FULL LENGTH ARTICLE

A Study on English as Foreign Language Writing: Instruction, Nature of Tasks and Performance of Students: A Case of North Shoa Preparatory Schools

Ebabu Tefera[1]

Abstract

The main objective of this study was to examine the nature of writing tasks, instructions and students' performance. To this end, a descriptive survey research design was employed. Specifically, a mixed approach was employed to collect qualitative and quantitative data involving the use of classroom observation, questionnaire, interview, document analysis and test. The subjects for the study were selected from North Shoa Zone Grade 11 students. Two hundred twenty five students, who were selected randomly, filled the questionnaire and sat for the writing test. Eleven students for interview and five teachers for observation were selected purposefully. Also, the writing tasks in the Grade 11 English Student Textbook were included as non-human participants for analysis purpose. Then, the qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The quantitative data were analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Attempts were made to triangulate the qualitative and the quantitative data. The document analysis indicated that the writing tasks do not have significant gaps although they involve certain limitations. The observation and the interview data analysis results revealed that while some teachers mostly skipped the writing sections of the English language text book, most teachers completely relied on the product approach of teaching writing though the writing tasks in the English textbook promote the task-based and the process approaches to teaching writing. The writing examination data analysis result revealed that students had low performance of writing. The study concludes that the poor writing performance of students' is mainly rooted in the practice of the writing instruction. That is, teachers did not properly employ the communicative approaches to teaching writing though the writing tasks in the Student Textbook involved those approaches.

Key words: /Approach/ Communicative task/Pedagogical task/Writing performance/

[1] PhD, Bahr Dar University, Faculty of Humanities, Depart of English Language and Literature;
teferadugna@gmail.com

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

In Ethiopia English is used for communication purposes in banks, airlines, international organizations, and so on. Newspapers such as the *Ethiopian Herald*, *The Reporter*, *The Fortune*, *The Monitor* etc. are published in English. Most importantly, the English language is used as a medium of instruction. For example*,* teaching English language starts from Grade 5 in Addis Ababa, and South Nations, Nationality and Peoples' Regional Government, from Grade 7 onwards in Amhara Regional State, and from Grade 9 and above in Oromia and Tigyay Regional States. Consequently, English has a pronounced benefit for Ethiopia to promote communication and education.

Thus, English, as an independent subject, is taught in primary, comprehensive secondary, and preparatory schools. Also, writing lessons are included in all English texts from Grades 1-12, and it is presumed that students learn writing as an independent skill in the entire grade levels. However, according to the present researcher's experience of teaching Basic Writing Skills at university level, students who completed preparatory schools and joined university demonstrated serious gapes in EFL writing. The students' low writing ability might be resulted from (a) the nature of the EFL writing tasks, (b) the approaches and methods used to teach EFL writing or (c) both the tasks and instructions.

In brief, writing activities in an EFL context is demanding. According to Freedman, Pringle and Yalden (1983), in the EFL context, the problems students encounter while writing and learning to write are twofold: learning writing strategies and learning a foreign language. In other words, there are many extra things that an EFL student faces besides what a first language learner of writing skills encounters. Similarly, Raimes (1983) notes that students who write in English, as a foreign language, come across with all the challenges (such as cognitive, psychological and linguistic and many more) in the same way as native speakers of English face as they should consciously learn the grammar, syntax, vocabulary, rhetorical structure and idiom of the English language besides learning the strategies of writing. So, most EFL writing courses might focus on teaching the systems of English language, and the teachers need to pay a due attention to help their students in grasping the grammar, syntax, vocabulary and mechanics of writing. Moreover, since writing task demands more time and effort, teachers may have very limited time coverage to promote students' writing ability so that they can express their ideas through writing.

Most importantly, in a foreign language context in which students are exposed to a target language in the classroom for a limited period of time, there is a great demand to make the EFL classroom a place where real and meaningful communications take place. In addition, such emphasis on meaning in syllabus design and the teaching learning process of EFL writing calls for contemporary approaches to language teaching including task based language teaching and a process approach to teaching writing. In this regard, a task based language teaching seeks to provide learners with a natural context for language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Willis (1996) maintains that task-based language is the extension of communicative language teaching as the former draws on several tenets from the latter. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), tasks are considered useful tools for applying the following communicative language teaching

principles. Firstly, activities that involve real communication are essential for language learning. Secondly, activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. Thirdly language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

Based on the above, language tasks can be put in a continuum from the tasks which put emphasis on language forms up to the tasks which focus on meanings, but the present study focuses on the latter. Thus, a language task, according to Willis (1996), refers to an activity in which the target language is employed by students for a communicative purpose to meet a purpose. Specifically, a writing task in this research could be defined as a writing activity which makes students use the target language as a tool of written communication to achieve a certain objective. In short, a task-based approach to teaching writing could help students to use English language for written communication.

A task-based approach to teaching writing promotes the cognitive processes of learning which implies that the task-based approach presupposes the process approach to teaching writing. Also, according to Nunan (1991), the process approach encourages learners to go through the various stages of classroom writing practice, and it allows learners to employ a lot of time on pre-writing, writing, revising and editing and enables them to get teacher and peer supports.

In conclusion, what is significant for a textbook writer and a teacher who teaches EFL writing lessons is to design communicative tasks and use teaching methods which help students develop their writing competence. To do so, they are required to use contemporary (meaning oriented) approaches to design writing tasks as well as to teach writing skill.

1. 2. Statement of the Problem

English as a foreign language writing has several benefits for students in countries where English is used as the medium of instruction. Ethiopia is one of the counties which use English as a medium of instruction. Accordingly, preparatory school (Grade 11 and12) students need to accomplish a great number of writing tasks aiming to prepare themselves for higher education. That is, a preparatory school is the stage where students prepare to join university and it is where they are expected to do numerous EFL academic writing tasks. So, students at preparatory school level, in the context of Ethiopia, need to develop skills in EFL writing to cope with the multitude of EFL writings they are expected to produce in their university studies. Regarding this, Geremew (1999) notes that students need to develop a wide range of writing skills to successfully carry out academic writing tasks.

However, according to the present researcher's observation, many students who completed preparatory schools in Ethiopia demonstrated serious writing deficiencies. What makes the situation worse is that several first year university students who completed their preparatory school education and joined higher institutions could not write meaningful and correct sentences let alone write (continuous) texts in English. Thus, the present researcher believed that there might be curricular and/or pedagogical deficits of writing lessons at preparatory school level. Yet, there are some researches that made their focus on the area of preparatory school teaching materials and instructions of

writing in English. For example, Alamrew (2005) explored perceptions of teachers, the writing instructions, students' perceptions, and the writing performance of students; the subjects for the study were grade 12 students in Addis Ababa preparatory schools. In the same vein, Tekle, Ebabu and Endalfer (2012) conducted a study on teachers' perception of EFL writing and their practices of teaching writing. The participants of this study were Jima Zone preparatory schools teachers and students. But neither of the studies addressed the nature of writing tasks incorporated in the Grade 11 English Student Textbook. Also, both previous studies did not address the approaches/methods used in the teaching learning process of writing lessons by employing the criteria used for designing and teaching communicative tasks.

The present study is different from the above two studies in its focus and context. Thus, this study attempted to examine the writing instruction, the teachers' approach of teaching writing, and the nature of the writing tasks incorporated in Grade 11 English textbook and the students' ability of writing compositions in English in Amhara Regional State, specifically in North Shoa Zone where English is employed as a medium of instruction beginning from grade seven onwards.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the nature of writing tasks, writing instructions and students' writing performance. Specifically, it aims to:

- find out the nature of writing tasks
- explore how writing is taught at preparatory school level
- Examine the students' performance of writing in English

1.4 Research Questions

With the above objectives in mind, the following research questions are posed:

- How are the writing tasks in Grade 11 English textbook designed?
- How is EFL writing taught at preparatory school level?
- What is the students' performance of EFL writing?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The finding of this study could give pedagogical insights to teachers in that it would help them to identify the prominent weaknesses of the teaching learning process of the writing instruction which again would help them to fill the gaps when they teach; it could provide them with information that could help them evaluate and adjust their approaches of teaching writing. It would also assist syllabus designers and textbook writers to reconsider and revise the writing tasks incorporated in the English text book. Finally, it could help students to learn writing communicatively and develop their writing competently.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Writing for Communicating

Writing, like speaking mostly involves communicating. That is, according to Hedge (2005), most writings that people carry out in the real world or outside classroom are accomplished having a reader and a purpose in mind. In other words, as White (1988) highlights, EFL writing can be at sentence level or beyond sentence level, and while the former is used to develop the learners' EFL accuracy, the latter aims to promote learners' fluency of writing or their ability to express their ideas in English. That is, the discourse level writing which can be conceptualized as a piece of written language in context or stretch of language perceived to be meaningful, unified and purposive is supposed to involve communication (Crystal, 1994). Thus according to Widdowson (1983), written discourse involves an interactive process of negotiation in which the author accomplishes two tasks. That is, on the one hand, the writer interacts with an imaginary reader and write in such a way that the reader could understand the intended message of the piece of writing; on the other hand, he/she is required to use appropriate language and organize the text in the way it is easy for readers to move from one part to the other linking the ideas in it (Harmer, 2007).

