

Exploring Academic Writing Proficiency of Tertiary EFL Learners of Bangladesh: A Pedagogical Implication

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ABSTRACT

It is essential that tertiary EFL students become proficient in all key aspects of writing, such as content, arrangement of ideas, usage of appropriate vocabulary, use of language and grammatical precision, and mechanics, in order to improve their formal writing skills. As a result, the current study's objective is to assess the level of writing competency of tertiary EFL students in terms of the key writing components and to provide some recommendations for EFL teachers, syllabus writers, and material designers. This study is qualitative in nature that collected 49 narrative essays from 49 tertiary students. The participants comprised both English and non-English majors from seven private and public universities in Bangladesh. The data were generated from English writing tests where students wrote one narrative essay. In order to explore EFL students' general writing ability, the essays were then analyzed on the basis of the analytic writing rubrics developed by Jacobs et al. (1981). The findings of the analysis indicate that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL learners' proficiency in all the major components falls in the category of Fair to Poor. The findings also indicate that the most challenging writing skills for the learners are the use of language and the use of vocabulary. The study concludes with some pedagogical suggestions for tertiary EFL teachers, syllabus designers, and material designers. This study stands out as unique and important since little research has previously attempted to evaluate the writing proficiency levels of Bangladeshi tertiary students under the key writing components.

Keywords- Tertiary EFL Writing, Testing Writing, Components of Writing, Composition Scoring Technique.

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to technological advancement and economic compulsions, English is currently the most widely used language in worldwide communication (Hameed, 2016). In this backdrop, writing is viewed as one of the most vital skills needed for modern individuals engaged in international communication. However, writing is thought to be the most complex and challenging language skill to learn (Alwasilah, 2004; Martin, 1991; 1993; Husna, 2017; Klimova, 2014), especially in the

case of learning to write in a second or foreign language (Negari, 2011).

This is particularly true for English as a second or foreign language (EFL/ESL) students. Compared to listening, speaking, and reading, writing is a higher-order skill, and, it requires the learner to thoroughly explain the context in order to be understood (Hameed, 2016). Another reason is that it addresses the rules of the target language, such as vocabulary, discourse, and grammar and usage norms (Hung, 2006) which are usually different from those of one's first language. As a result, learning to

write presents a greater challenge for L2 learners (Hameed, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial for the EFL teachers to have a thorough understanding of their students' level of writing abilities and comprehend the major issues their students experience in developing their writing skills. The analysis of the EFL learners' writing abilities is essential for achieving this goal (Yuliana et al., 2016).

As multiple issues are associated with writing acquisition, the learning and teaching of writing in EFL/ESL has consequently been the focus of substantial research (e.g., Raimes, 1983; Juzwik et al., 2006; Teng et al., 2022; Kitamura, 2023). In order to create effective writing pedagogies, it is essential to have an understanding of the writing abilities of tertiary EFL learners and be able to unearth the problems associated with various writing-related areas. The analysis of writing proficiency among EFL/ESL students has thus also received research attention. (Myles, 2002; Wu & Garza, 2014; Abied et al., 2022).

1.1 Problems of Bangladeshi Tertiary EFL learners:

The goal of EFL writing courses in Bangladeshi higher education is to help students write more effectively in a variety of situations and for a variety of goals (Sultana, 2019). In the EFL writing class, Bangladeshi students are required to write in a number of genres including various sorts of essays, formal and informal letters, newspaper articles, reports, business proposals, etc. Even though writing proficiency is highly valued, Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students find it to be the most difficult English language skill to master (Karim et al., 2017; Khan & Ivy, 2017). In addition, the majority of students in the tertiary EFL writing classroom find writing to be an unhappy experience, and regrettably, the vast majority of them demonstrate poor writing ability (Chowdhury & Kamal, 2014; Maniruzzaman, 2012; Afrin, 2016 and Mustaque, 2014; and Karim et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, despite appearing outstanding, passing rates in English courses in tertiary EFL education do not adequately reflect the development of students' language skills (Chowdhury & Kamal, 2014). The reason for this is that the actual situation is completely different. According to Patwary and Sajib (2018), the majority of tertiary students lack the necessary understanding of writing processes, and Rahman and Hasan (2019) found that the general writing quality of tertiary EFL students is substantially worse than expected. The poor state of English writing proficiency among Bangladeshi students is also confirmed by the English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), which places Bangladesh at 63rd in the world ranking, whereas the Netherlands has acquired 1st, Singapore 2nd, Malaysia 24th, and India 52nd. Rahman and Pandian (2018) observe that only two of the over 1700 applicants to an English department admission test at a public university were able to meet the minimum requirement set by the university's English department. It further highlights the grave condition of their writing ability. It is noticeable that in the domain of EFL/ESL

writing, L2 writing researchers have conducted some studies on the testing proficiency of EFL writing in non-native English-speaking contexts, such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Iraq, there is a dearth of research information in the pertinent field in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, further studies are needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the actual status of Bangladeshi tertiary learners' overall writing proficiency and the proficiency of all major components of writing. This study is designed to assist educators in customizing their teaching approaches and resources to better meet the different needs of their students by giving a more thorough understanding of the writing competency status of Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students.

II. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is *'to assess the writing proficiency status of the EFL students of public and private universities of Bangladesh'*.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To assess Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' analytic composition profile and
- ii. To assess Bangladeshi tertiary students' overall writing proficiency level (OWPL).

2.3 Research Questions:

In order to meet the research objectives stated above, the current study seeks to address the following questions:

RQ 1: What is the analytic composition profile of Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students, i.e., how well-rounded they are in terms of the five writing skills of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics?

RQ 2: What is the overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) of Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students?

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Writing

Writing is the act of putting words together to express concepts clearly. Great writing goes a step further; it uses powerful language to communicate concepts that profoundly inform or inspire. Effective writing is a prerequisite for effective communication, and writing is successful when it makes appropriate use of grammar, punctuation, word choice, style, tone, judicious organization of ideas. Ur (1996) and Nunan (2015) both claim that writing is a tool for students' intellectual development. However, writing is "the largest and the most multifaceted language component" of the four fundamental language abilities (Reza, 2019). Writing well avoids repetition and omits superfluous information (Haugh & Duhamel, 1962). Nunan (1998) asserts that effective writing entails understanding letter formation mechanics, adhering to spelling and punctuation

conventions, using grammatical structure, organizing content, perfecting and refining one's initial works, and selecting a style fit for the target audience.

According to several studies, including those by Bacha (2002), Olivas and Li (2006), tertiary EFL students have a particularly challenging and demanding work when it comes to academic writing, mostly because it entails an added cognitive strain for its precision. Gillet (2017), referenced in Aunurrahman (2017), asserts that in academic writing, especially essays, sophisticated, objective, formal, clear, and precise language should be used. Al-Badi (2015) adds that writing requires a complex mental process that includes careful thought, discipline, and focus in addition to using cognitive talents. After all, the writers' level of proficiency does affect the quality of their work (Soleimani et al., 2015).

3.2 Writing Proficiency and Subskills Covered in the Tertiary EFL Writing Syllabi

In a higher education sphere learning to express oneself in accordance with conventions is "both expected and valued within academia" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 233). According to Arapoff (1969) and Ofte (2014), a professional writer at the tertiary level must be proficient in a number of essential norms, mechanics, and procedures as well as possess a thorough understanding of grammar and language use. For higher education learners, the ability to write in English is crucial (Tan & Manochpinyo, 2017) and students must improve their writing skills in order to meet their own demands while attending tertiary institutions (Kholili, & Ferdiyanto, 2020).

Brown (2001) states that a skilled writer needs to possess specific abilities like organizing ideas coherently, using discourse markers and rhetorical devices in a written text coherently, revising texts for clarity of meaning, editing texts for proper grammar, and produce final products. According to Reza (2019), writing accurate sentences, creating sentences with various structures, paragraph writing, situational writing, formal letter writing, informal letter writing, dialogue writing, etc. are all required English course topics in Bangladeshi tertiary EFL settings. Additionally, it covers the news reports, press releases, and newspaper articles. According to Raimes (1983), writing instruction should focus on enhancing students' understanding of vocabulary, idioms, and grammatical structures. She suggests developing the following elements of writing: grammar, purpose, audience awareness, writing process, writing mechanics, content, idea organization, and word choice are among the writing-related factors. She continues by saying that a writer must have a mastery of using grammar rules for verbs, agreements, articles, pronouns, syntax, sentence boundaries, stylistic decisions, sentence structures, etc. in order to produce high-quality writing.

3.3 Assessing Writing

Researchers frequently employ three main categories of evaluation rating scales to evaluate students' writing in an EFL context. They are holistic rating scale, analytic rating scale, and primary trait rating scale

(Weigle, 2002).

3.4 Holistic Scales

The holistic raters, according to Barbara (1998), swiftly scan through the text and issue a "general impression" score based on how well the content matches the criteria outlined in the most recent scoring guide. Additionally, she notes that holistic scales typically feature small scoring intervals; some have four intervals, while some use a 6-point scale. Higher holistic scalescores indicate greater ability in the fields listed on the scale, whereas lower scores show low proficiency in one or more fields thought to be essential to the production of good text.

