



Teaching English Correspondence for International Trade: Content-Based Instruction, Genre Moves and Business Simulation

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Abstract

This research reports a teaching procedure for English Correspondence for International Trade. The pedagogical framework is underpinned by content-based instruction, genre moves and business simulation, in which each approach has its source and theories to support it. In the current context, content-based instruction refers to specialist knowledge in relation to letters of credit and incoterms. English learners are grouped into trading partners for import and export simulation. Through continuous simulation, a series of memo, email and letter correspondence proceeds in a systematic order. The analysis of genre moves aims to make learners recognize the communicative purpose and linguistic features of a business letter. Meanwhile, frequent collocations and formulae are phased into the lesson. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the proposed methodology and the students' perception. Data results provide some evidence for the effectiveness of the genre approach on business letter writing. Questionnaires reflect the learner need for business writing skills as well as specialized knowledge.

Keywords: content-based instruction, genre moves, simulation

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) got its formal inception in the 1960s (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It is a branch of English Language Teaching (ELT) and is considered to be contrasted with English for General Purposes (EGP). Although ESP may take various forms, it is generally accepted that the provision of ESP courses should be based on learner needs.

A glance at ESP teaching in Taiwan reveals that ESP programs differ widely. In the context of academic study, language learners remain in their own subject while language teachers are attached to the learner's subject department. In the context of occupational areas, language classes may be arranged at a learner's spare time. Night schools or divisions of continuing education also offer ESP courses. Most of their students are people currently employed.

Different from the above situations where learners are non-English majors, English or applied English departments also offer ESP courses to their students, such as English for Mass Communication, English for Tourism, English for Business Purposes, English for Science & Technology and English for Medical Purposes.

The course background

The school researched is one of the leading universities in southern Taiwan. The business English curricula provided by the department of applied English are split into several subject domains such as English for International Trade, English for Marketing, English for Finance and MICE English. Different from St. John's (1996) dichotomy for EBP, English for general business purposes (EGBP) and English for specific business purposes (ESBP), the current EBP curricula can be called content-based instruction (CBI) for business purposes. They can be seen as an amalgam of English for general purposes (EGP) and deep EBP. The emphasis on what language items for specific purposes are to be learnt in a 'classic' EBP class for business professionals turns out to be a focus on what specialized content is to be learnt in such a 'semi'-EBP class for English majors. The 'semi'-EBP is characterized by the redirection of attention from 'content in favor of language' to 'language in favor of content'. In other words, specialized content is taken into account more in syllabus design. The instructional format is a discipline-based model in the field of CBI. Its organizing principle is the content of the academic subject itself. For example, international trade encompasses price quotation, documentary credit and shipping terms; therefore its content revolves around these related topics.

In the current context, English majors take elective EBP courses mainly for two purposes: preparation for future study in business and job-oriented preparation. They regard elective EBP courses as a launch pad for their career plan. In the present study, English Correspondence for International Trade is a 3-credit hour elective course for the 2nd year undergraduates. The overall instructional objective is threefold:

1. To equip English majors with the specialized knowledge of international trade.
2. To make students familiar with the style and structure of business letters.
3. To enable students to write business letters in relation to international trade.

THE PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLISH CORRESPONDENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Due to lack of specificity of EBP methodology, the methodology in the present EBP context has thus been developed by the teacher-researcher herself. This paper offers a teaching framework for English Correspondence for International Trade and outlines three delivery approaches on which the framework is based. The three approaches are phased into the course in turn: content-based instruction, business simulation, awareness of genre moves in routine correspondence along with formulaic language learning.

Meanwhile two aspects of knowledge are imparted: specialist knowledge with a content focus and specialized knowledge with a language orientation. From this premise, the researcher sought to rely on the theories set out in the literature to support the integrated framework and found that each approach itself can stand alone to account for its pedagogical rationale. The rationale of each approach and its application are discussed.

Content-based instruction

Content-based instruction (CBI) programs are characterized by integrated language and content teaching. Spanos (1989) distinguished three fundamental types for CBI:

- (1) Content-based language instruction, where topical content is used in the language classroom.
- (2) Language-sensitive content instruction, where language instruction is conducted in the content classroom.
- (3) Articulated language and content instruction, where attempts are made to coordinate both content and second or foreign language.