Discourse level writing could have different purposes. This means, as Hedge (2005) stated, writing could be accomplished in response to a demand which can arise from academic studies or social roles. Consequently, EFL learners can write for academic or functional purposes, and the former, for Geremew (1999), relates to an institutionally required activity in which students write to meet the academic requirements of a particular educational institute, and the latter, according to KIE (2006), concerns with an authoring skill which is practiced in everyday communications such as writing friendly letters, reports, e-mails, memos, formal letters, and so on.

Thus, learners need to acquire communicative competence in writing or improve their ability to use a target language for communicative purposes. Moreover, according to Lighbown and Spada (2006), communicative competence involves linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Cook, 2003; Hyland, 2003).

Firstly, linguistic competence refers to the knowledge underlying the students' ability to produce correct sentences in English language (Cook, 2003). Weigle (2002) also explains that linguistic knowledge refers to the mastery of the fundamental building blocks of language which includes knowledge of the basic structural elements of the language.

Secondly, sociolinguistic competence implies the knowledge of how to use language to achieve certain communication goals; for communication to be successful, written messages need to be appropriate to the social context in which they are written, and thus learners need to know the appropriate social conventions (Nunan, 1989; McNamara, 2000; Hedge, 2005).

Thirdly, for Hedge (2005), discourse competence means the ability required to write coherent texts. Lastly, according to Weigle (2002), strategic competence entails different kinds of cognitive aspects, and it is a higher order executive processes which helps to manage cognitive functions while employing language for communication

purposes; it is a skill which helps a writer to employ his/her knowledge of linguistic resources appropriately so that he/she could achieve desired communicative goals.

To help students acquire the above mentioned types of communicative competences of writing, it is necessary to use communicative approaches to teaching EFL writing. Accordingly, some of the contemporary communicative approaches, such as the task-based and process approaches are discussed as follows.

2.1.1 Task-based Approach to Teaching Writing

A task-based approach uses a communicative task as a tool to teach a target language. In detail, a task can be either real world or pedagogical. According to Long (1985), a real world task is a piece of work carried out for a certain purpose, and it involves, for example, painting a fence, dressing a child, completing a form, selling or buying goods, booking a ticket, lending or borrowing a book, typing a letter, etc. This definition, according to Nunan (2004), is not methodological and language oriented, and thus a pedagogical definition of a task would be invaluable. In other words, a 'task' can be defined from the 'real-world' perspective, and it may put emphasis on what the learner will do in the real world.

In this regard, for Richards and Rodgers (2001), a pedagogical task is a type of task that is performed using a target language, for example, finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, writing a letter, drawing a map listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command and so on. Furthermore, as Nunan (1989) states, a communicative task is an activity which is performed in the classroom and that engages learners in understanding, controlling, creating and negotiating meaning in the foreign language focusing on meaning rather than form.

The pedagogical tasks are classified into a pedagogical task rehearsal and pedagogical task activation where the former refers to a piece of classroom work in which learners rehearse in class a communicative act that they could accomplish outside class. The latter implies a piece of classroom work which involves a communicative interaction which learners will not perform outside class; it is designed to activate learners' language acquisition processes (Nunan, 2004).

Furthermore, different writers mention different types of components for a communicative task. For example, as Candlin (1987) suggested, a communicative task could involve input, roles, settings, actions, monitoring, outcomes, and feedback. Furthermore, Shavelson and Stern (1981) explain that a communicative task includes content, materials, activities, students, and social community. Also, as Wright (1987) suggests, tasks need to involve input data which may be provided by materials, teachers or learners and an initiating question which initiates students to do something with the data.

By integrating the components of a task mentioned by different authors, Nunan (1989) formulated four components of a communicative task which involves (implicitly or explicitly): (1) *a goal/ objective* which can promote learners' communicative competence including linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, (2) *input* which might be verbal (e.g. a reading passage) or non-verbal (e.g. a picture), (3) *activity* which refers to tasks, not exercises, that learners can actually accomplish with the input in hand, (4*) roles* for teachers and

learners in which learners are the main actors in the communications and teachers are facilitators, organizers, and monitors, (5) *setting* which refers to arrangement of students, for instance, in a pair or a group work.

In this study, the aforementioned components of a communicative task (given by Nunan, 1989) are used to analyze the writing tasks incorporated in the Grade 11 English students Textbook. Specifically, the following conceptual framework was employed to analyze the written tasks.

Goal   ↘   ↙   Teacher role
Input   →   Tasks   ←   learner role
Activities ↗   ↖   settings
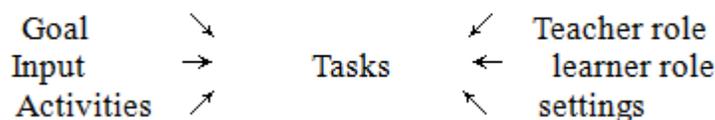
A framework for analyzing communicative tasks (Nunan, 1989)

2.3. 2. The Process Approach to Teaching Writing

For Brown (2001), writing is a thinking process in which a writer produces a written product after he/she goes through the different writing steps; it is an organic, developmental process in which one's thought grows. And a process-approach helps students to practice the true nature of a writing act. According to Kroll (1990), a process approach provides a way to think about writing in terms of what a writer does (planning, revising, and the like) instead of in terms of what the written product looks like (patterns of organization, spelling, and grammar).

In other words, for Nunan (1991), a process approach focuses on the stages of writing and helps learners to produce, reflect, discuss and rework on successive drafts of a text in a classroom writing practice; it encourages learners to feel free to convey their own thoughts or feelings in written messages by providing them with plenty of time and opportunity to reconsider and revise their writing and at each step to seek assistance from outside sources such as the teacher. Furthermore, it allows collaborative work which, as Harmer (2004) pointed out, gives students chances to learn from each other; for example, at the pre-writing phase, students in a small group can brainstorm for ideas and prepare outlines/plans through discussion. In short, a process-approach to teaching writing helps students to pass through the writing processes and make use of their potential skills to write from their repertoire by getting support from the teacher and peers.

2.3.2 Theoretical Framework

The task-based approach can be rooted in the language theory and the learning theory. For example, it takes the following assumption of language theory for granted: (a) language is mainly a means of conveying message, (b) different aspects of a target language are involved in task-based approach, (c) lexical units are essential for learning and using a target language, (d) discussion is the cornerstone of language acquisition, and

these principles could be drawn from the functional and interactional views of the language theory (Richards & Rogers 2001). In detail, the functional view sees language as a vehicle for expressing functional meaning whereas the interactional perspective considers language a means of creating and maintaining social relations (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). That means the task-based approach as a type of communicative approach presupposes its principles from the functional and interactional views.

