

The Efficacy of Templates in Enhancing English Letter Writing

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Annotation. The use of templates in English letter writing has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing writing efficiency, accuracy, and consistency across various contexts, including academic, professional, and personal communication. This study investigates the efficacy of templates by analyzing recent research from the past seven years, focusing on their role in reducing cognitive load, standardizing communication, and improving readability. Templates provide a structured framework that guides writers, particularly non-native speakers, through the complexities of letter composition, allowing them to focus on content rather than structure. The article also offers a practical framework for designing and implementing templates, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and customization to avoid generic outcomes. Results indicate that templates significantly improve writing quality, reduce cognitive effort, and enhance consistency, though over-reliance can lead to impersonal communication. The study concludes with recommendations for future research and practical applications, advocating for a balanced approach that combines template use with creative adaptation to maintain contextual relevance and engagement.

Keywords: template, letter, efficiency, accuracy, consistency, cognitive load, framework.

Эффективность шаблонов в улучшении написания писем на английском языке

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Аннотация. Использование шаблонов в написании писем на английском языке стало мощным инструментом для повышения эффективности, точности и последовательности письма в различных контекстах, включая академическую, профессиональную и личную коммуникацию. Данное исследование изучает эффективность шаблонов, анализируя последние исследования за последние семь лет, с акцентом на их роль в снижении когнитивной нагрузки, стандартизации коммуникации и улучшении читаемости. Шаблоны предоставляют структурированную основу, которая помогает авторам, особенно не носителям языка, справляться со сложностями составления писем, позволяя им сосредоточиться на содержании, а не на структуре. Статья также предлагает практическую основу для разработки и внедрения шаблонов, подчеркивая важность гибкости и настройки, чтобы избежать шаблонных результатов. Результаты показывают, что шаблоны значительно улучшают качество письма, снижают когнитивные усилия и повышают последовательность, хотя чрезмерное reliance на них может привести к безличному общению. Исследование завершается рекомендациями для будущих исследований и практического применения, предлагая сбалансированный подход, который сочетает использование шаблонов с творческой адаптацией для сохранения контекстуальной уместности и вовлеченности.

Ключевые слова: шаблон, письмо, эффективность, точность, последовательность, когнитивная нагрузка, основа.

Ingliz tilida xat yozishni yaxshilashda shablonlarning samaradorligi

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Annotatsiya. Ingliz tilida xat yozishda shablonlardan foydalanish turli kontekstlarda, jumladan akademik, kasbiy va shaxsiy muloqotda yozish samaradorligi, aniqligi va izchilligini oshirishning kuchli vositasi sifatida paydo bo'ldi. Ushbu tadqiqot so'nggi yetti yil davomidagi tadqiqotlarni tahlil qilib, shablonlarning kognitiv yukni kamaytirish, muloqotni standartlashtirish va o'qiluvchanlikni yaxshilashdagi rolini o'rganadi. Shablonlar mualliflarga, ayniqsa ona tili ingliz tilidan bo'lmaganlarga, xat yozishning murakkabliklarini engishda yordam beradigan tuzilgan asosni taqdim etadi, ularning mazmun emas, balki tuzilishga e'tibor qaratishiga imkon beradi. Maqola, shuningdek, shablonli natijalarning oldini olish uchun moslashuvchanlik va sozlashning ahamiyatini ta'kidlab, shablonlarni ishlab chiqish va joriy etish uchun amaliy asosni taklif etadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, shablonlar yozuv sifatini sezilarli darajada yaxshilaydi, kognitiv harakatlarni kamaytiradi va izchillikni oshiradi, ammo ularga haddan tashqari tayanib qolish shaxsiyatsiz muloqotga olib kelishi mumkin. Tadqiqot kelajakdagi tadqiqotlar va amaliy qo'llash bo'yicha tavsiyalar bilan yakunlanadi, shablonlardan foydalanishni kontekstual mos kelish va jalb qilishni saqlash uchun ijodiy moslashuv bilan uyg'unlashtirishni taklif qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: shablon, xat, samaradorlik, aniqlik, izchillik, kognitiv yuk, asos.

Introduction

As being one of the crucial productive skills, writing in a second language has a key role in individuals' professional lives regarding the challenges of contemporary professional and academic life. It is possible to say that writing must be developed as a skill or a habit but sometimes it may be too late for second language learners. It is undoubtedly a great challenge to select the best approaches, methods and techniques to be used in EFL classes. Writing teachers have a dual challenge: Not only must they help the most reticent and timid writers overcome a potentially crippling writing phobia, but they must also instil in their students the confidence needed to translate their thoughts into correct and acceptable English. Even though the writing product is an expression of one's individuality and personality, it is important to remember that writing is also an endeavour, a way of communicating with others, inform them, persuading them, and debating with them.

