



Student's Perspective On Business Letter Topic: Case Study Of English Education Department Students Of UHKBNP In English Correspondence Subject

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji perspektif mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar (UHKBNP) mengenai penulisan surat bisnis dalam mata kuliah Bahasa Inggris Korrespondensi. Mengakui surat bisnis sebagai alat penting dalam komunikasi profesional, penelitian ini menyelidiki sikap mahasiswa terhadap relevansi surat bisnis, tantangan yang dihadapi selama pembelajaran, serta penerapan keterampilan ini dalam karir mereka di masa depan. Menggunakan metodologi studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan sepuluh mahasiswa, dengan fokus pada pengalaman dan wawasan mereka. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memahami pentingnya surat bisnis untuk kesuksesan profesional, menghargai perannya dalam mengembangkan profesionalisme, pemikiran kritis, dan keterampilan linguistik. Namun, tantangan seperti menguasai format, menyesuaikan nada sesuai konteks, dan keterbatasan paparan terhadap aplikasi dunia nyata diidentifikasi. Mahasiswa menghargai metode pengajaran interaktif dan umpan balik konstruktif, namun menyoroti kebutuhan akan perbaikan, termasuk integrasi teknologi dan aktivitas pembelajaran praktis. Studi ini menekankan perlunya peningkatan kurikulum untuk sejalan dengan tuntutan yang terus berkembang dalam lanskap digital dan profesional. Dengan mengatasi tantangan yang diidentifikasi dan menerapkan perbaikan yang disarankan, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada optimalisasi pendidikan surat bisnis, memastikan mahasiswa siap menghadapi tuntutan komunikasi di tempat kerja modern.

Kata Kunci: *Surat Bisnis, Surat Menulis dalam Bahasa Inggris, Perspektif*

Abstract

This research explores the perspectives of English Education Department students at the University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar (UHKBNP) on the topic of business letter writing within the English Correspondence subject. Recognizing business letters as essential tools for professional communication, this research investigates students' attitudes toward their relevance, challenges encountered during learning, and the applicability of these skills in their future careers. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, data were collected through interviews with ten students, focusing on their experiences and insights. Findings reveal that students understand the importance of business letters for professional success, appreciating their role in developing professionalism, critical thinking, and linguistic skills. However, challenges such as mastering formats, adapting tone to context, and limited exposure to real-world applications were identified. Students valued interactive teaching methods and constructive feedback but highlighted the need for improvements, including the integration of technology and practical learning activities. The study underscores the need for curriculum enhancements to align with the evolving demands of digital and professional landscapes. By addressing identified challenges and implementing suggested improvements, this research contributes to optimizing business correspondence education, ensuring students are well-prepared for the communication demands of modern workplaces.

Keywords: *Business Letter, English Correspondence, Perspective*

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication skills are indispensable in the professional world, and among these, business correspondence holds a prominent place. Business letters, as a formal method of communication, are integral to establishing professional relationships, conducting negotiations, and addressing corporate matters. They embody professionalism, precision, and a clear understanding of purpose. For students pursuing education in English, particularly in the English Education Department, the ability to craft proficient business letters is not only an academic requirement but also a foundational skill that equips them for diverse roles in the workforce.

At the University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar (UHKBNP), the English Correspondence subject serves as a cornerstone in preparing students for real-world communication demands. This course introduces students to various aspects of business correspondence, ranging from formal structures and appropriate vocabulary to tone and contextual meaning. The curriculum aims to ensure students can effectively produce different types of business letters, such as letters of inquiry, orders, complaints, adjustments, and employment applications. While these skills are fundamental to professional success, the perspectives of students on the topic of business letters are crucial for understanding

the effectiveness of teaching methods and the relevance of the subject in their academic and professional journeys.

Several factors influence how students perceive the importance and practicality of learning business letters. Proficiency in English, familiarity with professional writing standards, and exposure to real-world applications of business correspondence all play significant roles. Furthermore, the ongoing digital revolution has reshaped traditional communication methods, prompting a shift toward electronic forms such as emails and online business messaging platforms. This evolution raises questions about how students view the relevance of formal business letter writing in a rapidly changing professional landscape dominated by digital communication tools.

Despite these changes, traditional business letters remain a vital aspect of professional documentation, often required in formal contexts such as legal agreements, official requests, and employment processes. However, mastering this form of writing presents unique challenges for students. These include the use of formal vocabulary, understanding implicit contextual cues, ensuring grammatical accuracy, and adhering to specific formats and conventions. For students who are non-native English speakers, these challenges can be particularly pronounced, affecting their confidence and overall learning experience.

Educators face the task of bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring students not only understand the technicalities of business letters but also appreciate their real-world relevance. Students' feedback and perspectives can provide valuable insights into how effectively these objectives are being met and what adjustments might be needed to align the curriculum with contemporary professional demands.

