

Easy business e-mail in English

A course project, a year late, from Allan Edmands

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Introduction

Easy? *Easy* is hardly a term that the typical Japanese would use to describe experiences with the English language. Deep in his or her heart, under the surface polite exterior, there is a palpable hatred of English. After years of painful study of formal, stilted, outmoded, theoretical grammar formulas taught by pedants who themselves are terrified of the idea of actually conversing with a native English speaker, who wouldn't hate English?

The international language. Yet there is no getting away from English, much as the Japanese would dearly love to. Because of an embarrassing turn of geopolitical events in the early to mid-1940s, the beautifully subtle and ultrapolite Japanese tongue did not become the world's language, which it was obviously so well suited for. Unfortunately for the Japanese people, their language's rightful place as *the* international language is occupied today by the barbarous English speech.

The essential language for business. Naturally, the Japanese people are far too polite to explain the situation that way. In fact, the typical Japanese businessperson professes a great eagerness to learn English. And why not? Like it or not, communication in English is essential for success in most international business transactions, and Japan's upstart neighbors in Asia--Taiwan, Hong Kong (even China itself), the Philippines, Singapore, even that former colony Korea--are much better communicators in English. Unless the Japanese improve their English proficiency, these rivals are likely to “eat Japan's lunch”--to use a triteness the Japanese speaker is prone to use inappropriately.

The formidable language. For decades already, Japan has abounded in courses in English--formal English essay writing, American casual conversation, the special English vernacular of romance, the underlying meanings of the dialog in Hollywood movies. The results are disappointing--actually pitiful. It is considered a tremendous accomplishment when a Japanese businessperson, one who has not spent considerable time living in an English-speaking country, assembles a single intelligible sentence, let alone an entire memo.

For example... There are multitudes of examples of this maladroit incompetence, but the following correspondence from Yoji to his American friend Allan is typical. Planning his first trip to the U.S., accompanying his girl friend (whom he abbreviates as "GF") on her business trip for GE (!), Yoji wants to get together with Allan. GF must visit GE offices in Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles. Although Allan doesn't have time to travel downstate to New York City, he suggests that Yoji and GF take the train to Poughkeepsie, where he can pick them up and drive them to his Woodstock home for a visit with the family. Yoji had first proposed a date on the 22nd, but in this e-mail he explains that he must shift the visit one day later.

Yoji writes:

I'm sorry. The day when I can go will shift for one day. GF must be in Chicago at work till the 22nd. I am also in Chicago together with her till the 22nd. Therefore, it will become that I go to NY on the 23rd. Are 23 days sufficient? Is it very well, although I want to go together with GF, if your time can be taken? Supposing it is very well to it, it is from me to her. I wants to give franklin day planner, would you buy it? She is the section chief of GE Jpn., is quite busy, and has not done management of time. They are bought for it in Japan, or since it is high, I want to become, and to buy it there.

Allan assumes that Yoji would like him to get a Franklin Planner for his GF (a purchase Yoji would reimburse), since it is so much less expensive in the U.S. than in Japan. Allan responds that since there is no Franklin-Covey store near Woodstock, it would make more sense for Yoji himself to buy the planner in Chicago or New York City. After researching the Web, Allan sends Yoji the addresses and phone numbers of several large-city Franklin-Covey stores, as well as giving him the URL so that Yoji can determine the best size and style.

Yoji writes:

I look for the store of Franklin in Chicago. Thank you for having the place of the Franklin's stores taught. I looked at HP of Franklin in web. It seems that he can buy the same goods with 60% grade of Tokyo in the United States.

Allan had no clue what *HP* referred to (does Hewlett-Packard have anything to do with Franklin Covey?). Anyway, Allan asked Yoji to confirm which day he would have time to visit, after explaining that the trip to Woodstock by train and car would be about three hours each way. Allan suggested that Yoji and GF stay for a meal.

Yoji writes:

I appreciate kindly. It will become that I go to your house on the evening of the 23rd. I'll take GF, please treat to supper. Since I can go to Grand Central Station if I am after 16:00, please investigate the train schedules from Grand Central Station. of henceforth at the time to it. Moreover, please also investigate the train schedules from Poughkeepsie of return. It is the apartment of her company in Manhattan that I stay.

I have almost no opportunity to speak English, after stopping meeting Allan. Therefore, I become unable to speak English. I am looking forward to being able to meet you after a long time.

Allan provided the train times for Friday the 23rd after 4 PM. He copied the note to his friend Susan, who uses that train much more frequently and would have a more up-to-date schedule, asking her to confirm the times. Allan explained to Yoji that if they could not leave New York City until after 16:00, it would be getting late by the time they reached Woodstock, and that perhaps they should plan on staying overnight. Allan promised to get them to the train on Saturday morning. But...

Yoji writes:

Thanks for your kindness. Then I already take a train early to a slight degree. How is it then in the start at the 15:30 times? 24 days, I have to leave NYC early in the morning at 24th, and will go to LA. I surely have to return to NYC The time with late me also returns to Manhattan. A train should time-investigate once again. I am O.K. if it can return to NYC by 12PM time.

Allan and Yoji finally worked it out: They would come a little earlier on Friday and return late that evening, so they would be able to catch the morning flight to LA. Allan explained about the need for changing trains at Croton-Harmon Station when traveling late at night. After being copied on the note again to confirm times, Susan wrote to Yoji, too, explaining a little more about the Croton-Harmon switchover. In the meantime, Yoji had sent Allan another note, full of unreadable characters, which were

obviously the futile attempt of Allan's computer to render double-byte Japanese. Allan asked Yoji what was in that note, in English.

As for the Mail, I transmit Mail from Allan to GF. I used to be mistaken in it and used to send to Allan. The contents of the Mail should be disregarded. I am the thing which wrote the message of love to her by Japanese.

I'll buy for her a Franklin Day Planner. She was too busy with work until now. I have humanity to her and want to return to the generous life. Therefore, I am as a present. Franklin Day Planner was chosen. When I will visit in your house on the 23rd, please show her your Day Planner. It is told to her that I raise and read the book of how to use Day Planner. Since there is seldom time when I visit this time, I think that I cannot have how to be used for her from Allan taught. Therefore, it teaches her that I had taught Allan until now. Thanks

Yoji felt that it would be suitably polite to thank Susan for her help:

Yoji writes:

I am Yoji of Allan's friend. Thank you for having you carry out by having many things investigated kindly. I can also make the change by Croton-Harmon satisfactory by favor.

Some business examples. The preceding was, of course, the correspondence between friends, and though it deals extensively with specifications of time and place and circumstance as any business correspondence does, it might be argued that this is not really *business* correspondence. Okay, okay--here are some strictly business examples.

Here's a characteristic example from a writing class, where students were assigned to write a business letter about a given situation. Please understand that the real daily on-the-job tasks of each of these students involve corresponding in English concerning important international business transactions.

Subject: Your incorrect balance

Dear Mr. Zandecki:

We own you an apology. I much apologize our mistake to you for you incorrect account balance. I believe that the management of customer's account is the most important thing as a bank, so I cannot excuse this mistake.

We soon investigated the cause of the mistake. That caused our operator typed the wrong data entry information on your individual record. In addition, there was a bug in the adjustment program to filter such an operation. We have collected the error. Thank you for your understanding.

Your account is already fixed certainly and the actions were taken to prevent this kind of error to never happen again. These actions will not only keep your satisfaction but also other customers' one. I truly thank you for your pointing out the problem.

As the express of my apology, a Number 1 Service Card, which has much special options. It entitles you to free checking and a \$100,000 line of credit is sent separately near later. We are very sorry with the trouble again. We would be pleased you to accept the card and we hope you to use our bank furtherly.

If I can do any further service, do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,
T. Naoi
Senior Vice President at the Bank

Here's an actual e-mail notice:

To all members of System Center this year and last year:

I created notes database by way of experiment. It is purpose to store of experience reports and voices of System Center each other. The name is "a casket of system center". Please use this database, and give me your advice that you want to do. I think set up this database on local server, not public server for period of experiment. I will set up on public server after I reflect your advices. Please input positiveness!

serverip(temporary) : test.kawasaki.japan.ibm.com

If you can't connect this server, refer for my mail,how to connect to server, before. The period of experiment is until March 20.