At the tertiary level, Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) identified three models for content-based instruction: theme-based, sheltered and adjunct formats according to their relative focus on language and content. Crandall (1993) also classified CBI into three types: (1.) content-based language instruction, (2.) sheltered subject matter teaching and (3.) language across the curriculum. She defined the first type of CBI as a general approach, in which ESL/EFL teachers use academic texts and tasks as a vehicle for developing language, content and study skills. The second type refers to an approach in which subject teachers adapt the language of their texts to make their instruction accessible to students at lower proficiency levels. The third type means an effort to integrate language instruction into all other curricula—an approach where language and content teachers are teamed together and language teachers derive their materials from the content course. The language teacher emphasizes language skills while the content teacher focuses on academic concepts. These three models can be put on a continuum. At one end of the continuum is the content-driven model (the sheltered CBI) and at the other end is the language-driven format (the theme-based CBI).

Extended from the content-driven model to the extreme is discipline-based language instruction (Krueger & Ryan, 1993). The content is normally disciplinary materials. This embraces instruction in non-language courses that makes extensive use of informational resources in a foreign language or in content courses taught in a foreign language. In line with discipline-based model, the sustained notion advocated by Pally et al (2000) is an important addition to the existing CBI models. She used the term 'sustained content-based instruction' (SCBI) to emphasize that not all content-based curricula feature sustained content. She defined SCBI as studying one content area over time and proposed sustaining a particular content instruction over a semester to lead to

deeper engagement with content sources, meaningful content learning and improved language abilities.

In sum, there are several features which distinguished the aforementioned models from each other (Brinton et al., 1989; Pally et al., 2000; Snow & Brinton, 1997; Wesche, 1993).

1. In the theme-based model, the focus is EFL/ESL learning; in sheltered courses, it is mastery of content materials; in adjunct model, both language and content learning are given prominence. In the sustained model, a single content area is emphasized in depth. In discipline-based courses, academic disciplines are the content organizing principle.

2. In theme-based and sustained courses, language teachers also teach content material; in sheltered and discipline-based courses, subject teachers are responsible for presenting material in the target language in a way that will support language learning; in adjunct courses, each teacher is responsible for his/her subject domain as well as coordination with the other.

3. In theme-based courses, more attention is paid to language learning, while in sheltered and discipline-based courses, more focus is on specialist content learning. The adjunct program highlights both content and language learning.

The literature review concerning CBI types serves two purposes:

1. To characterize CBI as a methodology with many facets, this review tries to depict the current contexts in which one of the CBI models is used.

2. A reference to previous CBI models would clarify which aspect of CBI the present pedagogical framework fits conceptually.

As aforementioned, the discipline-based model has been used in the current context. The reason for adopting content-based instruction in an EBP class is that students see the need for conveying their business knowledge in trade-related correspondence. Incorporating CBI is a natural result of considering such a need. Appendix 1 illustrates a part of class lectures, through which indispensable specialist knowledge in relation to letters of credit (documentary credit) is delivered.

The genre approach

Genre-based pedagogy has been highly promoted in the field of applied linguistics and ESP, as genre awareness fosters language learning. According to Swales (1990), a genre can be briefly defined as a class of texts characterized by a sequence of 'moves' with each accomplishing some part of the overall communicative purpose of the text. Genre analysis is the study of the structural and linguistic regularities of particular text types and the role they play within a discourse community. Nwogu (1991) further defined a move as "a text segment made up of a bundle of linguistic features (e.g. lexical meanings and illocutionary forces), which gives the segment a uniform orientation and signals the content of discourse in it" (p. 114).

Swales (1990) proposed that the identification of recurring discourse structures such as moves and steps in genre-specific text would raise learners' genre awareness and facilitate their participation in their disciplinary discourse communities. Other advantages in association with genre awareness include enhancing learners' discourse communication abilities and benefiting learners in their professional roles (Hyland, 2000; Mustafa, 1995; Johns, 2001).

Applying the notion of genre to the current teaching context, the students are firstly directed to the 7 Cs' guiding principles for writing a business letter: completeness, clearness, correctness, concreteness, conciseness, courtesy and consideration. The 7 Cs' can be applied to all types of business letters to ensure effective exchange of information and the maintenance of a good relationship.

As mentioned, the second aim of the course is to raise students' awareness of the generic and structural features of routine correspondence and to enable them to replicate these features in their own letter writing. To accomplish this, they are given several sample letters for each situation. Following Swales' (1990) notion of genre, a sample letters is divided into several text segments (i.e. moves) based on the messages and their communicative purposes in the body of the letter. Table 1 lists the moves in twelve types of business letters together with the function of each move. The analysis of move structure can provide students with an easy way into writing business letters.

