

# The Saigon International University



## Saigon International University Graduation Thesis

**Ho Chi Minh City - 2023**

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# **GRADUATION THESIS**

*Major*

English

*Title*

**DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING  
ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTERS OF  
ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS AT  
THE SAIGON INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this graduation thesis titled "Difficulties in Writing English Business Letter Writing of English-majored students at The Saigon International University" is my own work and effort and that it has not previously been submitted for a degree or certificate at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, all sources of information used in producing this thesis have been properly acknowledged.

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## **INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS**

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## **LIST OF TABLES, CHARTS, AND ABBREVIATIONS**

### **Tables**

### **Charts**

### **Abbreviations**

SIU: The Saigon International University

ESL: English as a Second Language

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the difficulties faced by senior English-majored students at the Saigon International University when writing business English letters. The research method used in this study was quantitative, with a survey questionnaire to gather data. This study aims to identify the difficulties that senior English-majored students at the Saigon International University face when writing business English letters and provide recommendations to improve their business English letter writing skills.

The results of the survey showed that senior major students were aware of the importance of writing skills and wanted to improve this skill. However, they have many difficulties when writing business letters. From the research findings, the researcher provides suggestions and recommendations to help students solve difficulties in English business writing skills.

This research could play an essential role in helping Business English major students prepare for their future employment and career prospects after college. By improving their business English writing skills, students will strengthen their professional communication ability in the globalized workplace.

**Keywords:** Business English, senior Business English-majored students, business letter writing, difficulties, solutions.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The rationale of the study

Communication is a crucial component in all aspects of life because people are bound and linked together through communication. Communication is the process of imparting or exchanging information or news through speech, writing, action, body language, or other ways. It helps people understand not only others but also themselves, awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and constantly strives for development. This is a condition of social existence and human development in study, work, and life. In particular, business communication has the ability to connect partners and individuals, resolve conflicts, spread the spirit of solidarity, and arouse motivation through language, which directly leads to promoting business development. Whether one is starting out in business or is further along in one's career curve, there are specific business communication skills necessary for success (Han & Zhou, 2017). Therefore, communication is one of the most important demands in life, especially business. In the globalization economic era, many companies not only operate in the country but also reach out abroad. English is one of the most critical languages in today's global world since it is the mother tongue of about two hundred million people. Moreover, there are more than three hundred million people who speak English as their first or native language. People in business are studying English in order to break down the language barrier in some way. This makes it easy to transact or communicate expectations to potential partners. Therefore, it is used as a means of communication in business.

With the continuous growth of commerce and industry, contact forms through English business letters are becoming increasingly popular in trade due to their speed and convenience. English business letter is one of the simplest and most straightforward to negotiate and is the primary communication between businesses. Business correspondence not only secures and promotes business but also keeps cooperation simple. Furthermore, these reflect the professionalism as well as the ability of the letter writer and are even representative of a company's image. Effective business correspondence may assist local producers and overseas customers in establishing or maintaining long-term favorable relationships (Zi Yu, 2014). As a result, business correspondence is now an essential component of commerce.

Recognizing the importance of business letters, Vietnamese students, in general, and SIU students, in particular, have been striving to enhance their English business letter writing skills, especially in the age of today's international economic integration. The researcher had the opportunity to study Business Letter Writing in final year at the Saigon International University, leading to awareness of this subject's difficulties and how to overcome them. This subject taught me some skills, such as writing memos, e-mails, and letters, that are essential for working in the business world in the future. However, a business letter has a standard writing style and formality in communication; this space for more transparent and concise information should be present in the letter; otherwise, miscommunication and confusion will follow. Therefore, students should master a degree of learning in terms of format and content knowledge of a letter business. This research paper serves as a preparation for final-year students' future jobs. That is why the researcher chose this topic: Difficulties in Writing English Business Letter Writing of English-majored students at The Saigon International University..

## **1.2 Research objectives**

This study focuses on finding the difficulties when writing English business letters for English-majored students at the Saigon International University. Based on common errors and problems, the study will propose effective solutions to help students improve their writing business correspondence skills and then realize the importance of this subject to students' future jobs. The biggest aim of the research is to assist students in being prepared for future interactions with employers and increasing their confidence level in writing communication by avoiding unnecessary faults. Based on the findings, the researcher made ideas and recommendations to aid students with their English business letter-writing skills. The researcher hopes that this study will assist SIU students in improving their English business letter-writing skills and help their future work.

