

A Comprehensive Study of Business Writing Competence Among Business Management Students at Techno Link College, Ethiopia

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Abstract—As businesses increasingly rely on written communication for various purposes, the ability to articulate ideas, convey information, and engage stakeholders through written mediums has become a vital competency. This study delves into the challenges faced by students when they write business letter, report and email in English at Techno Link College, Burayu Campus. The research aims to comprehensively analyze the issues surrounding business writing, exploring how students perceive and approach the learning of this crucial skill. To conduct this investigation, a mixed-methods approach was employed and both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were utilized. A sample of 165 students was randomly selected, and their insights were gathered through a survey questionnaire. The findings of the research revealed that the majority of the students struggle to master the art of effective business writing. The results show that the majority of students exhibited poor performance across these essential business communication tasks such as composing emails, letters and reports.

Index Terms—business writing, difficulty, email, letter, report

I. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of global business, effective communication has emerged as a quintessential skill. The ability to articulate thoughts, ideas, and information with precision and clarity is crucial, particularly in the realm of business writing. Recognizing this, the study delves into the challenges faced by students at India's Nazareth College of Arts and Science as they navigate the intricate world of writing for the commercial domain.

Business writing, a skill often considered ancillary in academic curricula, is increasingly gaining prominence as a vital talent in the professional arena. The research aims to dissect the multifaceted issues encountered by students when tasked with communicating through diverse business writing formats. By understanding the hurdles faced by these students, we hope to shed light on effective strategies for educators and institutions to enhance the development of this essential skill. Business communication has evolved significantly, with a shift towards a globalized marketplace. As such, the ability to communicate effectively in writing has become indispensable for aspiring professionals. The abstract highlights the significance of written communication skills in the business context and addresses the struggles faced by students at Nazareth College of Arts and Science in mastering business writing. However, a notable research gap exists in the absence of a detailed examination of the root causes behind the observed poor performance. Researches which have been conducted in the same area lack an exploration of specific challenges encountered by students, hindering a nuanced understanding of the deficiencies in their business writing abilities. Addressing these gaps would facilitate the

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development of targeted interventions and improvements in business writing education. Therefore, this study focuses specifically on investigating Nazareth College of Arts and Science students' business writing skills.

The primary objective of this research is to examine the challenges that students encounter while learning and practicing business writing. To achieve this goal, the researchers employed a comprehensive approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Through student surveys, the researchers sought to measure students' business writing skills.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The extensive body of literature on business writing highlights the significance of honing effective communication skills in organizations. A number of scholars and practitioners have contributed insights and strategies to improve writing proficiency in various business contexts. The significance of effective business writing has become increasingly manifest in contemporary professional environments. As organizations rely heavily on written communication, the ability to convey ideas, information, and proposals coherently and persuasively has become a fundamental skill.

Bernoff (2016) assessed the impact of poor business writing. The study highlights the financial consequences of poor writing skills on organizations. Bernoff emphasized the urgency for organizations to prioritize effective communication to maintain productivity and financial health. Blake and Bly (1991) provided a comprehensive understanding of the building blocks necessary for effective communication. Students can develop a strong base for navigating various business writing tasks by emphasizing these foundational elements. McCormick and Hemphill (2000) offered a theoretical framework that connects the principles of communication to the practical context of business writing. This integration can provide students with a deeper understanding of the rationale behind effective business communication strategies.

Guffey and Du-Babcock (2010) investigated essential concepts and practical applications; their work aligns with the multifaceted nature of business writing. This foundational resource can support students in gaining a holistic understanding of the various dimensions of business communication. Lentz (2013) contributed valuable insights into the implications for business writing pedagogy. Lentz's work provides a bridge between academic learning and real-world application by focusing on workplace practices. This connection is crucial for educators seeking to prepare students for the practical demands of business writing in professional settings. Zinsser (2006) explored the elements of style, clarity, and grace in business writing. He emphasized the importance of clear and graceful expression. These concepts are foundational for effective business communication that enhances business writing proficiency. Davis et al. (2000) delved into the theoretical underpinnings of business by incorporating practical exercises that aimed at improving writing skills. Regular engagement in writing practice could benefit students who face challenges in business writing.

