

## Teaching Commercial Correspondence for Business-English-Majored Students in Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry: Difficulties and Recommendations

Pham Ngoc Son 

Faculty of Foreign Languages – Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, Vietnam

✉ **Corresponding Author:** Pham Ngoc Son, **E-mail:** [sonpn@hufi.edu.vn](mailto:sonpn@hufi.edu.vn)

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

**Received:** May 08, 2021

**Accepted:** June 05, 2021

**Volume:** 3

**Issue:** 6

**DOI:** 10.32996/jeltal.2021.3.6.5

### KEYWORDS

Business English, Commercial Correspondence, teaching and learning English, teaching commercial correspondence, difficulties in teaching and learning English.

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to figure out the difficulties the students of Bachelor of Business English in Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry (HUFI) face in commercial correspondence. During the 4th semester of Bachelor of Business English, students in HUFI study the course of commercial correspondence. The major barrier for these students is their inability to use terminology and syntax correctly. For this purpose, data were collected from 100 students from two Business-English-majored classes in HUFI using timed Grammaticality Judgment Tests proposed by Ellis, R. (2005). The results showed that most students were not familiar with terminology commonly used in commerce; they failed to use formal English language syntax in their correspondence writing. In the post-test interviews, students shared that they were not equipped with enough terminology used in commerce, and it was so complicated to use grammar correctly in commercial correspondence. The findings in this paper may serve as a foundation to figure out factors that need to be considered when designing materials and teaching business English.

### 1. Introduction

Commercial correspondence, a written communication, plays an important role in helping business-English-majored students pursue future careers in foreign-invested enterprises in Vietnam. Not only does commercial correspondence serve as a written commitment between interest parties, but the commercial correspondence is also very beneficial in building and maintaining a trade relationship with different parties related to business transactions. Hence, learning how to write and use commercial correspondence effectively must be essential for working in foreign-invested enterprises. However, business-English-majored students in Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry (HUFI) do not seem confident in getting knowledge in this course. In fact, they are not good at written communication. They are unaware of common grammatical structures of English that they have been learning at different levels of education, especially those used in commercial correspondence.

Under globalization, English has become a means to help the labor force in developing countries, including Vietnam, find a good job in foreign-invested enterprises. Many English learners, including business-English-majored students in HUFI, believe that spoken communication must be more important than written communication. That is why these learners focused on listening and speaking skills and ignored reading and writing. The result was that many graduated business-English-majored students may master spoken communication but do not feel confident in reading, especially writing. Although business-English-majored students in HUFI are equipped with knowledge of English grammar, they may fail to apply these grammar points effectively in real situations. These students also do not realize the connection between grammar and writing; instead, they consider grammar course as a compulsory course in the training program. Thus, they study grammar course in order to pass the exam.

Not realizing the importance of grammar and writing may cause many complaints from foreign-invested enterprises in Vietnam: Graduated business-English-majored students could not produce an effective business correspondence. Hence, in recent years, mastering writing skill can be one of the compulsory requirements for those who would like an opportunity to work in foreign-invested enterprises in Vietnam.

It can be said that without mastering both spoken and written communication in English, students who majored in business English may find it more challenging to get a good position in foreign-invested enterprises in Vietnam. In order to help business-English-majored students in HUFU have a competitive advantage in the labour market, teaching and learning written communication, including commercial correspondence, is a must. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to pinpoint difficulties causing deficient performance in writing correspondence from business-English-majored students in HUFU. The findings of this paper also aim to help these students study commercial correspondence effectively through recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

Correspondence can be understood as a written form of communication, generally through letters or emails; it is a way to pass on ideas in writing. Commercial correspondence or business correspondence refers to the written form of communication used in business. According to Ashley (2007), correspondence can be considered a key aspect of commerce and business because it can reflect on the competence and professionalism of the person who has written it and the company this person works for. Clear and compelling correspondence is an important part of running an efficient business and can promote good relations. Therefore, writing skills – what is written and how it is expressed – should be as much a part of business education (p. 5). Together with spoken communication, written communication like correspondence must be essential in the working environment. Writing is an activity to express ideas, issues, events, feeling or thinking to others through written form, which needs considerable components; therefore, in the context of the teaching of writing in English, students need to learn how to communicate in written English as a way of sharing observation, information, thoughts, or ideas with themselves and others (Fadilah, 2019, p. 83). Riaz and Gul (2016) share the same ideas, stating that written communication plays an important role in the professional career of commerce students as they are to draft letters of different nature in their professional career (p. 12). Writing is a source of sharing our ideas, information, and viewpoint with the present and future generations. It allowed the intelligentsia and taught people of the past to speak to the present world. It is the best helping tool to write official text and also for the purpose of business correspondence. Also, it is a necessary source that enables us to interact with others in a variety of ways (Riaz & Gul, 2016, p. 13).