Table 1. The moves in business letters

Sales letter	Inquiries/Requests	Replies to inquiries
1. Begin with a strong opening statement that attracts attention.	1. State where you learned about the company/ product.	1. Acknowledge receipt.
2. Promote the features of the product. (a) Explain (b) Itemize the benefits.	2. Give general information about your business.	2. Answer questions the enquirer asked.
3. End confidently and encourage the receiver to respond.	3. State your interest.	3. Suggest ways in which you could help the enquirer to make a decision.
	4. Request action.	4. Invite the enquirer to ask further information.
	5. Appropriate closing.	
Order letter	Replies to orders	Refusing order
1. Acknowledge the reply.	1. Acknowledge the order.	1. Thank the customer for the order.
2. Place an order. (a) Give detailed info. (b) Shipping instruction.	2. Confirm the supply.	2. Say that you cannot meet the order.
3. Confirm terms of payment.	3. Say what you have done about the order.	3. Say why you cannot meet the order.
4. Set deadline for delivery.	4. Say what you are going to do next about the order.	4. Suggest an alternative.
	5. Assure the delivery.	
	6. Appropriate closing.	
Shipping advice	Request for payment	Reminder for payment
1. Refer to the order.	1. Refer to the product for which payment is due.	1. Review earlier efforts to collect payment.
2. Give shipping details. E.g. arrival date, vessel name, shipping documents:	2. State the current status of the overdue account.	2. Give a final opportunity by fixing a deadline.

B/L, invoice, packing list.	3. Ask for a payment.	3. State that you wish to be fair and reasonable.
3. Thank you for the patronage and look forward to the safe arrival of the goods.	4. Conclude by indicating your faith in the customer's settlement of payment.	4. State what action you'll take if it is ignored.
		5. Regret the necessity for the letter.
Complaint/ Claim	Positive adjustment	Rejecting a complaint
1. Refer to the order.	1. Acknowledge the letter of complaint.	1. Thank the customer for writing and express your regret re the problem.
2. State reason for complaint.	2. Explain the cause of the problem.	2. State the reason for the refusal tactfully. (Politely explain why the complaint is unjustified.)
3. Suggest possible causes of the problem.	3. State action taken to prevent the problem happening again.	3. Sympathize with the customer and show another expression of thanks.
4. State action(s) you require the other company to take (Recommend the action that will best solve the problem.)	4. Reassure the customer.	
	5. State remedy action taken to solve the problem.	

After the analysis of genre moves, students are guided to pay attention to collocations and formulae/formulaic sequences (Schmitt, 2010; Wray, 2002). The rationale of raising students' consciousness of collocations or formulae is that they are often stored as a unit and can be retrieved as a whole. Lewis (2000) urged the teaching of collocations for the following:

1. Collocations, which make up nearly seventy percent of everyday language, are fundamental to language use.
2. The predictability of collocations will make learning easier.
3. The more collocations learners are exposed to, the better they will use them.
4. Collocations enhance fluency and speed up communication.

Overall, there are two types of collocations: lexical collocations and grammatical collocations. Lexical collocations mainly include word-associations where one component recurrently co-occurs with one or more other components as the only or one of the few possible lexical choices. Examples include *quantity discount*, *volume discount*, *bulk orders*, *reserve the right and make payment* (see Table 2).

Grammatical collocations consist of a content word and a function word or certain structural pattern (e.g. *that*-clause, *to* + infinitive or *gerund*). For example, *it is essential that* + noun clause, *look forward to* + *V-ing* and *would like to* + infinitive are all grammatical collocations (see Table 3).

Table 2. Lexical collocations

Pattern	Examples	Pattern	Examples	Pattern	Examples
Verb	meet deadline	Adjective	immediate	Noun 1	volume discount
+	meet requirement	+	dispatch	+	bulk order
noun	make payment	noun	competitive price	Noun 2	quantity discount
	make concession		repeated purchase		trade discount
	reserve the right		safe arrival		trade terms
	issue/ open a L/C		regular supplies		worth \$
	arrange shipment		great appreciation		a trial order
	make		most favorable		discount concession
	arrangement		terms		market penetration
	place an order		mutual advantage		invoice price
	receive shipment		no commercial		shipping advice
	take a legal action		value		product
	maintain supplies		perfect condition		specifications
			firm order		
			unavoidable		
			occurrence		

Table 3. Grammatical collocations

Pattern	Examples	Pattern	Examples
Preposition	in one's favor	Noun	delivery by <u>date</u>
+	at one's expense/ risk	+	deadline of <u>date</u>
noun	be <u>of interest</u>	preposition	the letter of <u>date</u>
combinations	subject to change without notice		the demand for
	up to sample/ expectations		a discount of ~ %
	of good/ superior quality		an order for
	at ~ days sight		a breach of
	with effect from		replacement for
	below the standard		apology for
	in good order		lack of
	out of stock		inconvenience caused
	in strict rotation		by
	under considerable pressure		attention to/ a focus on
			interest in/inquiry
			about
			a shortage of
			a range of
~ that noun clause	Please note that	Verb	offer to
	We trust that	+	wish to
	It is essential that	infinitive	would like to
	I can only assume that		feel free to
	We regret that		do not hesitate to
	We expect that		be glad to
	You can be assured that		be pleased to
	Please ensure that		There seems to
	We suggest that ~should ~		There seems to have
	It is very likely that		been

