

GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN BUSINESS STUDENTS LEARNING CV WRITING

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Abstract

Curriculum Vitae (CV) is an essential document used to showcase personal competence in written form. To make sure that competence is articulated correctly in a written format, students should be aware of their accuracy as it reflects their professionalism. Thus, this study aims to investigate the common grammatical errors found in CVs. Quantitative research was chosen. 34 random Business Economics students' CV documents in a complete format were analyzed using a grammar checker tool named *Grammarly*. The result reveals that there were 221 grammatical errors found in the students' CVs consisting of errors in lexis (34.56%), syntax (28.82%), discourse (23.53%), and morphology (16.67%). This finding highlights the students' struggle to articulate their competence in a well-written document. Furthermore, this may be a reflection for students and teachers to attain better students writing in the future and for researchers to investigate more on grammar errors in the context of English for Foreign Learners and curriculum development of professional writing.

Keywords: grammatical errors, Curriculum Vitae, business students

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive job market, a Curriculum Vitae (CV) must be clear, concise, and complete to leave a strong first impression. A well-written CV can significantly influence hiring or scholarship decisions, as it reflects the applicant's professionalism and communication skills (Bergren & Yonkaitis, 2023) as it is used to filter the potential candidates in the process of job or scholarship application reflecting its role as a tactical weapon for career development (Gottlieb et al., 2021). A CV should be well-crafted dealing with its content and accuracy. Fennel (2025) asserted that recruiters commonly took approximately 6–8 seconds in reviewing each CV. It is crucial that a CV showcases clarity and accuracy. Further, Van der Bijl and von Pressentin (2024) extended the value of professionalism and linguistic precision in CV writing, as these qualities help candidates stand out.

On the same vein, recent studies have explored the significance of grammar accuracy in the context of CV writing. A survey conducted by OfficeNeedle (2021) stated “75% of employers would reject a resume with grammatical errors.” Errors spotted in grammar were considered as indications of carelessness or poor work ethic. Supportively, Nguyen (2019) found that non-native English speakers often make errors in tense and preposition use, which can negatively influence employers' perceptions towards the candidates' quality. These findings further confirmed the urgency of prioritizing grammatical correctness in professional writing. Giang (2023) pointed out that grammar accuracy matters not only in CVs but also in the context of scholarship applications. In detail, it was found that besides the record of publication, educational background, research experience and research interest, detailed error checking becomes a notice for scholarship recruiters. Similarly, Ghafar and Sawalmeh (2024) stated that grammar have a significant role in ensuring clarity, coherence, and precision in both written and spoken English.

In the professional field, grammatical errors in CV writing have become a critical aspect. In this case, it could influence applicants' quality as it reflects their attentiveness to details. A CV with major grammatical inaccuracies can result in confusion and indicate a candidate who has either lack of preparation or poor language mastery. As Isma (2024) emphasized, clarity and conciseness are vital in CVs, and grammatical mistakes can reduce a candidate's chance of being hired. A study has investigated the same concern by identifying common types of grammatical mistakes as stated by Yanuarti (2021) who analyzed international students' application letters and identified frequent errors involving articles, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and misspellings. Her findings showed that even students exposed to English in their daily still struggle with grammar in formal documents. This prompts questions about how non-English majors, especially those in business faculties, perform in writing CVs and other professional texts.

Shinta et al. (2023) further examined cover letter assignments from second-semester students and discovered that omission and misinformation errors were the most frequent, suggesting gaps in students' understanding of fundamental grammar rules. In another relevant study, Isma et al. (2024) focused on Business students who are rarely exposed to English writing practice and found that grammatical errors involving articles, prepositions, and subject-verb agreement were common. These findings suggest the writing competence of non-English major students regarding their grammar expertise should be addressed to ensure their preparation in entering the professional setting.

CV composition goes beyond merely a technical task as it serves as a form of self-presentation. In the context of Business students, CV is a representation of one's skills, experience, and backgrounds aimed at showcasing themselves in competitive fields. Grammar errors can reduce the power of a CV, sending negative signals about the writer's attention to detail and professionalism. According to Sterkens et al. (2023), even minor spelling mistakes in a resume can diminish the likelihood of being invited for an interview. These errors are often interpreted by employers as indicators of lower conscientiousness, poor interpersonal skills, or weak cognitive ability. Therefore, grammatical accuracy in a CV plays a powerful role in shaping an employer's first impression.

