Students' Challenges in Writing Cover Letters: The Teacher-Intervention Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of teacher intervention on second language learners' process of writing cover letters for job applications in a workplace communication course at a Malaysian public university. Adopting an action research design, the study integrated content analysis, self-assessment feedback, and individual interviews to obtain both quantitative and qualitative insights. Four English language teachers participated as observer-collaborators throughout the intervention process. The primary objective was to identify challenges encountered by students in cover letter writing and to implement targeted pedagogical strategies to address them. The findings indicate that teacher intervention significantly enhanced learners' awareness of English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and improved their ability to organize and present relevant information effectively. Following the intervention, most students demonstrated greater clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness in their writing. Nonetheless, a few continued to experience difficulties with conciseness and precision, primarily due to limited preparedness and unfamiliarity with workplace writing conventions. Overall, the study highlights the pivotal role of teacher intervention in developing learners' professional writing competence.

Keywords: cover letter, teacher intervention, self-assessment feedback, process writing, second language

INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the effects of teacher intervention on the process writing of cover letters for job applications among eight second language (L2) learners enrolled in a workplace communication course at a Malaysian public university. Specifically, the study adopts an action research framework designed to improve pedagogical practices through iterative cycles of reflection and intervention. The research employs content analysis and semi-structured individual interviews, allowing for both textual and perceptual insights into the learners' writing development. The research procedure is guided by Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle, which emphasizes learning as a process involving four interconnected stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

In the context of this study, action research is viewed as a value-laden and transformative practice (Herr & Anderson, 2005), one that positions teachers as reflective practitioners capable of initiating and monitoring meaningful changes in classroom learning (Burns, 2020; Farrell, 2022). Writing instruction, particularly in English for workplace communication, is conceptualized as a socially situated and discursive process in which learners negotiate meaning and identity through text production (Hyland, 2019; Lee, 2022). Within this paradigm, errors and inconsistencies are not merely signs of linguistic failure but are instead regarded as creative and developmental indicators of learners' progress toward mastering the conventions of professional writing (Kim & Zhang, 2023; Al-Mekhlafi & Ismail, 2024).

The research team comprises four English teachers who simultaneously serve as teacher-researchers and participant-observers, embodying the dual roles characteristic of collaborative action research (Burns, 2020; Bailey & Diab, 2023). The primary objective of this project is to identify problems and errors in the format, structure, and content of cover letters written by the selected students, and to implement targeted pedagogical interventions to address these weaknesses. Through iterative cycles of teaching, feedback, and reflection, the study aims to enhance students' ability to produce clear, coherent, and effective cover letters that align with

authentic workplace communication standards. Ultimately, the research contributes to ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between academic writing instruction and the communicative demands of professional contexts in Malaysian tertiary education (Yusof & Azmi, 2023; Abdullah & Ismail, 2024).

This article is organized into eight parts. It begins by presenting the context of the study. The second section provides background information about the teacher-informants, the selected students, and the course. The third section outlines the research questions, followed by a literature review in the fourth. The fifth section offers a concise overview of the research design, methodology, and procedure, while the sixth presents the analysis of the findings. The seventh section discusses the implications for classroom practice, and the final section concludes the paper.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Bridging the Gap: Malaysian Employment and Workplace Requirements

It is widely recognized that Malaysian fresh graduates continue to face difficulties in securing employment despite the expansion of tertiary education opportunities. Numerous perspectives have been offered to explain this persistent issue. Among the most frequently cited factors are graduates' limited command of the English language, insufficient soft skills, and inadequate exposure to authentic workplace contexts (Abdullah & Ismail, 2024). Recent studies confirm that many employers still regard English proficiency and communication competence as crucial employability indicators, particularly in multinational and service-oriented industries (Hamzah et al., 2024; Noor et al., 2022).

