

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG**



ISO 9001 : 2008

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH: TIẾNG ANH

HẢI PHÒNG - 2010

**HAIPHONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT**

GRADUATION PAPER

**AN ANALYSIS OF SOME TECHNIQUES TO
IMPROVE WRITING ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTERS.**

By: Vu Thi Huong Giang

Class: NA 1004

Supervisor: Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen, M.A

HAI PHONG - 2010

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG**

Nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp

Sinh viên:Mã số:.....

Lớp:Ngành:.....

Tên đề tài:

.....

.....

.....

Nhiệm vụ đề tài

1. Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp (về lý luận, thực tiễn, các số liệu cần tính toán và các bản vẽ).

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Các số liệu cần thiết để thiết kế, tính toán.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp.

.....

.....

.....

CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI

Người hướng dẫn thứ nhất:

Họ và tên:.....

Học hàm, học vị:.....

Cơ quan công tác:.....

Nội dung hướng dẫn:.....

Người hướng dẫn thứ hai:

Họ và tên:.....

Học hàm, học vị:.....

Cơ quan công tác:.....

Nội dung hướng dẫn:.....

Đề tài tốt nghiệp được giao ngày 12 tháng 04 năm 2010

Yêu cầu phải hoàn thành xong trước ngày 10 tháng 07 năm 2010

Đã nhận nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Sinh viên

Đã giao nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Người hướng dẫn

Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2010

HIỆU TRƯỞNG

GS.TS. NGUYỄN Trần Hữu Nghị

PHẦN NHẬN XÉT TÓM TẮT CỦA CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN

1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Đánh giá chất lượng của khóa luận (so với nội dung yêu cầu đã đề ra trong nhiệm vụ Đ.T. T.N trên các mặt lý luận, thực tiễn, tính toán số liệu...):

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Cho điểm của cán bộ hướng dẫn (ghi bằng cả số và chữ):

.....
.....
.....

Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2010

Cán bộ hướng dẫn
(họ tên và chữ ký)

NHẬN XÉT ĐÁNH GIÁ
CỦA NGƯỜI CHĂM PHẢN BIỆN ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

1. Đánh giá chất lượng đề tài tốt nghiệp về các mặt thu thập và phân tích tài liệu, số liệu ban đầu, giá trị lí luận và thực tiễn của đề tài.

2. Cho điểm của người chấm phản biện :

(Điểm ghi bằng số và chữ)

Ngày..... tháng..... năm 2010

Người chấm phản biện

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the process of doing the graduation paper, I not only have faced up with many problems in analyzing techniques in improving writing English business letters, collecting reference materials but also difficulties in choosing the right way to express my idea. However, I have received a lot of guidance, assistance, and enthusiasm from my supervisor, Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen and other teachers in Foreign Language Department of Hai Phong Private University. Thanks to these helps, I have overcome the difficulties and completed my graduation paper successfully.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude and indebtedness to my supervisor Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen who has always been most willing and ready to give me valuable advices, suggestions and materials to finish this study. I would like thank all teachers of Foreign Language Department of Hai Phong Private University for their precious and useful lessons during my four – year study which is then the foundation of this graduation paper.

Last but not least, I am grateful to my family and friends for their encouragement and inspiration.

Hai Phong, June 2010

Vu Thi Huong Giang

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Table of contents	ii
List of figures	v
<i>PART ONE: INTRODUCTION</i>	1
1. Rationale	1
2. Aims of the study	2
3. Scope of the study	2
4. Method of the study	2
5. Design of the study	3
<i>PART TWO: DEVELOPMENT</i>	4
CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	
I.1. An overview on Business letter	4
I.1.1. Definition of Business letter	4
I.1.2. Importance of business letter	5
I.1.3. Purposes of Business letter	6
I.1.4. The format of the English business letter	7
I.1.5. Abbreviation	15
I.2. Several types Business letters	15
I.2.1. The sales letter	16
I.2.2. The inquiry letter	18
I.2.3. The order letter	20

I.2.4. The acknowledgement letter	22
I.2.5. The refusal letter.....	23
I.2.6. The complaint letter	25
I.2.7. The adjustment letter.....	27
I.2.8. The resignation letter.....	29

**CHAPTER II. ANALYSIS OF SOME TECHNIQUES IN IMPROVING WRITING
ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTERS.**

II.1. Essential techniques in writing English business letters.....	31
II.1.1. You-attitude	31
II.1.2. Positive emphasis.....	33
II.1.3. Tone	35
II.1.4. Language.....	37

**CHAPTER III. SOME SUGGESTIONS TO VIETNAMESE LEARNERS FOR
IMPROVING TECHNIQUES IN WRITING ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTERS**

III.1. You-attitude.....	39
III.1.1. Focusing on “you” instead of “I / We”.....	39
III.1.2. Avoiding “you” in criticism and refusals	40
III.1.3. Emphasizing reader benefits.	41
III.2. Positive emphasis	42
III.2.1. Eliminating negative words, using positive words.....	42
III.2.2. Focusing on what the reader can do rather than what cannot be done	44
III.2.3. Giving an alternative if possible.....	45
III.3. Tone.....	46
Avoid stiff, outdated expressions	47
III.4. Language	49
III.4.1. Avoid the using of slang in writing letter.....	49

III.4.2. Avoid using overly technical terms, unfamiliar abbreviations.	49
III.4.3. Avoid using cliches	49
III.4.4. Avoid sexist language	50
III.4.5. Avoid repetition in writing letter.....	51
III.5. Raising student's awareness of cultural differences between Vietnamese and Western style in writing a business letter.	53
<i>PART THREE: CONCLUSION</i>	55
References	56

List of figures

Figure 1 : Full block-letter style	13
Figure 2 : Modified block-letter style.....	14
Figure 3 : Sales letter	17
Figure 4 : Inquiry letter.....	19
Figure 5 : Order letter	21
Figure 6 : Acknowledgement letter	22
Figure 7 : Letter refusing a speaking invitation.....	24
Figure 8 : Complaint letter	26
Figure 9 : Adjustment letter – company fault.....	28
Figure 10 : Resigning under negative conditions.	30

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Nowadays, English plays an important role in international communication. It is widely used in all fields of life such as economy, politics, tourism and education. And in this globalizing trend society, the modern evolution of business becomes more and more necessary and in order to satisfy this trend, the business letter has become increasingly important.

Whether a mail order business is carried on or not, the letter is no less important. Goods are bought, collections made, complaints adjusted, instructions given, business policies and selling campaigns outlined in the business letters. Realizing the important role of business letter, Vietnamese students have been studying hard because to deal with English business letter effectively is significant in the integration process into WTO.

However, there is a fact that not everyone can write a successful business letter in English because writing a letter presents a particular type of the language and the writer should make it natural, lively and persuasive.

It is very difficult to learn business letter writing well and understand it deeply. We can not only learn its basic rules of format, styles but also study all of its aspects. Writing a correct form of English business letter is really a problem not only to elementary students but also to students at upper levels or even graduated one.

Thus I decided to choose “ An analysis on some techniques to improve writing English business letter” as the topic for my research with the hope that learners will be able to know more about the usage of techniques in writing business letters.

2. Aims of the study

You have the right to express yourself and your intention in any manner you please in an English business letter, but if you wish to communicate effectively, you should use standard English and follow all of the rules in English business letter writing.

The aims of this paper are :

- Giving theoretical background of definition, importance, purpose, business letter format and some types of business letter.

- Finding out some common mistakes in writing an English business letter.
- Analyzing and suggesting some techniques in order to have good will in writing English business letter.

3. Scope of the study.

There are so many different material resources and researches that require a lot of time and hard labor while my personal experience is limited. Therefore, this study can only focus on study some effective techniques in English business letter writing skills, especially through the analyzing the business letters in order to suggest appreciate solutions to overcome such difficulties in writing.

I hope that this study is a good reference material for the English learners who wish to build a goodwill in writing English business letters.

4. Methods of the study .

To finish this paper, I myself carry out the method of Inductive study which means that I go from concrete materials of sample business letters to remarks and conclusion.

A part from that, The Qualitative method is also applied to analyze the tone, the language usage in different collected business letters

The theoretical background, the types of business letters are extracted from variety of resources such as books, websites and experiences of businessperson who deal with those in their daily work.

5. Design of the study.

My graduation paper is divided into three parts, in which the second naturally is the most important part.

- Part one, is the **introduction**, in which the rationale of the study, the aims of the study, the scope of the study, the method of the study, design of the study are presented.
- Part two, is the **development**, the main part that includes three chapters.
 1. Chapter one : theoretical background which focuses on the definition, important role, purpose, format and types of business letters.
 2. Chapter two : analysis of some techniques in improving writing English business letter.
 3. Chapter three : some suggestion to Vietnamese learners for improving techniques in writing English business letter.