Best regards,
Kazue Onodera

And here is an e-mail to the director of the technology center at a major computer company in the U.S.:

To: Bill Joy
JINI technology Center
Sun Microsystems
Subject: JINI license

Dear Mr. Joy:

Our company is a manufacture of computer peripherals and software. We intend that their products could communicate each other by JINI technology that your company was developed. We expect that our business chance should enlarge by JINI.

Therefore I would like to know detailed JINI license system. Please send me JINI license reference documents. I want to negotiate contract conditions few weeks later.

Sincerely,
Kazutoshi Takeya
Office System Center
RICOH Co. Ltd.

To be taken seriously. Examples such as these are amusing and even disarmingly endearing, but they do not earn the respect that their writers would like. As can be seen on almost all photographs of the Japanese, if they are not holding their fingers in a “V” sign, they look serious and they want to be taken seriously. When they realize how their written English is received by kind native English speakers struggling to decipher it and making generous allowances for it, the Japanese cringe with deep shame.

Technical and scientific examples. English technical and scientific writing from Japan is swollen with misleading statements and thick fog. The bewildering VCR instructions written in Japan are classics, but here are some recent examples of technical explanation that is intended to clear things up but produces the opposite effect:

Size of charge saved is given to an either plate of a condenser with $q = CV$. However, q is charge expressed in a coulomb, C is capacitance expressed in a farad, and V is a potential difference between plates expressed in a volt.

Macroinstruction is a serial command executed by movement called one time of key stroke and one time of mouse click. you can make editing of existing macroinstruction and new macroinstruction by selecting macro setup option.

The prior level that can be selected among print manager includes low level, middle level, high level. While they print it, these setting gives influence to the efficiency of other other applications. For example, print work becomes fast when selects high level, but handling of other applications becomes slow.

The diskette has the thick disk (magnetic memory medium) in the protect jacket as shown. Treat the diskette carefully as it could lose the data and be hard to write the new data.

Don't erase something on the diskette, with a rubber because the diskette covered with the grounds of a rubber will make trouble or can't be used.

Don't put the heavy thing on the diskette. It could break or crack the surface of the diskette completely. Don't touch the surface of the magnetic disk directly. The body's grease and sweat cause the trouble to the diskette.

The operation to fix the hard disk head is following.

To group employees into males and females and into managerial staffs and non-managerial staffs, two summary items need to be set. Since the managerial staff and non-managerial staff groups are created by sex, a total of four groups would result.

¡DANGER! A dangerous toy. This toy is being made for the extreme priority the good looks. The little part which suffocates when the sharp part which gets hurt is swallowed is contained generously. Only the person who can take responsibility by itself is to play.

COOLES AND HEATES: If you want just condition of warm in your room, please control yourself.

English ornamentation. No doubt recognizing the international importance of English, the Japanese everywhere display strange distant resemblances to it. Using “English” in this way--on signs, on clothing, and on product packaging--without regard to its actual meaning, has a certain cachet, apparently lending a distinction that correct Japanese cannot. The result is often unintentionally poetic--endearing and charming, in fact--but, unfortunately, it is always inappropriate or even garbled. Many bring tears of hilarity into the eyes of native English speakers. Here are a few examples:

Dipper Dan: Making you feel Nice and Happy by tasting Dipper Dan's flavor. That's our happiness. Making Heartful Communication between you and Dipper Dan. That's our wishness.

All-in-one integrated design. This powerful computer has been realized by the introduction of a number of high technologies. It must be one of the reliable assistants in your daily life.

World's finest whisky made from Scotland's finest grapes.

FUJI BEER. The efficacy of this Beer is to give the health and especially the strength for Stomach. The flavour is so sweet and simple that not much injure for much drink.

GRACEFUL CHOCOLATES--Fancy Collection. Chocolate was loved as luxury nourishment by the princes and the noblement of medieval Europe ever before. This is the superb chocolate that has been confectioned from the choice materials by using the traditional technique of Switzerland. Lively Tea Time With Sweet Chocolates.

It's happiness people loving casual true caring friends taste everyday relaxing coziness fun intimate hot open likeable and togetherness. It's warmth bonest embracing pure gentle comradship you family us sharing sociable aroma liveliness tenderness smiling easy and yours.

We established a fine coffee what everybody can say TASTY! It's fresh, so-mild, with some special coffee's bitter and sour taste. "LET'S HAVE SUCH A COFFEE! NOW!" is our selling copy. Please love CAFÉ MIAMI. Many thanks.

You can see many more examples of such howlers at <http://www.english.com>

To be taken seriously. The Japanese, however, are not amused. They are sick of their pitiful English being the laughingstock of everyone else. Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) has recognized that only effective communication in English can hope to win the full respect of the world business community, and thus help the Japanese businesspeople retain their position as major players in international commerce. In this way, Japan can rise out of its economic slump, restoring the 1980s bubble economy on a firm footing (to mix metaphors the way business writers the world over do with alacrity).

The hubris of the native English speaker. MITI recognizes that Americans, Brits, and Aussies, with all their ridicule of the Japanese, are far from perfect business communicators themselves, as the following example windbaggy sentences embedded in e-mails from native English speakers reveal:

There is an upward exposure of revenue.

The Security Manual has been concatenated with the General Practices Manual on UMIS for the last 18 months. Please cascade this to your staff as appropriate.

Manufacturing will have the final say in the elongation of the time frame.

I'm not expectational of fruitfulness.

Officials at MITI secretly harbor dreams of showing up the arrogant native English speakers. MITI's secret ambition is to make Japan come out from the bottom and ultimately win once again: Not only can Japan produce the best automobiles and the best VCRs, in a few years they will also produce the best business communication in English!

Easy! MITI is determined to do something about improving business English. They have solicited for bids from companies and institutions to design and develop within one year a comprehensive 200-hour standardized training course in effective business English to be delivered to businesses throughout Japan. The course should build on the English skills (such as they are) already possessed by the typical Japanese businessperson. And, since this person has very little time (and, though not acknowledged, a very great hatred for English), the course should be "easy."

The Bentley bid. MITI is very interested in the quote offered by Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, of 1.5 billion yen (about \$12,940,590 at the current exchange rate) accompanied by an outline prospectus (a proposal for a proposal) for a course to be developed by a team led by Dr. Saul Carliner, assistant professor of information design. Dr. Carliner followed up MITI's expression of interest with a Tokyo meeting to hear their stated needs (and assess their unstated needs). He also wanted to learn specifically what MITI had in mind with the adjective *effective*.

In the meeting, Dr. Carliner explained the Bentley course design and development process, and he helped MITI intelligently select among alternatives for the proposal. He is aware of the need to preserve the dignity of both the learners and the MITI client, and he has passed this awareness on to his entire

team. MITI has indicated that Bentley College will be awarded the contract, assuming the finished formal proposal satisfies the expectations raised by the prospectus and the meeting with Dr. Carliner.

(This presentation project encompasses the proposal. You see, it is not just a way to resolve an Incomplete in a course, it is part of a proposal to win a 13-million-dollar contract. You can be sure that most of the provocative allusions to Japan's incompetence with English will be absent from the final proposal.)

Dr. Carliner intends this copyrighted "Easy business English" course to be a prototype, tailored to Japan. After assessing its success there, however, he plans to develop it further, generalizing it into a patented killer app that any business would want for training its employees who are expected to communicate intelligibly. The prototype course includes the following modules, each one capable of being a stand-alone course of approximately 20 hours of student time:

- Instructions and procedures
- Technical reference material
- Reports
- Proposals
- Questionnaires
- Advertising copy
- Job descriptions
- News releases
- Newsletter articles
- Journal articles
- Meeting minutes
- Business correspondence, including memos and letters
- Other (still under development)

The TOEIC prerequisite. Realizing that the current skill level of the learners is decidedly uneven, Dr. Carliner has determined that there should be a prerequisite for the foregoing modules: a certified score of 550 (about a "C" or "C+") in the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), a familiar measure of English proficiency in Japan. To help those who have not satisfied this benchmark, Bentley College is providing an additional remedial module:

- Preparation for the TOEIC

Subcontracted modules. The modules have been farmed out to several subcontractor vendors. Allan Edmands of Woodstock, New York, has been awarded the contract to develop just the part of the business correspondence module that deals with e-mail. (Other parts of the business correspondence module deal with the formatting of hardcopy letters, the distinction between memos and letters and their use, and so on.)

