

Research Article

# Group Writing: Overcoming Challenges and Facilitating Excellence in Group Writing in Blended EFL Classes in Tertiary Contexts in Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** The study examined the challenges faced by tertiary-level EFL students when collaboratively completing various writing activities inside hybrid EFL classrooms. It also explored synchronous solutions to these obstacles. EFL learners frequently engage in group activities to enhance their writing skills in EFL classes. These collaborative exercises have yielded a significant variety of reflections that are consistently explored in the study. The study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed approach, using a Survey Questionnaire, Focused Group Discussion (FGD), and Participant Observation (PO) to gather primary data. The numeric data was analyzed using class intervals of the scale composite scores, while the qualitative data was studied thematically. The quantitative results indicate that more than one-third of students face significant difficulties in pre and post-writing activities. Among these students, 45% experience moderate-level challenges while writing. According to the Relative Importance Index (RII), students encounter greater challenges in post-writing (0.72) compared to pre-writing (0.68) and while writing (0.64) in group writing. After analyzing the recognized difficulties in different phases, feasible strategies such as fostering a culture of collaborative writing, promoting self-directed learning, and cultivating interpersonal relationships were identified as effective means to improve writing skills in groups for English in the EFL context.

**Keywords:** collaborative writing; obstacles; group writing; strategies; hybrid EFL classes

## 1. Introduction

The multifarious challenges and pedagogical benefits connected to collaborative writing approaches in the EFL context emphasize the intricate learners and educators navigating to enhance their English writing skills. The efficacious writing skill transfers knowledge and perspectives across generations in countries that significantly contribute to the overall education journey (Deane, 2018; Sarwat et al., 2021). Despite holding the utmost importance, ESL learners frequently encounter numerous unseen and unexplained obstacles when developing their English writing skills. Besides, English teachers encounter numerous constraints while instructing writing skills to learners (Moses & Mohamad, 2019). Pineteh (2014) argues that “Academic writing challenges are evident in the slew of language; conceptual and stylistic flaws in scholarly papers by students” (p.16). Consequently, EFL educators have devised several techniques and strategies to instruct writing abilities in foreign languages, including individual writing, peer-assisted writing, and collaborative writing.

Consequently, over the past two decades, collaborative writing, also known as group writing, has been widely adopted by both EFL learners and practitioners from primary to tertiary level education. According to Shehadeh (2011), this collaborative approach has gained popularity in language schools globally during the past twenty years. It is widely used in various situations and at different proficiency levels (Fung, 2010). Though, this widely acknowledged strategy provides several advantages, such as enhancing the process of reflective thinking, which expands students’ understanding of the subject matter, and recognizing the audience’s intentions and expectations (Bruffee, 1993), and many concrete obstacles have been overlooked by EFL scholars, who have already been blindly embracing this technique on a large scale for a long period at different levels of education. Hence,

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numerous (EFL) learners are experiencing significant difficulties in practicing their English writing skills in groups. For instance, Al Ajmi and Ali (2014) state that students frequently mention several difficulties associated with the group writing approach, such as a time-consuming nature, inactive participation by group members, unfair evaluation, and absence of a group work ethic. Also, according to Millis and Cotel (1998), the group of individuals who contribute little or nothing to the overall productivity are referred to as “Hitchhikers”, where the active members of the group experience discomfort when participating in group writing because they consistently observe that the inactive members receive the same grades despite not contributing to their allocated functions with similar effort and sincerity.

Staggeringly, this method has also been utilized in L1 environments such as the collaborative writing strategy implemented with secondary school students in Malaysia (Sim, 1998), university-level students in Thailand (Moonma, 2021), and higher education learners in the AESL context (Advanced English As a Second Language) in Australia (Storch 2001; 2002; 2005). In a study conducted by Karim (2015), group writing approaches in Bangladesh were examined at various levels of schooling with mixed reactions. For instance, Sharmin (2024) examines that the students of undergraduate level in Bangladesh experience some difficulties with “*like lack of motivation, shyness, and the overuse of first language in group discussions, as well as the time-consuming nature and hostility among group members*”. Besides, this same study reveals a few of the group members were active and hesitant to discuss their ideas whereas some of them were firm enough that their ideas are far better than others (Sharmin, 2024). Similarly, in the post-COVID era, educators are constantly utilizing different digital resources such as Padlet for collaborative writing in classes (Jahan et., al, 2023). However, a noticeable number of issues with an unaffordable internet connection, unstable electricity supply, lack of teachers training on technology, etc. have been raised to the practitioners and learners to improve academic writing skills in Bangladesh (Karim, 2015).