## **1.3 Significance of this study**

Communication is an essential part of any aspect of life. This study only related to a piece of communication in the business aspect: business correspondence. Based on the purpose of the study, the researcher is aware of its significance to the students who are the future generation of the world. So, why is it important for students? Because letter communication is one of the most popular and significant forms in business to transact, negotiate, and maintain a good relationship with strategic partners contributes to the development of your company. It proves that poor English business letter-writing skills will lead to a waste of time and a high risk of losing goodwill from essential partners, more seriously, a failed transaction causing damage to the company. No company accepts an employee who does not add value to them, limiting your opportunity in the future. Given these issues, it is essential to focus on improving English business letter-writing skills as early as their university years so that students can

become familiar with it and consider it a position of strength in a future job. Because business correspondence has a standard and formal writing style, the student often makes mistakes when writing it in terms of form and content if they do not master the knowledge of business letters. This study focuses on the analysis difficulties as well as pitfalls of the student when writing English business letters. Therefore, the research could play a role as luggage for students to prepare for their employment and career prospects after college.

#### **1.4 Scope of the study**

Firstly, the research focuses on recognizing and studying the issues that students confront in order to find suitable solutions for them. The study does not attempt to investigate other areas of English learning, such as variables influencing English writing or students' English learning habits, and so on. Listening, speaking, and reading were not mentioned in this study.

Secondly, the researcher concentrated on the senior Business English-majored students in classes 19DTA1 and 19DTA2 at The Sai Gon International University. The scope of the study is 32 students (23 females, 14 males) in those classes. The thesis did not study other subjects, such as teachers or parents.

### **1.5 Research questions**

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What difficulties do senior Business English-majored students face when writing business English letters?

2. What solutions are recommended to improve business English letter writing skills of Business English-majored students?

### **1.6 Structure of the study**

The researcher divided this study into 5 Chapters:

Chapter 1 (Introduction) displays the rationale for the study, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of the study, structure of the study, and research question.

Chapter 2 (Literature review) provides a general overview of business letters. This chapter provides the reality of English Business letter-writing among Business English major students, as well as a general theoretical background of business correspondence. This chapter was divided into nine parts, including the reality of English Business letter-writing, the definition, importance, types of business letters, qualities of a good business letter, parts of a business letter, formats of a business letter, the difficulties when writing a business letter, previous studies, and theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 (Research methodology) describes the research method in detail, including research design, participants, research methods, data collection instruments, procedures and data analysis.

Chapter 4 (Research findings) analyzes the data collected after the field survey. Based on the analysis results, the researcher came to new conclusions and provided comments and evaluations regarding the survey results.

Chapter 5 (Recommendations and suggestions) gives solutions for the difficulties when writing an English business letter for senior Business English-majored students.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. The reality of English Business letter writing among Business English major students**

In an era of rapid globalization and technological advancements, the role of effective communication in English, particularly business letter writing, has taken centre stage. The ability to write clear, concise, and professionally structured letters has become a necessity in today's business world. Despite the increasing popularity of digital communication, the art of letter writing holds its ground in formal business correspondence. Guffey and Loewy (2015) affirm that a well-structured business letter maintains a degree of formality that email communication often lacks. Therefore, Business English Letter Writing is a crucial skill for Business English major students as it serves as a critical tool for communication in a professional setting.

To understand the reality of this skill among these students, various aspects, including students' awareness, their self-assessment, frequency of practice, letter length, necessity, and motivation for improvement, must be evaluated. When analyzing a skill or competency (like business English letter writing) among a group of learners (like business English major students), it's standard to consider multiple aspects. This is because a skill is multifaceted, and to truly understand students' competence; we need a holistic view. Therefore, aspects like students' self-awareness, self-assessment, frequency of practice, understanding of letter length (a specific feature of business letters), recognition of the necessity for the skill, and their motivations for improvement, are all relevant to their difficulties when writing a business English letter. (Brown, 2004)

Based on a study conducted by De Villiers (2018), many individuals, including Business English majors, often struggle with business letter writing. Common issues include

inappropriate word choices, incorrect use of technical terms, lack of clarity, and problems with the overall structure and format of the letter. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving better educational strategies, practical exercises, and continual feedback. With focused training and practice, the mastery of English business letter writing can significantly enhance an individual's professional communication skills. In short, the importance of business English letters is indisputable and the current reality is that many people, especially students, are struggling with difficulties in writing business English letters.