Gale (2014) found that students struggled with composing well-organized, concise English letters, emails, and reports and he provided some practical principles for enhancing business writing skills. According to Gale, effective business writing is rooted in clarity, conciseness, and purpose. Gale's insights contribute to the understanding that proficiency in business writing requires a strategic approach, focusing on the essential elements that make communication effective in a professional setting. Garner (2012) explored that students' business writing skills including emails, letters, and reports are poor. Therefore, he suggested that educators should engage in regular writing practice to enhance their writing skills. Tanviboolaya (2014) explored the challenges faced by employees at Electronics Sthece Co., Ltd., in their business English writing skills. According to him, emails should be clear, concise, and tailored to the audience's language proficiency. Considering the potential language barriers highlighted in the research, students should focus on simplicity and directness to ensure effective communication.

Thep-Ackrapong (2005) emphasized on potential challenges faced by report writers. According to Thep-Ackrapong, a report needs to be structured in a way that aids comprehension, utilizing clear headings and concise language. Besides, reports should be designed to guide readers through complex information, ensuring that even challenging topics are presented in an accessible manner. According to Williams (1990) and Zinsser (2006), emails should adopt a clear and graceful style to ensure that the message is easily understood. Reports which follow a well-crafted writing style enhance the document's overall impact. Both authors stress the importance of simplicity which helps the writers convey their messages with clarity and elegance. Prapawuttikul (2004) investigated the English writing and speaking needs analysis of MIT support staff that provides valuable insights for effective email communication. Understanding the specific language requirements is crucial for tailoring emails to meet the needs of diverse support staff. Prapawuttikul stated that email writers should adapt their language and content based on the identified communication gaps to ensure clarity and comprehension.

Ramesh (2018) studied the enrichment of legal vocabulary skills and enhancement of legal writing and advocacy skills among law students to offer guidance for report writing, particularly in the legal field. According to him, reports in legal contexts demand precision and a rich vocabulary. The study suggests that a tailored approach to skill development can significantly impact the quality of legal reports, emphasizing the importance of adapting content to the specific needs of the audience. Santithawornying (2015) focused on problems in English communication skills between Thai and Japanese staff in a Thai-Japanese leasing company that highlights the significance of effective communication in a multicultural workplace. According to Santithawornying email and report writing involve considering the cultural nuances and language differences identified in the study. Therefore, students should strive for clarity and sensitivity in

cross-cultural communication to minimize misunderstandings and foster effective collaboration within multinational teams.

Srisitanon (2009) addressed intercultural challenges in written communication that involve adopting a culturally sensitive approach. According to him, students can benefit from understanding the specific intercultural communication barriers identified in the study to ensure that emails and reports are not only grammatically correct but also culturally appropriate which contributes to successful communication within a diverse corporate environment.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a sample of 165 business management students through a simple random sampling technique that reflects the diversity of the student population at Techno Link College. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (survey questionnaire) were employed to ensure a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by these students. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26.

IV. RESULT

SPSS Version 26 and Excel were utilized in order to analyze the data gathered from a primary source. Then the analyzed data is interpreted and discussed systematically.

Q1. "I face difficulty in logically organizing my ideas when I write emails in English."

TABLE 1
DIFFICULTY IN LOGICALLY ORGANIZING OF IDEAS WHEN WRITING EMAIL IN ENGLISH

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	11	6.7
Disagree	15	9.1
Neutral	14	8.5
Agree	68	41.3
Strongly Agree	58	35.2
Total	165	100

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of respondents' perceptions regarding the difficulty they face in logically organizing their ideas when writing emails in English. The majority of the participants, 76.5% (41.3% agreed and 35.2% strongly agreed) that they face challenges in this specific aspect of English email writing. This indicates that a substantial majority acknowledges the difficulty of organizing ideas coherently in their English email correspondence. Conversely, 15.8% of respondents (6.7% strongly disagreed and 9.1% disagreed) that they face difficulties in organizing ideas when writing emails in English. 8.5% of respondents neither strongly agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Overall, the results from this table stress a prevalent difficulty among respondents in logically organizing ideas when writing emails in English.

Q2. "I face difficulty in using a wide range of vocabulary in my emails writing."