This phenomenon has become so pronounced that it has drawn sustained attention from policymakers, including Malaysia's Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), which has emphasized the need to strengthen graduates' employability through curriculum innovation and industry collaboration (MOHE, 2023). Despite these initiatives, many university students appear to underestimate the importance of mastering professional communication skills and understanding workplace expectations (Yusof & Azmi, 2023). This lack of awareness and preparation often leads to a mismatch between the competencies possessed by fresh graduates and the skills demanded by employers in the job market (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Rashid et al., 2023). As a result, employers continue to express concerns about graduates' readiness to function effectively in professional environments, highlighting the urgent need for more integrated approaches to teaching English for workplace purposes within higher education institutions (Tan & Lim, 2024).

Lost In Translation: Malaysian Undergraduates and The Challenges of Workplace Communication There continues to be a noticeable mismatch between the levels of English taught for academic or general purposes and the communicative demands required in workplace settings. For fresh graduates entering professional domains, it is crucial to be socialized into workplace communication contexts that demand specific linguistic, pragmatic, and interpersonal skills (Crosby, 1999). Failure to recognize this need often leads to difficulties in performing effectively in professional environments (Lovelace, 2001; Moody, Stewart, & Bolt-Lee, 2002). Recent research in Malaysia confirms that this issue remains relevant, as many graduates continue to face challenges in expressing themselves fluently and appropriately in English during workplace interactions such as interviews, meetings, and presentations (Hamzah et al., 2024; Yusof & Azmi, 2023). Studies have also highlighted a persistent gap between the English-language competencies expected by employers and those developed through tertiary education (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Abdullah & Ismail, 2024).

This gap underscores the need for English language instruction that goes beyond grammatical accuracy to include authentic, workplace-oriented communication practices. In particular, action research projects conducted in Malaysian universities have demonstrated that targeted pedagogical interventions—such as business communication modules, simulated workplace tasks, and technology-mediated speaking activities—can significantly enhance students' communicative competence and employability readiness (Rashid et al., 2023; Tan & Lim, 2024). Given this continuing concern, the four teacher-researchers in this study have chosen to frame these issues as the basis for an action research project aimed at aligning tertiary-level English instruction more closely with the linguistic and communicative expectations of the modern workplace.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The process of writing becomes increasingly complex for second language (L2) learners, particularly when the task involves composing a cover letter for a job application. A cover letter is a genre of professional writing that differs significantly from the academic texts students are accustomed to producing in university settings. For many learners, this type of workplace discourse lies outside their existing schema and personal experience, making it difficult to conceptualize the tone, structure, and content required (Hyland, 2019; Lee, 2022).

Consequently, synthesizing information about their academic achievements, personal skills, and relevant experiences to align with a specific job advertisement can be a challenging task. Writing an effective cover letter requires students to evaluate, select, and organize the most pertinent details from their background and then adapt and transform these details to fit both the linguistic expectations and professional conventions of the workplace (Kim & Zhang, 2023; Al-Mekhlafi & Ismail, 2024). The challenge intensifies when the target language is English, as students must not only demonstrate grammatical and lexical competence but also apply suitable writing strategies, rhetorical structures, and vocabulary appropriate for formal employment contexts (Tan & Lim, 2024).

Furthermore, because the course in which this task is embedded is a university-level workplace communication course, students are required to adhere to institutional guidelines. They must engage in various pedagogical procedures such as writing conferences, feedback sessions, and evaluation cycles with their teachers (Burns, 2020; Farrell, 2022). Within this process-oriented framework, teacher intervention plays a crucial role in guiding learners through successive drafts, providing feedback on content, organization, and language use, and supporting them in producing a polished final version of their cover letter (Bailey & Diab, 2023).

Considering these factors, the present study explores the role of teacher intervention during the stages of process writing in helping students enhance the quality of their final cover letter drafts. The subsequent section outlines the participants and the specific course selected for this investigation.

The Course, The Participants, And the English Language Teachers: An Overview The study involved eight participants and four teachers who served concurrently as collaborators and participant-observers in this action research. The present study was conducted within the context of the Workplace Communication II (WC II) course offered at a Malaysian public university. This course serves as an advanced and exit-level subject designed to prepare students for professional communication demands in real-world workplace settings. Before enrolling in WC II, students are required to complete Academic Communication I, a foundational course that focuses on developing academic literacy and writing skills essential for tertiary learning.