3.5 Analytic Scales

Another sort of scoring scale, the analytic scale, allows raters to assign a text a score based on how well it exhibits particular qualities essential to effective writing, separately (as opposed to holistically). These sorts of scoring scales are called analytic scales. According to Barbara (1998), multiple-trait scoring methods are generally employed to differentiate between crucial writing components including rhetorical proficiency and adherence to language standards. The criteria for multiple-trait scoring are "developed on-site for a specific purpose with a specific group of writers and with the involvement of the readers who will make judgments in [that] context" (Hamp Lyons 1991, p. 248). A "weighted" scale is one that was developed by Jacobs et al. (1981) at Texas A&M University and it is called the ESL Composition Profile. According to Barbara (1998), grades are given based on the weighted average of five components of academic writing: content, text organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. This rubric assigns a score out of 100 to each writing sample, with the weight of each component dependent on how important it is to the overall project. Additionally, using both evaluative terms (such as "excellent to very good" and "fair to poor") and succinct explanations of the aspects that go into each component of writing, the scoring guide offers recommendations for how many points should be awarded to texts within each component (Barbara, 1998). Appendix 2 provides specifics of the scoring matrix suggested by Jacobs et al. (1981).

3.6 The Primary Trait Scale

According to Barbara (1998), the primary trait scale is a type of analytical rating scale that is applied at a degree of assignment-related specificity. Scott (1996:117–118) proposes a sample primary trait (**Lloyd-Jones, 1977**) scoring scale. This rating takes into account the writer's acquaintance with the cultural aspects of the subject as well as specific linguistic specifics necessary to finish the assignment.

IV. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Numerous investigations on student writing have used analytical scoring and a global and local error assessment. Reyhan (2012), for instance, used Jacobs et

al.'s (1981) analytic scoring in a study that looked at whether guided writing and picture sequences may improve tertiary students' writing skills in Indonesia. Furthermore, Reyhan acknowledges in the study that analytical scoring is more effective than any other type of scoring, such as holistic scoring, in analyzing students' writing development. The ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs et al., 1981) was utilized in Chu's (2012) study to evaluate the writing texts of tertiary ESL students in Malaysia and New Zealand.

Izadpanah et al. (2014) conducted another study in this area in which they examined the potential interactions between holistic and analytical scoring systems in assessing second language writing, as well as whether or not these systems over or undervalue the outcomes in relation to one another. According to the study, the scales used by the two grading systems for writing were effective predictors of one another.

In the study by Yuliana et al. (2016), the analytical scoring method was used to assess the English writing skills of Indonesian tertiary students at a university in Bandung. The test papers were scored using the ESL Composition Profile, which was created by Jacobs et al. (1981). The study by Kholili and Ferdianto (2020) that tested the essay writing performances of the Indonesian Tertiary EFL Learners also used the ESL Composition Profile, which included an assessment of the written essay's content, vocabulary, language use, organization, and mechanics.

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The first rationale given in this study has to do with how little has been discovered about L2 writing in the setting of Bangladesh. The studies that are currently available, however, show that none of these studies have assessed Bangladeshi tertiary students' writing abilities using any of the grading criteria mentioned above. Studies on writing in second languages outside of the US, Australia, Canada, and the UK are scarce, according to Chan and Abdullah (2003). As a result, teachers frequently have to rely on their own materials in the classroom because so much of the pertinent theory is lost on them (Hyland, 2003). The current study's goal was to fill this vacuum by examining student papers and employing analytical scoring, more especially multiple trait analytic scoring, to show the students' writing skills.

For this, the analytical scoring system created by Jacobs et al. (1981) was used. According to Silva (1989), this rubric provides the most in-depth discussion of ESL writing grading. In L2 investigations, it is crucial to choose a standard instrument since it is highly challenging to compare the results of various studies because researchers rarely utilize standard instruments (Silva, 1989). Thus, the application of this scoring framework will enable comparisons with earlier studies in the area.

The second rationale reported in this study is linked to the fact that most Bangladeshi students do not

seem to be able to attain reasonable English literacy even after going through 12 years of learning English in primary and secondary levels (Rahman and Pandian, 2018). As some studies have shown, most learners who enter universities have limited critical ability to respond to an academic text (Ahmad, 2007 cited in Che Musa et al. 2012) and lack the conventions of academic writing needed to write well in academic discipline (Krishnakumari, Paul-Evanson & Selvanayagam, 2010 cited in Che Musa et al. 2012). According to studies, students believe that one of the biggest obstacles to learning the target language is a lack of lexical proficiency (Nation, 2001). Students identify language issues—in particular, a poor command of vocabulary and grammar—as their primary writing challenges, according to Hyland (2003).

Despite the importance of vocabulary knowledge in the development of ESL language abilities, vocabulary is still a neglected topic in ELT (Kholili & Ferdianto, 2020). According to Croft (1980), many educational systems tend to place more importance on structural signals and grammatical patterns of the language than vocabulary, and students are usually asked to learn vocabulary on their own with little to no guidance (Crookall & Oxford, 1990). Teachers anticipate that students will all have the same level of academic and critical knowledge essential to satisfy the course's academic requirements because students are spilt according to course programs (Chu, 2012).