TABLE 2
DIFFICULTY IN USING A WIDE RANGE OF VOCABULARY IN EMAILS WRITING

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	15	9.1
Disagree	19	11.5
Neutral	12	7.3
Agree	52	31.5
Strongly Agree	67	40.6
Total	165	100

Table 2 provides an insightful perspective on the respondents' views regarding the difficulty they encounter in using a wide range of vocabulary in their email writing. 9.1% of the participants strongly disagreed and 11.5% of respondents disagreed that they face difficulty in using a diverse vocabulary in their email writing. This indicates only a small number of the respondents feel confident in their ability to incorporate varied language in their written communication and use an appropriate and wide range of vocabularies. The "Neutral" category represents 7.3% of respondents. These respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they face challenges in employing a broad vocabulary. The majority of respondents, comprising 72.1% (31.5% agreed and 40.6% strongly agreed) that they struggle with utilizing a wide range of vocabulary in their email writing. This shows that a significant proportion of individuals feel limited in their ability to express ideas with diverse language. The findings from this table suggest a need for vocabulary development initiatives, especially in the context of email writing. To address the identified difficulty, educational programs or workplace training sessions could focus on expanding participants' vocabulary and providing tools and strategies to diversify language use. Additionally, considering the diversity in respondents' perspectives, personalized approaches may be beneficial in catering to varying levels of vocabulary proficiency and addressing individual needs effectively.

Q3. "I face difficulty in using correct grammar during my email writing."

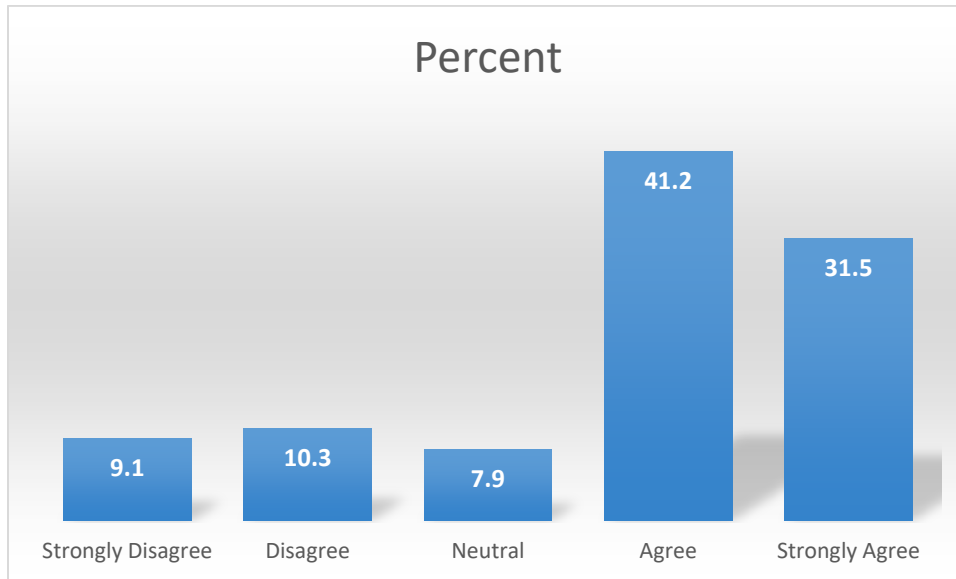


Figure 1. Difficulty in Using Correct Grammar During Emails Writing

Figure 1 presents an insightful overview of respondents' sentiments regarding the challenge of using correct grammar in their email writing. 9.1% and 10.3% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that they have confidence in their ability to use correct grammar in email writing. This suggests a notable portion of participants who feel proficient at applying grammatical rules, highlighting a degree of grammatical proficiency within the surveyed group. 7.9% of respondents indicate neither agreed nor disagreed with facing difficulties in using correct grammar. This group may include individuals who feel moderately challenged by grammatical aspects or those who hold an indifferent stance, showcasing diversity in experiences and attitudes toward grammatical accuracy. The majority of respondents, constituting 41.2% and 31.5% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they struggle with using correct grammar in their email writing. This substantial percentage highlights that a significant proportion of individuals perceive difficulties in maintaining grammatical accuracy. The majority of respondents regarding challenges in maintaining grammatical correctness in their email communication. This implies a potential area for targeted educational interventions or workplace training programs to enhance participants' grammatical skills in the context of email writing. The findings from Figure 1 suggest a considerable need for interventions aimed at improving grammatical proficiency, particularly in the context of email writing. Educational curriculum could be designed to provide students with the necessary tools and strategies to enhance their grammar skills. Recognizing the diversity in respondents' perspectives, personalized approaches may be beneficial in addressing varying levels of grammatical proficiency and catering to individual needs effectively. Besides, the results emphasize the importance of integrating grammar-focused modules into language education or professional development programs to empower individuals with the skills needed for effective written communication. According to Lamessa et al. (2024) stated, “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” (p. 7).