Similarly, a task-based approach could draw its principles from the learning theories; for example, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning is citable as it gives recognition for the value of meaningful interaction for learning language, and this theory assumes that social interaction is very important for the development of cognition and it believes that learning is a social act. According to Vygotsky (1978), language serves a social purpose which can be achieved through interaction. A task-based approach can also be informed by the second/foreign language acquisition hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) and the psycholinguistic theory (Ellis, 2003). In the light of the aforementioned theories, a language teacher can provide students with meaningful and authentic language tasks and help them to accomplish the tasks through interaction using the target language as a communication tool. Thus, the task-based approach can help to apply the communicative language teaching principles by using activities which promote real communication and involve meaningful and authentic writing tasks.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study aiming to describe events that occur naturally. The researcher used pragmatism as a theoretical framework for the research design, for it allows the researcher to use quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.2 Participants of the Study

Participants for the study were selected from North Shoa Zone Grade 11 students and teachers. Two hundred twenty five students and five teachers were participants of the study. Also, 11 students participated in the interview.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

The researcher, firstly, selected 5 teachers (sections) using purposive sampling technique for the observation. However, because two of them were not voluntary, only three teachers were observed. Purposive sampling method was again used to choose 11 students for interview. In addition, 225 students who have completed filling the copies of the questionnaire and sat for the exam were selected randomly. To make it clear, out of the 20 schools of the Zone, five of them (25%) were selected using random sampling method first. Then, one section from each of the five selected schools was taken for observation although observations were made on the three sections only because of the teachers' reluctance to be observed in the two sections. But, all students of the five sections completed the questionnaire and sat for the exam.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, content analysis, observation, and interview were employed. Furthermore, questionnaire and test were used.

Document Analysis: Grade 11 English for Ethiopia Student Textbook was taken as a document for analysis. This student textbook incorporates a total of 19 writing sections. All the 19 writing parts of the textbook were employed for the analysis purpose. Checklist which is adapted from Nunan (1989) was used to analyze the writing lessons.

Observation: As it is mentioned above, out of the 5 selected teachers, only 3 teachers were willing for the observation, and they were observed using a checklist. Each of them was observed 3 times and totally 9 observations were conducted. Since most teachers rarely taught the writing sections, the current researcher could not get sufficient classes for observation. As a result, an attempt was made to substantiate the observation data using interview and questionnaire, and adequate data were gathered regarding what teachers actually did in the writing lessons. The observation was used as the main data gathering instrument.

Interview: A semi-structured interview was employed, for it could allow the researcher to enquire opinions from interviewees and encourage respondents to express their views freely. The interview helped the present researcher to obtain data which could substantiate the observation data. Accordingly, 11 students were interviewed, and the data were recorded using a tape recorder. The interviews were conducted in Amharic language, for it is the first language for most students' and to allow them express their ideas without difficulty. This helped the researcher to get data in depth and breadth.

Questionnaire: A questionnaire with two parts had been administered to 225 sample students. The first part of the questionnaire was about the extent to which teachers gave attention to writing parts. The second section was concerned with the teaching methods teachers employed. The questionnaire was used to substantiate the observation data.

Writing Test: A discourse level writing test was administered to 225 students. These participants were provided with one topic for writing so that evaluators of compositions could compare students' writing abilities on the same ground. Heaton (1988) suggested that in a composition test, students should write on the same topic; students' compositions written on one topic give markers a common ground for evaluation. The other point for not allowing a choice of task for test takers is that different topics do not have the same difficulty levels; for example, a topic for an argumentative essay and a topic for an expository essay require different cognitive demands (Weigle, 2002).

In addition, participants wrote a letter because letter writing is predominantly appeared in the Grade 11 English textbook in use, and students could practice it. The evaluation criteria were adapted from TOFL Writing Scoring Guide as it is quoted in Weigle (2002 p.113). Each student's piece of writing was rated by two experienced experts in TEFL, and an average score for each was taken for the report of this research.

3.1 Data Collection Procedures

Firstly, areas of writing tasks from grade 11 textbook are identified for content analysis. Then, out of 20 preparatory schools of North Shoa Zone, five schools were selected randomly. Next, one teacher from each school was selected using purposive sampling technique. Then, the observations were conducted. After the completion of the observations, the test was administered, and copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the sample students at the same time. Finally, interviews were held with 11 selected students.

3.2 Data Analysis

The qualitative data were categorized based on common themes, for analysis and then interpretation. To analyze the quantitative data, descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Document Analysis

The contents used for analysis were the writing tasks of Grade 11 English for Ethiopia Student Textbook which is currently used as a teaching material in the country. This textbook has about 12 units, and each unit again incorporates 9 sections (introduction, listening, language focus, study skills, speaking, reading, word power, writing and assessment). Also, every unit has two main divisions: part A and part B. Specifically, there are about 19 writing sections which are distributed to each of the 12 units. The writing tasks which appear in the assessment and the revision parts of the textbook were not selected for analysis to avoid repetition. The writing tasks were analyzed based on components of a task formulated by Nunan (1989); they are input, objective, setting, roles, activity, and implementation. Based on the above, the analysis part is presented under here.

4.1.1 *Objectives (Goals)*

Each of the 12 units of the Grade 11 English text book has two parts: part A and part B, and in each part, there are lists of objectives, and most of them incorporate objectives for the writing tasks along with the objectives of other language skills and aspects. According to Graves (2000), an objective should stipulate performance, condition and criterion. Hyland (2003) also stated that an objective must specify three crucial dimensions such as performance, conditions and measures. In the target textbook of this study, there are about 18 objectives of writing, and each of them was evaluated based on the parameters mentioned above, that is, performance, condition, and criterion.

Table 1: Components of the Objectives of Communicative Writing Tasks

Unit	Objectives: You will	Performance	Conditions	Criterion
1	Write a report on the African Union.	1	1	0
2	write an informal letter to a friend write a magazine article	2	0	0
3	write a for and against essay write a health leaflet	2	0	0
4	write a reply to a formal letter write a report on HIV/AIDS in an African country	2	2	0
5	write an extract from a tourist brochure write a formal letter	2	1	0
6	write a narrative	1	0	0
7	write a summary write an information leaflet	2	0	0
8	write some paragraphs about how we can save water in Ethiopia	1	1	1
9	write a survey report	1	0	0
10	write an essay	1	0	0
11	create an NGO and write a brochure about it write some interview questions	2	1	1
12	write an opinion essay	1	0	0
Total	18	18	6	2
%	100	100	33.33	11.11

A learning objective is a statement which describes performance capability to be developed by the learner. As it is indicated in Table 1, the entire (100%) objectives stated at the beginnings of the units were found to include component of performance. That is**,** all the objectives precisely indicated what students would write at the end of each writing lesson. Of the total objectives, only 6 (33.33%) and 2 (11.11%) of them involved components such as condition and criterion, respectively. Thus, the objectives which were found at the beginning of the units did not adequately reflect the two components (conditions and criteria).

In other words, most of the objectives of the writing tasks, which were found to be mixed with the other lesson objectives of the textbook at hand, did not incorporate the conditions or circumstances in which students were supposed to accomplish during the writing tasks. More specifically, Most of the objectives did not state the context, quantity and quality of the pieces of writings they would be expected to produce after learning the particular writing lessons.

Table 2: Writing Tasks Based on Real World Rehearsals versus Pedagogical Activation

Unit	Writing tasks on real world rehearsal rationale	Writing tasks on pedagogical rationale
1	Write a report on the African Union.	
2	…write a letter about your school and the education system in Ethiopia. …write an article for a point of view arguing that Ethiopia needs more educated women…	True or false(how to write an informal letter) Match languages to their function Read this magazine and answer the questions Complete this outline plane notes …
3	write an essay in response to this statement: "*You should not ignore traditional medicine because of modern developments*" …write a government health leaflet …	Read this essay and answer the questions below. Complete the notes about the article in this outline plan
4	Imagine you are Mrs. Rowda and write a reply to Mr. Bona's letter. Write a report on HIV/AIDS in an African country	Read this letter and answer the questions below. Identify the layout of a letter. Identify the structure of Mr. Bona's letter. The language of formal letters
5	Imagine that your town or village is not included in the brochure. write one or two paragraphs about it to include in the brochure Write a letter to the tourist agency	Language practice
6	Write a story of 250 to 300 words.	
7	Write a summary using the information in your notes. Write an information leaflet on one of the topics (mentioned above).	Make note on the text on why weather forecasts are important in this way.
8	Write 2-3 paragraphs about the best conservation method(s) for your region/town.	
9	Write a survey report.	Study and discuss this information about writing a survey report.
10	Write an essay on an aspect of development	
11	Write a one-paragraph report on the data about NGO projects given in the table. Write a brochure about your NGO. Write some interview questions	Look at the mind map and complete it with relevant data from the table. Identify these question types.
12	Write an opinion essay in support of digital technology	Make an outline.
Tot.	19	16
%	54.3	45.7

In addition, comparisons were made between real world rehearsals and pedagogical justifications of the writing tasks (Table 2). Accordingly, while 19 (54.3%) of the tasks were found to reflect real world rehearsal rationale, 16 (45.7%) of them reflected pedagogical rationale; that is, most of the writing tasks in the textbook at hand encourage learners to rehearse a behavior they are expected to display outside the classroom. According to Nunan (2004), classroom tasks are classified as rehearsal rationale and pedagogic rationale. While the former is concerned with pieces of classroom tasks in which learners rehearse (in class) a communicative act they can accomplish outside the classroom, the latter involves classroom activities in which learners are unlikely to accomplish them outside the classroom (Nunan, 2004). Thus, the data analysis revealed that most of the writing tasks were designed aiming at helping students to practice writing tasks that they could apply outside classroom.

