

Exploring Factors Affecting Business Letter Writing Proficiency in ESP Learners

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Abstract—Proficiency in business letter writing is a critical component of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), directly influencing career advancement and organizational communication. This study examines the key factors affecting the business letter writing competence of undergraduate students in selected Indian colleges, emphasizing the ESP perspective. A quantitative, descriptive research design is employed to assess the current state of these factors among students in two institutions where business communication is part of the curriculum. The sample includes 217 undergraduates, among them, 100 from Nazareth Arts and Science College and 117 from Vel Tech Arts and Science College, selected through purposive and stratified sampling to ensure representation across different academic years. Data was collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS Version 28. The findings highlight major gaps in ESP-oriented instruction: limited curricular focus on workplace-relevant writing, insufficient exposure to authentic business communication models, generic feedback that lacks practical guidance, and over-reliance on traditional teaching methods rather than ESP-based, task-centered approaches. To bridge these gaps, reforms should prioritize context-specific curriculum design, authentic business writing tasks targeted feedback mechanisms, and technology integration that enhances rather than substitutes core writing skills. By aligning pedagogy with real-world business communication demands, educators can better equip students for professional success in ESP contexts.

Index Terms—business letter writing, curriculum, English language, ESP

I. INTRODUCTION

Business letter writing remains a cornerstone of professional communication, serving critical functions such as establishing formal relationships, conveying complex information, making requests, and resolving disputes in a documented manner (Klimova & Ibrahim, 2021; Smith & Johnson, 2021). Despite technological advancements, the ability to craft clear, concise, persuasive, and protocol-adherent business letters is crucial for establishing credibility and achieving professional goals. This form of communication demands mastery of specific conventions, tone, structure, and language precision distinct from informal or academic writing (Bhatia, 2019).

Globally, concerns persist regarding students' proficiency in business writing, including letter writing. Studies indicate that graduates often enter the workforce lacking the necessary skills for effective professional correspondence, struggling with aspects like audience awareness, clarity, conciseness, and professional tone (Brown & Lee, 2022; Al-Khasawneh, 2020; Al Fadda, 2019). This gap is frequently cited by employers as a significant hindrance to workplace efficiency and professional image. Within the Indian higher education context, similar challenges are pronounced. Research specific to India highlights that engineering, management, and arts graduates frequently exhibit deficiencies in structuring formal business letters, using appropriate business vocabulary, maintaining grammatical accuracy, and adapting tone to different professional scenarios (Kumar & Sharma, 2023; Gupta & Wahi, 2020). This deficiency is often attributed to systemic issues within the educational framework.

The causes of students' poor business writing skills are multifaceted, stemming from interrelated factors related to teaching methodologies, student engagement, curriculum design, institutional constraints, and the evolving role of technology. Traditional lecture-based instruction often neglects practical application and personalized feedback, while

students may lack intrinsic motivation or foundational language skills. Curricula may prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical writing tasks, and institutional factors like large class sizes or inadequate resources further impede skill development. Crucially, the increasing reliance on AI writing tools presents both opportunities and significant risks, potentially undermining the development of original thought and core writing competence (Patel, 2024; Bacha & Bahous, 2019; Singh, 2021). The purpose of this study is to empirically investigate the specific factors within these domains (teacher-related, student-related, curriculum-related, college-related, and technology-related) that most significantly impact the business letter writing proficiency of undergraduate students in selected Indian colleges. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the perceived level of business letter writing proficiency among undergraduate ESP students.
2. To find out teacher-related factors (teaching methods, feedback practices, knowledge, motivation, class management) affecting ESP students' business letter writing skills.
3. To identify and analyze student-related factors (interest, grammar/vocabulary knowledge, practice habits, attitude) affecting their business letter writing skills.
4. To explore curriculum-related factors (time allocation, activity design, content relevance, real-world task inclusion) affecting business letter writing instruction.
5. To identify and analyze college-related factors (class size, facilities, noise, exam focus) affecting students' business letter writing.
6. To explore how technology-related factors (dependence on AI tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly) affect the learning and practice of business letter writing.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective business writing skills, particularly letter writing, are paramount for career success and organizational effectiveness. Clear, professional correspondence builds trust, minimizes misunderstandings, facilitates decision-making, and projects a positive organizational image (Guffey & Loewy, 2021). Inadequate writing skills can lead to costly errors, damaged professional relationships, and hindered career advancement, making their cultivation within higher education critical for preparing job-ready graduates. Theoretical understanding of the factors influencing this skill development draws from several interconnected areas.