It is more challenging to master written communication, especially in commercial correspondence. Writing is related to the knowledge and experience of the writer's own cognitive process. Writing consists of a triangle, including the writer, the readers and the text message. The writer is the initiator and creator of the message who transforms the ideas into words to communicate the writer's point of view to the reader. The reader is the receiver of the message created by the writer. The last element is the contents of the text message, aiming to maintain the relationship between the writer and the readers and make the communication complete. All three elements are indispensable to complete the writing process because each plays its roles in interpreting the meaning of the written communication (Riaz & Gul, 2016, p. 14). Students need further practice to master writing skills, especially in commercial correspondence, because good writing skills cannot be acquired naturally. The cultural setting, a good learning environment, and formal and informal teaching practices all play a role in developing this skill. In writing, the students must compose pieces of information in the form of text, using their ability and expertise. In this activity, the writer first learns the mechanical aspect of writing, consisting of knowledge of words, letters, spelling, and punctuation. After learning the mechanical aspect of writing, the writer moves towards the creative aspects of writing, including the learning of grammar, vocabulary, and the correct placement of words into a sentence (Riaz & Gul, 2016, p. 14). However, students may get little opportunity to write. These days, with the advances of technology, mainly the Internet, students may have more opportunities to read ideas from the Internet. Instead of critical thinking for a better piece of writing, they become habituated to copy ideas from sources of references and produce writing pieces without paying attention to writing theory. Thus, students commonly violate rules of correct format, formal language uses, and grammatical structures under commercial correspondence.

Figuring out barriers that students normally meet in writing is conducted by various researchers, three of whom are Fadilah (2019), Nila (2017) and Chan (2014). Fadilah (2019) stated that the most complicated thing learners must overcome using terminology appropriately; the second barrier is making a business letter clear, concise, and meaningful (p. 92). Nila (2017) believed that three factors caused the errors in writing, including Language transfer, overgeneralization, and context of learning. According to Chan (2014), some most challenging written means of communication that must be put into consideration include: (1) the use of words and clarity in order to make a business proposal/report/plan look professional; (2) the use of correct format and style; (3) the need to meet different parties' expectations in writing negative messages; and (4) choosing an appropriate coursebook to teach written communication in business English (p. 384 – 386).

In order to improve writing skill, Graham and Larsen (cited in Riaz & Gul, 2016) suggested six effective principles, including: (1) the provision of result-oriented instruction must be given; (2) the instruction of the teacher should be changed according to the needs of the students; (3) the teacher should intervene whenever the students commit a mistake so as to prevent students making these mistakes again; (4) the teacher should hold a positive view and expect that every student can learn to write without any difference; (5) the errors and mistakes of the students should be identified, and special concentration should be given on the rectification of these errors; and (6) the teacher should use new technological devices, fun games and various other activities to create interest in classroom teaching (p. 14).

### **3. Methodology**

This paper aims to figure out difficulties in written communication faced by Bachelor of Business English students in HUFU; then, suggestions to solve the problems are given. In order to analyze various factors causing difficulties, a descriptive research method is used.

#### **3.1 Design of the study**

In order to collect data for this paper, a test was designed. This test is originally suggested by Ellis (2005) with some modifications aiming to be appropriate to business-English-majored students in HUFU. There were 17 incorrect sentences in the test, divided into morphological structures and syntactical structures. The participants were asked to correct these sentences. The participants were required not to write their names on the test for the purpose of retaining the secrecy of the responses and would be given 20 minutes to finish the test. When the time was up, the tests were collected and presented into a percentage with illustrations for further analysis. Besides, an interview after the test was done, aiming to know more about difficulties business-English-majored students in HUFU met in studying the course of commercial correspondence. Ten of the students, five in each class, were chosen for the interview.