		It appears to	
Verb/	look forward to + V-ing	Content word	payable at ~ days sight
phrasal verb	inform sb. of + n.	+	acceptable on the
+ preposition	specialize in + V-ing/ n.	preposition	condition~
+ gerund or	Thank you for + V-ing/ n.	combinations	meet with one's
noun	apologize for + V-ing/ n.		approval
	have pleasure in + V-ing		signed with effect from
	appreciate + V-ing/ n.		date~
			renewable from date~

As can be seen in Table 3, some multiword collocations are formulaic in nature and seem to correlate with a certain move of a genre. For instance, the formulaic expression '*Delivery by + date is essential*' often appears in the move *setting a deadline for delivery* of an order letter. More formulaic phrases are given below.

We would appreciate it if...	Could you please send us	We thank you for...
We have pleasure in...	We are pleased to...	We look forward to...
~ will be highly	We would be grateful if...	For the attention of ...
appreciated.	Delivery by...is essential.	We regret to inform you
We are writing to...		that...
We have seen your		

Business simulation

At the beginning of the course, students are instructed to find their own partners and sit close together for a semester. To ensure students' active participation in teamwork, the teacher-researcher offers a quasi-business environment in the classroom by modeling the process of doing business. Each group represents a company and business simulation continues with the course for a semester, namely continuous simulation (Tarnopolsky, 2000). Students are placed in various business situations in relation to international trade (such as complaint, adjustment, inquiry and replies).

In the first meeting, students are required to give a name to their companies (including designing a logo or a trademark) and to decide what their business would be. In the second meeting, students are asked to introduce their companies and their major businesses. Moreover, they are required to design their company's letterhead for future commercial correspondence. When each group's firm is thus created, its day-to-day functioning starts throughout the whole semester (i.e. doing business on an on-going basis). In this way, students act like employers and write for their company in each business situation. Each group/company is either a buyer/importer or a seller/exporter. Therefore, each group/company will send and receive letters at the same time. Each time when students finish writing, they need to deliver their letters to the right company. The aim of such simulation is to provide students with a purpose and context for writing. As an example, Table 4 gives a picture of business simulation.

Table 4. Twelve companies created by twelve groups of four students

Group	Company name	Place	Group	Company name	Place
1	Kuso Office Supplies	Amsterdam, Holland	7	Momo LV Ladies	California, U.S.
2	Dreamer PC Home	Taipei, Taiwan	8	The One Textiles	Pattaya, Thailand
3	Rain Electronics	Seoul, Korea	9	Miracle Kitchen	Liverpool, U.K.
4	TBG Computers	Singapore	10	A-go-go Drink Machines	Toulouse, France
5	F4 Gentlemen's Outfitters	Yokohama, Japan	11	Rainbow Food Processor	Murcia, Spain
6	La New Shoes	Hong Kong	12	Even Ovens Ltd. Satellite Dishes	Melbourne, Australia

The feedback stage takes place in a separate session after the writing activity. Each group of students is required to look through the letter they receive from another group and to mark on the letter grammatical errors or any problems they have in understanding. Following that, letters are returned to the groups that wrote them. Then each group checks their own letter and corrects the mistakes. The feedback session is a vital part of the activity in that students are generally slow in recognizing their own errors than in seeing others.

By this stage, the entire pedagogical framework comprises group work and business simulation, meanwhile content-based instruction and genre awareness are phased into the course and progress in a systematic order. Since there are twelve types of business letters, there will be twelve mini-cycles for the teaching procedure: (1) content-based instruction, (2) genre awareness, (3) writing under business simulation and (4) peer review (see Appendix 2 for a graphical display). Subsequently, this research seeks to answer the following questions.

RQ1: What are students' perceptions toward the teaching methodology for *English Correspondence for International Trade*?

RQ2. Will content-based instruction, the genre approach and business simulation help students to enhance their business letter writing?

RQ3. What problems may students encounter while writing a business letter?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The participants were a class of forty-eight English majors at the intermediate level of proficiency. Two textbooks were used: Longman Commercial Communication (Stanton & Wood, 2016) and Company to Company (Littlejohn, 2016). The former contains a variety of business letters in relation to import and export. The latter adopts an interactive task-based approach and provides simulation situations for students to

practice writing letters to each other (as the book title suggested, company to company).

