



## **ENHANCING BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS FOR COMMERCE STUDENTS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Writing allows one to communicate their thoughts, opinions, values, and beliefs to another person or group of people over time and distance barriers. The purpose of this study is to comprehend how tertiary students perceive their English language abilities, particularly about various formal writing abilities. For this study, 120 students were chosen from commerce students at Arts and Science Colleges. The samples were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The researchers employed a descriptive research design. Primary data was collected through the use of the questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. The finding of this study showed that the tertiary level students of Arts and Science Colleges lack appropriate letter, summary, E-mail, note making, PPT preparation, memo, and report writing skills.

**Keywords:** Communication skills, ELT, Business writing, e-learning, and Activity-based teaching strategies

## 1. Introduction

English is the primary language used in international trade. English is a crucial language for cross-border communication. The demand to study business English has grown during the course of the 20th century. According to Jack (2008), "Today's industry moves at such a breakneck pace that writers at every level need to communicate information rapidly and accurately to a wide range of difficult audiences." The introduction of new commercial phrases has also altered the way people write internationally. By focusing on teaching the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) abilities, institutions meet the demands of a global society. Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing are the four components of LRSW learning. The LSRW method of learning frequently places listening first, then speaking, reading, and writing, when it comes to learning skills. These abilities are therefore usually referred to as the LSRW method of learning.

Howatt (1984) demonstrates that the teaching of the English language has a very long history and is connected to two key factors: trade and migration. British trading with other nations expanded. Communication in trade was mostly done in English. Different methods have been used to spread English throughout the three

concentric circles. The migration of native speakers from the British Isles to Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, and Canada has contributed to its expansion in the inner circle. A lingua franca is a language that is extensively used to facilitate communication between people whose native tongues differ from one another. Thus, a wide variety of speakers and purposes for using English are present. Business writing has a defined purpose and gives the reader pertinent information in a direct, succinct, and effective way. Transactional, persuasive, informative, and instructional are the four subcategories that can be applied to it. Clarity of ideas, conciseness, good grammar and sentence building, and plain language are qualities of effective business. A language's distinctive way of conveying thoughts and information is called its "style." For an audience that is overwhelmed by information and constrained by their hectic work schedules, an effective style is required (Frank 2014). According to Ashraf (2005), style refers to how something is said as opposed to what is said.

Indian English shares many similarities with ordinary British English in terms of grammar, but it has many more words that have been acquired from Indian languages in terms of lexicon. As a result, among Indian English-speaking speakers,



there is a lot of code-mixing in addition to code-switching. The majority of Indian English users may therefore make mistakes for this reason. Writing serves a variety of purposes in daily life, including those that are academic, professional, media-related, social, cultural, and personal. Personal letters, circulars, reports, memoranda, instructions, emails, assessment reports, meeting minutes, project reports, and other written materials are used as a primary form of communication. Access to journals, periodicals, books, bills, and correspondence also requires writing. Writing in English is becoming more necessary for academic and professional purposes as English gains significance.

In the sphere of education, strong writing abilities are crucial for completing projects, assignments, recordkeeping, and taking exams. Writing ability is highly correlated with academic ability assessment in the Indian educational system. Writing is the sole formal assessment method used to evaluate students in schools, colleges, and universities. Even for job postings, there are written exams. Today, writing on a computer has become a survival skill. In India nowadays, positions requiring writing abilities including content writing, technical writing, and editing pay quite well. Reading and its related skills, including grammar and vocabulary, as well

as other language skills like writing are reinforced. Reading for knowledge improves writing abilities. Reading with a goal improves vocabulary. To meet all of the needs of the students in the classroom and their daily lives, it is crucial to concentrate on teaching writing. As a result, writing is a crucial linguistic ability. The importance of competent writing, especially in English, in the global society has led to an increase in the importance of writing teaching in second and foreign language education.

The world has become a global village as a result of technological and travel advancements, which have allowed individuals from many cultures to communicate and meet. As a result, language communication has become even more crucial. Therefore, it is now commonly acknowledged as a necessary talent for school, business, and personal reasons to be able to speak and write in a second language. The ability to engage fully in all facets of society is, for the majority of students, the ultimate goal of being able to write, and as students advance to higher school, the importance of being able to write well increases.