#### **3.2 Sample of the study**

The sample of this study consisted of 100 business-English-majored students in HUFU in two classes. They were following the course of commercial correspondence in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester. Before studying this course, they were equipped with English grammatical knowledge in the course of grammar in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester and basic business terminology in the course of business English in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester. The textbook for the course of commercial correspondence was the *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* written by Ashley (2007). The length of this course was 45 periods, equivalent to 3 credits, lasting 15 weeks, 3 periods/ week. Due to the limited length of time, students could not study all chapters in this textbook; instead, they were taught the six first chapters and the last chapter; the others were for self-study.

#### **3.3. Research Instrument**

The instrument used in this research comes to timed Grammaticality Judgement Tests suggested by Ellis (2005), consisting of 17 incorrect sentences. According to the author of this test, Ellis, R. (2005), the choice of the grammatical content was motivated by the following considerations: (1) An attempt was made to select target language structures that were known to be universally problematic to learners; (2) The structures were selected to represent both early and late acquired grammatical features according to what is known about the developmental properties of L2 acquisition; (3) The structures were selected to represent a broad range of proficiency levels according to when they were introduced in ESP courses covering beginner, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced levels; and (4) The structures were chosen to include both morphological and syntactic features (p. 154).

According to Krisztina, S. (2016), Grammaticality Judgement Tests have been commonly used for a long time in SLA to measure second language learners' (i) linguistic ability and also (ii) to decide whether L2 learners rely on their explicit, implicit or both knowledge sources when making judgements about the well-formedness of sentences by modifying the two aspects of GJTs, which are time pressure and task stimulus. Test takers undergo a three-stage process while performing a Grammaticality Judgement Tests, which are the 'semantic processing' whereby learners understand the meaning of a sentence; the 'noticing' phase, when they realise if the given sentence is formally correct or not; and the 'reflecting' phase, when they identify what is ill-formed and why (p. 217).

Different from the original test suggested by Ellis, R. (2005), the author of this paper kept the nature of 17 grammatical structures; however, the language used in these 17 sentences was taken from the coursebook of *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* written by Ashley, A. (2007). The 17 grammatical structures, consisting of 7 morphological structures and 10 syntactical structures designed by Ellis, R. (2005) were given as follow:

Structure	Example of learner error	Acquisition	Pedagogic introduction	Type
Verb complements	Liao says he wants <i>buying</i> a new car.	Early	Lower intermediate	S
Regular past tense	Martin <i>complete</i> his assignment yesterday.	Intermediate	Elementary/lower intermediate	M
Question tags	We will leave tomorrow, <i>isn't it?</i>	Late	No clear focus at any level	S
Yes/no questions	Did Keiko <i>completed</i> her homework?	Intermediate	Elementary/lower intermediate	M
Modal verbs	I must <i>to brush</i> my teeth now.	Early	Various levels	M
Unreal conditionals	If he had been richer, she <i>will</i> marry him.	Late	Lower intermediate/intermediate	S
Since and for	He <i>has been living</i> in New Zealand <i>since</i> three years.	Intermediate	Lower intermediate	S
Indefinite article	They had <i>the</i> very good time at the party.	Late	Elementary	M
Ergative verbs	Between 1990 and 2000 the population of New Zealand <i>was increased</i> .	Late	Various levels	S
Possessive -s	Liao is still living in his rich <i>uncle</i> house.	Late	Elementary	M
Plural -s	Martin sold a few old <i>coin</i> to a shop.	Early	No clear focus at any level	M
Third person -s	Hiroshi <i>live</i> with his friend Koji.	Late	Elementary/lower intermediate	M
Relative clauses	The boat that my father bought <i>it</i> has sunk.	Late	Intermediate/advanced	S
Embedded questions	Tom wanted to know what <i>had I done</i>	Late	Intermediate	S
Dative alternation	The teacher explained <i>John the answer</i> .	Late	No clear focus at any level	S
Comparatives	The building is <i>more bigger</i> than your house.	Late	Elementary/intermediate	S
Adverb placement	She writes <i>very well</i> English.	Late	Elementary/lower intermediate	S

Note. S = syntactic; M = morphological.

Figure 1. Seventeen experimental grammatical structures<sup>2</sup> (Source: Ellis, R. (2015, p. 155))

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis, the results were found and discussed in two parts: Part 1 focused on the timed grammaticality test results. The results were divided into morphological structures and mistakes in syntactic structures in this part. The second part came to a discussion of results found in interviews on 10 business-English-majored students in HUFI.

