

## ENGLISH WRITING DIFFICULTIES OF BUET STUDENTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL : A CLASSROOM STUDY

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**Abstract:** In the recent years, there has been a growing concern in developing English writing skill in the higher education at tertiary level of our country as learners at this stage aim to acquire more specific knowledge. At tertiary level, as the medium of teaching-learning is English and as the learners are assessed mostly by means of English writing skill both in the formative and summative tests, naturally their writing has to be more focused and specific. Therefore, it is expected that the students will be proficient enough in writing in English at advanced level. Hence, my paper aims to spotlight the English writing condition of the engineering students at tertiary level by an empirical classroom study of a particular department, Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). More specifically, this paper will try to find out the existing difficulties and problems of the students, also the reasons behind and finally provide some recommendations to mitigate or overcome those difficulties faced by these youngsters of CSE department.

### Introduction

Since English writing plays an important role in intercultural and international written communication, it is becoming indispensable for the engineering students to have good command over English writing to be in touch with the global community. So, the cultivation of this very important skill has been emphasized also in BUET, being the pioneer and top rank of engineering institution in the country. BUET has taken English as a second or foreign language with importance and also has considered English as a compulsory subject of study for almost all the departments. Only a few departments have English as optional subject. The department of Computer Science and Engineering has compulsory English courses in both

theory and sessional (practical class in a well-equipped lab.) for the students of Level-1/Term-2. These students have a good number of writing tasks, ranging from writing dialogue, paragraph, essay, précis, amplification, business letter, report, printed copy of presentation paper to analytical writing based on some short literary pieces. Though there are different types of writing like creative, technical, business, academic, journal, conference paper, publication and so on, this paper will be confined only to English writing skills designed for the academic purposes of the students of Computer Science and Engineering in BUET.

### Background /Objective of the Study

Writing skill is an important part of communication for a student throughout his/her academic life because it allows one to organize feelings and ideas clearly to convey meaning through well-constructed text. University students must be able to write clearly about topics related to their research fields. (Choen and Miller (2003). Also, "Writing is both a physical and mental act. At the most basic level, writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader" David Nunan(2003,p-88). According to Bjork and Raisanen, quoted by Khairy (2013,6,1-2) "We highlight the importance of writing in all university curricula not only because of its immediate practical application, i.e. as an isolated skill or ability, but because we believe that, seen from a broader perspective, writing is a thinking tool. It is a tool for language development, for critical thinking and, extension, for learning in all disciplines."

The students of BUET are claimed to be the best students in the country. But it is seen that many of these students have problems in writing skill though some of them excel in speaking and other skills. Despite getting English as a compulsory subject of study for quite a long period of time (primary to H.S.C.), many students cannot express their ideas and views efficiently in writing. So, I have tried to explore the roots of these problems, the reasons behind and finally have come up with some recommendations, analyzing some writing samples of a particular department namely the department of Computer Science and Technology (CSE).

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*Research Questions*

The main focus of this paper is to find out:

1. What is the present condition of writing of the students of CSE? What are the problems prevalent in their writing?
2. What are the reasons behind these problems? Why can't the students express their views clearly in writing?
3. How to solve or overcome these problems of this department?

*Literature Review*

McNamara et al. (2010) stress that writing well is of great importance for success in a wide variety of situations. They claim that writing skill is among the best indicators of student success at university, describing good writing as writing that articulates ideas clearly, argues opinions, synthesizes multiple perspectives, presents information effectively and consistently with well-chosen details, and avoids grammatical and mechanical errors. Dudley-Evans and St. John state, as quoted in Khairy (2013, p-1-2), "Success in the relevant fields depends on the factor that how effectively the students handle different writing genres like summaries, essays, reviews, etc." A good number of research articles have offered valuable insights into the problems of second language learners in English writing skill. After doing research on Chinese students, Darus and Ching (2009) showed that the four most common errors made by the Chinese students in English composition writing are the mechanics of writing, tenses, prepositions and subject-verb agreement. Another research of Javed and Umer (2014) revealed that some Saudi students have serious problems in their academic writing due to their weaknesses in using appropriate lexical items, organization of ideas and grammar. The other weaker areas are prepositions, irregular verbs, articles, punctuation, suffixes and prefixes.