Writing proficiency is viewed as a sign that pupils have mastered the cognitive abilities required for higher education because writing and critical thinking are

thought to be closely related. The capacity to edit one's written language for grammatical, stylistic, organizational, and other aspects is essential to the development of writing as a skill. The ability of a student to edit for grammatical elements is one of the issues that most language teachers worry about. Teachers have intervened while helping students gain more skills since the Writing Processes Movement in the 1970s.

Employees' ability to write accurately for business is critical in the corporate sector. Although general English focuses on honing English language proficiency, there is still a knowledge gap in terms of professional English. The tertiary-level curriculum excludes business English and, in particular, business writing. Because of this, tertiary students are not aware of the significance and subtleties of business writing. The tertiary students believe that their formal writing abilities are strong. Besides, there is an urgent need to educate tertiary learners about the value of excellent business writing and raise awareness of the methods to generate successful business documents also tertiary learners lack effective business writing abilities. Therefore, this study aims to:

1. To comprehend how English language proficiency and written communication are used in the corporate environment

2. To comprehend how tertiary-level students, perceive their English language abilities, particularly with regard to formal writing abilities.
3. To evaluate the tertiary students' business writing abilities through diagnostic exams.
4. To launch a program to increase awareness and enhance tertiary learners' business writing abilities (using task-based teaching pedagogy).

The researchers looked at a variety of academic works that claim that the corporate world lacks strong business writing and that students find it difficult to transition from the academic to the corporate world. Business writing will be successful when the documents are devoid of errors and the readers are completely convinced of the document's content. Despite having some knowledge of business writing, students lack the precise skills needed to write business documents.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Characteristics of Writing**

The art of writing must be taught to people. The spoken and written forms of language differ significantly from one another. Unlike speaking, writing is out of chronological order. In contrast to spoken language, even spoken language that has been captured on hard copy or soft copy, is permanent. Physical separation is one effect



of writing's displacement in space and time.

The writer is in a very different position than when speaking face-to-face due to the physical distance between them. In oral communication, we can typically tell how well our message is understood by watching how our audience reacts. The reader's response in writing always takes time, and by the time it does, it's too late. The writer enjoys a benefit that the speaker usually does not. Writing allows authors to keep track of their performance while they work and make adjustments without the reader being aware of it. While hesitation and corrections are visible to the listener during conversation, they are not apparent to the reader when writing. As a result, the writer can put a lot of time and effort into crafting the correct message, and writing can allow the writer to be far more accurate and fluent than speaking.

The explicitness of the message is a key distinction between speaking and writing. Because the writer and the reader are typically not in the same room, it is crucial that the writer be clear and not assume that the reader already knows what they are talking about. Different genres of writing have established traditions for explicitly stating shared knowledge; for instance, business correspondence frequently begins with the words "with reference to," which demonstrates the

reader's shared understanding of the topic at hand.

## 2.2 Writing in Academic Contexts

Writing allows one to communicate their thoughts, opinions, values, and beliefs to another person or group of people over time and distance barriers. Written communication has social and legal obligations since it produces a finished output. Writing has gained relevance in the academic world primarily because it is extremely visible and offers an efficient way to assess the performance of the pupils. The development of intricate writing ability, however, has not been a top priority of language classes. The use of prescriptive textbooks and grammar guides as teaching aids continues to emphasize content-based language training. The lack of specific activities for writing in India emphasizes how little attention is paid to improving writing abilities. The nature of language courses has shifted from content-based to skill-based as a result of advancements in language teaching methodologies and the growing need for communication abilities, allowing for some room for writing skill instruction and improvement.

