**Immediate Hire or Immediate Rejection?**

**Grammar Usage Errors Taint Ratings of Applicants’ Writing, Employability, and Character**

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**Overview**

Scholars debate whether English instructors should devote focused attention to grammar usage and mechanics. On one hand, most grammar usage errors are superficial and do not impede readers’ understanding, and an emphasis on mastery of usage rules perpetuates a system in which certain forms of grammar usage may afford status and prestige. On the other hand, studies have illustrated that professionals perceive grammar usage errors as bothersome. More importantly, interviews with business professionals suggest that grammar usage errors might harm impressions of the writer as a person.

Study Objective:

In the current study, we tested the idea that grammar usage errors taint impressions of a job applicant’s writing and job readiness. We hypothesized that common grammar usage errors in a cover letter would negatively affect people’s judgments of the applicant’s character. Evaluations of the applicant’s writing quality, ratings of the content of the letter, and likelihood of hiring the applicant were considered.

Method Overview (N = 201; 68% Response Rate)

We asked community adults to evaluate college students’ “readiness” for the real world. We asked each participant to read one of three hypothetical professional cover letters written by a college student, and then rate the student applicant who purportedly wrote it. Participants did not know the study was about grammar usage.

Participants varied in gender: 72 men, 128 women, 1 unspecified; in age: Range 22-80; M = 49.54 ± 10.83 years; and in education level: 20% Associate’s or less, 45% Bachelor’s, 35% Master’s/Doctoral Level Degree.

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**Stimulus Materials**

**Character Judgments**

**Results**

**How Was Their Overall Writing Quality?**

**How Well Did They Sell Themselves (Substance of Letter)?**

**Would You Hire Them?**

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**References**

2. College English, 43, 734-806.

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