In our country, a few of researchers have also studied and pointed out English writing problems of our tertiary level students. "Writing is the most focused but the least developed English language skill among the learners in Bangladesh. At tertiary level the situation is not different". Uddin (2014, p-116). In their research, Khan and Akter (2011) identified undergraduate students' word and sentence level mistakes in English writing. According to them, "In the training curriculum, aims and objectives should be

appropriately designed and utilized to make sure it is effectively linking the praxis of writing which is inevitably essential in today's English teaching and learning context" (8,11,23). Mustaque, S (2014) illustrates that undergraduate students' writing samples exhibit innumerable errors, i.e. lexical-semantic errors, errors with verbs, prepositions, articles. In her study, she also points out that the participants write without any planning and mostly purposeless. Furthermore, Alam mentioned as stated in Mustaque (2014, p-334) "It is often found that students may have knowledge about vocabulary and grammatical aspects (e.g. using the right tenses, collocation and prepositions) but face problems in writing coherently and re-structuring ideas after evaluating them". In another study, Fahmida, B (2010) identifies that Bangladeshi tertiary level students' common errors lie in their academic essay, and there are different types of errors like spelling, punctuation, organizational problems, etc. Besides, Ahmed (1999) in his study finds that Bangladeshi students are seriously prone to make mistakes in English articles, and mistakes occur because of the differences between Bangla and English language. Thus, these researchers have found that writing in English poses many problems for many ESL (English as a second language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners.

**Methodology**

The present study has been conducted empirically, specifically focusing on the paragraph writing class of the CSE students of L1T2 at BUET. Paragraph has been selected as it is the key unit of writing skill. Also, descriptive qualitative method has been used.

*Sample Size and Research Instrument*

For collecting data, 35 students of one section of CSE in an English sessional class in a well equipped lab designed for practice were asked to write a paragraph on a problem – solution based topic "Cyber Crime" in five peer groups. So, research samples were 35 students of five groups and their paragraph writing samples were used as research instruments. The participants were used as experimental group and they were asked to write two drafts before and after instruction respectively in the nature of pre-test and post-test. First, each group was given ten minutes for discussion to exchange views and ideas regarding the topic. Then, to know

the present proficiency level of the learners, each and every member of a group was asked to write individually. After completion of their writings, students were asked to do peer -evaluation and cross checking for peer learning. After that, each group was asked to compile a single draft for the teacher. It was also expected that each group's peer work would be better than their individual draft as they put combined effort. Next, immediately after the teacher's evaluation, feedback and detail instruction to use the general writing process of planning, listing, drafting, proof reading, editing and making final version with the use of appropriate structures of topic sentence, paragraph developers, modulators and terminator, each group was instructed again to produce their second draft improving on the first one . The total time span was 3 hours. The writing samples presented a vivid picture about the students' writing problems.

#### *Writing Sample Analysis and Findings*

The participants in their first draft did less planning and wrote in free hand. So, naturally they faced difficulty in generating material. They showed more concern and difficulty with vocabulary, spent more writing time but failed to produce a compact text. Some of them wondered how to maintain the sequence of ideas. They rarely reviewed, reread and reflected on their written texts. Even if they revised, they focused more on grammar than on the mechanics of writing. As a result, their writings were less effective exhibiting more errors. On the other hand, these participants in their second draft showed much improvement in organizing their ideas following writing task with proper steps which made their writing far well-composed and coherent.

However, analyzing the paragraph writing samples minutely, it is found that CSE students' difficulties in English academic writing lie mainly in three aspects, i.e.

