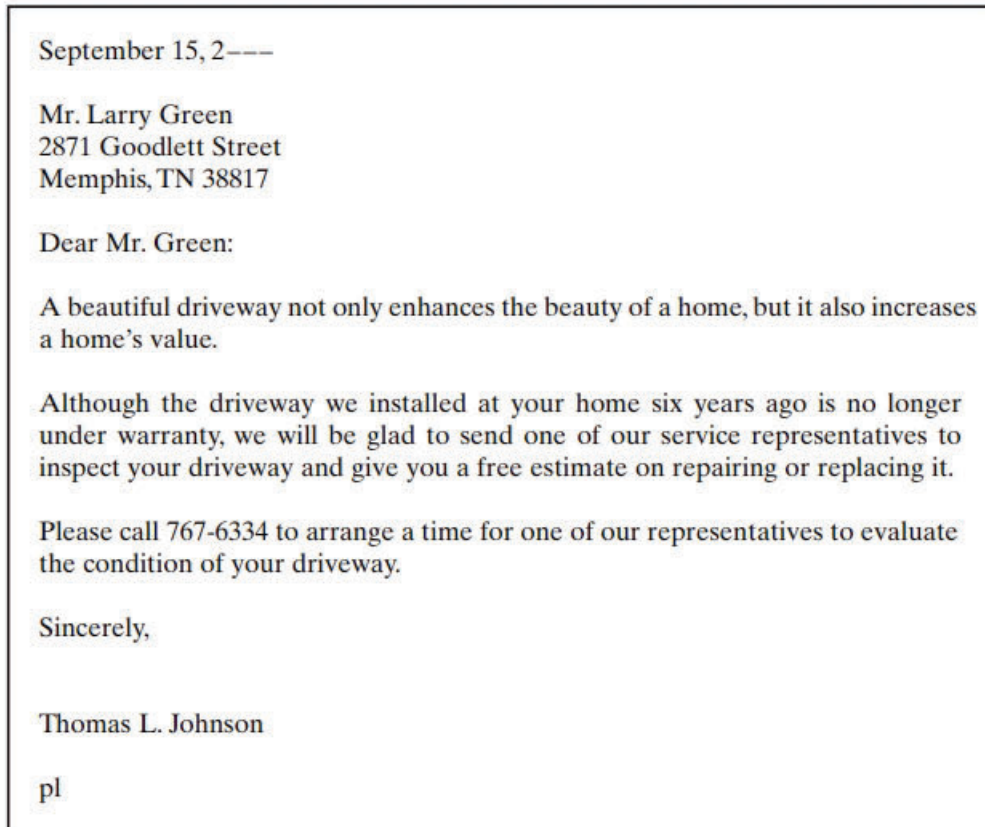


FIGURE 6 U.S. Letter

FACSIMILES (FAX)

Multinational businesses in the United States have found that the facsimile (fax) machine is more dependable than the mail service in many countries. However, in some countries the telephone system is also poorly managed; this poor management often suggests that using the fax machine may not be better than using the mail. Poor service of both mail and telephone systems occurs during the stormy seasons that a number of countries experience. In addition, many countries lack regular mail and telephone service in their remote areas. However, through telecommunication satellites and cell towers, telephone service is becoming more dependable than the mail in many locations around the globe.

The fax should be written as you would write a letter. If you are sending production schedules, budgets, or other types of written information, then a cover letter or transmittal sheet should be used so that the operator knows to whom the fax is directed, from whom the material originates, and how many total pages are included. Figure 7 is an example of a fax.

ELECTRONIC MAIL (E-MAIL)

A question that often arises is whether electronic mail (e-mail) is suitable for international correspondence. In some countries it may be preferable to send a traditional letter as an e-mail attachment. The e-mail message would simply consist of one sentence that transmits the letter. In such

To: Jim Cain, President
Cainable Vegetables

From: Wu H. Chu

I received your fax message delightly. How is your business doing? I really think that our election was better for all business in Korea. If you can make a videotape of Ray Manner' farm, that would be great. Videotape, Blueprints together you can send me by airmail *not by ship*, regardlessly special or regular with the bill I would appreciate it very much. In designing of my vegetable farm I am take your experienced advice in good consideration. Thank you. I will look for your advices more.