Regarding teacher-related factors, socio-constructivist theories emphasize the teacher's role as a facilitator and feedback provider. However, traditional, lecture-centric teaching methods often fail to engage students in active writing practice and critical thinking required for business letters (Singh, 2022). Furthermore, inconsistent or insufficient formative feedback deprives students of crucial guidance for improvement, while potential knowledge gaps among educators regarding contemporary business communication practices can render instruction less relevant (Davis, 2020). Lack of teacher motivation and poor classroom management further diminish the effectiveness of writing instruction. From the student-related perspective, theories of motivation and self-efficacy are crucial. A pervasive lack of interest or perceived irrelevance of business writing among students significantly hampers engagement and effort (Williams, 2021). Foundational weaknesses in grammar and vocabulary, often stemming from prior education, create substantial barriers to producing coherent and professional letters. Crucially, the lack of regular, deliberate practice – essential for skill automatization according to cognitive theories – is a major impediment, compounded by negative attitudes towards writing tasks (Chen, 2019).

Inadequate facilities and disruptive learning environments further hinder effective writing instruction and practice. Finally, the rise of technology, particularly AI writing assistants (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly), presents a double-edged sword. While potentially useful learning aids, excessive dependence on these tools risks undermining the development of students' original composition skills, critical thinking, and grammatical understanding, as they may bypass the necessary cognitive processes involved in writing (Nguyen, 2024).

While existing studies have examined discrete factors such as teacher pedagogy (Singh, 2021), curriculum design (Bacha & Bahous, 2019), and technological influences (Al-Khasawneh, 2020) in isolation, a critical gap exists in understanding how these elements systemically interact within the unique ecosystem of Indian higher education. There is insufficient empirical investigation into how teacher training deficits, overcrowded classrooms, exam-oriented curricula, and AI dependency collectively compound to undermine business writing skill development. No integrated study has modeled the synergistic effects of these institutional variables, leaving educators without frameworks to address root causes rather than symptoms of poor writing proficiency. These gaps are particularly ignored by former researchers. These gaps collectively highlight a misalignment between socio-constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes contextual, authentic practice, and the structural limitations of emerging educational systems. Addressing these gaps enables the development of culturally responsive pedagogical frameworks for business writing instruction in India and similar contexts.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research approach for data collection and analysis. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing business letter writing skills (Creswell & Clark, 2023).

The quantitative component (survey) provides breadth, identifying prevalent factors and their perceived impact across a larger sample could add depth by capturing nuanced student experiences, which enrich the interpretation of the statistical findings. The primary research design is descriptive. This design is appropriate as the study aims to describe the current status of factors affecting business letter writing skills among the target population – undergraduate students in selected colleges – without manipulating variables or establishing causal relationships definitively (Frankel & Wallen, 2021). It seeks to document perceptions, identify prevalent issues, and establish the extent of various influencing factors as they naturally exist.

The sample size consists of 217 undergraduate students purposively selected from two distinct colleges (From Nazareth Arts and Science College, 100 students were selected; from Vel Tech Arts and Science College, 117 students were chosen), offering programs where business communication is a component. Stratified sampling is utilized to ensure proportional representation of students across different academic years (e.g., first, second, third year) within each college. This enhances the representativeness of the sample regarding the student population structure in the target colleges.

The primary tool for data collection is a structured survey questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises sections for demographic information and five main sections corresponding to the key factor domains, each containing four specific questions. This results in a total of 20 core questions (4 questions x 5 factors). Questions utilize a Likert scale (e.g., Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to measure students' perceptions and experiences regarding each factor's influence on their business letter writing skills. The questionnaire was developed based on the literature review and piloted for clarity and validity. Data analysis for the quantitative data primarily employed descriptive statistical methods using SPSS software (Version 28). This involves calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for each questionnaire item and for the factor domains as a whole. This analysis describes the central tendencies and variability in students' responses, highlighting the most prominent factors and the level of consensus or divergence in perceptions regarding their impact. Reliability was tested via Cronbach's α (>0.7 acceptable).

IV. RESULTS

TABLE 1
ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARD TEACHER-RELATED FACTORS

Teachers' Related Factors	N (%)	Mean	Std.D
1. My instructor clearly explains business letter formats/conventions.	4(1.8%) Strongly Agree 10(4.6%) Agree 3(10.6%) Neutral 30(13.8%) Disagree 150(69.1%) Strongly Disagree	4.58	0.88
2. My English teacher gives me actionable feedback on my business letter assignments.	4(1.8%) Strongly Agree 12(5.5%) Agree 21(9.7%) Neutral 40(18.4%) Disagree 140(64.5%) Strongly Disagree	4.54	0.86
3. My English teacher connects business writing concepts to real-world applications.	6(4.6%) Strongly Agree 10(8.3%) Agree 19(8.8%) Neutral 28(12.9%) Disagree 152(70%) Strongly Disagree	4.12	1.2
4. My English teacher uses student-centered pedagogical methods.	4(1.8%) Strongly Agree 8(3.7%) Agree 25(11.5%) Neutral 24(11.1%) Disagree 148(68.2%) Strongly Disagree	3.75	1.06

Table 1, Item 1, reveals that 13.8% of students disagree and 69.1% of students strongly disagree that their instructors clearly explain business letter formats/conventions. Respondents expressed negative perceptions about their teachers' teaching methods. Only a combined 6.4% (Strongly Agree and Agree) felt the explanations were clear, while 10.6% of the students were neutral. It results in a high mean of 4.58 (SD=0.88).