To answer the research questions, forty-eight anonymous questionnaires of thirteen open-ended questions (see Appendix 3) concerning the students' perception toward the three approaches were distributed at the end of the semester. The responses were classified into several categories based on the gist of their statements together with the count.

To examine whether the students benefit from the instruction of genre moves and formulae, repeated measures t tests on pre- and post- treatments across the first three types of business letters (i.e. sales, inquiries and replies) were administered. The measure for writing performance was operationalized as the number of errors. The students with knowledge of genre moves and formulae or collocations were expected to make fewer errors. The treatment involved letter writing before (without) and after (with) genre and collocation instruction. The comparison was therefore straightforward. Finally, a series of t-tests were conducted on SPSS 17.0

For a coding reliability check, one of the researcher's colleagues, who taught the same subject, was requested for help. The consistency of the coding was mainly calculated by the coefficient of the simple percentage agreement. The percentage of agreement between two raters reached 95%.

DATA RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 5 summarizes the statistical results concerning the genre approach.

Table 5. Repeated measures t test results for the genre approach across three types of trade letters

Letter type	Pre-treatment Mean	Post-treatment Mean	t	p (sig.)
Sales letter	12	8	-2.304	0.034*
Inquiry letter	9	6	-2.1	0.048*
Reply letter	11	6	-2.382	0.02*

Measure: the number of errors in a letter. The determination of the significance level was set at $p < .05$. "*" = statistically significant difference.

As can be seen in Table 5, the genre approach demonstrated a beneficial effect on the writing performance across three letter types (as fewer errors have shown, $8 < 12$, $6 < 9$, $6 < 11$). All p-values $< .05$ indicate a significant difference between with and without the instruction of genre moves and formulae in the mean value of errors. To confirm the helpfulness of the genre approach, the questionnaires were analyzed based on the gist of the students' statements.

Students' perception toward a genre-moves approach

Table 6. Student responses to the genre approach

Positive Response	Count	Negative Response	Count
Very useful phrases and collocations	19	Little time spent on sentence structure	3
The structure of each type of trade letter is clearly listed and easily followed.	32	Insufficient explanation why some wording and tone was impolite	9
The identification of moves helps to write a letter in a systematic order.	27	The structure lecture for each type of trade letter is boring, though it is helpful.	16
The move structure helps me to check whether my letter contains complete messages.	13		

Note: The class size = 48. The total counts are not equal to the class size because the students' responses to each question were classified into several categories based on the gist of their statements.

Quite a few students (19 mentions, see Table 6) felt that the learning of formulae and collocations was the most helpful. Among the activities undertaken in the class, twenty-seven students liked the analysis of moves better because they felt that the moves provided a good direction to follow. One-third of the students indicated that knowledge of genre structure, despite being more boring than other activities, has helped them to enhance writing abilities. They acknowledged that the genre approach achieved an immediate effect in light of the thinking process. To some extent, there was an analogy with driving, as several students pointed out on the questionnaire.

"For writing, the move in a genre is like a signpost for driving. It will be easier for a driver to follow the direction and judge the distance when a road is well signposted."

Furthermore, it was very encouraging for the teacher-researcher to see that some students stated their needs for the teacher's push from behind (13 mentions).

"I remember Ms. Hsu's lecture about the moves in a letter. The move structure is deeply rooted in my head. For fear of point deduction, I think I wrote each type of letter well by following its move structure."

Negative comments about the genre session are mainly "insufficient syntax explanation" and "too little time spent on grammar". Nine students remarked that in some cases it would have been more concrete to be told why some wording was considered offensive or inappropriate. Perhaps the teacher-researcher should take the blame because of her failure to recognize the students' need for the explanation of some grammatical points. This also implies that the syllabus may need modifying in this regard.

Moreover, a handful of students voiced their concern that although formulaic phrases are useful in routine business correspondence, they still need to learn more about non-routine matters such as social skills.

Students' perception toward content-based instruction

When the students were asked "Which approach do they like most, the genre approach or content-based instruction?", the bulk of students' preferences (40 out of 48) tended to center around business content instruction. They gave their reasons as below.

"Business content knowledge makes me feel that I am a double major."

"Learning a new content area makes me feel a sense of achievement."

"Business concepts are easily kept in mind once understood. I have a short memory. I dislike form-function exercises."

The value of CBI was highlighted by students' conception that they were more knowledgeable being a double major than being a language major. Their need for knowledge of another content area became prominent when the chance was given. Such a knowledge need may have dictated their preferences for CBI. This can be partly ascribed to the fact that the participants in this research were English majors in an EFL context. The EBP class provided them with the opportunity of learning something different from a language course. Around ten students who intend to run an export and import business expressed their enthusiasm and excitement about the usefulness of business knowledge learnt in this course.

