

Situated Learning Theory: The Application of Grammatical Structure (Gerunds and Infinitives) in Developing EFL Students' Cover Letters

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Abstract

Focusing on integrating teaching and learning grammatical structures in real actions and practices has been critical and one of the cornerstones in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) domain. This paper emphasizes exposing EFL learners to actual tasks and opportunities they can benefit from in their future careers, along with understanding the meanings and functions of gerunds and infinitives. The situated learning theory was used to frame the current study on EFL students taking the grammar 1 course. The number of students was 60, but the study sample was seven students, which selected randomly. Students were guided to use gerunds and infinitives to develop a cover letter for one of the agencies they selected rather than apply those rules to artificial tasks. The sampled data of the qualitative research was used to analyze students' cover letters by investigating two main concepts. First, their use of gerunds and infinitives; second, the elements of writing professional cover letters. The findings showed students' accurate usage of gerunds and infinitives in different phrases, such as opening, closing, and body paragraphs, to present their educational background and experiences. Thus, the findings showed that the cover letters that have been written by the participants were not the best, but they achieved the general guidelines of creating cover letters and applied the targeted rules. EFL teachers are recommended to enhance their students with variety of authentic tasks that integrate the use of grammatical structures and the practice of using these structures in real tasks.

Keywords: cover letters, professional communication, situated learning theory

1. Introduction

1.1 The Importance of the English Language in Job Market

With great attention to the English language, it is crucial to understand the proper use of the English language level and the basis of global communication (Nova & Koerniawaty 2021). The English language is internationally used either in classrooms or in real interaction. Thus, English becomes an important tool for non-native speakers to successfully obtain the target career (Phan & Socciarelli, 2020). Nowadays, English is considered fundamental for people in general and applicants specifically. Using the English language accurately in workplace-related contexts would indicate an employee's high level of academic performance and show a higher degree of professionalism (Gritsenko, 2016). Thus, English has become the main prerequisite for the present job market (Sri Durga, 2018). This was supported by a study that explored the English language and linguistic competencies that have a significant role in graduates being accepted into the job market and having successful communication in workplace-related contexts (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). In other words, if the students did not receive the instruction of using the proper usage of linguistic structures, they would not strengthen their linguistic background and have the ability to use them in their real work life.

1.2 Communication Skills in a Professional World

Learning how to write in English has different purposes, such as essays, dissertations, theses, and different assignments. One of these purposes that is important but slightly focused on in classrooms is business writing. Business writing skills need to be enhanced by teachers to strengthen students' professional skills before they get into their future careers and become competitive candidates (Vera & Comm, 2019). This was consistent with what has been stated by Sonnenschein and Ferguson (2020), who found that professional communication skills are significant for graduates' readiness for the job market. Therefore, whether written or oral communication skills, it is essential for graduate students to master them to be able to function effectively within the professional world (Mishra & Mishra, 2020). English language teachers are encouraged to prepare their students for future careers by providing writing training sessions that could improve writing competence (Medvedeva, 2016).

One of the most common business communication writings is cover letters or job application letters. Writing this type of letter requires applicants to present their qualifications, experiences, and skills listed in their resumes to show their relevant skills and qualifications to the announced positions (Gross, Hamlin, Merck, Rubio, Naas, Savage, & DeSilva, 2012). Indeed, several studies focused on how cover letters could be written and designed professionally by English as second language learners (ESL) or English as foreign language learners (EFL). Specifically, these studies discussed the structure of how to conduct a professional cover letter and what the audience would expect to find in their job application letters. Examples of these studies were included, (Dunin-Dudkowska, 2019; Tomaska & Nosek, 2018; Arista, yana, & Sugiharti, 2016; Ciortescu, 2012; Salvador, 2011). Moreover, some other studies explored the teaching approaches and methods that could be implemented in learning to write cover letters including (Rahayu, et al, 2021; Hidayanti, 2020; Phan & Socciarelli, 2020; Tirtanawati & Rahmawati, 2020; Alzaanin, 2019; Swe & Kyu, 2019).

Furthermore, various findings discussed the grammatical and linguistic errors in ESL/EFL students' English academic and business writings. According to Nova and Koerniawaty, (2021) there were "... 17 types of grammatical errors produced by the students with missing an article, misspelling, capitalization, incorrect number agreement, and incorrect preposition as the common grammatical errors found" (p. 670). Students' writings of authentic texts, such as the application letter, showed that students' most frequent grammatical errors were related to the subject-verb agreement and the verb tense (Vera & Comm, 2019). Thus, college students need to be prepared for the professional world by being able to create a competitive resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile (Vergara, 2022). The previous studies indicated a significant need for more investigation of the problems that students may commit in writing a cover letter. As stated by Latipah and Gunawan (2020), "... it is considered necessary to conduct more studies or analysis on application letters created by students in order to attain a real portrait of their abilities in writing the text" (p. 237). Consequently, this present study seeks to assist ESL/EFL teachers in recognizing students' learning gerunds and infinitives in writing a professional cover letter. _

