

## THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR IN THE ACQUISITION OF BUSINESS ENGLISH COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY AMONG THE STUDENTS OF ZAGREB UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

### *VAŽNOST GRAMATIKE U USVAJANJU POSLOVNE KOMUNIKACIJE NA ENGLISKOM: ANALIZA ISTRAŽIVANJA MEĐU STUDENTIMA TEHNIČKOG VELEUČILIŠTA U ZAGREBU*

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the importance of grammar in the acquisition of business communication in English during studies and its application in future business activities. It explores key issues related to grammatical competence and its impact on the quality of business communication, and provides recommendations for improving teaching. Grammar is a fundamental component of effective communication, especially in professional and academic contexts where clarity and accuracy are essential. This study examines the attitudes of students at Zagreb University of Applied Sciences regarding the importance of grammar in their English communication. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which grammatical knowledge poses a barrier or limitation to their speaking abilities, as well as its impact on their confidence and expressive skills. The findings provide valuable insights for improving teaching methods and fostering language competencies that enable more effective communication in a foreign language.

*Key words: grammar, business communication, language competences*

#### SAŽETAK

Ovaj rad analizira važnost gramatike u usvajanju poslovne komunikacije na engleskom jeziku tijekom studija i njezinu primjenu u budućim poslovnim aktivnostima. Istražuje ključna pitanja vezana uz gramatičku kompetenciju i njezin utjecaj na kvalitetu poslovne komunikacije te daje preporuke za poboljšanje nastave. Gramatika je temeljna komponenta učinkovite komunikacije, posebno u profesionalnim i akademskim kontekstima gdje su jasnoća i točnost bitne. Ova studija ispituje stavove studenata Tehničkog veleučilišta u Zagrebu o važnosti gramatike u njihovoj komunikaciji na engleskom jeziku. Konkretno, istražuje se u kojoj mjeri gramatičko znanje predstavlja prepreku ili ograničenje njihovim govornim sposobnostima, kao i utjecaj na njihovo samopouzdanje i ekspresivne vještine. Rezultati pružaju korisne smjernice za poboljšanje metoda poučavanja i poticanje jezičnih kompetencija koje omogućuju učinkovitiju komunikaciju na stranom jeziku.

*Ključne riječi: gramatika, poslovna komunikacija, jezične kompetencije*

## 1. UVOD

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is a cornerstone of successful business operations and a key competency for students who want to be competitive in the global job market, impacting both internal processes and external stakeholder relations. One of the foundations of successful verbal and written business communication is grammatical accuracy of business documents, such as emails, reports, and presentations, which ensures clarity, reduces misunderstandings, and projects professionalism [1], [2]. However, there are significant challenges in grammar acquisition that can affect the effectiveness of business communication. Furthermore, grammatical errors can compromise credibility and negatively affect perceptions among clients, colleagues, and stakeholders [3]. Conversely, precise and accurate grammar reflects attention to detail, reinforces persuasiveness, and enhances the overall impact of the message. Moreover, linguistic precision contributes to operational efficiency by minimizing the need for clarification and facilitating the accurate transmission of information. Consequently, grammar should be recognized not merely as a technical aspect of writing but as a critical factor in maintaining clarity, building trust, and supporting organizational objectives. Errors in spelling and punctuation further exacerbate communication challenges by creating ambiguity and potentially altering intended meanings. Such inaccuracies may lead to misinformation and cause recipients, especially prospective clients or new contacts, to disengage rather than seek clarification, thereby increasing the risk of lost business opportunities [4]. Maintaining grammatical accuracy is therefore essential to preserving clarity, credibility, and professionalism in business communication.

#### 1.1 PROBLEM, PREDMET I CILJEVI ISTRAŽIVANJA

##### 1.1 PROBLEM, SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The problem of the research is the insufficient grammatical competence of students and frequent grammatical errors in business communication

in English, which negatively affect the clarity, precision and professionalism of expression. Also, the problem is how grammar teaching can be better adapted to the needs of students and the business context in order to improve their communication efficiency.