Q4. “I face difficulty use appropriate words when I write business letters.”

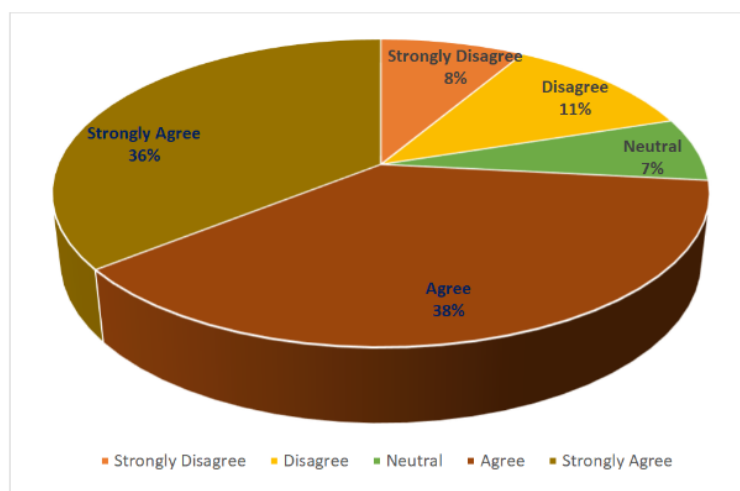


Figure 2. Difficulty in Using Appropriate Words When Writing Business Letters

Figure 2 provides a comprehensive view of respondents' perceptions regarding the difficulty they face in using appropriate words when writing business letters. 8.5% of participants strongly disagreed and 11.5% of participants disagreed with the statement that they face difficulty in using appropriate words when writing business letters. This indicates a notable portion of participants who feel adept at choosing a suitable language for their written communication, showcasing a level of proficiency in vocabulary selection. 6.7% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they face difficulties in using appropriate words in business letters. This group may include individuals who feel challenged in word selection or those who hold an indifferent stance, revealing diversity in experiences and attitudes toward vocabulary used in this specific context. The majority of respondents 37.6% agreed and 35.8% strongly agreed that they struggle with using appropriate words when writing business letters. This substantial percentage highlights a widespread recognition that a significant proportion of individuals perceive challenges in accurately choosing words for effective communication in a business letter format. The majority of respondents face challenges in using appropriate words when composing business letters. The findings from Table 4 suggest a considerable need for interventions aimed at improving word selection skills, particularly in the context of business letters. Business writing courses could focus on providing learners with the necessary tools and strategies to enhance their vocabulary and select appropriate words for professional written communication. Recognizing the diversity in respondents' perspectives, personalized approaches may be beneficial in addressing varying levels of vocabulary proficiency and catering to individual needs effectively. Additionally, the results emphasize the importance of integrating specific modules on word choice into language education or professional development programs to empower individuals with the skills needed for effective written communication in a business context.

Q5. "I do not about spellings and grammar when writing business letters."

TABLE 3
FACING DIFFICULTY OF SPELLING AND GRAMMAR WHEN WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	17	10.3
Disagree	15	9.1
Neutral	14	8.5
Agree	63	38.2
Strongly Agree	56	33.9
Total	165	100

Table 3 presents the respondents' opinions on the statement, "I do not care about spellings and grammar when writing business letters." 17 respondents (10.3%), strongly disagreed with the statement. This suggests that a small number of the participants place a high importance on spelling and grammar when composing business letters. These individuals likely prioritize effective communication and professionalism in their written correspondence. 15 respondents (9.1%), disagreed with the statement. This indicates a significant number of participants recognize the significance of proper spelling and grammar in business letters. 14 respondents (8.5%), were neutral. This group neither agreed nor disagreed about the importance of spelling and grammar in business letters. 63 respondents (38.2%) agreed with the statement. These participants do not understand the importance of spelling and grammar in their business letters. It shows that in their writing they potentially emphasize other aspects of business content over linguistic accuracy. 56 respondents (33.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. This indicates that a significant number of participants prioritize content or other factors over careful attention to spelling and grammar when composing business letters.