FIGURE 7 Korean Fax

countries as France, for example, recipients may get a negative impression when important information is transmitted in the typical casual e-mail style. Even when the choice is made to send a traditional letter as an attachment, there are other considerations, such as whether or not the recipient welcomes attachments and whether the recipient's system is capable of downloading large attachments. Since attitudes toward use of e-mail vary not only by industry and country but also by age of correspondents, it is probably advisable to consider whether e-mail is the most appropriate communication channel for corresponding with international business colleagues (Weiss, 2005).

The vice president of a company in Canada, who was born in South Africa and lived in England before moving to Canada, emphasized that styles of e-mail vary depending upon the country. She said, "The North American way of e-mail communication is very direct and abrupt and in no way kind on relationships." She added that in countries where people focus more on the relationship than on the task, it is wise to spend time building the relationship rather than simply introducing the task. She further suggests that in their initial e-mail to Chinese counterparts, U.S. persons should introduce themselves and inquire about the Chinese colleague's family. "If you build the relationship, it is much easier to get the task done," she says. (Gohring, 2004, p. 45)

When using e-mail internationally, you should use the same writing techniques you use for a letter. However, because the format is a memorandum with TO, FROM, DATE, and SUBJECT already stated, you do not use an inside address.

Proper e-mail courtesy includes addressing the receiver by name in the opening sentence (i.e., Mr. Slovinsky, thank you for sending me the figures I requested). Avoid addressing the person by his or her first name unless permission has been granted to use the first name. You should check your e-mail inbox at least once a day and respond promptly, preferably within 24 hours. Keep messages concise and brief; most messages should be kept to a maximum of two screens. You should also devise an electronic "signature" because, unlike a letter, e-mail is not on company letterhead (Sabath, 2002).

Lash (2007) offers these suggestions for writing e-mail messages to international colleagues:

- In your introductory e-mail, include some phrases, such as "hello" and "good-bye," in the customer's language. Mention places you enjoyed visiting if you have traveled in the customer's country.

Written Communication Patterns

- Use a collaborative tone; ask for feedback at the conclusion of your e-mail messages. State that you are enjoying working with the person and use such phrases/sentences as “I appreciate” and “Thank you for your feedback.” Avoid humor because humor does not cross cultures easily. Be positive and cheerful; be honest but do not emphasize any negatives in your message.
- Avoid dwelling on cultural differences; concentrate on similarities in experiences and attitudes. Admit your own biases.
- Use short, simple sentences; show humility; and be deferential. Avoid abbreviations, contractions, possessives, parenthetical phrases, and slang, jargon, or idioms. Use only present and past tense; avoid progressive tenses.
- Be explicit; emphasize your desire for feedback on your ideas. Always include your relation to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) when referring to time in the message (GMT minus seven hours, for example).
- Do not use all capital letters and avoid exclamation marks. In addition, do not ask questions starting with the word “why” because such questions seem to require that readers defend their positions.
- Be generous with compliments. Include such statements as “I like your suggestion” and “I am happy you thought about that.”
- Maintain a consistent pattern in the way you organize your e-mail messages. Boilerplate paragraphs are useful for messages used for recurring situations, such as delivery instructions.
- Learn how to handle problem situations. When you do not understand, always ask for clarification. When you are angry, avoid expressing your feelings in the e-mail message. Simply ask questions and say that you wish to clear up any misunderstandings. If you do make a mistake, apologize—even though you may feel that you are not at fault. Do not attempt to assign blame.

Major cities around the world are connected by the Internet and have e-mail available. E-mail is a very convenient way to send documents, and many times the printout is clearer than when using a fax machine. Telephone lines are a problem in some countries, and the cost may be much higher than in the United States.