1. Language (Grammar and Vocabulary)
2. Structure (Steps) and
3. Content (Information)

More specifically--

- a) Wrong choice of words or collocation difficulty
- b) Lack of lexical variety or poor stock of vocabulary

- c) Monotony of language use
- d) Empty content
- e) Repetition of ideas
- f) Lack of depth and profundity
- g) Lack of transition, cohesion and coherence
- h) Lack of total organization ability, etc

#### *\*Academic Writing Difficulties in Language*

For a better writing, an understanding of the grammar of a language is essential. Because, it is said that grammar is the skeleton while vocabulary is the flesh of the language. An analysis of the students' writing samples reveals that some students have problems in syntactical level. Some examples of sentence level grammatical mistakes are in spelling, preposition, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, articles, number, tense, capitalization, fragments etc. Even some of them do not know sentence structure well. These students cannot write simple, compound and complex sentences correctly. For example, Group-1 has written-

**Wrong:** Even if the hackers can have access to illegal banking system and steal a huge amount of money. This sentence is incomplete. It does not give sense or meaning. But probably they have tried to convey--

**Better:** Even the hackers can have access to illegal banking system to steal a huge amount of money. Again, G-1 has written--

**Wrong:** Hacking is a great threat to a person's private information or even if a nation's confidential matter.

The sentence looks like split sentence.

**Better is:** Hacking is a great threat to a person's private information, even to a nation's confidential matter.

[G-1, 1<sup>st</sup> draft]**Wrong:** Making a group of IT specialist to protect the server. It is apparent that the sentence is not finished.

**Correct:** A committee comprising a group of IT specialists can be formed to protect the server.

In their writing, there are other sentence level grammatical mistakes like –

**Preposition:** [G-1] **Wrong:** Spreading virus among the computers is also a very well-known cyber crime.

**Correct:** Spreading virus in the computers is also a very well-known cyber crime.

Also, [G-3] **Wrong:** Personal and small level cyber crimes generally take place from frustration of individuals.

**Better & correct:** Personal and small level cyber crimes generally take place out of frustration of individuals.

**Wrong:** Recently, a devastating event of stealing took place from the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers.

**Correct:** Recently, a devastating event of stealing took place in the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers.

**Punctuation:** Because of wrong punctuation, many sentence fragments, comma splice and run-on sentences are found. For example:

[G-1]**Poor:** They are breaking into other computers to steal information  
\_Cyber crime includes hacking, internet piracy, phishing, spreading virus, black mailing and harassing \_

Full stop is not given to finish the sentence; which makes it run-on sentence as if it continues.

**Better:** They are breaking into other computers to steal information. Cyber crime includes hacking, internet piracy, phishing, spreading virus, black mailing, harassing and so on.

If 'and so on' is not used, then it limits the scope. But there might be other chances as well.

**Wrong:** It is not possible to eradicate this problem fully\_

Full stop is not given to finish the sentence.

**Correct:** It is not possible to eradicate this problem fully.

#### *Subject-Verb Agreement*

[G-1, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft] **Wrong:** Piracy, another cyber crime, include breaking copy right of software or book.

**Correct:** Piracy, another cyber crime, includes breaking copy right of software or book.

**Number:** Number related problem or singular-plural mistakes are also visible.

[G-1, 1<sup>st</sup> draft]**Wrong:** One of the cyber crimes piracy which include breaking copyright of software or book.

**Better:** One of the cyber crimes, 'piracy' includes breaking copyright of software or book.

Besides, [G-3, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft]

**Wrong:** Personal and small level cyber crimes generally takes place out of frustration of individuals.

**Correct:** Personal and small level cyber crimes generally take place out of jealousy or enmity of individuals.

**Tense:** Mixing of present and past is also seen in their writing:

[G-2, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft] **Wrong:** It occurs due to the security hole in our today's era of communication and authentication system. Some miscreants often involved in a malpractice to blackmail or harass other people in social media.

**Correct:** It occurs due to the security hole in our today's era of communication and authentication system. Some miscreants often involve in a malpractice to blackmail or harass other people in social media.

Again, [G-3, 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft] **Poor:** Recently, a devastating event of stealing took place from the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers.

**Better:** Recently, a serious theft has taken place from the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers.

#### *Crossing out at the beginning of a line*

If someone crosses out at the beginning of a line, it creates a 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph. But a paragraph is supposed to be written in a single paragraph. For instance-

[G-1] One of the cyber crimes, piracy  
breaking includes breaking copyright of software or book.