Given these challenges, targeted instruction and guided practice are essential. Isma and Baharuddin (2022) emphasized that regular writing activities, teacher feedback, and exposure to real examples of professional business writing can improve students' writing quality. By identifying and correcting common mistakes, students can avoid fossilizing their errors and gain more confidence in writing documents such as CVs, cover letters, or emails (Isma, 2024). Recognizing common errors can help teachers and material developers to design learning preparation that strengthens students' grammar awareness in professional contexts.

In short, grammar-related issues in CV writing are not only common but also have serious implications for Business students' success in the job market. These errors affect how applicants are perceived by employers and may lead to missing opportunities. Consequently, boosting students' understanding of grammar as part of Business English instruction is vital. By identifying frequent errors and equipping students with the right strategies to avoid them, lecturers can help prepare learners for effective communication in the global job market.

This study seeks to address this gap by identifying and categorizing the most common grammatical errors in Business students' CVs. By analyzing 34 student CVs using a grammar-checking tool, the study aims to offer both practical and theoretical contributions. On a practical level, the results can raise students' awareness of typical grammar mistakes and help them improve the clarity and effectiveness of their CV writing. Lecturers and material developers can also use the findings to design more targeted writing activities that prepare students for real-world professional communication. On a theoretical level, the study contributes to the growing body of research in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in Business English writing. It also adds insight into how grammatical competence influences written professional communication among non-English major students.

METHOD

This study applied a quantitative research method to investigate the quantity of common grammatical errors made by Business students in their CVs. It aligns with Lim (2024) who proposes quantitative research as the best method to analyze patterns in large datasets, enabling objective measurement of error frequency and distribution. It belongs to a descriptive quantitative approach as it focuses on identifying and categorizing the grammatical errors found without manipulating the variables. The data consist of 34 anonymized CV that were made by Business students from undergraduate program for project in Business English class. 34 documents were selected as they have met the criteria of CV with complete components as instructed in class before. The data were analyzed using a grammar checker, named *Grammarly* to maintain its objectivity. The grammatical errors found then were coded and analyzed descriptively using Microsoft Excel. Corder error analysis model was chosen to analyze the data containing stages of collecting data, identifying errors, describing errors, explaining errors up to evaluating errors (Ullah et al., 2025).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the process of data analysis, Grammarly found 221 grammatical errors made by 34 Business students in their CVs. The errors were, then, categorized into 16 grammatical error types. The errors consist of 23 confused words, 7 determiner use (a/an/the/this, etc.), 33 misspelled words, 16 incorrect phrasing, 16 punctuation in compound/complex sentences, 36 ungrammatical sentence, 38 improper formatting, 4 comma misuse within clauses, 14 incorrect noun number, 7 closing punctuation, 6 wrong or missing prepositions, 6 incorrect verb form, 27 inappropriate colloquialisms, 7 wordy sentences, 18 text inconsistencies and 10 incomplete sentences. In frequency, it was found that 3-7 students made mistakes on comma misuse within clauses, incorrect verb form, wordy sentences, closing punctuation, wrong or missing prepositions, inappropriate colloquialisms, determiner use (a/an/the/this, etc.), and incorrect noun number. More than 20% of the students had problems with incorrect noun numbers, punctuation in compound/complex sentences, incomplete sentences, and almost 30% students have problems with text inconsistencies. Meanwhile, 13 to 15 students made errors on incorrect phrasing, improper formatting and confused words. Surprisingly, half of the students produced ungrammatical sentences in their CV and almost 65% of them misspelled some words. The details can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. Frequency of Grammatical Errors

	Grammatical Errors Type	Numbers of Students	Percentage
1	Comma misuse within clauses	3	8.82%
2	Incorrect verb form	4	11.76%
3	Wordy sentences	4	11.76%
4	Closing punctuation	4	11.76%
5	Wrong or missing prepositions	5	14.71%