RÉSUMÉ AND JOB SEARCH INFORMATION

Globalization has definitely expanded the information people need to get a position in a country other than their own. Variations exist in the styles and contents of résumés as well as the style, content, and format of the letter of application.

Mohammed Al-Ali (2004) found that different rhetorical strategies were used based on whether or not the writer was English speaking or Arabic speaking. English cover letters used supportive discussions in support of the writer’s candidacy and explicit requests for a job interview; Arabic letters did not. Arabic letters of application glorified the company being contacted and asked for compassion; English letters did not.

Job-search information needed to find a position in Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea, United Kingdom, and the United States follows.

Brazil

Brazil has many trade, professional, and social networking organizations that can help with finding a position. Sites such as <http://www.goingglobal> and <http://www.jobline.net> list by country where to find positions and discuss the requirements for working in the country. Receiving

Written Communication Patterns

a visa to work in Brazil can be a lengthy process so starting the job hunting early is recommended. Résumés or CVs (curriculum vitae), as they are usually called, are similar to résumés in the United States in information requirements except that they may also include some personal information such as marital status, number of children, and organizations of which you are a member as many European countries also require.

Since Brazil is a more contact-oriented culture, one should be prepared for more physical contact such as hugs and touching of the arms and such during conversations. Because Brazilians are a relationship-oriented country, applicants should plan on long interviews to give the Brazilians time to get to know them.

Because Brazil graduates more individuals from college than there are positions available, it is very difficult for someone outside of the country to get a position. In Brazil bureaucracy runs everything, so it is important to learn how to get things done in this country. Speaking Portuguese fluently is highly recommended, as well as being able to understand the language when it is spoken very fast. Executive search firms tend to help applicants find a position only if they have the exact position for which the person is seeking.

Canada

Canadian hiring officials prefer résumés that include information similar to that included on U.S. résumés: educational background, work experience, skills, achievements, and references. No personal information is included in Canadian résumés. Canadian employers stress the importance of selecting keywords carefully, including use of industry jargon in describing skills and qualifications, as larger companies use résumé scanning software. Like U.S. employers, Canadians recommend using the combination résumé, rather than the functional or chronological résumé, for job seekers who have gaps in their work history. They also emphasize the importance of writing a cover letter that is tailored to the specific company and that is free of mistakes in spelling and grammar. Additional job-search information for Canada is available at <http://www.goinglobal.com>.

Workopolis.com, which is offered in English and French, is Canada's largest online job site; it offers more than 30,000 jobs each day in Montreal and Toronto, as well as some other Canadian cities. Job seekers may search by location, keyword, job category, and so on. The *Toronto Star* is Canada's largest daily newspaper and has numerous job listings.

It is difficult to get a long-term work visa in Canada; however, short visits for academic study or employment are possible.

China

Résumés or CVs as they are called in China contain personal information. In addition to the name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, applicants include date and place of birth, gender, marital status, and information about their children. After the personal information, the job objective is listed, followed by education or employment history, depending on which is most relevant. Schools attended are listed including dates of attendance, location, and degree(s) received. A section on Specialized Training typically follows Education. This section includes computer skills and language competencies (which should include Mandarin). Employment history, including company name and location, dates of employment, and job titles, are listed as Work Experience. Duties and responsibilities are described using action verbs. Both education and Work Experience are listed in reverse chronological order with the most recent school attended or job experience given first. References are usually omitted—the statement “References furnished on request” is usually placed at the end of the résumé. Information about careers in China is available at <http://www.goinglobal.com>.

Written Communication Patterns

The visa system takes a long time to complete. It is highly regimented. It is not easy to get a position in China unless you want to teach English, have a doctorate and can teach at the university level, or have a skill that they need. It is important to learn as much about the employer as possible. Many business organizations and trade councils in China assist people looking for positions in China.