This study builds on the basis of professional writing with different purposes in real life and linguistics structures. The goal of this study is to deal with the participants as social actors through "...a transition from a communicative approach to an action-oriented approach" (Piccardo & North, 2019, p. 137). In grammar classes, learners exposed to different grammatical structures related to gerund and infinitive forms. Learning grammar rules is a small part that affects their production. However, training learners to interact in real situations by writing a cover letter using gerunds and infinitives may move them to interact socially and professionally with different agencies or organizations. Thus, the study seeks to answer the addressed research question as follow:

1. How do EFL learners use gerunds and infinitives by integrating the application of essential components of the cover letters?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Use of Gerunds and Infinitives in Writing Cover Letters

Several of definitions of gerund and infinitive forms have raised by different researchers, such as (Benali & López, 2019; Benali & López, 2019; Chalabian, 2020; Anggraeni, 2018; Alam, 2018). Gerunds and infinitives are defined as "...verb complements because they are used after certain verbs, that is, they function as the object of another verb" (Benali & López, 2019, p. 87). EFL/ESL students might have challenges in using gerunds and infinitives when trying to use them in their production. The provided ESL/EFL textbooks do not reflect the use of verbs followed by gerunds and infinitives in authentic English contexts (Chalabian, 2020). Thus, one of the syntactical errors found in EFL students' essays was the use of gerunds and infinitives (Anggraeni, 2018). As it has been revealed by Alam (2018), second language learners in Bangladesh made "nine types of verb errors which are about subject and verb agreement, active – passive moods, verbmissing, verb-tense, infinitive after auxiliary, irregular verb, verb-ing after modal, verb past after infinitive and nonfinite as main verb" (p. 58).

Grammatical structure errors can be noticeable through writing tasks. One of the most complex tasks in class is writing professional and academic tasks because it needs more procedures, such as pre-writing, during-writing, and post-writing phases (Altameemy & Daradkeh, 2019). Professional writing includes reports, emails, essays, resumes, and cover letters. It is crucial to encourage learners to practice tasks that help them send the intended meaning, such as writing convincing cover letters, because "the college years are a critical time for students to prepare themselves for their future careers" (Vergara, 2022). One of the benefits that learners obtain is learning the elements and tips to attract job seekers' attention and consider the candidate for the job interview (Vergara, 2022). Writing a cover letter is not an easy task for graduates to write and achieve their desired position. Swe and Kyu (2019) proposed that EFL students encountered challenges in being able to write and submit an appropriate cover letter that suited their desires and needs. Applicants should be aware that there are some essential components in writing a cover letter, including a heading, salutation, showing their motivation to get the position, mentioning their qualifications and skills, closing message, and signature (Dunin-Dudkowska, 2019). They need to know how to write each component effectively and what to include in each element of the cover letter. For example, when writing the closing message, students need to understand that this is where they should write a simple and concise statement (Kojima & Barron, 2016).

In addition, language learners with a middle or low level of English proficiency skills encountered difficulties in creating a cover letter that was free of errors, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, which negatively affected their presentation of their qualifications (Latipah & Gunawan, 2020). This was agreed with the study of Saejew (2015), who found that one of the most frequent errors that students conduct in cover letter writing is in the use of punctuation. Therefore, writers need to pay attention to both the message as well as the grammar usage of the message because they all would have substantially impact on peoples' decisions regarding their submitted job application letters (Bleske-Rechek, Paulich, Shafer, & Kofman, 2019). That means grammatical errors in a text could lead to miscommunication (Prathia, 2018).

2.2 Politeness in Writing Professional Cover Letters

In cover letters, there are different elements that should be considered, such as language, content, formatting, and the way of writing, including politeness. Politeness is important because it represents the authors’ personalities and characteristics. Politeness is defined as “...a criterion of civility where a certain type and level of culture is reflected by the ‘appropriate’ command of politeness” (Mohammad & Allo, 2021, p. 368). Students should consider the pragmatic aspects of the targeted language when designing a job application letter. Some EFL students followed specific strategies to show politeness and appreciation, such as using some linguistic units, including *thank you* and *I look forward to + NP/Gerund* (Tongpoon-Patanasorn & Thumnong, 2020). There were some indirect markers that EFL students used in their statements or questions to reflect a high degree of politeness, such as using model auxiliary verbs, like ‘Can you’ (Zulianti & Nurchurifiani, 2021). However, some studies revealed students’ inability to show their politeness in written texts. One reason for failing to address politeness is that EFL students lacked the knowledge and instructions for using politeness rules in online platforms, which led to miscommunication (Almoaily, 2018). This is agreed with the results of Mohammad’s and Allo’s study (2021), which indicated that EFL students misused politeness strategies and cultural norms when communicating within the English community. Therefore, EFL learners need to use linguistic and communicative competence in the job markets to effectively be used in different social situations (Freeman, 2012).