- Part three, is the **conclusion**, summarizes the previous parts.

PART TWO

DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

I.1. An overview on Business letters

I.1.1. Definition of Business letter

In 2007, the Post Office of Vietnam estimated that of the 72 million items of post they delivered daily, 80% were business communications. Business letter are business tools, they are used to provide or request information, confirm less formal communications or highlight a problem that needs to be resolved. So, What is a business letter ?

A business letter is a formal communication between people or organizations who are involved in trading, exchanging money for goods or services.

Writing a business letter is about developing that trade, so it is important to remember that a business letter is an official document. Of course there are many other communications between peoples and companies, for instance telephone conversations, email, meetings, presentations, contracts, orders and invoices. A business letter is the most powerful communications tool for providing structured and considered information in a formal way.

A business letter is a letter written in formal language, usually used when writing from one business organization to another, or for correspondence between such organizations and their customers, clients and other external parties. The overall style of letter will depend on the relationship between the parties concerned. (wikipedia.org)

A business letter serves the main purpose of communication between two companies, or it is a method to talk to different people within a business. (eduers.com)

Business letter is a letter dealing with business.(synonym.com)

Among many definitions, a “business letter” according to the Oxford English dictionary is “*a missive, communication in writing addressed to a person or body of person. Also in extended use applied to certain formal documents issued by persons in authority*”

In my opinion, business letters are formal letters used for business to business, business to client, or client to business correspondence. A business letter is a formal means of communication between two people, a person and a corporation, or two corporations. Business letters differ from personal letters because they follow very strictly set rules for composition. Many people are intimidated by the prospect of writing to strict guidelines, however business letters are nothing to be afraid of. They are too useful a tool to be stigmatized by the public.

I.1.2. Importance.

Every business requires communication which extends the exchange of information, products and partnerships. Proper communication is the means of a good business. In fact communication only brings good clients, customers and reputation to the business. Writing business letters perfectly is an art in its own priority. A professional business letter shall definitely bring good and positive response for the business whereas an uncommon letter may not yield expected results and at times, businesses lose customers. Therefore, writing of letters in business language is very important which would impress customers and investors

For instance, if a customer placed an order for 10 laptops, the company should accept and address the letter as “*we thank you for your order and we confirm the dispatch of 10 laptops*” which means thanking the client is very important as the customer would be very pleased to read such lines in business letters. In case of payment request writing letters, the content of the letter should be quite explanatory indicating the need for payment. Use of harsh or rude language would cause further harm and damages the relation between company and clients. Therefore, while writing payment request letters, content should be brief and to the point, such as “*we bring your kind attention to the payment pending from your end*” because we can never assess the reason why payment has been held up whether unnoticeably or due to lack of funds, therefore, the letter must be polite and professional.

Business letters are the life blood of communication for any business. There are many types of business letters in use. Many people thought that business letter would be a thing of the past once the email and other technology seep into the offices. This notion has so far been proven false. Business letters are still in wide use and their importance hasn't been diminished to the slightest. There are many reasons why we usually write business letters. Some of the most common and the obvious reasons for writing business letters are given below.

I.1.3. Purpose

Business letters are used for many purposes such as to make inquiries, send replies, to place orders or bank correspondences etc. The main and the basic function of the business letter is not only to convey your message to the person who receives the letter but also to influence the reader

A business letter (or formal letter) is a formal way of communicating between two or more parties. There are many different uses and business letters. Business letters can be informational, persuasive, motivational, or promotional.

A well-written, professional business letter can easily open up doors and allow your opinion or request to be heard. Some of the more common reasons to write a business letter are:

- To request more information about a product
- To ask for a business reference
- To express your opinion about a product
- To transmit a message from the writer to the reader
- To persuade the reader to act
- To create goodwill in the reader

For the above purposes, business letter is really an indispensable means of communication in today's life.

I.1.4. The format of the English business letter

The letter tells a lot about the writer and the organization he or she represents. Just as the clothes you wear to job interviews play a part in the first impression you make on potential employers, the appearance of your business letter may be crucial in influencing a recipient who has never seen you.

The rules for preparing a neat, attractive letter are not difficult to master, and they are important particularly if you type your own letter.

I.1.4.1. Parts of the business letter.

All business letters have certain elements in common. Here are the standard parts of an business letter : Sender's address, date, reference line, receiver's address, attention line, salutation, subject line, the body, complimentary close, signature and enclosure. Several of them appear in every letters, others appear only when desirable or appropriate.

1. Sender's address

This part of the letter shows the organization's logo, name, full address (street, city and state, ZIP code), telephone number (almost always) and email address (often). For example :

APC ASIA PACIFIC CARGO	APC_REAL CO LMT. 18 Nguyen Chi Thanh Str., Ba Dinh Dist., Ha Noi, Viet Nam Tell : ++84 4 771 6489 Fax : ++84 4 7716488. Email : service@apc.vn.com
----------------------------------	--

2. Date

It is the date on which the letter is written. There are two conventions in use, The standard dateline in the U.S is month/date/year while European dateline is date/month/year. The name of month is often written in full and the numeral indicating the day is without *st,nd,rd* or *th*.

For example :

British dateline : *13 September, 2010*

American dateline : *September 13, 2010*

3. Reference line

On occasion, the writer may wish to include such information as the file number of the project, case or order that the letter refers to. For example :

Our ref : BG7146

Your ref :

4. Receiver's address.

The receiver's address identifies the receiver of the letter. It comprises the name and address of the person or the firm to whom the letter is written to. The first line of the receiver's address contains the name of the recipient preceded by an appropriate courtesy title such as Ms., Mr., Dr. The person's job title can be put on the same line or on a separate line of the receiver's address. For example:

Dr. A.B. Markus, Professor

University of Alaska

Office of Admissions

P.O.Box 757480

Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7480

5. Attention line

This is not always required. It should be used when the letter is addressed to an organization as a whole, but the writer wants it to be handled by a specific person from the organization. An attention line (starting with Attention or Attn.) may take any of the following forms.

For example :

Attention : Dr. Henry

Attention : Director of Marketing

6. Salutation

The style of salutation should follow that in the first line of the receiver's address. If in the receiver's address, the recipient is addressed by name, the salutation is "*Dear Mr./Ms. + surname*". If that first line contains a job title such as Human Resource Manager, then use "*Dear Sir/Madam*" (US: Ladies and Gentleman).

A salutation is followed by a comma (*Dear Mr. Johnson,*) in a British business letter and a colon (*Dear Mr. Johnson:*) in an American one. For example:

Dear Ms. Smith,

Dear Mr. Smith,

When you do not know whether the recipient is a man or woman, you may use a title appropriate to the context of the letter.

For example :

Dear Customer,

Dear Homeowner,

Dear Parts Manager,

7. Subject line

The subject line is most commonly used in simplified letters. It announces the subject of the letter and appears immediately below the salutation. Typed in all-capital letters, it may start with "Subject:" or "Re:" (an abbreviation for Regarding). For example :

Re : REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON SECURITY ALARM SYSTEM

8.Body

The form of the main subject is not of any rule; however, it should be neat, easy reading and not too complex. Moreover, the presentation of the letter's body should be unified for reader to read and understand correctly and easily. The style of the subject lay out may be straight or tapped depending on your habit, and there is usually a space between two paragraphs in the straight type. However, the style should be unified despite whatever way you use.

In general, letters include one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph should focus on main content which normally stands in the first position of paragraph.

- The first paragraph introduces the reason or purpose of the letter
- The second paragraph develops clearly the reason
- The last paragraph shows the writer's attitude towards the subject

9. Complimentary close.

This is a polite, formal way to end a letter. The complimentary close should match the tone of the salutation.

- *Sincerely,*
- *Yours sincerely,*
- *Very truly yours,*
- *Yours faithfully,*
- *Best regards,*
- *Respectfully yours,*

10. Signature

The signature block often consists of four elements : the company name (optional), the writer's handwritten signature, his or her full name and job title.

For example :

Yours sincerely,

For Green Island Company

DEVANS

Dirk Evans

Customer Service Manager

11. Enclosure

The enclosure is used to indicate that something is attached to the letter. Such a notation helps recipients confirm that all the enclosures are included when receiving the letter. For example :

Encl. : Security Alarms brochure

I.1.4.2. Margin and line spacing.

Normally, the English business letter is horizontally centered. The margins around the letter should be an inch at least.