Germany

The German résumé is a complete dossier of the candidate. A length of 20–30 pages is not unusual. The résumé should include positions the candidate has held, photocopies of diplomas and degrees the candidate has earned, letters of recommendation, verification of previous employment, a recent photograph, and a statement of computer and language skills. It is preferred that workers speak German. Other information includes the names and professions of the candidate's parents; names of brothers, sisters, spouse, and children; religious affiliation; and financial obligations. In addition to the diplomas and degrees, transcripts are provided to certify all course work completed. Professional activities, including publications and personal references, are also given. A typed letter of application that is one to two pages in length accompanies the résumé. The style should be very conservative and formal.

In Germany, students often enter into a contract with a company while in college. College internships are very important. The two largest newspapers where employment ads are placed are the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Suddeutsche Zeitung*. Additional information on positions may be found at <http://goinglobal.com>.

Japan

Finding a position in Japan generally requires having the skills directly related to the position and having a personal introduction. Work permits or visas must be processed in the jobseekers country of residence through the local embassy or consulate of Japan. Without the correct introduction you probably will not receive an interview.

A simple résumé should be handwritten in Japanese. It should list the dates and locations of your education and work experience. Networking is very important in Japan and with the right introductions an interview may be a formality. If you are interviewed, they will be looking not only for qualifications but to see if there is a fit between you and the organization. More information is available at <http://goinglobal.com>.

Mexico

Finding a position in Mexico is done through contacts and networking. A visa is needed for a stay of more than 180 days, a return air ticket, and a passport that is good for six months beyond the departure date. Many international firms in Mexico seek foreign workers or transfer foreign workers to Mexico.

Mexican résumés are lengthy. The résumé includes a cover page with the applicant's name and the word curriculum vitae. Beyond the standard education, work experience, and job objective, you would find personal information such as age, marital status, gender, place and date of birth, and a photograph. Since education is very important in Mexico, include awards, courses, and training you have received. Likewise titles are very important so when choosing references be sure to list their titles and positions. Since punctuation and grammar are very important in Spanish be sure to have someone proofread your résumé carefully. More information is available at <http://goinglobal.com>.

The Netherlands

A resident permit and social security card are required after three months. Many people are turned down due to the number of people who apply. In The Netherlands a small amount of information is better than a lot of information. The résumé follows the format of a U.S. résumé. Name, date and place of birth, address, e-mail address, driver's license number, education, work experience, and leisure and volunteer activities are included on the one to two page resume. It is correct to write the résumé in Dutch. If you are being seriously considered for a position, school grades and letters of recommendation will be requested later. During the interview (of which there will be several), applicants may be asked personal questions, such as marital status; applicants feel free to ask questions about salary and company benefits.

Many newspapers such as *NRC Handelsblad*, *Volkskrant*, *De Telegraaf*, and *Algemeen Dagblad* have job openings listed. Plus websites such as the EURES website, Monsterboard.nl, and Werk.nl list job openings and interview advice. Additional information is available at <http://www.goinglobal.com>.

Singapore

Résumés in Singapore begin with personal information (name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, nationality, date of birth, and gender). The sections that follow include education and qualifications, work experience, activities and hobbies, and special skills and training (computer skills and languages written and spoken). Military service should also be listed. The length of the résumé is usually one page but should not exceed three pages. The cover letter should be addressed to a specific person; applicants should remember that a Chinese surname will be written first.

Job sites include Monster, Contact Singapore, JobStreet, and JobsCentral.

South Korea

Permission to enter South Korea is granted or denied at the point of entry even for people who have a visa. A visa should be obtained before arrival but does not guarantee entry. Personal contacts are important in order to obtain a position in South Korea; however, recruiters and governmental employment agencies are also helpful.

A cover letter and résumé are required by South Korean companies. Job applicants in Korea are advised to use reverse chronological order when listing information related to work experience and education on the résumé. Name and address of employers, job title, and details of achievements and duties are included. Job seekers are expected to complete a standard application form typically used by Korean companies.

