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Scope of Cooperative Language Learning Opportunities in the EFL Classes in Bangladesh: A Study among Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract

This study examines the opportunities for Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) level in Bangladesh and explores the challenges to its implementation. Using a descriptive, quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, data were gathered from 320 students across 32 institutions (both rural and urban) from all eight education boards in Bangladesh through a structured questionnaire. The results highlight a significant and consistent urban-rural gap. Urban students report notably higher and more regular exposure to various cooperative learning activities, such as collaborative writing, role-plays, and group projects, with agreement levels between 52% and 72%. Conversely, rural students report much lower exposure (12% to 40%) and no strong agreement for any cooperative practice. While both rural and urban students recognize large class sizes as a major obstacle, rural students additionally face challenges related to infrastructure and a persistent teacher-centered culture. Despite limited exposure, rural students surprisingly have a stronger belief in the effectiveness of cooperative learning. The study concludes that the potential for CLL in Bangladesh is not only limited but also inherently unequal, resulting in a two-tiered education system where geography influences access to communicative, learner-centered teaching. Recommendations include tailored teacher training, curriculum reforms to emphasize collaborative skills, targeted infrastructure investments for rural schools, and the development of low-anxiety learning routines to bridge educational gaps and promote equitable implementation of the national curriculum.

Keywords: Cooperative Language Learning, EFL, Higher Secondary Education, Urban-Rural Divide, Educational Inequality, Bangladesh

I. INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Learning (CL) is considered one of the most effective methods for promoting academic progress. The term refers to a small, preferably diverse group of students working together to achieve a common goal (Pateşan et al., 2016). In Cooperative Learning, each member is responsible for the group's collective learning (Jacobs & Hall, 2002). Group members support each other in reaching their shared objective, fostering a culture of achievement and strengthening team spirit (Johnson et al., 1998). According to Niculescu and Dobre (2011), CL has significant potential to influence students and can be applied across disciplines and grade levels. Therefore, it can be argued that Cooperative Learning offers better support for learners. CL is widely used by teachers worldwide. CL has two main components: "Cooperation" and "Learning." It highlights collaboration to reach shared goals and verify understanding (Pateşan et al., 2016). During collaborative learning, participants gather to participate in small-group activities (Niculescu & Dobre, 2011). These groups may consist of two to six students with common academic aims. This approach creates a balance between personalized and collective learning by reducing competition. Agarwal and Nagar (2011). Cooperative Learning has five core pillars, called the 'Elements of Cooperative Learning.' These are Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Group Processing, Small Group Skills, and Face-to-Face Interactions (Johnson & Johnson, 2018; SERC, 2020).

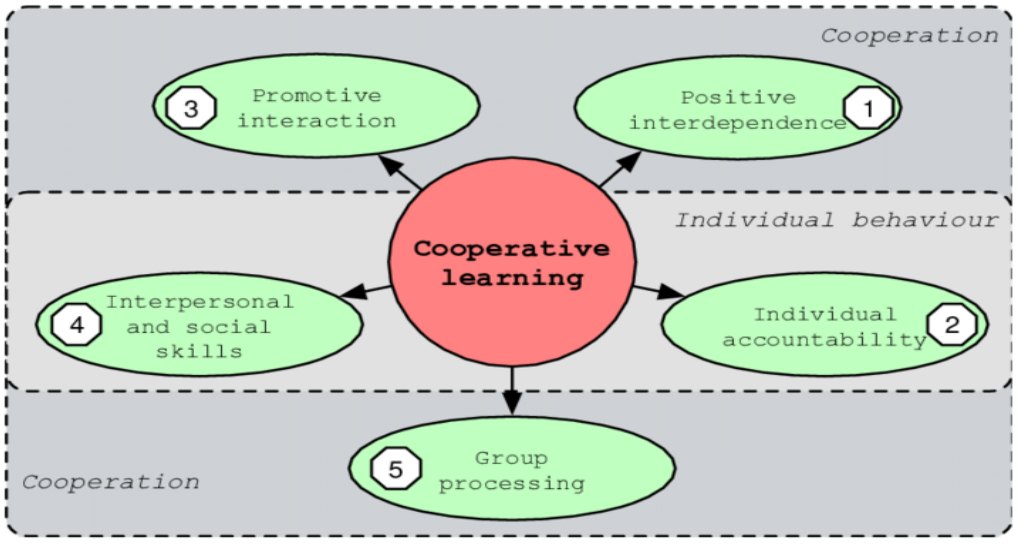

Figure 1: Elements of Cooperative Learning

Figure 1 illustrates the five components of Cooperative Learning. Various factors must be considered when implementing Cooperative Learning Strategies (CLSs). These factors include establishing objectives, selecting an appropriate approach to group formation, arranging the space, explaining tasks to learners, clarifying assessment criteria, and facilitating the implementation of the five components of CL (Rahman et al., 2019). Researchers advocated for the promotion of Cooperative Learning inside educational institutions, particularly at the school level. It may assist in orienting learners both intellectually and socially (Johnson & Johnson, 2018). Consequently, educators must to be encouraged to implement the CLSs in their instruction (Jacobs & Hall, 2002). The HSC English curriculum in Bangladesh is founded on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology, which was used to enhance students' "communicative competence"(Hamid, 2011). This method essentially corresponds with cooperative learning as it transitions from passive, lecture-centric education to active student participation (Aruan, 2018). The prescribed HSC English textbook, published by the National

Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), is also designed to facilitate this. It integrates communicative functions with grammar and focuses on practicing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). The very nature of CLT requires interaction, and cooperative learning strategies like group work, pair work, role-plays, and simulations are the primary tools for bringing this curriculum to life (Momtaz & Garner, 2010). Hence, it is essential to investigate the scope of Cooperative Language Learning Opportunities in the HSC-level EFL Classes in Bangladesh.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperative Learning (CL) serves as a viable alternative within the EFL environment, where Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is recommended as a pedagogical strategy for English language instruction (Chen, 2018). By enabling students to use newly learned abilities and engage in discussions to expand their knowledge, CL may serve as an adjunct to teachers' education (Simon, 2021). Consequently, the educator assumes the role of facilitator and mediator in the learning process. Such educational activities promote the interests of learners (Roger & Johnson, 1994). Cooperative learning is an appropriate method to evaluate social learning via structured group activities (Johnson & Johnson, 2018). Cooperation needs practice and assistance; it does not occur spontaneously (Hernández-Sellés et al., 2019). Learning experiences must be meticulously crafted to facilitate effective and efficient cooperation among students; otherwise, some may resort to independent work (Zhou, 2012). Engaging pupils in the competition enhances their ability to cooperate effectively. But an excessive emphasis on competitiveness may cause students to prioritize winning above learning (Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014). Cooperative learning can be beneficial in this context. This is a pedagogical method wherein students collaboratively seek answers to an issue designated by the instructor (Afghari & Khayatan, 2017). Cooperative Learning exhibits significant variability; nonetheless, most settings emphasize learners' investigation or application of course content rather than the instructor's presentation or elucidation of it (Nguyen, 2022; Center for Teaching Innovation, 2022; Valamis, 2022). Collaboration, including task and team control, mutual support, motivation, and good contact, is effective in attaining academic gains (Scager et al. 2016).

Mandikonza (2022) conducted research demonstrating that Cooperative Learning promotes the enhancement of both individual and group abilities related to concept acquisition in pre-service teachers. In addition to academic accomplishment, psychological and social aspects, including learner satisfaction, motivation, and engagement, are crucial in the learning process. CL offers opportunities for group education, peer tutoring, and peer evaluation that are correlated with increased learner satisfaction (Chen, 2018; Hernández-Sellés et al., 2019). Moreover, various studies indicate that Cooperative Learning positively influences learner motivation (Chin-Fei & Chia-Ju, 2012), improves metacognitive and critical thinking skills (Begum, 2018), facilitates extensive knowledge construction (Baanqud et al., 2020), aids in achieving greater learner engagement (Youngren, 2021), and enhances learners' civic problem-solving capabilities (Yunus et al., 2021). Although CL has advantages, it also encounters certain obstacles. Research indicated that the extensive nature of the syllabus influences the duration required for the application of CL in a classroom (Wangda & Dorji, 2020). Nonetheless, class size, noise, and loss of classroom management (Nguyen et al., 2021) are consistent obstacles to facilitating CL that could be mitigated by allocating duties to students, establishing a conducive learning environment, and meticulously supervising the groups (Zhou, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2021). Consequently, it can be said that CL has vast prospects in language education. The government of Bangladesh emphasizes English education at all levels and introduces CLT for promoting English language teaching and learning. The characteristics of CLT are mainly aligned with the characteristics of cooperative learning techniques. However, there is a lack of systematic research on the scope of CL in the context of English education in Bangladesh, especially at the HSC level. The study is expected to bridge the gaps in research in this specific field.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study mainly explores the scope of Cooperative Language Learning Opportunities in the EFL Classes at the HSC level in Bangladesh. The study also investigates the challenges to implementing cooperative language learning techniques in the EFL classrooms.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

This section details the systematic procedures employed to investigate the scope of Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) opportunities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh. A descriptive, quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. This design is appropriate as it allows for the collection of numerical data to describe the current state of a phenomenon, such as the frequency, nature, and perception of CLL opportunities, from a large sample at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach enables the researcher to identify patterns and relationships between variables (e.g., institution location and perceived frequency of CLL) without manipulating the study environment. The target population for this study comprised all higher secondary students enrolled in colleges and higher secondary schools affiliated with the major education boards in Bangladesh (Dhaka, Rajshahi, Comilla, Jessore, Chittagong, Sylhet, Barisal, and Mymensingh). From each division, a total of 4 HSC-level institutions were randomly selected (2 from rural and 2 from urban areas) using a lottery method. This resulted in a total of 32 institutions (8 divisions × 4 institutions). From each selected institution, a list of all students enrolled in the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) first-year and second-year classes was obtained. Using a simple random sampling technique (random number table), 10 students were selected from each institution. This yielded a final intended sample size of 320 students (32 institutions × 10 students). The primary data collection instrument was a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed in English, piloted, and subsequently translated into Bangla (the native language) to ensure complete comprehension by all participants. Data analysis included counting the percentage and frequency of the learners' perceptions regarding the scope of CLL. Besides, Independent Samples t-tests were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of perceived CLL opportunities (CLO Scale) based on binary demographic variables such as institution type (Rural/Urban).

V. FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

The study conducted a questionnaire survey to explore the perceptions of the HSC level students regarding the scope of cooperative language learning opportunities in their classroom. The data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 following proper statistical methods. The results of the data analysis have been discussed below.

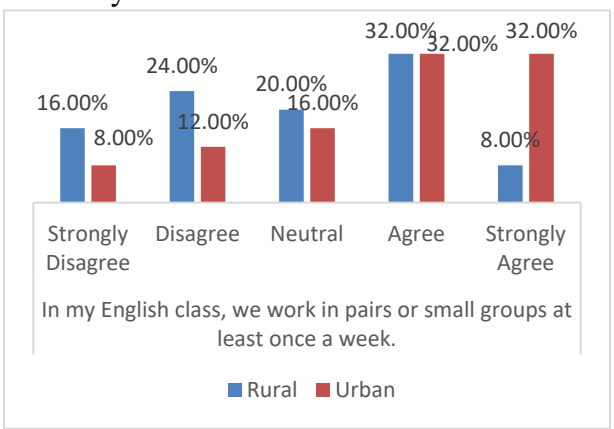

Chart One

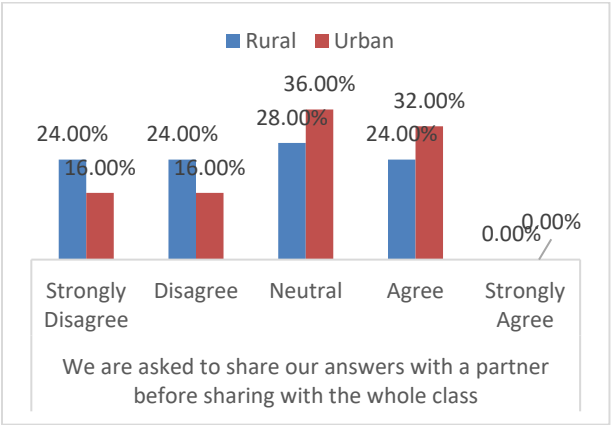

Chart Two

The most significant and immediate observation of the first data set is the dramatic difference in the frequency of cooperative learning between rural and urban classrooms. While the curriculum advocates for pair and group work, the reality for students varies greatly depending on their institution's location. A combined 64% (32% Agree + 32% Strongly Agree) of urban students report working in pairs or small groups at least once a week. This indicates that a solid majority in urban settings experience at least a minimal level of cooperative learning. In stark contrast, only 40% (32% Agree + 8% Strongly Agree) of rural students report the same frequency. This is a significantly lower adoption rate. Conversely, 40% (16% Strongly Disagree + 24% Disagree) of rural students explicitly state they have no experience with weekly cooperative learning, compared to only 20% of urban students. This second dataset provides a fascinating and nuanced counterpoint to the first. While the previous statement measured the frequency of pair/group work, this statement measures a specific pedagogical technique: the "think-pair-share" structure, where students first discuss answers with a partner before being called upon in front of the whole class. This distinction is crucial because think-pair-share represents a more structured, scaffolded form of cooperative learning that is specifically designed to reduce anxiety and increase participation—a key goal of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach underlying the HSC curriculum. The most striking observation is the complete absence of "Strongly Agree" responses in both rural and urban contexts (0.0% for both). This indicates that the structured think-pair-share technique is not being implemented as a regular, well-established classroom routine anywhere, regardless of location. Instead, the data reveals a pattern of hesitant, inconsistent adoption, with a significant portion of students (Rural 28% and Urban 36%) sitting in a "neutral" zone of uncertainty.