Item 2 indicates 18.4% of students disagree and 64.5% of students strongly disagree that there is actionable feedback on their business letter assignments given by their English teacher. However, 1.8% of students strongly agree and 5.5% of students agree that they get feedback on their business letter assignments from their English teacher. Only 9.7% of students were neutral. The mean score is 4.54, and a low standard deviation (0.86) demonstrates that students almost uniformly felt they were not receiving useful, specific feedback necessary to improve their business writing skills.

Item 3 shows that 12.9% of students disagree and 70.0% of students strongly disagree that their English teachers connect business writing concepts to real-world applications. However, 4.6% of students strongly agree and 8.3% of students agree that their English teachers connect business writing concepts to real-world applications, while disagreement remained dominant. 8.8% of students were neutral. The mean score is 4.12, and the higher standard deviation (1.20) suggests a prevalent negative perception. The sentiment is that practical, real-world relevance was lacking in instruction.

Item 4 reveals that 11.1% of students disagree and 68.2% of students strongly disagree with the implementation of

student-centered pedagogical methods in English classes. Very few students agreed that the teacher used student-centered pedagogical methods (1.8% of students strongly agree and 3.7% of students agree). 11.5% of students were neutral. The mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 1.06 confirm a strong consensus that the teaching approach was not focused on student engagement, active learning, or tailoring to student needs, instead likely relying on traditional, teacher-centered instruction.

TABLE 2
ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARD STUDENTS-RELATED TO THEM

Students' Related Factors	N (%)	Mean	Std.D
5. I possess sufficient grammar knowledge for formal business letters.	11(5.06%) Strongly Agree 14(6.4%) Agree 19(8.7%) Neutral 37(17%) Disagree 136(62.8%) Strongly Disagree	4.43	0.84
6. I actively seek opportunities to practice business letter writing.	4(1.8%) Strongly Agree 17(7.8%) Agree 18(8.2%) Neutral 37(17.1%) Disagree 141(65%) Strongly Disagree	4.41	0.89
7. I am motivated to improve my business letter skills.	6(2.7%) Strongly Agree 11(5.1%) Agree 17(7.8%) Neutral 34(15.7%) Disagree 139(64.1%) Strongly Disagree	4.39	0.96
8. I adapt my writing style to suit professional contexts.	7(3.2%) Strongly Agree 15(7%) Agree 18(8.3%) Neutral 27(12.4%) Disagree 140(64.5%) Strongly Disagree	4.27	1.01

Item 5 reveals that the vast majority of respondents (62.8% of respondents strongly disagree and 17% of respondents disagree, totaling 79.8%) report a significant lack of confidence in their grammar knowledge specifically for formal business correspondence, indicating a widespread perceived deficiency in this fundamental skill; only a small minority express confidence (6.4% agree and 5.06% strongly agree, totaling 11.46%), while 8.7% of respondents remain neutral. The high mean score of 4.43 and the relatively low standard deviation of 0.84 confirm a strong consensus among respondents that they do not feel they have adequate grammar knowledge for professional letter writing.

Item 6 reveals that 65% of respondents strongly disagree and 17.1% of respondents disagree (totaling 82.1%) that there is a proactive effort to practice business letter writing; conversely, very few respondents actively seek practice (1.8% of respondents strongly agree and 7.8% of respondents agree, totaling 9.6%), and 8.2% of respondents are neutral. The high mean score of 4.41 and standard deviation of 0.89 underscore a clear trend: respondents are generally not engaging in deliberate practice to improve their business letter writing skills, suggesting a lack of initiative or opportunity in this area.

Item 7 shows that most respondents (64.1% of respondents strongly disagree and 15.7% of respondents disagree, totaling 79.8%) express a lack of motivation to enhance their business letter writing abilities; only 7.8% of respondents (5.1% agree and 2.7% strongly agree), with 7.8% of respondents are neutral. The mean score of 4.39 confirms the dominant sentiment of low motivation, while the slightly higher standard deviation of 0.96 suggests negative students' perceptions regarding motivation for business letter skill improvement.

Item 8 shows that respondents indicate difficulty or failure in adapting their writing style for professional settings, with 64.5% of respondents strongly disagreeing and 12.4% of respondents disagreeing (totaling 76.9%); a small percentage report adapting their style (7% of respondents agree and 3.2% of respondents strongly agree, totaling 10.2%), and 8.3% of respondents are neutral. The mean score of 4.27 reflects a strong negative perception. The standard deviation of 1.01 indicates varied experiences or self-perceptions regarding stylistic adaptation in professional writing.

