

Fostering Professional Writing and Intercultural Reflexivity in a Transnational Simulation Project

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Abstract

This study investigates how university students experienced simulated business email communication within the Japanese-Vietnamese Joint Project (JVJP), an educational initiative aimed at replicating authentic workplace interactions through intercultural collaboration. A total of 42 participants—23 Vietnamese and 19 Japanese students—were engaged in email-based roleplays simulating exchanges between overseas customers and supplier company representatives. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were drawn from weekly reflective journals, documented email threads, discussion board posts, course grades, and exit surveys. Analysis revealed three prominent themes: academic engagement, classroom-reality interconnectedness, and intercultural reflexivity. Students consistently emphasized the realism of the project, with one Japanese participant stating, “I was able to think how to respond if [*sic*] I were a real businessman,” and another acknowledging, “this program has taught me a lot of things about being a business person.” Vietnamese students also expressed a heightened sense of professional readiness: JVJP “allow[s] us to have a better understanding of business and make us ready for business.” Survey results reflected these sentiments, with 56.3% of Japanese and 86.4% of Vietnamese participants reporting substantial improvements in business communication skills. Intercultural insights were central to students’ reflections, particularly regarding differences in formality, tone, and cultural conventions. For instance, participants noted that “Japanese students write business e-mails in a formal way,” and that “Vietnamese students seem to write freely.” One student observed, “soft language is preferred in Japan,” especially “when writing to complain,” while another emphasized, “Japanese often have long greetings...It is good to understand that there is such a culture.” Statistical analysis using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient showed positive associations between types of email exchanged and final course grades, as well as survey responses. These findings affirm the pedagogical value of JVJP, suggesting that structured email simulations can foster intercultural competence, professionalism, and student agency. The paper concludes with recommendations for implementing similar joint programs, including detailed planning, learner support, and activities that cultivate a community of learners prepared for global business contexts.

Keywords: English learners, business communication, intercultural reflexivity, higher education

1. Introduction

Why do we write? In many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, writing tasks are often designed around abstract audiences and contrived purposes, resulting in limited engagement and superficial skill development (Sharma, 2022). Students may be asked to compose essays, reports, or letters for hypothetical readers, with little connection to real-world communication. This disconnect between classroom writing and authentic professional practice has long been critiqued in the literature (Cuerden, 1990; Ishihara, 1996; Kixmiller, 2004; Lindblom, 2004; Morales, 2017), with scholars advocating for writing tasks that involve genuine audiences and meaningful communicative goals.

Research has shown that authentic writing contexts, where students write for real readers with real stakes, can significantly enhance motivation, clarity, and rhetorical awareness (Chen & Brown, 2012). When learners perceive their writing as purposeful and socially situated, they are more likely to engage critically with tone, structure, and audience expectations. As Sharma (2022) argues, workplace-like writing environments such as LinkedIn and blogging platforms offer valuable opportunities for students to develop professional voice and intercultural competence.

The Japanese-Vietnamese Joint Project (JVJP) was designed in response to this pedagogical need. By simulating transnational business email exchanges between Japanese and Vietnamese university students, JVJP provided participants with a “real” audience and meaningful communicative purposes. Students were tasked with composing, replying to, and negotiating emails that mirrored authentic workplace scenarios such as placing orders, responding to complaints, and issuing invoices while navigating cultural differences in tone, formality, and professional etiquette.

2. Research Aim

This study investigates how university students experienced simulated business email communication within JVJP, an educational initiative aimed at replicating authentic workplace interactions through intercultural collaboration. Specifically, it asks: *How do university students experience simulated business email communication in an intercultural, workplace-oriented educational setting?* By analyzing both quantitative performance data and qualitative reflections, the study explores how students engaged with professional writing tasks, developed intercultural awareness, and workplace-relevant communication skills in a transnational learning environment.