2.3 Situated Learning Theory

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), situated learning means that “... learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p. 31). To improve students’ language skills and provide them with valuable knowledge, EFL teachers should consider their students’ interests and reality (Galindo, 2021). Situated learning theory focuses on helping students to relate artifacts to the knowledge of the classroom to be experts in the given knowledge (Besar, 2018). Therefore, when teachers request students to analyze a specific job advertisement related to their interests and then write a purposeful cover letter, students would strengthen their communication skills and increase their learning motivation (Doan, 2021). This was similar to the findings of Özüdoğru and Özüdoğru (2017), who confirmed that students’ use of the target language would be improved and their motivation to practice the language would be increased if their classroom activities connected to real-world situations.

Based on the situated learning theory, the following figure 1 was crystalized to present how this theory is framed within the current research. During the study, three main aspects were highlighted: exposure to targeted concepts, classroom activities and authentic tasks, and real-world communication. Those crucial aspects are tightly interrelated. The participants introduced and learned different rules for using gerunds and infinitives properly. Then, they were also exposed to a new type of professional writing, which was writing cover letters. While they were learning the new grammatical rules, they worked on many valuable activities to prepare them for the final actual project. At that time, the instructor taught the concepts and gave the students the responsibility to work on the provided activities. The instructor was trying to provide an opportunity for the students to integrate and apply using gerunds and infinitives while writing cover letters. As Bikowski stated (2018), “Grammar instruction has thus moved beyond the memorization of rules or dialogues and is more firmly situated in helping learners develop their communicative competence, necessitating tasks that allow for noticing and consciousness-raising of grammatical forms and their usage” (p. 1). Finally, the instructor asked the students to choose one of the announced jobs on the governmental website; the students were ready to submit their cover letters to the same link the instructor provided.

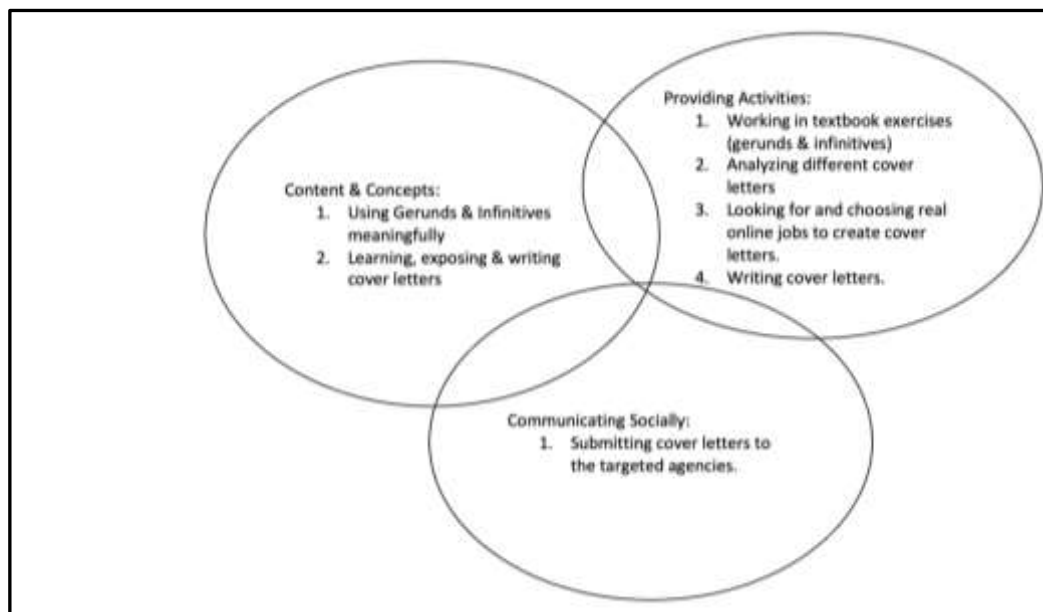


Figure 1. Three main ideas were addressed based on the situated learning theory

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling

This qualitative research study was designed to investigate the practice of using gerunds and infinitives through composing cover letters by EFL students in the Saudi context. The sample of recruitment participants was undergraduate students from level two in the English department. They took the English grammar 1 course in the fall semester. Then, they enrolled in the English grammar two courses of the spring semester. Although the number of students was around 60, the selected and random sample was only seven. To consider confidentiality, the participants' names and personal information were anonymous in the study. For ethical consideration, the authors followed the requirements of the standing committee on the ethics of scientific research to collect the data. They informed the participants about the purpose of the study, and they signed the consent form after they accepted to participate in the study.