##### 4.1 Results and Discussion from the timed grammaticality test

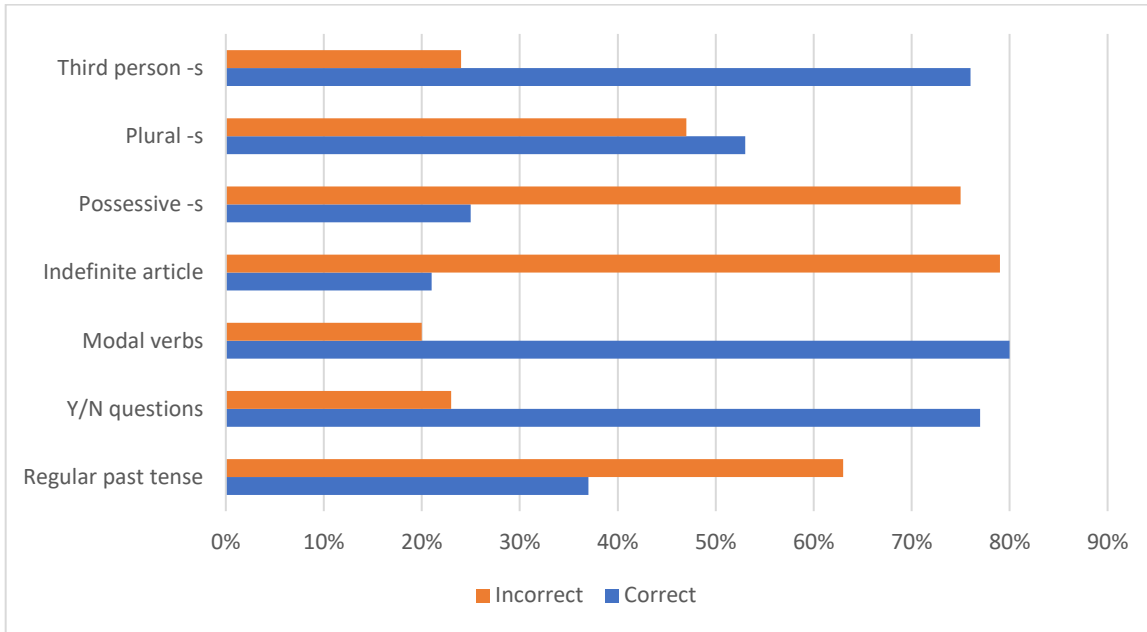
###### 4.1.1. About Morphological Structures

There were seven sentences of morphological structures as suggested by Ellis, R. (2005), including (1) Regular past tense, (2) Y/N questions, (3) Modal verbs, (4) Indefinite article, (5) Possessive -s, (6) Plural -s, and (7) Third person -s. The collected data were converted into percentage as given in Table 1 and Graph 1 below.

Table 1. Sentences of Morphological Structure

Sentence Number	Sentences	Nature of Sentence Structure	Correct	Incorrect
1.	The provisional order you send is sufficient, but please return any unsold kits in two months.	Regular past tense	37%	63%
2.	Did you delivered the packages to us as required?	Y/N questions	77%	23%
3.	As we are planning to send to send another order within the month, could you please to confirm that you agree to these new terms of payment?	Modal verbs	80%	20%
4.	We are the chain of retailers based in Birmingham and are looking for a manufacturer who can supply is with a wide range of sweaters for the men's leisurewear market.	Indefinite article	21%	79%
5.	We are waiting for our principals consignments.	Possessive -s	25%	75%
6.	The carpets should be wrapped, and the packaging reinforced at both end to avoid wear.	Plural -s	53%	47%
7.	I am writing on behalf of our principal in Canada, who are interested in importing chinaware from England.	Third person -s	76%	24%

<sup>2</sup> Source: Ellis, R. (2005, p. 155)



**Graph 1. Sentences of Morphological Structures**

From the collected data, it can be revealed that among the seven sentences of morphological structures, participants find it hard to recognize mistakes in the regular past tense, indefinite article, and possessive -s.

In an indefinite article, 79% of the participants fail to give the correct responses. Articles are not so important in spoken communication; thus, students often have a tendency to ignore this grammatical aspect. That is why they may not find this mistake in the given sentence. However, in written communication, using correct articles is considered as means to produce an effective piece of writing. Especially, in commercial correspondence, without using a correct article, the party receiving the information sometimes becomes confused. Students should be asked to review the theory of using articles correctly when starting the course of commercial correspondence.