Correct: One of the cyber crimes, piracy includes  
breaking breaking copyright of software or book. Again,  
So, they should be inspired to use  
this this intelligence for the development purpose.

Correct: So, they should be inspired to use this  
this intelligence for the development purpose.

#### *Lack of Lexical Variety and Inappropriate Collocation:*

The study of lexical error is important because it reveals learners' knowledge of language. Students fail to generate ideas clearly for the lack of lexical resources. Owing to poor stock of vocabulary, CSE students find it difficult to achieve lexical variety in their writing. They fail to make full use of synonyms to enrich the expression. Lexical

errors seem even more disruptive and more serious than grammatical errors as these sorts of errors impede readers' comprehension. Inappropriate word choices and incorrect collocation fail to convey the correct meaning in students' English writing. For instance-

G-3 has written—

**Wrong:** Cyber crime has become one of the most well-known phenomena in the last few decades.

**Correct:** Cyber crime has become one of the burning issues in the last few decades.

Again,

**Wrong:** Personal and small level cyber crimes generally takes place out of frustration of individuals.

**Correct:** Personal and small level cyber crimes generally take place out of jealousy or enmity of individuals.

Moreover, G-3 has written—

**Poor:** Recently, a devastating event of stealing took place from the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers.

**Better:** Recently, a serious theft took place from the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers. Or, A large amount of money has been stolen from the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers.

In addition, G-2 has written-

**Poor:** People often involve in a practice where they black mail or harass other people in social media.

**Better:** Some miscreants often involve in a malpractice to black mail or harass other people in social media.

### *Academic Writing Difficulties in Structure*

The writing samples of the CSE students have revealed that some of them have some problems in the structure planning of the text, that is, how to start and end the paragraph with topic sentence and terminator; also, how to maintain transition, cohesion and coherences between different sets of ideas for overall unity or organization. For example, G-1 in their 2<sup>nd</sup> draft has started with—

**Poor:** We know internet has created a global connection using computers across the world. Internet has changed the analog world into digital one.

These two sentences could be merged as a topic introducer.

**Better:** Internet has created a global connection changing the analog world to digital one.

Again, G-2 has written –

**Poor:** The proper way to stop these crimes is using the hackers as they know every possible ways to do these.

We can see, there is a gap as it raises a question “using the hackers for what?” As the purpose is not mentioned, it is incomplete. Therefore, it is

**Better:** The proper way to stop these crimes is using the hackers for its defense system as they have very expertise in it.

Some more examples of Topic Sentence:

[G-4] **Poor:** Cyber crime is the type of crime which is becoming more and more acute problem in the perspective of our country.

**Better:** Cyber crime is becoming very acute in our country these days.

Again, **Poor:** As cyber criminals are really difficult to trace and there is not much specialization in the law enforcement authorities \_the extent of cyber crime is ever on increase.

**Better:** Since cyber criminals are really very shrewd to trace, specialization in law enforcement is necessary to control them.

### *Academic Writing Difficulties in content:*

Some students have difficulties in the presentation of content. Because of lack of depth and profundity, they have difficulties in producing new and original ideas. As they lack detail information about the topic, they cannot illustrate it properly rather they repeat the same ideas. Moreover, most of the students are not used to think directly in the target language. Many students translate their ideas from L1 to L2 which is time consuming as well. Besides, some of the students tend to write skipping all the necessary structural steps and methodologies. They do not brainstorm before writing either. So, they need too much time in planning content and forming ideas with pertinent examples and supporting details. My sample CSE students have taken almost two and half hours to produce their 1<sup>st</sup> draft, and next 1 hour to submit their final draft. So, they took extra half an hour as the time limit was 3 hours.