Abundant research has shown that the group writing approach has numerous positive effects. However, it is important to note that EFL learners face countless hidden and undefined affective problems that hinder their writing skills over time. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the challenges encountered by students in blended EFL classrooms at higher education institutions in Bangladesh when it comes to writing in groups. Additionally, this study aims to provide timely and efficient solutions to promote excellence in group writing in tertiary-level blended EFL classes in Bangladesh.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The present study takes place in a language institute located within a university in Bangladesh. As per the University’s GENED (General Education) Committee, it is necessary to prioritize and cultivate the writing abilities of its students to reach global standards. Besides, EFL programs often alternate between online and on-campus formats due to the presence of infectious diseases and internal decisions aimed at ensuring uninterrupted language classes. Additionally, all materials for EFL classes are uploaded to BUX, the only officially authorized online platform where students can access all updates and course materials. In the last five years, various digital tools and resources, such as Google Meet, Google Drive, Google Forms, Google Docs, YouTube, and ChatGPT, have been used in regular EFL classes.

The author of this study is an experienced EFL practitioner with over five years of extensive expertise instructing English to learners at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. I frequently confront different issues when completing writing exercises in groups, such as organizing the students into groups, assigning assignments to the group members, keeping the student’s attention, and many other issues in each class.

Based on this scenario, the *aim of this research* focuses on (1) a comprehensive inquiry is required to increase the group-based writing skills development and learning experiences in EFL classrooms at the tertiary level in Bangladesh; (2) to support excellence in writing abilities through collaboration, the current study investigates the hidden difficulties associated with group writing as well as a few potential solutions.

The *research questions* are the following:

1. What challenges do students have in blended English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom when participating in group writing tasks at the tertiary level in Bangladesh?
2. How can the challenges of collaborative writing be reduced to enhance the efficiency of group writing in tertiary-level EFL lesson in Bangladesh?

## 2. Literature Review

Writing in groups is a significant educational activity in EFL blended classes that helps improve the writing skills of learners who have certain identified limits. According to Murtiningsih (2016), students face difficulties due to limited time, interdependence across tasks, and various writing styles that undermine the coherence of their work. The research suggests that some students may be hesitant to engage in collaborative writing, and students with limited language skills may not fully realize the benefits of this technique until they are matched with more proficient peers (Murtiningsih, 2016). Furthermore, according to experts Wilmot and Mckenna (2018), students who lack fluency may struggle to write in groups within a bilingual environment and context.

Blended or hybrid learning combines traditional face-to-face classroom methods with online educational resources and interactive online tools (Park et al., 2019). In addition, Lin and Huang (2011) explain that hybrid teaching approaches integrate both in-person and online classrooms to create cohesive experiences and enhance comprehension among educators and students in English teaching and learning. In the era of technology, blended classrooms have become a common practice in the field of education, with both students and professors seamlessly adjusting to this method. According to Collis and Moonen (2001), blended learning is a combination of traditional face-to-face learning and online learning, which enables instruction to take place in both physical and virtual classrooms.

The act of practicing writing skills in EFL composition classes highlights challenges that arise in collectivist societies such as Japan and China. According to Carson and Nelson (1994), ESL students may place more importance on maintaining peace with their group members than on offering condescending treatment to their peers. The more comprehensive findings of collaborative writing highlight several drawbacks. These include students often lacking the necessary proficiency to provide constructive feedback to others, the potential for one member to dominate group writing, learners not receiving clear instructions for the activity, and inadequate preparation for group writing activities in class (Bryan, 1996). Hence, educators must maintain constant oversight of group dynamics and activities to handle these difficulties in writing effectively.