The remainder of this presentation is concerned strictly with the submodule “Easy business e-mail in English,” which could be a stand-alone course, and it constitutes the proposal itself. Of course, several of the points for the submodule are identical to those for the entire business course. The points that are specific to the e-mail submodule are identified as such.

The next topic, “Needs analysis,” begins with a restatement of the client’s request.

Needs analysis

This topic is divided into the following sections:

- A restatement of the MITI request
- Performance and business issues driving the request for training
- The skills to be addressed through training
- Who are the learners?
- The project constraints

The e-mail submodule, “Easy business e-mail in English,” which is the focus of this proposal, can be a stand-alone course for Japanese businesspeople who need that training specifically. Many of the points in this and the following sections overlap those for other modules, but points specific to the e-mail submodule are identified as such.

A restatement of the MITI request. As we learned in the introduction, Japan’s Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) has asked Bentley College to design and develop a standardized training program in effective business English for Japanese businesspeople all over Japan. To summarize the MITI request, the course should:

- Build on whatever English skills are already possessed by the learner.
- ***E-mail specific*** (and an expansion of what MITI had in mind with the adjective *effective*):
Transfer to the learner sufficient skill with business English so that the learner can write English e-mails that:
 - ✓ Are correct in grammar, spelling, usage, and accepted style.
 - ✓ Deliver the point efficiently, without misleading.
 - ✓ Use the appropriate tone and do not offend. (This is always a surprise to the Japanese, who deserve their reputation as the most polite people in the world, that their garbled English might be unintentionally offensive to Americans, who deserve their reputation as the least polite people in the world.)
- Be “easy.” This has two meanings:
 - ✓ The course should not take up too much time. MITI has stated that the typical learner has very little time for coursework.

- ✓ The course should overcome the learners' dread, distaste, and hatred for English. Dr. Carliner has divined this very important "request," though MITI officials were too embarrassed to mention it.
- Be deployed (ready for delivery) in April 2002.

Performance and business issues driving the request for training. Japanese businesspeople currently have an atrocious, ludicrous level of competence with business English. To be specific, their English is typically burdened with grammatical errors, garbled syntax, strange usage, illogical or incomplete thought, and unintended connotation.

Yet, because English is essential in international commerce, they must use it daily on the job. It has long been evident that native English speakers are often misled and are almost always amused by business correspondence from Japan. Misleading English can and often does offend, generate expensive errors, cause delays, and necessitate corrections and embarrassing apologies. Amusing English means that the Japanese businessperson is not taken seriously.

The bottom line is not only loss of face, but also loss of business to Japan, as overseas companies in delicate contract negotiations prefer the more reliable communication with Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Korea, and India. The loss is especially significant when a contract requires supporting documentation in English.

Put simply, the Japanese businessperson needs far greater fluency with business English, because the lack of this fluency is costing Japan money.

The skills to be addressed through training. The following are the skills to be addressed. Each point describes a skill that learners should be able to do and (unless otherwise indicated) they are not doing now at all (or are doing it very poorly or only to a very small degree).

The entry skill level for learners in this course is a certified TOEIC score of 550.

E-mail specific: Learners need to write intelligible e-mails. Specifically, learners should be able to:

- *[Some overlap with other modules]* Write with correct grammar, syntax, spelling, usage, and accepted style. Use the following correctly:
 - ✓ Articles
 - ✓ Active and passive voice
 - ✓ Tense, person, and mood
 - ✓ Modifiers
 - ✓ Emotion words
 - ✓ Nominalizations
 - ✓ Parallelism
 - ✓ Phrasing (to break up noun strings)
 - ✓ Deadwood-free prose
- Write the different parts of a note (opening, development, closing), using commonly accepted usage conventions.
- Write e-mail notes that are comprehended the first time.
- Write with the appropriate tone, a tone that makes the desired impression and does not offend.
- Write the type of e-mail appropriate for each business situation:
 - ✓ Request or inquiry note
 - ✓ Acknowledgment note
 - ✓ Confirmation note
 - ✓ Congratulations note
 - ✓ Acceptance or approval note
 - ✓ Rejection or refusal note
 - ✓ Complaint note
 - ✓ Disagreement note
 - ✓ Apology note
 - ✓ Introduction or recommendation note

- ✓ Invitation note
- ✓ Gratitude note
- Write a note that a recipient could not guess was written by a non-native English speaker.
- Respond promptly to English e-mails received. The Internet connects more than 60 million users in almost 100 different countries. E-mail is the most widely used Internet capability. A Japanese businessperson can send and receive letters and files to and from millions of other people quickly, reliably, and inexpensively. Most of the important e-mail is in English. Unlike paper mail, e-mail is immediate, and typically does not afford the luxury of staff help with English expertise. The sender must write his or her own English, usually within a 24-hour turnaround (currently correspondence takes 3 to 5 business days to turn around, probably due to the writer's insecurity with English).
- *[Some overlap with other modules]* Distinguish good business writing from bad business writing by identifying examples of each and explaining the qualities that make the writing good or bad.

Who are the learners? The learners are Japanese businesspeople, currently holding responsible salaried positions in companies engaged in international commerce. Their duties involve regular communication in English with customers, vendors, and business partners in English-speaking countries. All of them have attained a TOEIC score of 550. Their experiences with learning English has generally been quite negative: years in the public school memorizing the fine points of grammar but with scant exposure to actual English in use, years in post-school classes whose objectives (if there were objectives) were irrelevant to the business world.

The learners tend to be “workaholics.” They typically endure long daily train commutes, and many of those who secure a seat on the jam-packed trains occupy themselves with offline work on a laptop computer, with reading, or with sleeping. The reading material might be business materials (reports and white papers from the office), books about Japan’s place in the world marketplace, or (especially with males, but increasingly with females as well) the ever-popular adult comic books called *manga*¹.

Once at the office, according to *Pictorial Encyclopedia of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Gakken, 1987), “they hear a morning pep talk or perhaps loudly chant the company’s motto as a prelude to the

¹ In Japan, *manga* is serious business. According to *Basic Japanese through Comics* (Atlanta: Mangajin, 1993), *manga*, unlike American-style comics, is “not just ‘kid stuff’ but a highly developed medium for entertainment and education, very popular among adults.” *Manga* is estimated to account for over a third of all books and magazines published in Japan. Because it is so widely read, *manga* is “as powerful as TV in shaping popular culture, and [it] plays an important role in forming national attitudes, starting national fads, and shaping the national language in Japan. A growing number of government agencies, and some of the biggest names in corporate Japan, are now even using *manga* in training materials, product manuals, and corporate histories.”

day's work. [They] often work overtime and without taking their allotted annual vacations... Due to the lifetime employment system, [they have] a strong identification with the company. This in turn contributes to stability in management, for the company and employee both feel as if they are in the same boat.”

The work environment is a crowded “bullpen”; only managers have private offices, and not all of them do. Everywhere Japan is a noisy place, and the office is no exception. There are abundant distractions from telephone conversations and on-the-fly conferences in adjacent cubicles. Everyone is aware of what everyone else is doing; privacy is an undreamed-of luxury.

Older learners generally feel that work is what makes life worthwhile, spending any limited free time relaxing in front of the TV or playing a Japanese form of pinball called *pachinko*. (Japanese executives prefer *mah jong* to *pachinko*.) Younger learners are more involved with their families and spend free time in tennis, skiing, golf, jogging, or weekend carpentry. All learners are computer-literate, and computer games are becoming more popular--especially among the younger learners.