The need for specialist knowledge also helped to explain why the content lectures remained in their mind. Somewhat surprisingly, most students still remembered the specialist content delivered at the beginning of this course. The subject matter was completely new to them so that CBI seemed more effective in terms of memory than genre-awareness exercises. Though collocation exercises have achieved an immediate effect on writing performance, the CBI effect on specialist content learning stays longer. The following is a selection of their responses.

"I remember one of Ms. Hsu's content lectures was the incoterms. The seller's risks and responsibilities in a price quotation such as FOB and CIF are deeply rooted in my head."

"I have acquired some basic knowledge of export and import, which is helpful in looking for a job in an international enterprise."

Students' perception toward business simulation

Most students felt that group work had reduced their tension and panic in class. Those who voted for business simulation explained that they preferred the collaborative atmosphere in teamwork. They admitted that their attention span was short, yet they were aware that team spirit (the feeling of being on the same boat) extended their attention span and facilitated mastery of content through cooperative learning.

"The continuous role play for the same company enables us to learn how to function in a firm and learn to how to resolve conflicts."

Eight students noted that business simulation created an atmosphere of bringing the office to the classroom. Their comments resembled the following.

“I felt I was a boss.”

“I enjoyed owing a company running on an ever-lasting basis.”

“Good game—very realistic and fun.”

One student even said that his attitude changed when working with others. He added that such teamwork experience was different from that in other courses. He enjoyed working with ‘business partners’ and would welcome this kind of teamwork in the future.

“We imagined we would make money by quoting a price with a big profit margin. We also quoted a competitive price in the hope of getting more orders. We settled customer complaints by negotiating a favorable compensation.”

Another student mentioned her pride in being able to use her intelligence to solve problems when writing an adjustment letter. Among many types of business letters, eight students expressed their view that negative adjustment letters were the most challenging in terms of the maintenance of business relationship. The overall students’ impression of business simulation is summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Summary of the students’ perception toward business simulation

Positive Response	Count
Playful learning in company simulation	43
Due to competition with other companies/groups, we seldom engaged in small talk during group discussion.	31
More intensive collaboration than usual	28
Sense of achievement-speaking like a boss	5
Negative Response	Count
Feeling of freshness from company simulation wore off toward the end of the semester	1

Students’ perception toward peer feedback

Table 8. Summary of the students’ perception toward peer feedback

	count
Overwhelmingly positive comments	
We did not feel embarrassed when reading feedback given by other groups or writing feedback for other groups.	32
Peer feedback helped us to know the errors in our group letter and thus we made fewer errors in the 2 nd draft before it was submitted to Ms. Hsu	40

The peer feedback session received considerable support (32 mentions, see Table 8). Some students showed their blunt happiness in finding fault with other groups’ letters.

They were excited to see that other groups ended up having to rewrite due to many errors being spotted. No one complained about peer correction. The embarrassment of losing face was eased by group writing. Two students pointed out the importance of good peer work as a learning model. They gave their reason that due to the same English proficiency, peer letters were easier for them to emulate. Despite the fact that there was a peer feedback session, none of the students mentioned that they should have been keen on language accuracy during the write-up phase.

Students' perception toward the teaching framework

From their questionnaire responses, most students apparently liked the course. Twenty students expressed their appreciation of the recyclable teaching methodology for each type of business letter in that the teaching procedure was predictable to them. Before the course, several students thought that business letters were becoming obsolete because of the advance in computer technology. They presumed that business correspondence can be mostly done on a computer or a mobile phone with access to the Internet. Later they found that in some business situations, formal letters are needed. In addition, they were surprised to learn that the course also included specialist content instruction. Seventeen students even recommended that specialist content should be included more.

Generally speaking, the pedagogical framework appeared to be acceptable to the students. A simple answer "like or dislike" may suffice to answer the question. As is evident from the students' responses, when content-based instruction was a new experience to them and matched what they believed they would need in the near future, their curiosity was aroused and thus increased interest pursued. The issue of whether their interest could be maintained over time is worth investigating but beyond the current research focus. When it came to assessing whether they had actually learned something new from the course, the whole class gave an affirmative answer.

As to the problems that students may encounter while writing a business letter, their answers included word choice, modals and voice. Based on the students' letters (see Appendix 4), the most frequent errors were: (1) the omission of articles, (2) subject-verb disagreement, (3) wrong tense, (4) lengthy run-on sentences, (5) sentence fragments, and (6) translationese (Ideas are formulated in the native language and then translated into English). The errors imply that even though a business letter involves specialist knowledge, syntax and grammar should not be ignored. Otherwise, students may make the same linguistic errors thousands of times, leading to the result that practice does not necessarily make perfect.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the current teaching context, mastery of business specialist knowledge seems to be indispensable if business letters in relation to international trade are to be effectively written. The questionnaires also reflected a need of most English-majoring students for specialist knowledge.