Students who achieve a minimum grade of A− in Academic Communication are eligible to register for WC II, which is a compulsory course required for graduation. The WC II course is conducted over a fourteen-week semester, consisting of two two-hour sessions per week. The curriculum is structured around two key components: (1) the job application component, which focuses on practical skills such as cover letter and résumé writing, and (2) the group project component, which emphasizes workplace-related communication practices and collaborative tasks.

For this study, only the first component—the job application segment—was examined, with particular attention to the process of composing cover letters. The résumé writing component was excluded from this analysis to maintain a specific focus on the pedagogical and linguistic aspects of cover letter composition.

The participants in this study consisted of eight second-year undergraduate students from two different faculties. Four participants (P1, P2, P3, and P4) were enrolled in the Faculty of Economics and Management (FEP), while the remaining four participants (P5, P6, P7, and P8) were from the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST). In terms of their English proficiency, as indicated by their Malaysian University English Test (MUET) results, one participant (P4) obtained Band 2, one participant (P2) achieved Band 4, and the remaining six participants (P1, P3, P5, P6, P7, and P8) scored Band 3. This distribution shows that most participants possessed an intermediate level of English proficiency, which provided a balanced representation of language ability among the group.

The researchers in this study were four English language teachers who taught the selected Workplace Communication II classes. Each teacher assumed a threefold role throughout the research process: (1) as classroom teachers responsible for facilitating instruction and guiding students' writing processes, (2) as participant-observers documenting classroom interactions and student progress, and (3) as collaborators contributing to the design, implementation, and reflection phases of this action research. Their dual position as practitioners and researchers provided valuable insights into the pedagogical impact of teacher intervention within authentic classroom settings.

Research Questions

This study aims to address the following questions:

1. What patterns are evident in the students' cover letters before the teacher intervention stage?
2. What patterns emerge in the students' cover letters after the teacher intervention stage?
3. What do the patterns in the cover letters and the students' self-assessment feedback reveal about the effectiveness of the teacher intervention?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND PROCEDURE

This study employs an action research methodology, which allows practitioners to systematically investigate and improve their own teaching practices. Three main research methods were used:

1. Content analysis of the students' cover letters completed during the pre- and post-intervention phases,
2. Students' self-assessment feedback, gathered to capture their reflections on their writing processes and learning experiences, and
3. Individual interviews conducted with the students to gain deeper insights into their perceptions of the intervention. In summary, the research procedure was structured around four sequential and cyclical stages, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, reflecting both Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model and the principles of action research. Each stage was interrelated, forming a continuous process of observation, reflection, action, and evaluation aimed at improving students' writing of cover letters.
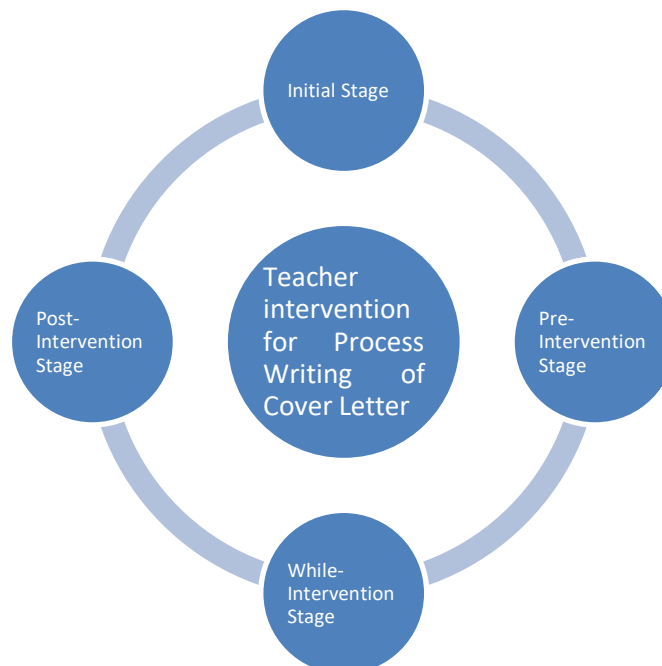

Figure 1: The intervention model illustrating the four stages of learning adapted from Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle.

