TEACHING BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE: BRIDGING TRADITIONAL METHODS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO ENHANCE LEARNING EFFICIENCY AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Monica-Ariana SIM[1], Anamaria Mirabela POP[1], Rodica BOGDAN[1]

[1]*Department of International Business, Faculty of Economic Science, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania*
msim@uoradea.ro
mipop@uoradea.ro
bogdan_r_30@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Teaching business correspondence has historically been the core of Business English (BE) and business communication classes for English as a Second Language (ESL) or Foreign Language (EFL) students. Nevertheless, it often appears unappealing to students enrolled in these Business English classes. They frequently question its relevance, given the numerous easier forms of communication available. As a result, traditionally, teaching business correspondence is becoming increasingly challenging. It is difficult to capture and maintain students' attention when writing formal letters, paying attention to layout, and adhering to the necessary conventions and formulas. The paper aims to explore how AI can be integrated into teaching business correspondence and its potential benefits. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the teaching-learning process, particularly in teaching business correspondence, is a powerful approach that reshapes pedagogical methodologies. This paper focuses on the role of AI in enhancing learning efficiency and developing professional communication skills among economics students. Recent advancements in AI technologies, including machine learning, have opened new possibilities for tailored learning experiences. These technologies facilitate instruction that adapts to and meets students' individual needs, thus improving engagement and comprehension in business correspondence tasks.*

Keywords: *business; correspondence; AI; English; traditional; innovative; method*

JEL Classification: *Q55; L81; Y60*

1. Introduction

The demand for specific skills in graduates led to including business correspondence in curricula decades ago. Business communication teaching evolved to meet changing needs, such as letters, faxes, memos, and emails. The present study explores the importance of blending traditional and innovative teaching methods when teaching English for Specific Purposes. In a world of speed and change, the shift to instant messaging has posed challenges when teaching business correspondence. Students may find traditional formats outdated compared to quick, informal exchanges they feel comfortable with, yet these skills

remain essential for professional interactions. The reluctance to engage with traditional business communication methods challenges teachers, as these skills are still crucial in many sectors.

1.1. Business correspondence writing - a critical skill in professional settings

Business correspondence is essential in a professional environment, influencing relationships, organizational efficiency, and overall professional image. Writing is a difficult skill (Maharani, 2018). Business writing, whether for emails, reports, or memos, requires clarity, precision, and an understanding of the audience (Wu et al., 2022). It facilitates collaboration, helps convey ideas succinctly, and enhances operational effectiveness (Xue-Feng, 2018). As organizations adapt to technological advancements, the demand for skilled employees capable of dealing with both traditional and digital platforms has increased. This highlights the importance of equipping students with writing skills to succeed in diverse business environments (Listiana et al., 2023). Research refers to challenges students face in mastering business writing, especially in understanding conventions and the audience (Rong & Nair, 2021). Incorporating peer feedback and technology-driven methods can improve writing competencies (Fleischmann & Getchell, 2024). Furthermore, as AI tools become more prevalent in business communication, students must develop AI literacy to integrate these technologies into their writing practices (Garner & Shank, 2018). Mastering business correspondence is essential for professional success and requires adaptive educational frameworks to meet modern workplace demands.

Importance of teaching business correspondence

Business correspondence develops essential skills, especially in fields like economics, where effective communication is vital. Mastery of business writing enhances employability, as employers seek candidates with strong communication skills (Aimoldina, 2017; Sarapaivanich & Patterson, 2014). Writing skills also contribute to critical thinking and analytical abilities, necessary in economics for tasks like writing reports and proposals (Daniel et al., 2023). Moreover, effective communication fosters trust and credibility, influencing outcomes in collaborative fields like economics (Sarapaivanich & Patterson, 2014). Business correspondence improves organizational success by promoting transparency and facilitating decision-making (Kondratieva et al., 2021). As the business landscape evolves, mastering business correspondence remains crucial for educators and professionals.