Below are some spacing guidelines for the business letter :

Dateline	1 blank line below the last line of sender's address
Receiver's address	1-10 blank lines below the dateline
Attention line	1 blank line below the receiver's address
Salutation	1 blank line below the last line of the receiver's address

Subject line	1 blank line below the salutation
Body	1 blank line below the salutation (single-space within paragraphs; double-space between paragraphs)
Complimentary close	1 blank line below the last line of the body
Signature block	3 blank lines below the complimentary close
Enclosure notation	1 blank line below the reference initials

I.1.4.3. The layout of the English business letter.

The letter layout is the way of arranging all the basic letter parts. Sometimes a company adopts a certain format as its policy; sometimes the letter writer is allowed to choose the most appropriate format.

Two major letter layout styles are common used for the English business letter :

1. Block : This is the most modern of the formats and the one most widely used. Since every line of the block style letter begins at the left margin, this format saves typing time. Block format tends nonverbally to suggest efficiency. The evenness of the left margin projects a neat, orderly image.

2. Modified block : Modified block is the same as block letter layout, except that the sender's address, date, complimentary close and signature block start near the horizontal center of the page, and are aligned vertically. Many people consider the modified block's appearance more balanced and traditional.

Sender's address

Evans & Associates 520 Niagara St. Lexington, KY 40502
--

(512) 787-1176

Fax : (512) 787-1233

Email : 9200.123@CompuServe.com

Receiver's address

Mr. George W. Nagel
Director of Operations
Boston Transit Authority
57 West City Avenue
Boston, MA 02210

Date

May 15, 2010

Reference line

Our ref : DBJ869

Salutation

Dear Mr. Nagel,

<i>Body</i>	<p>Enclosed is our final report evaluating the safety measures for the Boston Intercity Transit System.</p> <p>We believe that the report covers the issues you raised and that it is self-explanatory. However, if you have many any further questions, we would be happy to meet with you at your convenience.</p> <p>We would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. L.K. Sullivan of your committee for his generous help during our trips to Boston.</p>
<i>Complimentary close</i>	Sincerely,
<i>Signature</i>	<i>Carolyn Brown</i>
<i>Typed name</i>	Carolyn Brown, Ph.D.
<i>Title</i>	Director of Research
<i>Additional information</i>	Enclosure : Final Safety Report copy : Safety Committee Members

Figure1: Full block-letter style

	center
<i>Sender's address</i>	3814 Oak Lane Lexington; KY 40514
<i>Receiver's address</i>	Dr. Carolyn Brown Director of Research Evans & Associates 520 Niagara Street Lexington, KY 40502
<i>Date</i>	December 8, 2010
<i>Salutation</i>	Dear Dr. Brown,
<i>Body</i>	Thank you very much for allowing me to tour your testing facilities. The information I gained from the tour will be of great help to me in preparing the report for my class at Marshall Institute. The tour has also given me some insight into the work I may eventually do as a laboratory technician.

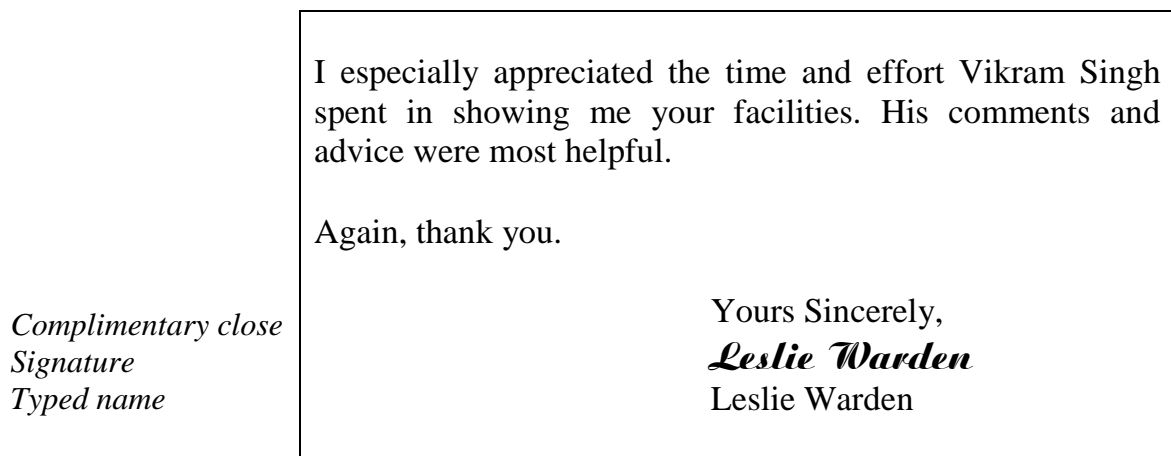


Figure 2 : Modified block-letter style

I.1.5. Abbreviation

Shortening or abbreviations are used much in commercial correspondence because it is very useful in speeding up writing and easy to read.

The following abbreviations are widely used in business letters:

- "A. M.," "M.," and "P. M." for forenoon, noon, and afternoon.
- L/C = letter of credit
- Ltd = Limited
- cc = carbon copy (when you send a copy of a letter to more than one person, you use this abbreviation to let them know)
- enc. = enclosure (when you include other papers with your letter)
- c.i.f = cost, insurance and freight
- f.a.s = free along side ship
- f.o.b = free on board
- f.o.r = free on rail
- COD = cash on delivery
- VAT = value added tax

I.2. Several Business letter

There are almost as many types of letters as there are reasons for writing. This chapter is devoted to a number of typical letters : the order letter, the inquiry letter, the acknowledgment letter, the complaint letter, the adjustment letter, the refusal letter, the resignation letter and the sales letter.

I.2.1. The sales letter

A sales letter, or letter that promotes a product, service, or store, requires both a thorough knowledge of the product or service and a keen awareness of the potential customer's needs. For this reason, many business employed in a small business or are self-employed, you will probably have to write your sales letters yourself.

A sales letter should catch the reader's attention, arouse the reader's interest, emphasize the benefits of the product or service, and invite the reader to respond. You should keep the following points in mind :

- Attract the reader's attention and arouse his or her interest in the opening.
- Continue to emphasize the benefits of the product to the reader. Do not exaggerate, you will lose the reader's confidence if you claims sound unreasonable.
- Suggest ways that the reader can make immediate use of the product or service.
- Make it easy and worthwhile for the customer to respond. You might include a local street map showing how to get to your store, a discount coupon, instructions for convenient phone in orders and free delivery, or a Web address where the customer can download more information.

<p>Janice's Cycle Shop 775 First Avenue Ottumwa, Iowa 52345 (515)453-6522</p>

Mr. Raymond Sommers
550 College Place
Sharpville, Iowa 75859

April 3, 2008

Dear Mr. Sommers,

*Attract reader's
interest*

Are you ready to go bike riding this spring-but your bike is not ?

*Emphasize
benefit of
product*

Janice's Cycle Shop is ready to get your bike in shape for the beautiful day ahead. We will lubricate all moving parts : check the tires, brakes, chain, lights, horn, and all other accessories; and make any minor repairs – all for only \$10 and the coupon enclosed with this letter.

*Time and
payment*

Just stop in any day , Monday through Saturday, between 8 a.m and 9 p.m. We are conveniently located at the corner of First and Walker. You can pay with cash, check, or credit card.

If you bring your bike in before 10 a.m, you can be enjoying a spring bike ride that evening.

Happy riding !

Your sincerely,

Janice

Janice's Cycle Shop

Figure 3 : Sales letter

I.2.2. The inquiry letter

An inquiry letter is a formal letter making a legal claim, and requesting that the claim be satisfied, either by asking the receiving party to perform a previously ignored responsibility or obligation, repay for damages they caused, returning items belonging to the author, or some other legal issue that needs to be settled.

Being able to write an inquiry letter is also a valuable skill. An inquiry letter template helps one to ask queries related to a product, job, funds, promotional materials, etc. The inquiry letter format should be written in a friendly tone so that the recipient is happy to reply.

	<p>University Of Dayton Dayton, OH 24564</p>
	<p>Ms. Jane Metcalf Engineering Valley Power Company Miamitown, OH 435546</p>
	<p>March 11, 2009</p>
<i>Inquiry information</i>	<p>Dear Ms. Metcalf,</p> <p>Could you please send me some information on heating systems for an all electric, energy efficient, median priced house that our systems design class at the University of Dayton is designing.</p>
<i>Include detail information</i>	<p>The house, which contains 2,000 square feet of living space (17.600 cubic feet), meets all the requirements stipulated in your brochure “Insulating for Efficiency”. We need the following information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.The proper-size heat pump to use in this climate for such a home.2.The wattage of the supplemental electrical heating units that would be requires for this climate.
<i>Friendly closing</i>	<p>We will be happy to send you a copy of our preliminary design report. Thank you very much.</p> <p>Sincerely yours, <i>Kathryn J.Passions.</i> Kathryn J.Passions. Systems-Design Student</p>

Figure 4 : Inquiry letter

I.2.3. The order letter

One of the most common reasons for writing a business letter is the need to order supplies or equipment. Obviously, an order letter must be specific and complete if you are to receive the exact item you want.