Job fairs are held in the COEX Convention Center several times each year; they provide job seekers an opportunity to meet with numerous representatives of South Korea's mid-sized companies. Additional information is available at <http://www.goinglobal.com>.

United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

The curriculum vitae or CV as the résumé is called in the United Kingdom (UK) is one to two pages in length, typed, and does not include a photograph. The CV is accompanied by a cover letter. The CV contains a professional objective, name, address, phone number, e-mail address, professional experience, education, hobbies and other activities, and references. Include "References are available on request" at the end of the CV. Military service is not listed, and there is no personal information.

Written Communication Patterns

A visa is required to work in the United Kingdom and involves extensive documentation. Positions may be found in newspapers such as *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times*, and *The Financial Times*. Additional information may be found at <http://goinglobal.com>.

United States

U.S. hiring officials have indicated a preference for résumés that are one to two pages long. Important résumé items include personal information (name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address), job objective (to give the reader an idea of the type of work desired and plans for advancement), work experience (current position, company name and location, job title, dates employed, responsibilities, and accomplishments), and educational background (universities attended and degrees received). Most hiring officials prefer three or four references (names of people who can verify your work experience, educational achievements, and character). Information about your family, age, religion, ethnicity, or gender should not be included, nor should a photograph be included. The résumé is accompanied by an application (cover) letter.

In the United States, good sources of job opportunities are the Sunday edition of major newspapers in cities where you are interested in working. *The Wall Street Journal* on Tuesdays has a special employment section and also produces a newspaper, *Employment Weekly*, which is a collection of all employment advertising for the previous week in all U.S. regions of *The Wall Street Journal*. In larger cities, public and private employment agencies are also adept at helping people find positions.

Many companies now post position openings on their websites; therefore, applicants can go to the company's website to apply. Networking is one of the best ways to obtain a position in the United States. U.S. recruiters expect candidates to know the employer, its competitors, and its customers before interviewing.

In the United States there are a number of visas that are divided into immigrant (permanent resident) and nonimmigrant (temporary resident) visas. All workers need a Social Security Card.

A number of sources of books, websites, and government documents are available to help prevent a faux pas (a social blunder or error in etiquette). The Department of State's *Background Notes* by country, the *CultureGram* series, the Department of Commerce's *Overseas Business Reports*, the *World Factbook*, the *Statesman's Yearbook*, and <http://goinglobal.com> are good sources for specific information on various cultures and finding positions in different countries.

Terms

Buffer	International English	Parochialism
Emoticons	Lexical errors	Syntactic errors

Exercise 1

Instructions: Circle T for true or F for false.

1. T F Native speakers of a language will discover lexical errors easier than the syntactic errors.
2. T F The writing style of U.S. letters is more formal than most foreign correspondents.
3. T F The use of a buffer in bad-news messages is typical of the writing style of Latin Americans.
4. T F The Japanese try to present negative news in a positive manner.
5. T F Ending messages on a positive note is important in both French and U.S. letters.

Written Communication Patterns

6. T F The indented letter style for business letters is used by the French.
7. T F Salutations of German letters are more formal than in the United States.
8. T F The Japanese traditionally begin letters with comments about the season or weather.
9. T F Résumés submitted to a German firm are typically longer than those submitted to a U.S. firm.
10. T F Spanish résumés are typically in letter form.

Questions and Cases for Discussion

1. Explain how the format of business letters differs in U.S. correspondence and in Latin American countries.
2. How does the tone and writing style of Japanese letters differ from those of the United States?
3. To use international English, what cultural factors do you have to understand?
4. Explain the difference between lexical and syntactic errors.
5. Explain why people from two cultures who speak the same language may have difficulty in communicating.
6. Define a buffer and how it is used.
7. Which countries expect the reader “to read between the lines” for meaning?
8. What are some guidelines for writing e-mail messages to international colleagues?
9. What items are currently included in résumés in the United States?
10. Explain the major differences between résumés of the United States and of other cultures.