This research focuses on exploring the perspectives of students in the English Education Department at UHKBNP on the topic of business letters within the English Correspondence subject. It seeks to uncover their attitudes toward the relevance of business letters in today's professional environment, the challenges they encounter while learning, and their views on the applicability of these skills in their future careers. By analyzing these perspectives, the study aims to contribute to the improvement of teaching methodologies, ensuring that students are well-prepared for both academic success and professional endeavors. Moreover, the findings of this study may provide a basis for integrating more practical and adaptive learning strategies, bridging the gap between academic training and real-world expectations.

In summary, this research aims to enhance our understanding of students' experiences and perceptions, shedding light on how the business letter component of the English

Correspondence subject can be optimized to meet the evolving needs of students and the demands of modern professional communication.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative research design, specifically using a case study approach. A case study methodology allows for in-depth exploration of a specific group of students (the English Education Department students of UHKBNP) and their perspectives regarding the business letter topic within the English Correspondence subject. The qualitative nature of the study will enable the researcher to gather rich, detailed data about students' attitudes, experiences, and challenges in mastering business letter writing.

Participants

The participants of this research were taken from Group PIA2 of third semester students of English Education Department in the University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar (UHKBNP) who are currently enrolled in the English Correspondence subject. The researcher only taken 10 (ten) students to involved in interview section to know their perspective about business letter in English Correspondence subject.

Data Source and Data Collection

This research utilized qualitative data, which was analyzed based on responses from an interview. The interview consisted of 10 questions designed to explore students' perspectives on the business letter topic in the English correspondence subject. Data collection was carried out by distributing the interview questions through a Google Form. The researcher gathered insights from students regarding their perspectives on how the teacher delivered the English correspondence lessons.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researcher applied a qualitative descriptive approach, following the steps outlined by Miles and Huberman. Qualitative analysis comprises three main activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. These steps are explained as follows:

a) Data Reduction

The first step in qualitative data analysis is data reduction. This process involves summarizing, selecting essential elements, and focusing on key aspects of the data.

b) Data Display

The second step is data display, which refers to organizing and compressing the information in a structured format to facilitate conclusion drawing and decision-making. By presenting the data clearly, the researcher can better understand and analyze the findings. In this study, interviews and questionnaires will be used as tools for data display, as they are commonly employed in qualitative research.

c) Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final step involves drawing and verifying conclusions. From the onset of data collection, qualitative analysis begins identifying meanings, patterns, explanations, potential relationships, and causal connections. The conclusions derived from qualitative research serve as answers to the research questions, presented as descriptive findings. In this step, the researcher ultimately obtains the results and conclusions of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the interview responses are categorized into several themes related to students' perspectives on business letter writing in the English correspondence subject.

1. Understanding of Business Letters

Students demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept and significance of business letters. Most students described business letters as formal, structured communication tools used in professional settings to convey information, make requests, and establish agreements. The importance of professionalism, clarity, and maintaining official records was consistently highlighted.

2. Relevance to English Correspondence

Students acknowledged the importance of learning business letters in the English correspondence subject for career readiness and professional development. They viewed this knowledge as essential for effective communication in a globalized business environment. Specific benefits mentioned included improving grammar, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills, as well as preparing for real-world professional scenarios like job applications and workplace interactions.

3. Knowledge of Business Letter Formats

Many students found understanding the different formats and styles of business letters challenging. Key difficulties included remembering the structural elements, adapting tone and language to various contexts, and addressing cultural differences in communication styles. Despite these challenges, students recognized the importance of mastering these elements to ensure professionalism and clarity.

4. Writing Experience

While some students had prior experience writing business letters as part of assignments or real-world tasks, others lacked such experience. Students with experience noted challenges such as ensuring proper format, using the right tone, and avoiding informal language. Those without experience expressed a need for more practice and exposure to real-world scenarios.

5. Teaching Methods

Students generally found the teaching methods for business letters effective but suggested areas for improvement. They appreciated real-life examples, hands-on activities, and peer feedback. Suggestions for enhancement included incorporating interactive activities like role-playing, more detailed feedback on assignments, and leveraging technology to modernize the learning experience.

6. Application of Skills

Most students believed that the skills learned in business letter writing would be useful in their future careers. They provided examples such as writing cover letters, drafting formal emails, and preparing proposals. These skills were seen as universally applicable across different professions and industries, highlighting their relevance.

7. Confidence in Writing

Students expressed varying levels of confidence in writing business letters. While some felt equipped with the knowledge and skills to write professionally, others identified a need for more practice and real-world application to build their confidence.

8. Feedback on Writing

Students who received feedback on their writing emphasized its value in improving their skills. Feedback helped them refine tone, clarity, and format, making their writing more professional and effective. Those who had not received feedback expressed a desire for constructive criticism to aid their learning.

