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## Research Article

### Investigation of the success of English Foreign Language (EFL) writing skills at the Tertiary level of Bangladesh

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#### Abstract:

*The writing method is most necessary for students of every level. It is extremely difficult to acquire skills. To find out the success of the English foreign language writing skills at the tertiary level in Bangladesh is the main objective of this study. Approximately, 105 students have been selected by the university. The data was collected online for Covid-19. Although the query is based on online classroom observations and a questionnaire. Five*

*teachers were interviewed through questions, especially on the writing skills of the students. The discoveries exposed that in their academic writing, students at the tertiary level face diverse glitches, including syntax, spelling, vocabulary, context, construction ideas, writing on different topics, and so on. To improve students' writing in English, this research could help teachers to solve problems and to use their special techniques.*

**Keywords:** Writing skills, tertiary learners, EFL learners, English Foreign Language

#### Introduction:

There are many reasons why students fail at writing skills. Most of the students are from Bangla medium, cannot even write well at the university level. Lack of motivation and discomfort in the English language classroom. They feel annoyed by the classroom activities because of poor skills. So, no one can deny the importance of writing. To find out whether the EFL writing at the tertiary level is going on smoothly or not is the main aim of this study. This study suggests some recommendations for students to overcome problems if there are any.

#### Objectives of the Study:

The purposes of the study are to-

- Check out what a teacher has to face in an English foreign language classroom while writing activities.
- Find out the types of errors students commit in their writing,
- Examine the method of teaching EFL writing,
- Observe the relevance of existing textbooks,
- Find out the types of errors students commit in their writing,
- Commend actions to improve the present state.

#### Significance of the Study:

- It is equally important to survey the present state of students' writing skills in Bangladesh, particularly at the university level.

- Some steps must be taken to identify the problems and to improve them.
- This study will be of great significance and interest to the country as a whole.

### Research Questions:

The central research questions of this study are mentioned below-

- What is the state of EFL writing at the university level in Bangladesh?
- Is the present pedagogy system in writing suitable for university students in Bangladesh?
- What are the shortcomings in the EFL writing of university students?
- How can the problems be solved?

### Statement of the Problem:

- Obtaining proficiency in English writing is a tough job.
- Inappropriate instruction
- Learner's learning methods make students unable to be proficient writers even at the tertiary level.

### Literature Review:

David Nunan (2003), explained in his textbook 'Practical English Language Teaching' and, from his research, it is clear that- writing is an activity. It can be physical and also mental. At the first level, writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas. Alternatively, for learners, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them and organizing them.

Hedge (1988), shows a path from his findings that, "Active writing needs many things: a high degree of association in the development of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy; the practice of complex grammatical strategies for focus and emphasis; and an alert choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structures.

Ayesha Alam Talukdar conducted a study on the Writing Behavior of ESL Learners at the Tertiary Level: A Study at Prime University. In her study, she found that most students could not arrange accurate sentence structure as they are not specialists in that language. Students face serious problems with evolving sentence.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1975) found that how efficiently students handle different writing genres verifies their success. This application is applicable to students of all disciplines. English writing as L2 writers or students may face many problems. Fahmida, B. (2010) in her research on Bangladeshi

Tertiary Students' Common Errors in Academic Writings, focused that in academic writing students at tertiary level in Bangladesh made dissimilar types of errors, namely spelling and punctuation. Her suggestion is that for their improvement, they need more intensive English courses.

According to Gugin (2014), in his research he found problems with paragraph writing. To him, it facilitates the teacher to move back to sentence and forth to an essay.

Hammad (2014) in his study found through the questionnaire responses from 60 university learners in Palestine that the problems of grammar, vocabulary, content and cohesion are the problems.

Javed and Umer (2014) in their research of Saudi EFL Learners' Writing Problems: A Move towards Solution noticed that students are weak at using appropriate lexical items, organization of ideas, and grammar, and they have serious problems with their academic writing. The other weaker areas are prepositions, spellings, irregular verbs, articles, punctuation, suffixes, and prefixes.

Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014) in their comparative study present that students face writing problems at schools and universities. Among the five writing problems, maintaining cohesion and writing correct sentences are the fourth and fifth problems. Among the other problems, they mentioned how to start a paragraph or essay, vocabulary and development of ideas or content are the problems.