The research was conducted over three main stages: pre-intervention, while-intervention, and post-intervention. During the pre-intervention stage, the selected group of participants was introduced to the procedures involved

in the job application task. Each student was required to identify and select a job advertisement related to their field of specialization. To ensure suitability, all chosen advertisements were reviewed and approved by their English teachers before being used for the writing activity. During the third week of the semester, the researchers, who also served as participant-observers, conducted the first round of draft writing sessions in their respective classes. Each learner was given approximately one to one and a half hours to compose a cover letter based on the approved job advertisement. At this point, students had not yet received formal instruction on the format, structure, or conventions of professional cover letter writing. Upon completion, the teachers collected the drafts, analysed emerging writing patterns, and conducted individual interviews with selected students to gather preliminary insights.

In the while-intervention stage, one or two class sessions provided explicit instruction and practical guidance on effective cover letter writing. Teachers introduced the key principles of organization, tone, and content development, and shared model cover letters to demonstrate features of clarity, conciseness, and persuasiveness. The participants were also guided on how to tailor their cover letters to specific job requirements, emphasizing the integration of personal skills and experiences that align with workplace expectations.

Finally, in the post-intervention stage, the participants were asked to revise and rewrite their cover letters in class based on the feedback and instructional input received. Upon submission, the revised cover letters were analysed and compared with the earlier drafts to identify changes, improvements, and persistent issues. A second round of individual interviews was then conducted to explore the learners' reflections on their writing process and the influence of teacher intervention on their performance.

In summary, the four stages formed a continuous cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, thus allowing both students and teachers to engage in meaningful experiential learning. This cyclical process not only enhanced the learners' writing skills but also empowered teachers to refine their teaching strategies in real time.

Synopsis Of the Results

In this study, three research questions served as the framework for organising the discussion and interpretation of the findings. In this section, we compare and contrast the two sets of cover letters, one written before the intervention and one written after. We look for language and structural characteristics. Students' views on the writing process and the effect of teacher involvement on their learning are illuminated by the self-assessment feedback examined in the second part. In part three, we see the results of the individual interviews that were carried out before and after the intervention. These interviews shed light on the learners' thoughts, difficulties, and developing comprehension of how to write successful cover letters for use in the workplace.

Patterns Identified in Students' Cover Letters Prior to the Teacher Intervention Stage This initial analysis focuses on the first research question, which examines the patterns observed in the participants' cover letters before teacher intervention. This table summarizes the recurring patterns identified in students' initial cover letter drafts and their reflections shared during self-assessment. The findings reveal limited understanding of cover letter conventions and the need for explicit instruction in structure, content development, and evidence-based presentation of skills. The following table presents a summary of the findings related to this question.

TABLE I Patterns of Students' Cover Letters and Their Self-Assessment Feedback

No	Pattern of Cover Letter	Learners' Self-Assessment Feedback
P1	Lacked information about educational qualifications and mentioned possessing soft skills without providing supporting evidence.	Admitted not knowing how to write a cover letter and mentioned briefly reviewing the job advertisement's requirements.
P2	Listed skills but failed to demonstrate them convincingly.	Acknowledged not knowing how to write a cover letter and relied on intuition, stating she 'didn't want to make myself look stupid.'
P3	Mentioned educational background but provided limited details; claimed to be the best candidate with extensive experience, yet no supporting evidence was given.	Admitted limited knowledge of cover letter writing but reported doing some online research for guidance.

P4	Claimed to be highly motivated, independent, and fond of challenges, but omitted educational background and other relevant skills.	Reported knowing 'a little about the format' but not about the required content.
P5	Provided minimal educational information and mentioned a brief, three-month research assistant experience without elaboration.	Reported having read several samples but was unaware of the proper flow and organization.
P6	Excluded educational information and referred to meeting company requirements based on internship experience, without offering supporting details.	Mentioned prior experience writing cover letters in Malay and stated she could recall some formatting conventions from that experience.
P7	Claimed to have the interest and necessary skills for the position but did not include specific details or supporting evidence.	Provided very limited information during the feedback session.
P8	Briefly mentioned educational background and relevant soft skills, but presentation was weak and lacked adequate supporting details.	Reported general familiarity with cover letter writing but admitted uncertainty regarding the correct structure and format.