Sample Writings (both 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> draft) of the students of CSE [G-1 & G-3] on CYBER CRIME are shown below:

G-1	1 <sup>st</sup> draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft
	<p>We know internet is a global connection between computers across the world. We use internet to transfer information access others computers. Internet has changed the analog world to digital. But in the meantime the experts of IT are taking advantage of vulnerable systems. They are breaking into others computers to steal information. This is called cyber crime. Hacking, internet piracy, phishing, spreading virus, blackmailing and harassing with the help of internet are various types of cyber crime. Hacking includes stealing highly classified information of Govt. institutions or even a person and selling to the black market. They can have access to illegal banking system and can steal huge amount of money. One of the cyber crimes piracy which include breaking copyright of software or book. Virus spreading is also a very well-known cyber crime. Hackers can easily blackmail and harass any person stealing personal information. Cyber crime can be reduced by building strong server firewall and network protocall. Making a group of IT specialist to protect the server. In recent times Bangladesh govt. has introduced law against cyber crime. That is ICT act. For people Any sort of involvement in cyber crime should be brought under this law punishing properly. And awareness among common people is also necessary. Cyber cannot be completely removed but it can be reduced following specific procedures.</p>	<p>We know internet has created a global connection using computers across the world. Internet has changed the analog world into digital one. But today we are using this system to commit various heinous activities. These negative or illegal activities are known as cyber crime. In the modern era, it has risen to an alarming situation. Mostly these crimes are done by IT experts who are taking the advantage of vulnerable system. They are breaking into other computers to steal information. Cyber crime includes hacking, internet piracy, phishing, spreading virus, blackmailing and harassing. Hacking is a great threat to a person's private information as well as to a nations' confidential matter. Hackers steal them and sell them to the black market. Sometimes they blackmail or harass a person with that informa-tion. Even if the hackers can have access to illegal banking system and steal a huge amount of money. Piracy, another cyber crime, includes breaking copy right of software or book. Spreading virus among the computers is also a very well-known cyber crime. It is not possible to eradicate this problem fully But effective measures can reduce this problem to some extent. For this we should build strong server firewall and network protocol. A group of IT specialist should be made to think over this problem and give probable solution to it. In recent times Bangladesh Govt. has introduced law against cyber crime, named 'ICT act'. The people indulged in cyber crime are very talented. So, they should be inspired to use this intelli-gence for the development purpose.</p>

G-3	1 <sup>st</sup> draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft
	<p>Cyber crime has become one of the most well-known phenomenon in the last few decades. It has turned out to be a social disease. Today's world is a more digitalized world where people spend most of their times in the virtual world. Greater and major cyber attacks often are executed in an organized group. In most cases, the crimes are done for political, international &amp; military purposes. Cyber criminal looks for fault lines in cyber infrastructure. For example, cyber attack on defense networks are done to spy on activities of enemy defense activities. Some cyber criminals aim at draining confidential informations from personal to national level. personal and small level generally takes place from frustration of individuals. Recently, a devastating event has occurred in our country which is the first event in the world's history regarding cyber crime. The reserved money of Bangladesh bank was stolen by cyber hacking .Besides,in this era of social communication ,women are the main victims to cyber harassment. They face abusive messages and emails in social media like facebook, twitter, instagram etc. We need to prevent cyber -crime very efficiently. We can form a 'cyber-patrol' by those who can protect the connectivity of us with the virtual world. The cyber-patrol will be well-trained on IT based on information technology. We also should limit the accessibility of internet to teenagers and limit some particular website. After all, to prevent cyber-crime fully, we have to form unity between all the authorities at governing level. Technology has both its blessings and curses. We have to adopt the blessings and form a careful habit in using internet in order to restore a balance in the virtual world.</p>	<p>Cyber crime has become one of the most burning issues in the last few decades. It has turned out to be a social disease. Today's world is a more digitalized world where people spend most of their time in the virtual world. Greater and major cyber attacks often are executed in an organized group. In most cases, the crimes are done for political, international or military purposes. For example, cyber attack on activities of enemy or rival groups. Some cyber criminals aim at draining confidential informations from personal to national level. Personal and small level cyber crimes generally takes place out of frustration of individuals. Recently, a devastating event of stealing took place from the reserved account of Bangladesh Bank by a group of hackers. Besides, in this era of social communication' women are the main victims to cyber harassment. They face abusive messages and e-mails in social media like face book, twitter, instagram etc. To stop these unfortunate incidents, we can form a 'cyber-patrol' by trained experts who can protect our connectivity with the virtual world. Also, we have to form unity between authorities at governing levels. We also should maintain a limited accessibility of internet to teenagers. After all, technology has both its blessings and curses. Cyber advancements have changed our regular life to a large extent. Today, communication has become much more easier. So, we have to adopt the blessings of technology in order to restore balance in the virtual world.</p>