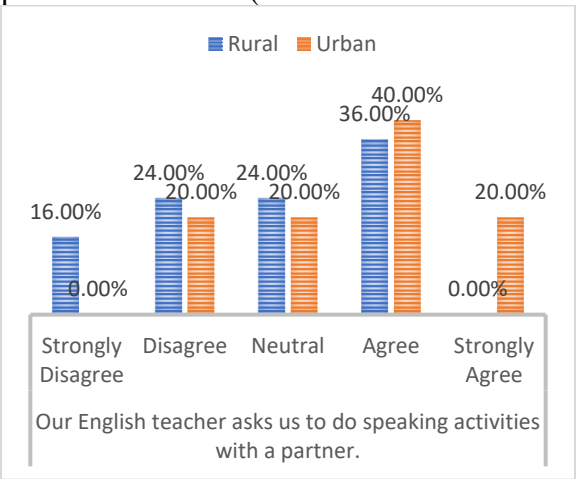

Chart Three

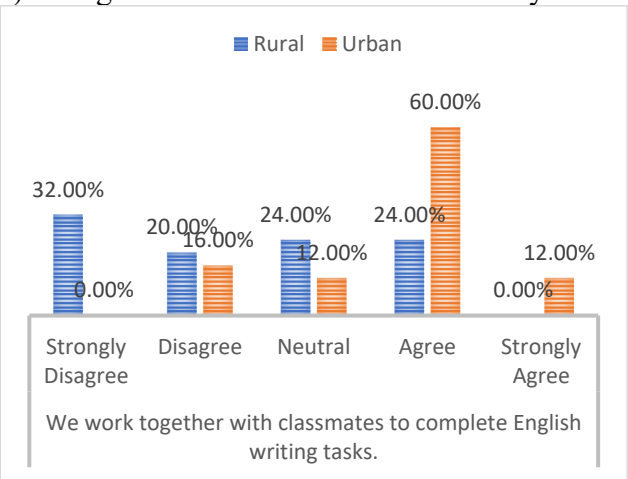

Chart Four

This third dataset is particularly revealing as it focuses on a specific, foundational communicative activity: paired speaking practice. The data reveal a dramatic and concerning urban-rural divide, with urban students reporting significantly higher exposure to paired speaking activities than their rural counterparts. In urban classrooms, paired speaking activities appear to be a normalized and relatively routine practice for a majority of students (Strongly Agree 20% and Agree 40%). The presence of 20% "Strongly Agree" responses is particularly significant—it indicates that for a substantial minority, this is not an occasional activity but an established classroom routine. The complete absence of "Strongly Disagree" suggests that even students who do not experience it regularly are at least exposed to it occasionally. In rural classrooms, 40% of students (Strongly Disagree + Disagree) explicitly state they are not asked to do paired speaking activities. When combined with the 24% who are neutral (likely indicating inconsistency or uncertainty), a full 64% of rural students either do not experience paired speaking or experience it so inconsistently that they cannot confirm it.

This fourth dataset is arguably the most striking of the series. It focuses on collaborative writing, which is a higher-order cooperative learning activity that requires significant coordination, trust, and pedagogical structuring. The data reveal an extreme and alarming urban-rural divide, with urban students reporting collaborative writing experiences at nearly four times the rate of rural students. Urban students are 3 times more likely to report collaborative writing activities than rural students. When examining only "Strongly Agree" responses, the disparity is infinite (12% vs. 0%), indicating that no rural student in the sample experiences collaborative writing as a strongly established routine. For a majority of rural students (52%), collaborative writing is explicitly absent from their English learning experience. When combined with the 24% who are neutral (likely indicating extreme inconsistency or uncertainty), a full 76% of rural students either do not experience collaborative writing or experience it so rarely that they cannot confirm it.

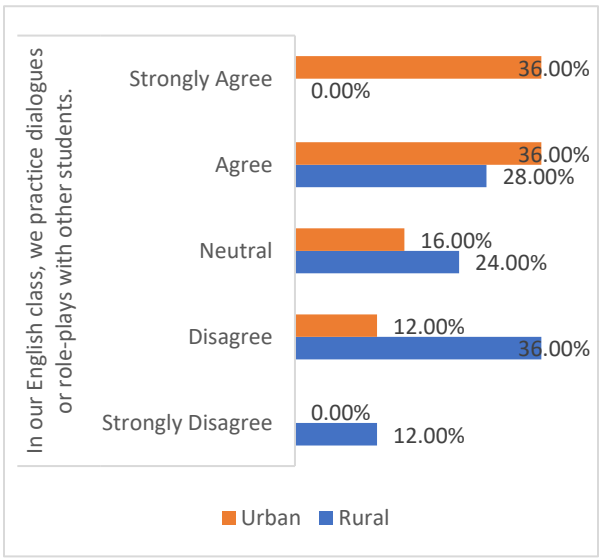

Chart Five

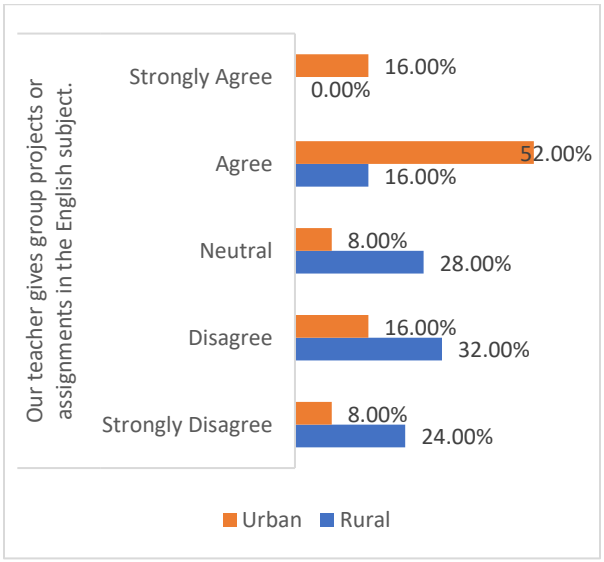

Chart Six

This fifth dataset reveals the most extreme urban-rural divide observed across all items. For role-plays and dialogues, activities that represent the pinnacle of communicative language teaching, urban students report 72% agreement (36% Agree + 36% Strongly Agree), with over one-third experiencing these activities as a strongly established routine. In stark contrast, only 28% of rural students agree, with none reporting strong agreement. Meanwhile, 48% of rural students explicitly disagree (12% Strongly Disagree + 36% Disagree) that such activities occur in their English classes, which is more than double the urban disagreement rate of 12%. This disparity suggests that while urban classrooms have successfully integrated the interactive, performative aspects of communicative language teaching, rural students are being systematically excluded from the very activities most central to developing authentic speaking confidence. This sixth dataset reveals a continuation of the profound urban-rural divide, with group projects representing another area where urban students receive dramatically more cooperative learning opportunities than their rural counterparts. Urban students report 68% agreement (52% Agree + 16% Strongly Agree) that they receive group projects or assignments in English, with a substantial 16% experiencing this as a strongly established routine. In contrast, only 16% of rural students agree, and none report strong agreement. Meanwhile, 56% of rural students explicitly disagree (24% Strongly Disagree + 32% Disagree) that group projects are assigned, more than triple the urban disagreement rate of 24%. The rural "Neutral" category remains high at 28%, suggesting inconsistency or uncertainty for nearly one-third of rural students.