The mistake of using possessive -s is in the second rank. 75% of the participants cannot correct the given sentence. Similar to articles, possessive -s sometimes plays a minor part in speaking. This may make the students not put a focus on this grammatical aspect. Nevertheless, as a requirement of accuracy informal language, without the correct use of possessive cases in general, the piece of writing may be ineffective.

The third mistake that the participants cannot correct comes to regular past tense, accounting for 63% of incorrect answers. Tenses become a common group of mistakes that students commonly make. Although students have many opportunities to study tenses, they do not pay much attention to using correct tenses. If there are only some common tenses used in speaking, mastering all-tense usages should be a need to produce a good piece of writing. Due to a lack of focus on writing, students may ignore the usage of tenses. The result is that it may be complicated for students to figure out mistakes in tenses when writing.

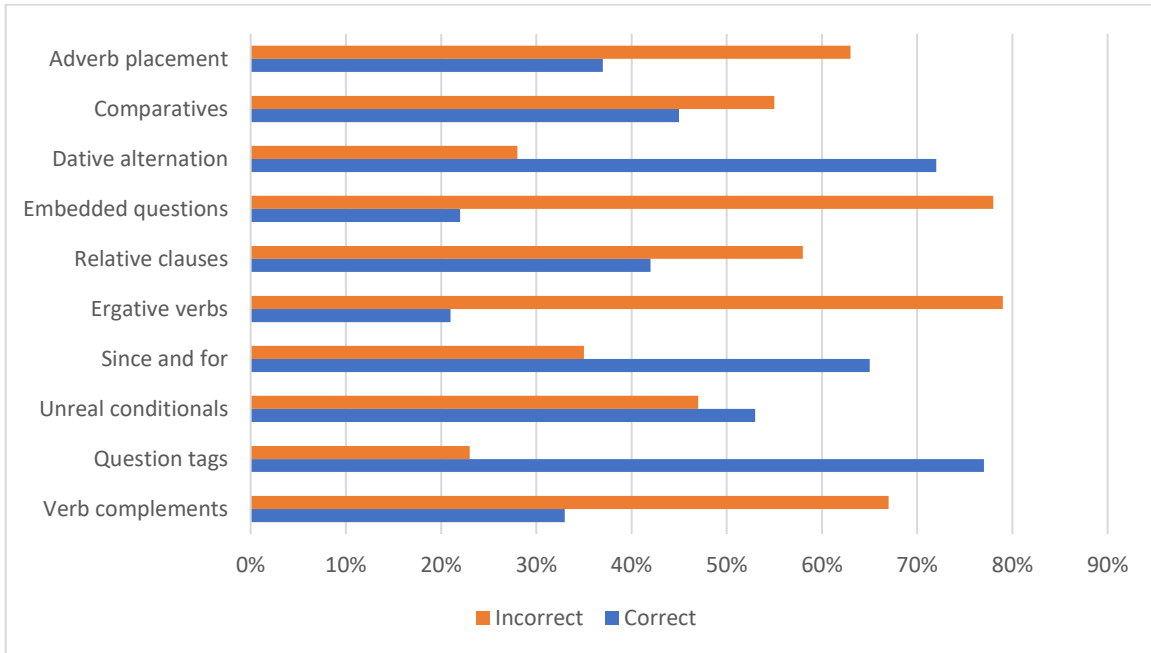
It seems that mistakes in Y/N questions, modal verbs, plural -s, third-person -s should not be a challenge to the participants. The high percentage of correct answers proves this. 77% of the participants give correct answers for Y/N questions, 80% for modal verbs, 53% for plural -s, and 76% for third person -s. Among the above cases, plural -s should be put into consideration. Nearly half of the participants give incorrect answers, proving that students may not be sure when using plural cases in writing.

**4.1.2. About Syntactical Structures**

Similarly, analyzing data in this part is not different from 4.1.1. There were ten sentences of syntactical structures as suggested by Ellis (2005), including (1) Verb complements, (2) Question tags, (3) Unreal conditionals, (4) Since and for, (5) Ergative verbs, (6) Relative clauses, (7) Embedded questions, (8) Dative alternation, (9) Comparatives, and (10) Adverb placement. The collected data were converted into percentage as given in Table 2 and Graph 2 below.

