ENGLISH for SOCIAL and ACADEMIC PURPOSES

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Ting Su Hie
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Preface

*English for Social and Academic Purposes* is targeted at students entering university, with the aim of bringing them up from the level of school writing and interactions to the level of academic communication required in the university context. To achieve this goal, the book makes use of concerns affecting university students and fully participating members of the society, encompassing pertinent global concerns ranging from health, climate change and animal abuse to social courtesies such as giving advice and expressing congratulations and condolences.

The seven units in the book are organised such that students can transfer the grammar and language skills used in social situations to academic contexts. For example, modal verbs which are used to give advice to friends are also used for making recommendations in reports. Using this approach, students are scaffolded to transfer language features they have used in informal communication to more formal contexts. Emphasis is also placed on audience awareness and the organisational structure of texts, in particular, recounts, descriptions, explanations, information reports and arguments. In terms of pedagogy, this book is among the first few attempts by Malaysian academics to use the genre-based approach as the underpinning of language materials for bridging social and academic use of the language.
About the Authors

Rosnah Mustafa holds a Master of Education in Applied Linguistics from the University of Western Australia (UWA) and a B. Ed (TESL) (Hons) from Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM). She has been with the Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak since 1996 and has been teaching the English proficiency and TESL courses. Her research interests include self-directed learning, language learning strategies, language anxiety and literature.

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Dr. Ting Su Hie graduated with a Ph.D from the University of Queensland. She holds an M.Sc (TESL) from University Putra Malaysia and a B.A (Hons) in Education from Universiti Sains Malaysia. Since she joined Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, she has been teaching English proficiency and TESL courses. She has published extensively on language use in multilingual settings, strategic competence and academic writing.
Acknowledgements

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7. OneWorld UK Ltd for the article on global warming found on their webpage, http://tiki.oneworld.net/global_warming/.


11. Cuesta College for their explanation of the differences between facts and opinions, found on their webpage http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/as/310.HTM.

Our grateful acknowledgement is also given to public domain websites:


2. United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States for the articles on the Greenhouse Effect, found on their webpage http://epa.gov/climatechange/kids/greenhouse.html

Our thanks also go to contributors of materials who wish to remain anonymous, and to Florence Tee Pei Feng and Koay Lian San for photographs of the Penang heritage sites. Every effort has been made to contact the copyright holders of materials for permission to include the materials in this coursebook. We regret any oversights that may have occurred and will rectify them in future editions of this book.
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• Write note of congratulations and condolences | • Expressions for congratulations and condolences | 2 hours |
| 2    | Asking for and Giving Advice | • Describe problems  
• Ask for and offer appropriate advice | • Modal verbs | 2 hours |
| 3    | Recounting Past Experiences | • Identify sequence of events in personal and factual recounts | • Tenses  
• Time expressions  
• Transitive and intransitive verbs | 4 hours |
| 4    | Describing Places | • Organise descriptions of places in spatial order  
• Read for gist and specific details | • Adjectives  
• Present tense | 2 hours |
| 5    | Reading about Health | • Skim for main ideas  
• Scan for specific information  
• Make inferences and interpretations of texts | • Question and answer format  
• Imperatives  
• Modal verbs | 2 hours |
| 6    | Explaining Global Warming | • Make oral presentations  
• Identify sequence of events and cause-and-effect relationships  
• Write explanation texts | • Active and passive voice  
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• Logical connectors | 4 hours |
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UNIT 1

EXPRESSING CONGRATULATIONS AND CONDOLENCES

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Understand dialogues conveying congratulations and condolences and extract specific information from the dialogues.
2. Practise orally offering congratulations and condolences, using appropriate expressions.
3. Understand congratulatory and condolence messages and extract the main idea and specific information from the messages.
4. Write letters of congratulations and condolences.

LISTENING

Pre-listening Activity

- Has anything interesting or sad happened to any one of your friends lately?
- If something did, what did you say to him/her?
- Did you congratulate him/her or offer him/her your condolences?
- How do you congratulate someone properly? How do you offer your condolences properly?

Note the words or expressions commonly used in these two contexts.

The following are some examples of phrases (in bold) used to express sentiments:

Examples of congratulations

- **Congratulations!** You scored grade A in mathematics.
- **Well done,** Ali! I heard you got a full scholarship.
- **Congratulations,** Mimi! You're on the dean's list again this semester.
  Oh, how I wish I were in your shoes!
Examples of condolences

- I'm so sorry, Ahmad. I heard that your uncle passed away recently.
- Our condolences, Sherry. We heard about your dad. It must be very difficult for your family.