6	Inappropriate colloquialisms	5	14.71%
7	Determiner use (a/an/the/this, etc.)	6	17.65%
8	Incorrect noun number	7	20.59%
9	Punctuation in compound/complex sentences	8	23.53%
10	Incomplete Sentence	8	23.53%
11	Text inconsistencies	10	29.41%
12	Incorrect phrasing	13	38.24%
13	Improper formatting	14	41.18%
14	Confused words	15	44.12%
15	Ungrammatical sentence	17	50.00%
16	Misspelled words	22	64.71%

In short, these 16 grammatical error types can be categorized into five major linguistic subsystems: phonology, morphology, syntax lexis, and discourse (Corder, 1973; James, 1998). The findings show that the highest number of errors in Business students' CVs occur in lexical choices, followed by syntactical issues, discourse-related errors, and lastly, morphological errors. The details can be perceived in table 2 below:

Table 2. Frequency of Grammatical Errors in 5 Linguistic Subsystems

Grammatical Errors Categories		Percentage
Syntax	Comma misuse within clauses	28.82%
	Punctuation in compound/complex sentences	
	Incomplete Sentence	
	Ungrammatical sentence	
	Incorrect phrasing	
Morphology	Incorrect verb form	16.67%
	Incorrect noun number	
	Determiner use (a/an/the/this, etc.)	
Lexis	Wrong or missing prepositions	34.56%
	Confused words	
	Inappropriate colloquialisms	
	Misspelled words	
Discourse	Count of Wordy sentences	23.53%
	Count of Text inconsistencies	
	Count of Closing punctuation	
	Count of Improper formatting	

A. Lexical Errors

Here are the examples illustrating the lexical errors found in the students' CVs shown in table 3.

Table 3. Lexical Errors

Error Types	Examples
Wrong or missing prepositions	“Give direction to the crew 13 Give direction to the crew 13 what to do in the art division to do in the art division” instead of “Give direction to the crew 13 Give direction to the crew 13 on what to do in the art division to do in the art division”
Confused words	HMPSM instead of “Management Students Organization”
Inappropriate colloquialisms	“I can manage myself ” instead of I have a good self-management .”
Misspelled words	“particulary” instead of “particularly”

Lexical errors are the most frequently occurring type of grammar error found in students' CVs, accounting for 34.56%, while all other types appeared at lower rates, each below 29%. The big portion for lexical errors may reflect that students often struggle with finding suitable prepositions, translating what they intend to express, and writing words in formal context. First, error may happen as they are challenged with writing unfamiliar English words. Besides, the students may rarely be exposed to formal expressions leading them to producing informal tones or inappropriate colloquialism. Moreover, it may also caused by the mother tongue interference as the students still use L1 structure when they intend to have L2 translation. This phenomenon makes sense as other researchers found the typical situation. Chuenchaichon (2022) experience the effect of L1 interference done in which Thai EFL Non-English Major Students produced grammatical errors in English as the structure used belongs to Thai grammar. This finding aligns with Vu and Le (2022) who see lexical barriers belongs to the dominant challenge found by students in writing CV consisting of lexical range, word-by-word translation from L1, choosing appropriate meanings of the words, and words used in the right context to impress the recruiters. In their deeper analysis, lexical errors commonly happen as they rely much on having online assistance that is more accessible quickly without considering its accuracy.

B. Syntax Errors

Examples of syntax errors can be seen in table 3 below.

Table 3. Syntax Errors

Error Types	Examples
Comma misuse within clauses	“Soft Skill: Problem Solving, Time Management, Negotiation and Communication Skills” instead of “Soft Skill: Problem Solving, Time Management, Negotiation, and Communication Skills”
Punctuation in compound/complex sentences	“Detail-oriented and organized with experience in managing financial 3 records, and verifying document accuracy.” instead of “Detail-oriented and organized with experience in managing financial 3 records and verifying document accuracy.”