3. Literature Review

Traditional EFL writing instruction has long been critiqued for its reliance on abstract audiences and artificial communicative purposes, which often fail to engage learners or prepare them for real-world communication (Sharma, 2022; Ishihara, 1996). In many classrooms, students write essays or letters for hypothetical readers, with little sense of audience awareness or professional relevance. This disconnect between classroom writing and authentic practice has prompted calls for pedagogical reform emphasizing *real audiences for real writing* (Cuerden, 1990; Kixmiller, 2004; Morales, 2017).

Authentic writing tasks—those involving genuine communicative intent and identifiable recipients—have been shown to enhance motivation, rhetorical precision, and learner agency. Chen and Brown (2012), in a task-based, computer-mediated study, found that ESL students who wrote for real audiences demonstrated greater attention to tone, clarity, and structure than those who engaged in conventional writing tasks. Lindblom (2004) similarly argued that writing for real purposes fosters deeper engagement and better prepares students for global communication demands. These findings align with Kixmiller’s (2004) assertion that authentic writing can meet educational standards without sacrificing relevance or creativity.

Recent scholarship has extended this argument into digital and workplace-like contexts. Sharma (2022) demonstrated that platforms such as LinkedIn and blogging can cultivate professional voice and intercultural competence, especially when students write for visible, responsive audiences. This shift toward workplace-oriented writing reflects broader changes in global communication, where English functions as the lingua franca in multinational teams and professional exchanges (Gonchar, 2024). Likewise, Nguyễn’s and Pham’s (in press) study demonstrates that digital platforms not only support metacognitive

development but also enhance intercultural awareness when used intentionally in education. This reinforces the value of combining technology with reflective pedagogy in preparing students for global communication contexts.

Gonchar's (2024) case study of designing students in multinational teams revealed that linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient for effective collaboration. Instead, success in international business contexts requires a nuanced understanding of cross-cultural communication styles, decision-making norms, and hierarchical structures. The study emphasized the importance of integrating both Business English and technical English into curricula, arguing that professionals must be able to articulate specialized concepts clearly while navigating cultural dynamics. This perspective challenges the narrow focus on CEFR-level proficiency and calls for pedagogical models that foster cultural intelligence alongside linguistic competence.

Chen (2024) further highlighted the need for student-centered, market-oriented teaching approaches that reflect the realities of globalized industries. In the analysis of flight attendant management education, Chen advocated for hybrid learning environments that blend virtual and real-world interaction to cultivate cross-cultural communication competence. The findings underscore the urgency of aligning teaching practices with evolving market demands and technological shifts.

In parallel, Hao et al. (2024) examined the impact of project-based learning and flipped classrooms on critical thinking and creativity in business English courses. Their quasi-experimental study found that both approaches significantly enhanced higher-order thinking skills, with project-based flipped classrooms yielding the strongest outcomes. These results support the integration of experiential, task-driven pedagogy in vocational and professional education, particularly in contexts where communication is central to workplace success.

Additional research further supports the need for pedagogical reform in EFL contexts. Nguyen (2018) emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence and collaborative learning in educational programs, aligning with the transnational aims of JVJP. Moser et al. (2018) highlight the role of differentiated instruction and scaffolding in education, reinforcing the value of context-sensitive support in intercultural writing tasks. In the Vietnamese EFL context, Nguyen and Javorsky (2025) advocate for equity-driven vocabulary instruction that moves beyond rote memorization—an approach echoed in JVJP's emphasis on authentic, purposeful writing. Dinh and Nguyen (2024) explore how academic orientations influence Vietnamese students' learning strategies and well-being, offering insight into the motivational dynamics observed in transnational simulations.

Taken together, these studies converge on a shared imperative: to move beyond formulaic writing instruction and toward pedagogical models that simulate authentic, intercultural, and professional communication. JVJP responds to this call by engaging students in simulated business email exchanges that mirror real-world workplace scenarios. By writing to actual peers across national boundaries, students navigate tone, formality, and cultural nuance—developing not only linguistic proficiency but also the intercultural reflexivity and professional awareness essential for global collaboration.