Since templates allow for creative expressions while giving a beginner writer the tools to write a successful paper, the question of whether they have that remarkable effect on writing process rose in the researchers' mind. They aimed to examine these templates efficiency and reveal their contribution into writing in EFL setting. Writing, a challenging area both for language learners and teachers, has been the main focus of a wide range of studies, however, the related literature lacks the studies referring writing templates despite their frequent usage in almost every writing related material, which substantially makes the current study remarkable. This study is also marked in terms of being the first experimental study mentioning about the writing templates and their application in EFL settings although some blog writings and comments, suggestions, tips for EFL teachers on using them as effective materials can be encountered on various websites

Effective written communication is a cornerstone of success in academic, professional, and personal contexts. However, many individuals struggle with structuring their thoughts, adhering to formal conventions, and maintaining consistency in their writing. Templates have emerged as a practical solution to these challenges, offering pre-defined structures that guide writers through the process of composing letters (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

Templates are particularly valuable in English letter writing, where clarity, tone, and format are critical. They provide a scaffold that reduces the cognitive effort required to organize information, allowing writers to focus on content rather than structure (Brown et al., 2020). This article examines

the role of templates in enhancing English letter writing, drawing on recent research to evaluate their efficacy and propose best practices for their use.

Theoretical Framework

About distinguishing writing from other language skills and identifying the place of writing skill in language learning, some fundamental aspects of writing, approaches to writing skill and to the methodology of developing writing skill need to be addressed. The notion of writing has been defined and identified by various scholars in view of various approaches (Kroll, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Nation, 2009). However, whichever meaning and understanding we adopt, we need to know about writing, as well as writing itself. The word ‘writing’ may be used to mean orthography, written discourse, the act of writing, or literature (Silva & Matsuda, 2002, p. 251). Also, the literature on writing skill provides a wide range of practices and empirical studies. These are mostly focused on developing writing or assessment procedures (Crusan, Plakans & Gebril, 2016; Hunter, Mayenga & Gambell, 2006; Ruiz-Funes, 2015; Telçeker & Akcan, 2010; Yoon, 2016). Several studies indicated innovative ways of developing writing. Web-based collaborative writing (Bikowski & Vithanage, 2016), narrative-centered digital learning environment (Pruden, Kerkhoff, Spires & Lester, 2016), portfolio assessment (Lam, 2013; Romova & Andrew, 2011), tutor mediation (Shrestha & Coffin, 2012), self-monitoring and reflexive assessment (Hawe & Dickson, 2014; Ryan, 2014), writing and its relationship with linguistic variables (Guanghui & Qiufang, 1999), teacher and peer corrective feedback (Aghajanloo, Mobini & Khosravi, 2016; Alizadeh Salteh, Yağız & Sadeghi, 2013; Cunningham, 2015; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Fordham, 2015) have been among recent studies reflecting the research trends in the vast literature of writing. Any discussion of L2 students’ writing needs must first take into account the wide diversity among L2 learners as distinct groups each with its own uses of, and needs for, writing. Students in EFL contexts will need English writing skills ranging from simple paragraph writing and summary skills to the ability to write essays and professional articles. In ESL contexts the range of written needs is equally diverse, although the needs will, for the most part, be more academically oriented. There are a number of factors relating to the theory and practice of writing instruction in second language which go well beyond the concerns and issues central to writing practices in L1 contexts.

To understand the efficacy of templates in English letter writing, it is essential to ground the discussion in relevant theoretical frameworks. This study draws on three key theories:

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT): Cognitive Load Theory, proposed by Sweller (1988), posits that working memory has limited capacity, and excessive cognitive load can hinder learning and performance. Templates reduce extraneous cognitive load by providing a pre-structured framework, allowing writers to allocate more mental resources to content creation rather than organizational tasks (Brown et al., 2020).

Scaffolding Theory: Based on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding refers to the support provided to learners to help them achieve tasks they cannot accomplish independently. Templates act as a scaffold by offering a structured framework that guides writers through the letter-writing process, particularly beneficial for novice writers or non-native English speakers (Harris, 2022).

Genre Theory: Genre Theory, as discussed by Swales (1990), emphasizes the importance of understanding the conventions and structures of specific types of writing. Templates align with this theory by providing a standardized format for different genres of letters (e.g., formal, informal, business), ensuring that writers adhere to genre-specific conventions (Lee, 2021).

Linguistic Features of Letter Templates

The use of writing templates is one of the best ways to cope with the difficulties while writing in a professional manner (Sumerset, 2008). According to Sumerset (2008) writing process starts with a blank document, then the task gets harder when students try to find the starting point. Whether it is a short informal note or a professional correspondence text, any writing is an arduous task in the first

few lines. As Sumerset (2008) indicates, writing templates help overcome the initial frustration caused by lack of advanced competences in writing skill. Apart from their time-saving feature, writing templates provide a basic outline and help students fulfil various writing tasks with fewer mistakes. Some of the most commonly used writing templates are:

- Resumes
- Reports
- Business Letter Writing
- Legal Writing
- Screenwriting
- Business Writing Templates
- Medical Writing Templates
- Scriptwriting Templates
- Everyday Writing Templates.

