
TEACHING ENGLISH FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND ENGLISH FOR BANKING AND FINANCE IN A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

As a foreign member of the Association for Business Communication (ABC), which is based in America, I have had three occasions to present my views on English teaching — “English as a Means of Communication — Viewpoints of Non-Native Speakers of English” (1991), “English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the Teaching of Financial English” (1992), and “An Attempt to Compile a Glossary of International Business Communication” (1993). This paper summarizes my teaching techniques explained in these studies, which are mainly developed through actual classroom experience.

INTRODUCTION

After thirty years of service with a Japanese commercial bank I have taught Banking and Finance, English for Foreign Trade, and Foreign Book Reading, while at the same time holding seminars for junior and

senior classes. My background is English and Banking and I belong to the School of Business Administration, where I hold the position of the Director of International Education and guide the English Proficiency Qualification Study Society run by students.

My publications include "Effective Business Writing," "A Dictionary of English Usage for Business and Finance," and "Branch Management and Control System in Financial Institutions." (Hashimoto, 1990, 1991a, and 1993a) Here I am going to explain what I have done in a Japanese university, especially with respect to developing business writing skills for non-native speakers of English.

English as a Means of Communication

Before joining the university I taught, from time to time, business writing in English to company employees. This experience resulted in my aforementioned 366-page book, "Effective Business Writing." I use this book as a textbook for my class on English for Foreign Trade. Having been used by other university professors, this book has gone as far as the seventeenth printing so far — a success as a textbook.

In my textbook I have set up a goal for the non-native English user to attain. What I think desirable is plain and clear English appropriate to the occasion. As a more concrete target, one should try to avoid the following three types of mistakes in completing a one-page business letter :

- (1) spelling mistakes
- (2) punctuation mistakes (including spacing)
- (3) gross grammatical mistakes

The third point refers to a mistake such as omitting the "s" from a

third-person, singular, present-tense verb. This goal, which may seem to a native user of English very easy to attain, is not necessarily easy for a non-native English user ; much less can one master idiomatic, colloquial expressions. I agree with the opinion that non-native English users should not aim endlessly at approaching a native level.

In the 1991 Convention of the Association for Business Communication held in Honolulu I pointed out that words and phrases of Anglo-Saxon origin and certain irregularities in English grammar sometimes hinder communication between native and non-native English speakers. I proposed, following Professor Saburo Haneda's opinion, to develop a "Universal English" that would serve as a more effective means of business communication. (Haneda, 1990)

In this connection, Dr. John D. Pettit, Jr., Executive Director of ABC, has supported our contention, in his address at the 50th National Assembly of the Japan Business English Association (JBEA), held in Fukuoka in 1990, by saying that :

"Because English usage is growing on this globe and because most who use it do so as a second language, let me mention some problems that many non-native English users have with the language.

One of these problems is the two-word verb. Words such as *give away*, *calm down*, *blow out*, and such consist of a verb and a second word that produces a meaning quite different from the meanings the words have individually. ...

Another problem for non-native English users is culturally derived words. Most are slang expressions. ... Similarly words derived from sports, social affairs, work, and the like are difficult to understand.

In general we can say with some assurance that non-native English users will have difficulty with these problems. Thus we should avoid them in our international communication efforts.” (Pettit, 1990)

English for Specific Purposes

On the subject of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the teaching of Financial English, I spoke at the National Assembly of the Japan Business English Association in 1991. Again in 1992, in New Orleans, I made a presentation at the Annual Convention of the Association for Business Communication, expanding on the subject I dealt with in 1991 (Hashimoto, 1991c and 1992). I think that ESP is useful also as a means of international communication, especially among non-native English speakers.

At my university, I use as the textbook for the course on Foreign Book Reading a book entitled “English for Business Studies,” published by Macmillan in 1981. The reason I selected this book is that it will help the Japanese students, who are in the School of Business Administration, prepare for their particular field of study in International Management.