4. Research Methods

4.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods design to investigate how university students experienced simulated business email communication within JVJP. The research integrated quantitative and qualitative data to capture both performance outcomes and learner perceptions, providing a comprehensive view of students' engagement with workplace-oriented writing tasks in an intercultural context.

Quantitative data were collected through screening test scores, course grades, and performance on structured email tasks. These measures were analyzed using Spearman rank correlation and Welch's ANOVA to examine relationships between task performance, perceived learning, and national cohort differences.

Qualitative data were derived from students' reflective journals, discussion board posts, and exit surveys. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in students' reflections, focusing on their sense of professionalism, intercultural awareness, and engagement with authentic communication

scenarios. By embedding data collection within the natural flow of the JVJP simulation, the study preserved the authenticity of student responses and minimized disruption to instructional practice. This approach allowed for the triangulation of data sources and ensured that findings reflected both measurable outcomes and lived experiences.

4.2. Participants

A total of 42 participants were engaged in email-based roleplays simulating exchanges between overseas customers and supplier company representatives. The Vietnamese cohort consisted of 23 students majoring in Business English at a large public university in Ho Chi Minh City, in Vietnam, while the Japanese cohort included 19 students majoring in Policy and Strategy Studies for Innovation at a private university in Tokyo, Japan. All participants were enrolled in courses that integrated the JVJP simulation as part of their curriculum.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

	Vietnamese students		Japanese students	
Student status	Sophomore	100%	Sophomore	100%
Female	14	60.9%	14	73.7%
Major		100%	Policy and	100%
	Business		Strategy	
	English		Studies for	
			Innovation	

4.3. Data Sources

Using a mixed-methods approach, data were drawn from weekly reflective journals, documented email threads, discussion board posts, course grades, and exit surveys. These data sources were used to evaluate students' engagement, performance, and reflections throughout the JVJP experience. These included graded email exchanges, which served as a measure of professional writing development; discussion board posts, which captured informal peer interaction and intercultural observations; and final course grades, which reflected overall academic achievement. Additionally, an end-of-program survey was administered to assess students' perceptions of learning outcomes and intercultural growth. The survey demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .942, indicating strong reliability across items.

4.4. The Japanese-Vietnamese Joint Project (JVJP)

JVJP was designed to simulate authentic workplace communication through structured email exchanges between university students in Japan and Vietnam over the course of a semester. The program aimed to foster a dynamic, business-like environment by assigning students professional roles within a simulated international supply chain.

At the beginning of the semester, two instructors – one from a Vietnamese university and one from a Japanese university – introduced JVJP to their respective classes as an integrated component of their business English curriculum. All participating students completed an English proficiency test to establish baseline language levels and to support quantitative analysis. Each student was then paired with a foreign writing partner, forming cross-national dyads in which one student assumed the role of a prospective overseas customer and the other acted as a representative of a real supplier company.

Throughout the semester, students received instruction on various types of business correspondence. In tandem with this instruction, they were assigned to compose and respond to a series of business emails reflecting common transactional scenarios. These included making enquiries, replying to enquiries, placing orders, sending invoices, lodging complaints, and responding to both justified and unjustified complaints. All email tasks were graded as part of the course and received formative feedback from instructors.

In addition to email exchanges, students submitted weekly journal entries and participated in class-wide discussion boards, guided by prompts provided by the instructors. To facilitate intercultural interaction, the instructors organized video conferences via Zoom, allowing students from both countries to meet and converse in real time. The simulation was designed not only to develop students' professional

writing skills but also to cultivate intercultural awareness and reflexivity. At the conclusion of the JVJP, students completed an exit survey evaluating various aspects of the program – including workload, task difficulty, peer interaction, and instructor support, etc. – and provided self-assessments of skills they felt they had developed or not yet achieved.