**Table 2. Sentences of Syntactical Structure**

<b>Sentence Number</b>	<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Nature of Sentence Structure</b>	<b>Correct</b>	<b>Incorrect</b>
8.	As we intend placing a substantial order, we would like to know what quantity discounts you allow.	Verb complements	33%	67%
9.	You will give us a 5% quantity discount in addition to 15% trade discount, don't you?	Question tags	77%	23%
10.	If there were no embargo from your government last month, you would receive the consignment now.	Unreal conditionals	53%	47%
11.	We have heard that our main supplier of chrome has gone bankrupt in October.	Since and for	65%	35%
12.	Between June and August the demand of this kind of items was increased.	Ergative verbs	21%	79%
13.	Our factory would have no problem in producing the 6,000 units that you asked for them in your enquiry.	Relative clauses	42%	58%
14.	We would like to know what discounts does your company offer us.	Embedded questions	22%	78%
15.	Please send the consignment for me not later than 20 June.	Dative alternation	72%	28%
16.	If you need much farther information, do not hesitate to contact us.	Comparatives	45%	55%
17.	The model now has been improved, making it much lighter.	Adverb placement	37%	63%



**Graph 2. Sentences of Syntactical Structures**

It can be clearly seen that the participants make more mistakes in syntactical structures than those in morphological ones. Table 3 and Graph 2 reveal that among the ten sentences of syntactical structures, participants find it hard to recognize mistakes in (1) Verb complements, (2) Ergative verbs, (3) Relative clauses, (4) Embedded questions, (5) Comparatives, and (6) Adverb placement.

Among the mistakes in syntactical structures, ergative verbs account for the highest percentage; 79% of the participants fail to give a correct answer. Ergative verbs are the kind of verbs that can belong to both transitive and intransitive; the object when an ergative verb is transitive should be the same as the subject when it is intransitive. It seems that the students cannot realize how an ergative verb is transitive and in what case it is intransitive. Generally speaking, the students may not pay much attention to this characteristic of verbs; instead, they just follow their habit of using verbs freely. This may cause many unavoidable mistakes in writing a correspondence, making the piece of writing ineffective. Hence, the students should be forced to review common ergative verbs used in business English before starting the course.

Embedded questions come to second place, accounting for 78% of the participants not giving the correct answer. The students may not find it difficult when making a question in English; however, they may not master embedded questions, which can be understood as a type of question included within another question or sentence. As a rule, an embedded question is different from other types of questions as there must not be any auxiliary verb between the question word and the subject. The students may learn by heart that there is always an auxiliary verb in a question; thus, they often have a tendency to put an auxiliary verb in an embedded question. Embedded questions become popular in business writing. Without carefulness, the students cannot avoid this kind of mistake.

Based on the collected data, verb complement is also a barrier for the participants in writing, accounting for 67% of the participants giving an incorrect answer. Verb complement can be defined as a word, phrase, or clause that follows the verb to add more information; it can strengthen the meaning and impact of the verb in a sentence. Thus, verb complement should play an important role in speaking and writing. Because verb complement can be the arrangement of one verb as the object of another verb in three ways, including infinitives, gerunds, and noun clauses, the students must put in mind which verb can be followed by which kind of object. Using wrong verb complements may not be a severe problem of speaking because this may not severely impact the message's meaning; however, it might be a problem in writing. The students may be familiar with complements of commonly used verbs, but due to the characteristic of formality in writing, many more verbs must be used. Hence, the students must review verb complements to limit mistakes related to verb complement in writing.

It is not surprising when adverb placement is in the third place, accounting for 63% of the participants giving incorrect answers. The rule of putting adverbs in correct positions in a sentence does not seem important to the students. The fact is that the students may use adverbs freely in their speaking; the wrong placement of adverbs in speaking may not make the listener find it hard to understand the message. Nonetheless, not putting adverbs in the correct place may not ensure accuracy and formality in

writing. As the students do not emphasize the role of adverbs in speaking, they can easily make mistakes related to adverb placement in writing.

Another problem found in this research comes to relative clauses. It is believed that relative clauses are not simple aspects of syntactical structures. Relative clauses are considered one of the most popular syntactic structures in writing. Without knowing how to effectively use this kind of structure, the students may not produce a good piece of writing. Due to its complicated structures, not all students can master this kind of syntactical structure. Thus, 58% of the participants in this research fail to give correct answer related to relative clauses. As relative clauses are frequently used in commercial correspondence, the students should be encouraged to carefully review this kind of structure to avoid making mistakes in using relative clauses.