Teachers may benefit from students' awareness of genre moves and peer feedback, which can partially reduce content or language errors. Teamwork through business simulation may enhance participation. The issues of group dynamics are worthwhile to explore but they are beyond this research focus.

Last but not least, the proposed teaching framework is certainly not a panacea, yet it offers an alternative approach to teaching *English Correspondence for International Trade*. It is hoped that the present research may provide some inspiration for future empirical studies concerning ESP methodology. Meanwhile, the students' feedback is essential to the ongoing reflections on, in and for the practice of this course.

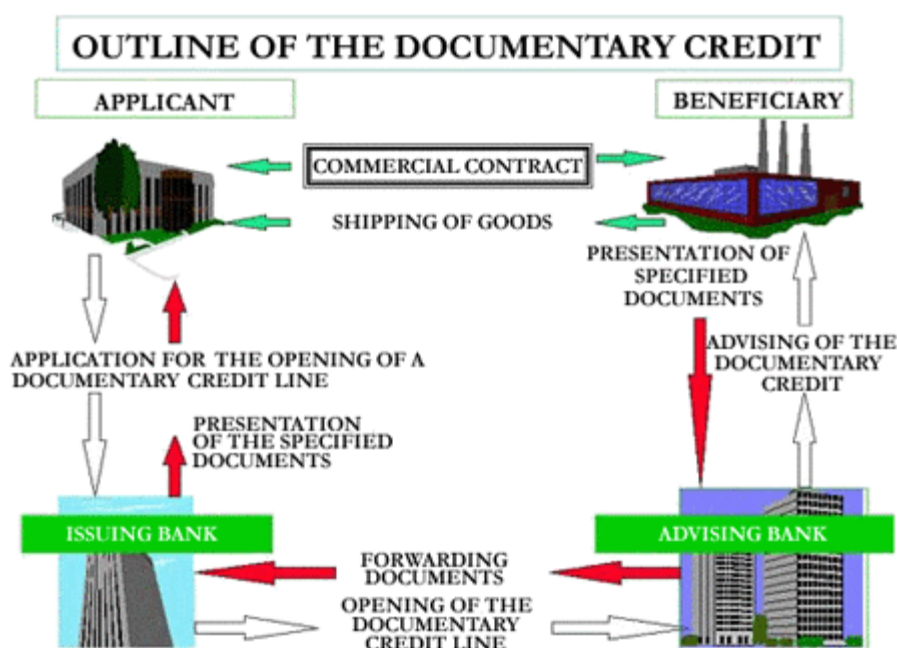
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. How a documentary credit works