5. Results

5.1. Quantitative Results

To understand how students experienced simulated business email communication within JVJP, quantitative data were analyzed to examine performance outcomes, perceived learning gains, and intercultural engagement. The results provide insight into how structured email roleplays fostered professional writing, academic achievement, and intercultural reflexivity.

5.1.1. Survey-Based Indicators of Learning

End-of-program survey responses revealed strong student perceptions of skill development. A majority of participants—56.3% of Japanese students and 86.4% of Vietnamese students—agreed that JVJP substantially improved their business communication skills and knowledge. These findings suggest that the simulation was perceived as both realistic and pedagogically valuable, with Vietnamese students reporting particularly high levels of professional readiness.

5.1.2. Correlations Between Performance and Perceived Learning

To examine how students experienced and responded to the simulated business email tasks within JVJP, Spearman rank correlation analysis was conducted to explore relationships between academic performance, task execution, and perceived learning outcomes. These correlations offer insight into how students engaged with the simulation as a proxy for authentic workplace communication.

Moderate positive correlations were found between final course grades and students' self-assessed skill levels at the end of the program ($\rho = .402, p < .05$), as well as the level of skill they believed was required to complete the JVJP tasks ($\rho = .474, p < .01$). Students who perceived JVJP as contributing substantially to their professional development also tended to earn higher grades ($\rho = .405, p < .05$). Instructor-related factors—such as well-planned content ($\rho = .329, p < .05$) and appropriate workload ($\rho = .428, p < .05$)—were likewise associated with stronger academic outcomes. These findings suggest that students who felt cognitively challenged and pedagogically supported were more likely to succeed, reinforcing the value of workplace-like simulations in higher education.

Performance on specific email tasks was also strongly linked to final grades, particularly those that required transactional clarity and tone sensitivity. Replying to enquiries showed the strongest correlation ($\rho = .667, p < .01$), followed by sending an invoice ($\rho = .571, p < .01$), placing orders ($\rho = .436, p < .01$), and making complaints ($\rho = .427, p < .01$). These results indicate that students who demonstrated competence in realistic business scenarios tended to perform better overall, affirming the pedagogical effectiveness of role-based email exchanges.

Moreover, replying to enquiries emerged as a particularly rich indicator of student engagement. It correlated with perceived effort ($\rho = .352, p < .05$), skill development ($\rho = .493, p < .01$), and multiple dimensions of instructional quality, including instructor effectiveness ($\rho = .396, p < .05$), clarity of presentation ($\rho = .361, p < .05$), and instructor availability ($\rho = .341, p < .05$). These associations suggest that this task not only required technical precision but also fostered reflective learning and intercultural sensitivity.

Students' motivation to participate in JVJP also showed meaningful associations with performance on more nuanced tasks. Those who cited intrinsic or academic reasons for joining the program performed better in replying to justified complaints ($\rho = .522, p < .05$) and unjustified complaints ($\rho = .437, p < .05$), indicating deeper engagement with complex communication challenges.

Finally, strong intercorrelations were observed among different types of email tasks, suggesting internal consistency in student performance and cumulative skill development. For example, replying to enquiries was positively associated with enquiries ($\rho = .484, p < .01$), orders ($\rho = .675, p < .01$), and sending invoices ($\rho = .600, p < .01$). Making complaints correlated with enquiries ($\rho = .436, p < .01$) and replying to enquiries ($\rho = .482, p < .01$), while replying to unjustified complaints showed strong associations with

nearly all other tasks, including replying to justified complaints ($p = .515, p < .01$) and making complaints ($p = .557, p < .01$). These patterns reflect the integrated nature of the simulation, where mastery of one communicative function supported competence across others—mirroring the interconnected demands of real-world business correspondence.