So, an order letter is written by a person or organization wishing to make a purchase. The letter should be specific, accurate, and complete, but not cluttered with unrelated details.

Make sure that the order letter contains the following information, as it applies to the items or items you are purchasing.

- The exact name and part number of the item.
- Any useful description of the item : size, style, color, and so on.
- The quantity needed of each item.
- The price of the item
- The shipping method
- The date of the order and the date by which you need the item
- The exact and full shipping address
- The method payment

	WRITE EDITORIAL SERVICES 5209 Mountain View Road Flagstaff, AZ 86001 Phone (520) 555-1134
	MEDIA PRODUCTS LTD 1200 Industrial Park Drive Boulder, CO 85059
	September 23, 2009
	Attention : Sales Department,
<i>Name part of item</i>	Please send the following items listed in your August catalog (CR-876) by November 5, 2008.
<i>Description</i>	8 Panasonic Toner Kirs, number KXP453
<i>quantity,</i>	@ \$93.00.....\$744.00
<i>price needed</i>	12 Reams of “Fine Business Paper”, 25% rag content,S-LG115-S
	@ \$21.00 each.....\$252.00
	1 Posture-Aid Chair, Brown, number C-GE1010

*Method of
payment*

@ \$205.00 each.....	\$ 205.00
	Total \$1,201.00
<p>The enclosed check for \$1,371.10 covers the price, sales tax, and UPS charges. If any of these items are not available, please adjust my order accordingly.</p>	
<p>Sincerely, <i>JAME WEBBER</i> Jame Webber Office Manager</p>	
<p>Enclosure : Check</p>	
<p>Fax (520)555-1100 Email : editors@netex.com</p>	

Figure 5 : Order letter

I.2.4. The acknowledgement letter

One of the ways to build goodwill in any business letter is to let customers or clients know that something they sent arrived. A letter that serves such a function is called an acknowledgement letter. It is usually a short, polite note.

<p>ECADS, INCORPORATED 502 Beach Street Miami, FL 45253 (305) 834-4323 Fax : (305)834-5646 Email : ms.ecards@exec.com</p>
<p>Mr. Joel Baker 3078 Terrace Boulevard Miami, FL 64532</p>
<p>January 18, 2009</p>
<p>Dear Mr. Baker,</p> <p>I received in today's mail the defective part that we talked about last week on the phone.</p>

As soon as one of our engineers can examine it, I will phone you.

Sincerely,

Marylin Sanchez

Marylin Sanches

Figure 6 : Acknowledgement letter

I.2.5. The refusal letter

When you receive a complaint letter, an inquiry letter, or any letter to which you must give a negative reply, you may need to write a refusal letter. Such a letter is difficult to write because it contains bad news. To state the bad news in your opening would certainly affect your reader negatively. The idea refusal letter says no in such a way that you not only avoid antagonizing your reader but also maintain goodwill. The indirect approach with refusals is appropriate.

The following indirect pattern is an effective way to deal with this problem:

- A buffer that establishes a professional tone.
- A review of the facts (reasons) leading to the bad news or refusal.
- The bad news or refusal itself.
- A goodwill closing

301 Industrial Lane
Decatur, Illinois 43523
Phone : (708) 674-3432
Fax : (708) 535-5764

Javier A. Lopez, President
TNCO Engineering Consultant
9001 Cummings Drive
St, Louis, Missouri 53526

March 26, 2008

*Begin with a
Buffer*

Dear Mr. Loperz,

I am pleased to have been invited to address your regional meeting in St. Louis on May 17. To be considered one who might make a useful contribution to such a gathering of experts is indeed flattering.

*The reason
leading refusal*

On checking my schedule, I find that I will be attending the annual meeting of our parent corporation's Board of Directors that date. Therefore, as much as I would enjoy attending your meeting. I must decline.

*End with a
positive close*

I have been very favorably impressed over the years with your organization's contributions to the engineering profession, and I am proud to have received your invitation.

Sincerely,
Ralph P. Morgan
Ralph P. Morgan
Purchasing Department

Figure 7 : Letter refusing a speaking invitation

I.2.6. The complaint letter

Writing a complaint letter is often an undesirable task, but if it is done well, the end result can be very rewarding. Complaint letters can be used for the purpose of having products replaced or money refunded, for changing company policy or government legislation, for influencing the media, and so forth.

A complain letter should be businesslike and logical, it should not sound “complaining”. The letter should reflect the fact that the writer is registering the complaint calmly, but it should also indicate that she or he expects the situation to be corrected.

The effective complaint letters should follow the same pattern. They should:

- Identify the faulty item or items, including invoice numbers, part names, dates, and so forth.
- Explain logically, clearly, and specifically what went wrong, especially for a problem with service.
- State what you expect the reader to do to solve the problem to your satisfaction.

BAKER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Television Services
502 Main Street
Springfield, OH 34525
(513)549-343
Fax : (513)563-464

Manager, Customer Relations
General Television. Inc.
5231 West 23rd Street
New York, Ny 12231

September 23, 2008

Identify fault

Dear Mr. Philips,

Explain problem

On July 9th, I order nine TV tuner assembly units for your model MX-15 color monitors. The tuner unit part number is TR-4233-4

Expect solution to your satisfaction

On August 2nd I received from your Newark, New Jersey, parts warehouse seven tuner units labeled TR-423-5. I immediately returned these tuner units with a note indicating the mistake that had been made. However, not only have I failed to received the tuner units I ordered, but I have also been billed repeatedly.

Would you please either send me the tuner units I ordered or cancel my order. I have enclosed a copy of my original order letter and the most recent bill.

Sincerely,
Paul Denlinger
Paul Denlinger
Manager

Enclosures

Figure 8 : Complaint letter

I.2.7. The adjustment letter

An adjustment letter often a response to a complain letter, should explain what caused the problem, specify what is being done to correct it, and, if the company for which the writer works was a fault, apologize for the incident

After you have obtained the facts, organize your letter into three basic parts.

- Refer to the letter of complaint and identify the item or service in question. If your company is responsible for the error, often an apology early in the letter. Doing so will help you to regain the customer's goodwill.
- Explain clearly why the error occurred or outline the company policy related to the problem, or do both. This is especially important if you are not able to do everything the customer ask.
- State specifically what you intent to do or have done to solve the problem. If you are not able to do exactly what the customer asks, give a partial adjustment if possible.

General Television, Inc.
4563 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10023
Customer Reasons

Phone : (212)454-4534
Fax : (212)445-3243
Email : sgv@juns.com

Mr. Paul Denlinger, Manager
Baker Memorial Hospital
Television Services
501 Main Street
Springfield, OH 35334

September 28, 2009

Identify the fault

Dear Mr. Denlinger,

Explain clearly why the error occurred

Thank you for your letter regarding your order for nine TR-3538-3 tuner units. We have shipped the correct units by USP; you should receive them shortly after you receive this letter. I have also canceled your original order so that you will not be sent overdue notices and so that we can charge you at our preferred-customer rate.

Solution

Please accept our apologies. Evidently, a dock worker failed to see your letter in the package, and it was sent to our Rebuilt parts Department. That is why your note did not come to the attention of our Parts Manager.

To prevent further inconvenience, please send any future packages directly to Mr. Gene Sanchez, Parts Manager at our Newark facility.

If can be of any further help, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Susan Siegel
Susan Siegel
Assistant Director

Figure 9 : Adjustment letter – company fault

I.2.8. The resignation letter

A business letter of resignation is written to announce the writer's intent to leave a position currently held, such as an office, employment or commission.

A resignation letter is generally a formality, but it is a sign of respect and is often expected. Remember that while you may be unhappy with your boss or your job, that the letter is written and will probably be placed in your employee file. In other words, letters can be permanent -- keep them positive.

So, a resignation letter should be as positive as possible, regardless of the circumstances of your resignation. Be factual and objective about your reasons for leaving and point out any benefits gained from the job experience.