The Japanese businessperson has very little time and feels tremendous pressure to get work finished as nearly perfect as possible. This learner typically does not view a training course as a chance to get away from daily routines, but as an annoying interruption to be avoided if at all possible. The learner appreciates any training that has immediate on-the-job applications, promises long-term career benefits, and enhances the company's prestige.

Compared with American students, Japanese learners are generally passive, respectful, and quiet in classroom situations. They often prefer to remain anonymous to other learners, and they prefer to deal face to face with instructors as infrequently as possible. (They tend to hold the instructor, or *sensei*, in some awe.)

Again compared with Americans, the Japanese are a homogenous society. They readily conform to unspoken social norms, and they hate to stand out in the crowd. Except for the differences between older and younger learners, there are few “outliers” in this audience description.

Most of the learners can be categorized as “nibblers”: They would appreciate knowing just enough English to be able to write effective e-mails, but few of them want to attain the fluency of a native English speaker. They are tolerant of short grammar explanations, provided these explanations are immediately applicable to improving the e-mails they need to write each day.

Though most learners have a deep-seated hatred of English, they are nonetheless motivated to learn it, since they know it will enhance their career by making them more valuable to their company.

The project constraints

This section is divided into the following subsections: schedule, budget, staffing, and corporate culture of the sponsor.

Schedule. The entire comprehensive course must be ready for delivery throughout Japan on April 1, 2002, the “drop-dead date.” Dr. Carliner is drafting the interim checkpoints (detailed instructional strategy points, content outline for each module and submodule, subcontractor agreements, and testing). Once this proposal is approved by MITI and the strategy points are clarified, there will be a more granular schedule; for example, interactive computer-based training involves detailed scripts, flowcharts and storyboards, and programming and possibly animations. Dr. Carliner is aiming on a 6-week contingency (a February 15 actual completion date).

Budget. Of course, the overall budget should not exceed the quoted bid of 1.5 billion yen. Dr. Carliner, who has quite a bit of experience with such estimates, has incorporated at least a 15% contingency into that quote, with the presumption that Bentley might be developing computer-based training (provided this needs analysis and the objectives point to CBT as an appropriate instructional strategy), and CBT is far more expensive than classroom training to develop.

Budgetary considerations are expanded in the “Instructional strategy” topic on page 32, but given MITI’s acceptance of the fat quote and the full year development time, we can assign the following priorities: (1) quality, (2) schedule, and (3) budget--in that order. What a luxury to be empowered to develop the best program we can think of!

Staffing. Staffing will certainly include an instructional designer (for the entire comprehensive course and for each module), a course developer for each module, a project manager for the entire course, an editor for the entire course (and perhaps editors for some of the individual modules), an art director for the entire course and graphic designers for each module, and production people both for the entire course and for individual modules.

Corporate culture of the sponsor. The corporate culture of the Japanese businessperson has been described already under the topic “Who are the learners?” on page 14. This section will describe some of the characteristics of the sponsor, MITI.

MITI officials, in common with most Japanese, have a very deep respect for learning, and they regard an instructor (*sensei*) with something close to reverence. On the other hand, though the officials at MITI have obviously recognized the need for training in English, they themselves speak very little English and have very little interest in learning it. In the negotiations with the sponsor, Bentley representatives will need to be sensitive to this and work very hard to communicate effectively.

MITI is willing to supply an interpreter for each conference, but it is important to bring up that need in preparing for each conference. Be alert to the possibility that the interpreter might not be skilled in the nuances of rapidly spoken English. For delicate negotiations, Bentley should consider hiring its own interpreter, who (taking account of the sensitivities of the MITI interpreter) stays in the background, stepping in only when a looming misunderstanding is apparent.

For both interpreters, avoid using American idioms and buzzwords, such as “throwing a monkey wrench into the plans,” “till the cows come home,” “to talk turkey,” “catch as catch can,” and “It’s a wrap.” Also avoid technical terms except where they are absolutely necessary. Finally, be very careful of humor; very little American jocularity translates well into Japanese.

Goals

This topic is divided into the following sections:

- Objectives, including business objectives and content objectives
- Evaluation, including Level 1 (reaction), Level 2 (learning), Level 3 (behavior), and Level 4 (impact).

Objectives

Business objectives.

- As a group, learners must demonstrate immediately on the job each skill learned or improved in actual business correspondence, measured in the first year by:
 - ✓ A 50% reduction in transaction completion time,
 - ✓ An 80% reduction in notes that need clarification or apologies with follow-up notes, and
 - ✓ A 90% reduction in costs directly attributable to misunderstanding in correspondence.
- Increased facility with English by Japanese businesspeople must by the year 2007 result in a 50% increase in “English business” market share (contracts coming to Japan that formerly went to other countries, traditionally better with English).

Content objectives. The first two of the following content objectives take into account MITI’s request that the course should build on whatever English skills are already possessed by the learner. Except for the first one, each of the following content objectives describes what the learner will be able to do at the conclusion of the course. The learner will be able to:

- Satisfy the prerequisite of a certified TOEIC score of 550.
- **Either:**
 - ✓ Improve the entry TOEIC score by 20 percent.
- **Or:**
 - ✓ Attain a TOEIC score of at least 700.
- Write with correct grammar, syntax, spelling, usage, and accepted style, as prescribed or recommended by accepted authorities and guidelines (Webster’s, Chicago Manual, and so on), measured by an 80% reduction in errors in the first year. The learner will be able to do the following:
 - ✓ Use appropriate articles (*a, an, or the*), and avoid an article when it is not appropriate.
 - ✓ Distinguish active and passive voice, explain when each voice is appropriate, and use voice appropriately in sentences.
 - ✓ Identify improper shifts of tense, of person, and of mood; and write sentences without such improper shifts.

- ✓ Identify modifier problems (misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, and so on) in given sentences, and write sentences using modifiers appropriately.
 - ✓ Identify problems with emotion words (for example, “I am irritating by this situation” and “This situation is irritated”), and write sentences using emotion words appropriately.
 - ✓ Identify nominalizations, explain the limited situations when they aid communication, use them in writing *only* in those situations, and--in places where nominalizations are typically used inappropriately and excessively--write with action verbs instead.
 - ✓ Identify problems with parallelism, successfully correct the problems, and write sentences using parallelism appropriately.
 - ✓ Identify problems with long noun strings, successfully correct the problems, and write sentences avoiding long noun strings by using appropriate phrasing.
 - ✓ Identify problems with deadwood, successfully correct the problems, and write sentences without redundancies and other unnecessary words or phrases.
- Write the different parts of a note (opening, development, closing), using commonly accepted usage conventions.
 - Write e-mail notes that are comprehended the first time, determined by the recipient not asking for a clarification in a follow-up note.
 - Write with the appropriate tone, a tone that makes the desired impression and does not offend, measured by the recipient not taking offense, necessitating apologies in a follow-up note.
 - Write the type of e-mail appropriate for each business situation (identify the type of any note, and name the type that would be appropriate in a given set of circumstances):
 - ✓ Request or inquiry note
 - ✓ Acknowledgment note
 - ✓ Confirmation note
 - ✓ Congratulations note
 - ✓ Acceptance or approval note
 - ✓ Rejection or refusal or rejection note
 - ✓ Complaint note
 - ✓ Disagreement note
 - ✓ Apology note

- ✓ Introduction or recommendation note
 - ✓ Invitation note
 - ✓ Gratitude note
- Write a note that a recipient could not guess was written by a non-native English speaker.
 - Reply, without assistance, to received English e-mails within 24 hours.
 - Distinguish good business writing from bad business writing by identifying examples of each and explaining the qualities that make the writing good or bad.

Evaluation

Evaluation is included in our design document from the beginning, so that we ensure we have built accountability in and that we will have a way to know whether we achieve the objectives we have set. After the course is delivered, we compile Level-1 evaluations, receive Level-2 results, initiate Level-3 evaluations, and receive reports indicating Level-4 results. We will be investigating anomalies and periodically summarizing and reporting our findings. From evaluations and from our in-staff post-mortems, we can learn from our mistakes and improve what we do.