3.2 Data Collection

To collect data, the instructor spent four weeks; the duration of the class was three hours every week. During those weeks, the main grammatical structures were focused only on gerunds and infinitives. There were different rules to help learners differentiate between them, as explained clearly in table 1 and table 2. Those tables were created based on the textbook's structural rules taken from Azar, Kock, and Hagen (2009). This textbook was the primary source to use in the grammar 1 course. Through the learning and teaching process, the instructor provided several activities to ensure clarity for the students. The instructor started with task-based language teaching to organize weekly tasks and activities and concluded with real projects. Piccardo and North (2019) encouraged applying real tasks after preparing students to develop their skills.

Table 1. Different rules of using gerund forms

Gerunds		
	Grammatical Rules	Structures
1	Gerund form as subjects	-
2	Gerund form as objects of prepositions	Preposition + gerunds
3	Specific verbs preceding only gerunds	enjoy, stop, avoid...etc.
4	Using gerund forms with go	Go + gerunds
5	Using gerunds with special expressions	-

Table 2. Different rules of using infinitives forms

Infinitives		
	Grammatical Rules	Structures
1	Specific verbs preceding only infinitives	decide, plan, ask...etc.
2	Infinitives form as subjects	-
3	Infinitives form with purposes	In order to+ infinitives
4	Adjectives preceding infinitives	Adjectives + infinitives

In the first lecture, the instructor finished explaining the first part of the rules. Then, the whole class worked on several exercises in the textbook. One of the activities was storytelling, starting from the first row of the class and finishing with the last row. Then, they discussed and shared their opinions about the story. In this task, students could stick with gerunds and infinitives; if they could use them, it would be beneficial. In this class, providing examples and using the learned rules of gerunds and infinitives were challenging.

In the following lecture, the instructor revised gerunds and infinitives at the beginning of the class. Then, the students were exposed to new rules related to gerunds and infinitives. After that, the instructor introduced the cover letter to students in the second part of the lecture. The students did not have a background in cover letters. In other words, learning how to write cover letters was a new concept for the students. Then, the instructor defined cover letters and clarified their purposes and importance of cover letters. The instructor applied the textual analysis method to help the students to identify the most important components of writing cover letters. At the end of the class, the instructor asked the students to find written cover letters and analyze them by telling what information and details the authors focused on to share with the whole class the following week.

In the next class, the students shared the chosen cover letters and discussed them with the whole class by following specific questions that the instructor provided. Through the discussion, the students tried to find the weaknesses of the selected cover letters. This helped the students to observe their weaknesses and how to solve them to develop professional cover letters. Then, the instructor explained the new rules of gerunds and infinitives to the class and worked on different exercises in the textbook. After that, the instructor asked the students to develop their own CVs since all students had theirs and knew about CVs. In this study, CVs were essential to help the participants develop their cover letters, but their CVs were not considered or analyzed in the current results.

The last gerund and infinitive rules were presented in the fourth class, and the class worked on different exercises as usual. Then, the instructor asked students to start developing their cover letters. Before writing their letters, the instructor provided the governmental website and asked the students to select the desired position. This website provides different types of jobs for all Saudi applicants. It offered opportunities to work online and strengthen their practical experiences. Even though the students got a job, it would be online and part-time

to avoid the negative impact on their studying progress. This website was chosen to ensure the security and privacy of all students. Also, the students wrote cover letters based on their chosen careers aligned with their CVs. The instructor asked the students to consider gerunds and infinitives while writing their cover letters carefully. Then, they submitted their documents to the potential agencies, which was considered a real task. After the submission, the students sent the proof of finishing their job applications to the instructors through the blackboard.

3.3 Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the sampled data was analyzed based on two parts. The first part analyzed the proper use of gerunds and infinitives based on the rules they had learned in their textbook. The second part investigated the main components of writing cover letters. Then, themes emerged while analyzing the data, such as Infinitival usage in cover letters by EFL students, gerundial usage in cover letters by EFL students, and general guidelines for writing cover letters. Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the findings based on the emerging themes. Also, the students signed the consent forms that explained the necessary details of the current study to understand their roles.

4. Results

There were two crucial parts in analyzing the gathered data in this study. The first data was related tightly to the students’ language used in their cover letters, specifically on infinitive and gerund forms. The other part was related to the general guidelines that the students included in their cover letters to professionally present their educational background and experiences. The following findings answer the research questions: How do EFL learners use gerunds and infinitives by integrating the application of essential components of the cover letters?