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team is well-established in the literature, and it poses potential challenges that may develop during group activities at any phase. Burris-Melville & Burris (2023) conducted a study titled "The Dream Team: A Case Study of Teamwork in Higher Education" which examined Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions such as absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results of a Team 2002 theory on team development (figure 1). In the first step, absence of trust occurs when group members don't feel confident being open with others and consequently, conflicts of common interest for team work raised in the second stage (Pane et al., 2018). According to Chan and Pheng (2018), "lack of commitment" is a strong issue for the effective team outcomes and often it is described as "free rider".



**Figure 1.** Lencioni's five dysfunctions of a team.

*Source:* Lencioni, 2002.

At the last stage, the presence of inactive members caused frustration since they never give equal effort to bring the success of teamwork (Tucker & Abbasi, 2016). Moreover, Pfaff and Huddleston (2003) mention, these inactive students significantly assume students' attitude towards group work.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Research Design

The mixed method is highly valued for its ability to thoroughly comprehend study phenomena through integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Sadan, 2014; Shwani, 2021; Dawadi et. al., 2021). The study design was founded on the principle that using both quantitative and qualitative methods together yields a more comprehensive comprehension of research issues compared to using either a single method (Creswell & Piano Clark, 2007, p. 5). Pardede (2019) suggests that utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and evaluation provides a comprehensive and inclusive analysis of the study problem, leading to a panoramic conclusion. Therefore, to avoid the limitation of a single method (Dörnyei, 2007), this study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data from survey questionnaires, focused group discussions (FGD), and participant observation (PO) that supported triangulating the data for creating this research more tangible (Bulsara, 2015; Dörnyei, 2007).

The current study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design involving two separate stages (Creswell, 2003). The initial stage involved gathering quantitative data using a survey questionnaire and employing FGD. During the second phase, the PO process was formulated based on the results of the survey questionnaire and FGD. From the quantitative phase of the study, I collected the data from students with an online survey questionnaire. Next, in the qualitative phase, this study collected student data through FGD and class observations.

#### 3.2. Sample and Participants

The findings of the current research have been examined with the data from 220 students' private university. Amidst 220 students, 208 participants participated in survey questionnaire and 12 students attended in FGD. The male and female participants are from multiple departments like BBA, English, Social Science, Economics, CSE, EEE, etc., and their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years. The research employed the triangulation approach, operating survey questionnaire, FGD, and PO methods. The Eng-091 (Non-Credit), and Eng-101 (3 credits) are the sources of data for the current study since these English Fundamentals courses perpetually reinforce the group and pair works fostering language learning in both on-campus and online classes.

#### 3.3. Instruments and Procedures

The first is the survey questionnaire, which serves as a valuable tool for gathering data for research endeavors (Alderman & Salem, 2010; Dorneles & Mathias, 2022). Several literature studies and opinions from EFL teachers and learners were considered when designing the survey questionnaire for this research. A total of fifteen items were included in the questionnaire.

Also, the current study employed FGD to uncover the concise results of obstacles and solutions in group writing. This study utilized FGD to gather comprehensive information, and the twelve individuals were chosen for the FGD based on the recommendation of Bellenger, Bernhardt, and Goldstucker (2011). The participants were randomly selected from the Eng-091 and Eng-101 courses to eliminate any potential prejudice. Both male and female students took part in this FGD. Some questions were omitted or included with the understanding that the data would be evaluated thematically, as suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2002). The entire FGD was audiotaped and transcribed with the participants' explicit cooperation. As stated by Creswell and Poht (2017), a member-checking procedure is employed to validate and establish the credibility of a qualitative study.

Besides, PO is part of the broader qualitative research paradigm described by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), used in this study to find the solutions of group writing. The fundamental steps (site selection, observation, recording, hypothesis formulation, repeated observation, and establishing saturation points) of PO were rigorously followed. As suggested by Kemp (2001), the preferred approach for implementing this method was to be a "quiet participant in energetic groups" while observing in classes. English foundations classes (Eng-091-Non credit & Eng-101 Credit) were observed to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data. Before the observation, both the course instructors and students willingly and enthusiastically agreed to allow data collection.