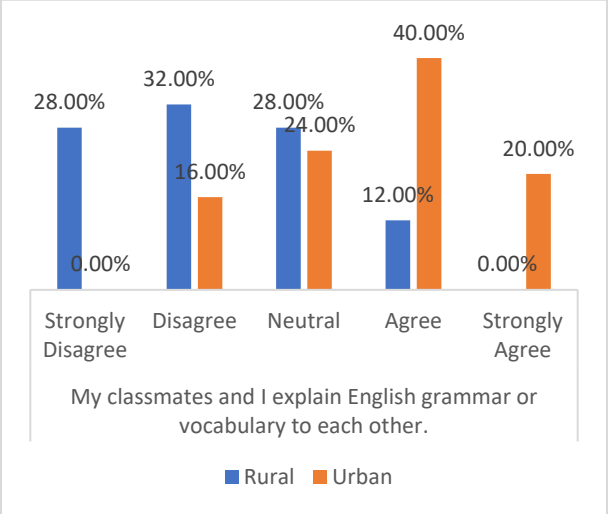

Chart Seven

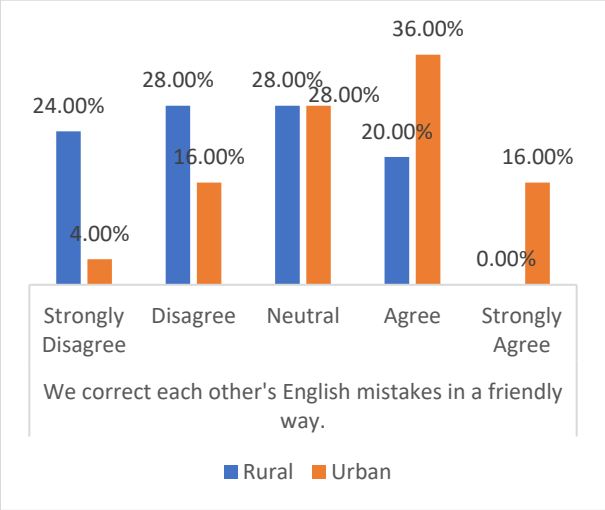

Chart Eight

This seventh dataset addresses peer-to-peer explanation of grammar and vocabulary, which is a form of cooperative learning that reflects deep cognitive engagement and mutual scaffolding. The data reveals yet another striking urban-rural divide. Urban students report 60% agreement (40% Agree + 20% Strongly Agree) that they explain grammar or vocabulary to classmates, with a significant 20% experiencing this as a strongly established routine. In contrast, only 12% of rural students agree, and none report strong agreement. A full 60% of rural students explicitly disagree (28% Strongly Disagree + 32% Disagree) that such peer-teaching occurs, compared to only 16% of urban students. The rural "Neutral" category remains high at 28%, indicating widespread uncertainty or inconsistency. This eighth dataset addresses peer error correction, which is a sophisticated form of cooperative learning that requires a classroom culture of trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for learning. The data reveals a significant urban-rural divide, though with some noteworthy nuances. Urban students report 52% agreement (36% Agree + 16% Strongly Agree) that they correct each other's English mistakes in a friendly way, with 16% experiencing this as a strongly established routine. In contrast, only 20% of rural students agree, and none report strong agreement. A full 52% of rural students explicitly disagree (24% Strongly Disagree + 28% Disagree) that friendly peer correction occurs, more than double the urban disagreement rate of 20%. The "Neutral" category is identical in both contexts at 28%, suggesting that over one-quarter of students in both settings experience peer correction inconsistently or are uncertain about what constitutes "friendly" correction.