4.1 Infinitival Usage in Cover Letters by EFL Students

The data showed students’ applications of infinitive rules that they learned during different classes in an accurate way. One of the rules that participants used was using infinitives to express purposes, as shown in the example 1 in table 3. They also used infinitives preceding adjectives, as examples 3 and 4. It seems that the students used parallel structure with infinitives properly, as in the example 6. They also used infinitive forms with several words, such as *expect* and *love*, as in examples 2 and 5. During the semester, students learned that specific verbs could come with infinitives and gerunds, such as *love* and *like*. The table below showed different students’ sentences using infinitives in different sentences.

Table 3. Using infinitives with different grammatical rules by the students

	Students’ Usages of Infinitives	Rules
1	I am writing <u>to apply</u> for a job as a translator at this company in Riyadh.	Using to + infinitive to express purpose.
2	I <u>expect to be</u> able to develop myself further as a professional.	Using infinitive after word expect
3	I am <u>ready to begin</u> immediately.	Using infinitives after adjectives.
4	I am <u>pleased to tell</u> you that it is one of my simplest qualities, but I have many others.	
5	I love to stand on the stage and act.	Using Infinitives after love
6	I feel that my biggest strengths are my ability to <u>organize, provide</u> clerical support to colleagues, and <u>communicate</u> well with people from all backgrounds.	Using parallel structure with infinitives

The data reflected the participants’ effort toward showing politeness through using their background and knowledge of the English language. First, most participants began their cover letters with opening phrases, such as *dear*. Second, all of them concluded their letters with closing phrases including *sincerely*. In addition, they used polite structures such as would like + infinitives, as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Using infinitives in a polite way

	Examples
1	I would like to introduce myself as a candidate for the translator position that you company recently advertised in the daily jobs.
2	I would like to further explain my motivation to work at ministry of culture during a personal meeting.
3	I would like to use my skills with the ministry of labor in order to make the best use of my acquired knowledge.

However, one participant tried to show politeness, formality, and proper usage of infinitives. As a result, she overused the rule of *would/would like + infinitives*, as shown below.

Table 5. Overusing infinitives in a polite way by one student

	Examples
1	I would like to express my interest...
2	I would describe myself as someone who is an ambition...
3	I would like to put these characteristics to use within your organization.
4	I would like to further explain my motivation to work...

Furthermore, one of the practices that the participants applied was using infinitive forms after models, such as *would* and *can*. All participants used models followed by infinitives as shown in table 6.

Table 6. Using infinities after models

Examples	
1	I <u>would appreciate</u> your careful consideration of my credentials as outlined within my attached CV.
2	I <u>would very much welcome</u> a personal meeting with you to discuss your needs and my ability to meet them.
3	I <u>can say</u> that I have experience in coding.
4	I <u>can handle</u> pressure.
5	I <u>would describe</u> myself as someone who is an ambitious and hard-working person.
6	I <u>can make</u> a valuable contribution to your organization.
7	I <u>can do</u> the best for this job.

4.2 Gerundial Usage in Cover Letters by EFL Students

The findings presented different rules for using gerunds through writing cover letters by the participants. The first rule that they used was using gerunds as the object of prepositions, as in the examples 1, 2, and 3 in table 7. The following rule was writing special expressions using gerund forms, as in examples 4 and 5. They also used gerunds with verbs, such as *like*, as in example 6 below.

Table 7. Using gerunds with different grammatical rules by the students

	Examples	Grammatical Structures
1	I am good at <u>designing</u> logos.	Using gerund forms as the object of prepositions
2	I am very <u>interested in working</u> for your organization.	
3	I <u>thrive on being</u> on the front line and am fully confident in my ability to handle any future issues and fast changes.	
4	I <u>have</u> experience <u>translating</u> many things.	Using special expression by using -ing
5	I <u>have</u> more than two years experience in <u>communicating</u> with clients.	
6	I <u>like doing</u> stuff instead of sitting and watching movies.	Using gerunds after <i>like</i>

The data reflected that most participants concluded their cover letters by including closing phrases. They used *preposition + gerunds*, as shown in table 8.

Table 8. Including gerunds in closing phrases

Closing Phrases	
1	Thank you in advance <u>for taking</u> a moment to review my cover letter.
2	I look forward <u>to hearing</u> from you soon.
3	Thank you very much <u>for taking</u> the time to review my application.
4	I look forward <u>to receiving</u> a response from you soon.

Through the findings, the participants successfully used both infinitives and gerunds appropriately. They used gerunds in different sentences than infinitives in their cover letters.