The last mistake accounting for more than 50% of the participants not giving correct answer comes to comparatives. The students must not be unfamiliar with comparatives as they have been learning comparatives at different levels of education. However, mastering this syntactical structure is still not easy. In reality, the students may not know how to use emphasis in comparatives; also, they may not distinguish the usage of "farther" and "further" in real situations. Although this syntactic structure is not so popular as others in writing, a mistake in comparatives can make writing ineffective.

From the collected data, other syntactical structures such as question tags, unreal conditionals, since and for, dative alternation must not become common mistakes. More than 50% of the participants give the correct answers for these structures. Among the four mentioned syntactical structures, the number of the participants giving the correct answers and incorrect answers in unreal conditionals is nearly equal. Therefore, the lecturers should help the students review this syntactical structure in case of having time during the course.

#### **4.2 Results and Discussion from the interview**

In order to reassure the results found in the test, an interview was done. Ten of the students, five in each class, were chosen for this interview.

The interview reveals that due to terminology in the given sentences, most of the interviewees cannot get the general meaning of the sentences; thus, they found it hard to recognize the problems of given sentences.

About the first seven sentences related to morphological structures, eight of the ten interviewees state that they really do not pay attention to such structures as these structures may not cause trouble understanding messages in spoken communication. Also, the interviewees think that speaking is more important than writing in a working environment, so they focus on speaking techniques. That is why they find it so complicated when studying writing, especially commercial correspondence.

About the syntactical structures, all of the interviewees say that they have many opportunities to study these structures at different levels of education, but how to apply these structures flexibly in writing is still a trouble. Of all the given structures, the interviewees find relative clauses the most challenging, especially in the case of reduced relative clauses. Thus, they easily make mistakes when writing rather long sentence. Another structure that they find complicated comes embedded questions. They do not know why we should use embedded questions in writing; instead, in their opinion, using normal questions may be simple with the limitation of mistakes. It seems that the students may not know the formality of embedded questions, which is commonly used in writing.

Last but not least, the interviewees believe that under globalization, in order to get a good job in foreign-invested enterprises, mastering both spoken communication and written communication is a must. They always hope that they can be equipped with all techniques in these two kinds of communication so as to have a competitive advantage in the labour force when they graduate from university with a B.A. in business English.

#### **5. Recommendations and Conclusion**

Under globalization, English can be considered the key to success in an academic environment and working environment. In such a developing country as Vietnam, mastering English skills may ensure an opportunity to work in foreign-invested enterprises with promising salaries. Therefore, following a BA course in English, especially business English, has become a popular tendency in Vietnam. However, to master English skills to work effectively in foreign-invested enterprises, students must be equipped with skills in both spoken and written communication. In reality, students in Vietnam, specifically in HUFU put an emphasis on spoken communication; instead, they may think that written communication just places a minor role in studying the English language. The result is that students may lack confidence in the working environment whenever they face writing correspondence. Many complaints from foreign recruiters prove this. With an aim to help students get better results in the course of commercial correspondence, a compulsory course in B.A. training program in HUFU, this study was conducted. The findings from the Grammaticality Judgement Tests suggested by Ellis, R. (2005) with modification and the interview reveal that students may know the importance of writing skill for the future career; however, they fail to know how to learn English writing effectively so as to produce a convincing piece of writing, especially in commercial correspondence.



It is clearly seen from the study that students easily make mistakes in both morphological structures and syntactical structures. It seems that syntactical structures become more challenging than morphological ones. There are three morphological structures causing difficulties for students, namely (1) regular past tense, (2) indefinite article, and (3) possessive -s. About syntactical structures, six over ten structures are seen to be barriers for students, including (1) Verb complements, (2) Ergative verbs, (3) Relative clauses, (4) Embedded questions, (5) Comparatives, and (6) Adverb placement.

Based on the results found in this study, together with theories related to written communication mentioned in literature reviews, the following recommendations are given:

First, lecturers should let the students know the importance of both spoken and written communication from the first semester of the training course. Students may not have enough experience in work; therefore, they may not know the requirements of fluent writing in the business environment. In order to help them have a correct view of the English language in the working environment, an emphasis on the equal importance of all four skills is a must.