**Table 1.** Phases of the study.

Phase	Process	Product
Phase-1: Quantitative data collection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A Google survey questionnaire (15 items with 5 points Likert scale);</li> <li>2) Created 3 categories like pre-, while, &amp; post writing in groups;</li> <li>3) Distributed Google survey questionnaire to 300 participants from Eng-091 &amp; Eng-101 courses.</li> </ol>	Numeric Data
Phase-2: Quantitative data analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Data screening;</li> <li>2) A 5 points scale of class intervals;</li> <li>3) The Relative Importance Index (RII).</li> </ol>	Descriptive Analysis Factors
Phase-3: Connecting qualitative and quantitative phases-FGD	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Developing FGD questions based on the results of the survey questionnaire;</li> <li>2) Selecting 12 students randomly from two different English fundamental courses (Eng-091 &amp; Eng-101);</li> <li>3) Interviewing 7 male and 5 female students;</li> <li>4) Recording full FGD with their positive consent;</li> <li>5) Analyzing data with a thematic view.</li> </ol>	FGD protocols FGD transcript Audio recordings
Phase-4: Connecting qualitative and quantitative phases-participant observation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Preparing a class observation checklist;</li> <li>2) Selecting 10 writing classes from non-credit &amp; credit courses (English Fundamental);</li> <li>3) Observing 5 classes of Eng-091(Noncredit) &amp; 5 classes of Eng-101 (credit) courses;</li> <li>4) Taking notes from observation;</li> <li>5) Analyzing data from PO &amp; FGD with a thematic view.</li> </ol>	PO protocol Class observation Checklist Field Notes
Phase-5: Integration of qualitative and quantitative results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Interpretation &amp; explanation of quantitative and qualitative results.</li> </ol>	Discussion Implication

Table 1 illustrates the procedure of utilizing the explanatory sequential approach in the present investigation. During phases 1 and 2, a Google survey questionnaire was created and sent out to the participants on Gmails accounts. The 300 participants were requested to voluntarily choose a single point from the provided Likert Scale, which ranged from strongly disagree to agree (1-5) on a five-point scale. Nevertheless, 208 individuals were present, and a Google survey form was employed. The data obtained from the survey was examined utilizing the Relative Importance Index (RII). Following that, a FGD was carried out with 12 participants, taking into account the valuable insights and discoveries obtained from both the survey questionnaires in phase 3. In the next phase 4, 10 EFL writing classes were chosen for observation, and a checklist specifically designed for class observation was created. During phase 4, the qualitative data was examined using a theme approach after gathering data through PO. In the final stage-5, the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed and elucidated, and the specific findings are reported in the subsequent results section.

### 3.4. Data Analysis Tools

#### 3.4.1. Survey Questionnaire for Quantitative Data

In accordance with the recommendations of Alkharusi (2022), a classification system consisting of class intervals was devised to detect obstacles encountered in collaborative writing. Three distinct categories, namely pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing/others,

have been established. Each category consists of 5 items, with each item being evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The maximum total score was 25, which was obtained by multiplying 5 by 5. On the other hand, the lowest score was 5, which was obtained by multiplying 1 by 5. The mean was computed by summing the scores for each category and dividing by the total number of items. The range was determined by subtracting the lowest total score of 5 from the greatest total score of 25, resulting in a difference of 20. The class interval was determined by adding the lower limit of the first interval, which represented the minimal composite score. This method was then repeated for the following intervals, as seen in table 2.

**Table 2.** 5-point scale of class intervals for interpreting the composite scores using the sum.

Interval	Midpoint	Interpretation
5-9	7.0	Very low-level challenge
9.1-13.1	11.1	Low-level challenge
13.2-17.2	15.2	Moderate level challenge
17.3-21.3	19.3	High-level challenge
21.4-25.4	23.4	Very high-level challenge

Source: Alkharusi (2022).

The Relative Importance Index (RII), a descriptive method for identifying the importance of each subscale in relation to other subscales within the scale, was constructed to find out the major challenges faced by the students in writing. To calculate the RII, the average score for each category was divided by the highest numerical value of the response, which, in this study, was 5 on the 5-point Likert scale.

#### 3.4.2. Qualitative Data-Participant Observation & FGD

Following the ground rules of analyzing qualitative data, the full transcripts and field notes were scrutinized several times in generating codes for theme interpretation (Creswell, 2003). Table 3 shows codes and themes for the data analysis.