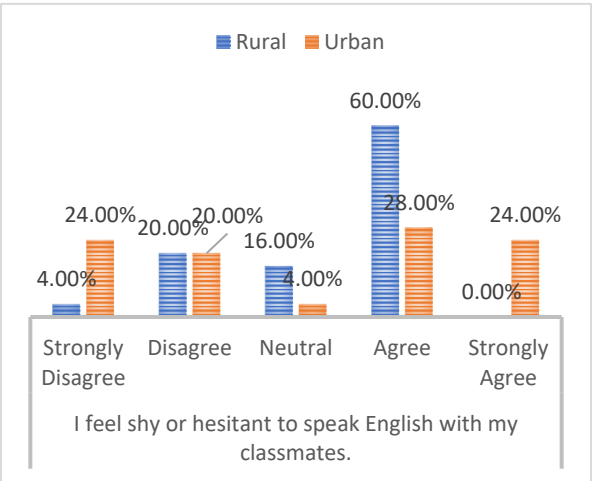

Chart Nine

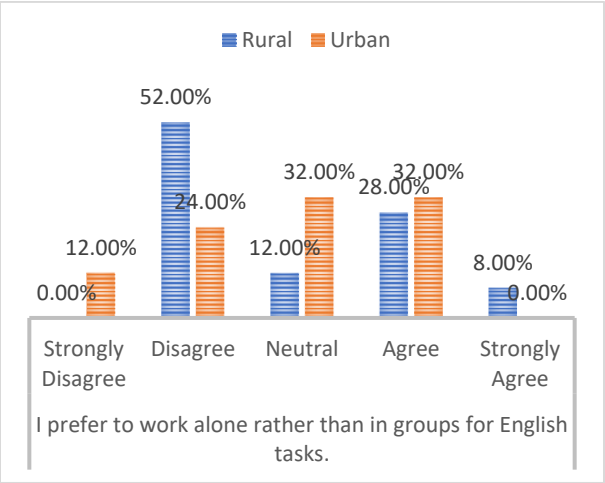

Chart Ten

This ninth dataset shifts focus from the availability of cooperative learning opportunities to students' affective responses, specifically, the anxiety or hesitation they experience when speaking English with peers. The data reveal a stark and inverse relationship between exposure to cooperative learning and speaking anxiety. The agreement rates appear close (60% rural vs. 52% urban), but the distribution and the confidence indicators tell a more nuanced story. The concentration of responses in the "Agree" category (60%) without any "Strongly Agree" suggests that shyness is widespread but perhaps situational or moderate rather than intense. However, the fact that only 24% of rural students express confidence (disagree with feeling shy) indicates that the majority lack the comfort needed for spontaneous peer interaction. This tenth dataset reveals a fascinating inversion of the urban-rural dynamic, showing that rural students are more likely to prefer working alone, while urban students demonstrate greater openness to group work—a finding that aligns with their respective levels of cooperative learning exposure. 52% of rural students disagree (52% Disagree + 0% Strongly Disagree) with preferring to work alone, meaning just over half actually prefer collaboration, while 36% agree (28% Agree + 8% Strongly Agree) that they prefer solitary work. In contrast, 36% of urban students disagree (12% Strongly Disagree + 24% Disagree), while 32% agree (32% Agree + 0% Strongly Agree), but notably, 32% of urban students remain neutral, the highest neutral rate for this item, suggesting openness or situational flexibility. The presence of 8% Strongly Agree among rural students (with no urban equivalent) indicates a small but significant subset who strongly resist group work, likely reflecting ingrained habits from teacher-centered instruction. Overall, urban students show greater readiness for collaborative learning, consistent with their substantially higher exposure to cooperative activities across the previous item

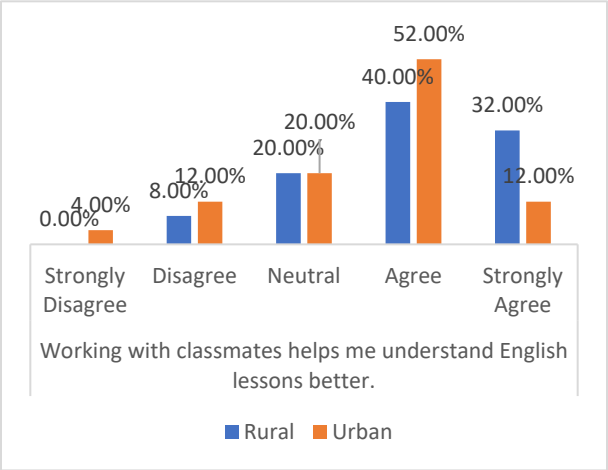

Chart Eleven

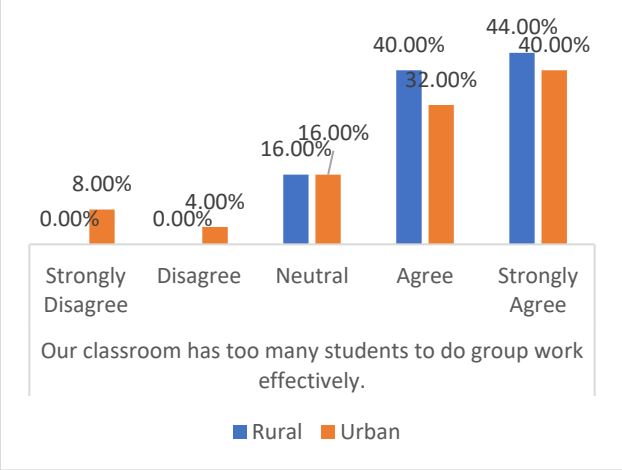

Chart Twelve

This eleventh dataset captures students' perceived effectiveness of cooperative learning, which is a crucial measure of whether students themselves recognize the pedagogical value of working with peers. The data reveal that while a majority in both contexts affirm the benefits of collaboration, the pattern of affirmation differs significantly between rural and urban students. 72% of rural students agree (40% Agree + 32% Strongly Agree) that working with classmates helps them understand English lessons better, with a remarkable 32% Strongly Agree, the highest "Strongly Agree" percentage for rural students across all items. Urban students show 64% agreement (52% Agree + 12% Strongly Agree), but with only half as many "Strongly Agree" responses (12% vs. 32%). This creates an unusual pattern: despite rural students having consistently lower exposure to cooperative learning throughout the previous items, they report stronger belief in its effectiveness when they do experience it. This twelfth dataset addresses a structural constraint frequently cited as a barrier to cooperative learning implementation: large class size. The data reveal an overwhelming consensus across both rural and urban contexts that

class size poses a significant challenge to effective group work. A combined 84% of rural students agree (40% Agree + 44% Strongly Agree) that their classroom has too many students to do group work effectively, with 44% expressing strong agreement. Urban students show nearly identical perceptions, with 72% agreement (32% Agree + 40% Strongly Agree) and 40% Strongly Agree. Notably, no rural student disagrees (0% Strongly Disagree + 0% Disagree) with this statement.