Darus and Ching (2009) in their research work named Common Errors in Written English Essays of Chinese Students: A Case Study in their paper they explained the four most common errors are the mechanics of writing, tenses, prepositions, and subject-verb agreement.

Khan and Akter's (2011) in their paper named Students' Mistakes and Errors in English Writing, found that learners learned English well or not its proof is their writing skill. Learners get grades/scores based on writing ability. In the class, only writing ability is judged by grades or scores in the examination, while the other three skills are more or less practiced.

Hasan and Akhand (2010), in their article named 'Approaches to Writing in ESL/EFL Context: Balancing Product and Process in Writing Class at Tertiary Level', presents that to judging the effects of writing tasks based on the effect of product and process approach to writing on learners' performance.

Farooq, Hassan, & Wahid (2012) explained that the 12th graders of Pakistan have to use vocabulary, grammar and spelling which they have described in their paper. L1 interference and the use of a comma in writing English are the problems as they have reported in their study.

In the textbook of Nunan (1989), he presents one of the complex cognitive activities, is writing. It works at the sentence level as the control of context, format, sentence structures, vocabulary, spelling, and letter formation.

**Methods:**

The study tried to examine the present position of EFL writing skills at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. The study tried to evaluate the currently followed writing components of the English syllabus at the university level. The investigator used both primary and secondary sources of data. The investigator collected the primary sources of data through a questionnaire. The investigator adopted

two different questionnaires, both for students and teachers. The researcher also collected secondary data from different publications, research studies, journals, and websites, etc. Data was collected from 105 students from different universities. On the other hand, 5 teachers were selected randomly from different universities who were currently teaching in class. The participants were randomly chosen from 4 universities of Cumilla, Dhaka, and Sirajganj. The data has been collected from Cumilla University, KhawajaYunus Ali University, Bangladesh Army University of science and technology, and Uttara University. The questionnaires were distributed among the participants. Both qualitative and quantitative procedures were used to analyze and interpret data from online data collection.

**Data Analysis and Research Findings:**

The answers specified by the students and the teachers have been collected together and shown on different tables.

**Analysis of Students’ Questionnaire:**

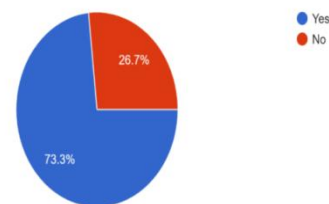
The data refers to the fact that has been found by teachers online. The answers specified by the

students and the teachers have been collected together and shown on different tables

**Table -1: Satisfaction in EFL Writing**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	72	73.3%
No	28	26.7%

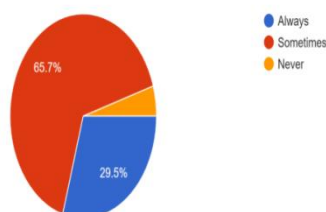
1. Are you pleased with your skill in EFL writing ?  
105 responses



In response to this question, 73.3% (72) students said that they are satisfied with their EFL writing

skills while 26.7% (28) students are not satisfied with their EFL writing skills.

2. Do you always practice writing in EFL classroom?  
105 responses



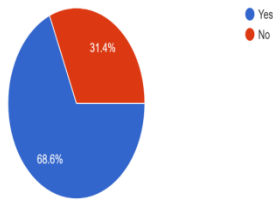
**Table- 2: EFL classroom writing practice**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	5	4.8%
Always	31	29.5%
Sometimes	64	65.7%

The above table reveals that only 29.5 % ( 31) students replied that they always practice writing in the EFL classroom, but a huge number of

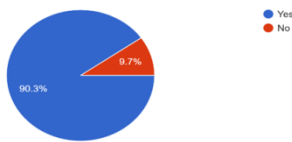
students, 65.7 % ( 64) of total respondents expressed that they sometimes practice writing in the EFL classroom carelessly.