## **2.2 Definition of business letter**

Every firm must create and maintain communication with its many partners, such as suppliers, customers, agencies, and so on, in order to grow. As a result, a business letter is an essential tool for commercial communication. In any company, this is an efficient way to communicate or request information, transmit important, sensitive, or confidential communications, or maintain permanent records. Telephone calls, emails, contracts, bills, and other forms of communication exist between people and businesses or organizations. It is critical to remember that a business letter is the most effective instrument for confirming facts in a formal manner

Business letters are letters sent for business purposes, whether they be B2B (business-to-business), B2C (business-to-consumer), or even C2C (customer-to-customer; for example, via electronic auction platforms). The purpose of this communication type is to deliver specific information or prompt a certain action (such as announcing a change in business policy or encouraging a consumer to make a purchase). (*Gotti & Candlin, 2009, p. 154*)

Every firm must create and maintain communication with its many partners, such as suppliers, customers, agencies, and so on, in order to grow. In any company, this is an efficient

way to communicate or request information, transmit important, sensitive, or confidential communications, or maintain permanent records. As a result, a business letter “is an important document that a writer uses to accomplish specific, measurable objectives in interaction with a specific audience” and, interestingly if rather narrowly, it “is usually written in Business English”. (*LaDuc, 1996*)

According to Lecture Notes: Business Communication A (2000), the letter serves as a liaison, spokesperson, and messenger for the organization, its products, services, and people. That letter represents the firm to the buyer, vendor, prospective client, or government agent. A letter that is succinct, clear, polite, kind, and complete conveys to the reader the picture of an efficient and caring company. A carelessly typed letter, wrong in its facts, and sloppy in its presentation may portray a negative image of a firm with which the reader should not do business. As a result, textual communication must be carefully planned. (*Olga & Andrew, 2000, p.42*)

A business letter is a formal communication document that is still relevant today despite the advent of electronic communication technologies. Letters are preferred in situations where a permanent record is needed, confidentiality is required, formality and sensitivity are necessary, and a persuasive, well-considered presentation is favored. Business letters are a powerful tool for maintaining customer relations, delivering formal and sensitive messages, and promoting products and services. They are confidential and represent deliberate, thoughtful communication, which can persuade people to change their actions, adopt new beliefs, and make decisions. (*Guffey & Loewy, 2016, p.156-157*)

A business letter is any type of formal letter that is used in commercial transactions. Each sort of business communication has a distinct design, tone, structure, and level of

formality appropriate to the message's purpose and intended audience. Formal business letters are constantly used. Business writing comes in a variety of formats, each suited to a certain function. All business writing must be precise and brief, using basic, direct language. (*Gilling, 2013, p.70*)

In general, there are multiple definitions of business letters, the common feature should be kept in mind: "All letters written for business purposes are business letters." A business or commercial letter is one that covers business-related topics and information. It is a letter in which business people or individuals exchange information with various business firms, customers, suppliers, employees, banks, insurance, companies, government agencies, and business associations in order to sell or buy goods, obtain information, place orders, make inquiries and other related issues. For the purposes of this study, the researcher defined business letters as "letters written among businessmen for the exchange of business-related information."

### **2.3 The importance of a business letter**

Karen Rayl (2002) said that: "The business letter is far from dead. Even with modern technology that allows us to send emails and mobile messages, we still write business letters for a variety of reasons, including resumes, proposals and reports, complaints and responses to complaints, direct mail marketing, and more." Karen Rayl's statement highlights the continued relevance of business letters in today's digital age. Despite the prevalence of modern technology, business letters remain an effective way to convey important information, build credibility, and establish professional relationships. (*Karen, 2002, p. 36*)

Business letters serve as a formal means of communication between people, so they are crucial in the business world. Certain organizational goals can be met with the aid of business