Based on Table 1, the findings indicate that nearly all the selected students were generally unable to produce clear and effective cover letters during the pre-intervention stage. Their initial drafts consisted mainly of generalized content that failed to highlight their personal attributes—particularly their technical and soft skills—in relation to the job positions they intended to apply for. This finding aligns with Wan Muda et al. (2023), who observed that many Malaysian undergraduates exhibit limited preparedness in effectively communicating their employability skills in professional contexts.

Following the pre-intervention stage, individual interviews were conducted in which students reflected on their experiences of writing cover letters. Through this self-assessment activity, they identified several factors that contributed to their difficulties in producing clear and effective letters. A key point that emerged was that, for most participants, this was their first experience writing a cover letter—all except Student 6 (P6) reported this. Similar challenges were noted by Saat et al. (2022), who observed that the mismatch between institutional instruction and industry expectations often leads to students' unfamiliarity with workplace communication conventions.

Many students admitted to being unfamiliar with the format, structure, and expected content of a cover letter. For instance, Student 2 (P2) mentioned relying on her "gut feeling," while Student 8 (P8) said she had a general idea of how to proceed. However, both acknowledged lacking precise knowledge of the appropriate structure and format. Student 6 (P6) stood out as the only exception; she had previously written a cover letter in Malay, which allowed her to recall "some of the format" and transfer that knowledge when composing one in English. These findings align with Ting et al. (2024), who reported that Malaysian undergraduates often overestimate their writing competence while remaining unaware of the formal structural and linguistic conventions expected in workplace documents.

In summary, during the pre-intervention stage, students' inability to write effective cover letters was largely attributed to their limited familiarity with workplace expectations and, more specifically, with the format, structure, and content of cover letters. This finding echoes Lim (2023), who reported that many Malaysian graduates struggle to align their application materials with job advertisement requirements, particularly in articulating how their skills meet employer expectations. The following section presents the patterns observed in the students' cover letters written during the post-intervention stage.

Learners' feedback on writing cover letters before the teacher intervention phase This part of the analysis addresses the participants' feedback regarding the writing of cover letters prior to the teacher intervention phase. All learners stated they wrote the cover letter for the first time. Based on Table 1, the pre-intervention self-assessment feedback revealed the learners' reflections on their experiences with writing cover letters. The learners identified multiple factors that hindered their ability to write clear and effective cover letters. Feedback indicated that the cover letters produced during the pre-intervention phase represented some of the learners' initial experiences in writing such documents. This applied to all learners except P6. Most of them acknowledged that they were unfamiliar with the content, structure, or format of a cover letter. P2 suggested reliance on her intuition,

while P8 claimed that she was aware of the writing process. However, both acknowledged a lack of clear understanding regarding the precise structure and format. P6, however, was the sole exception, as she disclosed having previously written a cover letter in Malay, her mother tongue. Consequently, she retained "some of the format," which facilitated the transfer of her prior knowledge in writing the cover letter in English. In summary, the participants reported that their challenges in writing effective cover letters were primarily due to a lack of understanding of the employment requirements of the workplace, particularly in relation to the format, structure, and content of cover letters, during the pre-intervention phase. The subsequent section will illustrate the patterns that were identified in the cover letters that the learners composed during the post-intervention phase.

Patterns of the students' cover letters after the teacher intervention stage In this second segment of the analysis, the discussion addresses the second research question: What patterns emerge in the students' cover letters after the teacher intervention stage? This table highlights the improvement in students' ability to include specific, relevant, and evidence-based information in their cover letters following teacher intervention and guided self-assessment. Their reflections reveal increased metacognitive awareness and the ability to align personal strengths with job requirements. The summary of findings related to this question is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Patterns of Improved Cover Letters and Learners' Self-Assessment Feedback

