



Improving writing fluency of grade V students of Rubesa Primary School in English through collaborative writing strategies

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Abstract

This action research explores the impact of collaborative writing strategies on the English writing fluency of 17 Grade V students at Rubesa Primary School in Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag, Bhutan. The students struggled with writing fluency despite their eagerness to write, exhibiting slow pace, limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and poor confidence. Over six weeks, the study implemented three collaborative writing strategies: Class Shared Writing, Pair and Share Journal Writing, and Jigsaw Writing. Data collection included baseline and post-data document analysis, pre- and post-tests, and a post-survey. Quantitative analysis revealed significant improvements in writers' confidence, speed, and perceived writing quality. Qualitative analysis showed increased vocabulary use, better paragraph organization, and more complex sentence structures. Students enjoyed working with peers and valued classmate feedback. The study demonstrates that collaborative writing fosters fluency development without anxiety for young English language learners. The findings suggest embedding structured peer-to-peer collaborative writing and scaffolding into daily teaching practice can enhance linguistic competence and learner confidence in rural Bhutanese classrooms.

Keywords: Writing fluency, collaborative writing, journal writing, jigsaw writing, grade v, english language learning, peer-to-peer learning

Introduction

In Bhutan's national education framework, English is a compulsory subject and the medium of instruction from upper primary onward. Proficiency in English writing is crucial not only for success in the subject itself but also for performance across disciplines like Science, Social Studies, and ICT, where clear written expression is required. The Department of School Education (2023) ^[5] emphasizes student-centred, communicative approaches to language teaching, with writing fluency identified as a cornerstone of academic literacy.

However, Grade V students at Rubesa Primary School struggle with writing fluently in English. Despite displaying enthusiasm and effort towards writing tasks, they often write slowly, use limited vocabulary, make frequent grammatical errors, and struggle to organize their ideas. As English is a foreign language for most of these rural learners, who speak Dzongkha or local dialects at home, the cognitive load of writing in English is high. Furthermore, parental support is limited due to caregivers' own limited formal education, which is often a result of subsistence farming demands.

In rural schools like Rubesa, where resources and opportunities to practice English are scarce, writing instruction often focuses on teacher-imposed corrections rather than fluency-building practice. This approach can diminish student confidence and inhibit risk-taking in writing. Given the importance of writing fluency as a building block for higher-order literacy skills, it is essential to address this issue. Without action, students may lose interest and develop a negative perception of English.

This action research aims to investigate the impact of collaborative writing strategies on the writing fluency of Grade V students. Grounded in social constructivist theory, the study asserts that learning occurs through dialogue, peer

scaffolding, and co-construction of meaning. The research question guiding this study is: How do collaborative writing strategies improve the writing fluency of Grade V students in English?

Objective

- To improve Grade V students' English writing fluency through collaborative writing strategies in a classroom setting.

Reconnaissance

As the Grade V English teacher at Rubesa Primary School, I observed that despite students' eagerness to participate in writing activities, they struggled with fluency. They frequently paused to ask for spellings, hesitated to start writing, and produced short, fragmented sentences. Analysis of their monthly test scripts and notebooks revealed recurring issues, including limited vocabulary, subject-verb disagreement, run-on sentences, and disorganized ideas. Despite repeated corrections, progress was minimal.

Discussions with my critical friend, Mrs. Sonam Gakey Zangmo, who teaches English in Grade VI, confirmed that these challenges are common in rural multilingual classrooms. She suggested shifting from a correction-focused approach to one prioritizing fluency, confidence, and peer support. Her feedback highlighted the potential of collaborative methods to reduce writing anxiety and promote active language use.

These observations, combined with the school's low English writing scores in formative assessments, motivated this action research. I realized that traditional methods wouldn't address the root causes of students' writing struggles. A structured yet flexible intervention centred on collaboration could provide the scaffolding and social motivation students

needed. This study emerged from a genuine pedagogical concern and a commitment to improving learning outcomes through reflective, evidence-based practice.

Situational Analysis

Rubesa Primary School, located in a semi-rural region of Wangdue Phodrang District, serves a small farming community. The school currently enrolls 103 students from Pre-Primary (PP) to Class VI. Access to digital resources is limited and parental or community engagement in school and academic activities remains minimal. Most parents are subsistence farmers with little or no formal education and therefore provide limited academic support at home.

The Grade V cohort consists of 17 students (10 boys and 7 girls) aged between 10 and 14 years. They share a similar socio-cultural background and speak Dzongkha as their first language, with limited exposure to English outside the classroom. While the students can write short paragraphs on familiar topics and demonstrate an understanding of basic grammar, their writing lacks fluency—defined here as the ability to produce coherent, largely error-free text with reasonable speed and confidence.