Writing has taken on a hugely significant role in today's employment chances. The majority of job categories that need strong writing abilities include journalism, editing, scriptwriting, and

translation. People who want to work in these fields need to be familiar with writing sub-skills such as note-taking, summarizing, editing, revising, and information sharing. Impressive writing is not a requirement for employment in some professions, but it is essential for a person's professional success in those fields. Additionally, having a thorough understanding of writing conventions that apply to all text kinds is crucial to both an individual's personal and professional success. As a result, explicit writing training is now required. According to Ramesh et al. (2019), "Students can enhance their maritime language skills and terms with the help of a word list based on the principles of ESP students perform well in enhancing their knowledge and use of maritime words and terms, having received profession-oriented training and materials." (p.423). The colonial government utilised English writing extensively for communication and also made it the language of instruction in schools. At that time, English was accepted as the official language of the administration, the elite, and the whole Indian press. English became more of a requirement to serve the "babus," as a result of the British forcing the Indians to acquire it in order to interact with them.

Even though English was a foreign

language back then, it still has a significant position in terms of authority and power today. In these situations, understandable input is important but insufficient for the acquisition of a second language. Only if the learner is "open" to input, or if their affective filter is low, can these inputs have any real meaning. For the affective filter (Krashan, 1985) to work, the learner should be motivated, ready to learn, and not overly concerned with his performance. Acquisition only occurs most effectively when the student's affective filter is entirely "down." Therefore, in a calm classroom, a manageable amount of information should be provided.

### **2.3 Importance of Writing in Different Settings**

Language users and composition academics agree that writing is a crucial skill. Writing on the value and function of writing in a personal, educational, and social context is no longer a simple undertaking. The next paragraphs will explore how writers such as Lindeman, Byrne, and Irscher sought to define the function of writing in various contexts. Writing teaching is taking on a more significant role in second language education as a result of the growing importance of writing proficiency, particularly in English, in the global community.



Therefore, it is now commonly acknowledged as a necessary skill for personal, professional, and academic reasons to be able to speak and write in a second language. The ability to engage fully in all facets of society is, for the majority of students, the ultimate goal of being able to write, and as students advance to higher school, this importance of being able to write well increases. Writing proficiency is viewed as evidence that pupils have mastered the cognitive abilities required for both school and employment because writing and critical thinking are thought to be closely related.

The capacity to generate ideas and edit one's written language for grammatical, stylistic, organizational, and other aspects is essential to the development of writing as a skill. The ability of a student to edit for grammatical elements is a concern for the majority of language teachers. Teachers have stepped in to help pupils build more skilled writing processes since the Writing Process Movement began in the 1970s. (Silva, 1990)

#### **2.4 Empirical Literature**

Martiwi (2017) did a study entitled "Error Analysis in Writing Business Email: A Case Study at PT. Nihon Denkei Indonesia". Email has transformed into an integral component of human style. Several businesses use email to interact with their

co-workers, business partners, and others, however many business emails contain errors in written style, such as utilizing abbreviations, addressing a foreigner with their first name rather than their family name, and so on. The objective of this study is to learn about the types of errors that may be discovered in business emails at PT. Nihon Denkei Indonesia and how to prevent them while writing business emails. Kassem (2017) authored "Developing Business Writing Skills and Reducing Writing Anxiety of EFL Learners through Wikis". Wikis were tested to see whether they improved business writing abilities and reduced writing anxiety in Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University, KSA, Business Administration students. The research included 60 randomly selected students in control and experimental groups. Two key data collection techniques were the Test of Business Writing Skills and the Writing Anxiety Inventory. The experiment took place in the second semester of 2015–2016. The pre-and post-intervention mean scores were compared using a t-test. The post-test of Business Writing Skills mean scores of the experimental group over the control group were statistically significant. After the session, the experimental group had much less writing anxiety than the control group. Wikis improve EFL learners' business

## Communication skills, ELT, Business writing, e-learning, and Activity-based teaching strategies

writing abilities and reduce writing anxiety. Instructors should be well-trained in wiki integration.