5.1.3. Welch's ANOVA Results

To examine how students from different cultural backgrounds performed within the simulated business communication environment of JVJP, a one-way ANOVA was initially considered. Nationality (Vietnamese vs. Japanese) served as the independent factor, while screening test scores, email task grades, and final course grades were treated as dependent variables. However, Levene's test indicated violations of the homogeneity of variance assumption ($p < .05$), prompting the use of Welch's ANOVA—a robust alternative suitable for unequal variances (See Table 2).

Statistically significant differences were found across several measures, suggesting that students' experiences and outcomes varied by national cohort. The most pronounced disparity was observed in final course grades (Welch statistic = 87.913, $df_1 = 1, df_2 = 73.200, p < .001$), with Japanese students (Nationality 2) achieving a mean score of approximately 8.2, compared to 6.5 for Vietnamese students (Nationality 1). Similarly, screening test scores differed significantly (Welch statistic = 21.056, $p < .001$), indicating initial proficiency gaps that may have shaped students' engagement with the simulation.

Among the email tasks, significant differences were observed in enquiries (Welch statistic = 8.540, $p = .005$) and orders (Welch statistic = 10.456, $p = .002$), both of which required transactional clarity and tone sensitivity. Mean plots confirmed that Japanese students consistently scored higher in these areas, with average enquiry scores around 7.6 compared to 7.0 for Vietnamese students, and order scores around 8.5 versus 8.0. These findings suggest that Japanese students may have approached these tasks with greater familiarity or cultural alignment to formal business writing conventions.

Although replying to enquiries, sending an invoice, and making complaints did not reach statistical significance ($p > .05$), the mean plots still revealed directional trends favoring Japanese students. For instance, the mean score for sending an invoice was approximately 8.0 for Japanese students and 6.5 for Vietnamese students, indicating a potentially meaningful—though not statistically confirmed—difference in task execution.

Tasks involving more nuanced communication, such as replying to justified and unjustified complaints, approached significance ($p = .085$ and $.102$, respectively). These tasks may have required deeper intercultural sensitivity and pragmatic awareness, reflecting subtle differences in tone, formality, and conflict resolution strategies—patterns that were also echoed in students' qualitative reflections. Taken together, the Welch's ANOVA results and accompanying mean plots provide a layered understanding of how students from different cultural contexts engaged with the JVJP simulation. While both cohorts benefited from the experience, Japanese students demonstrated stronger outcomes in transactional writing tasks and overall course performance. These findings underscore the importance of culturally responsive scaffolding when designing workplace-like simulations in transnational education settings.

Table 2

Robust Test of Equality of Means

		Statistic ^a	df1	df2	Sig.
Final course grade	Welch	87.913	1	73.200	<.001
Screening test scores	Welch	21.056	1	69.999	<.001
Enquiries	Welch	8.540	1	72.576	.005
Replying to Enquiries	Welch	4.757	1	65.693	.033
Orders	Welch	1.557	1	28.579	.222
Sending an Invoice	Welch	10.456	1	37.973	.003
Making Complaints	Welch	3.204	1	67.352	.078
Replying to a Justified Complaint	Welch	.191	1	34.452	.665
Replying to an Unjustified Complaint	Welch	2.846	1	30.635	.102

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

5.2. Qualitative Data Findings

To explore how students internalized and reflected on their experience within JVJP, a thematic analysis was conducted on reflective journals, discussion board posts, and exit surveys. Three prominent themes emerged: academic engagement, classroom–reality interconnectedness, and intercultural reflexivity. These themes illuminate how students navigated the simulated business email environment and how the experience shaped their professional identities and intercultural awareness.

The first theme, academic engagement, revealed students’ growing confidence and sense of professionalism in business communication. Many participants described JVJP as a transformative experience that helped them develop practical writing skills and a clearer understanding of workplace expectations. One student shared, “...this program has taught me a lot of things about being a business person.” Others echoed this sentiment, stating, “it [JVJP] helps me to know how to communicate in professional way” and “... [b]ecome more and more professional when writing an email.” Another participant reflected on the cumulative nature of the simulation: “through many letters and emails that I wrote, I know how to solve some problems and to be a professional business person.” These reflections suggest that JVJP fostered not only technical competence but also a sense of agency and readiness for real-world business contexts.