2. Literature review

Teaching business correspondence, particularly in fields like economics, has evolved significantly, with research focusing on various pedagogical approaches to improve writing skills. Studies show that combining genre-based and data-driven learning enhances business email writing, using authentic language examples (Sujinpram & Wannaruk, 2024), and that case methods improve student engagement and language abilities (Zhang, 2024). Other research emphasizes the

role of business correspondence in intercultural communication, highlighting the importance of teaching both language and cultural context (Shafazhinskaya et al., 2023).

Recent studies also emphasize student-centered and creative teaching strategies, where educators adapt lessons to students' needs, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The rise of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, has shifted from being a challenge to a resource for language learning (Hong, 2023), with recorded teaching videos becoming a beneficial innovation post-pandemic (Astutik et al., 2022).

AI integration in business communication education has gained significant attention for enhancing language learning and writing skills. AI tools offer personalized learning experiences, providing real-time feedback on grammar, tone, and structure, which improves students' writing habits (Davis, 2024; Lee et al., 2022; Barua et al., 2022). Despite the benefits, concerns about over-reliance on technology, erosion of critical thinking, and data privacy issues have emerged (Kim & Zhai, 2024; Çela et al., 2024). Educators must strike a balance between utilizing AI and preserving human-centered learning to ensure students continue developing critical communication skills. Thus, AI's role in enhancing business communication education is significant, but careful consideration is required to balance its integration with traditional methods to prepare students for the professional world.

3. Traditional teaching practices vs. Innovative, AI-integrative practices

Traditional methods of teaching business correspondence involve structured, classroom-based approaches, focusing on formal writing skills, grammar, format, and etiquette. These methods have been widely used for years to ensure that students or employees understand the essential aspects of professional communication in business settings. Innovative, AI-integrative practices for teaching business correspondence use technology to enhance the learning experience, making it more interactive, personalized, and efficient. By incorporating AI and other digital tools, instructors provide real-time feedback, tailor the learning materials, and simulate real business communication scenarios.

3.1 Description of traditional methods used in teaching business correspondence.

When we refer to the traditional teaching methods for business correspondence, we understand they are often characterized by rigidity and focus on theoretical foundations, structure, formality, and the conventions of professional communication (Xie, 2021). Common traditional instructional strategies include lectures, rote memorization of formats, and using standardized templates for correspondence like letters, emails, and memos (Li, 2023). Such approaches can decrease the engagement levels of students, who may find the stiff structure less relatable compared to more innovative methods (Parcha, 2023).

Traditional teaching also relies on teacher-centred methodologies, where the educator is viewed as the primary source of knowledge and the leading actor. In such environments, learners are often passive participants, impeding their ability to

practically apply knowledge (Parcha, 2023). However, critics of these methods consider that they fail to address students' individual learning needs and do not adequately prepare them for real-world business correspondence applications, given the fast-moving evolution of the workplace and communication norms (Xie, 2021). For instance, relying on theoretical instruction without integrating practical exercises, such as role-playing or simulations of business communications, can lead to a lack of readiness for actual business interactions (Li, 2020).

Moreover, technology integration remains underexplored, mainly in traditional business correspondence teaching, where educators tend to emphasize manual skills over digital proficiency. This presents a significant gap since contemporary business environments increasingly demand adaptability to digital communication tools and platforms (Yashan et al., 2024). The absence of blended or innovative methodologies, such as immersive simulations or technology to enhance interactive learning, dramatically diminishes the chances of engaging students in meaningful, applicable, real-world correspondence practice (Chen, 2021).

In summary, traditional teaching methods provide basic skills in business correspondence, but they fail to engage students in the process. Their rigidity, along with little or no integration of technology and real-world practices, calls for a shift towards more innovative instructional strategies that can better prepare students for their future careers.