In their daily English lessons, students typically spend 15–20 minutes writing four to five sentences. They frequently pause to ask questions such as “How do you spell this?” or “Is this correct?”—a behaviour that interrupts their writing process and reflects their dependence on teacher validation. Consequently, their writing progress is slower compared to their listening and speaking skills, indicating a systematic gap in productive written language development.

This issue is especially significant in Rubesa’s context, as English proficiency is critical for students’ readiness for middle school, where English becomes the main medium of instruction. Weak writing fluency not only affects performance in English but also in other subjects requiring written responses. Persistent difficulties in writing tasks may further undermine students’ confidence and motivation. Given these challenges, there is a pressing need for context-appropriate strategies that enhance writing fluency without overwhelming learners. Collaborative writing presents a promising approach—it capitalizes on peer interaction, a familiar and culturally rooted learning mode in Bhutanese communities, to scaffold language development within a supportive and low-stress environment.

Competence

a. Researcher

My elective subject is English and has more than 8 years of experience teaching English to upper-primary students, including Grade V at Rubesa Primary School. I participated in a two-day Action Research Workshop at Tsirang under the School Leadership Development Program (SLDP) initiated by the Royal Institute of Governance & Strategic Studies (RIGSS). These experiences equipped me with essential skills in lesson planning, data collection, and reflective practice—competencies vital for conducting this study.

b. Research Participants

The seventeen Grade V participants can construct simple paragraphs and understand basic narrative structures such as beginnings, middles, and endings. They possess a foundational grasp of grammar rules but face challenges in applying them accurately and consistently. Their main areas

of weakness include limited vocabulary, lack of sentence variety, and slow writing pace.

c. Critical Friend

Mrs. Sonam Gakey Zangmo, the regular contract teacher (RCT) and my critical friend, brings extensive teaching experience particularly in English language. Having attended the Professional Development (PD) program on Action Research at the Dzongkhag and School level, she provides methodological guidance, reviews intervention plans, and offers constructive feedback to ensure the rigor, validity, and relevance of the study.

Literature Review

Collaborative writing engages students in meaningful discussions, exchange of ideas, and mutual correction of grammatical errors, thereby enhancing their overall writing skills. Research shows that students often prefer working in groups rather than writing independently, as group work reduces stress and anxiety associated with complex writing tasks. The presence of peers provides immediate support and feedback, creating a more relaxed and productive learning environment.

Wongsakorn and Deerajviset (2023) found that collaborative writing significantly improved students’ writing performance because it allowed them to share opinions and generate a collective pool of ideas, leading to more accurate and coherent compositions. The study also revealed that students preferred brainstorming in groups, as they could help one another organize ideas, edit grammatical mistakes identified by the teacher, and proofread their writing tasks together. Moreover, group collaboration fostered a sense of pride, enjoyment, and practicality among learners. These findings support the view that collaborative writing plays a crucial role in developing students’ writing fluency.

For primary learners, a nurturing learning environment and structured teaching approaches are essential. One such approach is journal writing, where students freely express their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and ideas without fear of grammatical judgment. This method encourages fluency by allowing learners to focus on expressing meaning rather than avoiding mistakes. According to Cole and Feng (2015)^[4], strategies such as journal writing, scaffold instruction, and activation of prior knowledge are highly effective for English Language Learners (ELLs). Furthermore, pair-and-share journal writing—where peers exchange journals to provide feedback and ask questions—enhances writing fluency by making the learning process interactive, supportive, and engaging.

Similarly, Chiramanee and Kulprasit (2014)^[3] found that Thai Grade IX students not only improved their writing fluency through journal writing and peer feedback but also developed a positive attitude towards writing itself. This evidence indicates that collaborative writing strategies can effectively enhance writing fluency while fostering a supportive and motivating classroom environment.

Azman and Ayub (2021)^[1], in their study on Malaysian secondary school learners, reported that collaborative writing helped participants organize their writing more effectively. Students were able to structure content appropriately by assigning main ideas to distinct paragraphs, ensuring logical flow and coherence. They also wrote longer texts as they understood that each main idea required

supporting details and examples. In collaborative writing, when each student takes responsibility for a specific part of the text, they naturally pay attention to how their contributions fit into the whole composition. This shared responsibility promotes better organization, clearer structure, and smoother transitions in writing.