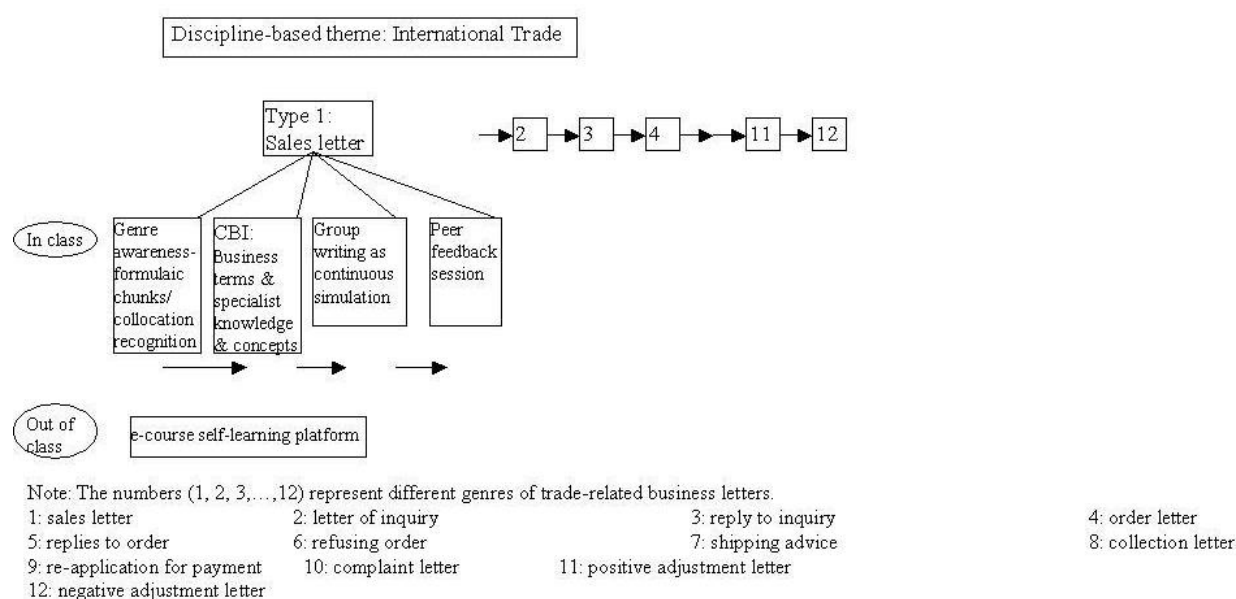


1. The importer and the exporter must negotiate and agree a sales contract.
2. The importer begins the Documentary Credit process by asking his bank to open a Documentary Credit in favor of the exporter. The importer supplies his bank with details of the transaction on an application form. By agreeing to open the credit, the importer's bank guarantees to pay the exporter if the importer cannot or will not pay.
3. The importer's bank (the issuing bank) sends details of the Documentary Credit to the exporter's bank (or to its agent bank in the exporter's country). At this stage, the exporter's bank may either simply pass on the details of the Document Credit to

the exporter, in which case it is an advising bank, or add its own guarantee to the credit, in which case it is a confirming bank.

4. The advising bank then informs the exporter of the Documentary Credit.
 5. When the exporter receives the Documentary Credit from his bank, he checks them very carefully. These details tell him which documents he must prepare before he can be paid, for example, Bill of Lading, Bill of Exchange, Commercial Invoice, Certificate of Insurance, Packing List and Export Permit, etc. Then the exporter dispatches the goods. The B/L is signed by the captain to confirm the goods are on board ship.
 6. After this, the exporter takes the documents to his bank, which checks them. If they are in order, the confirming bank pays the exporter or accepts a Bill of Exchange. At this point, the exporter has his money or a Bill of Exchange, the goods are on board ship, and the confirming bank has the documents.
 7. The confirming bank then sends the documents to the importer's bank, the issuing bank, which checks them and send the money to the confirming bank. (If the exporter's bank has not confirmed the Documentary Credit, but only advised him of it, the exporter will not be paid until the issuing bank has checked the documents and transferred the money, or accepted a Bill of Exchange.)
 8. The next stage is for the importer's bank to debit the importer's account. The importer must pay his bank in order to get the documents. Without the documents, and in particular without the Bill of Lading, the importer cannot collect the goods.
 9. At this point, the importer's bank has been paid, the importer has the documents and the goods are on board ship.
 10. The final stage is for the importer to use the documents, which prove his ownership of the goods, to collect the goods when they arrive in port.
- (Stanton & Wood, 2016, pp. 67-69).

Appendix 2. Sequence in the pedagogical framework for *English Correspondence for International Trade*



Appendix 3. Post-course anonymous open-ended questionnaire

1. What stage/part do you like? (business content instruction, writing under business simulation, genre-awareness language exercises, peer feedback)
2. What stage/part do you dislike? (business content instruction, writing under business simulation, genre-awareness language exercises, peer feedback)
3. How do you feel about this course?
4. Did something unusual happen during the business simulation? Can you make some comments on it?
5. How did your group complete a business letter? (E.g. Did someone take the decision? Or did you have conflicts in the process of writing?)
6. How do you feel about the quality of your group writing? Why?
7. In business writing, what knowledge or skills do you think you need most?
8. Which part of a business letter do you think is difficult to write?
9. What type of business letter do you think is the most difficult to write?
10. What perception did you hold toward business letter writing before this course?
11. How did you view your participation in doing business in English through business simulation?
12. Do you agree that this course has helped you to enhance your business writing ability?
13. Would you like your teacher to continue teaching this way? Why? Or why not?

Appendix 4. A sample of student business letter

Dear Mr. Deely,

Your order No. 33421 for scanners

December 4th

We thank you for your letter of December 4th, in which you have informed us that case number 9 contained ed the wrong goods.

We have looked into this matter and discovered that there appears s to be have been some confusion in the numbering of two different orders which were collected by our forwarding agent for dispatch to Canada. We have reviewed our coding system and can assure you that similar mistakes will not happen again.

We have already dispatched replacements s for the contents s of case number 9 and have arranged for the collection of the wrongly-delivered goods.

Finally, we would like to apologize to you about for the inconvenience you were caused and to thank you for your patience in this matter.

We look forward to hearing of the safe arrival of case number 9 and to do ing further business with you.

Yours sincerely,

Peggy Huang
Sales Manager