3. Do you face any problem in English writing on a new topic?  
105 responses



31.4% (33) students answered that they can write on any given topic. On the other hand, 68.6% (67)

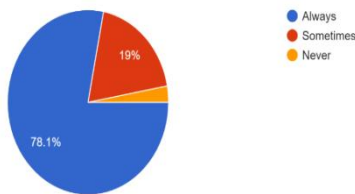
4. Do you believe that your academic English books support you to develop your EFL writing skill?  
103 responses



**Table- 4: Support of academic English books in developing EFL writing skill**

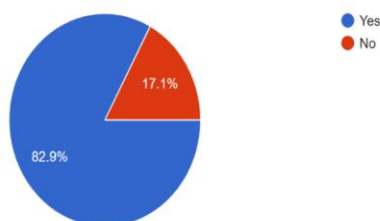
In the above table, it is shown that 90.3% (90) students replied positively about their academic

5. Does your teacher help in the classroom to improve your EFL writing skill?  
105 responses



In response to this question, 19 % (17) students opined that their teachers sometimes encourage them to practice writing in EFL class. 2.9 % (3)

6. Do you think that the system that is running applies to EFL writing skill?  
105 responses



The above table shows that 17.1% (18) students do not like the way they are taught. On the contrary,

**Table- 3: Face problem to Write on a new topic**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	67	68.6%
No	33	31.4%

students face problems with English writing on a new topic.

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	90	90.3%
No	10	9.7%

English. It indicates that academic English books offer services in the development of EFL writing skills.

**Table- 5: Help of teachers in developing EFL writing skill**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	3	2.9%
Always	80	78.1%
Sometimes	17	19%

students said that their teachers never encourage them in this regard.78.1% (80) students responded that their teachers always encourage them to practice EFL writing.

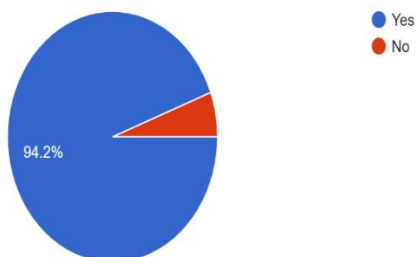
**Table -6: the system that is running effectively for EFL writing skill**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	82	82.9%
No	18	17.1%

82.9% (82) students like it. This finding reveals that some problems lie in the way of teaching.

7. Are grammatical instructions maintained during the EFL writing test?

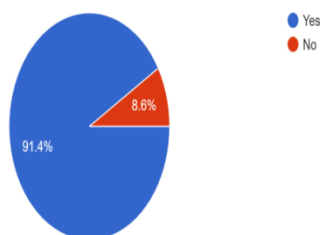
104 responses



From the above table, it is found that 5.8% (6) students emphasized based on memorization of grammatical rules rather than practicing them in

8. Can you write correct English sentences without your teachers?

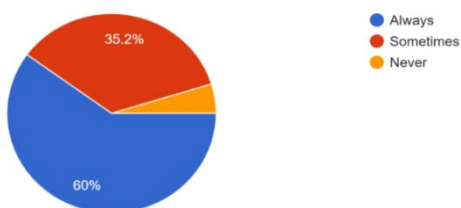
105 responses



In response to question no, 91.4% (91) students replied positively, while 8.6% (9) students gave a

9. How your teacher helps you during any writing activities in EFL classroom

105 responses



According to the above table, 35.2% (37) students said that their teachers sometimes helped them at the time of EFL writing and some students comprising 60% (58) of total respondents opined

**Table -7: Maintenance of grammatical rules**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	94	94.2%
No	6	5.8%

the sentences. 94.2% (94) students answered that they practiced grammatical rules rather than memorize.

**Table -8: Writing correct sentences in English**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	91	91.4%
No	9	8.6%

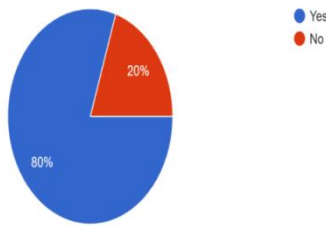
negative answer. This indicates that most students can write correct sentences with the help of their teachers, but there is still a problem.

**Table -9: Teacher’s help in EFL writing**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	5	4.8%
Always	58	60%
Sometime	37	35.2%

that their teachers always helped them in the same. On the other hand, 4.8% (5) students expressed that their teachers never helped them while doing writing activities.

10. Does your teacher warn you against making mistakes while writing in EFL classroom?  
105 responses



In response to whether their teachers warn them against making mistakes while writing, 80% (79) of students responded that their teachers always warn them against making mistakes while writing.

**Analysis of Teachers’ Questionnaire:**

Are you happy with the performance of your students in EFL writing as a teacher?