Q6. "I face difficulty make my business letters clear and concise."

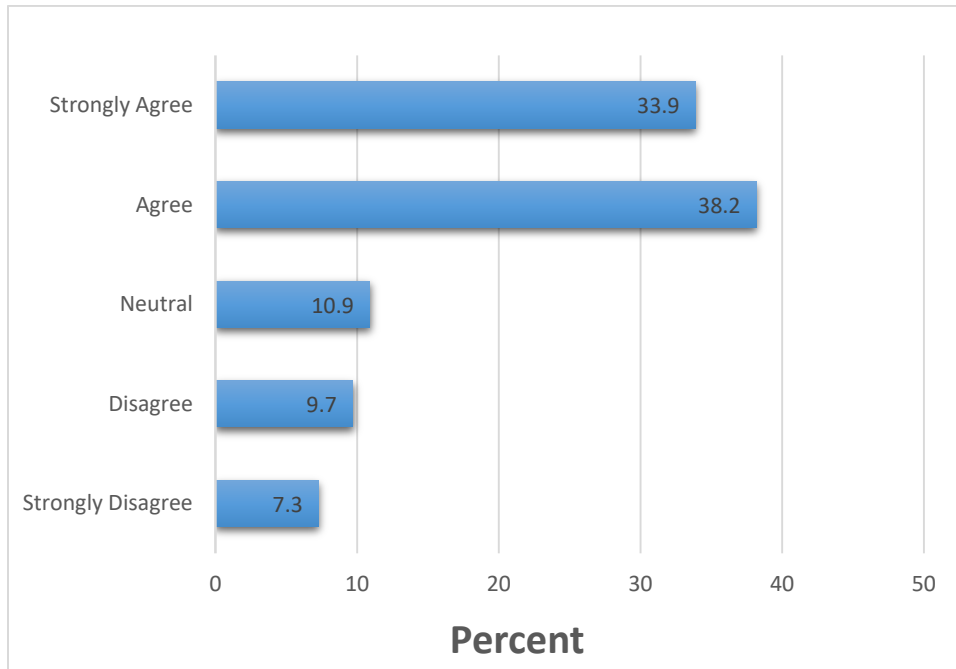


Figure 3. Facing the Difficulty in Making Business Letters Clear and Concise

Figure 3 provides insights into respondents' experiences regarding the clarity and conciseness of their business letters. The survey asked participants to express their opinions on facing difficulty in making their business letters clear and concise. A substantial portion of the respondents (33.9%) strongly agreed that they encounter they face difficulty in achieving clarity and conciseness in their business letters. This suggests that a significant number of the surveyed population face challenges in ensuring their communications are both clear and concise, highlighting potential areas for improvement in their business writing skills. And 38.2% of respondents agreed they face difficulties in achieving clarity and conciseness. On the contrary, 7.3% of respondents strongly disagreed that they face difficulties in making their business letters clear and concise. This suggests a minority perspective among participants who feel confident in their ability to create business letters that are both clear and concise. Similarly, 9.7% of respondents disagreed that they face challenges in business letter clarity and conciseness. This group likely acknowledges the importance of clear and concise communication but may feel that they do not encounter significant difficulties in achieving these goals. 10.9% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that they face challenges associated with making business letters clear and concise. In general, a substantial portion of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they face difficulties in ensuring clarity and conciseness in their business letters.

Q7. "I face difficulty in keeping the proper structure of the paragraphs when I write business reports."