The subject of this research is the role, significance and importance of grammatical competence in the process of acquiring business communication in English by students during academic education and its application in a professional context. The main problem that was observed is the frequency of grammatical errors in writing and speaking English in business communication, the lack of adequate application of grammatical rules in real situations and the impact on the overall effectiveness of communication in a business environment.

Research objectives:

- To determine the level of grammatical competence of students in the context of business communication.
- To analyze the impact of grammatical competence on the success of business communication.
- To propose ways to improve grammar teaching with a focus on application in business situations.
- To analyze the current level of grammatical competence of students in the context of business communication in English.
- To investigate the impact of grammatical accuracy on the effectiveness and professionalism of business communication.
- To provide suggestions for improving grammar teaching methods in order to better prepare students for real-world business situations.
- To develop guidelines for integrating grammar into Business English teaching that will increase student motivation and engagement.

#### 1.2. PRETHODNA ISTRAŽIVANJA 1.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Previous research points to the importance of grammatical competence as a key factor in successful business communication and points

out that it is essential for clear and coherent communication in a business environment [1]. Communicative approaches to grammar teaching, which include practical tasks, demonstrate effectiveness in reducing grammatical errors and increasing students' expressiveness, showing positive effects on the use of grammar in real speaking and writing situations [5]. Research also indicates that students often make grammatical mistakes due to the interference of their mother tongue and lack of exposure to English in the context of business communication. Some works emphasize the need for synergy between the theoretical learning of grammar and its application in the context of business correspondence, which results in greater functionality and relevance of acquired knowledge as well as the need to integrate grammar into the context of real business tasks in order to increase motivation and learning efficiency [4]. Empirical research underscores the importance of grammar in effective business writing. For instance, a study published in the World Journal of English Language [2] revealed that students with consistent grammatical proficiency demonstrated greater precision and coherence in their business writing. Similarly, Barat and Talukder [3] found that English language proficiency significantly enhances the effectiveness of business communication by facilitating smoother interpersonal exchanges and collaboration. Lookadoo et al. [6] found that students increasingly rely on AI-based writing assistants to improve grammatical accuracy, which in turn boosts their confidence and competence in business writing. A study by Huang [7] developed an LSTM-based grammar detection system that substantially improved learners' ability to correct grammatical errors, particularly in business contexts. Isma et al. [8] also reported that nearly half of the errors in students' business letters were related to grammar, highlighting the continued need for focused instruction in this area. Despite its significance, grammar remains a challenging aspect of business writing for many learners. The study "Factors Influencing Students' Business Writing Skills" [4] identifies grammatical weakness as a primary contributor to communication breakdowns, emphasizing the need for targeted instruction in this area. In the Croatian context, Vidak [9]

discusses how the format and grammatical structure of business letters affect their clarity and reception, while Pavlović and Šarić [10] emphasize the importance of cohesion and coherence in textual communication. This paper seeks to further explore the relationship between grammar and effective communication in business contexts, particularly from the perspective of learners whose first language is Croatian and who operate at intermediate to upper-intermediate levels of English proficiency. Understanding students' perceptions of grammar's role in communication can improve pedagogical strategies that enhance both language competence and professional communication skills.

## 2. EMPIRIJSKO ISTRAŽIVANJE

### 2. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The research was conducted at the Undergraduate studies of the Zagreb University of Applied Sciences in June 2025.

#### 2.1. CILJEVI ISTRAŽIVANJA I HIPOTEZE

##### 2.1. RESEARCH GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of this paper is to examine the perceived importance of grammar in English business communication among students of the Zagreb University of Applied Sciences. It investigates how students' attitudes toward grammar relate to their confidence in communication, their views on professionalism, and their recognition of business communication as a critical career skill.