In summary, a wide range of research supports the effectiveness of collaborative writing strategies in improving students' writing fluency, organization, and confidence. Through peer interaction, feedback, and shared responsibility, collaborative writing creates an engaging, low-anxiety environment that enables learners to write more fluently and meaningfully.

Action Research Question

How does the use of a collaborative writing strategy improve the writing fluency of Grade V students in English?

Data Collection and Analysis

Baseline Data Collection

To establish a comprehensive baseline of students' writing ability, a pre-test was administered to assess their

performance in four key areas: sentence construction, grammar application, vocabulary use, and organization of ideas. Each category was rated on a 4-point scale (1–4). The data collected from the pre-test were analyzed using Jamovi (version 2.3) to calculate the mean, median, and standard deviation. This provided an initial quantitative understanding of students' writing proficiency prior to the intervention.

Baseline Data Analysis

Students' written samples were evaluated using a rating scale developed by the researcher. Each of the four assessment criteria—sentence construction, grammar, vocabulary, and organization was rated on a 4-point scale (1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Excellent). The quantitative data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, and standard deviation) to establish a clear and objective baseline of students' writing performance. This method ensured consistent, reliable, and unbiased measurement of students' initial writing fluency before implementing the collaborative writing strategy.

Table 1: Pre-test data

Criteria	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
C1 Sentence Construction	1.56	1.50	0.464
C2 Vocabulary Use	1.44	1	0.527
C3 Grammar	1.67	1.50	0.661
C4 Organization of Ideas	2.11	2	0.333

Table 2: Mean Interpretation Range (1-4 Scale)

Rating Scale	Mean Range	Interpretation
1 Poor	0-0.99	Very Low / Poor
2 Fair	1-1.99	Low / Below Average
3 Good	2-2.99	Moderate / Satisfactory
4 Excellent	3-4	High / Very Good

Sentence Construction (C1)

The mean of 1.56 indicated that the students fell within the range of 1–1.99 (Low / Below Average) and with an SD of 0.464, the students were continually performing low in creating sentences.

Vocabulary Use (C2)

The mean of 1.56 indicated that the students fell within the range of 1–1.99 (Low / Below Average) and with an SD of 0.464, the students were continually performing low in creating sentences.

Grammar Application (C3)

The mean is 1.67, still in the low / below average range, but the relatively high (0.661) SD illustrates the relatively more differences in student's grammar abilities. Some students perform much better than their peers, while other students are having more difficulty.

Organization of Ideas (C4)

The average score of 2.11 sits within the moderate / satisfactory range. The standard deviation of 0.333 indicates that students performed consistently in this area, and this was their best skill area compared with the other components.

Ethical consideration

Ethical protocols were adhered to, and parental consent was sought using signed forms that communicated the purpose

of the study, what students would or would not participate in, and that participation was voluntary. Students were informed they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning pet names to all participants and confidentiality when storing data was ensured using a password-protected device. No real names were used in reports and other data samples. Students participated voluntarily and experienced fairness and respect throughout the study and during the study. The support it provided was integrated into English lessons so as to not disrupt or stigmatize those participating. All data were only used for the purpose of research and professional development that aligns with the Ministry of Education's guidelines and processes. A critical friend monitored the ethical phases of the study.

Intervention

The intervention was carried out for 4 weeks with nearly 16 hours of engagement including the baseline data collection while implementing the collaborative writing strategy in the lessons. In the first week the baseline data was collected through pre-test and introduced the concept of collaborative writing and familiarized the students with it. The second week until the fourth week was used to implement the collaborative writing strategies in the classroom. The final week was used to collect post-intervention data through document analysis and post-test. The following were the specific interventions adopted at different stages.

1. Class Shared Writing

In the second week, the class was introduced to share writing. The researcher initially provided a simple topic around which students already had some background knowledge. The class shared their ideas as a whole group while the researcher recorded the sentences on the board as students suggested words and sentences. The researcher demonstrated how to properly write a correct sentence, use capital letters appropriately, incorporate punctuation, and spell words correctly. In order to build students' vocabulary, the researcher modelled synonyms and students were encouraged to utilize more advanced words. For example, when students wanted to write happy, they were prompted to use the words delighted or joyful instead. Students were also encouraged to explain their ideas and participate in helping the researcher improve the writing. In an effort to increase student engagement and invest the students in their writing, the researcher allowed the students to rotate who would write. Over the course of the next few weeks, this component of writing instruction was utilized regularly with the goal of developing students' confidence, writing fluency and vocabulary.