Level 1 (Reaction). How do the learners feel about the course? We are including a sample evaluation form for the learners' reactions. The form will actually be written in Japanese. If the course is to be delivered as computer-based training (CBT)--a determination that will not be made until the topic "Instructional strategies" on page 32--the evaluation form will be a feedback form HTML page that the learner can submit to a CGI (Common Gateway Interface) program running on the server.

The Edmands team have some design concerns they hope can be addressed in the course evaluation phase. After examining the evaluations, the team will be able to make any necessary corrections. Among the concerns is the possibility that--if the course is to be delivered as CBT--the software in the submodule might be "obese," full of function that will rarely if ever be needed and that will take far too much time to load. Recognizing the tendency to "spray and pray" (spray as much as possible onto the students and pray that some of it will stick) with an audience from a different culture, the team worked very hard in drafting the course objectives to ensure the relevance of the material. Nonetheless, in the online feedback page they include questions about relevance.

Items in the evaluation that apply only if the course is delivered as CBT are highlighted in *italic blue*. Those learners who choose to be "reminded in a day" will be sent a reminder e-mail, with a direct link to the survey. The course administrator will also send a separate e-mail to each learner immediately after course completion, offering an incentive for completing the feedback within 3 days. After clicking the **Submit** button on the form, the learner sees a "Thank you" message (in Japanese).

Note to Saul: I recommend examining the Level-1 feedback form in the online version of this class project, rather than reading it in this document.



Easy business e-mail in English: feedback.

We'd like to hear from you. So that we can provide you and future students with the best possible learning experience, please take a few moments to complete this post-class survey.

[__Take the survey](#) [__Remind me in a day](#) [__Exit](#)

Note 1: Please be assured that your student ID is not linked to this form. Unless you supply contact information at the end, your feedback here is completely anonymous.

Note 2: To submit this form, you must be connected to the Internet.

Were you able to run the course on your computer?

Yes No

If you were not able to run the course, please tell us why not. Check all that apply:

- Plug-in not available
- No sound card
- Could not install plug-in
- Took too long to load
- Took too long to run
- Other (please explain below):

Have you taken computer-based-training (CBT) courses before:

Yes No

In a word or two, how would you describe the "Easy business e-mail in English" course? _____

Using a number, how would you describe the course?

1 2 3 4 5
Abysmal Average Outstanding

How much did you know about writing effective business e-mails in English **before** taking this course?

1 2 3 4 5

Nothing Some A lot

after taking this course?

1 2 3 4 5
Nothing Some A lot

The content appeared:

1 2 3 4 5
Thrown together *OK* *Superb*

How would you rate the relevance of the content of this course?

1 2 3 4 5
Irrelevant Somewhat relevant Very relevant

How likely are you to use some or all of the skills taught in this course in your work?

1 2 3 4 5
Not at all Not sure Very likely

The audio was:

1 2 3 4 5
Barely audible *OK* *Crystal clear*

If you had problems with audio, please tell us why. Check all that apply:

- Audio disturbs others*
- I am hearing impaired*
- I consider any audio annoying*
- Voice-over narration alone is preferable to background music*
- Other (please explain below):*

Graphics were:

1 2 3 4 5
Pure adornment *OK* *Illustrative*

The animation was:

1 2 3 4 5
Pure adornment *OK* *Very helpful*

Navigation through the course was:

1 2 3 4 5
Inconsistent OK Predictable

Prompts and consequences to your input were:

1 2 3 4 5
Illogical OK Predictable

Supporting print materials were:

1 2 3 4 5
Irrelevant OK Very helpful

Linked articles were:

1 2 3 4 5
Distracting OK Enlightening

Linked Web sites were:

1 2 3 4 5
Distracting OK Enlightening

Please rate the availability of Web-based help. Help was:

1 2 3 4 5
Perpetually down OK Always available

Please rate the availability of instructor help, for feedback on exercises.

The instructor was:

1 2 3 4 5
Missing in action There Dependable

Overall, was taking this course convenient?

1 2 3 4 5
No way I guess so Totally

Compared with a classroom course, this course was:

1 2 3 4 5
Much worse The same Much better

I would take another computer-based-training course:

1 2 3 4 5
Never If I must Without hesitation

The best part of this course was: _____

The one thing that could improve this course most is:

Please write additional questions or comments here:

If you would like us to contact you, please fill in the following information:

Name _____
Company _____
Phone _____ Extension _____
E-mail address _____

Please help us learn more about our students by answering the following:

In what prefecture of Japan do you work? _____

What is your job title? _____

What industry is your company involved in?

- Banking, finance, or securities
- Computers
- Distribution
- Education
- Government
- Healthcare
- Insurance
- Manufacturing
- Petroleum
- Process
- Scientific or technical
- Telecommunications or media
- Transportation
- Travel
- Utilities
- Other

Level 2 (Learning). How much did the learners actually learn in the course? The following is a sample of a test presented to the learner at the conclusion of the submodule “Easy business e-mail in

English.” Like the level-2 tests in the other modules of the comprehensive business English course, it is similar to the TOEIC.

1. *Insert the appropriate article in the blanks. If no article is required, insert an X:*

I like ___ apples, ___ pears, ___ peaches, ___ grapes, and ___ oranges. In other words, I like ___ fruit. I bought some apples and pears yesterday. ___ apples were delicious. But ___ pears were not so good because they were too ripe.

Several fires were reported in ___ city last night. ___ largest fire was in ___ lumber mill. Two restaurants had ___ kitchen fires. ___ dozen or more automobiles had ___ electrical fires. All of ___ fires were brought quickly under ___ control by ___ local fire department. Only ___ few injuries were reported, none serious. ___ injuries were mostly to ___ firemen.

2. *Change each of the following sentences from the passive voice to the active voice, if it is appropriate. However, if it is better to leave the sentence in the passive voice, write "OK" in the field.*

A report for each flight was written by Veda technicians.

A glossary is included at the back of the book.

When this switch is set to TEST, the transmission can be checked by the serviceman.

3. *The following sentences have problems of shift of person, shift of number, or shift of tense (or combinations of these shifts). Rewrite the sentences to correct the problems.*

When you press the **Enter** key, the menu will appear.

One can use a telephoto lens to produce their close-up shots.

We call the result output, which are characters or pictures displayed on a screen or printed on paper.

When the first wheels were made about 6000 years ago, you could move very heavy loads.

Every experiment we do in this laboratory must have a specific aim, and they must be performed with the appropriate apparatus.

4. *The following sentences have problems of placement of modifier. Rewrite the sentences to correct the problems.*

Sailing around the bend, the lighthouse came into full view.

The sample to be analyzed first must be put into solution.

After calibrating the manometer, three patients were found to have high blood pressure.

Pressing the ON button, the motor starts.

5. *Choose the appropriate words to complete the sentence:*

I believe you will be _____ with this narrative.

__fascinated __fascinating

Computer science is an _____ subject.

__interested __interesting

Many of the students are _____ by the professor's lectures.

bewildered bewildering

6. *In the following sentences, change unnecessary nominalizations to active verbs and get rid of dummy verbs and other unnecessary words:*

The enclosed report provides an explanation of magnetic forces.

Figure 6 is an unnecessary duplication of Figure 3.

We are achieving the replacement of copper telephone cables with optical fiber cables.

The researchers who effected the initial development of the Internet used e-mail extensively in the exchange of information.

7. *In which of the following sentences is the either-or construction used correctly? Place an O by each correct sentence and an X by each incorrect one.*

You can operate your CD player from either the deck or from the remote control.

You can operate your CD player either from the deck or from the remote control.

You can operate your CD player from either the deck or the remote control.

Either you can operate your CD player interactively from its remote control, or you can set it up for automatic operation.