Based on the defined research objective, two hypotheses were set:

##### **Hypothesis 1:**

Students who believe grammar is important for communication are more likely to believe that grammatical errors negatively affect professional impression in business communication.

##### **Hypothesis 2:**

Students who value grammar in communication are more likely to view business communication as important for their future careers.

**2.2. METODOLOGIJA ISTRAŽIVANJA**  
**2.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The survey questionnaire was compiled for research purposes and distributed through digital communication channels. The collected data was processed using inferential and descriptive statistical methods. Data was collected and processed on a sample of 148 students from the Zagreb University of Applied Sciences, primarily aged between 20–24 (68%). The majority have been learning English for over 12 years (61%), and most (70%) report frequent or consistent use of English in daily communication.

**3. REZULTATI I RASPRAVA**  
**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

When asked what they prioritize in English communication, as shown in Figure 1, 74% of respondents selected fluency over grammar (7%) and vocabulary (19%), indicating a strong preference for spontaneous expression.

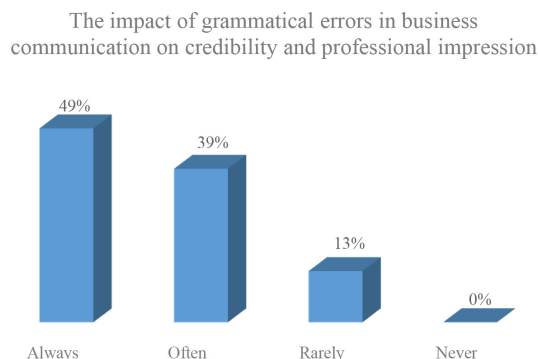


*Slika 1* Prikaz prioriteta studenata u komunikaciji na engleskom jeziku

*Figure 1* Display of students' priorities when communicating in English

However, 74% also stated that grammar is frequently or always important for effective communication. Regarding the consequences of grammatical mistakes, 64% believe they rarely or never cause misunderstandings, yet 36% reported experiencing miscommunication or negative feedback due to grammatical errors. Furthermore, 63% of students believe that grammatical accuracy often or always affects

how they are perceived by others. As shown in Figure 2, a significant majority (87%) agreed that grammatical mistakes in business communication affect credibility and professional impression.



*Slika 2* Prikaz stavova studenata o utjecaju gramatičkih grešaka

*Figure 2* Display of students' attitudes toward the impact of grammatical errors

Similarly, 95% believe business communication is important for their future careers. The most challenging aspects of English business communication were public presentations (48%), followed by writing emails/reports (24%) and meetings (18%). Notably, 91% of respondents believe business communication should be a mandatory part of all study programs, and 92% feel their institution has adequately prepared them in this area. Lastly, 93% of students agree that communication skills should be continuously improved, and 80% see artificial intelligence tools as beneficial for learning business communication.

As shown in Table 1, Chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 78.20$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) for the first hypothesis indicated a statistically significant association between students' perception of grammar importance and their belief that grammatical mistakes undermine credibility in business settings. This supports the idea that students not only value grammatical accuracy but also recognize its direct impact on professional image.

*Tablica 1* Chi kvadrat test ( $\chi^2$ ) varijable interesa

*Table 1* Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) variables of interest

Variables	$\chi^2$	df	p
Correlation between grammar importance and business credibility	78.20	6	.00

As shown in Table 2, a second Chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 67.02$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < 0.006$ ) also showed a statistically significant relationship. Respondents who emphasized grammar were more likely to strongly agree that business communication plays a crucial role in their career development.