CASES

The following procedure is recommended for analyzing the cases: (a) read the case carefully paying attention to details; (b) read the questions at the end of the case; (c) reread the case, taking notes on or highlighting the details needed for answering the questions; (d) identify relevant facts, underlying assumptions, and critical issues of the case; (e) list possible answers to the questions; and (f) select the most logical response to the question. Your professor may ask that you submit answers to the case questions in writing.

Case 1

You work in the personnel division of a multinational organization. You have been asked to provide a list of potential candidates for a management position in the corporation’s German office. Because of their laws, you want a German national for the position. How would you go about obtaining résumés to review?

Case 2

If you are dealing with a foreign corporation in which no one speaks English as a native or

second language, what may be necessary for your corporation and the foreign corporation to work together? How does a U.S. corporation react when the other corporation does not speak its language? If the corporation has the flexibility to deal with another company in which someone speaks its language versus one in which no one does, which company would receive the order?

Case 3

A U.S. executive was working with a convention booth builder in England. The English were not working on the booth and would not give a date of completion for the booth or a shipping date to the United States. For six consecutive weeks, the U.S. executive called to inquire about the state of the booth. One day, the executive was called and was given the usual litany of excuses, so he gave the English an ultimatum. The next week, the English had not acted on the ultimatum, so the U.S. executive informed the company he would have a trucking company pick up and ship the booth to the United States. Twice the trucking company went to pick up the booth and was told

by the English company that they were not authorized to pick up the booth. The U.S. executive finally had to hire the advertising firm in England that had originally hired the booth manufacturer to intervene and get the booth shipped. When the booth arrived in the United States, it had not been packed properly and required additional work. What cultural differences were involved in this situation? How could the executive have handled the situation differently?

Case 4

A British national was sent to the United States to work in a subsidiary. He was an engineer in a management position in charge of building a new factory for the corporation. He was initially offered intercultural training; however, he felt comfortable because both countries spoke the same language and declined the training. The British engineer later complained to the home office that he was not getting the cooperation he needed. The home office hired an intercultural trainer to go to his office to review his correspondence and sit in on some of his meetings. The intercultural trainer discovered that the U.S. employees did not understand his communications. The engineer was interjecting British humor and sarcasm in both his oral

communication and his e-mail messages. The U.S. subordinates did not know when he was serious about a problem and when they were to ignore his statements. What are some examples of humor used by people of the United States with foreigners that U.S. persons expect foreigners to understand?

Case 5

Virtual teams, comprising people who work together through the use of e-mail and other communication technologies to complete a task while in separate locations, are becoming more commonplace for working with international colleagues. Virtual teams have a number of advantages, including elimination of travel time and elimination of such negative behaviors as team members who are late, interrupt, and talk incessantly. An added advantage is that members from different cultures are often more comfortable expressing themselves in writing than in speaking. However, there are a number of disadvantages, especially when people from different cultures are involved. What are some of the concerns, issues, or disadvantages of a virtual team that communicates primarily via e-mail and that is composed of members from China, France, Mexico, and the United States?

Activities

1. Examine the Latin or Germanic roots of simple and difficult words in the English language.
2. Take a passage from a journal or textbook in another language and compare it, in terms of sentence and paragraph length, to a passage from a journal or textbook written in English.
3. Modify a bad-news letter so that it is effective for a reader who is Japanese, French, Spanish, or German.
4. Search the want ads of the local newspaper; bring to class a job announcement of a position with a multinational corporation, a position involving overseas travel, or a position located in a foreign country.
5. Prepare a résumé to be sent to a multinational company applying for an overseas assignment in a country of your choice.
6. Write a letter of application to accompany the résumé prepared in Activity 5.
7. Write a letter in English to someone who speaks English as a second language following the international English guidelines.
8. Find the errors in Figure 4 and explain why these particular errors may have happened.
9. Read the following two faxes and determine the reader's probable reaction. What choice of words could have been improved on? The first fax is from the U.S. corporate office to Taiwan; the second is from Taiwan to the U.S. corporate office.
10. Have an international student write a letter for you in English but with their native language style, tone, and format. Compare the letter to the style, tone, and format of U.S. letters.