4.3 General Guidelines for Writing Cover Letters

The data presented the important concepts that the students included in their cover letters. First, the students wrote their cover letters in response to a specific position, as in example 1 table 9. Deciding on a particular type of job dictated the students to include precise information to be applicable and help them to carefully select the information that is suitable for the required position, as in the example 2. Second, the students repeated the same information they mentioned in their letters, as the in example 3; however, they tried to summarize their educational background and experiences in how they span their future careers, as in the example 4. Third, they also try to use close phrases to show their interest, readiness, and availability to interview, as in the example 5. All participants created their cover letters; although this was the first time, they experienced writing this type of letter, they tried to present their information in a meaningful, concise, and clear way. They did not have enough practical experiences, but they tried to spotlight their strengths and educational knowledge, as in example 6. Last, they tried to use the language of self-promotion to raise the opportunities to be selected, as in the example 7.

Table 9. Using general guidelines of cover letters by the students

	Examples	General Guidelines of Cover Letters
1	I am writing to apply for a job as a translator at this company.	Applying to a specific position
2	In my free time, I teach an English online class, which mean that I have a background in teaching.	Trying to present her practice by talking about specific experience
3	Greater details of my accomplishments and experience can be found in the CV that came attached with this letter.	Trying to communicate the information in the cover letters to the provided CV.
4	I am interested in your position for a part time receptionist...I have more than two years experience in communicating with clients and coordinating with them as well as organizing and coordinating work between departments.	Trying to compare her qualification to the available position.
5	My schedule is flexible, and I am available for interview during the day, evening and at the weekend	Trying to close her letters with showing her readiness and availability for the interview at any time.
6	I am currently studying English language at Qassim university...The emphasis lies on translation...I would like to use my skills with Ministry of culture...	Trying to present her educational background and skills since there are no adequate working experiences.
7	-I am <u>good at</u> working under pressure. -I would describe myself as someone who is <u>an ambitious</u> and <u>hard-working person</u> . -I am an <u>excellent</u> online English teacher. -I am <u>confident</u> that I am the right person for vacancy and that I would also be an asset to your business.	Using the language of self-promotion.

After analyzing both grammatical structures and the components of cover letters, the data presented in the following figure 2. This figure showed three areas connected to the study’s purposes and results. The first area was gerunds and infinitives column, which focused on the participants’ use of gerund and infinitive structures in their cover letters. Different examples of the students’ sentences were posted in the tables above. However, the second area of the figure was the cover letter components column, representing the major sections of developing cover letters, such as the introduction, body paragraphs, and closing statements. Those sections were found in the participants’ cover letters. The last column was students’ integration of gerunds and infinitives within writing cover letters. This column is considered fundamental in this study because it clearly answered the study’s main goal of this study; it reflected how the participants showed their understanding of gerunds and infinitives while presenting their educational backgrounds and skills. Their output of gerunds and infinitives was aligned with creating cover letters that crystalized their identity and perceptions. Thus, figure 3 represented an example of one of the participants’ cover letters. This example, it showed how the participant included her educational background, qualification, and skills using gerunds and infinitives.

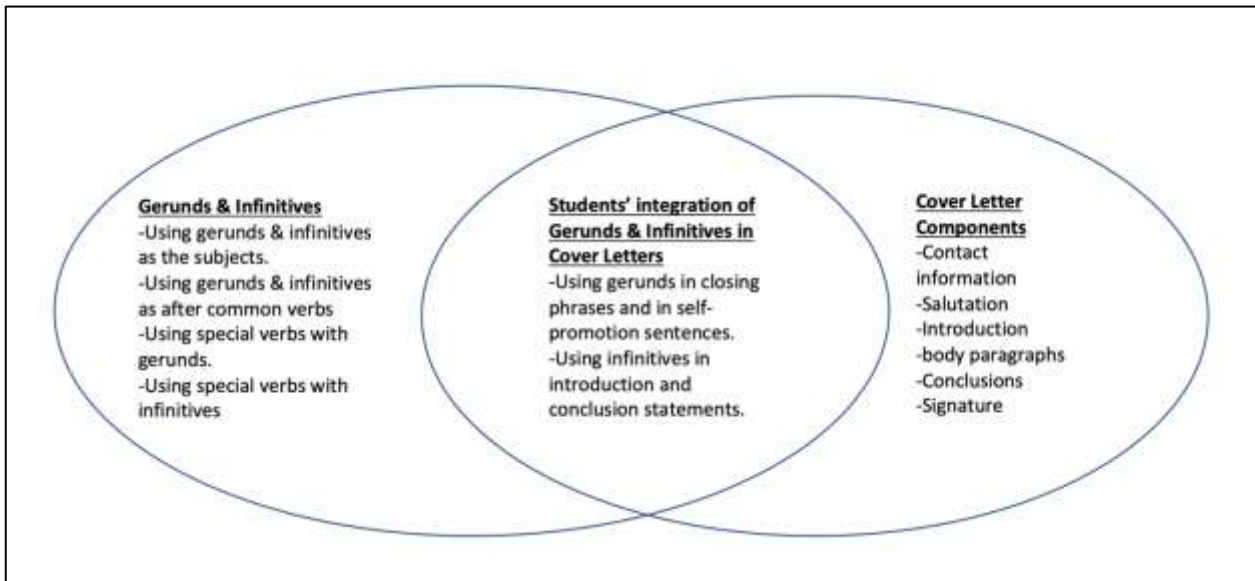


Figure 2. Three areas appeared after analyzing the formation of gerunds and infinitives in cover letters