Most writing lessons are not based on what students need to learn but rather on the preferences of the teachers. This oversimplified categorization prevents EFL students from developing as writers because they are not taught according to what they already know (Chu, 2012). As a result, students do not demonstrate the expected level of proficiency in writing tasks (Ullah, 2022; Mustaque, 2021). In order to aid in the development of students' writing skills, it is necessary to ascertain the level of competency of tertiary EFL learners in various writing components. The development of L2 writing instructions that can be applied in a variety of situations, notably in Bangladesh, may benefit from the insights gained from the current endeavor.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

The objective of the study was to assess the writing skills of tertiary EFL students with English and non-English majors in terms of the five main writing skills: content, text organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The researchers chose a qualitative research design to address the research topics since written works are qualitative data. Samples of 49 students' narrative essays on the subject of their most memorable day at university were used to create the data for this study. The texts were written in the classroom and had a word count of roughly 300.

6.2 Participants

The research involved 49 tertiary EFL students, consisting of 15 males and 34 females, who were enrolled in bachelor’s programs related to Linguistics, English, Mechatronics, and CSE majors at seven universities located in Bangladesh. Three of these universities were public and four were private, and they were spread throughout three different regions of the nation. The national curriculum in Bangla required all students to complete 13 years of EFL instruction during their primary, secondary, and higher secondary education. The students were either in their first or second academic year at the time of the study. Their writing skills showed a range of abilities, with some showing high, medium, and low proficiency levels.

6.3 Data and Data Collection Procedure:

This study utilized 49 handwritten narrative essays as qualitative content data. These essays were collected as part of the principal author's PhD project on writing problems among tertiary EFL students in the Bangladeshi context. The essays were written between June 2022 and December 2022 and all focused on the same topic: "A Memorable Day of Your University Life. The principal researcher made contact with the EFL professors at seven universities and received consent from both the professors and the students to proceed with data collection. The lead researcher visited the universities at the scheduled times and coordinated a test with assistance from the relevant faculties. The students had one hour to handwrite their essays during the test. The professors kept an eye on the writing sessions and assisted with questions about the directions and relevant topics. After finishing, the students gave the instructors their handwritten essays, and the instructors gave the principal researcher the test papers. Two independent raters, two tertiary EFL teachers, were employed in the study to guarantee its validity. The 49 student papers were then sent to the appointed raters to evaluate. They used the analytic writing rubrics created in consideration of the rubrics suggested by Jacobs et al. (1981) in order to assess the

students' overall writing proficiency. The rubric was slightly altered. (See Appendix 2 for the amended rubric.) The raters essentially rated the texts according to the five categories listed in the rubrics to evaluate the student works using this rubric. To prevent complications involving fractions, the nearest numbers have been coded as scores and mean scores in the tables. Overall, the dataset gathered for the current study was a subset of the larger categories of the dataset gathered for the principal researcher’s ongoing PhD project.

6.4 Data Analysis Procedure

To assess the students' level of writing proficiency, the grades from the two independent raters were then pooled to get the average score for each scoring method. The composition profile recommended in the scoring system—excellent, very good, fair, poor, or frustrating—was then matched to the average score of the two raters on each criterion for each student in accordance with Jacobs et al.'s (1981) analytic scoring. The findings from the analysis were then put together in order to make judgments about the students' level of writing ability. The scores of the writing components in terms of content, vocabulary, language use, organization, and mechanics were presented in the data tables that followed. The data were presented using the Microsoft Excel application as percentages and numbers. Additionally, the data were displayed in charts.

6.5 The Overall Writing Proficiency Scoring Rubric (OWPSR)

The analyses and the grades provided valuable information about students’ strengths and weaknesses and their overall proficiency levels in writing skills. The analyses of their performances and the grades were tabulated and categorized according to the rubric given below. The scoring rubric is the common standard measurement scale that tertiary EFL teachers generally use to evaluate students’ essays and compositions at different universities. The researchers devised it in light of their own experience working as university EFL teachers.

Table 1: The Overall Writing Proficiency Scoring Rubric (OWPSR)

Scores (%)	Total Scoring Points (out of 100)	Grade	Status
below 40%	Below 40 points	F	Frustrating
40-49%	40-49 points	E	Poor
50-59%	50-59 points	D	Substandard
60-69%	60-69 points	C	MLS (Minimum Level of Standard)
70-79%	70-79 points	B	Above Average
80% and above	80 points and above	A	High Standard

Table 2: Students’ Writing Proficiency Tests: Grading Scheme

Sl. No.	Criteria/Components of Writing	Allocated Marks in Percentage in Every Component
1	Content	30%

2	Content Organization (Organization of ideas, clarity, and coherence)	25%
3	Range of Vocabulary	20%
4	Language Use and Grammatical Accuracy (Varied sentence structure; correct use of subject- verb agreement, tense, number, word order/function, pronouns, prepositions, articles,)	25%
5	Writing Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing)	5%
	Total Marks	100%

VII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

RQ 1: What is the analytic composition profile of Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students, i.e., how well-rounded they are in terms of the five writing skills of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics?