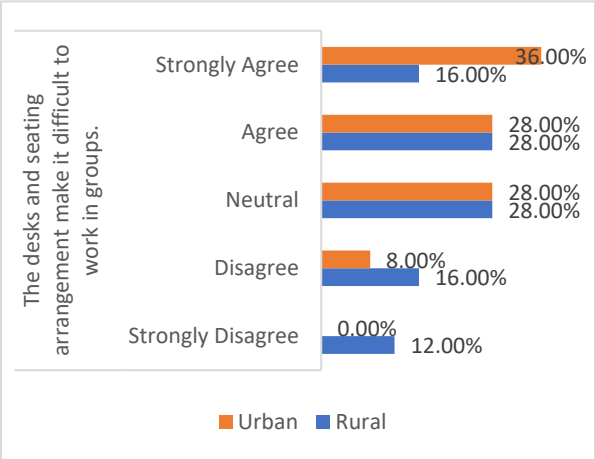

Chart Thirteen

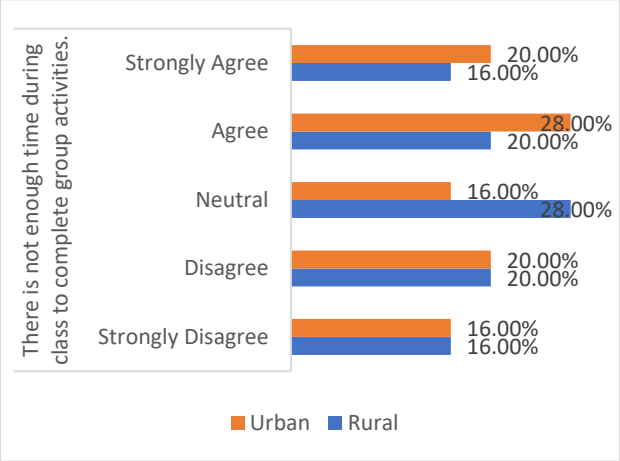

Chart Fourteen

This thirteenth dataset addresses physical infrastructure constraints, specifically how classroom furniture and seating arrangements impact the feasibility of group work. The data reveal that while both rural and urban students perceive physical barriers, the nature and intensity of these constraints differ significantly between contexts. 44% of rural students agree (28% Agree + 16% Strongly Agree) that desks and seating arrangements make group work difficult, while 28% disagree (12% Strongly Disagree + 16% Disagree) and another 28% remain neutral. In contrast, 64% of urban students agree (28% Agree + 36% Strongly Agree) with this statement, with 36% expressing strong agreement, more than double the rural strong agreement rate of 16%. Notably, no urban student strongly disagrees (0%), whereas 12% of rural students do. This fourteenth dataset addresses time constraints as a perceived barrier to implementing group activities, which is a factor often cited by teachers as a reason for avoiding cooperative learning. The data reveal remarkable similarity between rural and urban student perceptions, with both contexts showing divided opinions rather than consensus. 36% of rural students agree (20% Agree + 16% Strongly Agree) that there is insufficient time for group activities, while 36% disagree (16% Strongly Disagree + 20% Disagree), and 28% remain neutral. Urban students show 48% agreement (28% Agree + 20% Strongly Agree), with 36% disagreement (16% Strongly Disagree + 20% Disagree), and 16% neutral. Notably, the "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" categories are identical across both contexts (16% and 20%, respectively), indicating a shared minority that firmly believes time is adequate. This distribution suggests that time perception is highly variable and likely depends more on individual teacher practices than on rural or urban location.

Results from the t-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
		F	Sig.
In my English class, we work in pairs or small groups at least once a week.	Equal variances assumed	.009	.923
	Equal variances not assumed		

We are asked to share our answers with a partner before sharing with the whole class	Equal variances assumed	4.826	.029
	Equal variances not assumed		
Our English teacher asks us to do speaking activities with a partner.	Equal variances assumed	2.341	.127
	Equal variances not assumed		
We work together with classmates to complete English writing tasks.	Equal variances assumed	47.252	.000
	Equal variances not assumed		
In our English class, we practice dialogues or role-plays with other students.	Equal variances assumed	4.299	.039
	Equal variances not assumed		
Our teacher gives group projects or assignments in the English subject.	Equal variances assumed	2.372	.124
	Equal variances not assumed		
My classmates and I explain English grammar or vocabulary to each other.	Equal variances assumed	.098	.755
	Equal variances not assumed		
My group members listen carefully when I speak in English during group activities.	Equal variances assumed	19.808	.000
	Equal variances not assumed		
We correct each other's English mistakes in a friendly way.	Equal variances assumed	.441	.507
	Equal variances not assumed		
Working with friends helps me overcome my fear of making mistakes in English.	Equal variances assumed	6.319	.012
	Equal variances not assumed		
I feel shy or hesitant to speak English with my classmates.	Equal variances assumed	147.218	.000
	Equal variances not assumed		
I prefer to work alone rather than in groups for English tasks.	Equal variances assumed	5.004	.026
	Equal variances not assumed		
Working with classmates helps me understand English lessons better.	Equal variances assumed	3.297	.070
	Equal variances not assumed		
Our classroom has too many students to do group work effectively.	Equal variances assumed	22.035	.000
	Equal variances not assumed		
The desks and seating arrangement make it difficult to work in groups.	Equal variances assumed	10.803	.001
	Equal variances not assumed		
There is not enough time during class to complete group activities.	Equal variances assumed	5.311	.022
	Equal variances not assumed		