No	Pattern of Cover Letter	Learners' Self-Assessment Feedback
P1	Provided detailed information on degree subjects, with ideas more specific and closely aligned with the requirements in the job advertisement.	Reported conducting self-evaluation before writing the second cover letter, which helped her understand her capabilities better. She emphasized the importance of reading job advertisements to identify relevant abilities. "I referred to the templates taught by our workplace communication lecturer. I know about our skills and abilities."
P2	Explained clearly how previous university courses and activities provided valuable exposure and transferable skills.	Stated that one should undertake self-assessment before writing a cover letter. "Think about the skills—I believe I can increase my opportunities to be hired."
P3	Included specific examples demonstrating strong communication skills that corresponded with the job requirements.	Mentioned reflecting on teacher feedback before writing the second cover letter and considering how her skills matched the position. "I think about what I have learned and everything."
P4	Described educational background in detail, including relevant academic subjects and additional courses that strengthened computer, accounting, and soft skills.	Reported that self-evaluation helped her recognize her true potential, skills, and experiences. "I would think about the skills and experience."
P5	Expanded on key points and provided concrete details to substantiate claims of possessing skills relevant to the job advertisement.	Indicated that he evaluated himself by reflecting on school and extracurricular experiences. "I do self-reflection, ask my family and friends, and look back at activities and programs I have participated in."
P6	Cited specific examples of academic and co-curricular activities that developed skills relevant to the job advertisement.	Reported that self-assessment helped her reflect on her strengths and match them with job requirements. "After looking at the job advertisement, I tried to figure out my strengths and interpersonal skills to match the criteria and responsibilities."
P7	Provided detailed and specific information about university courses and part-time work experiences that enhanced personal qualities and job-relevant skills.	Explained that she self-reflected by comparing the job advertisement's criteria with her own abilities. "I read through the qualifications stated in the job advertisement to determine whether I fulfil the requirements."
P8	Elaborated on relevant skills, including leadership experience at university and strong communication and IT abilities, effectively supporting her claims.	Reported reflecting on the job advertisement's requirements and comparing them with her qualifications. "I referred to the job ads to consider whether I am qualified for the position offered."

Discussion of Findings: Improved Patterns of Cover Letters and Learners' Self-Assessment Feedback Table 2 presents the enhanced patterns of student cover letters along with their self-assessment feedback following a teacher-guided and self-reflection-based intervention. The evidence indicates a significant improvement in the participants' ability to craft coherent, detailed, and persuasive cover letters that better align their qualifications with job-advertised criteria. This progress suggests that cultivating metacognitive awareness and self-regulatory writing strategies can substantially improve students' professional writing.

Participant P1 demonstrated marked advancement by including specific degree-subjects and aligning her content with job requirements. Her reflective feedback reveals a heightened self-awareness and the recognition of reading job advertisements as a tool to identify relevant personal competencies. Participant P2 similarly succeeded in linking university coursework and extracurricular experiences to transferable skills, acknowledging that self-assessment prior to writing enhanced her employability belief. These findings echo the established view that self-assessment practices foster learner autonomy and metacognitive regulation in writing tasks (Ebrahimi et al., 2021).

Participants P3 and P4 extend this pattern by explicitly citing relevant experiences, substantiating claims about their communication, technical, and soft-skills. Their reflections convey that teacher feedback prompted deeper introspection, enabling them to identify and articulate their strengths more confidently. This aligns with recent studies showing that instruction in metacognitive writing strategies significantly enhances EFL learners' writing performance, motivation, and strategy use (Han, 2024).

Participants P5 and P6 further illustrate growth by providing concrete examples of academic and co-curricular activities relevant to job criteria. Their self-assessment feedback emphasises a reflective process of recalling past achievements and mapping them onto required competencies. Such processes are consistent with findings that self-evaluation and guided reflection lead to improved task-awareness and writing quality (Al-Mwzaiji & Alzubi, 2022).

Likewise, Participants P7 and P8 show increased proficiency: detailed narratives of leadership, coursework, and part-time work appear, and their reflections display analytical comparisons of job-requirements with personal qualifications. This evidence the development of metacognitive monitoring and control—as learners begin to evaluate their fit and adapt their writing accordingly. Recent research affirms that raising metacognitive awareness in writing contexts promotes better self-regulation and improved writing outcomes (Esfahani, 2023).