The second theme, classroom–reality interconnectedness, highlighted students’ recognition of the complexity and authenticity embedded in the simulation. Participants were often surprised by the challenges of responding to enquiries and complaints, with one remarking, “Before doing [sic] this program, i didn't think that response an requiry [sic] and complaint were hard more than expected.” Others reflected on how JVJP reshaped their understanding of business roles and professional communication. One student noted, “Well my perception of being a businessman has changed throughout the course, but not as drastically as I would have liked it to. Since writing emails and letters is only one small part in the grand world of business.” The program was frequently credited with bridging academic learning and workplace readiness: “[JVJP] allow us [them] to have a better understanding of business and make us [them] ready for business.” Another student shared, “I was able to think how to respond if [sic] I were a real businessman.” A particularly nuanced reflection captured the evolving perception of business environments:

I used to think that working in a business environment must be boring and stressful. However, after participating in this program, I found that despite being under lots of pressure, the business person can be creative when brainstorming, and that person can widen the social circle when working in an international environment.

A third prominent theme emerging from students' reflections was intercultural reflexivity—the ability to observe, compare, and adapt to differences in communication styles, cultural norms, and professional expectations across Vietnamese and Japanese contexts. Students frequently commented on variations in writing style, tone, and formality in business emails, revealing a growing sensitivity to cultural nuance.

Japanese students were consistently described as using more formal and polite language, often incorporating seasonal greetings and extended introductory phrases. One participant noted, “Japanese students write business e-mails in a formal way, while Vietnamese students seem to write freely,” while another observed, “...my Japanese partner is way more polite and use language even more formal than me.” This was also confirmed by a Japanese student: “In Japan, seasons - spring, summer, fall/autumn, and winter - are seemed [*sic*] as so important even in a daily life. So, at the beginning of the messages, Japanese people often put seasonal greetings.” Another Japanese student explained, “We often use vague words like よろしくお願ひします。 [*yoroshiku onegaishimasu*]) but in English we have to write details and express what we want someone to do.” *Yoroshiku onegaishimasu* is a fixed phrase frequently used in daily life in Japan, meaning “I wish you to treat the matter well” (Obana, 2012, p. 1535) when used in requests. Several students remarked on the use of soft language in Japanese complaint emails and the cultural preference for indirectness, with one explaining, “soft language is preferred in Japan, you should be especially conscious of this when writing to complain.”

In contrast, Vietnamese students were described as more direct, concise, and informal in their writing. One student reflected, “Vietnamese write it more specific for the beginning,” while another commented, “Vietnamese people may have multiple interpretation when reading a long email. So it is better to keep it short and concise.” These observations extended beyond language use to broader cultural practices. For example, students noted differences in how names are used: “In Vietnam, we called each other by their [first] names but in Japan they called each other by their family names,” and in how problems are approached, with Vietnamese students preferring immediate resolution and Japanese students favoring rule-based procedures.

Students also reflected on personality traits and behavioral norms, such as punctuality, conservatism, and communication dynamics during Zoom calls. One Vietnamese participant remarked, “I really admire the way they submitted the assignments on time,” while another noted, “They are not very vocal or talkative ... most of the talking being made by the Vietnamese instead.” These reflections suggest that the JVJP experience not only enhanced students' professional writing skills but also deepened their awareness of cultural nuance, interpersonal sensitivity, and the importance of adapting communication strategies in international contexts. Together, these qualitative insights affirm the pedagogical value of JVJP in cultivating professional identity, intercultural awareness, and reflective learning. Students not only practiced business writing but also engaged in deeper cognitive and emotional processing of what it means to operate in a global business environment.

6. Discussion

This study set out to investigate how university students experienced simulated business email communication within JVJP, an educational initiative designed to replicate authentic workplace interactions through intercultural collaboration. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data affirm the pedagogical value of such simulations, particularly in addressing long-standing critiques of EFL writing instruction.