AlMuslimi (2015) studied “The Effect of Using Portfolio on the Development of Students' English Business Writing and Their Attitudes towards the Course at Sana'a Community College”. This research examines how portfolios affect English business writing course development and student perceptions at Community College Sana'a's second-year bachelor and diploma programmes. A quasi-experimental design was used in this investigation. The survey sampled 40 male and female students. Experimental and control groups were formed. N=20 students in the control group received regular classroom teaching, whereas N=20 students in the experimental group received business writing portfolio evaluation. English business writing exam and nerve and behaviour questionnaire were used to assess course attitudes. Data analysis was done using SPSS. The questionnaire and test scores were analysed using independent and pair sample t-tests. For female business writers, the findings showed a statistically significant difference in improvement. Also, the post-questionnaire showed a favourable shift in the sample's opinion toward the course for the experimental group.

AlAfnan (2014) studied “Politeness in Business Writing: The Effects of Ethnicity and Relating Factors on Email Communication”. A Malaysian educational institute's workplace communications were examined for civility. It evaluated politeness tactics in relation to communicators' ethnicity, power, and social distance. In professional emails, Malaysians utilize direct imperative or declarative politeness, according to a study. This research found that Malaysians often utilized indirect positive and negative politeness. This is to build trust and personal connection. The research found that Malaysians were more courteous to distant coworkers than near colleagues, indicating that social distance was more important than power imbalance.

Caron et al. (2013) authored “Business Writing on the Go: How executives manage impressions through e-mail communication in everyday work life”. This research examines how CEOs employ paratextual signals to maintain professional perceptions in business emails on their smartphone and office PCs. A sample of 60 Canadian company leaders from diverse industries were interviewed via semi-structured, audio-recorded telephone interviews. The interviews analysed CEOs' email writing habits for business reasons on their smartphones and





office computers. After transcription, all interviews were analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods. This research compares how CEOs open and close business emails on their smartphone vs their office PC. They often employ folk categories to distinguish official and informal connections, internal and external communication, and the recipients and their identities. Executives are aware of the social significance of paratextual signals, and even their absence is often employed as a cue. Few studies compare organisational executives' smartphone email writing routines to those on their office computers, despite the importance of email in business interactions. This research reveals that CEOs' email writing behaviours shape professional identities and relationships, notwithstanding their task-oriented communication style.

Qian and Pan (2017) studied "Politeness in Business Communication: Investigating English Modal Sequences in Chinese Learners' Letter Writing". Politeness inspires pragmatics and inter- and intra-cultural communication study. Current literature focuses on how first-language users express politeness. Few studies have examined how second language learners from different subcultures of the same society utilise English. This research explores how Hong

Kong and Shanghai tertiary-level English learners employ modal sequences to compose polite business letters. Three hundred Hong Kong and 300 Shanghai students sent business letters. Compared to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, these final-year students from diverse fields have B2 English competence. The work used mixed approaches to monitor a complicated distribution of politeness realisations using modal sequences. Hong Kong students were more strategic users of modal sequences, as shown by the use of examples from the two purpose-built learner corpora that monitored and compared postsecondary English learners' business writing. Additionally, epistemic modality preserved writing civility better.

Jin (2020) studied "Language Characteristics of Business Letter Writing". Business English letter writing is crucial for English and business English majors. Many researchers worldwide have been examining business letter writing in many domains. Business English letter-writing language elements have yet to be completely analysed, which offers considerable value and room to investigate. Such research would boost global economic dialogue, especially in China, which is becoming more open and prosperous. This research would

## Communication skills, ELT, Business writing, e-learning, and Activity-based teaching strategies

summarise the important linguistic aspects of business letter writing and provide examples to help readers grasp it. This study's findings will also inspire business letter-writing courses.

Wilkinson and Crews (2009) studied "Business Report Writing Students' Perceptions of Their Ability to Succeed in an Online Environment vs. Students' Performance in an Online Course". As students want to study anytime, anywhere, online courses and programmes are growing. To develop efficient online learning, data must be gathered on students' online success perceptions and course performance. A College of Business experiment with business report writers is described in this document. The control group was educated in the regular classroom and the experimental group in integrated learning. Students believed they were good at technology and online achievement, yet assignment and post-test results differed across groups.