While listening Activity

Dialogue 1: Listening for gist

1. Who are the speakers in the dialogue?

2. What has happened to Hamidah's uncle?

Dialogue 1: Listening for details

1. When did the accident happen?

2. How old was Hamidah's uncle?

3. Is Hamidah planning to go home? Why?
Dialogue 1: Hamidah and Chen are coursemates. One day, Hamidah received a call from her father. After hanging up the phone, she started to cry. Chen is very concerned. The following is a conversation between Hamidah and Chen.

Chen: I'm sorry, Hamidah. I don't mean to be a busybody but why are you crying? Would you like to talk about it?

Hamidah: [Still crying] Thank you, Chen. That was my father on the phone. My uncle passed away last night.

Chen: I'm so sorry to hear that. How did it happen?

Hamidah: He was involved in a car accident. His car had a collision with an oncoming van. He was on his way back from work. Oh Chen ... he was only 25.

Chen: My condolences to your family. It must be quite a shock. Is there anything I can do for you? Are you going back to your kampung? Would you like me to inform your lecturers about it?

Hamidah: Yes, please. My brother is on his way to pick me up. I must attend the burial. Could you please tell Dr. Heng and Encik Rizal that I will not be able to attend their lectures today?

Chen: Of course. Don't worry about anything.

Hamidah: Thank you, Chen.

Chen: Don't mention it.

Instructor and students are to engage in a brief discussion of unfamiliar words/expressions such as busybody, passed away, collision, oncoming, shock, burial (pronounced as /berizal/).

Dialogue 2: Listening for gist

1. Who are the speakers in the dialogue?

2. What is the occasion on 20 December?
Dialogue 2: Listening for details

1. Where did the couple meet?

2. When do they plan to get married?

3. Are they planning to go on a honeymoon? If yes, where to? If not, why?

Dialogue 2: Below is a conversation between two friends who studied in the same university five years ago but have not seen each other for some time.

Suffian: Hey, Ken! ... It's been a long time since we met. How are you, old friend?
Ken: I'm fine. I see you're looking fit as usual, Suffian.
Suffian: Yeah. Thanks. So, how's life?
Ken: Hectic. I must say. I'm very busy preparing for my wedding. It's two weeks from now: 20 December, a Sunday.
Suffian: Congratulations! I didn't think you were the marrying type. Just kidding. So who's the lucky girl? Anyone I know?
Ken: Salina James. You remember her? She was our junior in university. We're both working in EY now.
Suffian: Yes, I remember her. Wow ... that sounds great. Don't I get an invitation?
Ken: Of course! The wedding will be held at my parents' place. You must come. Here's my number, 012-8211414.
Suffian: Hang on. I will give you a missed call now.
Suffian: Hey ... it's good to see you again. And, once again, congratulations and all the best. Hey ... where do you plan to go for your honeymoon? I own a travel agency. I could offer you some special discounts if you want.
Ken: Thanks. But we haven't talked about it yet. We're both so busy with work but I'll surely get in touch with you if we do decide to go, OK?
Suffian: No problem. I'll see you in two weeks' time.
Instructor and students are to have a brief discussion of unfamiliar words/expressions such as fit, how’s life?, hectic, the marrying type, kidding, all the best, travel agency, discounts, get in touch, in two weeks’ time.

READING

1. Pre-reading Activity

- Have you ever received a congratulatory note or card from your family members or friends?
- Have you ever received a note or card from your friends extending their condolences to you?
- If you have answered “Yes” to any of the above questions, what did these notes or cards say?
- How did you feel getting these notes or cards from your family members and friends?

2. Read Text 1 and answer the questions that follow.

Text 1

12 March 2010

Dear Prof. Charles,

Please accept our condolences on the untimely passing of your wife, Puan Lydia. It is difficult to understand why such tragedies happen, and we don’t understand why Puan Lydia was taken from you so early in your life together.

I hope you will now surround yourself with good friends and the pleasant memories that you have of Puan Lydia. I remember her beaming smile at the faculty picnics. She seemed to have a zest for life that few of us do and was willing to share that zest with others. I shall never forget her enthusiastic win of the sack race during the faculty family day last year.

Please accept what little comfort these words can give you. If we can help you in any way, please let us know. Our deepest sympathy on your bereavement.