**Major Reasons Underneath the Problems :****1. Academic Workload**

CSE students are burdened by their academic workload per semester. Moreover, they are more concerned about their major courses. Hence, they have less time to concentrate on English learning and writing practice.

**2. Overemphasis of Practical Skills**

CSE students' difficulties in generating informative, profound and creative ideas can partly be ascribed to the overemphasis of practical skills and the less importance to Social Science and Humanities disciplines in engineering education.

**3. Time Constraint**

In addition, L2 teachers are also concerned to complete the assigned course curricula of a semester. Because of time constraint (only 14 sessions), it becomes very difficult for them to attend to individual writing problems of every individual student regularly.

**4. Lack of Practice**

Most of the students hardly practice writing outside the class room. Moreover, the root causes behind writing problems are greatly influenced by a series of many other factors which are also required to address properly to improve the situation. Those are -

**5. Internal Factors**

Second Language acquisition is a complex process, which is greatly influenced by a series of internal factors, e.g.

- Aptitude or natural capacity or tendency
- Intelligence
- Age
- Gender
- Cognitive or personal knowledge style
- Motivation
- Personality, etc.

(Larsen-freeman, 1991)

**6. External Factors**

- Social context
- Family Environment
- Educational Background
- Classroom Setting

(Larsen-freeman, 1991)

Hence, learners from different educational backgrounds are certain to acquire a foreign language with differential success and encounter different language learning difficulties in their different academic settings.

**7. Educational Background**

Students' educational background plays a major role for their weakness in writing. Majority of the students come from Bangla medium institutions where the students do not get proper exposure to the second language for communicative use. The situation is far worse for the distant rural background students who are deprived of the urban facilities. These students really need to struggle to learn as they get the least exposure to the language. At present, in secondary and higher secondary levels, though communicative English courses have been introduced, even those courses fail to be fruitful for their faulty nature. These courses put emphasis on certain model compositions and passages, and also encourage students to memorize rather than to write by their own to pass and secure good grades in the Annual Final Examination. The question patterns are very typical and usually taken from some given comprehensions of a fixed text or guide books. As a result, students do not have much freedom to design or write by their own. Since learning by heart or memorization hampers learners' English writing capabilities, they should be encouraged and taught to use the language directly.

**8. Methodology**

The popular method of learning English as a foreign language in our country is grammar-translation method with special emphasis on grammar and translation from L1 to L2 and vice versa. Thus by this interference and transformation, the natural flow of learning the target second language in direct method is hampered.

**9. Pattern- Product Approach**

One of the root causes behind composing problems lie in the students' attitude to writing. Since most students at their early academic life are not taught how to develop appropriate organization of ideas, they fail to achieve expected writing proficiency at the advanced level. In their early life, most students

are taught to follow the pattern-product approach which emphasizes mechanical aspects of writing like focusing on grammatical and syntactical structures and imitating models with fixed patterns. This approach only emphasizes linguistic aspects, but ignores the content part, writing freedom, and cognitive approaches. It shows low value in creative writing. Also, it says nothing about the process of composition and “it cares for accuracy only but not for fluency” (Khansir, 2012 b: 292)

### 10. Process Approach and Cognitive Process

A large number of students of our country are not at all conscious of writing as a creative faculty learned through process approach (an approach which is considered the most appropriate one in ESL context. This approach emphasizes that writing itself is a development process that creates self-discovery and meaning. It is concerned with the process of how ideas are developed and formulated in writing. Indeed, it focuses on how clearly and efficiently a learner can express and organize his/her ideas), and cognitive process ( a mental process where learners store knowledge in memory and when that knowledge is put into performance through repeated practice following proper strategies, language learning is facilitated). Lack of interaction and practice deteriorate the situation. As the students do not get the direct exposure and opportunity to use English language, they are not used to write also directly following the appropriate method. Nevertheless, when these students are taught the right procedures at the advanced level, they improve but cannot come out completely error-free at once.