__ You can operate your CD player either interactively from its remote control or automatically through a saved program.

__ You can use this adapter with either your CD player or your TV set.

__ You can either use this adapter with your CD player or your TV set.

__ You can use this adapter either with your CD player or your TV set.

__ You can use this adapter either with your CD player or with your TV set.

8. *Decipher the following noun strings using phrasing:*

message-handling automation functions

computer system problem isolation manual

information systems communications support group

9. *Rewrite the following sentences, getting rid of unnecessary words:*

When all of these ingredients are combined together, a mild chemical reaction will occur inside of ten minutes and an unpleasant odor will spread throughout the entire room.

A considerable number of people have a tendency to write long, windy sentences.

The gears may be cleaned with the aid of a cleaning solvent.

Interim results will be reported during the course of the investigation.

The liquid was blue in color.

It is necessary that the device be fabricated with precision in view of the fact that it will be used in connection with very fast circuits.

10. *From among the following e-mail openings, select the best:*

Harold-san, Let me introduce myself. My name is Mikio Yamada, and I am reporting to Y. Hayashi of AP Technical Solutions.

Brown: I was introduced to you from Mr. Tanaka. This is my first note to you.

Dear Mr. Brown: I have been referred to you from Masaomi Tanaka concerning support issues for our software contract.

Brown-san! Hello, My name is Mikio Yamada. I belong to AP SW Technical Support.

11. *From among the following e-mail closings, select the best:*

Maybe you are a little tired. Take care of yourself.

Regards, Mikio Yamada, AP Technical Solutions

Regards, M. Yamada. P.S. I'm anxious for your stomach.

Bye, M. Yamada

12. Look at the following e-mail. Identify the single word that might render the entire note offensive to the reader:

Hi, Fiona.

Thanks a lot for sending me the new Redbooks. I feel it's great. Anyway, I had translated a Redbook into Japanese last year. It's successfully distributed for IBM Japan SE and customers.

The word is: _____

13. Look at the following acceptance e-mail, whose sentences are numbered. Identify the one sentence in this otherwise satisfactory e-mail that is problematical.

¹Subject: STC Regional Conference

²Dear Mr. Danjou:

³Thank you for inviting me to address the STC regional conference in Miami on August 3. ⁴I am happy to accept. ⁵As you suggested, I will speak on the code recursion modules.

⁶I am not sure how much time you have allotted me. ⁷Will you please let me know?

⁸Sincerely,

⁹Miyuki Nishitani

¹⁰Software Engineer

¹¹Windup96 Software, Inc.

__1 __2 __3 __4 __5 __6 __7 __8 __9 __10 __11

Which of the following is the problem with the sentence you have identified?

__Such a sentence is an ungracious and unnecessary amplification.

__Such a sentence should not be in that position in the note.

__Such a sentence is likely to offend the recipient.

__Such a sentence reveals a lack of self-confidence.

14. *The following is an unsympathetic rejection letter. Revise it to make it more sympathetic, while still denying the position.*

Dear Ms. Neumann:

Your application for the position of Junior Programmer at Windup96 Software has been rejected. We have found someone more qualified than you.

Sincerely,

M. Kashiwagi

Manager, Arctex Programming Development

Level 3 (Behavior). How much of the training is actually transferred to the job? Level-3 evaluation is planned for 6 months after the learner's course completion through the following:

- A TOEIC-like test, similar to the Level-2 test, given to the learner.
- A survey, written in Japanese, of supervisors of the learner's skill with business English.

Level 4 (Impact). What is the impact on the learners' companies in business terms? Level-4 evaluation is planned for 1 year after the course completion by the learner's group (department, division, or company). It will be a survey, written in Japanese, of executives measuring the achievement of the business objectives:

1. What is the reduction (in percent) since a year ago of transaction completion time in this group of learners?
2. What is the reduction (in percent) since a year ago of notes that needed clarification or apologies with follow-up notes among this group of learners?
3. What is the reduction (in yen) since a year ago directly attributable to misunderstandings in correspondence among this group of learners?

A second Level-4 evaluation is planned for 5 years after course completion by the learner's group (department, division, or company). It will also be a survey, written in Japanese, of high-level executives, to assess the increase (in percent) of "English business" market share (contracts coming to Japan that formerly went to other countries, traditionally better with English).

Instructional strategy

The instructional strategy for the comprehensive course in business English is essentially mastery learning. Learners must be able to master a minimum of English skills to be able to communicate effectively in international commerce. Mastery learning is consistent with the learning model prevalent in the Japanese culture; it is what learners are used to and are comfortable with.

This topic is divided into the following sections:

- Performance support
- Lesson format
- Delivery medium
- Support
- Constraints and component costs
- Testing

Performance support.

The primary reason that approximately 90 percent of all training fails to stick is that the skills that are taught are not used. MITI has assured the Bentley development team that the learners who will be taking the comprehensive course in business English indeed must use English daily on their jobs. Now a very important challenge to the team is to ensure that the lessons taken from the course (1) will remain conveniently handy to the learners for reference, and (2) will be deemed sufficiently useful by them to be referred to regularly.

Templates of e-mail types. Needing to create a ready often-referred-to reference, and taking into account MITI's request that the course should be "easy," the Bentley team has realized that attempting to ensure that learners attain a mastery high enough to compose all business English from scratch is inadvisable. Instead, the team will:

- Provide *templates for business English* that the learner would be able to adapt to any given business situation, and
- Ensure, with lessons practicing with the templates, that the learner recognizes the appropriateness of a particular template to the given business situation at hand.

For example, in the "Easy business e-mail in English" submodule, there will be templates for each of the following types of e-mails: request or inquiry note, acknowledgment note, confirmation note, congratulations note, acceptance or approval note, rejection or refusal note, complaint note, disagreement note, apology note, introduction or recommendation note, invitation note, and gratitude note. The submodule will include lessons providing practice with each type.

Grammar points. Although the templates obviate any need to compose business English from scratch, the Bentley team does intend the course to develop sufficient mastery in the learner to be able to adapt the template to its appropriate situation without introducing strange or substandard English. Therefore, interspersed with the template lessons will be minimal tutorials in sufficient English grammar to enable the learners to avoid typical pitfalls.

For example, lack of skill with articles is one sure indication that English has been composed by a non-native speaker. A lesson on articles will develop mastery with articles--the same mastery that a six-year-old native speaker might have (see test item 1 in the Level-2 evaluation, page 25)--to the degree that the non-native origin of the writing will be masked. Advanced subtleties with article use--usually not mastered by native speakers until the teen years (should one write “The elephant is said to have a long memory” or “An elephant is said to have a long memory”?)--will not be addressed.

Relevance. Aligned with MITI’s request, the course will build on whatever English skills are already possessed by the learner by employing wherever practicable the learner’s previous experience, which would certainly help to make the course relevant. Therefore, realistic situations (from the typical Japanese businessperson’s work day) will be featured in the tutorial itself and in the quiz exercises. Exercises will typically resemble TOEIC questions, and the material will increase in difficulty the deeper the learner gets into it. By the end of the course, we intend the learner to be able to attain a significantly higher TOEIC score, thereby advancing his or her career.

Convenience. Further taking into account MITI’s request that the course should be “easy” (because the Japanese businessperson has very little time), the Bentley team intends the course to be convenient, enabling each learner to take the lessons in little nibbles whenever time allows.

Entertainment. Still further taking into account MITI’s request that the course should be “easy” (because, although MITI wouldn’t state this directly, the typical Japanese businessperson hates English), the Bentley team will incorporate entertainment into what otherwise could be very dry material. Building on the popularity among a large portion of the learner audience for *manga* comics, the team will design animated characters into each lesson. They will ensure that the characters reinforce rather than distract from the point of the lesson.

Lesson format.

This section discusses business e-mail format, grammatical issue format,

writing style, and arrangement of the submodule.