According to Martiwi (2017), "Error Analysis In Writing Business Email: A Case Study At PT. Nihon Denkei Indonesia". Email has become a fashion statement. numerous firms use emails to interact with coworkers, business partners, and others, but numerous errors in writing style include utilising abbreviations, addressing foreigners by their first name

instead of their family name, and more. PT. Nihon Denkei Indonesia's business email blunders and how to prevent them are the focus of this study.

### 3. Methodology

For this study, 120 students were chosen from commerce students at Arts and Science Colleges. The samples were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The researchers employed a descriptive research design. Primary data was collected through the use of a questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, version 26.

### 4. Result and Discussion

The students' questionnaire which focuses on the perception of the learners on their proficiency in informal writing skills is analyzed as follows:

#### **Table 1 Students' Proficiency in Business Writing Skills**



Types	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Can't say	Total %
Letter	6%	20%	20%	50%	4%	100%
Summery	7%	25%	18%	45%	5%	100%
E-Mail	12%	18%	15%	48%	7%	100%
Note Making	10%	15%	20%	48%	7%	100%
Preparingg PPT	13%	14%	22%	45%	6%	100%
Memo	6%	4%	4%	15%	71%	100%
Report	10%	12%	36%	38%	4%	100%

Table 1, item 1, pointed out that out of the total respondents, 6% of the respondents perceived their letter-writing skills are excellent. In addition, 20% of the respondents perceived their letter-writing skills are good while 20% of the respondents perceived their letter-writing skills are average, 50% of the respondents perceived their letter-writing skills are below average and only 4% of the respondents did not the level of their letter writing skills. This shows that half a percent of students' letter-writing skills are not proficient enough.

Table 1, item 2, displays that 7% of the respondents perceived their summary writing skills are excellent. In addition, 25% of the respondents perceived their summary writing skills are good while 18% of the respondents perceived their summary

writing skills are average, but 45% of the respondents perceived their summary writingskills are below average and only 5% of the respondents did not the level of their summary writing skills. This shows that the majority of students' summary writing skills are at a low proficiency level. The analysis of Table 1, item 3, reveals that 10% of the respondents perceived their note-taking skills are excellent. In addition, 15% of the respondents perceived their note-taking skills are good while 20% of the respondents perceived their note-taking skills are average, 48% of the respondents perceived their note-taking skills are below average and only 7% of the respondents did not the level of their note-taking skills. This shows that the majority of students' note-taking skills are at a low level.

Table 1, item 4, indicates that out of the total samples, 13% of the respondents perceived their preparing PPT skills are

## Communication skills, ELT, Business writing, e-learning, and Activity-based teaching strategies

excellent. In addition, 14% of the respondents perceived their preparing PPT skills are good while 22% of the respondents perceived their preparing PPT skills are average, 45% of the respondents perceived their preparing PPT skills are below average and only 6% of the respondents did not the level of their preparing PPT skills. This identifies that almost half the percentage of students' preparing PPT skills is at an ineffective level.

As displayed in Table 1, item 5, 6% of the respondents perceived their memo writing skills are excellent. In addition, 4% of the respondents perceived their memo-writing skills are good while 4% of the respondents perceived their memo-writing skills are average, but 15% of the respondents perceived their memo-writing skills are below average and 71% of the respondents did not level of their memo writing skills. This reveals that the majority of students' memo-writing skills are below level so they were not sure about their memo-writing skills level.

Table 1, item 6, shows that 10% of the respondents perceived their report writing skills are excellent. In addition, 12% of the respondents perceived their report writing skills are good while 36% of the respondents perceived their report writing skills are average, 38% of the

respondents perceived their report writing skills are below average and only 4% of the respondents did not the level of their report writing skills. This indicates that almost half a percent of students report writing skills are below proficient level.

## 2. Conclusion

The study focused on the value of business writing and communication abilities in the workplace. The literature review's discussion of transfer theory demonstrated the challenges that students face while transferring their academic knowledge to the workplace. The finding of this study showed that tertiary students lack appropriate letter, summary, E-mail, note making, PPT preparation, memo, and report writing. Therefore, the awareness-raising program and training should be given to students to raise awareness of good business writing and to improve learners' writing abilities.

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