2. Pair and Share Journal Writing

In the third week, Pair and Share journal writing was implemented with the students. The researcher paired students in class, and provided every pair with a notebook to share. They took turns writing short journal entries about their daily experiences. Once one student had written an entry, their partner read the entry and responded by asking a question, giving a comment, or reflecting on the entry with their own experiences. In order to improve student vocabulary skills, the researcher encouraged students to exchange simple or repeated words, with synonym replacements or other words offering more detail. For example, instead of writing "fast", the students were encouraged to replace it with words, like hurried, rushed, or dashed. The researcher frequently implemented these journals once a day to develop this skill. The researcher looked through the journals to determine what vocabulary

was being used, provided feedback on structure and vocabulary use, and continued to guide students toward improving their writing.

3. Jigsaw Writing

Jigsaw writing was introduced during the fourth week. Students were placed in groups of three, and the researcher divided the writing into three parts (introduction, body, conclusion). Students were assigned one of the parts to write. After they completed their writing, the group joined their work and edited the text together. During that process, the researcher prioritized enriching language and vocabulary development by asking students to look for simple or overused words and replace them with stronger synonyms or more precise words. For example, instead of big, they could write enormous, gigantic, or massive. This activity was done the following weeks to develop collaboration skills, editing, and vocabulary.

Post-Intervention Data

To collect post intervention data, the researcher implemented a post-test and employed document analysis. The post-test required Class V to engage in writing a narrative essay, titled "One of the Best Moments in My Life," based on instructions focusing on particular criteria (sentence construction, vocabulary use, grammar application, and organization of ideas) to measure if the collaborative writing approach had increased their writing fluency. Document analysis was used to collect additional data, specifically to analyze students' notebooks and portfolios. To make the research more authentic and to fetch reliable results document analysis was done by the general subject teachers of grade V. In addition to this a survey was conducted for the subject teachers after the document analysis. For the post-test data, descriptive statistics were analyzed in Jamovi version 2.3, calculating the mean, median, and standard deviation. The document analysis and survey together served as tools to produce quantitative and descriptive data for deeper insights.

Table 3: Post Test Data

Criteria	Mean	Median	SD
C1 Sentence Construction	2.67	2.50	0.559
C2 Vocabulary Use	2.50	2.50	0.500
C3 Grammar Application	2.11	2.00	0.741
C4 Organization of Ideas	2.44	2.50	0.527

Sentence Construction (C1)

The mean score of 2.67 was Moderate/Satisfactory, and the standard deviation was 0.559 - meaning most students did better and were more consistent on the tests compared to the pre-test. This shows a clear improvement in students constructing sentences.

Vocabulary Use (C2)

The mean score is 2.50, which also falls into the Moderate / Satisfactory range. An SD of 0.500 indicates students performed at a fairly equivalent level. This represents considerable improvement from the pre-test, in which vocabulary was the weakest area.

Grammar Application (C3)

The mean score of 2.11 indicates that students' grammar skills just reached the lower end of the Moderate / Satisfactory range. The high standard deviation of 0.741 suggests considerable variation in performance, with a noticeable gap between higher- and lower-performing students.

Organization of Ideas (C4)

The mean score is 2.44, which also falls in the Moderate / Satisfactory range. The score had a standard deviation of 0.527, which shows the students improved and there was consistency in the overall organization of their ideas.

Table 4

Post Survey Data Analysis			
	Mean	Median	SD
1. Students are now able to construct clearer and more complete sentences compared to before.	3.25	3.00	0.500
2. There is a noticeable overall improvement in students' writing after the intervention.	3.50	3.50	0.577
3. Students' vocabulary use has improved after the intervention.	4.50	4.50	0.577
4. There are fewer grammar mistakes in students' notebooks and portfolios after the intervention.	3.00	3.00	0.000
5. Students are able to organize their ideas in writing more effectively compared to before.	4.00	4.00	0.000
6. The collaborative writing approach has motivated students to write more confidently.	3.75	4.00	0.500

Table 5: Mean Interpretation Range (1-5 Scale)

Rating Scale	Mean Range	Interpretation
1. Strongly Disagree	0-1	Very Low / Poor
2. Disagree	1.1-2	Low / Below Average
3. Neutral	2.1-3	Moderate / Satisfactory
4. Agree	3.1-4	High / Very Good
5. Strongly Agree	4.1-5	Excellent

Q1 & Q2 (Sentence Construction & Overall Improvement in Writing)

Teachers reported notable improvements in students' writing after the intervention. Sentence construction received a mean score of 3.25 (High / Very Good), indicating that students were writing clearer and more complete sentences. Similarly, overall writing improvement was rated at 3.50 (High / Very Good), reflecting consistent positive progress across multiple areas. The relatively low standard deviations (0.500 and 0.577, respectively) suggest that teachers' observations were largely consistent.