	<p>3234 North Prospect Ave. Seattle. WA 75678 (206) 345-8762</p>
	<p>Mr. Robert Stenzel Winterhaven Company 439 Alaskan Way Seattle, WA 34232</p>
	<p>February 12, 2009</p>
<p><i>Positive attitude</i></p>	<p>Dear Mr. Stenzel,</p>
<p><i>Reasons for leaving</i></p>	<p>My four-year employment with the Winterhaven Company has been a very pleasant experience, and I have learned a great deal during my time here.</p>
<p><i>Benefits gained from job</i></p>	<p>Because the recent realignment of my job leaves no career path open to me, however, I have accepted a position with another company that I feel will give me a better future. I am, therefore, submitting my resignation, to be effective on March 1, 2009.</p>
	<p>I have enjoyed working for Winterhaven and wish the company success in the future.</p>
	<p>Sincerely, <i>Nancy L. Winters</i> Nancy L. Winters</p>

Figure 10 : Resigning under negative conditions.

CHAPTER II. ANALYSIS OF SOME ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUES IN IMPROVING WRITING ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTERS.

II.1. Essential techniques in improving writing English business letters.

Every one of us has to write English business letter either in personal life or at work. The reasons you are reading this thesis is that the techniques of writing English business letter in the right way needs to be learned. In business letter writing, there is no face to face contact between people, and everything depends upon the techniques that are written. Therefore, it is important that you choose and use right way while writing business letters.

A part from the language that you use, the attitude, tone of your letter, positive emphasis also plays an important part while writing business letters. You need to identify your audience properly and say your views in a way that your words and tone convey the right meaning and you do not get misinterpreted in any way.

II.1.1. You-attitude

You-attitude is highlight by various business letter analysts to be one of the key factors that make up the success of all communication ranging from memos, emails, phone calls, interviews... to business letter.

You-attitude is a style of writing which looks at things from the readers' point of view, emphasizing what the reader wants to know, respecting the readers' intelligence, and protecting the readers' ego.

To make it simply, you-attitude is the style of writing that makes the readers feel that the most important person in the business relationship is You – the readers, not I/we – the writers. It is also an attitude that the writer should believe : that the most important person in the communication is You : the readers, the co-workers, the customers.

Make an “*Object-you*” into a “*Subject-you*”. “*You*” can be made the subject of a new sentence with You-attitude.

We will send **you** the newest edition when it becomes available.

=> **You** will receive the newest the edition when it becomes available.

Following are some more examples :

* Instead of saying what “*we*” are doing or will do for “*you*”, the writer should emphasize what the readers will experience or can do.

<u><i>We-attitude</i></u>	<u><i>You-attitude</i></u>
We will send you the details.	You will receive / be sent the details.
We will notify you ...	You will be notified...
We will provide you with...	You will receive...

We will give you... We will allow you to deduct...	You will be given... You can / may deduct...
---	---

* When there is no “*Object-you*” expressed, look for way to say the same things beginning with “*you*”.

<u><i>We-attitude</i></u>	<u><i>You-attitude</i></u>
We gladly accept orders by fax and phone. We will replace the damaged items.	You can order by fax and phone. You can return any damaged items for immediate replacement.

* Instead of saying how “*we*” feel, say how “*you*” feel.

<u><i>We-attitude</i></u>	<u><i>You-attitude</i></u>
We are happy / glad that... We are pleased to inform you...	You will be happy / glad that... You will be pleased to know...

* Instead of saying “*we ask / request / remind you*”, say “*please*”.

We ask that you co-operate. We would like to remind you that we must receive your payment by the 30 th . We remind you that the deadline is the 25 th of August.	Please co-operate. Please remember to send us your payment by the 30 th . Please note that the deadline is the 25 th of August.
---	--

II.1.2. Positive emphasis

While striving for natural tone, you should also aim for a positive attitude. Even when the subject of your letter is unpleasant, it is important to remain courteous and tactful. Building and sustaining the goodwill of your reader should be an underlying goal of nearly any letter you write.

A simple “please” or “thank you” is often enough to make a mundane letter more courteous.

Instead of : *We have received your order*

You might try : *Thank you for your recent order*

Or, in place of the impersonal :

Checking our records, we have verified the error in your November bill.

You could help retain a customer by writing :

Please accept our sincere apologies for the error in your November bill.

Saying “*We are sorry*” or “*I appreciate*” can do much to build rewarding business relations.

On the other hand, you must be tactful when delivering unpleasant messages. Never accuse your reader with expressions such as “your error” or “your failure”. **An effective letter would say :**

Because you have refused to pay your long overdue bill, your credit rating is in jeopardy.

A more diplomatic letter might say :

Because the \$520 balance on your account is now over ninety days past due, your credit rating is in jeopardy.

Because the 2nd sentence restrains from attacking the reader personally (and also includes important details), it will be read more receptively.

A word of caution is necessary here. Some writers, in an effort to be pleasant, end their letters with sentence fragments :

Looking forward to your early reply.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Thanking you for your interest.

These participial phrases should not be used to conclude a letter. There is never an excuse for grammatical flaws, especially when complete sentences will serve the purpose well :

=>We look forward to your early reply.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you for your interest.

Consider the difference between these 2 versions of the same letter :

<p>Dear Department Supervisors,</p> <p>I inform your subordinates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Because so many have taken advantage of past leniency, lateness will no longer be overlooked. Paychecks will be docked as of Monday, March 6th. 2. As a result of abuses of employee privileges, which have resulted in exorbitant long-distance telephone bills, any employee caught making a personal call will be subject to disciplinary action. <p>As supervisors, you will be required to enforce these new regulations.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>Dear Mr. Jonhson,</p> <p>Unfortunately, a few people have taken advantage of lenient company policies regarding lateness and personal phone calls. As a result, we must all now conform to tougher regulations.</p> <p>Please inform the members of your department that :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Beginning Monday, March 6th, the paychecks of employees who are late will be docked. 2. Personal phone calls are no longer permitted. <p>It is a shame that abuses of a few must cost the rest of us. But we are</p>
--	---

Assistant Director	asking all department supervisors to help us enforce these new rulers. Sincerely, Wanda Hatch Assistant Director
--------------------	---

=> In the second version, the selection of words and usage of short sentences are essential to create positive effects of the letter. The second version also includes important details, it will be read more and receptively.

Positive words can make readers feel warm and pleasant while negative words are much likely to cause negative feelings in the readers. Unpleasant words should be eliminated while positive ones, on the other hand, should be used effectively in business writing.

Pleasant, warm words

admirable, advantage, agreeable, amazing, benefit, comfortable, exclusive, fortunate, generous, pleasure, profit, progress, satisfaction, success, valuable, warmth, welcome...

Unpleasant, cold words

abuse, dissatisfied, error, failure, fault, inadequate, mistake, neglect, trouble, unsatisfactory, careless, blame, complaint, damage, defective, delay...

Furthermore, in order to avoid words with negative connotations, the writer can choose their opposite words to express the same idea.

For example:

<u>Negative emphasis</u>	<u>Positive emphasis</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our agency will close at 5:00 • Nobody without authorization will be allowed to visit the plant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our agency will stay open until 5:00. • Everybody with authorization will be allowed to visit the plant.

II.1.3. Tone

In written communication, how something is said is almost as important as what is said. Nevertheless, many writer tend to focus only the “what” of their documents. In fact, how something is said contributes much to the success of the business. When the recipient understands the message, and more importantly, accepts the message, the letter is considered effective. The below are some techniques in order to improve effectiveness of tone, seven “Cs” in business letter.

1. **Clarity** : Clarity depends on the use of words. In general, the writer should use simple every day language and avoid technical terms when appropriate to make sure the reader understands the message. Clarity also means organizing the letter so that each paragraph deals with one main idea, and presenting the idea in a logical order.

2. **Conciseness** : Conciseness means saying all that need to be said and no more. A concise letter should eliminate all unnecessary words. In business, few people have time to read irrelevant details. For this reason, it seems that short letters are remembered better than long ones.
3. **Completeness** : It is important that all the information needed must be included in the letter so that the reader has enough information to evaluate the message and act on it.
4. **Correctness** : Correctness refers to correct data, accurate statements, and explicit identification of assumptions and opinions. The message must also be free from errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar, word order, sentence structure and document format.
5. **Courtesy** : Courtesy means treating people with respect and friendly human concern. A courteous message takes the reader's feeling and point of view into consideration and offers help where necessary.
6. **Confidence** : A confident message shows the writer as a decisive, positive businessperson. It also shows that the writer assumes the reader is decisive, positive – a person capable of overcoming obstacles. Such a document does not neglect problems or negative factors; rather, it approaches problems as solvable when the reader and writer work together. A confident message eliminates the implication of doubt in conveying its message.
7. **Conversational tone** : Conversational tone involves using language that resembles conversation. It is warm and natural. It is also the language that people use most and understand best.