Table 3: Academic Writing and Functional Writing Skills

N	Tasks on formal/academic writing skills	Tasks on basic functional writing skills
1	Writing: A report on the African Union	Writing: A letter to a friend
2	Writing: A magazine article	Writing: A government health leaflet
3	Writing: An essay-modern versus traditional medicine	Writing: Reply to a formal letter
4	Writing: Report on HIV/AIDS	Writing: Extract from a tourist brochure
5	Writing: A summary	Writing: A formal letter
6	Writing: (2-3 paragraphs on) saving water in Ethiopia	Writing: A narrative
7	Writing: A survey report	Writing: An information leaflet
8	Writing: An essay	Writing: A brochure about your NGO
9	Writing: A report on some data Writing: Interview questions	
10	Writing: An opinion essay	
Tot.	11	8
%	57.9	42.1

The tasks in the grade 11 English textbook were also examined in terms of basic functional writing skills vis-a-vis academic/formal writing skills (Table 3). In line with this, out of the 19 objectives, 11 (57.9%) objectives were designed aiming at developing students' academic or formal writing skills whereas 8 (42.1%) of the tasks were written having the purpose of promoting learners' functional writing skills. This means, more focus is given to academic writing skills because Grade 11 is the stage at which students get preparation for university where they are expected to accomplish several academic writing tasks.

4.1.2 *Inputs*

A communicative writing task entails authentic or inauthentic inputs which can be presented in form of a text or a graph. The different forms and types of inputs provided for the writing tasks of the grade 11 English textbook are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Forms and Types of Inputs of the Grade 11 English Textbook Writing Tasks

Units	Writing Tasks	Description of inputs	Forms		Types	
			verbal	Nonverbal	Authentic	Inauthentic
1	A report on A U.	Listening/reading texts, a picture & a photograph	3	2	2	1
2	A letter to a friend	Listening text, some ideas& language expressions	2	0	0	2
	A magazine article	Reading/listening text, magazine article& photo	4	1	3	1
3	An essay	Listening texts, a model text), speaking &photos	4	2	0	4
	A health leaflet	Reading texts & speaking	3	0	1	2
4	Reply to a letter	Listening/reading text & a sample letter	4	0	0	4
	A report on HIV/AIDS	Reading text & articles about HIV/AIDS	1	0	1	0
5	Extract	Listening/reading & Language focus	3	0	2	1
	A formal letter	Listening & reading texts	2	0	0	2
6	A narrative	A story read by a teacher &language focus	2	1	1	1
7	A summary	Reading text	1	0	0	1
	An information leaflet	Reading/listening texts & pictures	5	2	2	3
8	Writing paragraphs	Listening/reading texts, speaking &photographs	4	2	2	2
9	A survey report	Reading text, speaking, survey reports& photos.	3	1	2	1
10	An essay	Reading/listening texts, speaking & picture.	4	1	2	2
11	A report on some data	Listening , data, bar graph, & pie chart	2	2	1	1
	A brochure	Reading text, speaking & pictures.	2	2	1	1
	Interview questions	Reading text	1	0	0	1
12	write an opinion essay	Reading text	2	2	1	1
Total	19		52	18	20	32
%	100		74	26	38	62

As it is shown in Table 4, verbal inputs are 74% whereas nonverbal inputs are found to be 26%. Specifically, the reading and listening texts were the parts which were mainly employed as inputs of writing tasks in Grade 11 English textbook. Texts such as formal and informal letters, magazine and newspaper articles, brochures, reports, statistical data, and etc. were found to be the main inputs for students to use as bases for

their writing activities. Also, listening texts about African Union, education, traditional and modern medicine, climate change etc., and stories were among the inputs used for the writing tasks. The inputs which were presented in nonverbal forms include photographs, pictures, and fewer charts and graphs.

Also, the issues indicated in the above table are types of inputs used in the writing tasks of the English Textbook for Grade 11. Most of the inputs (62%) were found to be inauthentic types whereas the remaining (38%) were authentic. This implies that the textbook did not include adequate authentic writing tasks which help learners to practice writing that they could use it in the real world.

4.1.3 Activities

An activity can be defined as what learners do with an input to accomplish a given writing task, and it should specify how the inputs will be employed (Hyland, 2003) as well as harmonized with the inputs. The following table indicates if the writing activities of Grade 11 English textbook involve the phases of writing and are relevant to the inputs given.

Table 5: The Phases of Writing and Relevance of Inputs to the Activities

Unit	Activities	entails writing stages		Relevant	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Write a report about the African Union	1	0	1	0
2	Write a letter to a friend Complete this outline plan with notes about the article Write an article arguing that Ethiopia needs more educated women.	2	1	2	1
3	Discuss the arguments for and against this statement: "Most people live in the countryside. Many are moving to cities as think life is better there" Write an essay in response to this statement: "We should not ignore traditional medicine because of modern developments." Write a government health leaflet about disease or illness.	2	1	2	1
4	Read this letter and answer the questions below. Write your answers … in your exercise book. Look at the layout of the letter and identify the features …. What is the structure of Mr. Bona's letter? Study the information in this box. Write a replay to Mr. Bona's letter Write a report on HIV/AIDS ….	2	4	2	4
5	Write 1 or 2 paragraphs about your town/village …. Write a letter to the tourist agency ….	0	2	2	0
6	Write a story of 250 to 300 words (1 or 2 pages).	1	0	1	0
7	Make notes on the text on why weather forecasts are important …. Write your own text using the information in your notes. Write an information leaflet on one of the topics mentioned above.	1	2	3	0
8	Write 2-3 paragraphs about the best water conservation method(s).	1	0	1	0
9	Write a survey report.	1	0	1	0
10	Write an essay on an aspect of development.	1	0	1	0
11	Write a one paragraph report on the data about NGO projects …. Create your own NGO, then plan and write your brochure. Write a list of questions to be used for interview.	3	0	2	1
12	Write an opinion essay.	1	0	1	0
Tot	26	16	10	19	7
%	100	62	38	73	27

An attempt was also made to investigate if the activities made students pass through the writing phases such as pre-writing, writing, revising, editing and proofreading (Table 5). Accordingly, 62% of them were found to stimulate students to pass through the writing stages although many tasks (38%) did not help students practice the writing processes. Lastly, the associations between the writing activities and the inputs provided for them were examined, and 73% of the inputs were found to be relevant to the writing activities.

4.1.4. *Learners' Roles*

Role refers to a part which an individual plays to accomplish learning activities. Students play an active role while accomplishing a writing task, and they could act as collaborative partners or individuals for the given writing tasks. The types of grade 11 English textbook writing tasks which encourage students to write either collaboratively or individually are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Types of Writing

Unit	Activities	Type of writing task	
		Collaborative	Personal
1	Work with a partner & divide up the work between you. With your partner, present the information you have found to each other. Show your first draft to your partner; check each other's work. Write up the final version of your report and proofread it before you submit it.	1	0
2	Think about the information, organization & format & then write your letter Complete an outline, brainstorm ideas, make a plan, write, check &edit your article	0	2
3	Complete an outline, brainstorm ideas, make a plan, write, check &edit your article Work with a partner… Write the final version of your leaflet	1	1
4	Identify features and structure of the letter; write a replay to Mr. Bona's letter Write a report on HIV/AIDS in one of the countries mentioned above Work with your partner; with your partner, research the information you need	1	1
5	Imagine your town/ village is not included in a brochure. Write 1 or 2 paragraphs about it to include in the brochure. Include these information: Write a letter to a tourist agency… Write a first draft and check it		2
6	Write a story of 250 to 300 words (1 or 2 pages)	0	1
7	Write your own text using the information in your notes Write an information leaflet on one topics mentioned above	0	2
8	Write 2 to 3 paragraphs about the best water conservation method(s)	0	1
9	Write a survey report	1	0
10	Write an essay on an aspect of development	0	1
11	Write a one paragraph report on the data about NGO projects in the table Create your own NGO, then plan and write your brochure Write a list of questions to be used for interview	3	0
12	Write an opinion essay	0	1
Tot.	19	7	12
%	100	37	63

As Table 6 indicates, most of the tasks (63%) could be done individually. Only 37% of the tasks might be accomplished cooperatively. It seems that inadequate focus

has been given to cooperative writing although collaborative writing has a paramount significance for learners. For example, Reid (1993) explains that collaborative writing helps students to employ each other's resources and work toward mutual objectives, and it, thus, results in a favorable classroom climate. In addition, Hedge (2005) suggests that learners can benefit from collaborative writing because it can help them share ideas and feedbacks on their pieces of writings.