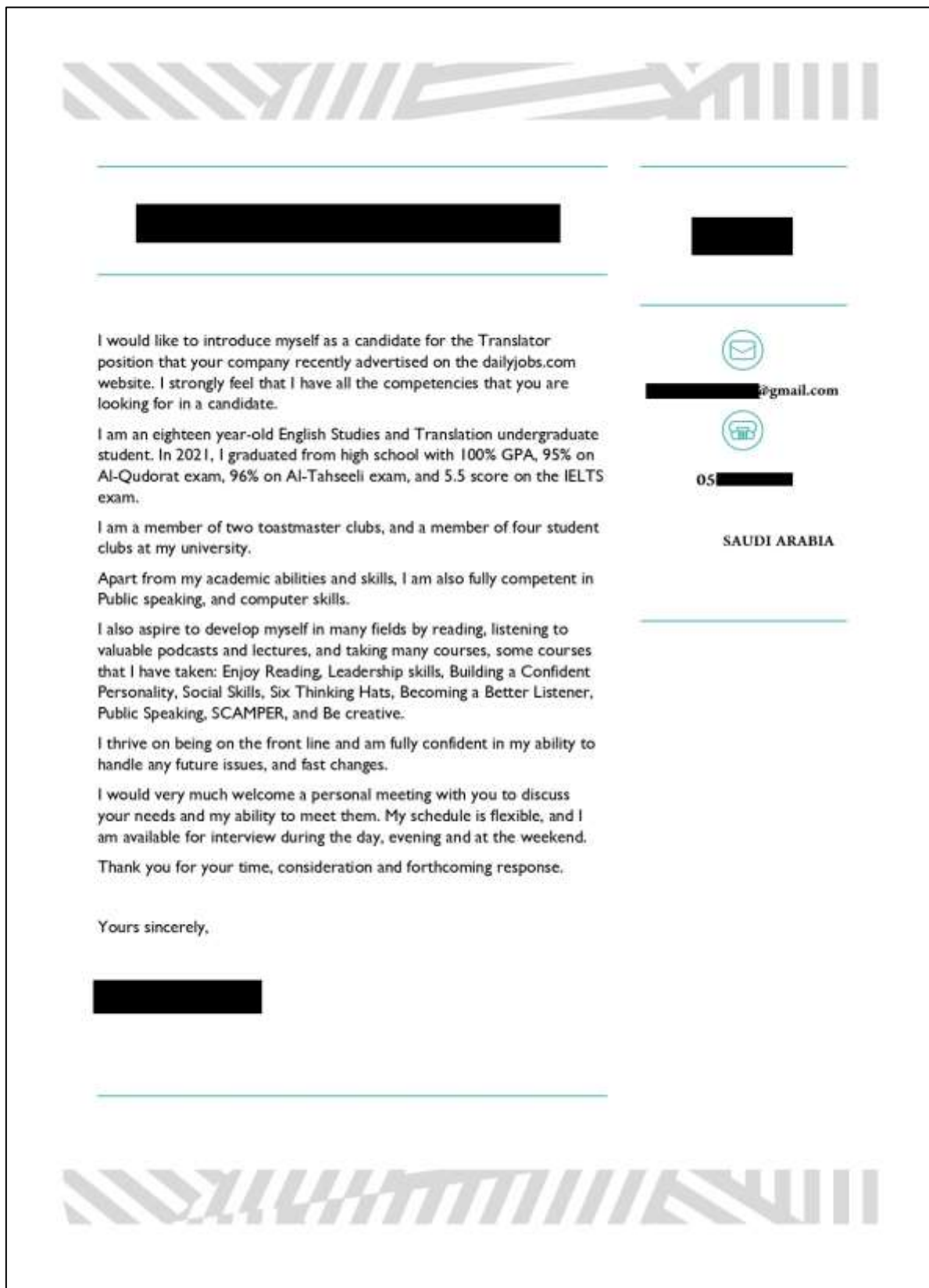


Figure 3. An example of a student’s cover letter using gerunds and infinitives

5. Discussion

With great attention and awareness of applying to different job applications, it is fundamental to consider the linguistic structures to represent selves in a professional way. Building on this basis, the study spotlighted two central parts: (1) developing cover letters and (2) integrating gerunds and infinitives in grammar classes. The first part was tightly related to the important sections and components of writing professional cover letters. The second part was related to all rules of gerunds and infinitives that they have received and learned. Although the submitted cover letters by the participants were not the best-written letters, they tried to write good ones considering the first time they had exposed, learned, and written cover letters.