**Table 1: Happy with students’ EFL writing performance**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	01	20%
No	04	80%

The above table reveals that only 20 % ( 1) teachers were satisfied with the performance of their students' EFL writing. On the contrary, 80 % ( 4) teachers were dissatisfied with their students’ performance.

Does the present syllabus offer enough scope for developing writing skills?

**Table- 2: syllabus offers enough scope for developing writing skill**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	4	80%
No	1	20%

80% (4) teachers said that the existing syllabus offered enough scope for developing EFL writing skills. On the other hand, 20% (1) of teachers expressed that the syllabus did not offer enough scope for developing EFL writing skills.

3) How often do you motivate the students to write by themselves?

**Table -10: Making mistakes while writing**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	79	80%
No	21	20%

On the other hand, 20% (21) students said that their teachers do not warn them against making mistakes while writing.

**Table -3: Motivating students in EFL writing**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	1`	20%
Always	2	40%
Sometimes	2	40%

The above table indicates that 20% (1) teachers never motivated their students to write by themselves. Only 40% (2) teachers always motivated their students to write. On the contrary, 40% (2) teachers sometimes motivated their students to write their own.

4) How often do you point out students’ problems regarding writing?

**Table 4: Pointing out students’ problems in writing**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	1	20%
Always	3	60%
Sometimes	1	20%

Only 20% (1) of total respondents from the teachers said that they never pointed out students’ problems regarding writing. 60% (3) of them expressed that they always pointed out students’ problems in writing.

5) Do you use any other materials/techniques in the classroom apart from the textbooks?

**Table 5: Use of other materials/techniques apart from textbooks**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	2	40%
No	3	60%

The table reveals that only 40% (2) of respondents from the teachers said that they used other materials and techniques apart from textbooks prescribed by NCTB. They ensured that they used their sheets and their own techniques to improve students' writing skills. But 60% (3) teachers expressed that they did not use any materials or techniques apart from the textbooks.

6) Have you ever attended any training course on how to teach EFL writing skills?

**Table 6: Training course on how to teach EFL writing skill**

Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	1	20%
No	4	80%

The table shows that only 20% (1) teachers attended training on how to teach EFL writing skills. In contrast to this, 80% (4) of respondents from the teachers said that they had never attended any course on how to teach EFL writing.

**Analysis:**

The researcher tries to explore the frankness of the questionnaire survey. During the observation, it was found that the online classroom situation was different as it was likely because of Covid-19. Most of the teachers were seen delivering lectures in their way. In some classes, it was found that the teachers were bored and so were the students. In these classes, both the teachers and the students were found inactive in some cases. The teachers remained inactive during the whole class. Only a few students could write something on the given topic. Sometimes their writing was checked and sometimes teachers could not check their writing due to the shortage of time. Some teachers were seen conducting classes actively. Further, they were seen encouraging their students. But the percentage is low. This was the actual scenery of the classrooms the researcher observed.

**Conclusion:**

This paper investigates the success of English Foreign Language writing skills at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Grammatical weakness, poor vocabulary stock, less practice, lack of motivation, lack of teachers' training, and students' absent-mindedness are the reasons that hamper the improvement of students' EFL writing, which is noticed through the collecting data from the students and the teachers as well as classroom observation. Students need the proper guidelines and need to find out their writing problems to become a good writer. It motivates to raise the learners' confidence.

**Recommendations:**

**Recommendations for the students:**

- Students have to be enthusiastic and should spend extra time on vocabulary and phrases.
- If possible, consult with their teachers if they face any problems with EFL writing.
- Avoid fear of errors and mistakes. Rather, they should continue their practice.
- They should be more attentive to the writing class.

**Recommendations for teachers:**

- Teachers should find out the actual problems of the students in EFL writing and suggest solutions to overcome the identified problems.
- They should motivate students to improve their strategies for writing in general, so they will be able to write and acquire the ability to write on any topic.
- They should ensure whether each student writes on the give for a topic either in the classroom or at home.

**Recommendations for the authorities:**

- Authority should ensure a decent honorarium for the teachers so that they can pay for their full concentration in the classroom.
- Authority should ensure proper training for teachers.
- To minimize the number of students in the class, the authorities should divide the class into sections and appoint more teachers and train them as well. This will help the teachers to conduct a class smoothly.

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