4.1.5. *Teacher's Roles*

An attempt was also made to examine teachers' role as facilitators, controllers or monitors as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Teacher's Role

Unit	Activities	Teacher's role	
		Facilitator	Monitor
1	Write a report of about 350 to 400 on the AU. Follow these steps.	1	0
2	Think about the information, organization, and format and then write a letter. Complete an outline, brainstorm, plan, write, and edit your article.	0	2
3	Complete an outline, brainstorm ideas, make a plan, write, and edit your article. Work with a partner… Write the final version of your leaflet	0	2
4	Identify features and structure of the letter; write a replay to a Write a report on HIV/AIDS in one of the countries mentioned above	1	1
5	Write 1-2 paragraphs about your town/ village …. Write a letter to a tourist agency. Write a first draft and check it	0	2
6	Write a story of 250 to 300 words (1 or 2 pages)	0	1
7	Write your own text using the information in your notes. Write an information leaflet on one of the topics mentioned.	0	2
8	Write 2-3 paragraphs about the best water conservation method(s).	0	1
9	Write a survey report.	0	1
10	Write an essay on an aspect of development.	1	0
11	Write a one paragraph report on the data about NGO projects…. Create your own NGO, then plan and write your brochure. Write a list of questions to be used for interview.	0	3
12	Write an opinion essay.	0	1
Tot.	19	3	16
%	100	16	84

According to Table 7, the role of the teacher is insignificant; his/her role is not stated in the tasks. But, the tasks seem to imply that the teacher might act as either as a facilitator or a monitor. Accordingly, in the 16% of the tasks, the teacher is a facilitator, and in the 84% of them, he/she is a monitor. A teacher acts as a monitor when he/she simply observes students doing the activities indicated in a particular writing task

whereas a teacher acts as a facilitator when he/she participates in the tasks as a supporter or guider. So, the analysis indicated that in most of the writing tasks, the teacher was passive or non-participant observer which implies that students were active participants who monitored their own writing skills development. In addition, none of the tasks allowed the teacher to be dominant or controller. All of the tasks did not permit the teacher to be active participant of the writing lessons. He/she mostly acts as a monitor, as he/she remains passive observer and to a limited extent acts as a facilitator.

4.1.6. Settings

Setting refers to the surrounding environment where the writing task is carried out, and/or it is the mode in which the task is done. The settings designed for the writing tasks of grade 11 English textbook are presented in the following table.

Table 8: Settings for the Writing Tasks

Unit	Some examples of activities for each unit	Tasks set for		
		Individual work	Pair work	Group work
1	You should work as a partner and divide up the work between you.	0	1	0
2	Write a letter about your school and the education system in Ethiopia. Complete an outline. With your partner pick out expressions…	2	1	0
3	Complete an outline plan, brainstorm for ideas, and write an article. Work with a partner… Write the final version of your leaflet	1	1	0
4	Write a replay to Mr. Bona's letter Write a report on HIV/AIDS. Work with a partner ….	1	1	0
5	Write 1 or 2 paragraphs about your town/ village …. Write a letter to a tourist agency… Write a first draft and check it	2	0	0
6	Write a story of 250 to 300 words (1 or 2 pages)	1	0	0
7	Make notes and write a summary using your notes Write an information leaflet on one topics mentioned above	2	0	0
8	Write 2 to 3 paragraphs about the best water conservation method(s)	1	0	0
9	Discuss (in a group) and write a survey report.	1	0	1
10	Write an essay on an aspect of development	1	0	0
11	Write a report by discussing the data with a partner or in a group Write a brochure. Work in a group or with a partner. Write a list of questions for interview. Work with a partner.	1	3	2
12	Write an opinion essay	1	0	0
Tot.	23	13	7	3
%	100	56.5	30.4	13.1

Most of the activities, that is, 56.5% of the writing activities of Grade 11 English textbook were set to be done individually. But, 30.4% of the activities were designed as pair works whereas 13.1% of them were group works. According to Hyland (2003), although individual writing tasks can develop students' reflective thinking skills, most of the professional and work place writing activities are actually done cooperatively. In line with this, pair and group works can provide students with real-life practice in negotiation and collaborative writing skills. Besides, it encourages the sharing of ideas and interaction in planning, revising and editing pieces of writings. Thus, even if pair and groups have paramount benefits in these regards, they were not adequately included in the Grade 11 English text book (Table 8).

4.2. Observation Data

One of the objectives of this study was to examine how writing was taught, and one of the instruments used for this purpose was observation. To conduct the observation, although the researcher selected five teachers, only three teachers were willing. The reason for their reluctance might be their lack of interest to teach the writing lessons. As a result, observations were conducted on three teachers only. Each of the three teachers was observed three times. On top of that, although the researcher aimed to observe each of the teacher six times in a semester, he could make only three observations for each of them because they mostly skipped the writing lessons, and he could not get more writing lessons. Therefore, he could observe a total of nine writing lessons within the whole semester. But fill this gap, he tried to collect adequate data using other tools such as interview and questionnaire.

The data gathered via observation were analyzed based on themes such as the teachers' attention of the writing lessons, and the types of approaches used for teaching writing skills, which were emerged from the data itself.

To start from the first theme, the observation revealed that teachers gave less attention to writing sections. The evidence for this is that the researcher could get a few lessons of writing (three lessons of writing from each teacher in a semester) for observation, as the teachers observed skipped most of the writing sections of the Grade 11 English Textbook.

In addition, all the nine observations demonstrated that the teachers employed lecture method for the writing lessons. That is to say, out of the three observed teachers, only one teacher sometimes employed a process approach of teaching writing. The remaining two observed teachers gave home works and assignments after giving explanations on a given writing lesson. These teachers used most of their class time for giving clarification, and they relegate the writing practices to provide home tasks.

As mentioned above, of the three observed teachers, only one teacher occasionally employed a process approach to teaching writing although he/she did not help students to practice all the writing steps adequately. For example, in all the three observation sessions, the teacher did not [inform] the learners the learning purpose and create a sense of audience for writing. Moreover, he/she did not make learners write outlines before they wrote their first draft. But he/she rarely attempted to provide students with contextualized writing tasks, encourage them to work in pairs and groups, make them to generate ideas using, for example, brainstorming, and help them to make use of the information in the tables, pictures, graphs and short notes to carry out their writing activities. Lastly, this same teacher did not use either peer or teacher feedback.

The most important issue is that the writing tasks in the English textbook are designed in the way they promote the development of the writing processes and help students communicate in writing. But, all the observed teachers did not give attention to the writing steps such as revising and editing for fear that they would face shortage of time to cover all the portions of the text book provided that they invested more time on each phase of writing tasks at hand.

In conclusion, participant teachers employed mainly the lecture methods to teach writing. By contrast, they rarely use the process approach to teaching writing although, as Nunan (1991) pointed out, this approach tend to make a teacher spend time

with learners on brainstorming, drafting, revising and editing and helps students to acquire various skills in a manner that most experienced writers employ.

Also, the researcher checked whether or not participant teachers support and supervise their students by encouraging them (students) to write in the class, and the data showed that all of the three teachers did not accomplish this task; rather, they made their students write at home. Even the occasionally observed teacher was employing the process approach as he/she orders his/her students to do the writing tasks at home after giving them input for writing. He/she did not help them, for example, to revise and edit their first drafts in class under his/her support.