### Recommendations

The problems regarding writing skill development of the students of English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) is an issue of perennial interest to language scholars, EFL/ESL teachers and applied linguists. So, a large scale pedagogic/Andragogic change is necessary for initiating positive and effective means to overcome the existing problems. Consideration of the prime variable factors below can be of great help to improve the present condition in specific to general writing:

1. Learners’ age, background and motivation in terms of needs and wants should be taken into consideration in general (Amin,2006). Since writing in English is a must to pass all the courses per semester, hence CSE students should be serious enough to gain their competence in this language despite their academic pressure.
2. To stimulate the learners’ thinking, teachers are recommended to design interesting or thought- provoking topics for regular tasks and discussions which will ultimately help develop their writing skill. One positive thing is, English teachers of BUET have already started using a well-designed communicative course-curricula incorporating extempore speech, reading based on literary fictions and short stories, discussion and debate, oral presentation and technical writing like report beside grammar learning to inspire, stimulate and generate engineering students’ critical thinking and creative ideas.
3. Selection and organization of course content in terms of learning ability, teaching ability, time frame, contact hours (frequency and duration) are important factors in general. (Amin,2006). Teachers need to design their total course and lecture plans prior to each semester.
4. BUET students study English course just for a single term with 1.5 credit hours (14 classes only), which is not adequate to have expertise in English as a second language. So, BUET academicians can think for a compulsory English course putting emphasis on exclusive writing skill throughout their total period of under grade, which will definitely help the students to be in regular touch with and practice this L2. Also, it will enable the English teachers to give quality time to their students.
5. To make the engineering students serious and interested in English as a subject, ESP (English for Specific Purpose) can be incorporated than EAP (English for Academic Purpose).
6. Moreover, at the beginning of the course, a proficiency test of the learners can be taken to evaluate their aptitude and level; also, categorize them into strong, medium and weak groups for better teaching; next; form groups combining all the strong, medium and weak students so that they can learn from the peer groups as well.
7. Teachers’ qualifications and sound knowledge, experience, sincere motivation, dedication etc, should be taken as important factors



- for better output. Teachers' professional security, work-load, working conditions, sound working environment, training programme for professional development, incentive for extra/additional working hours etc. need to be ensured also for quality teaching. (Amin, 2006 ).
8. Teaching and learning strategies could be responsible for the increase or decrease in the number of errors in the students' L2 writing. Remedial materials, teaching programmes and planning of teaching and learning strategies can be designed or used to enable the students to improve their language and use the target language flawlessly.
  9. Andragogy for adult students (18 years and above) /Pedagogy for non-adult students: A combined art and science of theoretical knowledge and practical skills supported by proper methods, techniques, tools and aids, computer assisted technology, sufficient teaching materials, teachers' handbooks, textbooks, reference books, internet resource materials etc. to teach the students play important role for good teaching and maximizing learning outcomes.
  10. Students need to feel the importance and role of writing both in their academic and real life. Exposure to the language and practice in its active use directly by suitable organization process are essential which are still insufficient. Therefore, teachers should help students giving directions or guidelines on the process or 'how' to build up and develop any topic.
  11. To get information about the topic, teachers may provide the students with some reading materials before writing.
  12. It is recommended that teachers select some model compositions or specimen samples before the writing task to provide meaningful handy reference for students to get better output. When students are exposed to the sample articles, teachers should guide them to pay attention to the language features in the model compositions, and urge them to process the useful language items .Moreover, students should be encouraged to use new words, expressions and sentence patterns that they have acquired, thus, promoting their vocabulary acquisition and linguistic competence. Vocabulary