The findings of this study, particularly the answer to RQ1, are classified under the following categories: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The results of the content analysis done in light of Jacobs et al.’s (1981) analytic scoring, as demonstrated in Table 3, show that all five components of students' composition are at a fair level. This level is just the middle of all five levels considered in the analytic scoring, where the levels considered are excellent, good,

fair, poor, and frustrating.

The mean scores for the components are: content [17.28 out of 30, (57.61%)], organization [12 out of 20, (60%)], vocabulary [10.57 out of 20, (52.85%)], use of language and grammar [13.71 out of 25, (54.85%)], and writing mechanics [3 out of 5, (60%)]. Although students' writing proficiency across all components is at the same level, level of Fair, they performed poorly in content (57.61%), use of language and grammar (54.85%), and vocabulary (52.85%), showing their best abilities in content organization (57.61%) and writing mechanics (60%). The outcomes reveal that the students displayed their weakest performances in the use of language and grammar (54.85%), and vocabulary (52.85%).

7.1 Writing Proficiency Test Scores in Terms of Different Writing Components

Table 3: Writing Proficiency Test Scores in Terms of Different Writing Components

Sl. No.	Assessment Parameter	Mean Scores of U1 Students	Mean Scores of U2 Students	Mean Scores of U3 Students	Mean Scores of U4 Students	Mean Scores of U5 Students	Mean Scores of U6 Students	Mean Scores of U7 Students	Overall Mean Scores	Proficiency Level in Percentage
1	Content – out of 30	16	17	18	19	18	17	16	17.28	57.61%
2	Structure of the Content- out of 20	11	12	13	13	12	12	11	12	60%
3	Vocabulary- out of 20	10	11	11	10	10	12	10	10.57	52.85%
4	Language Use- out of 25	13	13	15	14	14	15	12	13.71	54.85%
5	Writing Mechanics- out of 5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	60%
	Total Marks: 100									

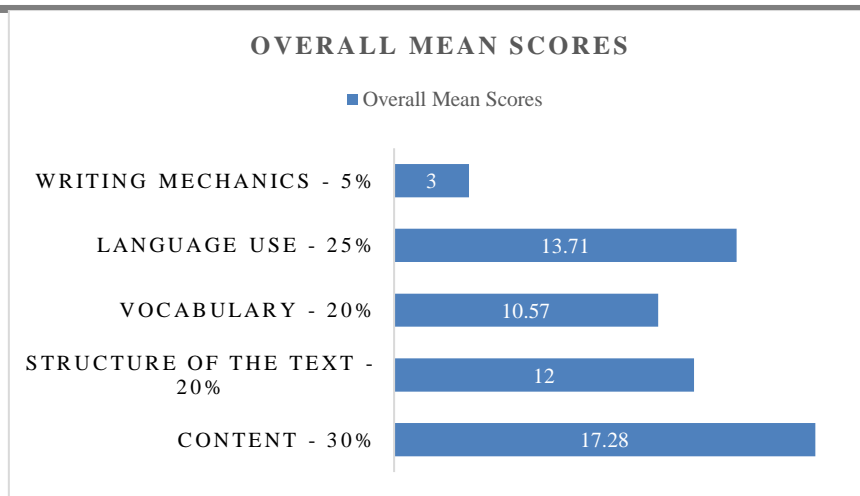


Chart 1: Writing proficiency status of tertiary EFL students in terms of different writing components

The proficiency levels of tertiary EFL students in terms of all major components are as follows:

7.2 Content

According to Chart 1, the average content score for tertiary EFL students is [17.28 out of 30 (57.61%)]. This outcome demonstrates that their content writing ability is in the Fair range. It implies that they have a thorough understanding of the subject matter they discuss, able to develop the subject, and can clearly examine the ideas. It displays little substance, low subject expertise, and little topic development. This also shows that the EFL students possess a basic understanding of the subject but are unable to further it. But as indicated in Table 3, a comparison of the scores for the various writing components reveals that students' performance in writing content (57.61%) is lower than their performance in content organization (60%) and writing mechanics.