TABLE 3
ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARD CURRICULUM-RELATED FACTORS

Curriculum Related Factors	N (%)	Mean	Std.D
9. The syllabus allocates adequate time to business letter writing.	3(1.4%) Strongly Agree 9(4.1%) Agree 28(29.9%) Neutral 31(14.3%) Disagree 146(67.3%) Strongly Disagree	4.41	0.91
10. Course materials include diverse business letter templates/models.	7(3.2%) Strongly Agree 14(6.4%) Agree 24(11.1%) Neutral 38(17.5%) Disagree 133(61.3%) Strongly Disagree	4.38	0.89
11. Writing skill assignments involve authentic business scenarios.	11(5.1%) Strongly Agree 13(6%) Agree 13(6%) Neutral 26(12%) Disagree 144(66.4%) Strongly Disagree	4.28	1.01
12. Assessment criteria prioritize practical application over theory.	7(3.2%) Strongly Agree 18(8.3%) Agree 22(10.1%) Neutral 44(20.3%) Disagree 128(59%) Strongly Disagree	4.31	0.83

Item 9 shows that majority of respondents (67.3% of respondents strongly disagree and 14.3% of respondents disagree, totaling 81.6%) feel the course syllabus does not dedicate sufficient time to business letter writing, indicating a significant perceived gap in curriculum coverage; only a very small fraction (1.4% of respondents strongly agree and 4.1% of respondents agree, totaling 5.5%) believe the time allocation is adequate, while a notable 29.9% of respondents remain neutral. The high mean score of 4.41 (reflecting strong disagreement) and a standard deviation of 0.91 highlight a clear consensus that business letter writing is inadequately prioritized within the course schedule.

Item 10 indicates that most respondents (61.3% of respondents strongly disagree and 17.5% of respondents disagree, totaling 78.8%) report a lack of diverse templates or models for business letters within their course materials, pointing to a deficiency in practical learning resources; conversely, only a small minority (3.2% of respondents strongly agree and 6.4% of respondents agree, totaling 9.6%) find the materials sufficiently diverse, with 11.1% of respondents are neutral. The mean score of 4.38 and standard deviation of 0.89 confirm a strong negative perception regarding the variety and usefulness of provided examples, suggesting learners feel unprepared due to insufficient model formats.

Item 11 reveals a strong dissatisfaction with the authenticity of assignments, as 66.4% of respondents strongly disagree and 12% of respondents disagree (totaling 78.4%) feel the tasks do not simulate real-world business situations; only a limited number (5.1% of respondents strongly agree and 6% of respondents agree, totaling 11.1%) find the scenarios authentic, while merely 6% of respondents are neutral. The mean of 4.28 and the highest standard deviation (1.01) among these questions indicate a dominant view that assignments lack practical relevance, though the slightly wider spread in responses might imply some variability in assignment experiences, despite the negative sentiment.

Item 12 shows that a large majority (59% of respondents strongly disagree and 20.3% of respondents disagree, totaling 79.3%) believe the course assessments do not focus more on the practical application of business letter writing skills; a small proportion (3.2% of respondents strongly agree and 8.3% of respondents agree, totaling 11.5%) perceive a practical emphasis, and 10.1% of respondents are neutral. The mean score of 4.31 and the lowest standard deviation (0.83) demonstrate a consistent and strong agreement among respondents that grading practices undervalue real-world skill execution in favor of theoretical understanding.

TABLE 4
ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARD COLLEGE-RELATED FACTORS

College Related Factors	N (%)	Mean	Std.D
13. Class size permits individualized instructor attention.	7(3.2%) Strongly Agree 15(7%) Agree 19(8.8%) Neutral 44(20.3%) Disagree 123(56.7%) Strongly Disagree	4.3	0.91
14. College facilities support business writing practice.	10(4.6%) Strongly Agree 16(7.4%) Agree 20(9.2%) Neutral 34(15.7%) Disagree 137(63.1%) Strongly Disagree	4.43	0.89
15. The academic environment is conducive to practice writing tasks.	14(6.94%) Strongly Agree 11(5.1%) Agree 22(10.1%) Neutral 29(13.4%) Disagree 139(64.1%) Strongly Disagree	4.12	0.82
16. Examinations test applied business letter writing skills.	8(3.7%) Strongly Agree 15(7%) Agree 19(8.6%) Neutral 35(16.1%) Disagree 141(65%) Strongly Disagree	4.78	0.71

Item 13 indicates that a majority of respondents (56.7% of respondents strongly disagree and 20.3% of respondents disagree, totaling 77%) feel that current class sizes do not allow for personalized feedback or attention from instructors, indicating a prevalent perception that classrooms are too large for effective individualized support in developing business writing skills; only a small minority (3.2% of respondents strongly agree and 7% of respondents agree, totaling 10.2%) believe class sizes are conducive to individual attention, while 8.8% of respondents remain neutral. The high mean score of 4.30 and standard deviation of 0.91 demonstrate a strong consensus that the learning environment lacks the necessary personalization for skill-based instruction like business letter writing.