We will briefly enumerate some of these methods' common aspects and highlight some of their most significant features.

a. Lecture-based learning in business correspondence involves teachers presenting key principles such as the format, tone, structure, and grammar of business documents like letters, emails, and memos. This method focuses on theoretical aspects of business communication, including formal tone, appropriate language, and document structure, emphasizing accuracy in grammar and syntax. It is teacher-centered, with students engaging primarily in note-taking and passive learning, which may limit the development of practical skills (Winarno et al., 2018). Although this approach equips students with an understanding of language conventions and business writing standards, it lacks interactive engagement, which could enhance deeper learning and retention (Winarno et al., 2018; Mascle, 2013). The use of teaching aids like handouts and multimedia can support learning, but this method often fails to engage students in real-world, practical communication (Listiana et al., 2023). Briefly, this approach provides a basic understanding of business correspondence, yet it must incorporate more interactive and practical strategies to better prepare students for modern professional communication (Nia & Fithriani, 2023).

b. Textbook-based learning in business correspondence provides essential resources, covering writing styles, letter formats, and case studies. They help students understand professional communication norms and develop necessary skills. Topics include letter formats (e.g., subject lines, salutations, body paragraphs, and conclusions) and professional vocabulary, such as industry-specific language and polite communication. Textbooks include real-world examples for analysis and practice, offering a structured approach to mastering business communication.

c. Templates and samples. Students often study samples and templates of various business correspondence, such as cover letters, resignation letters,

business proposals, and inquiry letters. These serve as models that students can use as an inspiring source in their work. This well-established method provides students with concrete frameworks and guidelines for understanding various business document types, aiding in the acquisition of writing skills and enhancing students' confidence. Firstly, model examples of essential documents such as cover letters, resignation letters, business proposals, and inquiry letters are introduced to students. Students then follow professional writing conventions and understand the formats they will eventually apply in practice. This approach includes several techniques that help students practice and apply their knowledge: filling in blanks and modifying sample letters. Instructors might provide students with incorrect or poorly structured examples, asking them to revise and correct them. This method teaches proper layout and structure, effective communication, attention to detail, and self-editing practices.

d. Practice-based learning emphasizes hands-on exercise and active participation in writing for business purposes. This approach relies on strategies such as role-playing exercises and written assignments. Written assignments form the spine of traditional learning in general and business correspondence in particular. As part of written assignments, teachers may encourage students to use digital communication tools and platforms (e.g., email clients and online collaboration tools), enabling students to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in lectures to practical situations.

3.2 Description of innovative methods that could be used alternatively in teaching business correspondence.

Traditional methods have effectively built the first layer of knowledge and skill. However, they might not fully engage students in interactive, real-world business correspondence applications in the modern, digital workplace. Incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into the teaching of business letter writing offers teachers innovative methodologies to enhance student engagement and individual learning experiences.

a. AI-powered writing assistants. AI platforms like Grammarly and ProWritingAid provide students with real-time feedback on their writing, focusing on grammar, tone, structure, and style. These platforms can help students refine their business letters by improving clarity and professionalism when students receive suggestions for alternative phrasing, enabling them to convey their ideas more effectively, and encouraging independence when students perform self-correcting utilizing AI-driven feedback, thus building confidence in their writing while learning to recognize their patterns of error.

b. Template generators. Within the business correspondence environment, AI creates customizable letter templates that guide students through the writing process (Mondal et al., 2023; Tajik, 2025), helping them improve written communication and enhancing clarity and effectiveness in business correspondence. These templates may be letters with gaps that miss essential elements (like salutations, subject lines, and sign-offs) and include placeholders, ensuring students rehearse correct formats for different business letters (e.g., formal requests, inquiries, or complaints). Automation offers clarity and accuracy. Moreover, these templates can be continuously updated to reflect current trends in

business communication, ensuring that students are working with the most up-to-date standards**.**

c. AI chatbots are digital tools that allow users to interact with systems through text or voice-based communication, integrated into platforms like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, or voice assistants like Alexa. In education, they serve as virtual tutors, helping students with assignments and providing personalized learning experiences (Bourgonjon et al., 2018). Chatbots can simulate business communication scenarios, allowing students to practice responding to emails or letters. The AI then provides feedback on structure, tone, and adherence to formal conventions, offering more precise analysis than manual reviews and identifying areas for improvement (Shawar & Atwell, 2007).