9. Use of Resources and Tools

Students reported using various tools and resources, such as Grammarly, online templates, and business writing guides, to support their business letter writing. These tools were found to be effective in ensuring proper format, grammar, and professionalism. Some students, however, expressed a need for more exposure to advanced resources.

10. Suggestions for Improvement

Students recommended improvements to the teaching of business letters, including more interactive and practical activities, real-world examples, and detailed feedback. They

also suggested integrating technology, such as digital tools and platforms, to enhance the learning process and provide modern, relevant approaches to business communication.

These findings reflect students' perspectives on the importance of business letter writing, the challenges they face, and their suggestions for improving teaching methods to enhance learning outcomes and career readiness.

Data Analysis

The interview responses in this section provide insights into students' perspectives on business letter writing as part of their English correspondence subject. These responses highlight the significance of business letters in professional communication, emphasizing their role in maintaining clarity, professionalism, and formal tone. Students recognize the importance of mastering business letter formats, styles, and language nuances to prepare for real-world applications, such as job applications and workplace communication. Additionally, the challenges they face, including understanding various formats, selecting appropriate language, and maintaining professional tone, reflect the complexities of learning this skill. The feedback on teaching methods underscores the need for practical, interactive, and technology-integrated approaches to enhance learning outcomes. Through their experiences, students acknowledge the value of business letter writing skills in their future careers and suggest improvements to teaching strategies to make the learning process more engaging and impactful.

The student responded to the interview questions about business letters in the context of an English correspondence subject. The responses analyzed based on key aspects:

1. Understanding of Business Letters

- a. Common Themes: Students emphasize that business letters are formal, structured, and significant for professional communication. Many highlight their role in maintaining professionalism, clarity, and as official records.
 - i. Student 1: "A business letter is a formal written communication used in a professional setting...ensuring clarity, professionalism, and effective record-keeping."
 - ii. Student 2: "Business letters maintain a formal tone, ensuring professional conduct and respect between parties."
 - iii. Student 6: "Business letters are formal written communication tools commonly used in professional environments."

- b. Challenges Identified: Some students mention the importance of mastering tone, structure, and the nuances required for effective writing.
 - i. Student 1: Highlighted the challenge of "striking the right tone and language" while adhering to the specific requirements of professional writing.
 - ii. Student 3: "In business letters, we not just write the letter by our own, it's also must to look out about their structure and key points."
 - iii. Student 8: Found it difficult to balance "personalization with formality" while ensuring clarity and professionalism.
2. Relevance to English Correspondence
- a. Importance: Students acknowledge the subject's value in equipping them for real-world scenarios, including career preparation and developing critical thinking.
 - i. Student 1: "Learning about business letters in English correspondence is important because it helps individuals communicate professionally and effectively."
 - ii. Student 2: "Understanding the nuances of tone, structure, and language in business letters can enhance clarity, prevent misunderstandings, and create a positive impression."
 - iii. Student 7: Emphasized its importance for students who may pursue careers outside teaching, like entrepreneurs or tour guides.
 - b. Varied Applications: Examples include job applications, professional communication, and enhancing grammar and vocabulary.
 - i. Student 5: "Understanding the proper format, tone, and vocabulary is essential for effective communication and career readiness."
 - ii. Student 9: "Equips students with the skills to craft clear, concise, and professional documents."
 - iii. Student 8: "Mastering this form of communication fosters clarity, professionalism, and critical thinking."
3. Knowledge of Business Letter Formats
- a. Challenges: Students find the variety of formats, cultural differences, and the need for precision in tone and language challenging. Remembering structural elements and adapting to different styles are common difficulties.
 - i. Student 2: "Each type of business letter—whether it's a formal proposal, a cover letter, or a client communication—requires specific formatting, tone, and language."

- ii. Student 6: "Difficulty in understanding the format and style of business letters is remembering all the parts, like the opening, body, and closing, so they follow the rules."
- iii. Student 9: "Familiarity with formats like block, modified block, and semi-block is essential to ensure appropriate presentation and adherence to professional standards."

4. Writing Experience

- a. Experience Levels: Several students have written business letters as assignments, while others lack real-world practice.
 - i. Student 1: "Yes, I have. My experience in writing a business letter was when I submitted an application to Benefactors from Singapore."
 - ii. Student 3: "Nope, I'm just a student right now. I hadn't ever had a job that required working on business letters."
- b. Difficulties: These include ensuring format accuracy, selecting appropriate language, and maintaining a professional tone.
 - i. Student 5: "One difficulty I encountered was using the appropriate tone—balancing professionalism with clarity."
 - ii. Student 7: "The difficulties are remembering the format, parts, and differences between any other kind of business letter."