**Table 3.** Codes and themes for the data analysis.

Types of Data	Codes	Themes
<b>FGD with students (Challenges)</b>	Absenteeism interrupts group writing dynamics & task distribution, influences disorganization, and causes reluctance from existing group members to add new students	Irregular students
	Variability in writing speed among group members leads to dysfunctionality of group writing	Slow writers
	Female discomforts disrupt writing effectiveness in male-dominated groups	Gender
	Showing unwillingness to engage in group writing through negative facial expressions, discouraging other's engagement.	Negative attitude
	More dependency on AI tools as the focus is often on finishing immediate tasks inside the writing classes rather than improving writing skills in the long term	Using temporary writing aids in EFL writing classes
	Neglecting given guidelines for the group work, impeding the effectiveness of group writing practices.	Norms of group work

<b>Class Observation/PO and FGD (Solutions)</b>	Religious reservations could obstacle some students from engaging in group writing, creating unforeseen situations for EFL teachers.	Socio-religious beliefs
	Academically poor students struggle to make positive relationships within the group, negatively impacting the quality of group writing projects.	Personal relationship
	Learners must know the benefits of group writing, active participation, realizing the importance of being motivated, developing self-learning skills	Awareness of the self-learning approach & self-motivation
	In the local context, students are not familiar with group writing, feel hesitant to actively participate	Promotes group writing culture
	Teachers could select a friendly leader, knowledgeable leader to guide the writing activity in groups	Select a good leader for the group
	Group members should do pre-study, be ready with basic materials, paper, and booklet, allocate enough time	Pre-preparedness with ample time
	A positive relationship, mutual understanding, assisting each other, listening to each other	Develop an inter-personal relationship
	Enormous resources like ChatGPT, Chat Bot, Midjourney, Grammarly.com, etc. should be used for continual learning following specific protocols	Online resources must be used in the proper way

The above-mentioned findings from FGD and PO have been explained in detail in the results section.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Quantitative Phase -Survey Findings

Students encountered predominantly moderate and high-level difficulties when engaging in collaborative writing exercises in the hybrid EFL class. Within pre-writing groups, 39.42% of students encountered moderate obstacles, 40.38% confronted high challenges, and 13.94% dealt with low-level challenges. 5.77% of pupils had really difficult obstacles. To elaborate, under the pre-writing stage in groups, students often use their native languages instead of English, all members of the group don't have an equal level of absorbing instructions from the teachers for the group writing, and different motivations influence students to face different challenges in the pre-stage of collaborative writing in EFL classes. Brainstorming for idea generation creates debates among group members. Accordingly, some students experience the dominating behavior of other members in the group in the pre-process of group writing. Therefore, it is proven that students face different problems in the EFL classes at higher education for their group writing from very low to very high levels following the RII analysis.

In addition, almost 45.67% of students experienced moderate-level difficulties while writing in groups, whereas 29.33% encountered high-level difficulties. Individuals with minor difficulties accounted for 20.19% of participants during the group writing activity. In a further example, the EFL learners experience different kettle of difficulties in the second phase of writing in groups within the classroom setting. They deal with the inactive members of the groups who always tend to rely on the other group members to complete his or her

contributions; some students fail to follow the given checklist for their group writing very frequently. Concurrently, seeking any assistance from the group members is not thoroughly established where students have different levels of language proficiency such as word order, vocabulary choice, sentence structure, etc. As a result, maintaining cohesion and the sequence of the writing-up remains a strong issue for the group members for their collaborative writing in the EFL classes.

**Table 4.** Challenges faced by the students in EFL classes for writing practices in groups.

Challenges	Pre-writing in groups inside the EFL classroom	While writing in groups inside the EFL classroom	Post-writing/others in groups inside the EFL classroom
Very low-level challenge	0.48	1.44	0.00
Low-level challenge	13.94	20.19	8.17
Moderate level challenge	39.42	45.67	33.65
High-level challenge	40.38	29.33	44.23
Very high-level challenge	5.77	3.37	13.94

Moreover, in the last stage, named post-writing, a significant proportion of students with high levels (44.23%) encountered considerable difficulties. For instance, after finishing their writing in groups, students find that group work consumes more time to finish the given task, and weak students struggle to get any support from their members who have a good command of the English language. More preciously, most students do not prefer to take peer feedback on their writing rather, they always expect to have correction feedback from the teachers directly. Besides, in the era of blended EFL classrooms, students are using different platforms and apps of AI (Artificial Intelligence) like Grammarly.Com, ChatGPT, Midjourney, Quillbot, and many more to generate their content, ideas, and supporting details, including language correction in group writing which hampers writing development in groups. To refer to it, table 4 shows that one-third of the students encountered moderate-level challenges (33.65%), while around one in ten students faced very high-level (13.94%) challenges in post-writing groups.