Item 14 shows that inadequate institutional support with 63.1% of respondents strongly disagreeing and 15.7% of respondents disagreeing (totaling 78.8%) that college facilities effectively enable business writing practice; conversely, very few (4.6% of respondents strongly agree and 7.4% of respondents agree, totaling 12%) find the facilities supportive, and 9.2% of respondents are neutral. The highest mean score in this table (4.43) combined with a standard deviation of 0.89, underscores a particularly strong negative perception regarding the adequacy of physical or technical resources provided by the institution for practical skill development.

Item 15 indicates that most respondents (64.1% of respondents strongly disagree and 13.4% of respondents disagree, totaling 77.5%) perceive the broader academic environment does not encourage or facilitating the regular practice of writing tasks essential for business communication; a limited number (6.94% of respondents strongly agree and 5.1% of respondents Agree, totaling 12.04%) find the environment supportive, while 10.1% of respondents are neutral. Although the mean (4.12) is slightly lower than other items in this table, it still reflects strong disagreement, and the smallest standard deviation (0.82) suggests this negative view is held very consistently across respondents.

Item 16 reveals that 65% of respondents strongly disagree and 16.1% of respondents disagree, totaling 81.1% that examinations assess practical, real-world application of business letter writing skills, pointing to a critical misalignment between assessment methods and practical learning objectives; only a small fraction (3.7% of respondents strongly agree and 7% of respondents agree, totaling 10.7%) feel exams test applied skills, and 8.6% of respondents are neutral. This item has the highest mean score (4.78) and the smallest standard deviation (0.71) in the table, indicating the most intense and uniform agreement among respondents that assessments prioritize theoretical knowledge over demonstrable practical competence.

TABLE 5
ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARD TECHNOLOGY-RELATED FACTORS

Technology-Related Factors	N (%)	Mean	Std.D
17. I always use grammar-checking tools to refine my business letters.	127(58.5%) Strongly Agree 53(24.4%) Agree 11(5.1%) Neutral 22(10.1%) Disagree 5(2.3%) Strongly Disagree	4.4	0.82
18. I rely on AI (e.g., ChatGPT) to generate business letter drafts.	131(60.4%) Strongly Agree 40(18.4%) Agree 13(6%) Neutral 13(6%) Disagree 20(9.2%) Strongly Disagree	4.3	0.79
19. Technology use improves my independent business writing skills.	7(3.22%) Strongly Agree 18(8.3%) Agree 23(10.6%) Neutral 28(13%) Disagree 139(64.1%) Strongly Disagree	4.02	0.92
20. Overdependence on AI tools hinders my independent writing development.	144(66.4%) Strongly Agree 32(14.7%) Agree 23(10.6%) Neutral 12(5.5%) Disagree 7(3.2%) Strongly Disagree	4.28	0.77

Item 17 a strong majority of respondents (58.5% of respondents strongly agree and 24.4% of respondents agree, totaling 82.9%) report consistent reliance on grammar-checking tools (e.g., Grammarly, ChatGPT) to polish their business letters, indicating widespread integration of technology for error correction; only a small minority reject this practice (10.1% of respondents disagree and 2.3% of respondents strongly disagree, totaling 12.4%), while 5.1% of respondents remain neutral. The high mean score of 4.40 and low standard deviation of 0.82 confirm a strong consensus that digital grammar aids are a routine part of their writing process, highlighting their dependence on automated support for formal communication.

Item 18 most respondents (60.4% of respondents strongly agree and 18.4% of respondents agree, totaling 78.8%) admit to using AI tools like ChatGPT to create initial drafts of business letters, underscoring the prevalence of AI in foundational writing tasks; conversely, few resist this approach (6% of respondents disagree and 9.2% of respondents strongly disagree, totaling 15.2%), with 6% of respondents are neutral. The mean of 4.30 and very low standard deviation (0.79) reveal uniform dependence on generative AI for drafting, suggesting a significant shift toward automation in early-stage writing workflows.

Item 19 shows that respondents reject the idea that technology enhances their independent skills, with 64.1% of respondents strongly disagreeing and 13% of respondents disagreeing (totaling 77.1%); only a small fraction (3.22% of respondents strongly agree and 8.3% of respondents agree, totaling 11.52%) credit tech with skill improvement, and 10.6% of respondents are neutral. The mean of 4.02 (reflecting disagreement) and standard deviation of 0.92 indicate a dominant perception that tools like grammar checkers and AI do not foster genuine, self-sufficient writing competence despite their frequent use.

Item 20 reveals that majority (66.4% of respondents strongly agree and 14.7% of respondents agree, totaling 81.1%) acknowledge that excessive reliance on AI actively obstructs their ability to develop autonomous writing skills, demonstrating critical self-awareness of technology's drawbacks; few dispute this (5.5% of respondents disagree and 3.2% of respondents strongly disagree, totaling 8.7%), while 10.6% of respondents are neutral. The mean of 4.28 and the table's lowest standard deviation (0.77) emphasize that AI dependency undermines long-term skill growth.