I use this textbook also for the purpose of introducing my students to the various fields of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). I think it pays to learn the essential vocabulary of a specific field of academic study while at the university, especially for non-native speakers of English.¹

1. As the book went out of print, I began using from 1994 a new textbook entitled “English for Corporate Communications, Cases in International Business,” by Jennifer Spring-Wallace, which was published by Regents/ Prentice-Hall in 1993. This book covers the subjects ranging from Business Ownership, Management,

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is an area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). As EAP deals with a variety of fields, EAP should also prove to be useful as a means of international communication. It would be good for university students to start with EAP.

In Japanese universities, a seminar is a course offered to junior and senior students on a yearly basis, from April to July and from September to January. In my case, the seminar for juniors is an extension of English for Foreign Trade, and the seminar for seniors is an extension of Banking and Finance. The former uses the "Longman Dictionary of Business English" (Adam, 1989); the latter uses the book "American Banking in Crisis" (Miller, 1990), with my translation. Students take two seminars consecutively and are required to write a graduation thesis in their senior year.

In their junior year, students collect technical terms from the Longman Dictionary of Business English, which has wide-ranging coverage of terms divided into as many as 25 field labels. This dictionary gives clear and accurate definitions, using a 2,000-word restricted vocabulary. Students are allowed to select three to five fields from the 25 fields of the dictionary. Such a personalized glossary of technical terms serves as a basis for one's graduation thesis, while becoming useful to one's job search.

It is of interest to note that an American member of the Association for Business Communication made a supporting remark on the importance of English for Specific Purposes, which is also sometimes called English for Special Purposes, as follows :

Organizational Behavior, Human Resources, Marketing, Ethics, International Business, Finance, Accounting to Entrepreneurship.

“If we are focusing on cross-cultural business communication conducted in English, we must never lose track of the fact that essentially we are dealing with communication which is the result of English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Special Purposes training. As one JBEA member forcefully remarked with regard to his and his colleagues’ efforts, ‘we are not just teaching Business Communication; we are also teaching English for Special Purposes, a form of English as a Second Language.’” (Hilton, 1992)

My Attempts to Compile English-Japanese Glossaries

In 1991, I published “A Dictionary of English Usage for Business and Finance.” It is the result of ten years’ work on my part, and includes some 5,300 entries, incorporating some 23,000 examples of phrases and sentences. In the 1993 Convention of the Association for Business communication held in Montreal, I spoke on my attempt to compile a glossary of international business communication. (See Addendum)

I and two other professors are compiling a dictionary of business letter expressions. We have gathered more than 13,000 sentences used in daily business activities, and are giving a corresponding Japanese translation for each sentence. We place emphasis on classifying the sentences and are spending a lot of time in sorting sentences according to functions and situations. We hope that the dictionary becomes an effective tool of international business communication for non-native English users.

I am also working on compiling a glossary of banking and financial terms. After its completion I hope to start editing an English-Japanese dictionary for that field. I believe that such efforts will serve to fill the

gap between native- and non-native users of English.

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Addendum

A Glossary of International Business Communication

1. The Present Situation in Japan

In Japan we have several English-Japanese dictionaries of business communication. They do not, however, incorporate many usages to claim to be a writing dictionary. Therefore, it is necessary to gather useful expressions and compile a glossary of this kind for non-native English speakers. With two other professors I am editing manuscripts of business letter expressions as an attempt toward the afore-mentioned goal.

There is also a glossary of this kind which includes some 3,500 expressions. We on our part have collected almost 14,000 expressions most of which are in sentence form, nearly 4 times as large as existing one in Japan. We are in the course of adding corresponding Japanese translations to each English expression. English key words and phrases will be italicized and, possibly, the corresponding Japanese portion will be printed in bold face for easy reference by the user.

We have several letter writing dictionaries in Japan which usually incorporate model letters and specimen paragraphs. But due to the limitation arising out of such a redundant structure, they cannot include expressions to cover various situations in business and social occasions.

2. The Purpose of Our Glossary

To overcome such a difficulty we have decided to present necessary expressions principally on a sentence basis. This approach may make it difficult for the beginner- and intermediate-level users to compose a paragraph with the use of such model sentences. But, as I will explain below, they will be helped by English key words and phrases, as they can refer to the corresponding Japanese translation shown in the glossary's index.