Two representational examples of some well-written sentences and two of poor-quality sentences in the texts are:

Well-written sentences:

- (a) "I am a new student of this university. This is my first day at university. When I first arrived at university on a shuttle train, I wondered how I would spend my time here." (Student-U1-a)
- (b) "A university is a place where a student gets all types of facilities to improve himself." (Student-U3-c)
- (c) "I spend the best moments in my university life and I have some good memories here that I am going to share." (Student-U3-c)

Poor quality sentences

- (d) In this university there's so much memories I will never forget and this moments keeps me strong when I fall in some problems. (*poor content*) (Student-U3-c)

7.3 Content Organization

- (a) "I was very nervous for missing the bus. Then I took a rickshaw. After that After that I reached the programme venue at 10.00 am." (Student-U5-a)

- (b) ".....After that we had our departmental class which was conducted by the department head and I enjoyed the class a lot.

After the class, I had a break of one hour. I went on discovering the campus....." (Student-U6-a)

Poor organization

- (c) "....There are lots of special and special and memorable day I can remember. From those I want to share a memorable day of my university life.
- (d) I can remember the day when our orientation happen." (U6-d)

7.4 Language Use and Grammatical Accuracy:

The total mean language use scores for tertiary EFL students are [13.71 out of 25 (54.85%)] according to Chart 1. This finding demonstrates that their proficiency with language, grammar, and vocabulary is below average. This outcome demonstrates that their language proficiency and grammatical correctness are in the Fair range. They frequently erred in the areas of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order or function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and fragments, as well as run-on sentences and deletions. This suggests that they made serious mistakes in both simple and sophisticated formulations. But the comparative analysis of the scores for the various writing components, as shown in Table 3 and Chart 1, also showed that the students' worst performance was in vocabulary (52.85%), and their second weakest area was grammar (54.85%).

Four representational examples of well-written sentences in the use of language and grammatical accuracy and vocabulary are:

The use of language and grammatical accuracy

- (a) "It was a wonderful opportunity for me to show my hosting performance." (Student-U4-a)

(b) “I was very excited to meet with my new university teachers and friends.”

(Student-U5-b)

Two examples of poorly-written sentences with the wrong use of language and grammatical accuracy are:

(a) “First day i met one of my friend whose name is Kaniz.” (Student-U5-d)

(mistakes in terms of the omission of articles and number)

(b) “Students of this university are also humble from day one.” (Student-U7-a)

(mistakes in terms of the use of appropriate forms of verbs)

7.5 Vocabulary

According to Chart 1, the average vocabulary use score for tertiary EFL students is 10.57 out of 20, or 52.85%. This outcome demonstrates that their language usage proficiency is at a Fair level. This suggests that they had a little vocabulary, frequently used incorrect word forms, and frequently chose words with unclear meanings. However, the comparative analysis of the scores for the other writing components, as seen in Table 3 and Chart 1, also show that the students' performance in vocabulary (52.85%) was the worst. Two representational examples of well-written sentences in the use of vocabulary are:

(a) “The first day at university is always very exciting because of the new environment, new people and obviously new education system.” (Student-U7-e)

(b) “When we arrived at the restaurant, the waiters welcomed us warmly.” (Student-U7-f)

Two examples of poorly-written sentences in the use of vocabulary are:

(c) “The memories may different from person to person.” (Student-U7-c)

(d) “In this populated city, it is very hard task to find a beautiful greeny garden.” (Student-U6-b)

7.6. Writing Mechanics:

This result is shown in Chart 1 and Table 3, which also show that the average writing mechanics score for tertiary EFL students is [3 out of 5 (60%)]. Their writing mechanics proficiency is at the Fair level. It indicates that they frequently made spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing mistakes that led to ambiguous meanings across the text. The comparative analysis of the scores for the various writing components, as shown in Table 3, reveals that students' performances in arranging the information and using writing mechanics are the best overall. Representational examples of two well-written sentences used in writing mechanics are:

(a) “I was very happy and excited for the first class. I was very nervous too.”

(Student-U7-e)

(b) “On 25th May we had a grand programme.” (Student-U2-d)

Representational examples of two poorly-written sentences used in writing mechanics are:

(c) “After taking class she left. Then Next class started 10.30 am.” (Student-U5-d)

(d) “A large group of students included me, visited our new arts faculty.”

(Student-U1-d)

RQ 2: What is the overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) of Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students?

The document analysis of the proficiency test papers also asserts that the overall status of the writing proficiency level (OWPL) of tertiary students is 57% (see Table 4), which is substandard in light of the Overall Writing Proficiency Scoring Rubric (OWPSR) shown in Table 4.