**Table 5.** Calculation of the Relative Importance Index (RII) value of the scale consisting of three dimensions of writing challenges.

Dimension of writing challenges	Mean	RII
Pre-writing in groups inside the EFL classroom	3.40	0.68
While writing in groups inside the EFL classroom	3.21	0.64
Post-writing/others in groups inside the EFL classroom	3.61	0.72

In brief, the survey data results have been presented in the table below on average. According to the Relative Importance Index (RII), students encountered the highest challenges in post-group writing, and the second-highest challenges were found in the pre-writing group (Table 5).

#### 4.2. Qualitative Phase (Question-1-Challenges)- Findings from FGD

The data from FGD has captured a more intensive and comprehensive description of research question 1, and it found some strong yet mostly ignored challenges in the classes for group writing practice.

##### 4.2.1. Irregular Students

Irregular students create problems in classroom group writing activities and assume that any of the students are absent on the initial day of group work or the follow-up day. Such occurrences result in a disruptive scenario in the following class since the majority of existing group members are reluctant to integrate new students into their collaborative writing groups and also if anyone misses the follow-up class. To explain, one of the participants mentioned “Maam, one of my group members is absent today and she was assigned to write the second supporting details”



(Evaluation paragraph).

#### 4.2.2. Slow Writer in Groups

Besides, when a student takes longer than expected to complete their assigned task, it causes the other group members to wait for the first writer to finish. This can be frustrating and irritating for the next members of the group. Therefore, it is frequently seen as a difficulty in the collaborative writing exercises in English in the EFL context.

#### 4.2.3. Gender of Students

In addition, several female students experience unease while participating in group writing activities in EFL programs where most group members are male. Their gender identification restricts them, leading to a change in groups and consequently interrupting the efficiency of the writing session in groups. For example, Student X says *"I feel discomfort to work in a dominating group since I studied in girls' institutions only"* (before University).

#### 4.2.4. Negative Attitude

Simultaneously, it is noted that some students consistently hesitate and show reluctance to engage in collaborative writing assignments during class. They express their discouragement through negative facial expressions and use negative language, which can challenge other students involved in group writing in EFL classes.

#### 4.2.5. Using Temporary Writing Aids in EFL Writing Classes

In addition, students are permitted to use different online resources, such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, Google Lens, Grammarly.com, and others, for collaborative writing activities in their English classes to search for ideas, content, and words, and take grammatical aid, as well as generate auto-text. This practice has now become common in EFL writing classes. However, the incorporation of this blended approach by EFL learners is greatly lacking in sustained improvement for writing abilities, as the focus is solely on completing group writing in EFL blended classes, like one of my participants confessed that *"I use ChatGPT (Paid service) for the correction of sentence structure in-class writing but I cannot use them in future because I never learn them."*

#### 4.2.6. Norms of Group Work

Furthermore, the students frequently neglect the fundamental principles of group writing in EFL classrooms, such as actively listening to all group members and adhering to a writing and time management checklist. This undermines the purpose of collaborative writing practice.

#### 4.2.7. Socio-Religious Beliefs

Within the local context, a small number of students exhibit religious reservations, and their religious convictions sometimes compel them to abstain from group involvement. Consequently, this gives rise to an unforeseen predicament in writing practices, which poses a difficult problem for EFL teachers to address. Participant Y mentions *"My parents dislike working with male fellows since our religious beliefs demand to stay away from males."*

#### 4.2.8. Personal Relationship

Lastly, the specific pupils who have repeatedly failed their English foundational courses are classified as probation students within the local academic setting. These probation students lack the cognitive abilities and struggle to establish meaningful connections with their peers in EFL classes when working on group writing tasks. In addition, typical students encounter difficulties in establishing a favorable rapport with probationary students, which, therefore, has a detrimental impact on their collaborative writing efforts.