Briefly, effective communication tone standard include seven criteria: Clarity, conciseness, completeness, correctness, courtesy, confidence and conversational tone. These qualities, in general, create goodwill in the reader and construct better climate that will lead the customer back to the organization for the future business.

II.1.4. Language

If you are one of those writers who need 100 words to say what might have been said in 40, you need to tighten up your prose. If you want to write effective business communications, start editing your writing to eliminate nonsense words and phrase, repetition and redundancies.

For example :

Original (50 words)	Edited (18 words)
With reference to your request for an extension on your note under the date of March 20 th , we have considered the	We can allow you an additional 90 days to

matter carefully and are pleased to be able to tell you that we will be willing to allow you an additional 90 days to make payment on your note.	pay your note. It is now due June 20 th .
--	--

⇒ There was no sacrifice in meaning by eliminating the excess words. Indeed, the shortened message is clearer and, therefore, stronger.

And in this example, the writer is adding a lot of extra information that is not particularly relevant.

Original (64 words)	Edited (8 words)
In looking over your current catalog, I notice that the sofa on page 50 (No. 273-1960) is shown in the illustration in the color of blue. However, in the description provided under the illustration, the colors listed as being available are black, ivory, green, and red. Does this mean that the color of the couch in the illustration is not available at this time?	Is sofa (No.273-1960) available in blue ?

Here is the list of wordy and phrases that are used too often in business writing.

Original	Edited
at all times	always
at an early date	soon
at that time	then
at this point in time	at this time
due to the fact that	because or since
during the course of	during
during the course of our research, we learn	our research shows
engaged in making a marketing study	making a marketing study
he made the announcement that	he announced that
held a meeting to discuss	met to discuss
I hope that you will be in a position to make a decision within a short time	I hope you can decide soon
in the event that	if
inasmuch as	since
it is the recommendation of the committee that	the committee recommends that
keep in mind the fact that	remember that
the costs were quite a bit lower than any of us thought they would be	the costs were lower than expected
the size of the report is 112 pages	the 112-page report

in length	
there was only one objection to your proposal, and that was the matter of timing	the only objection to your proposal was timing.
these items are being sold at a price of \$45	these items are priced at \$45
upon completion, please mail the application in the envelope that is being enclosed	please return the completed application in the enclosed envelope
your check in the amount of \$200	your check for \$200

CHAPTER III. SOME SUGGESTIONS TO VIETNAMESE LEARNERS FOR IMPROVING TECHNIQUES IN WRITING ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTERS

III.1. You-attitude

In a You-attitude letter, it is “You”- the reader that is treated with emphasis, not “ I / We” – the writer. The first You-attitude technique is related to use of personal pronouns.

III.1.1. Focusing on “you” instead of “I / We”

In order to write from readers’ wishes, preferences and interests, writers need to start from the simplest level : replacing terms that refer to themselves or the company they present with terms that refer to the reader. The fact is that the receivers are more concerned about themselves and are more like to read the message when they see their names and the second person pronouns (*you / your*) rather than the first ones (*I / we / my / us / our*).

Opposite to *You-attitude* is *We-attitude*, the style of writing that pay more attention to the writers themselves. The following contrasting examples demonstrate the different effects that are produced by two different attitudes.

<u>We-attitude</u>	<u>You-attitude</u>
I have scheduled your vacation to begin on May 01.	You may begin your vacation on May 01.
May I take this opportunity to express my thanks for account you recently opened with our bank.	Thank you for the account you recently opened at Vietcombank.
To help us process this order, we must ask for another copy of the requisition.	So that your order can be filled promptly, please send another copy of the requisition.
I am happy to report.....	You will be pleased to know...

Nevertheless, situations when the You should be avoided : when it criticizes the reader. The You can make readers feel that they are singled out for bad news or their ego is threatened

III.1.2. Avoiding “you” in criticism and refusals.

In this case, you should use a noun for a group of which the reader is a part. For example :

<u>Lack You-attitude</u>	<u>You-attitude</u>
We cannot supply you with the garments you request.	We do not sell our garments directly to the consumer .
You cannot return merchandise until you receive written approval.	Customers may return merchandise with written approvals.

There are two other ways that help minimize possible ill will : using passive voice or impersonal constructions. The passive sentence, which shows what have been done, not who has done it, can save the reader’s ego. Similarly, an impersonal construction also produces the same effects by denoting things, not people, do the action. Two sentences below are rewritten for better effects :

<u>Lack You-attitude</u>	<u>You-attitude</u>
You failed to sign your check.	Your check was not signed . (passive) Your check arrived without a signature . (impersonal)
You made no allowance for inflation in your estimate.	No allowance for inflation has been made in this estimate. (passive) This estimate makes no allowance for inflation. (impersonal)

III.1.3. Emphasizing reader benefits.

As a matter of fact, readers are more interested in what they receive or can do rather than what the writer has done. It is important that the writers be especially careful to avoid emphasizing what they themselves need, want, desire, demand or require. When applying You-attitude, the letter will sound more effective and more pleasant to readers’ ears. The below pairs of example surely exert different effects on the reader.

<u>Lack You-attitude</u>	<u>You-attitude</u>
We will send you the newest edition when it becomes available.	You will receive the newest edition when it becomes available.
We will allow you to deduct 2% of the	You may deduct 2% from the total price

total price if you pay within 30 days. We are shipping your order of Sep.21 this afternoon.	if you pay within 30 days. Your order of Sep.21 will be shipped this afternoon.
---	--

It can be seen that the left-column sentences focus on the writer's doing or generosity; therefore they sound self-centered and lack You-attitude. The right column sentences show awareness and appreciation of the receiver's needs or desires, so they will be more likely to satisfy the reader.

Below is one more example for contrasting, the You-attitude letter highlights what the customer can do or receive, not focuses on what the writer can do for them or why he or she want them to do like the We-attitude letter.

<u>We-attitude</u>	<u>You-attitude</u>
May I take this opportunity to express my thanks for the account you recently opened with our store. We are pleased to furnish a wide variety of products for the home or individual customers.	Thank you for the account you recently opened at Bekinson's. Serving you with your needs for clothing and home furnishing is a pleasure.
We want you to take full advantage of our store services, for we have the largest stock in the city. Also we make deliveries of our customers' purchases free of charge within 30 miles of our store.	You can satisfy all your shopping needs when you visit any of Bekinson's 32 well-stocked departments. Our courteous, skilled salesclerks are ready to assist you in selecting the merchandise that best meets your requirements.
We welcome you to Bekinson's. If we can be of additional service in any manner, please call on us.	You are always welcome at Bekinson's. Please call on us whenever you need additional services.

(Extracted from Murphy & Hildebrandt, 1991: 256)

Reader benefit can also work in a negative message. For example, when rejecting a request for a purchase of seven computer disks, the writer may link it to a reader benefit :

Not : *We cannot sell computer disks in lots of less than 10.*

But : *To keep down packing costs and help customers save on shipping and handling costs, we sell computer disks only in lost of 10 or more.*

However, when the benefit is not clear, or these is possibility that the reader will not acknowledge it, the writer should avoid stressing it in the negative message. Otherwise, it may sound insincere and make readers think that they are being fooled.

III.2. Positive emphasis

III.2.1. Eliminating negative words, using positive words.

Positive words are usually best for achieving your letter goals. It does not mean that negative words have no position in letters. Nevertheless, the writer should usually use positive words for they emphasize the pleasant aspects of the situation and pave the way for desired reaction.

Negative words, by contrast, are very likely to cause the opposite effectives. Phrases such as “*you failed to included*”, “*as you claim*” and “*you neglected*” carry implicit accusations, and will offend readers. Disciplinary phrases such as “*we will allow...*” belittle the reader, and phrases such as “*surely you are aware*” and “*it should be obvious*” may make the reader feel silly.

Words like *refuse, unfortunately, unable to, cannot, mistake, problem, error, damage, loss...* also imply unpleasant facts and may stir up the reader’s resistance to the goals and run the risk of damaging goodwill. As a result, it is advisable that the writer be highly wary of negative words or words with negative connotations.

The below example will illustrate the effects of word choice in a letter of refusal.

<u><i>Negative</i></u>	<u><i>Positive</i></u>
We regret to inform you that we cannot permit you to use our clubhouse for your meeting, as the Ladies Book Club asked for it first. We can, however, let you use our conference room, but its seats only 60.	Although the Ladies Book Club has reserved the clubhouse for Saturday, we can instead offer you our conference room, which seats 60.