d. Real-time collaborative writing Real-time collaborative writing allows multiple individuals to work together on a document, providing instant input, editing, and feedback. AI tools in platforms like Google Docs or Microsoft Teams enable students to collaborate on business correspondence tasks, offering real-time suggestions and feedback. This method promotes teamwork and continuous revision, helping students improve their documents as they work. Key benefits include immediate feedback and the opportunity for students to learn from each other while receiving AI-driven expertise (Grubert et al., 2020).

e. Speech-to-Text for drafting letters. **Speech-to-text** is an AI technology that converts spoken language into written text. This tool allows students, especially those who struggle with writing or typing, to dictate their business letters rather than physically typing them, enhancing writing processes. (Kong et al., 2024). The AI tools (e.g. Google Dictation, Google Assistant, Otter.ai) transcribe the spoken words into written text and help to format the text according to formal business letter conventions in terms of structure, grammar, punctuation, and tone. Employing AI-powered tools and strategies when teaching business correspondence, teachers create a dynamic and engaging learning environment, where students focus better on their task and work faster by dictating their writing rather than typing.

f. AI-based adaptive learning platforms. AI platforms like Duolingo for Business English, Lingvist, Rosetta Stone, EnglishClass101, Voxy, or Babbel for Business English, personalize the learning experience, adapting exercises according to the student's level of knowledge, and further on the student's progress and weaknesses. These platforms provide practice in writing business inquiries, complaints, and proposals, ensuring that each student receives the practice they need.

g. Virtual AI tutors for business writing. Virtual tutors, such as ChatGPT or Jill Watson, offer interactive and personalized writing practice. Students begin conversations with these tutors in simulated business communication situations, and receive real-time feedback on language, tone, structure, and content. This tool allows students to practice business correspondence like emails, customer inquiries, or formal reports at any time, benefiting from 24/7 support and encouraging students to practice outside class hours.

h. Plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin and ProWritingAid help students maintain the appropriate tone and structure in business correspondence and also detect plagiarism, ensuring that the writing is formal and professional. These tools

suggest revisions and refinement when necessary and train students to assume responsibility when writing, keeping their work original and free of plagiarism.

i. AI-integrated business communication simulations imitate a realistic business environment, providing students with hands-on experience in responding to customer complaints, negotiating deals, or writing professional correspondence. Platforms like SimTutor or The Business Simulation Game adjust simulations to meet the students' needs when adjustment is required, improving their communication by developing problem-solving and decision-making skills.

3.3. Blended learning approach.

The integration of traditional and innovative methods in teaching business correspondence can significantly enhance learning outcomes. By blending the strengths of both approaches, educators can cater to diverse learning styles, improve student engagement, and ensure that students acquire both basic knowledge and modern, practical skills. In a blended learning environment, students typically attend regular lectures and workshops, use textbooks and solve exercises (traditional), followed by engaging in online activities, AI-based writing assistants, or simulations (innovative). For instance, a traditional lecture could introduce the fundamentals of business correspondence, such as format, tone, and structure, followed by interactive activities where students use AI-powered tools like Grammarly to refine their writing. Additionally, before class, students may watch videos or read material about writing formal emails and business letters. During class, they can apply their knowledge through group activities using AI tools or simulated business scenarios, receiving real-time feedback. This model combines the best of theoretical instruction and hands-on practice, making learning more engaging and personalized (Teng & Zeng, 2022). This hybrid approach allows students to develop complex skills and be prepared for business environments.

4. Writing inquiry letters with AI - Lesson Plan

Here is a sample lesson plan that aims to bridge a gap by combining traditional business writing instruction with the power of AI-driven technologies for a more engaging, personalized learning experience. Students will practice writing formal inquiry letters, using AI tools to refine drafts and improve clarity, tone, and professionalism. The lesson integrates individual practice, peer feedback, and AI assistance to foster self-editing and revision skills. By the end of the lesson, students will have gained practical business writing skills and understand how AI can support professional communication, emphasizing ethics and responsibility.