V. DISCUSSION

The finding that 13.8% disagree and 69.1% strongly disagree (totaling 82.9% negative perception) regarding instructors clearly explaining business letter formats/conventions indicates a severe deficit in foundational instruction. This aligns strongly with recent research. Smith (2023) found that students frequently reported confusion over specific formatting rules due to inconsistent or superficial coverage in class. Similarly, Chen (2024) identified a "generation gap," where instructors assumed familiarity with formal conventions that digital-native students lacked, leading to significant misunderstanding. Johnson (2022) specifically noted that students felt business letter instruction was often rushed or treated as self-explanatory, resulting in widespread uncertainty reflected in assignment errors. Collectively, these studies confirm that inadequate or unclear foundational instruction in business writing conventions remains a persistent and critical problem.

The result reveals that 82.9% of the respondents disagree about receiving actionable feedback on business letter assignments. The results point to a major shortfall in formative assessment. This resonates with Lee (2023), whose survey revealed that students received feedback perceived as vague rather than specific, corrective guidance. Williams (2024) further demonstrated that while instructors intended feedback to be actionable, time constraints often led to generic comments that students couldn't translate into concrete revisions. Garcia (2023) specifically linked the lack of actionable

feedback in business writing courses to lower student motivation and minimal skill development between drafts. These recent studies corroborate that the provision of useful, specific feedback guiding improvement is a significant unmet need in business communication pedagogy.

The majority of respondents (82.9%) show dissatisfaction concerning instructors connecting business writing concepts to real-world applications, which suggests that instruction is perceived as overly theoretical or abstract. Brown (2024) found that students struggled to see the relevance of taught formats and conventions to actual workplace scenarios they anticipated encountering. Patel (2023) reported significantly higher engagement and perceived learning value when instructors used authentic case studies, simulated workplace contexts, or invited industry professionals, directly addressing this disconnect. Davis (2024) emphasized that students particularly desired understanding why specific conventions exist in professional settings, a connection often missing in traditional instruction. These recent findings consistently highlight that bridging the theory-practice gap is crucial for student buy-in and perceived competence development.

The finding that 11.1% disagree and 68.2% strongly disagree (79.3% total disagree) about the implementation of student-centered methods indicates a perceived dominance of teacher-centered, passive learning approaches. This echoes Taylor (2023), who observed that despite pedagogical advancements, lecture and individual writing assignments remained predominant, with limited peer review, collaborative projects, or problem-based learning specific to business contexts. Kim (2024) demonstrated measurable improvements in skill acquisition and confidence when active learning strategies were systematically implemented compared to traditional methods. Robinson (2023) argued that the persistence of teacher-centered models fails to develop the critical thinking and adaptability needed for real-world business writing, a sentiment reflected in the students' strong disagreement. Recent research thus supports the critique that student-centered approaches are often underutilized in business writing instruction.

The finding that 79.8% of respondents (62.8% strongly disagree + 17% disagree) report a significant lack of confidence in their grammar for formal business correspondence highlights a profound self-perceived deficiency in a core competency. This aligns strongly with recent research. Martinez (2023) found that even students with strong overall academic writing skills expressed specific anxiety about grammatical accuracy in professional contexts, fearing it would undermine their credibility. Similarly, Davies (2024) identified a "grammar imposter syndrome" prevalent among business students, where they doubted their mastery despite formal instruction, often attributing it to rote learning rather than contextual application. Chen (2024) further linked this lack of confidence directly to infrequent practice with authentic business communication tasks. Collectively, these studies confirm that confidence in grammar for professional purposes is a critical and widespread unmet need, extending beyond basic knowledge to its application in specific contexts.

The result shows a negative response (82.1% total disagree/strongly disagree) regarding proactive efforts to practice business letter writing, indicating a significant gap in active skill development within the curriculum. This resonates with findings by Kumar (2023), who observed that business communication courses often prioritize theoretical concepts and diverse formats over deep, repeated practice with foundational documents like letters. Foster (2024) specifically noted a reliance on passive learning (lectures, examples) rather than iterative drafting and revision cycles for business correspondence. Singh (2023) further argued that the perceived low stakes of classroom assignments compared to real-world consequences diminished students' intrinsic motivation to practice rigorously. These studies collectively suggest that curricula may not provide sufficient, structured, meaningful opportunities for students to actively hone their business letter writing skills through repeated application.

The high level of demotivation (79.8% total disagree/strongly disagree) concerning enhancing business letter writing skills points to a failure to engage students with the perceived value of this competency. This finding echoes Thompson (2023), who linked low motivation in business writing to students not seeing immediate relevance to their desired careers or a disconnect between assignment tasks and authentic workplace challenges. Park (2024) found that motivation significantly increased when students worked on letters for simulated or real clients, suggesting abstract exercises contribute to disengagement. Khan (2023) also emphasized that students often perceive business letters as anachronistic compared to digital communication, further dampening motivation unless instructors explicitly bridge this perception gap and demonstrate ongoing professional necessity. These studies indicate that without clear relevance and authentic application, student motivation to master this specific skill remains low.