=> In the first version, “*we regret to inform you*” implies that the information following will not be good, “*we cannot permit*” only carries the bad news but also sounds a bit harsh; and lastly the good news is unnecessarily lightened by the word “only”. Whereas, the second version contains no negative words, but still it accomplishes the major task as to deny the request.

Some of the refusal letters are use very negative words such as *disappoint, trouble, uneconomical, unacceptable, turn down, withdraw, not worthwhile, never and allow* – an authoritative word.

Briefly, as the selection of words is essential to create positive effects of a letter, negative words should be used with special care and in most cases, they should be removed from letters.

Below are some more examples of negative-to-positive word choices:

<u><i>Negative</i></u>	<u><i>Positive</i></u>
Don’t forget to enclose your check. We regret to inform you that we must deny your request for credit.	Please remember to enclose your check. For the time being, we can serve you only on a cash basic.

If you **can't understand** this explanation, please feel free to call me.

If you **have further question**, just call me.

III.2.2. Focusing on what the reader can do rather than what cannot be done.

Most information, even bad news, had some redeeming feature. If writers can make their audience aware of that feature, their message will be more acceptable and they are more likely to maintain goodwill. Sometimes, by implying the bad news, the writer may not need to actually state it. But writers do need to ensure that no potential for misunderstanding is present. If necessary, and only if necessary to avoid misunderstanding, writers may need to state “we cannot”.

Here are some messages written from a negative perspective and rewritten from a positive perspective:

<u><i>Negative</i></u>	<u><i>Positive</i></u>
It will be impossible to open an account for you until you send us your signature card.	Your account will be open as soon as you send us your signature card.
Smoking is not permitted anywhere except in the lobby.	Smoking is permitted in the lobby only.
Don't leave the coffee pot dirty when you go home.	Please clean the coffee pot before you go home.
We cannot complete the study until next week.	We will complete the study next week.

Clearly, it is possible to write bad news message in a more positive way. It is easy to transform a message with negative feeling or tone into one that is positive and encouraging. And the negative information is even more emphasized by the negative tone. They are likely to provoke readers' negative feelings, create the negative image of the writer and thus harm goodwill.

III.2.3. Giving an alternative if possible.

Writers should do a little bit more than they have to do for their readers to gain goodwill. For example, when writing to a customer, the writer can include a few words about new merchandise received, new services provided, price reductions, and so on. In a refusal letter, the writer may suggest an option that remains.

Giving an alternative is a good idea for several reasons :

- It offers the reader another way to get what he or she wants.

- It suggests that you really care about the reader and about helping to meet - his or her needs.
- It enables the reader to reestablish the psychological freedom you limited when you said “no”.
- It allows you to end on a positive note and to present yourself and your organization as positive, friendly and helpful.

The below examples will illustrate this technique :

<i>Negative</i>	<i>Positive</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We regret to say that we cannot deal with retailers directly. • You cannot get a loan because you owe so much on your credit cards. • I am afraid that I will not be able to present the report on education at your conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since we are only able to deal with wholesalers, may I refer you to one of our agents R.L, rue Montpellier 28, Paris, tel no ... • You can get a loan if someone co-signs the loan with you. • As I will be out of town the day you need me, may I recommend Ms. Paula Perkins of my staff ?

III.3. Tone

Achieving an appropriate business style maybe the biggest problem for the writer of business letters.

For example :

As per your request, please find enclosed herewith a check in the amount of \$16.49.

Such expressions are “*herewith*” and “*as per*” contribute nothing to the message while making the letter sound stilted and stiff.

While business letters will vary in tone from familiar to formal, they should all sound natural. Within the limits of standard English, of course, you should try to say things in a “regular” way :

⇒ *As you requested, I am enclosing a check for \$16.49.*

This sentence is not only more personal and friendly, it is also more efficient. It uses fewer words, taking less time to write and prepare as well as to read and comprehend.

Consider the difference between these 2 versions of the same letter:

Dear Mr. Singh, With reference to your order for a Nashitocamcorder, we are in receipt of your check and are returning same.	Dear Mr. Singh, We have received your order for a Nashito camcorder but, unfortunately, must return your check.
---	--

<p>I beg to inform you that, as a manufacturer, our company sells camcorders to dealers only. In compliance with our wholesale agreement, we deem it best to refrain from direct business with private consumers.</p> <p>For your information, there are many retailers in your vicinity who carry Nashito camcorders. Attached please find a list of said dealers.</p> <p>Hoping you understand.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>As a manufacturer, we sell only to dealers, with whom we have very explicit wholesale agreements.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we sincerely appreciate your interest in Nashito products. We are therefore enclosing a list of retailers in your community who carry a full line of our camcorders. Any one of them will be happy to serve you.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
---	--

=> *In the first version, some expressions are too long and they made the letter sound stilted and stiff. And the second version uses fewer words, simple words, positive tone... and for this reason, it seems that simple, straightforward and remembered better than the first version.*

The following additional tips will help you to achieve a tone that builds goodwill with the reader :

1. Be respectful, not demanding

Change *Submit your answer in one week.*

To *I would appreciate receiving your answer within one week.*

2. Be modest, not arrogant.

Change *My report is thorough, and I'm sure that you won't be able to continue efficiently without it.*

To *I have tried to be as thorough as possible in my report, and I hope you find it useful.*

3. Be polite, not sarcastic.

Change *I just received the shipment we ordered six months ago. I'm send it back – we can't not use it now. Thanks a lot !*

To *I am returning the shipment we ordered on March 12, 2007. Unfortunately, it arrived too late for us to use it.*

4. Be positive and tactful, not negative and condescending.

Change *Your complaint about our prices is way off target. Our prices are definitely not any higher than those of our competitors.*

To *Thank you for your suggestion concerning our prices. We believe, however, that our prices are competitive with, and in some cases*

below, those of our competitors.

=> You should **Avoid stiff, outdated expressions**

For years people thought that they had conform strictly to a prescribed style of writing with “standard” expressions. As a result, business correspondence became rigid and unfriendly. Personally, the author finds these expressions are still quite popular in business correspondence, especially in highly formal letters; and in not few cases, some prove to be appropriate. However, it should also be noted that nowadays, conversational style and familiar expressions are enjoying popularity far and wide.

<u>To be avoided</u>	<u>Preferable</u>
- acknowledge receipt of / am in receipt of <i>This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter.</i>	- Thank you / We received <i>Thank you for writing me about.....</i>
- advise <i>Please advise us of the action you intend to take.</i>	- say / tell / let us know <i>Please let us know what action you intend to take.</i>
- at an early date <i>You will hear from us at an early date.</i>	- soon (or give a specific date) <i>I will write you soon about....</i>
- attach hereto <i>Attached hereto is the agreement for your signature</i>	- attached / here / enclosed <i>Attached is the agreement for your signature</i>
- due to the fact that <i>Due to the fact that our factory is on strike, we....</i>	- as / because / since <i>Because our factory is on strike. we...</i>
- enclosed please find <i>Enclosed please find your copy of the minutes of our last meeting.</i>	- enclosed / here <i>Enclosed are the minutes of our last meeting</i>
- here with <i>I am sending you a duplicate bid herewith</i>	- don't use <i>Enclosed / Attached is a duplicate bid.</i>
- kindly <i>If our substitution is not satisfactory, kindly let us know.</i>	- please <i>If our substitution is not satisfactory, please let us know.</i>
- thank you in advance <i>Thank you in advance for any courtesies you can extend to Mr. Philips.</i>	- don't use <i>I would appreciate any courtesies you can extend to Mr. Philips.</i>
- trust <i>I trust you will agree with the action I have taken</i>	- hope / know / believe <i>I believe you will agree with the action I have taken</i>
- would ask / would remind / would say <i>I would ask that you bear with us on our delayed order.</i>	- don't use <i>would</i> this way <i>I hope you will understand why your order will be delayed.</i>

III.4. Language

III.4.1. Avoid the using of slang in writing letter

It is not only weakens your message but often leaves the reader wondering what you meant to say

For example :

Avoid : The Purchasing Department considered the price from Allied *a rip-off*

Better : The Purchasing Department considered the price from Allied *much too high* (Explains more precisely what is wrong with the price)

Don't ever use slang, you simply can not write anything like "A *couple of hundred quid*" or "*bucks*" or "*I have to scouring off you*" instead of "*I need a loan*"

III.4.2. Avoid using overly technical terms, unfamiliar abbreviations.

Because they can confuse the reader and obscure your message.

For example :

Avoid : We place a great deal of emphasis on employee participation through our *QM and JIT* programs.

Better : We place a great deal of emphasis on employee participation through our *quality management and just-in-time stock order* programs.