4.3 Interview Data

A total of 11 students, who were selected by classroom teachers, participated in the interview. Teachers selected students for interview, for they could know the students' performance levels, and they would choose participants based on their mid exam results and participations in class. The teachers were informed to include low, average and high achievers. Finally, explaining the purpose of the interview, the researcher asked each of the participants the following questions:

1. *To what extent did your English language teachers give attention to EFL writing?*
2. *To what extent did the writing instructions help you to develop your writing skills?*
3. *What is your general comment about the teaching learning process of EFL writing?*

In response to the first question, most of them (9 out of 11 participants) explained that their teachers gave more focus to grammar, vocabulary, speaking and reading, and they put a limited emphasis on writing tasks. For example, S1 reported that while more focus has been given to speaking and grammar, writing has been given a very limited attention for the following reasons: (1) some teachers thought that students would learn writing at university; (2) writing is not included in the national examinations, and (3) teaching writing requires more time. Likewise, S3 states that their English teacher has given more emphasis to grammar and speaking, and he has been frequently skipping the writing lessons. In addition, S10 forwarded the following ideas:

> *We have been taught grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. But we have not learnt writing. In every unit of the Grade 11 English textbook, there are writing tasks. However, teachers have been skipping them …. They might believe that we do not have interest to learn writing and do writing tasks.*

In summary, Grade 11 English language teachers gave less attention to the writing sections of the English textbook, mainly for students are not asked to produce pieces of writings when they sit for final examinations given at school or national level, and teaching writing requires more time which uses up the time that teachers can employ to teach other sections of the textbook which appear in the final examinations.

The other important point is that different writing genres did not get equal attention. Some students explained that while letter writing has got a very limited attention, other types of writings were totally ignored. For example, S2 reported that "Teachers rarely asked us to write formal letters, but they have never asked us to write

essays, brochures and reports". This means, of the different writing genres, letter writing has got inadequate attention while essay, report, summary, etc. writing were completely ignored.

In response to the second question, almost all of the respondents reported that writing instructions helped them insignificantly to develop their writing ability. For example, S2's response can be read as "The writing instructions have not helped us to develop our writing skills; we have never made writing practices in class…" S4 also said that the writing instruction is not effective, and it did not help them to develop their ability to write in English. That is, even if several writing lessons were incorporated in the Grade 11 English textbook, teachers did not give adequate focus to them, and as such students did not show significant progresses in their writing skills.

Finally, students were asked to give their comments on the teaching-learning process of the EFL writing at grade 11, and 5 out of 11 respondents (S2, S3, S4, S7 and S8) suggested that the time allocated to the Grade 11 English Textbook was not sufficient. Example,

- *I think there is shortage of time. The Grade 11 English textbook is too broad and incorporated several portions which could not be covered in a year. The portions of the text book and the time allotted to it are not proportional (S3).*
- *…teachers did not help us practice the writing processes, for they worry about shortage of time (S4).*
- *Due to inadequacy of time the English language teacher has been skipping, especially, the writing tasks (S7).*
-

In short, due to lack of time, writing was not taught as expected by the English textbook writers and syllabus designers. It is obvious that students can develop their EFL writing skills if they make continuous and several practices which require adequate time. Squire (1983) suggests that time on the writing task is important if students are to learn writing well. In other words, if one wants students' performance of writing skills to show improvement, providing enough learning and practicing time for them is crucial.

Also, many of the respondents (S1, S5, S6, S9, S10 and S11) explained that there were a few teachers who lacked the capability and confidence to teach English in general and EFL writing in particular. S5 forwarded that teachers themselves lacked knowledge of English language and the skills of EFL writing. According to S5, some teachers who were teaching English for grade 11 students came from elementary schools through transfer and they lacked the necessary knowledge, experience, and skills of writing and teaching writing. S9added the following comments:

I have not shown any progress in my EFL writing ability. When I was in Grade 7 and Grade 8, I regularly wrote paragraphs as class works and assignments, and so my writing ability as well as my interest and confidence to write were boosting. But, when I joined preparatory school, the situation changed. Let alone practicing writing paragraphs and essays, I did not get the chance to exercise sentence writing; the English language teacher did not give more attention to the writing tasks. Hence, my writing skill has been declining, and currently I have low capability and confidence to write in English.

Likewise, S9, S10 and S11 noted that their English language teachers did not teach them writing; for they lacked proper expertise and experience to teach English for the grade level they are assigned. That is, it seems that because some schools (especially in rural areas) got difficulty to employ qualified and experienced teachers appropriate for the grade level at hand, they might assign teachers who are trained for Elementary and Junior secondary schools to teach English at the preparatory school levels, and hence these teachers might get it challenging to teach English in general and EFL writing in particular at the grade level at hand, for it was beyond their level. Thus, as the respondents explained, these teachers were not confident and capable enough to teach EFL writing, and this might be one of the reasons for teachers to skip the writing lessons.

Some participants also suggested that teachers did not use appropriate teaching methods of writing. For example, S5 commented that their English language teacher (when he/she taught them letter writing) used lecture method and did not attempt to help them practice writing letters; he/she did not give them class works and assignments on writing. According to Hedge (2005), a writing classroom where writing is relegated to homework exercise has a limited benefit for students; learners would be benefited from a classroom writing exercise, for which the English language teacher can design activities with judiciously planned phases of panning, writing, and revising.

Lastly, all the 11 respondents explained that the Grade 11 English textbook was too bulky which could not be covered in a single academic year, and because of that, they skipped some of the sections of the textbook and mainly the writing tasks. To put it in other words, the teachers gave priority to those portions of the textbook which would appear in the national examination or final examinations of the schools, and they gave a very limited attention to the writing tasks as they were thought not part of these examinations. To cite an example, S2said:

The English language textbook is bulky, and it contains several portions which cannot be covered in a year. Unless teachers become selective, they cannot address even half of its portions. This might be the reason for teachers to skip the writing sections. In addition, the book is not handy, or it is not comfortable for students to carry it when they come to school; as a result, some of the students might leave it in their homes.

In summary, the analyzed data revealed that the time fixed to the current Grade 11 English Textbook was not adequate for English language teachers to address properly all of its portions, and of the different portions of the textbook, the writing sections were

the ones that get the least attention, for writing is not part of the School Leaving and the final examinations of the particular preparatory schools.

4.4 Questionnaire Data

Copies of a questionnaire on writing instruction and teaching methods were administered to 225 students, and all of them were completed.

Table 9: The Amount of Attention Given to Writing Skills in English Language Classes

Item	Response											
Which language skills/aspects does your teacher give more focus	Speaking		Listening		Reading		Grammar		Vocabulary		Writing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	72	32	26	11.56	27	12	70	31	19	8.44	11	4.89

The Grade 11 English textbook has about 12 units, and each unit has two parts: part A and part B. Each part again includes speaking, listening, reading, vocabulary, grammar and writing sections. Of these sections, as it is indicated in Table 9, 32% and 31% respondents reported that their teachers gave more emphasis to speaking and grammar parts, respectively whereas only 4.89% of the sample students responded that their teachers taught writing lessons. That is, very few respondents described that their teachers gave focus to writing. This implies that writing sections were the least focused parts of the textbook at hand, and this is consistent with the observation and the interview data.

Table 10: The Chances Students Get to Practice Writing

Item	Response									
How often did your teacher give you chances to practice writing?	Very often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at all	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	15	6.67	41	18.22	71	31.56	18	8	80	35.56

Students were asked if their teachers made them practice writing, and 80 respondents (35.56%), that is, most of them, replied negatively (Table 10). In other words, students did not get sufficient chances of practicing writing in English classes. But according to Belcher (2009), a good writing experience can be achieved through writing a lot which implies the outcomes of practicing with writing. Furthermore, Hedge (2005) notes that to become a competent writer, a learner is required to make a lot of writing practices; indeed, they remain poor in writing in English because they rarely make writing practices.

Table11: Frequency of Negligence of the Writing Lessons

Item	Response								
Does your teacher skip the writing tasks?	Yes				No				
	N		%		N		%		
	211		93.78		14		6.22		
If 'Yes' how often?	Very often		Often		Someti mes		Rarely		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	45	20	55	24.44	81	36	30	13.33	14	6.22

Students were also asked whether their Grade 11 English language teachers skipped the writing tasks of the English text book or not, and 211 respondents (93.78%), most of them, replied that their teachers skipped the writing tasks. They were also asked about the extent to which teachers skipped the tasks, and 81 (36%) of them replied that their teachers **sometimes** skipped the writing lessons whereas 45 (20%) and 55 (24.44%), a significant number of respondents, reported that their teachers skipped the writing lessons **very often** and **often**, respectively (Table 11). This is also consistent with the observation and the interview data analysis results which demonstrated that teachers skipped the writing lessons, for they encountered shortage of time to cover all the portions of the textbook, and as the summative evaluations (final examinations at school and national level) did not include writing examinations.