5. Teaching Methods

- a. Feedback: Students generally find teaching methods effective but suggest more interactive and practical approaches. Recommendations include role-playing, peer feedback, and integrating technology.
 - i. Student 1: Praised the teaching methods for including "real-world examples, hands-on practice, peer feedback, scenario-based learning, and the use of digital tools."
 - ii. Student 6: Found it helpful when examples of business letters were provided and the steps were explained clearly.
- b. Suggestions for Improvement: Interactive activities, use of real-world examples, and hands-on practice are frequently suggested.
 - i. Student 5: "Incorporating more interactive activities, such as group discussions or peer evaluations, could make learning more engaging."

- ii. Student 10: "Practices and critics. I don't want praises because it will not take me anywhere."

6. Application of Skills

- a. Career Utility: Students recognize the universal applicability of these skills, from job applications to professional communication in various industries.
 - i. Student 1: "These skills are essential for effective professional communication, such as writing cover letters and formal emails."
 - ii. Student 5: Highlighted uses in corporate settings, managerial roles, and entrepreneurial ventures.
- b. Examples: Drafting proposals, replying to formal emails, and creating cooperation letters were commonly mentioned.
 - i. Student 3: Mentioned writing letters for workplace scenarios like "ordering supplies or requesting cooperation."
 - ii. Student 7: "As a future teacher, I might use a business letter for events like requesting services for seminars."

7. Confidence in Writing

- a. Confidence Levels: Confidence varies. Some students feel equipped after learning, while others feel the need for more practice to build proficiency.
 - i. Student 1: "I feel quite confident about writing business letters in English after learning about them in the English correspondence subject."
 - ii. Student 3: "To be honest, it's hard to remember the format and the structure, but I can answer questions about business letters."
 - iii. Student 6: "Although still sometimes confused with formal words, I now have a better understanding of the correct structure and format."

8. Feedback on Writing

- a. Impact: Constructive feedback is noted as crucial for skill development. It helps students refine tone, clarity, and format.
 - i. Student 2: "Feedback has significantly improved my skills by helping me refine my tone and clarity."
 - ii. Student 5: "Constructive feedback taught me how to sound more professional and avoid casual tone."
 - iii. Student 9: "This constructive criticism has been instrumental in refining my writing style and ensuring adherence to formal conventions."

9. Use of Resources and Tools

- a. Resources Used: Tools like Grammarly, templates, and business writing guides are commonly used. These are seen as effective in maintaining professionalism and simplifying the process.
 - i. Student 1: "Templates from online platforms and tools like Grammarly help me maintain professionalism and accuracy."
 - ii. Student 6: "I use business letter templates on the internet, which are quite effective because they already have a clear format."
 - iii. Student 8: "I use the 'Canva' application because it provides many templates for business letters."
- b. Challenges: Some students rely on limited resources and need more exposure to advanced tools.
 - i. Student 4: Does not currently use specific tools but expressed interest in exploring them.
 - ii. Student 7: Highlighted difficulties in remembering parts of business letters without relying on templates.

10. Suggestions for Improvement

- a. Enhancing Teaching: Students recommend incorporating real-world scenarios, more detailed feedback, and regular practice. Leveraging technology and focusing on practical applications were other key suggestions.
 - i. Student 1: Suggested "incorporating role-playing scenarios, real-world examples, and peer review sessions."
 - ii. Student 5: Recommended "detailed feedback on assignments and sample letters from different industries."
 - iii. Student 8: Proposed "using real-world scenarios, emphasizing tone and etiquette, and leveraging technology to enhance the learning process."

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this research, it is evident that the topic of business letters holds significant importance in preparing English Education Department students at UHKBNP for professional communication. The students recognize the value of mastering business letters as a vital skill for their future careers, especially in a globalized workplace. This study highlights key insights into students' understanding, challenges, and perspectives, offering a comprehensive view of their learning experiences.

Students acknowledge the role of business letters in enhancing professionalism, critical thinking, and linguistic skills. However, they face challenges such as mastering formal formats, adapting tone to various contexts, and overcoming limited exposure to real-world applications. Confidence levels in writing business letters vary, with many students emphasizing the importance of more practice, constructive feedback, and exposure to advanced resources and tools.

The teaching methods, while generally effective, could benefit from enhancements to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Suggestions for improvement include incorporating interactive activities, such as role-playing and case studies, and leveraging digital tools to modernize the curriculum. Additionally, students expressed a desire for more detailed and constructive feedback to refine their writing skills.

The research underscores the relevance of integrating business correspondence skills into the curriculum and adapting teaching strategies to align with the evolving demands of the professional and digital landscape. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the suggested improvements, educators can better equip students with the competencies necessary for career success.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the understanding of how business letter education can be optimized to support academic and professional development, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the diverse communication demands of the modern workplace.

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