### 4.3 Solutions (Observation and FGD)

#### 4.3.1. Awareness of the Self-Learning Approach & Self-Motivation

by informing students about the advantages of writing skills in their academic and professional endeavors and cultivating their ability to study independently, it is possible to encourage their active engagement in group writing exercises during lectures. Since the majority of learners are unaware of the actual purpose of writing in groups in EFL classes. To explain, one of the participants confessed that *"we take it as a course only, not as a skill."*

#### 4.3.2. Promotion of Group Writing Culture

Similarly, group writing culture has become a whole new standard for students at some private universities in Bangladesh. The newly enrolled students lack prior experience in

engaging in collaborative writing exercises, which leads to their unease in the unfamiliar environment of group writing projects upon entering the University. Consequently, EFL learners have proposed that they should be exposed to this culture through workshops that cover fundamental concepts and ethics, as well as the practice of collaborative writing. It has also been proposed that specialists in this particular sector should deliver these sessions.

#### 4.3.3. Selection of a Good Leader for the Group

Students believe that teachers can choose a competent and amiable leader to guide the group activity by adhering to the provided instructions and checklist of assigned writing. The group leader can rephrase and reiterate the instructions in a way that benefits the group members. *“Maam, you must select the leader because it is very important to us”* another participant emphases.

#### 4.3.4. Pre-preparedness with Ample Time

In addition, it is advisable to provide sufficient time to carry out the entire activity, since this process is time-consuming. Students must prepare themselves with the subject matter and gather the necessary resources such as pens, textbooks, and paper. Besides, it has been observed that providing instructions, and group formation absorb time and hamper the quality of writing. This is because students need to engage in discussions with their group members and share their contributions to the writing. Consequently, students proposed that being well-prepared in writing classes within groups can enhance the quality of collaborative writing in a blended learning setting. As a participant revealed *“We need more time to understand the process.”*

#### 4.3.5. Development of an Inter-Personal Relationship

Participants suggest that establishing a strong interpersonal relationship with classmates is beneficial for effective group writing in EFL classrooms. A robust and auspicious connection enables them to freely express their viewpoints, effectively collaborate, and provide mutual support without ambiguity or unease. To provide the expected result from the collaborative exercise to enhance writing proficiency.

#### 4.3.6. Use of Online Resources

The last theme illustrates that students seek proper guidance for using online platforms like Grammarly, ChatGPT, Midjourney, Scispace, and Googlebot for their regular studies, term papers, and assignments. These tools have just been utilized to meet deadlines and complete tasks, with a significant lack of substantial advancement in their learning journey. Therefore, the learners are worried about the efficacy of the online resources and have requested that EFL educators offer clear instructions and policies for utilizing these resources, which will improve actual writing development.

## 5. Discussion

This research unequivocally demonstrated that students encounter significant challenges throughout the process of collaborative writing in EFL classes, which detrimentally affects the advancement of their writing abilities. The writing development in groups is significantly hindered by learners' varying degrees of linguistic competency, comprehension, motivation, and individual attitude. Language learners exhibit variations in their knowledge, experience, talents, and traits, even when they hold the same level of language proficiency. The variations between individuals may create obstacles for certain learners when collaborating well in group settings (Alfares, 2017, p. 253). Besides, during the writing process, some students remained silent and did not actively participate in generating material, preserving the structure, and following the provided writing objectives. This lack of involvement resulted in a lack of coherence in their work. As per Alfares (2017), several students had difficulties effectively communicating their thoughts and expertise to their peers within their group. To analyze, active participation of students in classes is not encouraged in Bangladesh; hence, students often find it more challenging at the tertiary level. Students have utilized several online sites such as ChatGPT, Chatbot, Midjourney, Grammarly.com, and Google Bard for collaborative writing exercises. Specifically, certain students are classified as premium users of these generative artificial intelligence platforms. One group member reviews the machine-generated text, while others seek help with sentence correction, word choice, and other tasks to complete the assignment within the allotted class time. The potential of AI can give rise to contentious matters, particularly concerning the escalation of ethical and academic transgressions among students, such as plagiarism, dishonesty, laziness, dependence on