Teachers can also play a significant role in helping students to practice the writing processes by structuring writing tasks and giving the necessary support. In line with this, students were asked if their teachers accomplished these tasks in the writing classes. See the following table.

Table 12: Frequencies of Teaching Processes (pre, while, and post) of writing)

Item The teacher makes us:	Response									
	Very often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
generate ideas	41	18.22	71	31.56	73	32.44	28	12.44	12	5.33
write an outline	54	24	54	24	62	27.56	42	18.67	13	5.78
organize ideas	67	29.78	69	30.67	53	23.56	29	12.89	7	3.11
write the first draft	37	16.44	78	34.67	62	27.56	33	14.67	15	6.67
revise the draft for organization	43	19.11	66	29.33	81	36	27	12	8	3.56
revise the first draft for ideas	52	23.11	51	22.67	72	32	36	16	14	6.22
edit the draft for language	89	39.56	48	21.33	65	28.89	16	7.11	7	3.11
get comment exchanging our pieces of writings	34	15.11	66	29.33	69	30.67	40	17.78	16	7.11
write the final draft incorporating comments given	35	15.56	63	28	71	31.55	37	16.44	19	8.44

As is indicated in Table 12, 32.44% and 27.56 % of the participant students reported that teachers **sometimes** helped them to generate ideas and write outlines, respectively, before writing the first draft. This result is slightly consistent with the observation data analysis result; that is, of the three observed teachers, while two teachers used lecture method for teaching writing, only one teacher was found to help his/her students to

generate ideas, although he/she did it occasionally, in his/her writing classes. In general, both data analysis results revealed that students did not get adequate support from their teacher or peers to generate ideas and then write outlines at the planning stage of writing.

Table 12 also shows that 30.67% and 34.67% respondents replied that teachers **often** helped them to organize and write their first draft, respectively. As Table 12 indicates, 36% and 32% of the respondents reported that teachers **sometimes** helped them to revise their first draft for organization and ideas, respectively, but, 39.56% of respondents explained that their teachers **very often** made them edit their pieces of writings for language. The data in the table reveals that teachers gave more priority to editing than revising their pieces of writings. They made students worry more about accuracy (grammar, vocabulary, syntax, capitalization and spelling) than the development and organization of their ideas. This leads learners to be concerned with local encoding at the expense of larger discourse units. For example, Nunan (1991) states that bad writers spend a little time reviewing what they have written, and they are concerned mainly with vocabulary and sentence formation at the expense of ideas; accordingly, the type of teaching method that the teachers employ to teach writing could lead students to becoming poor writers.

In addition, Table 12 depicts that most of the respondents (30.67%) reported that their teachers **sometimes** made them exchange their pieces of writings and get comments from each other. Helping students to get comments and feedbacks from each other using peer feedback helps to produce quality pieces of writings. Nation (2009) explains that feedback (whether it is peer or teacher feedback) shapes learners' progress in writing by diagnosing problems and providing encouragement so that they keep writing continuously. Indeed, if students did not get feedbacks and comments on their written products, their progress would be limited. In other words, doing writing tasks collaboratively has a paramount significance to share ideas, especially, at the revising and editing stages, and   peer feedback is one of the techniques that help students share ideas.

The next step of the writing processes is rewriting the final draft incorporating comments, and regarding this, the majority of respondents (31.55**%)** explained that teachers **sometimes** helped them to do so. According to Reid (1993), helping students get comments and feedbacks on their pieces of writings should be part of the writing instruction (Table 12). Feedbacks on written works could help learners develop the habit and ability of using techniques of revising. And teachers can promote students to improve their pieces of writings by helping them to incorporate comments and feedbacks they have received from other individuals. But, triangulated evidences indicate that teachers gave little concern to encourage their students to rewrite their first drafts incorporating the comments they have received from others.

4.5. The Writing Examination Data

One of the purposes of this study was to assess the writing performances of students. In line with this objective, the following research question was posed.

What is the students' performance of writing?

To answer this research question, students were asked to write a formal letter on a given thesis statement.   From 255 students sat for the exam, only 159 wrote the letter in accordance with the instructions given to them. The students' pieces of writings were marked by experienced teachers who had PhD degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and had long teaching experiences of writing courses at university level. The teachers employed a six-point scale scoring guide. As it is mentioned in Weigle (2002), this scale is a standardized instrument which is commonly used to mark compositions written for the purpose of decision makings.   To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were employed as follows.

Table 13: Students' Writing Performance Mean and Standard Deviation

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Writing performance	159	1.69	.954

As it is indicated above (Table 13), the mean value of the students' writing performance is 1.69 which is below average (3). That means most of the participant students scored below three out of six. Therefore, the students' writing examination scores indicate that the majority of students are low achievers in writing in English. In addition, the standard deviation is .954 which is very law, and it shows that there is no difference among students in their performance of students which implies that almost students had nearly the same writing performances which could be categorized as low.

Here it is necessary to note that the students' interview and questionnaire data revealed that teachers either skipped the writing lessons or do not teach them effectively. Likewise, the writing examination data analysis discovered that students' performance is very low. Thus, the students' low performance of writing could be rooted in the teachers' ineffective ways of teaching writing. In fact, the participant teachers did not give enough attention to the writing lessons, and they did not employ the teaching methods which could promote learners' communicative competence in writing. As a result, students could not acquire good experiences and competences of writing.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

This part entails the summary results which are presented as follows.

The first objective of the study was to investigate the nature of the writing tasks of Grade 11 English textbook. And the tasks were analyzed based on parameters such as goal (objective), input, activity, role and setting. To begin with the first component of the writing tasks, the entire objectives stated at the beginnings of the units are found to include the component of **performance.**   In contrast, out of the 18 objectives, only the 6 objectives (33.33%) entail the component of condition. Similarly, only 3 (11.117%) of the objectives involve criterion. More specifically, most of the objectives did not clearly state the context, the quantity, and quality of the pieces of writings they would be expected to produce after learning the particular writing lessons.

In addition, the writing objectives were interpreted in terms of rationale. And while 19 (54.3%) of the tasks were found to reflect real world rehearsal rationale, 16 (45.7%) of them reflected pedagogical rationale. That is, the majority of them were designed based on real world situations and they could encourage learners to rehearse a behavior needed outside the classroom.

These same objectives were also examined in terms of   basic functional writing skills and formal or academic writing skills. Out of 19 objectives, while the 8 were designed based on basic functional writing skills, 11 were designed aiming at developing students' academic or formal writing skills. Thus, focus is given to academic writing skills which are appropriate for preparatory school level where students are getting ready to join university.

The second component of a writing task is input. The data analysis result revealed that verbal inputs were74% whereas nonverbal inputs were found to be 26%. Specifically, the reading and listening texts were the parts which were mainly employed as inputs of writing tasks in Grade 11 English textbook. Texts such as formal and informal letters, magazines and newspaper articles, brochures, reports, statistical data, and etc. were found to be the main inputs for students to use as bases for their writing activities.   The inputs which were presented in non-verbal forms hardly included photographs, pictures, charts and graphs. The data analysis also showed that most of the inputs (62%) were found to be inauthentic types whereas the remaining (38%) were authentic.

Thirdly, an attempt was made to investigate if the activities encouraged students to pass through the writing phases such as generating ideas, writing a first draft, revising, editing and proofreading, and 62% of the activities could stimulate students to pass through the writing stages although many tasks (38%) would not encourage them to go through the writing stages. Also, 73% of the inputs were found to be relevant to the writing activities.

Fourthly, an investigation was made on the roles of learners during accomplishing the writing tasks, and in most of the tasks (63%) students were individual writers. Only 37% of the tasks could make students participants in a collaborative writing. It seems

that inadequate focus has been given to cooperative writing although collaborative writing has a paramount significant for learners.

Also, the roles of teachers in the 19 writing tasks were found to be insignificant; their roles were not stated in the tasks. But, the tasks seem to imply that the teachers might act as either as facilitators or monitors. Accordingly, in the 16% of the tasks, the teachers could act as facilitators, and in the 84% of them, they could act as monitors. None of the tasks allowed the teachers to be dominant in the classroom.