Q3 (Vocabulary Use)

Teachers strongly agreed that students' vocabulary use improved significantly, with a mean score of 4.50 (Excellent). The SD of 0.577 indicates that most teachers' responses were closely aligned, reflecting consistent observations of vocabulary growth.

Q4 (Grammar Mistakes)

With a mean score of 3.00 (Moderate / Satisfactory), grammar appears to be the area showing the least improvement. The SD of 0.000 indicates complete agreement among teachers, highlighting that grammar remains a concern.

Q5 (Organization of Ideas)

The mean score of 4.00 (High / Very Good) shows that teachers agreed students are now better able to organize their ideas. The SD of 0.000 reflects total consensus among teachers.

Q6 (Confidence through Collaborative Writing)

A mean score of 3.75 (High / Very Good) suggests that collaborative writing helped students write more confidently. The SD of 0.500 indicates that teachers' responses were generally consistent.

Results and Discussion

The action research examined the effectiveness of collaborative writing strategies in improving the writing fluency of Grade V students, focusing on sentence construction, vocabulary, grammar, and organization of ideas. Both pre- and post-test data, document analysis, and teacher surveys were used to assess progress.

Baseline Results

The pre-test revealed generally weak writing skills. Sentence construction (M = 1.56, SD = 0.464) and vocabulary (M = 1.44, SD = 0.527) were low, indicating difficulty in forming clear sentences and limited word use. Grammar (M = 1.67, SD = 0.661) showed wide variation among students, while organization of ideas (M = 2.11, SD = 0.333) was relatively better but still moderate. These results confirmed the need for scaffolding through collaborative approaches (Cole & Feng, 2015) [4].

Post-Test Results

After six weeks of collaborative writing activities—class shared writing, pair-and-share journals, and jigsaw writing—students showed clear improvement across all areas.

1. Sentence construction rose from 1.56 to 2.67 (SD = 0.559), indicating greater clarity and completeness.
2. Vocabulary improved from 1.44 to 2.50 (SD = 0.500), showing broader word use supported by peer exchanges.
3. Grammar increased modestly from 1.67 to 2.11 (SD = 0.741), remaining the weakest area.
4. Organization of ideas advanced from 2.11 to 2.44 (SD = 0.527), reflecting better essay structure.

Overall, vocabulary and sentence construction showed the greatest gains, aligning with Wongsakorn and Deerajviset (2023) and Azman and Ayub (2021) [1], who found that collaboration enhances vocabulary and logical organization.

Post-Survey Results

Teacher feedback corroborated these improvements.

1. Sentence construction (M = 3.25, SD = 0.500) and organization of ideas (M = 4.00, SD = 0.000) were rated highly.
2. Vocabulary (M = 4.50, SD = 0.577) showed the most notable progress.
3. Grammar (M = 3.00, SD = 0.000) remained a concern.
4. Confidence in writing (M = 3.75, SD = 0.500) increased significantly.

Teachers agreed that collaborative writing fostered fluency, confidence, and motivation.

Discussion

Collaborative writing—through shared, peer, and jigsaw activities—proved effective in improving writing fluency. It

enhanced sentence construction, vocabulary, and organization by providing scaffolding, feedback, and shared responsibility. However, grammar accuracy improved less, indicating a need for additional focused instruction. These findings support previous studies emphasizing that collaboration builds fluency and confidence but requires targeted grammar support (Cole & Feng, 2015; Wongsakorn & Deerajiset, 2023) ^[4].

Reflection

What Worked

Collaborative writing increased engagement, confidence, and motivation. Initially hesitant, students became more comfortable sharing and revising work. Vocabulary use expanded through peer feedback and discussion, and essay organization improved through jigsaw writing. These outcomes align with Lopres *et al.* (2023) and a recent study showing that collaboration reduces writing anxiety and enhances self-efficacy (Frontiers, 2023).

Challenges

Grammar remained a persistent challenge despite overall improvement, consistent with studies noting that fluency gains often outpace grammatical accuracy. Time constraints and uneven group participation also affected outcomes. Managing group dynamics and integrating collaboration efficiently into the curriculum are areas for further development.

Conclusion

This research confirmed that collaborative writing strategies significantly improved the writing fluency of Grade V students by enhancing vocabulary, organization, and confidence. Grammar requires continued, focused attention. The process strengthened reflective practice and underscored the value of collaboration for sustained writing growth and student motivation.

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