Business e-mail format. Each lesson dealing with a type of business e-mail covers the following in a tutorial format:

- A description of the lesson's purpose and of the skills that will be developed
- The probable length of time needed for the lesson
- What this type of e-mail is used for (gaining the learner's attention, tying this type of e-mail to a known on-the-job task)
- Things to include in this type of e-mail
- Things to avoid in this type of e-mail
- The format for this type of e-mail
- Words that can be plugged into the appropriate places
- Phrases and sentences that can be plugged into the appropriate places
- Tips on writing and a discussion of any special situations
- A bad example or two, with a discussion about the points that are bad
- A good example or two, with a discussion about the points that are good
- A template for this type of e-mail that can be plugged into the appropriate business situation and modified as needed
- A TOEIC-like quiz on this type of e-mail, with feedback
- A descriptive summary, recapping the main points of the lesson
- A glossary if appropriate (terminology is defined wherever first used)

Grammatical issue format. Each lesson dealing with a grammatical issue covers the following in a tutorial format:

- A description of the lesson's purpose and of the skills that will be developed
- The probable length of time needed for the lesson

- A short explanation of the grammatical point, with an illustrative example
- An explanation explaining how this grammatical point corresponds with a familiar grammatical point in Japanese
- Examples of misuse of the grammatical point, explanations of how the misuse can be corrected, and relevant discussion
- A TOEIC-like quiz on this grammatical point, with feedback
- Drills as appropriate, with feedback until mastery
- A descriptive summary, recapping the main points of the lesson
- A glossary if appropriate (terminology is defined wherever first used)

Writing style. The writing style of each lesson is persuasive (to motivate the learners to take an interest in improving their business English), clear and involving (revealing how the lesson is applicable to the learners' daily work), supportive and explanatory, and polite while at the same time direct.

Arrangement of the submodule. The following is the arrangement of the “Easy business e-mail in English” submodule. Lessons on grammatical points alternate with lessons on an e-mail type template, to reduce the possibility of the learner getting bored or bogged down. That is, the samples in the lesson on articles (lesson 8) will incorporate material from a request note (lesson 6), and the confirmation note samples (lesson 9) will employ some of the points given in the articles lesson.

1. Introduction to writing effective business e-mails in English
2. The content objectives of the submodule
3. The arrangement of the submodule
4. The differences between good business writing and bad business writing (the criteria with examples of each)
5. A lesson in tone (writing from the recipient's point of view), including criteria of good tone, bad examples, good examples, and a quiz
6. Request or inquiry note
7. Acknowledgment note
8. *Grammar:* Articles

9. Confirmation note
10. *Grammar:* Active and passive voice
11. Congratulations note
12. *Grammar:* Tense, person, and mood
13. Acceptance or approval note
14. Rejection or refusal note
15. *Grammar:* Modifiers
16. Complaint note
17. *Grammar:* Emotion words
18. Disagreement note
19. *Grammar:* Nominalizations
20. Apology note
21. *Grammar:* Parallelism
22. Introduction or recommendation note
23. *Grammar:* Phrasing (to break up noun strings)
24. Invitation note
25. *Grammar:* Deadwood-free prose
26. Gratitude note
27. Summary of effective business e-mail in English
28. A TOEIC-like test (Level-2 evaluation; see page 24 for an example)

Delivery medium.

“Easy business e-mail in English,” as with each of the other course modules and submodules of the comprehensive business English curriculum, will be delivered over the computer, either offline or online.

The choice of *computer-based training (CBT)* is strongly indicated for the following compelling reasons:

- MITI's request for a standard course, consistent for all learners in Japan
- Ease of distribution to a large number of learners at geographically dispersed sites (all over Japan)
- Cost efficiency for recurring training
- Convenience (no need for instructor, classroom, or minimum number of classroom learners)
- The need for the learners to pace themselves
- The need for extensive learner practice, which can be supported with templates long after course completion
- The desire of most learners in this culture to remain anonymous to other learners and not to deal face to face with instructors
- Sufficient time and budget to develop CBT
- Ease of upgrading because of the modular design

The specific delivery medium for each course module will be a business-card-size CD-ROM, 62.5 mm by 78 mm, capable of holding 75 MB but also capable of fitting in the learner's shirt pocket. The CD-ROM will be packaged in a clear plastic sleeve. On the back of the sleeve will be affixed a clear sticker containing the minimum system requirements and instructions for getting started, written in Japanese.

The software will perform on standard configurations, in most versions of most browsers. We can safely assume that most users have versions of commonly available readers and players (Macromedia Shockwave Flash, RealPlayer, and Adobe Acrobat, for example), but free plug-ins are readily available to the few learners who do not have them.

The user interface will be consistent and predictable (although the content itself will vary and have surprises). Navigation will be continuously evident to the learner, and so will be the place the learner currently is in the lesson. The learner will always be able to repeat a lesson or any part of a lesson. Conversely, it will always be possible for a learner to skip ahead.

The learner will be able to run the course in a laptop on a commuter train, for example, without being connected to the Internet. (This is why we are not using the term *online learning*.) When the learner is connected to the Internet, however, an extensive support system will be available.

There will be supporting print materials (enlarging upon the text printed on the CD-ROM's sleeve sticker), documenting the minimal system requirements and the instructions for loading the program, saving data, and turning the program off--all written in Japanese.

Support.

This section discusses offline help, online help, feedback to learner input, and editing of actual e-mails.

Offline help. There will be a limited contextual help (help specific to individual screen items) available when the learner is offline. In addition, there will be help for the entire screen, explaining in Japanese what the various elements are and instructing the learners how to respond in step-by-step procedures. This help will be displayed in a separate window, enabling the learner to perform the actual task in the main window.

Online help. When the learner is online, an extensive help facility will be available in Japanese at the administration Web site, with all current versions of most browsers supported. This help will include examples and demonstrations, showing learners how to perform specific tasks and the likely results. The help will also include tips and techniques, acquainting the learners with aspects of the course software that they might otherwise have missed.

Learners will be able to consult the online help from:

- Contents, which will list the major sections within help
- Search for any item the learner types in
- Links from one help item to another

Like offline help, online help will be displayed in a separate window, enabling the learner to perform the actual task in the main window.

Feedback to learner input. There will be feedback both offline and online to learner input. To a correct response the feedback will be very congratulatory, and to an incorrect response it will be slightly apologetic and encouraging for the learner to try again. Where appropriate, feedback to an incorrect response can include a hint. The hint to a second incorrect response can be stronger. To the third incorrect response to the same question, feedback will supply the correct answer, with some explanation.

Programming for this feedback can be somewhat daunting. For such input as learner response to items 5, 7, 10, 11, and 13 in the Level-2 test (see the example on page 24), feedback can be straightforward: It is possible for only one answer to be correct. For items 1 and 12, however, the feedback will need to tolerate mixed case and misspelling, although in counting an otherwise correct input as correct, the feedback will tactfully take note of the lapse.

For items 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9, the feedback will draw from a database onboard the CD-ROM that will be stocked with variant correct answers, searching for a match (again tolerating variations in case and spelling), thereby counting the input as correct. If it finds no match, the feedback will state that no match was found and offer the learner two choices: Either revise the input or submit it online to the administration Web site, which has a variants database far larger than the onboard CD-ROM database. (A learner who is currently offline can save the input for later submission.) For item 14, submission online would be necessary in any case.

If no match is found at the Web site database after submission, the feedback will again offer the learner two choices: Either revise the input or submit it to human editorial review, which will have a 48-hour turnaround from a human instructor drawn from a farm of free-lance editors and instructors who could be based anywhere in an English-speaking country. Feedback from the human instructor will include a short explanation.

Editing of actual e-mails. For a fee, individual learners will be able to submit to the administration Web site actual correspondence they have written or are about to write. The administration site will then pass the e-mails on to an instructor from the free-lance farm. The concept for this facility is aligned with MITI's request that the course builds on whatever English skills are already possessed by the learner.

Note: The actual delivery of the education and its administration is beyond the scope of this proposal, which is strictly for design and development. Nonetheless, you can be sure that Dr. Carliner is preparing

a separate proposal for Bentley College to administer the course delivery, for another fat contract with MITI.

Constraints and component costs.

Constraints to consider include the following:

- Overall editorial and graphic guidelines for the entire course
- Authoring environment, including authoring software and hardware platform
- Delivery environment

For more information, see Dr. Carliner's paper "Preparing a Persuasive Business Case for Online Learning Programs" (published in the February 2000 issue of *Learning Circuits*).