**Tablica 2** Chi kvadrat test ( $\chi^2$ ) varijable interesa

**Table 2** Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) variables of interest

Variables	$\chi^2$	df	p
Correlation between grammar and importance of business communication	67.02	9	.00

These findings demonstrate a clear link between grammatical awareness and perceived professional competence. Students who understand the importance of grammar tend to hold more positive attitudes toward the value of business communication overall. This suggests that fostering grammar competence in English instruction may also enhance students' motivation and confidence in business and academic communication contexts. The results reveal a nuanced attitude among students toward grammar in communication. While fluency is valued most, grammar is still seen as essential to credibility and professionalism, particularly in business contexts. This dual perspective highlights the need for balanced instruction, emphasizing both accuracy and fluency. The students' recognition of AI tools as helpful suggests a growing openness to digital support in language learning.

#### 4. ZAKLJUČAK

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Business communication in English is a key skill for students in today's globalized job market. Grammatical accuracy is the foundation of successful written and oral communication. The aim of this paper is to explore the importance of grammar as a fundamental element in the context of successful business communication in English and to identify the obstacles that students encounter in acquiring grammatical rules. Based on the results, it can be concluded that knowledge

of grammar significantly affects the clarity, precision and professionalism of expressions, which directly contributes to the effectiveness of communication in a business environment. Frequent grammatical errors undermine trust and can lead to misunderstandings, which negatively affects the perception of students as future business communicators. This study explored the role of grammar in the acquisition of Business English communication skills among students at the Zagreb University of Applied Sciences. The findings clearly demonstrate that students who value grammatical accuracy tend to perceive it as essential not only for effective communication but also for maintaining credibility and professionalism in business contexts. Moreover, a statistically significant correlation was found between students' attitudes toward grammar and their recognition of the importance of business communication for their future careers. Despite placing a high value on fluency, the majority of students acknowledge that grammar significantly affects how their messages are received and interpreted, especially in formal and professional settings. These insights underline the need to further emphasize grammar instruction in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, particularly in areas such as business writing and professional communication. Additionally, the results suggest that encouraging positive attitudes toward grammar may contribute to greater motivation, self-confidence, and willingness to engage in business-related language use. Future curricula should continue to integrate grammar instruction into communicative tasks and professional scenarios to better prepare students for the demands of the global workplace.

Based on the analysis of the literature, previous studies and research conducted at Zagreb University of Applied Sciences, an integrated teaching approach is recommended to improve the acquisition of business communication through grammatical competence, which includes:

- Application of practical tasks and simulations of business communication
- Interactive working methods and use of digital tools
- Regular evaluation of grammatical competence and adjustment of teaching

- Encouraging independent learning and metacognitive strategies.

The following steps that the authors recommend for further research that will improve teaching and acquisition of grammar in business communication are:

- Implementation of integrated teaching models that connect grammatical concepts with practical business tasks, such as writing emails, reports and presentations

- Application of communicative and interactive working methods, adapted teaching methods that include digital tools and simulations of business situations including group discussions, negotiation simulations and interactive digital learning tools, as well as the possibilities of modern technologies, especially AI tools, in supporting the learning of grammar and business communication, which can increase motivation and efficiency of learning [11]

- Continuous work on evaluating and adapting the curriculum to the specific needs and levels of students according to feedback and the labor market

- Encouraging self-assessment and metacognitive strategies in learning grammar in order to increase independence and motivation.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of grammatical competence in business communication. Similar to the findings of Ng et al. [2], the present study confirms that students associate grammatical accuracy with clarity, credibility, and professionalism in business contexts. The strong relationship identified between grammar awareness and professional impression also supports the conclusions of Barat and Talukder [3], who highlight the role of language proficiency in effective business communication. At the same time, this study extends existing research by focusing on students' perceptions within an applied higher education context, thereby providing additional insight into the role of grammar in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses.

These recommendations will improve the quality of students' communication in English in a

business environment, which will contribute to their competitiveness and professional development. In conclusion, grammatical accuracy should not be perceived only as a technical aspect of the language, but as a key factor for successful business communication, which shapes a professional image and ensures effective exchange of information in a global business environment. This paper offers guidelines for improving teaching practices with the aim of better preparing students for the demands of the modern labor market.

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