Students’ Overall Composition Profile: Overall Status of Students’ Writing Proficiency

Table 4: Students’ Overall Composition Profile: Overall Status of Students’ Writing Proficiency

Sl. No.	Assessment Parameter	Overall Mean Scores of Every Component	Proficiency Level in Percentage	Grades of Every Component	Status in terms of Components	Overall Writing Proficiency Rate (OWPR)	Overall Status of Writing Proficiency in Light of OWPSR
1	Content – out of 30	17.28	57.61%	C	Fair	57.06%	Grade: D
2	Structure of the Text-out of 20	12	60%	C	Fair		

3	Vocabulary- out of 20	10.57	52.85%	C	Fair	Status: Substandard
4	Language Use- out of 25	13.71	54.85%	C	Fair	
5	Writing Mechanics- out of 5	3	60%	C	Fair	
Total Marks: 100						

VIII. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the analytic composition profile, i.e., how well-rounded they are in terms of the five writing skills of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, of the first- and second-year tertiary-level EFL students in Bangladesh. While investigating the students' proficiency level in writing the content of an essay, the study found that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' overall mean score in content writing is 17.28 out of 30 (57%). This is in contrast to the findings of the previous studies that found the overall mean score in content to be 22.3 out of 30 (74%), and that was at the level of Good to Average (Yuliana et al., 2016). It indicates that compared to other global tertiary EFL contexts, both English and non-English major tertiary EFL students in Bangladesh are much weaker at writing the content of an essay.

Another component of writing investigated was the structure of the text or the organization of the content. The study found that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' overall mean score in the organization of the content is [12 out of 20, (60%)], which is in contrast to previous studies that found the overall mean score in the organization of the content to be (14.7 out of 20, 74%), and that was at the level of Good to Average (Yuliana et al., 2016). It indicates that compared to other global tertiary EFL contexts, both English and non-English major tertiary EFL students in Bangladesh are lagging behind in organizing the content of an essay.

The third component of writing investigated was writing mechanics. The results show that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' overall mean score in writing mechanics is [3 out of 5 (60%)], which is consistent with previous studies that found the overall mean score in organization content to be (3.6 out of 5 (70%)), and that was at the level of Fair to Poor (Yuliana et al., 2016). It indicates that, compared to other global tertiary EFL contexts, both English and non-English major tertiary EFL students in Bangladesh are at the same level. However, the detailed scoring suggests that they struggle a lot with using writing mechanics in narrative essays.

The fourth writing component that was investigated in the study was the use of language and grammar. The results demonstrate that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' overall mean score in the use of language and grammar is [13.71 out of 25 (54.85%)]. This result shows that their level of proficiency in the use of

language and grammar is in the Fair level, which is consistent with previous studies that found the overall mean score for the use of language and grammar to be 15.9 out of 25, (64%), and that was at the level of Fair to Poor (Yuliana et al., 2016). It indicates that, compared to other global tertiary EFL contexts, both English and non-English major tertiary EFL students in Bangladesh are at the same level. However, the detailed scoring suggests that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students are weaker in the use of language in writing narrative essays.

The final component investigated was the use of vocabulary. The results demonstrate that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' overall mean score in the use of vocabulary is [10.57 out of 20 (52.85%)]. This result shows that their level of proficiency in the use of vocabulary is at a fair level, which is in contrast with previous studies that found the overall mean score for the use of vocabulary to be (15 out of 20, 75%), and that was at the level of Good to Average (Yuliana et al., 2016). However, the comparative study among the scores of different components of writing, shown in Table 5 and Chart 1, also reveals that the students displayed their weakest performances in the use of vocabulary (52.85%). This also indicates that the use of vocabulary is the most challenging writing skill for Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students, which is consistent with the study by Hameed et al. (2016).

The present study further aimed to investigate the overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) of the first- and second-year tertiary-level EFL students (both English and non-English majors) of different public and private universities in Bangladesh in writing narrative essays. The results demonstrate that the status of the overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) of Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students is 57.06% (see Table 5), which is substandard in light of the Overall Writing Proficiency Scoring Rubric (OWPSR) shown in Table 3. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of the study by Yuliana et al. (2016), which found that the overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) of tertiary students is 72%, representing the level of Above average. This comparative counting has been done in light of the Overall Writing Proficiency Scoring Rubric (OWPSR) shown in Table 3. Another similar study was conducted by Reza (2019) in the Bangladeshi context, which found the overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) of tertiary students to be 41.99%. In comparison to that study, the present study reveals an increase in the OWPL of Bangladeshi tertiary

EFL students, but in comparison to other global contexts, Bangladeshi tertiary EFL learners' overall writing proficiency level is much lower. It is also supported by Rahman and Hasan (2019) who found that the overall standard of Bangladeshi tertiary students' writing is poor.