technology, and substandard learning engagement (Novawan, et al.; 2024, p.11). As a result, the lasting outcome is that it does not enhance their writing abilities since they do not gain the essential knowledge over an extended period. Gender identification and religious reservation among group members are sensitive but relatively uncommon challenges encountered in group writing exercises in EFL schools. To elucidate the matter, female students may occasionally experience discomfort when participating in group work, where males are the majority. According to Jule (2016), females from all ethnic backgrounds face specific and unacknowledged difficulties. In addition, students often encounter problems such as forgetting the fundamental guidelines for group writing practice and experiencing bad interpersonal interactions, which hinder advancement in writing abilities inside groups.

Furthermore, the study examined the strategies to alleviate the acknowledged difficulties encountered during collaborative writing exercises in EFL classrooms. There is a suggestion that pupils should be cognizant of their duty to develop their writing talents independently. Many learners fail to see the advantages of strong writing skills in their academic and professional lives. Thus, self-motivation is necessary to achieve significant improvement in writing abilities. For learners to develop a sense of ownership over their learning, the instructor must exert effort in motivating them (Al-Shourafa, 2012). Another successful suggestion is to encourage the practice of collaborative writing among newly enrolled students at the University. The participants strongly underlined the need to foster the culture of group writing practice among learners in the Bangladeshi setting since they are not currently familiar with it. Akindele and Trennepohl (2008) argue that students' lack of knowledge about the group work technique leads to their passivity and silence in the classroom. Additionally, the instructor might facilitate the selection of a proactive and encouraging leader for each group, who would oversee and generate the final written product. This approach, along with prior preparation, addresses the challenges associated with writing exercises in EFL classroom. The pupils lack personal acquaintance with their peers and show no initiative in fostering interpersonal connections. However, the participant observed that a robust mutual comprehension can strengthen their writing abilities through group practice. According to Chang (2010), having a positive identity within a group contributes to establishing a supportive classroom climate. Located on the same level, the EFL blended writing classes provide learners with access to online resources. However, students tend to rely only on these tools to complete writing projects fast, which hinders their learning process and creates a void in their writing skills. Consequently, the pupils anticipate that professors would furnish explicit instructions on how to utilize various resources and technology efficiently and productively throughout writing exercises inside the classroom. When incorporating AI into EFL lessons, it is crucial to address ethical concerns such as privacy, fairness and prejudice, human contact, and transparency (de la Vall & Araya, 2023). Ultimately, it is crucial to firmly develop the practice of dedicating sufficient time to group writing to fully reap its optimum advantages.

## 6. Conclusions

Writing something is a regular task for each EFL learner and class. This widely recognized approach contains some undeniable challenges, though this tool makes unremarkable progress in writing skills for EFL learners. In addition, new issues and challenges have arisen in the EFL classes for the group writing practice in which online resources, online learning Apps, and hardcopy have been used in the EFL classrooms. However, based on all challenges, a handful of effective solutions have been recommended to follow in the EFL classes for the practice of writing skills in groups.

Implementation of the current study not only offers the particular and sustainable mapping of successful group writing but also serves students' professional aspects as well. Nowadays, all work demands the individual who is inclined to work in groups, to facilitate group work effectively. Therefore, promoting and establishing group work in EFL writing classes with concrete maps and solutions are strongly recommended for learners and practitioners. This could aid the EFL learners in progressing their writing skills with maximum benefits such as critical and analytical skills, and leadership skills, fostering the exchange of knowledge, maximized motivation, and sharing experiences. and the practitioner/EFL teachers could use it without question.

Expanding the participants pool to add more universities in Bangladesh could enrich the breadth and depth of the research's findings. By including a more diverse range of participants from different academic institutions, the researcher could potentially draw a wider spectrum

of perspectives, experiences, and insights connected to the research content. Additionally, engaging multiple universities could support and mitigate any potential biases or limitations connected with focusing solely on one institution.

However, more research studies could be used facilitated for establishing the most functioning solutions to foster the process of group writing considering all contemporary contexts for EFL classes in Bangladesh

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