Traditional EFL writing tasks have been criticized for their artificiality—often involving abstract audiences and contrived purposes that fail to engage learners meaningfully (Sharma, 2022; Ishihara, 1996). In contrast, JVJP provided students with a “real” audience and purposeful communication, echoing calls for authentic writing environments that foster rhetorical awareness and learner agency (Cuerden, 1990; Kixmiller, 2004; Lindblom, 2004; Morales, 2017). The strong correlations between final course grades and students' perceived skill development, task difficulty, and instructional quality suggest that students were not only performing but also reflecting critically on their learning. This aligns with Chen and Brown's

(2012) findings that authentic audiences enhance ESL writers' attention to tone, clarity, and communicative intent.

Quantitative data revealed that performance on specific email tasks—especially replying to enquiries, placing orders, and sending invoices—was strongly associated with final grades and perceived learning. These tasks required students to apply transactional clarity, tone sensitivity, and intercultural awareness, mirroring real-world business communication. The strong intercorrelations among email types further suggest that students developed cumulative competence across communicative functions, reinforcing the integrated nature of the simulation.

Qualitative findings deepened this picture, revealing three prominent themes: academic engagement, classroom–reality interconnectedness, and intercultural reflexivity. Students consistently described JVJP as transformative, citing increased confidence, professionalism, and readiness for workplace communication. Many reflected on the complexity of responding to complaints and enquiries, noting that the simulation challenged their assumptions about business writing and exposed them to the nuanced demands of professional discourse. These reflections echo Gonchar's (2024) argument that linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient for success in international teams; students must also navigate cultural norms, decision-making styles, and hierarchical expectations.

The theme of intercultural reflexivity was particularly salient. Students demonstrated a growing ability to observe, compare, and adapt to differences in tone, formality, and communicative style between Vietnamese and Japanese contexts. Japanese students were described as using more formal and indirect language, often incorporating seasonal greetings and softening strategies in complaint emails. Vietnamese students, by contrast, were perceived as more direct and concise. These observations align with Chen's (2024) call for student-centered, market-oriented teaching that reflects real-world cultural dynamics. They also support Gonchar's (2024) emphasis on cultural intelligence as a core component of Business English education.

This intercultural sensitivity was further supported by reflective tools integrated into the course. Nguyễn and Quang Nam (in press) found that combining Padlet with structured reflection helped EFL teachers develop metacognitive awareness and intercultural competence—outcomes mirrored in JVJP student reflections. Similarly, Dinh and Nguyen (2024) highlight how academic orientations influence Vietnamese students' learning strategies and well-being, offering insight into the motivational diversity observed in JVJP.

Finally, the pedagogical structure of JVJP—task-based, collaborative, and situated in a simulated workplace—resonates with Hao et al.'s (2024) findings on project-based learning and flipped classrooms. Like their study, JVJP fostered higher-order thinking, creativity, and reflective learning, suggesting that experiential simulations can be powerful tools for transforming writing pedagogy in vocational and professional education. Taken together, these findings affirm that simulated business email communication, when designed with authentic audiences and intercultural collaboration, can bridge the gap between classroom writing and workplace practice. JVJP not only improved students' professional writing skills but also cultivated the intercultural reflexivity and communicative competence essential for global collaboration. This study contributes to a growing body of research advocating for writing instruction that is purposeful, situated, and responsive to the realities of international business communication.

7. Conclusions and Suggestions for Practical Use

This study examined how university students experienced simulated business email communication within JVJP, a transnational educational initiative designed to replicate authentic workplace interactions. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research revealed that students not only developed professional writing skills but also cultivated intercultural reflexivity, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of global business communication. Quantitative data showed strong correlations between task performance, perceived learning, and final grades, while qualitative reflections illuminated students' evolving sense of professionalism, cultural awareness, and collaborative agency.