Lastly, the settings designed for the writing tasks of grade 11 English were examined, and while56.5% of the activities were set in the way students could do them individually, 30.4% and 13.1% of them could be accomplished in pairs and in groups, respectively. Thus, even if both pair and group works have paramount benefits, they are not adequately incorporated in the text book.

The second objective of the study was to investigate the writing instruction. To achieve this objective, observation, interview, and questionnaire were employed as data gathering tools. Accordingly, all the observation, the interview, and the questionnaire data analysis results showed that the writing instruction had a serious flaw.

In brief, according to the observation data analysis result, all the 9 observations conducted demonstrated that the observed teachers employed mainly lecture methods of teaching writing, and they rarely used the process approach. This shows that although the writing tasks in the Grade 11 English Text Book were written in the way they could promote the development of writing processes and real communication, teachers mostly did not base their teaching of writing on the approaches reflected in the writing tasks. Moreover, the same data showed that teachers did not employ the time allocated to the writing tasks for the purpose it was meant to serve teaching writing. These same teachers were also observed to give students take home writing tasks instead of giving writing activities to be done inside the classroom under their support where the students can get the teachers' direct support.

To come to the interview data analysis, the result showed that students at preparatory school level did not get writing instructions which could help them to develop their writing competence. That is, teachers either skipped the writing lessons or used the ineffective teaching methods of writing.   To put it in detail, firstly, most teachers were observed skipping the writing lessons. Secondly, although some teachers occasionally tried to teach writing, they focused on formal letter writing only, and even those teachers who focused on letter writing used lecture methods, and they did not give their students opportunities to practice writing. In fact, they did not give the required focus to essay writing, report writing, and writing leaflets.

Also, the questionnaire data analysis result revealed that the writing section was the most ignored part of the Grade 11 English textbook compared to the speaking, reading, listening, and grammar and vocabulary parts of the same textbook. In other words, the data analysis result demonstrated that teachers gave less attention to the writing tasks, and they did not give students opportunities to practice writing. Similarly, the questionnaire data analysis result showed that most teachers skipped the writing lessons. Regarding this, even if the majority of respondents assured that teachers sometimes skipped the writing tasks, many students also reported that their teachers very often and often skipped the writing lessons. Regarding the writing processes, most respondents reported that their teachers sometimes helped them to generate ideas, write

outlines (at the pre-writing stage), revise their first draft, get comments from each other exchanging their pieces of writings and write their final draft incorporating comments they had received form their friends.

The third purpose of the study was to examine students' performance of writing, and in this case the writing examination data analysis results indicated that the mean value of the students' writing exam score was 1.69 (out of 6). This shows that most students' writing performance is by far below average. And a score below half is obviously considered a low or a failing. That is, most students did fail in the exam. In other words, the majority of the respondent students have low writing performances. Thus, the ineffective teaching methods that teachers employed might take the lion's share for the students' low performance of writing. That is, the interview and the questionnaire data analysis revealed that writing was hardly taught or not taught effectively, and the students' writing performance was by far below the standard. In short, the writing instruction could be the main factor for the students' low scores of the writing test.

5.2 Conclusions

`   Based on the data analysis and summary presented above, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Most of objective for the writing tasks did not clearly state the context, quantity and quality of pieces of writings that students are expected to produce after learning the writing sections; similarly, most of the writing tasks did not encourage collaborative writing.
2. The amount of non-verbal inputs (Pictures, photos, graphs etc.) incorporated in the text is inadequate.
3. Most teachers gave a very limited attention to the writing sections of the textbook. In addition, even those teachers who occasionally taught writing letters employed mainly lecture method of teaching writing although the writing tasks in text book could promote the phases as well as the real communications of writing.
4. Most teachers worked to cover the portions of the Grade 11 English Textbook, not to promote students' writing skills. And some teachers were incapable to teach EFL writing.
5. Most students had low writing performances.
6. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the writing instructions had serious deficits; the writing tasks involved certain flaws, and students' writing performance was also very low. These suggest that the learners' low performance of writing could be resulted mainly from the ineffective teaching of writing. In other words, the preparatory school students' lack of skills in EFL writing could be rooted mainly in the implementation of the writing tasks.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Educational Bureaus should prepare and give trainings on contemporary teaching approaches or methods of teaching writing for preparatory school English language teachers. They should also create awareness among preparatory school English language teachers and students about the benefit of EFL writing.
2. School principals should make follow ups on English Language teachers and check if they give equal focus to all portions of the English Language Textbook including writing sections.
3. Teachers should give equal focus to all skills and language aspects of English language.

References

Alamrew G/Mariam (2005) "*A study on the Perception of Writing, Writing Instruction and Students' Writing Performance of Students*." (Unpublished PhD Thesis).Addis Ababa University.

Belcher, W. L. (2009). *Writing your journal articles in 12 weeks: A guide to academic publishing success***.**USA: SAGE Publications.

Brown, D. H. (2001). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). Now York: Longman.

Byrne, D. (1991). *Teaching writing skills*. Longman: Longman Group UK. Limited.

Candlin, C. (1987). Towards task-based language learning. In C. Candlin & D. Murphy (Eds.) *Language learning tasks*. Englewood Cliffs N.J. : Prentice Hall International.

Cook, G. (2003). *Applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crystal, D. (1994). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R.(2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freedman, A. Pringle, I. and Yalden, J. (Eds). (1983). *Learning to write: First/Second Language*. London: Longman.

Graves, K. (2000). *Designing language courses: A guide for teachers*. Canada: Heinle and Heinle Publishers

GeremewLemu (1999). *A study on the academic requirements: Four departments in focus in Addis Ababa University*. (Unpublished PhD Thesis).Addis Ababa

Harmer, J. (2001). *The pactice of English language teaching(3rd Ed).* Longman: Pearson Educational Limited.

Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. Longman: Pearson Education Limited.

Harmer, J. ((2007).*The practice of English language teaching.(4th Ed)*.Longman.: Pearson Education Ltd.

Heaton, J. B. (1988). *Writing English language tests*. London: Longman Group Limited.

Hedge, T. (2005). *Writing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hyland, K. (2003). *Second language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

KIE (2006). *Secondary teachers English*. KIE, Nairobi.

Krashen, J. D. (1989). *Second language acquisition and second language learning.* Oxford, New York: Pergamon Press.

Kroll, B. (1990). *Second language writing research insights for the classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Lightbown, P. M. and Spada, N (2006). *How languages are learned (3rd).*Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Long, M. (1985). A role for instruction in second language acquisition. In K. Hyltenstam& M. Pienemann (Eds.) *Modeling and assessing second language Acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

McNamara, T. (2000). *Language testing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ministry of Education. (2003 E. C.). *English for Ethiopia student textbook: Grade 11.*Pearson: Pearson Education

Ministry of Education .(2008). *English language syllabus for Grade 11*. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.

Nation, I. S. P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing*. UK: Rutledge, Taylor and Francis

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communication classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology***:** *A text book for teachers*. New York: Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task based language teaching***:** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Raimes, A. (1983). *Techniques in teaching writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reid, J. (1993). *Teaching ESL writing***.** USA: Regents Prentice Hall.

Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shavelson, R. J. and Stern, P. (1981)..Research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgments, decisions and Behavior. *Review of Educational Research*.*51*(4). pp. 455-498.

Squire, J. R. (1983). Instructional focus and the teaching of writing. In Freedman, A. Pringle, I. and Yalden, J. (Ed).*Learning to write first language/second language.* London and New York: Longman Group UK, Limited.

Tekle Ferede, Ebabu Tefera and Endlafer Melese. (2012). A descriptive survey on teachers' perception of EFL writing and their practices of teaching writing: Preparatory schools in Jimma Zone in focus. *Journal of Education and Sciences*. *Vol. 8,* No 1 (pp. 29-52).

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge: Harvard University press.

Weigle, S. C. (2002). *Assessing writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

White, R. Y. (1988). *Teaching written English***.** Oxford; Heinemann International.

Widdowson, H. G. (1978), *Teaching language as communication, Oxford*: Oxford University Press.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Longman: Addison Wesley Longman.

Wright, T. (1987). Instructional task and discourse outcome in the L2 Classroom. In Candlin and Murphy (Eds.). *Language learning tasks*. Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice Hall International.