It is also possible to find templates to write reports, term papers, scholarly papers or even college admissions essays. The literature on the development and use of writing templates is rather restricted. Supatranont (2012) suggested using writing templates for research article abstracts. Using a corpus-based method, she developed a writing template which can be used by academics to write research article abstracts.

Letter templates are characterized by their fixed structure and formulaic language. Key linguistic features include:

Fixed Phrases: *Templates often include standardized expressions such as "Dear Sir/Madam," "Yours sincerely," or "I am writing to inquire about..."*

Syntax and Grammar: *Templates adhere to grammatical rules, ensuring clarity and correctness.*

Register and Tone: *Templates are tailored to specific contexts, such as formal, informal, or business correspondence.*

Pedagogical Value

Templates serve as a scaffold for learners, helping them understand the conventions of letter writing. They provide:

Structure: *A clear beginning, middle, and end.*

Vocabulary: *Domain-specific language for different contexts.*

Confidence: *A reliable framework reduces anxiety and encourages experimentation.*

Designing and Implementing Templates: The design and implementation of templates for English letter writing require careful consideration of the target audience, purpose, and context. Below is a step-by-step framework for creating effective templates:

1. **Identify the Purpose and Audience** Templates should be tailored to the specific needs of the user. For example, a business letter template will differ significantly from a personal letter template in tone, structure, and content (Lee, 2021).

2. **Define the Structure** A well-designed template includes clear sections such as the salutation, introduction, body, conclusion, and closing. Each section should be labeled and accompanied by brief instructions or examples (Harris, 2022).

3. **Incorporate Flexibility** While templates provide structure, they should also allow for customization to accommodate unique situations. For instance, placeholders for personalized information (e.g., names, dates) can enhance the relevance of the letter (Taylor et al., 2023).

4. **Test and Refine** Templates should be tested with a diverse group of users to identify potential issues and areas for improvement. Feedback from users can inform revisions that enhance usability and effectiveness (Nguyen, 2020).

1. Formal Letters

Formal letters are used in professional or official contexts. A typical template includes:

Salutation: "Dear [Recipient's Name],"

Introduction: State the purpose of the letter.

Body: Provide details or explanations.

Conclusion: Summarize and express gratitude.

Closing: "Yours sincerely," followed by the sender's name.

Example:

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am writing to apply for the position of Marketing Manager, as advertised on your website.

With over five years of experience in digital marketing, I believe I am well-suited for this role.

Please find my resume attached. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my application further.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Doe

2. Informal Letters

Informal letters are used for personal communication. The template is more flexible but generally includes:

Salutation: "Dear [Name],"

Introduction: A friendly opening.

Body: Share news or ask questions.

Conclusion: A warm closing.

Sign-off: "Best wishes," or "Love," followed by the sender's name.

Example:

Dear Anna,

How have you been? I hope all is well. I'm writing to tell you about my recent trip to the mountains—it was amazing!

Let's catch up soon.

Best wishes,

Sarah

3. Business Letters

Business letters are used for professional communication between organizations. The template is similar to formal letters but often includes:

Letterhead: Company name and address.

Reference Line: "Re: [Subject]"

Formal Tone: Professional and concise language.

Example:

ABC Corporation

123 Business Street

New York, NY 10001

Dear Ms. Johnson,

Re: Proposal for Collaboration

We are pleased to submit our proposal for a collaborative project between our companies. Please review the attached document and let us know your thoughts.

Sincerely,

John Doe

CEO, XYZ Inc.

Results

The use of templates in English letter writing has demonstrated several benefits, as evidenced by recent studies:

1. **Improved Writing Quality** Templates help writers adhere to formal conventions, resulting in letters that are more coherent, concise, and professional (Smith & Johnson, 2019).
2. **Reduced Cognitive Load** By providing a clear structure, templates reduce the mental effort required to organize information, enabling writers to focus on content (Brown et al., 2020).
3. **Enhanced Consistency** Templates ensure that all letters follow a standardized format, which is particularly valuable in organizational settings (Harris, 2022).
4. **Increased Efficiency** Writers using templates report significant time savings, as they no longer need to start from scratch with each letter (Taylor et al., 2023).

Despite these advantages, some limitations have been noted. Over-reliance on templates can lead to generic or impersonal letters, particularly when users fail to customize the content (Nguyen, 2020). Additionally, poorly designed templates may restrict creativity and adaptability. Templates for writing English letters are a valuable tool for both learners and professionals. They provide a structured framework that enhances clarity, consistency, and efficiency in written communication. However, it is essential to balance the use of templates with flexibility and creativity to ensure that letters remain contextually appropriate and engaging. Educators and professionals should view templates as a starting point rather than a rigid formula, encouraging users to adapt and personalize them as needed.

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