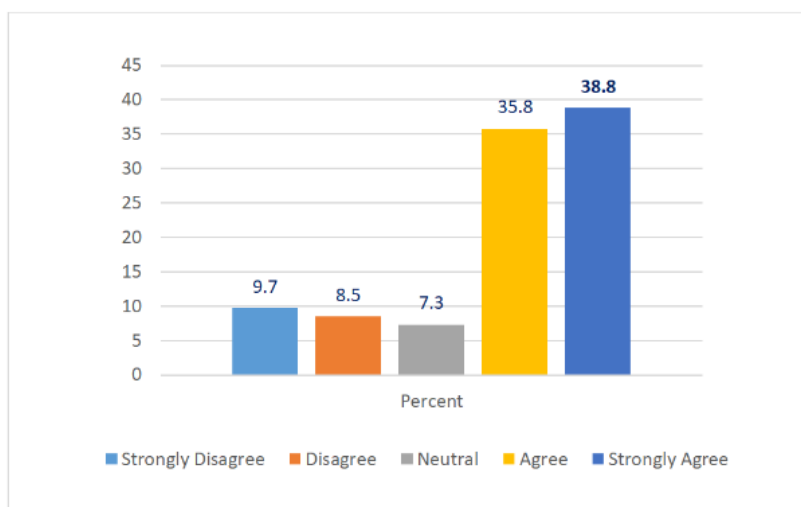


Figure 4. Facing Difficulty in Keeping the Proper Structure of the Paragraphs When Writing Business Reports

Figure 4 sheds light on the respondents' challenges related to maintaining the proper structure of paragraphs when writing business reports. The survey prompted participants to share their opinions on this matter. A majority of respondents, 38.8%, strongly agreed that they face difficulties in maintaining the proper structure of paragraphs in their

business reports. They acknowledge that they face challenges in structuring content effectively within the context of business report writing, indicating a potential area for improvement in the skills of the surveyed population. In Addition, 35.8% of respondents agreed they face difficulties in maintaining proper paragraph structure, though not to the extent of those who strongly agree with the notion of facing difficulties in keeping the proper structure of paragraphs in business reports. In contrast, a smaller proportion, 9.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion of facing difficulties in keeping the proper structure of paragraphs in business reports. These participants feel confident in their ability to maintain the appropriate structure in their written reports. Similarly, 8.5% of respondents disagreed with the statement about difficulties in maintaining paragraph structure in business reports. This group acknowledges the importance of proper structure but may feel that they do not encounter significant challenges in this aspect of report writing. 7.3% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. In summary, a considerable majority of respondents either agree or strongly agree that they face challenges in maintaining the proper structure of paragraphs when writing business reports. This highlights a widespread recognition of difficulties in this specific aspect of business writing.

Q8. "I do not know the proper components of report writing."

TABLE 4
FACING DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING THE PROPER COMPONENTS OF REPORT WRITING

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	13	7.9
Disagree	15	9.1
Neutral	12	7.3
Agree	64	38.8
Strongly Agree	63	38.2
Total	165	100

Table 4 presents the respondents' feedback regarding the statement, "I do not know the proper components of reports writing." The majority of respondents, 38.8%, strongly agreed that they encounter challenges in understanding the proper components of reports writing. This shows that many participants experience difficulties in organizing their written content effectively. Additionally, 35.8% of respondents agreed they struggle to recognize the proper components of report writing. On the contrary, 9.7% of respondents strongly disagreed and 8.5% disagreed respectively with the statement. These respondents believe that they do not face challenges in understanding the proper components of report writing. Moreover, 7.3% of respondents expressed a neutral stance, suggesting a group that neither agreed nor disagreed significantly. It indicates a notable portion of respondents know the proper components of reports writing. In summary, the data from Table 8 highlights a widespread acknowledgment among the respondents regarding challenges in maintaining the proper structure of paragraphs in business reports. The majority either agree or strongly agree with the statement, emphasizing the need for potential interventions or support mechanisms to enhance the participants' skills in this aspect of business writing.

Q9. "I face difficulty in writing business reports with clear sentences and plain language."