Based on the Levene's Test results, significant variance differences between rural and urban groups were found for 10 out of 16 items ($p \leq 0.05$), indicating that the two populations differ fundamentally in their response patterns. The strongest evidence of unequal variance emerged for collaborative writing ($F = 47.252$, $p < 0.001$), shyness in speaking English ($F = 147.218$, $p < 0.001$), and overcrowding as a barrier ($F = 22.035$, $p < 0.001$)—items representing the most profound disparities between rural and urban educational experiences. For these 10 items, any subsequent t-test comparisons must use the "equal variances not assumed" (Welch's correction) row to ensure valid statistical inference. The remaining 6 items (including general pair work, speaking activities, group projects, peer correction, peer explanation, and perceived effectiveness) showed no significant variance differences ($p > 0.05$), permitting the assumption of equal variances for t-test analysis. Overall, the predominance of unequal variance findings confirms that rural and urban HSC English classrooms constitute two distinct educational

contexts rather than points on a continuum, with urban responses showing greater polarization due to the presence of strong affirmers, while rural responses remain concentrated in negativity and neutrality.

VI. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The research entitled "Scope of Cooperative Language Learning Opportunities in the EFL Classes in Bangladesh: A Study among Higher Secondary Students" uncovers a significant and systematic urban-rural disparity in the use of cooperative learning within HSC English classrooms. An analysis of fourteen questionnaire questions reveals that urban students regularly report substantially greater exposure to cooperative learning activities compared to their rural peers, with the disparity increasing as task difficulty escalates. Urban students exhibit agreement rates between 52% and 72% for various cooperative learning practices, such as collaborative writing (72%), role-plays (72%), group projects (68%), and paired speaking (60%). In contrast, rural students demonstrate agreement rates ranging from 12% to 40%, with a notable absence of "Strongly Agree" responses across all eight cooperative learning items. The difference is biggest for complicated, organized tasks: collaborative writing has a 48-point difference, group projects have a 52-point difference, and peer explanation has a 48-point difference. Levene's Test for equality of variances shows that rural and urban populations are fundamentally different. For 10 out of 16 questions, the variance differences are significant ($p < 0.05$), which means that urban responses are polarized, whereas rural responses are mostly negative or neutral. The results together show that Bangladesh's higher secondary English instruction has a two-tiered educational system. Urban kids are in a communicative, learner-centered classroom that is more and more like the goal of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) curriculum. Cooperative learning is becoming a typical part of the routine. In contrast, kids in rural areas still go to traditional, teacher-centered classrooms where cooperative learning, if it exists at all, is only used for the most basic, unstructured pair work and has never been a normal part of the system. The total lack of "Strongly Agree" responses from rural students on all cooperative learning items, along with the high number of rural students who disagreed or were neutral, shows that the collaborative, interactive classroom that the HSC English curriculum envisions is still a long way off for most rural students. These findings prompt essential inquiries regarding educational equity and the consistent application of national curriculum standards, indicating that the availability of cooperative language learning opportunities in Bangladesh is not only restricted but inherently inequitable, with geographic location as the principal factor influencing a student's access to communicative, learner-centered pedagogy.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings reveal a systematic urban-rural divide in cooperative learning implementation, with rural students being systematically excluded from the communicative, learner-centered experiences envisioned by the HSC English curriculum. The following recommendations are proposed across multiple levels of the education system.

Teacher Training: Context-specific training on structured cooperative learning; rural-specific classroom management; urban-rural mentorship networks

Curriculum & Assessment: Reform HSC exams to value collaborative skills; develop ready-to-use cooperative learning materials

Infrastructure: Targeted resources to rural institutions; low-cost adaptations for fixed seating

Affective Support: Low-anxiety speaking routines; leverage students' positive perceptions of cooperative learning

Policy & Research: Minimum implementation standards; qualitative research on rural barriers; scale successful rural models

VIII. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the scope of cooperative language learning opportunities in Bangladesh's HSC English classrooms is not merely limited but fundamentally unequal, with rural students systematically excluded from the communicative, collaborative experiences their urban peers increasingly enjoy. Addressing this disparity requires a coordinated, multi-level approach that provides rural teachers with context-appropriate training, resources, and support while simultaneously reforming assessment systems that currently disincentivize interactive pedagogy. Critically, the finding that rural students strongly believe in the value of cooperative learning despite rarely experiencing it suggests that the foundation for change exists; what is needed now is the political will, resource allocation, and institutional support to transform this belief.

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