First, the participants successfully used different grammatical rules that they learned on gerunds and infinitives. Their writing's application of structure indicated their comprehension of the concepts. As Jones, et al., (2013) indicated having a good understanding of grammatical concepts and making a good choice of grammar might greatly contribute to students' goal achievement in writing. For example, they recognized that common verbs come with both infinitives and gerunds, such as *like* and *love*. They also used self-promotion with gerunds and infinitives to talk about their skills and abilities, such as *I am good at working under pressure*. The purpose of using self-promotion is to attract others' attention. This result is consistent with Elsakran (2018), who indicated the importance of including expressions such as "I am a suitable...or the details given below make me a good fit for the position advertised" (p. 139). Those expressions help the applicants to crystalize and show their abilities to fit with the targeted jobs. As Doan (2021) stated that applicants, especially students, do not need only to show others their skills and abilities rather, they need to present what they are going to provide for the targeted agency. That information would not be learned if the students did not expose and experience to apply to real tasks. Doan's implication was to build a bridge between the learning outcomes and classroom activities to prepare learners to be ready for real life.

Second, the data generally showed the participants' lack of work experience. However, the participants' trial in writing concise and brief letters were obvious because they summarized the most important information, including their personal attributes and educational background. This result is consistent with the rule 2 of writing professional cover letters that Tomaska and Nosek (2018) addressed, which was "remember KISS—Keep It Short and Simple" (p. 2). In this study, all participants provided one page of cover letters consisting of greetings, opening phrases, important information, and closing phrases. The findings addressed crucial concepts that the participants highlighted, such as reflecting on the specific positions, summarizing not repeating their CVs, and showing their readiness and availabilities. This finding is consistent with Helder's results (2011) which stated that writing in a specific genre aligns with the certain purpose would require a specific writing structure, language use, and specific type of content. In addition, the way that the participants formed their letters is consistent with the recommendations that Vergara (2022) advised applicant students to follow. Vergara notified that applicants should post their contact information at the top of the letter, then greet them, introduce themselves, talk about the qualifications, spotlight the value that they offer to the company, and last add closure with a thank. In conclusion, the students benefited from this real task because it facilitated their learning of gerunds and infinitives by analyzing others' cover letters and by creating their own ones to be prepared and ready for their future work life.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although different existing studies have posited the essential information that cover letters should include, this study focused on how EFL students' practices and applications using gerunds and infinitives help to develop their cover letters. The current research aimed to prepare students for their real life through grammar classes. For this reason, it was important that EFL students use the learned grammatical structures in real activities. In this study, the instructor encouraged the students to develop professional cover letters to experience applying to proper online job applications. The instructor held the responsibility of teaching both writing cover letters and the formation of gerunds and infinitives. Both were new concepts to the students, but they eventually developed their own cover letters. The first time they created cover letters, integrating gerunds and infinitives was considered challenging but effective. Mainly, the instructor used a governmental website to avoid applying artificial tasks. This activity raised the students' attention and awareness because they learned the components of cover letters, including the opening, closing, and body paragraphs. Within these components, the students combined gerunds and infinitives while writing and analyzing their assignments before submitting their job applications. Finally, the results revealed that the participants' cover letters were not the best, but it is acceptable as the first time they were exposed to because they could apply gerunds and infinitives in the different statements of cover letters.

The following recommendations are addressed on the basis of the current study's findings:

1. EFL students need to expose to cover letters and perceive the important components of writing professional and accurate cover letters.
2. Students need to receive instruction on how to assess and include their skills, abilities, educational background, and value in cover letters.
3. Students with insufficient practical experience should learn how to promote themselves by showing their skills and abilities by focusing on their educational background. Especially how to use the language in the cover letters may affect the opportunity that might lead to successfully meeting the head or failing this position.

4. More training is important for students and add more to grammar courses to help students connect the learned concepts to their real life. This would contribute to making the teaching-learning process more interesting.
5. Providing direct teaching of writing cover letters is essential, especially for students who are never exposed to it before because they may fail to assimilate and write cover letters initially. However, they need to devote themselves and practice learn writing cover letters and integrate other skills to grammar activities.

7. Limitations

The limitation of the present study was that this research included only seven participants to answer the research questions. Thus, the results of this study could not be generalized to EFL learners. Further researchers can raise the number of EFL or ESL students as participants to provide more depth and detailed data.

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