Component costs include the following:

- Interpreter, for conferences with MITI
- Research
- Equipment costs, including hardware that can accommodate some double-byte information
- Software licences, including for authoring tools that can accommodate double-byte information
- Training of Bentley staff in authoring tools
- Labor:
 - ✓ Fully burdened cost of an instructional designer and a course developer (each module)
 - ✓ Fully burdened cost of a project manager
 - ✓ Fully burdened cost of an editor
 - ✓ Fully burdened cost of an art director, as well as for graphic designers for modules developed in house (extensive graphics)
 - ✓ Fully burdened cost of the production staff
- Subcontract fees:
 - ✓ Scripting
 - ✓ Writing of print materials
 - ✓ Editing (as needed)

- ✓ Graphic design
 - ✓ Storyboarding
 - ✓ Programming
 - ✓ Module and submodule development (outside of Bentley staff work; see “Labor” on page 40)
 - ✓ Translation into Japanese of help information, supporting print material, and the feedback form
 - ✓ Contingencies
- Royalties for graphics and music
 - Recording and postproduction of voice-over narrations and other sound
 - Narration talent
 - Usability test
 - Manufacturing of business-card-size CD-ROMs
 - Printing of hardcopy support materials
 - Packaging
 - Inventory costs
 - Marketing costs (to be discussed in subsequent meetings)

Testing.

There will be thorough technical reviews throughout the development process. At the end, testing will be done in two phases: quality review and pilot testing. There is a third phase, validation field testing, but that activity is covered under the name *evaluation* (see page 20).

Quality review testing. Everything displayed on the screen, every aspect of the CBT course, will undergo a thorough quality review test, covering the following:

- ***Language and grammar*** will be of the highest standard, the best possible English as an example for those who are trying to learn the language. (This test can be done with a printed version of the script.) Criteria will include the following:
 - ✓ Reading level: A reading level no higher than 6th grade will be appropriate for this audience.

- ✓ Cultural bias: Parochial language will not be used, except in the context where learners will need to become acquainted with American conventions (in such a case, the conventions will be explained).
- ✓ Technical terms and jargon: Buzzwords and acronyms will be avoided, or--if they are unavoidable in the context of the lesson--they will be thoroughly explained.
- ✓ Spelling, grammar, and punctuation will undergo a thorough editorial review.
- ✓ Spacing: Conventions for paragraphing, spacing between sentences, and hyphenation will be determined in advance and will be adhered to. Page breaks will be appropriate.
- **Surface features** are what can be seen on the display other than the spelling and grammar just referred to; they will include the aesthetics of display presentations, the quality of student input, and related topics.
 - ✓ Displays will be uncluttered, without too much information being shown at once, and will be relevant to the goals of the lesson. Overlaid sections will not overlap and will not be too close together. Attention will be attracted to the important information.
 - ✓ Presentation modes, such as text, graphics, color, and sound, will be used appropriately.
 - ✓ Text quality: Scrolling will be avoided, wordiness will be avoided, and the typeface will be easy to read.
 - ✓ Input devices will be appropriate for each type of user input. Mouse actions will have keyboard shortcut equivalents wherever possible.
 - ✓ Completion scenario: At the end of a lesson, it will be obvious to the learner that the lesson is over, and instructions will be present for what to do next.
- **Links** will work, all of them, without exception.
- **Menus** will be consistent and well-labeled, so that it is apparent where the learner is within a lesson. Directions for making a choice will be clear, and feedback will be informative after incorrect selections. Correcting an incorrect choice will be easy. Completed menu items in a lesson will be marked.
- **Questions** will be relevant to the course objectives and will be concerned with important information. There will be a variety of types of questions, requiring not only recognition and pressing a single key but also remembering, understanding, applying, evaluating, typing, constructing, and so on. All correct and likely responses will be allowed. Help will be available, and retries after incorrect responses will be possible. Increasingly informative feedback, supportive rather than demeaning, will be given after each incorrect response, and the correct answer will be provided after a set number of such incorrect responses. All feedback will be unambiguous. Feedback will be

based on intelligent judging of the learner's response rather than mere checking for a particular word or phrase with perfect spelling.

- **General pedagogical issues:** Presentation of tutorial information will be broken up by learner activities, such as questions related to the information just presented. Lessons will be designed so that short learning sessions are convenient, between 15 minutes to an hour depending on the material.
- **Learner control:** The learner will be able to move forward to the next display, review, exit and return to complete a lesson later, and ask for help and directions. How to do these things will be obvious. There will be protection against accidental irreversible actions. The learner will be able to control the pace of the information. All advertised keys work will operate as promised, and no keys will cause such malfunctions as overwriting of displays or execution errors.
- **Motivation:** Computer anxiety will be minimized through ease-of-use and appropriate safety nets. An appropriate level of challenge will be maintained (increasing difficulty as the learner progresses). Curiosity will periodically be aroused with surprising or apparently discordant information. Learner confidence will be maintained with appropriate objectives and instruction that makes achieving the objectives possible. Satisfaction will be maintained with supportive feedback, encouragement, and procedures that the learner will perceive as fair.
- **Interactions** will be relevant to the objectives and will enhance comprehension, memory, and the transfer of what is learned to real-world activities.
- **Animations and graphics** will reinforce the lesson's objectives, will be at the appropriate level of detail, and will look professional. Animations will be paced properly.
- **Invisible functions** are those features that are not seen when the lesson is running, including acquisition and presentation of data.
 - ✓ Records and data accuracy will be ensured.
 - ✓ Security and accessibility: All data collected will be accessible only to those who are authorized to see it. Data tampering will be prevented through encryption and backup procedures.
 - ✓ The amount of data will not overwhelm the capacity of the system, and data records will not be lost.
 - ✓ Restarting after accidental termination will be possible, without loss of data.
- **Subject matter** will be thoroughly reviewed and will be error-free. All information presented on creating effective business e-mails in English will be correct, having been reviewed by a content expert (a teacher of English as a foreign language) not directly on the development team.
 - ✓ The goals and objectives of each lesson will be explicitly stated, in terms not requiring the learner to understand already the content of the lesson just to understand the goals and

objectives. The goals will be perceived by the learner and by an independent content expert as useful and relevant.

- ✓ The information presented in each lesson will be relevant to the lesson's objectives and will be accurate and complete. All stated facts will be correct, correct answers to questions posed will be judged to be correct, and all graphic material will be accurate. Terminology will be correct, contemporary, and consistent. The subject will be covered with sufficient depth for the objectives. The level of detail, complexity, and realism will be appropriate for the objectives.
- ✓ Content emphasis: Each lesson will emphasize those things most relevant to the objectives and most likely to be difficult for the learner.
- ✓ The organization of each lesson will conform to the natural organization of the subject matter, from the learner's perspective. The organization will be obvious to the learner.
- ***Supporting print materials*** will be reviewed for their relevance to the lessons on the computer. All print information will be accurate and complete, determined through an actual test of following the instructions. Everything silkscreened on the surface of the CD-ROM (artwork and text) and printing in any part of the packaging will conform to specifications.

Pilot testing. Pilot testing for usability will involve selecting the test subjects (at least three actual representatives of the Japanese learner population), explaining the purpose of the test and the overall procedures (this is a test of our course, not of the subjects), determining the prior knowledge of the subjects, unobtrusively observing and recording the subjects interacting with the lessons, debriefing the subjects while thoughts are fresh, and revising lessons according to our findings.

In a pilot test, we will validate the content of the course and all the instructions in it. Can our test subjects, who represent our learners, understand what is going on without our staff prompting them from the sidelines? Can they understand the questions in the lessons, for example? Can they correctly answer the questions? Wherever the test subjects fail to understand the material or follow the instructions, we will need to assess what it is that is unclear.

Screen mockups

Please refer to the computer-based version of this course proposal for the mockups. Just insert the CD-ROM into your CD-ROM drive.