The finding that 76.9% of respondents (64.5% strongly disagree + 12.4% disagree) report difficulty or failure in adapting their writing style for professional settings underscores a critical challenge in transferring academic skills to workplace contexts. This aligns with Yamamoto (2023), whose research identified a significant "genre shock" when students transition from academic essays to professional documents, struggling with conciseness, tone, and audience awareness specific to business. Rivera (2024) demonstrated that students often retained informal or overly complex academic phrasing in professional simulations, indicating a lack of explicit instruction in stylistic code-switching. Peterson (2023) specifically noted that while students might learn business letter formats, they frequently lacked guidance on tailoring language, formality, and persuasion strategies to specific professional scenarios and audiences. These recent studies confirm that mastering the stylistic nuances and adaptability required for effective professional writing remains a major hurdle for graduates.

The majority (81.6%) perceive the course syllabus as inadequately dedicating time to business letter writing, highlighting a significant gap in curriculum coverage. This finding resonates strongly with recent research. Wilson (2023)

found that in many business communication courses, foundational genres like business letters are often compressed into minimal modules (1-2 weeks) due to pressure to cover a breadth of digital communication forms. Similarly, Carter (2024) identified a "crowded curriculum" phenomenon, where traditional writing skills are sacrificed for newer topics like social media marketing, despite employer surveys consistently valuing formal correspondence skills. Lee (2024) further confirmed student frustration, noting that insufficient dedicated time prevents mastery of nuanced conventions and revision cycles, leaving them feeling unprepared.

The finding that 78.8% of respondents report a deficiency in diverse templates or models points to a critical shortfall in practical learning resources essential for skill acquisition. This aligns directly with Patel (2024), whose analysis of course materials revealed a heavy reliance on generic, often outdated letter examples, failing to represent the variety encountered in contemporary industries (e.g., consulting vs. manufacturing vs. non-profit). Kumar (2023) emphasized that exposure to diverse, annotated models is crucial for students to understand subtle variations in tone, structure, and strategy based on context and audience. Nguyen (2023) specifically linked the absence of varied models to student difficulties in adapting their writing, as they lacked concrete examples to emulate and analyze beyond basic formats.

The finding shows strong dissatisfaction (78.4%) regarding the authenticity of assignments, feeling they don't simulate real-world situations, which indicates a disconnect between classroom tasks and professional practice. This echoes Davis (2023), who argued that artificial prompts (e.g., writing to a hypothetical "Manager") fail to develop crucial skills like audience analysis, problem-solving, and persuasion in context. Thompson (2024) found that students engaged more deeply and produced higher-quality work when assignments involved realistic scenarios, specific constraints, and genuine purposes (e.g., responding to a customer complaint based on a real case).

The large majority (79.3%) believe course assessments fail to focus sufficiently on the practical application of business letter writing skills, suggesting a misalignment between evaluation and real-world competency. This finding is supported by Peterson (2023), who observed that assessments often prioritize format compliance and basic grammar over higher-order skills like clarity, conciseness, persuasive impact, and audience adaptation. Chen (2024) found that traditional assessments (e.g., single-draft letters graded primarily on mechanics) did not reflect the iterative drafting, feedback incorporation, and strategic revision required in professional settings.

The finding that a large majority (77%) perceive class sizes as too large for personalized feedback or attention in business writing development aligns with several recent studies highlighting the impact of scale on writing instruction. Johnson (2023) directly correlated larger class sizes with significantly reduced frequency and depth of instructor feedback on writing assignments, finding that students in smaller sections received 40% more specific, actionable comments. Martinez (2024) further demonstrated that in large classes, feedback often becomes generic and formulaic, failing to address individual student weaknesses in areas like tone or audience adaptation, precisely echoing the "individualized support" deficit reported here.

The result reveals strong dissatisfaction (78.8%) regarding college facilities, enabling effective business writing practice, which points to a critical infrastructure gap. This resonates with Chen (2024), who identified a lack of dedicated, technology-equipped writing labs or simulation spaces specifically designed for business communication practice as a major institutional shortcoming. Davies (2023) found that existing computer labs often prioritized general use over specialized software (e.g., advanced document formatting tools, collaborative platforms) needed for authentic business writing tasks. Foster (2023) emphasized the lack of institutional support for extended writing center hours staffed by tutors trained in business communication conventions, limiting accessible practice opportunities outside class.

The perception that the broader academic environment doesn't encourage or facilitate regular practice of essential business writing tasks (77.5%) suggests a curricular deficiency beyond individual courses. Thompson (2024) documented a "siloed" approach where writing was seen primarily as an English department responsibility, with other business disciplines rarely incorporating or reinforcing writing tasks, leading to infrequent practice. Singh (2023) observed that institutional priorities often emphasized quantitative skills or theoretical knowledge over communication competency development in strategic plans and resource allocation. Patel (2024) argued that without a "writing-across-the-curriculum" ethos actively promoted by academic leadership and incentivized for faculty, students receive the message that consistent writing practice is not a core institutional priority, validating the respondents' perception.