Incomplete Sentence	Writing “Built Piction Studio’s branding, social media presence, and promotional strategy from scratch.” in a paragraph, instead of composing it into a bullet point.
Ungrammatical sentence	“A freshgraduate from Human Resource Program, University of Atma Jaya Yogyakarta. Have an experience in training and workshop about training and development.” instead of
	“A freshgraduate of the Human Resource program at Atma Jaya Yogyakarta University, with experience in training and workshops related to training and development.”
Incorrect phrasing	“A proactive, organized, and detail-oriented management graduate with good communication skills and experience in marketing with a track record of creating digital marketing strategy solutions for products, eager to learn and contribute in a dynamic and professional environment.” instead of "A proactive, organized, and detail-oriented management graduate with strong communication skills and marketing experience, including a proven track record of developing digital marketing strategies for products who eagers to learn and contribute to a dynamic and professional environment."

Syntax errors accounting for 28.82% reflect the second biggest challenge for students in writing CV especially in structuring complex and compound sentences, using word order and writing a sentence with a complete structure consisting of subject and verb. Kurniasih (2022) claims that the existing struggle in writing complex and compound sentences consisting of fused sentences, missing verb, missing subject, comma splices and missing subject and verb happen because the students are not exposed to that format in their real daily life. Simple sentences, in fact, are more common to use regularly for a conversation. Therefore, it is reasonable if there are several ungrammatical sentences found in CV. These issues may happen as the students try to write unfamiliar complex sentences without mastering the grammatical rules.

C. Discourse Errors

Discourse errors are the third most common grammatical issue consisting of errors in the form of wordy sentences, text inconsistencies, closing punctuation and improper formatting. The examples are visible in table 4 below.

Table 4. Discourse Errors

Error Types	Examples
Wordy sentences	Ability to analyze data and situations in accordance with management theory instead of using word “by/ following/ under”
Text inconsistencies	Writing “Bachelor’s degree” and “Bachelor degree” inconsistently
Closing punctuation	Successfully achieved the target participants, by doing 31 good in public speaking 32 and promoting (unfinished sentence with no punctuation to close)
Improper formatting	“...conducting 2 interviews with organizations or companies to regarding the implementation of the 4 management pillars in Research Duty 2022.” instead of “ the four ”

Discourse and style errors (23.53%) involve issues related to coherence, consistency, and professional tone. In some cases, it seems that wordy sentences exist because of translation errors interfered by L1 as noted by Vu and Le (2022). Meanwhile, text inconsistencies and closing punctuation indicate the lack of details from the students. Last, the unknown rule of formal writing format may be the reason for improper formatting.

D. Morphological Errors

Here are the examples illustrating the morphological errors in students' CVs listed in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Morphological Errors

Error Types	Examples
Incorrect verb form	"Collaborate with members of the transportation Division to help finding bus vendors..." instead of writing to help find
Incorrect noun number	"Capable to backup other member job." instead of "Capable to backup other members' job."
Determiner use (a/an/the/this, etc.)	An active and a driven professional Bachelor of Economics and Management Studies who are certified in Human Resources. Instead of "An active and driven professional with a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Management Studies, certified in Human Resources."

Morphological errors are the least common grammatical error found with 16.67% detected. Morphological errors involve inaccuracies in word forms, including verb conjugations, noun plurals, and determiner usage. These errors align with James' (1998) framework of error analysis, which categorizes such mistakes as indicative of interlanguage development challenges. The prevalence of these errors suggests students struggle with mastering English's complex morphological system, particularly where it differs significantly from their L1 (Corder, 1973).

CONCLUSION

This study identified and analyzed 221 grammatical errors found in the CVs of Business students, highlighting five major linguistic problem areas. Lexical issues were the most prevalent, followed by syntax, discourse, and morphological errors. The findings reflect students' limited exposure to formal English writing and underline the challenges faced by non-English major students in producing grammatically accurate professional documents.

The study emphasizes the need for focused pedagogical strategies that incorporate grammar instruction, targeted feedback, and exposure to professional writing models. Teachers should prioritize not only the content of student CVs but also the linguistic accuracy to help students better represent their competencies. Material developers are also encouraged to create contextualized writing activities that address real-life professional demands.

For future research, a qualitative follow-up study could be conducted to investigate the reasons behind students' grammatical choices and explore their writing processes. Additionally, experimental studies testing the effectiveness of instructional interventions would provide practical insights into improving grammatical accuracy in professional writing courses.

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