TABLE 5
FACING DIFFICULTY IN WRITING BUSINESS REPORTS WITH CLEAR SENTENCES AND PLAIN LANGUAGE

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	14	8.5
Disagree	17	10.3
Neutral	12	7.3
Agree	67	40.6
Strongly Agree	55	33.3
Total	165	100

Table 5 provides insights into respondents' perceptions regarding the statement, "I face difficulty in writing business reports with clear sentences and plain language. 73.9% of respondents (40.6% agreed and 33.3% strongly agreed) that they encounter challenges in constructing business reports with clear sentences and plain language. This indicates that remarkable participants face difficulty in writing in a straightforward manner. Conversely, 8.5% of respondents strongly disagreed and 10.3% disagreed with the statement, indicating participants who feel confident in writing business reports with clear sentences and plain language. Besides, 7.3% of the respondents were neutral. The data from Table 5 shows the importance of addressing challenges in writing with clear sentences and plain language among the surveyed population. A substantial portion of respondents need targeted interventions, training, or resources to enhance their skills in crafting business reports.

Q10. "I do not proofread my business report after writing it."

TABLE 6
FACING DIFFICULTY IN PROOFREADING BUSINESS REPORT AFTER WRITING IT

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	18	10.9
Disagree	16	9.7
Neutral	14	8.5
Agree	60	36.4
Strongly Agree	57	34.5
Total	165	100

Table 6 presents the respondents' perspectives on the statement, "I do not proofread my business report after writing it. A significant portion of respondents, constituting 70.9%, (36.4% agreed and 34.5% strongly agreed) that they do not engage in proofreading their business reports after writing them. On the contrary, 10.9% of respondents strongly disagreed and 9.7% disagreed with the statement. This indicates that a minority of the respondents recognize the importance of proofreading in the business report writing process. Additionally, 8.5% of respondents were neutral that neither agreed nor disagreed. The data from Table 10 highlights a significant trend among the surveyed population of not prioritizing proofreading in the business report writing process. This finding underlines the potential need for interventions, training, or awareness campaigns to emphasize the importance of proofreading for accuracy, clarity, and overall quality in business communication. Improving proofreading habits could contribute to enhancing the professionalism and effectiveness of written business reports.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the investigation revealed numerous challenges experienced by business students in the domain of business writing. A substantial number of respondents expressed difficulties in various facets of business writing, including email, letters, and report composition. A significant finding of the study was the widespread struggle among students when it comes to utilizing proper language in emails. The findings indicated that many students faced challenges in both sending and receiving emails in English, showing a gap in proficiency that may hinder their future professional endeavors. Another remarkable finding was the difficulty in composing well-organized, concise English business letters. This skill, often overlooked, is crucial for effective communication in the business world. The study highlighted the need for focused attention on this aspect of business writing in educational curricula. The challenges extended to more complex forms of business writing, particularly in report composition. Overall, the majority of respondents struggled with constructing adequately organized paragraphs while writing reports and emails in English. This finding suggests a need for targeted interventions to enhance paragraph construction skills among business students.

VI. CONCLUSION

Effective business writing is a multifaceted skill that requires a combination of theoretical understanding, practical application, and strategic thinking. The study sheds light on the challenges faced by business students at Nazareth College of Arts and Science when navigating the intricacies of business writing. The majority of respondents struggled with constructing effectively organized paragraphs while writing business letter, reports and emails in English. The findings emphasize the need for a targeted and multifaceted approach to business writing instruction. Understanding the challenges faced by business students at Nazareth College of Arts and Science opens the door to crucial implications and recommendations for educators and institutions. The study emphasizes the importance of regular writing practice. Therefore, engaging students in consistent writing exercises, both inside and outside the classroom, can significantly contribute to the improvement of their business writing skills. The findings highlight the necessity for a comprehensive approach to business writing instruction. Educators should consider diversifying writing assignments to expose students to various formats and styles of business writing. This approach can help students develop a versatile skill set that aligns with the diverse demands of the professional world. Students dealing with the complexities of composing emails, letters, and reports can benefit from the holistic approach. Moreover, the emphasis is on regular writing practice. Proficiency in business writing is a skill that can be developed and refined over time.

Future research should delve into the complexities of these challenges, examining whether they stem from insufficient training, curriculum gaps, individual skill disparities, or other contributing factors. Additionally, there is a need for comparative research to assess how the identified challenges align with industry expectations, providing insights into whether academic programs adequately prepare students for the demands of real-world business communication. Addressing these gaps would facilitate the development of targeted interventions and improvements in business writing education.

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