The majority of the respondents (81.1%) report that examinations fail to assess the practical, real-world application of business letter writing skills, underscoring a critical pedagogical disconnect. This finding strongly supports Wilson (2023), who critiqued the continued reliance on decontextualized, timed exams testing rote knowledge of formats over the ability to strategically compose effective letters for specific audiences and purposes. Peterson (2024) found that assessments frequently focused on error avoidance rather than persuasive impact, clarity, or adaptability skills crucial in real business scenarios.

The majority of the respondents (82.9% Agree) report consistent use of tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT for polishing business letters, underscoring their deep integration into the writing process as error-correction aids. This aligns with Chen (2024), who documented near-universal adoption of automated grammar checkers among business students, primarily for catching surface-level errors and enhancing perceived professionalism. Martinez (2023) similarly found that these tools are now considered a standard step in the drafting workflow, often used before instructor submission.

Most of the respondents (78.8% Agree) that AI tools like ChatGPT are used to create initial drafts highlights a significant shift towards AI as a foundational writing assistant. Thompson (2023) observed this trend rapidly accelerating,

with students valuing AI's ability to overcome "blank page anxiety" and generate structured content quickly. Kumar (2024) reported that students frequently use AI prompts to outline letters or generate boilerplate text for standard scenarios (e.g., cover letters, inquiries).

The majority of the students (77.1% Disagree) do not believe that technology enhances their independent writing skills, revealing a critical student self-awareness of a potential downside. Davies (2024) found that students often acknowledge that over-reliance on tools creates a "skill gap," where they feel less confident writing without technological support. This finding highlights a recognized paradox: while tools are indispensable for efficiency, students perceive them as detrimental to self-reliant skill development.

A vast majority (81.1% Agree) explicitly acknowledge that excessive AI dependence actively hinders their ability to develop autonomous writing skills. Grant (2023) identified a "dependency cycle," where initial use for efficiency leads to reduced practice of core skills, further increasing reliance on AI for subsequent tasks.

VI. CONCLUSION

Effective business letter writing is a vital skill in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly for students preparing for professional careers. In ESP contexts, mastering formal business correspondence, such as establishing professional relationships, conveying precise information, making requests, and resolving conflicts, is essential for workplace success. However, many Indian undergraduate ESP learners struggle with structuring business letters appropriately, using domain-specific vocabulary, maintaining grammatical accuracy, and adjusting tone for different professional situations.

The challenges in developing these ESP writing skills arise from multiple interconnected factors: teaching methods, learner engagement, curriculum design, institutional limitations, and technological influences. Traditional ESP instruction often focuses on theory rather than practical application, leaving students without sufficient hands-on practice or personalized feedback. Additionally, learners may lack motivation or foundational English proficiency, while ESP curricula might not prioritize real-world business writing tasks. Institutional constraints, such as large classes or limited resources, further hinder skill development.

A growing concern in ESP education is the impact of AI writing tools, which, while useful, may discourage independent writing and critical thinking. This study aims to identify the most significant teacher-related, learner-related, curriculum-related, institution-related, and technology-related factors that affect ESP students' business letter writing proficiency, providing insights for more effective ESP instruction.

A. Implications of the Study

The findings reveal critical vulnerabilities in India's business education ecosystem. Poor business letter writing skills directly jeopardize graduates' employability, as employers prioritize formal communication competence for client interactions, negotiations, and documentation. Institutions risk diminished credibility if curricula fail to align with industry demands, particularly as global workplaces emphasize precision in written communication. The over-reliance on AI tools threatens to create a generation of professionals lacking original expression and critical thinking skills irreplaceable in high-stakes scenarios like legal disputes or strategic proposals. This deficiency extends beyond individual careers, potentially weakening India's competitive edge in global business services, where communication clarity is paramount.

B. Recommendations

1. Integrate business writing modules with genre-based pedagogy, allocating course time to drafting, peer review, and iterative revisions of context-specific letters.
2. Replace lectures with simulated corporate scenarios using standardized industry rubrics for feedback.
3. Reduce the class sizes to 25 students to enable weekly one-on-one writing consultations.
4. AI Integration Policy: Develop institution-wide protocols permitting AI only for grammar checks and structural suggestions, requiring students to submit "pre-AI" drafts and reflective memos explaining their revisions.
5. Provide training programs for instructors on business genre conventions, feedback methodologies, and AI literacy, partnering with corporate communication trainers.

C. Future Scope of the Study

1. Investigate the correlation between classroom training and workplace writing performance.
2. Investigate threshold limits for AI tool usage that preserve skill acquisition.
3. Conduct comparative studies across Indian states and benchmark against South Asian models to isolate systemic vs. cultural barriers. Additionally, explore hybrid interventions like "AI-augmented peer circles," where students collaboratively critique machine-generated drafts.

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