Taken together, the data in Table 2 reveal more than just improved textual output: they demonstrate a shift in students' writing cognition, self-perception, and autonomy. Integrating structured self-assessment with explicit teacher feedback appears to have resulted in improved alignment between learner-generated writing and workplace communication expectations. This aligns with the broader scholarship which identifies metacognitive and self-regulatory strategy instruction as effective in writing development (Teng et al., 2021).

In summary, it can be concluded that during the post-intervention phase, despite certain shortcomings, the participants demonstrated an improved ability to compose clearer and more effective cover letters. This improvement can be attributed to their increased comfort with self-assessment, awareness of workplace and job requirements, and ability to present their strengths, relevant information, technical skills, and soft skills—developments facilitated by teacher intervention. The following section analyzes the effectiveness of the teacher intervention.

The efficacy of the instructional intervention Finally, in this third segment of the analysis, the discussion addresses the third research question: What do the patterns in the cover letters and the students' self-assessment feedback reveal about the effectiveness of the teacher intervention? Overall, the findings indicate that the teacher intervention effectively facilitated the participants' socialization into the conventions of English for Occupational Purposes, particularly in understanding the appropriate format, structure, and content required for writing a professional cover letter. As reflected by participant 3 (P3), she acknowledged drawing upon the input and feedback provided during the intervention to complete her task.

The analysis further revealed a marked improvement in the quality and organization of cover letters produced during the post-intervention stage compared to those written before the intervention. These results are consistent

with Ganapathy, Tan, & Phan (2020), who found that teacher-provided corrective feedback in Malaysian ESL contexts leads to clearer, more accurate written work. Similarly, the study of letter writing using blogs at IKM Lumut showed improvements in format, content, and mechanics post-intervention. Nevertheless, it was also observed that some students continued to struggle with producing clear, concise, and contextually appropriate cover letters. Contributing factors to these challenges appeared to include limited learner readiness and insufficient familiarity with workplace contexts, expectations, and requirements.

Implications to the Classroom Context The findings of this study highlight the crucial role of teacher intervention in improving learners' ability to produce clear, coherent, and purposeful cover letters. The students' self-assessment feedback and improved quality of their post-intervention writing demonstrate that structured guidance and focused feedback significantly enhance writing performance. This aligns with the results of Azmar & Razali (2025), who found that ESL lecturers employing process-genre and collaborative approaches substantially increased students' clarity and organisation in academic writing.

In classroom settings, this suggests the importance of integrating explicit instruction on workplace-related writing genres, such as cover letters, into English courses. Tasks simulating authentic job application processes, combined with modelling and feedback cycles, echo the successful practices observed in Azmar & Razali (2024), who reported that learners benefited when teachers used clear feedback and scaffolded writing tasks.

At the institutional level, these findings point to the need for curriculum designers and teacher educators to embed intervention-based approaches within English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) courses. Providing training for teachers on effective feedback strategies and learner-centred methods can ensure that language instruction remains relevant, practical, and aligned with workplace communication demands. The needs analysis by Mazyani Mat, Harwati Hashim & Sulaiman (2025) among ESL undergraduates revealed gaps in students' understanding of writing conventions and feedback needs, supporting your claim. Similarly, the case study by Azmar & Razali (2024) suggests that moving away from purely drill-based methods toward process-based instruction is likely to yield better writing outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has demonstrated that teacher intervention plays a vital role in enhancing ESL learners' writing competence, particularly in composing cover letters for job applications. Through structured guidance, feedback, and reflection, students became more aware of their own learning processes and were able to apply effective writing strategies aligned with professional expectations. The overall improvement observed in their post-intervention work reflects the effectiveness of a learner-centred and feedback-driven instructional approach. The findings further suggest that targeted teacher intervention not only improves students' immediate writing performance but also fosters long-term learner autonomy and confidence. By engaging in self-assessment and revision, learners developed critical awareness of both content relevance and linguistic appropriateness, bridging the gap between academic writing and workplace communication. Future research could extend this work by examining the long-term effects of teacher intervention, comparing different feedback modalities, or applying similar approaches across other workplace communication genres to enhance the overall development of English for Occupational Purposes

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