Don't invent abbreviations and acronyms; only use common and standard ones.

III.4.3. Avoid using cliches that is, worn-out phrases such as “ big as a house” or “ nose to the grindstone”. Instead, choose words that convey more precisely the particular condition or situation you are describing.

For example :

Avoid : To reduce costs, we have got to *keep our eye on the ball*.

Better : To reduce costs, we have got to *keep accurate records of all expenditures* and look for ways to cut our overhead.

III.4.4. Avoid sexist language

Titles, names of positions or occupations and common references can also be made gender-inclusive.

For example :

Avoid : Do not judge someone simply on the basis of *his* sex or color.

Better : Do not judge someone simply on the basis of *sex or color*.

Salutations in business letter should also be gender-inclusive when the name of person addressed is not known. For example :

Dear Supervisor,

Dear Manager,

Nowadays, once women had assumed a large role in the workplace, the words used to describe business roles had to be reexamined. Since, for example, a “businessman” often turned out to be a women, more and more people opted for the sexually neutral term “businessperson”.

The third person singular pronouns in English (**her/she, him/her, his/hers**) are still divided by gender, and so pronouns use continues to present a problem for the writer wishing to avoid “sexist language”.

To avoid this problem, a common way is to use third person plural pronoun .

*An employer must be able to rely on **his** secretary.*

=> *An employer must be able to rely on **their** secretaries.*

Dear Sir,

=> *Dear Manager,*

Dear Chairman,

=> *Dear Chairperson,*

The following list will eliminate the problem from your writing :

Avoid	Revised
salesman	salesperson
chairman	chairperson
fireman	firefighter
watchman	guard, security officer
news man	reporter
repairman	repairer
policeman	police officer
foreman	supervisor
mankind	people
gal Friday	assistant
businessman	businessperson

III.4.5. Avoid repetition in writing letter

A common mistake of some letter writers is repetition. They use the same words (or a form of chose words) and phrases repeatedly in the same paragraph. Some examples:

<u>Repetitive</u>	<u>Edited</u>
Although it is our policy to <i>accept returned merchandise</i> that is in good condition, <i>returned merchandise</i> that is not salable can not <i>accepted</i> .	We <i>accept for returns only</i> merchandise that can be resold.
It is <i>possible</i> that the damage occurred because of faulty packing. An even	The damage may have been caused by faulty packing, or more likely, improper

greater <i>possibility</i> is that the <i>shipper</i> was careless in storing the merchandise for safe <i>shipment</i> . In any event, we will do everything <i>possible</i> to <i>ship</i> a replacement this week.	storage by the shipper. In any event, we will try to send a replacement this week.
Most industrial relations specialists recommend that <i>employees participate</i> in job evaluation, although many employers think that <i>employee participation</i> is not desirable.	Most industrial relations specialists recommend that <i>employees participate</i> in job evaluation, although employers do not always share this point of view.

Here is the list of repetitive words and edited words :

<u><i>Redundant</i></u>	<u><i>Edited</i></u>
in the near future	soon
invisible to the eye	invisible
lose out	lose
Monday morning at 10'oclock a.m	Monday at 10a.m
new beginner	beginner
past experience	experience
rarely ever	rarely
refer back to	refer to
repeat again	repeat
the only other alternative	the only alternative
true fact	facts

Now consider the following 2 sample letters. Notice the repetitions in the first that are eliminated in the second.

<p>Dear Ms. Rodriguez,</p> <p>I am very pleased <i>with the invitation that I received from your inviting me to make a speech for the National Association of Secretaries on June 11th.</i></p> <p>Unfortunately, I <i>regret that I can not attend</i> the meeting on June 11th. I feel that <i>I do not have sufficient time to prepare myself</i> because I received your invitation on June 3rd and <i>it is not enough time to prepare myself completely for the speech.</i></p>	<p>Dear Ms. Rodriguez,</p> <p>I am very pleased <i>with the invitation to speak to the National Association of Secretaries.</i> Unfortunately, <i>I can not attend</i> the meeting on June 11th.</p> <p>I feel that <i>I will not have sufficient time to prepare myself</i> because I received your invitation on June 3rd.</p> <p>I will be happy to address your organization on another occasion if you would give me a bit more notice. Best of</p>
--	--

Sincerely,	luck with your meeting.
	Sincerely,

Of course, as you exclude irrelevant details and repetitions, you should be careful NOT to cut corners by leaving out necessary words. For example, some writers, in a misguided attempt at efficiency, omit articles (*a, an and the*) and *prepositions* :

Please send order special delivery.

The only effect of omitting “the” and “by” here is to make the request rude and impersonal. The correct sentence is :

Please send the order by special delivery.

III.5. Raising student’s awareness of cultural differences between Vietnamese and Western style in writing a business letter.

Certainly, there are a great number of differences in the way Vietnamese and Western people think and write. For example, Westerners highly appreciate punctuality, establish credibility by using more facts and sources than background knowledge; like to look at things as “black and white” pictures and separate emotions from the problem. We also would like to highlight two differences that we came across in the course of study.

- Native speakers of English often use two below conventional ways to address someone :

Correct : Title + last name *Dear Ms. Smith,*

First name only *Dear Marry,*

Incorrect : Title + first name *Dear Ms. Mary,*

Last name only *Dear Smith,*

The first way of addressing is often used in formal situations while the second in intimate or less formal settings. In Vietnamese culture, hardly is anyone addressed by his or her last name, but always by the first name : “ *Dear Tung,*” / “*Dear Mr. Tung,*”. Of course “*Title + first name*” is usually used in formal situations, but age is also another important factor that governs the choice of address term. In formal or informal situations alike, it may sound rude to address an older person by name without title.

For example, that a 30-year-old manager writes to a 50-year-old employee using “*Dear Tung,*” may be regarded as improper. Vietnamese students should pay attention to this difference to address Westerners correctly.

- Western people want to think of themselves as independent units while the Vietnamese emphasize the belonging to a group. That partly explains why

Vietnamese writers may want to refer to their company's names instead of referring to themselves or paying more attention to the reader.

There is a fact that Vietnamese students are not applying You-attitude techniques well in their requesting and refusing letters. It is likely that their Vietnamese thinking and reasoning style interferes in the way they write English business letter.

Therefore, the Vietnamese who are English learners, the writers should highlight that *“Business letters written in American English are generally friendly and consider readers as final point, central point; among those letters writers try to point out the readers' purpose and demand”*.

PART THREE

CONCLUSION

Generally, learning English business letter often does not come easy to learners and may become a nightmare if they do not have a good learning method or use them improperly. Business letter carry the spirit of business activities : using familiar words to express more complicated ideas, but at the same time, they are seen as very tough by almost all learners. Admittedly, techniques in writing business letters are not easy to learn but it is a worthwhile goal which you should bend your energy towards.

Once learners have familiarized themselves with the habit of using effective techniques and used them in natural way, it is time to say that they are on the way of making English business letter.

In this paper, I introduce the most typical features of business letter as well as many strategies which I think effective in learning business letter. It is hoped that my inspiration in business letter learning shines through these pages and finds it way to other learners of English. Besides, I must emphasize that this paper is still a long way from a perfect reference, its ultimate goal is just to provide some suggestions to help learners get a better understanding and a proper way of treating phrasal verbs.

The last message I would like to put across is that success does not come in a fortnight. “Practice, practice and practice” – that is what it really takes to have a good command of business letter – the true reflection of the talent and success of the skillful businessperson.

References

- Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to do Things with Words*. Cambridge University Press.
- Billet, C.D. 1997. *Better Business Writing Skills*. Cannes : Media Training Publishers.
- Bisticco, M.1989. *Instant Business Letter*. Wildwood House.
- Bovee, C.L. et al. 2001. *Business Communication Essentials*. Prentice Hall.
- Guffey, M.E. 2003. *Business Communication*. Thomson South-Western.
- Lesikar, R.V. 1991. *Basic business communication*. Richard D. Irwin. Inc.
- Locker, K.O. 1992. *Business and administrative communication*. Richard D. Irwin. Inc.
- Walte E.O & et al. 1998. *Writing That Work*. ST. Martin's Press.
- Wolf, M.P & Kuiper,S. 1984. *Effective communication in Business*. South Western Publishing Company.
- www.businessletterpunch.com/
- www.business-letter-writing.com
- www.writeexpress.com/download.html
- www.smcps.k12.md.us/mbms/writing/ltrforms.html
- www.business-letters.com/business-letters.htm
- www.writeexpress.com/letter-writing.html
- [www.writinghelp-central.com/ articles-letter-writing.html](http://www.writinghelp-central.com/articles-letter-writing.html)