Sincerely,

Azmah Hussin

(On behalf of the Third-year Students of Organic Chemistry Programme)
Give the meaning of the underlined words as they are used in the letter.

1) Passing: _______________________________________________________________________

2) Surround: _____________________________________________________________________

3) Zest: _________________________________________________________________________

4) Bereavement: __________________________________________________________________

Answer the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of this note? _________________________________________________________________________

2. Who is Azmah Hussin? ________________________________________________________________________________

3. What does the writer suggest Prof. Charles do? _______________________________________________________________________

4. What does the writer offer in the third paragraph? ____________________________________________________________
Congratulations! I heard about your recent promotion to Regional Manager of Ausstina & Co from Simon a couple of days ago. I know you probably wish to keep a low profile about this whole promotion matter but I am so happy for you. I think you deserve this promotion since you've been working so hard to bring the company to where it is now. Your dedication and hard work have really paid off and I am so proud of you. We must catch up one of these days when you're back in town. I want to hear everything about your new post, the challenges, perks, and of course your life now as a very important key person in the company. Perhaps you could give me a few tips on how to become a successful employee as well.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Miss you,

Angie
Give the meaning of the underlined words as they are used in the email.

1) Promotion: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

2) Low profile: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

3) Dedication: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

4) Paid off: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

5) Catch up: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

6) Challenges: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

7) Perks: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

8) Key person: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

Answer the following questions.

1. How did Angie know about Aleeya’s promotion?
   ____________________________________________

2. How does Angie feel about Aleeya’s achievement?
   ____________________________________________

3. What type of person is Aleeya? What words would you use to describe her?
   ____________________________________________
1. When you think of happy occasions such as a wedding, the birth of a child and anniversary, what words come to mind?

Sample expressions used for weddings and anniversaries:
- Best wishes on your wedding day.
- Wishing you a day filled with happiness - a future filled with love.
- Today is the beginning of a lifetime of love.
- May your love grow stronger as the years grow longer.
- May each anniversary strengthen the love you share today.
- May the romance of your wedding day remain with you for the rest of your life.
- I’m so glad you found each other!
- Wishing you many blessings as you begin your new life together.
- Your long-lasting love for each other is an inspiration.
- May you have a love of life and a life of love.
- Your love has stood the test of time – the truest measure of love.

Sample expressions used to express happiness on the arrival of a new baby:
- It’s been a long wait, but now your special one has arrived – congratulations to you and your family.
- Congratulations on the birth of your son/daughter! He/She is blessed to have you to call Mummy and Daddy.
- A new son/daughter has entered your life and your hearts – congratulations!
2. When you think of sad occasions such as the death of a family member, separation and failure, what words come to mind?

The following are some phrases, expressing sympathy and condolences:

- We wish to express our deepest sorrow to Libau and family.
- It was a shock to learn of Halimatul’s death.
- My most heartfelt condolences to Ah Kong’s family and friends.
- I was stunned to learn of Krishnan’s death.
- We are deeply shocked and saddened to hear of Tom’s demise.
- My heartfelt sympathies go to you and your family.
- Words alone cannot express how sorry I am to hear this news.
- My deepest sympathy to you and your family.
- I send my prayers to you and your family.
- I am truly sorry for your loss.
- You have my heartfelt sympathy on the loss of your beloved wife.
- I just wanted to say I am very sorry to hear of Jacky’s passing.
- I am shocked to learn of Lau Ming’s untimely death and saddened for Judy and the family.
- I was deeply shocked and saddened by Miss Banyun’s sudden passing.
- I’m terribly saddened to hear of the demise of your loved one.
- To her family and friends, my deepest sympathies.
- Our deepest sympathy to her family and dear friends.
- Please accept my heartfelt condolences on this great tragedy.
- Words fail to express our heartfelt sympathies.
- My sincerest condolences to you, your families and friends.

3. Discuss the following.

- Which of the expressions above are for formal and informal use?
- Which are for written messages of congratulations and condolences?
- What expressions are young people likely to use to express congratulations and condolences?
Dear Chong,

I am very (1) _____________ to hear that your father had (2) _____________ suddenly. I would like to (3) _____________ my (4) _____________ condolences to you and your family. Although I knew he was (5) _____________ I was still taken by (6) _____________ by his sudden passing.

It was just last week that I (7) _____________ to him and I (8) _____________ glad that I had a chance to see him one last time when I (9) _____________ to your house to give some mangoes. He was a good caring father. And I will (10) _____________ him as a warm and kind person who was ever ready to help others.