Second, writing, especially commercial correspondence, requires much further practice. Thus, students must be encouraged to write as much as possible. In commercial correspondence, lecturers should encourage students to write correspondence based on real workplace situations. Students must be sure about the formality of a correspondence shown by the format, the language use, and the grammar. In the coursebook named *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* written by Ashley, A. (2007), the characteristics of a commercial correspondence are described and explained in details in chapter 1 and chapter 2.

Third, to succeed in the course of commercial correspondence, students must be equipped with the terminology used in business. Business concepts must be carefully explained with examples to make students familiar with words and expressions commonly used in the business environment. The Glossary part given in the *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence* is meaningful. This part can help students much in reviewing terminology used in business. Students are urged to study the terminology given in this part after finishing each chapter.

Fourth, to ensure commercial correspondence formality, paying much attention to grammatical structures should be a need. Although students have had opportunities to study grammar at different levels of education, a review of key grammar points commonly used in commercial correspondence is essential. Lecturers should save some periods to help students overview these structures before starting chapters related to business transactions in writing.

Last but not least, additional hand-outs aiming to help students review concepts in business, rules in writing correspondences, frequently used grammatical structures beside the main coursebook is also encouraged. Furthermore, students must be encouraged to work in groups to solve business problems in writing and work individually at home for further writing tasks./.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Acknowledgements:** My completion of this research paper could not have been accomplished without the support of the board of management in HUFU Faculty of Foreign Languages and my students' participation. Their contributions are sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References

- [1] Ashley, A. (2007). *Oxford Handbook of Commercial Correspondence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- [2] Chan, M. (2014). Communicative Needs in the Workplace and Curriculum Development of Business English Courses in Hong Kong. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 77(4), 376 – 408. DOI: 10.1177/2329490614545987
- [3] Ellis, R. (2005). Measuring Implicit and Explicit Knowledge of a Second Language. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 27(2), 141 – 172. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263105050096>
- [4] Fadilah, N. R. (2019). Difficulties in Writing Business English Correspondence. *Intensive Journal*. 2(2), 81 – 92. DOI:10.31602/intensive.v2i2.2459
- [5] Krisztina, S. (2016). Grammaticality Judgement Tests as Measures of Explicit Knowledge. *Argumentum* 12(2016), 216 – 230.
- [6] Nila, S. F. (2017). Problems in Writing English Business Letter: Errors and Factors. *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Language, Literature, and Teaching*. Indonesia: Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS). ISSN 2549-5607.
- [7] Riaz, M. & Gul, S. (2016). Difficulties in Written Communication Faced by the Students of Commerce: A Study Conducted at Graduate Level (B. Com). *Global Language Review*, 1 (1), 11 – 23. [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/glr.2016\(I-I\).02](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/glr.2016(I-I).02)

## Appendix

### Timed grammaticality test

**Instructions:** There are 17 incorrect sentences given below. You are required to correct these sentences in 20 minutes. Remember not to write your name on this paper test.

No.	Incorrect sentences	Your answers
1.	The provisional order you send is sufficient, but please return any unsold kits in two months.	
2.	Did you delivered the packages to us as required?	
3.	As we are planning to send to send another order within the month, could you please to confirm that you agree to these new terms of payment?	
4.	We are the chain of retailers based in Birmingham and are looking for a manufacturer who can supply is with a wide range of sweaters for the men's leisurewear market.	
5.	We are waiting for our principals consignments.	
6.	The carpets should be wrapped, and the packaging reinforced at both end to avoid wear.	
7.	I am writing on behalf of our principal in Canada, who are interested in importing chinaware from England.	
8.	As we intend placing a substantial order, we would like to know what quantity discounts you allow.	
9.	You will give us a 5% quantity discount in addition to 15% trade discount, don't you?	
10.	If there were no embargo from your government last month, you would receive the consignment now.	
11.	We have heard that our main supplier of chrome has gone bankrupt in October.	
12.	Between June and August the demand of this kind of items was increased.	
13.	Our factory would have no problem in producing the 6,000 units that you asked for them in your enquiry.	
14.	We would like to know what discounts does your company offer us?	
15.	Please send the consignment for me not later than 20 June.	
16.	If you need much farther information, do not hesitate to contact us.	
17.	The model now has been improved, making it much lighter.	