The findings affirm the pedagogical value of authentic, task-based simulations in EFL and business English contexts. JVJP provided students with meaningful communicative purposes and real audiences—

addressing long-standing critiques of abstract, decontextualized writing instruction. By engaging in structured email exchanges across cultural boundaries, students practiced tone sensitivity, transactional clarity, and adaptive communication strategies that mirror the demands of international business environments. These outcomes align with recent scholarship advocating for workplace-oriented writing pedagogy, intercultural competence, and experiential learning.

7.1. Suggestions for Practical Use

To replicate and scale the success of JVJP, educators and institutions should adopt a strategic, learner-centered approach that integrates intercultural collaboration, authentic communication tasks, and sustained instructional support. The following recommendations offer practical guidance for implementing similar transnational writing simulations in business English or EFL contexts.

7.1.1. Strategic Planning and Collaboration

Successful joint projects require intentional cross-institutional coordination. Educators should:

- Leverage professional networks to identify co-teaching faculty with shared pedagogical goals and complementary expertise. Partnerships may emerge through academic conferences, professional associations, or institutional exchange programs.
- Plan ahead in detail, including timelines, task sequences, grading policies, and contingency measures for technical or scheduling disruptions. A shared project calendar and collaborative planning documents can streamline coordination.
- Schedule regular meetings—such as weekly check-ins, after-school sessions, or video conferences—to align instructional pacing, troubleshoot challenges, and maintain momentum across institutions. These meetings also foster trust and shared ownership among instructors.

7.1.2. Clear Instructional Design

Clarity and structure are essential when guiding students through complex, intercultural simulations. Instructors should:

- Provide step-by-step guidelines for each email task, including sample formats, tone expectations, and common pitfalls. Scaffolded instructions help students internalize genre conventions and reduce cognitive overload.
- Use video conferences early in the project to facilitate partner introductions and “get to know” activities. These sessions humanize the experience, build rapport, and lay the foundation for respectful, productive communication.
- Offer criterion-referenced marking rubrics that clearly define performance standards for content, tone, structure, and intercultural sensitivity. Transparent assessment criteria promote fairness and help students self-monitor their progress.

7.1.3. Fostering a Community of Learners

Beyond task completion, joint projects should cultivate a sense of belonging, shared purpose, and learner agency. Educators can:

- Design collaborative activities that encourage peer interaction, mutual support, and shared goals—such as joint brainstorming sessions, peer review exchanges, or reflective journaling.
- Motivate students by shifting from extrinsic incentives (grades, deadlines) to intrinsic engagement (personal relevance, curiosity, autonomy). This can be achieved by framing tasks as real-world challenges and inviting students to reflect on their growth.
- Empower students as agents of their own learning by allowing them to choose the company they represent, select job roles, and personalize communication strategies. Ownership fosters deeper investment and authentic voice.

7.1.4. Ongoing Support and Feedback

Sustained guidance is critical to ensure students feel supported and challenged throughout the simulation. Instructors should:

- Provide timely, constructive feedback on both language and content, focusing on clarity, tone, and intercultural appropriateness. Feedback should be dialogic, encouraging students to revise and reflect.

- Check behind students during complex tasks to ensure understanding, especially when navigating nuanced scenarios like complaints or negotiation. Informal check-ins and formative assessments can help identify gaps early.
- Respond flexibly to students' needs, whether technical (e.g., platform access), emotional (e.g., anxiety about intercultural interaction), or linguistic (e.g., vocabulary support). Adaptive support fosters resilience and confidence.

By implementing these strategies, educators can cultivate a dynamic, learner-centered environment that mirrors the realities of global business communication. Joint projects like JVJP not only enhance language proficiency but also empower students to navigate cultural complexity, collaborate across borders, and communicate with clarity and confidence in professional contexts. As global markets and multilingual workplaces become the norm, such pedagogical models offer a timely and transformative approach to preparing students for the demands of international collaboration.

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