I should also explain the reason why we had selected letter writing as an effective tool for international business communication. There are several more tools such as telexes, faxes, memos, reports, or oral presentation. However, most of these tools are based on the art of letter writing. For non-native English speakers, it is a prerequisite to get accustomed to this art.

In compiling our letter writing dictionary, we have put great emphasis on the method of classification of the well over 13,000 expressions so that one can reach a particular expression he or she may choose to employ when writing his/her letter.

3. The Method of Classification

Here is an explanation of our classification. There are usually two ways of classifying expressions. One way is to classify them according to functions ; the other according to situations. For most major divisions we classify our model sentences according to situations. However, in sub-

divisions classification by functions is introduced to put each sentence under more appropriate headings.

Major divisions are composed of subjects commencing with salutations (which may belong to a function, but sub-divisions are more situation-specific), calls, arrangements, transactions, contracts, negotiations, disposals, and ending with thanks. Salutations and thanks, as well as some other subjects, are more distinctly classified according to specific sub-divisions.

Additionally, each sentence will be preceded by a Japanese translation and bold face Japanese counterparts of model English expressions, which will serve as a guide to Japanese readers in search of an appropriate expression. He or she then can modify the sentence to meet the actual situation. Therefore, we call our methodology as "Access in Japanese, Express in English."

4. The Value Attributable to the Glossary

Because the glossary is rather exhaustive we have been able to incorporate various expressions appearing in social business letters and directors letters. This feature will be welcomed by Japanese users, since practically no books devoted to director's letter writing have been published in Japan.

I trust the co-authored glossary will be published within the next twelve months. The glossary will satisfy the demand of the Japanese readers in that it has the afore-mentioned merits as compared to the predecessor of its kind, and will prove to be an effective tool for international business communication.

(Sample Page)

02訪問：1 会見：02面談の予約

貴殿が、〈場所〉へ〈時間〉にいらっしゃると伺っております。その折、貴殿にお会いしたいと思っています。当方は〈日付／時間〉がよろしいのですが。

くる

I understand *you will be visiting* 〈place〉, 〈time〉 and was wondering if you would like to get together during that time. I will be free on 〈dates/times〉.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 21

02訪問：1 会見：02面談の予約

東京へお越しになる旨伺っております。その際お目にかかれるかどうかお伺いいたします。貴殿のご都合をお手紙でお知らせ下さい。

あえるかどうか

I understand you will be visiting Tokyo, and would like to know *if you wish to get together*. Please write to let me know when you will be free.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 5

02訪問：1 会見：02面談の予約

重要な用件について、お訪ねしたいのですが。

たずねたい

I wish to *call on you*, concerning a matter of importance.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 22

02訪問：1 会見：20その他

貴殿にお会いできるかどうか、お知らせ下さい。

できるかどうか

I'd like to know *if it would be possible* to meet with you.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 16

02訪問：1 会見：20その他

あなたにお会い**できるかどうか**、お知らせ下さい。

できるかどうか

I'd like to know *whether it would be possible* to meet with you.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 12

02訪問：1 会見：02面談の予約

私は〈日付〉に〈場所〉にまいりますので、貴殿に**お会い**いたしたく存じます。

あう

I'll be in 〈place〉 on the 〈date〉 and would like to *meet with* you.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 11

02訪問：1 会見：01訪問の予告

私は〈何月何日〉の週に**そちらに**まいりますので、その折貴殿にお会いしたいと存じます。

そちらに行く

I'll be in your area during the week of 〈period〉 and would like to meet with you sometime during that time.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 20

02訪問：1 会見：01訪問の予告

〈日付〉に**そちらに**まいりますので、**貴殿にお会い**したいと思っております。

あいたいとおもう

I'll be in your area on the 〈date〉 and *would like to meet with* you.

13. 依頼：会見：3 1 8 15

02訪問：1 会見：20その他

貴殿にお会いできるかどうかお伺いいたします。

きでんにあう

I'm writing to ask about the possibility of *our getting together*.