References

- Al-Ali, M. N. (2004). How to get yourself in the door of a job: A cross-cultural contrastive study of Arabic and English job application letters. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 25(1), 1–23.
- Azuma, S. (1998). How do Japanese say “no” in the written mode? *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal*, 2(2), 18–29.
- Bosrock, M. M. (1995). *Put your best foot forward: Europe*. St. Paul, MN: International Education Systems.
- Collin, P. H., Lowi, M., & Weiland, C. (2002). *Beginner's dictionary of American English usage*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.
- Conaway, R. N., & Wardrope, W. J. (2004, December). Communication in Latin America.
- DeVries, M. A. (1994). *Internationally yours: Writing and communicating successfully in today's global marketplace*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Geluyckens, R., & van Rillaer, G. (1996, March 26–31). *Face-threatening acts in international business communication: A quantitative investigation into business writing*. Paper presented at the 22nd and 23rd LAUD Symposium, Duisburg.
- Green, D. J., & Scott, J. C. (1992). International business correspondence: Practices and perspectives of major U.S. companies with related implications for business education. *NABTE Review*, 19, 39–43.
- Gohring, N. (2004, November). Face time. *PM Network*, pp. 41–45.
- Haneda, S., & Shima, H. (1982). Japanese communication behavior as reflected in letter writing. *Journal of Business Communication*, 19(1), 21–32.
- Janner, G. (1977). *The businessman's guide to letter writing and to the law on letters* (2nd ed.). London: Business Books.
- Kilpatrick, R. H. (1984). International business communication practices. *Journal of Business Communications*, 21(4), 40–42.
- Kubota, R. (1997). A reevaluation of the uniqueness of Japanese written discourse. *Written Communication*, 14(4), 460–481.
- Lampi, M. (1992). Rhetorical strategies in “Chairman’s Statement” sections in the annual reports of Finnish and British companies: Report on a pilot study. In P. Nuolijarvi & L. Tiittula (Eds.), *Talous ja Kieli 1* [Language and Economics 1] (pp. 127–143). Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration. Helsingin kauppa- orkeakoulun julkaisu D-169.
- Lash, B. (2007, May). Communicating across cultures by e-mail: Advice for consultants. *Intercom*, 54(5), 23–25, 42.
- Park, M. Y., Dillon, W. T., & Mitchell, K. L. (1998, July). Korean business letters: Strategies for effective complaints in cross-cultural communication. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 35(3), 328–345.
- Riddle, D. I., & Lanham, Z. D. (1984–1985, Winter). Internationalizing written business English: 20 propositions for native English speakers. *Journal of Language for International Business*, 1, 1–11.
- Sabath, A. M. (2002). *Business etiquette: 101 ways to conduct business with charm and savvy*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1998). Dear ????: Understanding British forms of address. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 61(3), 50–61.
- Varner, I. I. (1987). Internationalizing business communication courses. *Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, 1(4), 7–11.
- Varner, I. I. (1988). A comparison of American and French business correspondence. *Journal of Business Communication*, 25(4), 55–65.
- Weiss, E. H. (2005). *The elements of international English style*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Glossary

Buffer is a paragraph used to begin a bad news letter; tells what the letter is about, is pleasant, but says neither yes nor no.

Emoticons are symbols used to convey emotions within e-mail messages.

International English is a limited vocabulary for international businesses using the 3,000–4,000 most common English words.

Lexical errors are language content errors.

Parochialism is the same as ethnocentrism.

Syntactic errors are errors in the order of the words in a sentence.

Answers to Exercises

True/False

1. F

2. F

3. F

4. T

5. F

6. T

7. T

8. T

9. T

10. T