IX. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Based on the in-depth discussion provided in the aforementioned section, the study draws the conclusion that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students perform mediocly in terms of content and poorly in terms of language use, grammar, and vocabulary when writing narrative essays. However, they demonstrate the highest proficiency level in terms of writing mechanics and content organization. This suggests that language use, grammatical correctness, and vocabulary are the most difficult writing skills for both English and non-English major tertiary EFL students in Bangladesh. The findings show that Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) is below par. The current study shows an increase in Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students' overall writing proficiency level (OWPL) when compared to a related study by Reza (2019), but a significantly lower level when compared to other worldwide contexts. Teachers might adjust their instructional strategies and assist students in developing their writing skills based on the presented findings of the current study. The current study specifically suggests the following educational choices:

1. As the Bangladeshi tertiary EFL students are weak in general in all components of writing, EFL teachers and curriculum planners should enhance the quality of the EFL writing programmes offered at higher institutions.
2. As the use of language, grammar, and vocabulary pose a significant challenge for tertiary EFL students in Bangladesh, regardless of their English proficiency level or major, EFL teachers should prioritize grammar and vocabulary development programs.
3. EFL teachers should prioritize teaching and providing targeted practice exercises on the use of language, grammar, and vocabulary.
4. Cooperative learning and peer feedback programmes should be enhanced in the tertiary EFL writing classroom.
5. EFL teachers should create a congenial environment where the students can write happily and comfortably.

Teachers should motivate the learners so that they write a lot. They should ensure all possible resources and support for the students so that they grow intellectually.

FURTHER STUDIES

Given that this study was limited to three divisions of Bangladesh and just seven universities, and that many other tertiary institutions of various types were not included, additional research in this area is strongly advised. Larger samples may be used in future study with

students from other tertiary settings.

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Declaration regarding Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

Data used for this study may be available on request to the principal author.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Evaluation and Grading Scheme for the Proficiency Test Paper

The test papers were analyzed and graded based upon the grading policy suggested by Hedge (2000:148) and ESL Composition Analytic Scoring Profile (Jacobs et al., 1980).

The grading policy of the compositions of test paper is given below:

- i. Task Fulfillment/Content-30%
- ii. Content organization (with special reference to clarity, coherence, and development of the essay)-20%
- iii. Use of Language (Accuracy of grammar, and sentence variety)-25%
- iv. Vocabulary (Range of vocabulary applied)-20%
- v. Writing Mechanics (spelling, punctuation and capitalization, and paragraphing)-5%

Appendix 2:

ESL Composition Analytic Scoring Profile

[Prepared in light of Jacobs et al.'s (1980) Profile]

CONTENT

Score	Grade	Status	Criteria
30-27	A	Excellent	knowledgeable; substantive; thorough development of thesis; relevant to assigned topic
26-22	B	Good	some knowledge of subject; adequate range; limited development of thesis; mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail
21-17	C	Fair	limited knowledge of subject; little substance; inadequate development of the topic
16-13	D	Poor	does not know knowledge of subject, non-substantive; not pertinent; OR not enough to evaluate
1-12	E	Frustrating	does not know knowledge of subject, non-substantive; not at all relevant; OR nothing to evaluate

CONTENT ORGANIZATION

Score	Grade	Status	Criteria
20-18	A	Excellent	fluent expression; idea clearly stated/supported; succinct, well-organized; logical sequencing; cohesive
17-14	B	Good	somewhat choppy; loosely organized but main idea stands out; limited support; logical but incomplete sequencing
13-10	C	Fair	non-fluent; ideas confused or disconnected; lacks logical sequencing and development
9-7	D	Poor	does not communicate; no organization; OR not enough to evaluate
1-6	E	Frustrating	no organization at all, extremely haphazard; OR nothing to evaluate

VOCABULARY

Score	Grade	Status	Criteria
20-18	A	Excellent	sophisticated range; effective word/idiom choice and usage, word form mastery; appropriate register
17-14	B	Good	adequate range; occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured
13-10	C	Fair	limited range, frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured
9-7	D	Poor	essentially translation; little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, and word form; OR not enough to evaluate
1-6	E	Frustrating	Extremely poor knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, and word form; OR nothing to evaluate

LANGUAGE USE

Score	Grade	Status	Criteria
25-22	A	Excellent	effective complex construction; few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, prepositions, articles, pronouns
21-18	B	Very Good	effective but simple constructions; minor problems in complex constructions; several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/functions, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured
17-11	C	Fair	major problems in simple/complex constructions; frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions, meanings confused or obscured
10-5	D	Poor	virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules; dominated by errors; does not communicate; OR not enough to evaluate
0-4	E	Frustrating	faulty sentence construction; full of errors; does not communicate; nothing to evaluate

WRITING MECHANICS

Score	Grade	Status	Criteria
5	A	Excellent	demonstrates mastery of conventions; few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing
4	B	Good	occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured
3	C	Fair	frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing; poor handwriting; meaning confused or obscured
2	D	Poor	no mastery of conventions; dominated by the errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, handwriting illegible; OR not enough to evaluate
1	E	Frustrating	no mastery of conventions; full of errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing; handwriting illegible; OR nothing to evaluate