He will be (11) _____________ missed by all those who knew him. May he rest in (12) _____________.

Your friend,

Ngalang Ngo
5. Do this grammar exercise. Use the given words to fill in the blanks in this congratulatory note and discuss who the sender and recipients are. Note the formality of the language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>congratulations</th>
<th>future</th>
<th>pleased</th>
<th>promotion</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>better</th>
<th>Best</th>
<th>excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

17 April 2010

Dear Richard,

(1) ____________ on your (2) ____________ to the General Manager position at Rimba Hijau Corporation. You have (3) ____________ business skills and the drive to go far – keep up the (4) ____________ work! I'm (5) ____________ the management at Rimba Hijau recognised your abilities.

(6) ____________ wishes for many (7) ____________ successes.

Sincerely,

Lim Sng Heng
WRITING

1. How to write a note of congratulations

Social-oriented notes are an excellent way to establish or reinforce social, family or even business relationships. The use of personal notes to express congratulations or condolences is considered by many to be a dying art. While fewer and fewer people write these types of notes, almost everyone enjoys receiving them, and these kinds of notes leave a lasting impression.

Step 1: State the purpose. Depending on the reason for writing the note, this may vary, from complimenting or congratulating a friend on an accomplishment to apologising for being unable to attend a social event.

Step 2: Give details or background information. This part may contain an explanation or personal comments on the reasons concerning the first part.

Step 3: Restate what has been said in the first part of the letter. For example, if this is a congratulatory letter, the last part re-congratulates the recipient.

Reminder: Did you use a pleasant tone in the note?

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS

to

SYARIKAT MAJU JAYA

on the Official Opening of its
Kuching Branch

at

Lot 122, Section KTLD, Jalan Kulas Utara
94300
Kuching, Sarawak

by

Y.B. Dato' Seri Hamid Hasyim Shahbuddin
Minister of Industrial Development

on 2 July 2010

From:
The Board of Directors,
Management and Staff of
Cahaya Indah Enterprise Sdn Berhad (101111-T)
1st Floor, No. 199, Lot 2007
Jalan Merdaya 94300, Kuching

Note: Names and addresses used in the sample are fictitious.
2. How to write a note of condolence

Condolence notes should always be handwritten. It is in very poor taste to type a note of condolence but in this modern era, it may be the trend to send it via email. Although sympathy cards are available, a note of condolence is more personal and should be written in a sincere tone.

Step 1: Offer your condolences or express your sympathy to the person you are writing to on a sad occasion such as the death of a family member or a close friend.

Step 2: Reflect on the person who has died or the deceased. If you knew the person well, personal recollections are appropriate. If you did not know the person well or at all, this part is optional; although, if you can relate this person’s life to your own in some way, you should include this part.

Step 3: Finally, offer further condolences or support.

Reminder: Does the letter comfort the bereaved?

**CONDOLENCES**

Our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to Hasmah Hussien & family on the loss of their beloved mother/mother-in-law/ grandmother Puan Hjh Aisyah Osman Ali

From:
Anthony Ling
Megan Chong
Connie Tan
& staff of CICT Sdn. Bhd.
Kuching

**CONDOLENCES**

Our heartfelt sympathy & condolences to Jason Lee & family on the recent loss of their beloved father/father-in-law/grandfather Mr. John Albert Lee

From:
Irene Ching & staff of Ming & Ming Ptd. Ltd.

Note: Names and addresses used in the samples are fictitious.
3. Pair writing in class

**Situation:** You are the secretary to the chief executive officer (CEO) of Ceramic Tiles. One of the staff members passed away suddenly yesterday. The CEO has asked you to write a condolence note to the family. On behalf of your company, write the note extending the company’s condolences. Write ONE of these:

- a. A condolence note to be published in the newspaper;
- b. A condolence note accompanying a bouquet of flowers to be sent to the house; or
- c. A condolence message in a condolence card to be given to the family.

**SPEAKING**

1. In this conversation, Student A congratulates Student B on his/her good news. Write the dialogue lines for Students A and B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A: You meet your friend. Greet your friend and ask your friend why he/she is looking so happy.</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student B: Reply to your friend’s greetings and tell your friend of your <strong>good news</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student A: Express your surprise/happiness and congratulate your friend after hearing his/her <strong>good news</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B: Thank your friend for congratulating you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>