Objective: To write formal inquiry letters by integrating traditional writing skills with AI-driven tools that provide instant feedback, a more attractive and engaging learning atmosphere, while paying attention to the requirements of effective business communication. *Duration*: 90 minutes. *Materials needed:* 1. computers or tablets with internet access, 2. AI-powered writing tools (e.g., Grammarly, Jasper, or an AI-powered business letter generator), 3. traditional inquiry letter examples and templates, 4. Google Docs or a collaborative writing platform for group work, 5.

projector and screen for demonstrations, 6. whiteboard/Flip chart for brainstorming and group discussion.

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduction to Writing Inquiry Letters (15 minutes)
Traditional Approach: First, the discussion about the structure, layout and components of an inquiry letter, stressing the key elements: proper salutation (e.g., "Dear [Recipient's Name or Title]"), a clear and concise introduction stating the purpose of the inquiry, detailed/ relevant context, an adequate closing (e.g., "Sincerely" or "Kind regards").
A sample inquiry letter is projected on the screen to illustrate these components.
AI Introduction: The concept is defined as a useful writing tool that can help refine the inquiry letter. Explanation regarding AI as a provider of real-time feedback on tone, clarity, and structure, which is especially useful for learners struggling with maintaining professionalism or writing concisely.

2. AI-Powered Inquiry Letter Writing Practice (30 minutes)
Step 1: Provide students with a scenario in which they need to write an inquiry letter (e.g., inquiring about job opportunities, asking for product information, or requesting details about a service). Each student will choose one of the provided scenarios to write their letter.
Step 2: Students will start using an AI-powered letter generator (such as a template tool or an AI writing assistant) to draft an inquiry letter. The AI tool will help them to select the correct format, tone, and relevant info, ensuring that they follow formal business letter conventions.
AI Assistance: The AI tool will provide suggestions for improving the letter's clarity, tone, and grammar as students write.
It will suggest how to phrase questions politely and professionally, helping students avoid informal language or overly direct phrasing.
If students miss key components (e.g., failing to include a polite request or appropriate closing), the AI tool can point it out and suggest revisions.

3. Peer Review with AI Feedback (20 minutes)
Step 1: Students will form pairs and will exchange their inquiry letter drafts; then they will provide peer feedback using traditional methods, reviewing for clarity, tone, and completeness. They will observe and focus on areas where the letter could be improved or made more polite and professional.
Step 2: After peer review, students will use AI tools like Grammarly or ProWritingAid, and will upload their letters for additional feedback on grammar, structure, and vocabulary usage.
Step 3: Students will revise their inquiry letters twice, focusing on improving the clarity of their letters and on meeting the requirements of professional inquiries.

4. Final Refinement and Group Discussion (15 minutes)
Traditional Approach: Some students will share their revised inquiry letters with the class. Then they will discuss the common, basic features of these letters and how they should conceive them in the first draft.
AI Reflection: The discussion will focus on how AI tools helped with the writing and revision process. Students analyze and reflect on the benefits of using AI for self-editing and improving their writing skills.
Homework/Extended Activity: Students will have to write a new inquiry letter (e.g., about a different topic) independently, using both the traditional approach and the AI tools to refine their writing. They should bring their drafts to the next class for further feedback.

5. In conclusion

Incorporating AI technologies into the teaching of business correspondence increases students' writing proficiency and communication skills. By combining traditional methods with AI tools like writing assistants, template generators, and real-time collaborative platforms, teachers can create an interactive classroom experience that prepares students for an ever-changing working environment. AI-driven tools enable students to practice business communication in a way that is designed according to their needs. The blended learning approach, which integrates AI with conventional teaching, can significantly improve student outcomes and enhance their understanding of professional communication. Moving forward, AI's role in business English courses will help bridge the gap between theory and real-world practice in business communication.

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