- acquisition is a long and complex process, and only through considerable language intake and usage, CSE students can eliminate the language barriers to successful English writing.
13. Students also should have sound knowledge about a topic of discourse writing (say, paragraph, essay, Report, etc.). They need to have detailed information about every pros and cons of the topic, its types and layouts, the differences among various parts and elements, etc.
  14. Teachers should increase the number of exercises, drills and classroom activities for writing firstly in the mother tongue and secondly in the L2. For, learners who are not proficient in writing in L1 also lack the ability in their L2 in the matter of planning and organizing their ideas. So, it is really urgent for them to be familiar with the differences in discourse structure between the first and the target language so that they do not transfer the Bangla style of organizing paragraphs and passages to English academic writing.
  15. For learning any language, all its four basic skills are pre-requisite, which are actually inseparable and interdependent. So to learn one particular skill like writing, rest of the skills can be used as complementary tool/s or medium/media. More importantly, both the instructor and the learner should be a kind of avid readers and go for regular extensive reading of books and consulting journals about writing.
  16. Teacher-student ratio should also be taken into account. Standard number of students per class should be 30-35.
  17. Learners' errors are quite natural and vital part of the learning process. So, proper evaluation (individual, pair, peer, teachers' assessment) or feedback (requirement and purpose oriented) or testing (both formative and summative) at regular intervals have become a necessity for better output. But, more focus should be given on discovering meaning or well-justified argument than simply finding errors from the surface texts of the students unless they lead to problems with the interpretation process (Md. Shamsuzzaman and John Everatt, p-74).
  18. Regular reflection and appropriate improvisation by the teacher in the class have really become immediate these days. Writing

instructor should try to aspire to instill mechanical, syntactic, and semantic sophistication in students whose learning is influenced by social, perceptual, and cognitive filters. With regular practice, students will come to show facility in choosing diction, sculpting argument, and manipulating information which are indeed the earmarks of critical intelligence (Md. Shamsuzzaman and John Everatt, p-81).

19. Above all, students should be motivated to regular writing practice outside the class.
20. Last but not the least, students should be discouraged to memorize and follow direct method to express their opinions. The latest communicative approach can be of great help to learn writing skill if we have the right number of motivated and qualified teachers, limited class size, a good number of motivated students and adequate sessions for regular sufficient practices.

### Limitation

The present study has been conducted on just a single section (35 students) of the Department of CSE, BUET. And, only a particular kind of research instrument (writing sample of paragraph) has been used because of time constraint. Therefore, if a large scale investigation could have been conducted on a good quantity of students of all the sections of CSE or all the departments of BUET, or if other research instruments like Questionnaire and Interviews involving both teachers and students could have been undertaken, then a far more authentic broader picture could have been derived which would have opened a wide scope or a new avenue for further extensive research in this field. However, the researcher hopes that despite these limitations, the present study would be found satisfactory in the relevant field which would possibly help language facilitators to ponder over the issues raised once more.

### Conclusion

Since writing is a productive skill, it involves a lot of structures, techniques, sub - skills like stylistic skill (ability to use sentences and language effectively) or mechanical skill (ability to use conventions like

punctuation, spelling, etc, correctly), different genres (different types of literary discourse like narrative, descriptive, procedural/process, argumentative), formal or informal language, etc. which are pretty difficult to acquire overnight. In this regard, Heaton (1979) said that the writing skill acquisition in a foreign language is really complex and difficult to learn in general. So, it requires a conscious effort along with a long continuous rigorous practice to reach a standard level of mastery and expertise. McNamara et al.(2010) mention that ,to become good writers, students need to have a better command of a greater diversity of words and more complex syntactical structures which, as Kellogg (2008) says, takes time through continuous reading, writing and deliberate practice. Moreover, it is seen from the present study that the prime reasons behind CSE students' English writing problems lie in the existing system, approach and methodology of teaching-learning in secondary and higher secondary level along with many other factors. The traditional method does not seem to produce the desired goal of making the students efficient in writing in English appropriately. Therefore, to address and overcome the constraints and impediments of CSE students of BUET regarding this very important writing skill as 'written communication' not just as a 'fixed pattern' in learning English as a foreign language, a concerted effort with proactive attitude and effective pedagogical measures from all relevant quarters have become imperative.

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