



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**AN INVESTIGATION OF CHALLENGES STUDENTS
FACE IN LEARNING WRITING IN SOPHOMORE
ENGLISH COURSE, A CASE OF ADMAS UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE**



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JUNE, 2011

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TEFL)**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was investigating challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course. This was examined making two specific objectives central. These were identifying the prevalent challenges and assessing the impact of these challenges. In order to attain these objectives, a descriptive statistical analysis was employed using a sample of 48 student and 8 teacher respondents selected by simple random sampling method. The findings of the study revealed that student related challenges such as loose students' cooperation, weak readiness and lack of interest to learn writing as well as their poor background are among the prevalent problems that hinder students' learning of writing in Sophomore English course. Moreover, other problems like learning barriers and ineffective use of learning strategies, challenges related to language skills and other pedagogic albatrosses hinder their learning of writing. Based on the findings, it was concluded that student related problems such as their loose interest and readiness to learn writing, weak background and poor cooperation are found to be prevalent challenges. Moreover, their unconscious use of learning strategies and presence of learning barriers hinder their effective learning of writing. Additionally, other greatly manifested obstacles to their learning of writing include factors associated with teachers' modes of teaching, alienated provision of writing in the course, Sophomore English, and large class size. As per the conclusions, teachers, management of AUC, MoE and other concerned bodies are recommended to pay due attention to such prevalent challenges students face as students' enthusiasm, collaboration, use of strategies, effects of learning barriers, course provision system and class size.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Communication is central in every step of human walk letting, in turn, everyone achieve needs of all concern. It is a continuous process through which ideas are shared between/ among two or more parties with common frame of reference in order to satisfy both physiological and psychological needs (Tesfaye, 2008). Inevitably, it is the essential part of human interaction strengthening integration at all levels and enhancing every aspect of personal and professional facets.

Hence, writing, which incorporates a large number of components, is one way to form communication with others. Human beings make use of this in everyday instances to record happenings, transfer messages, receive notes, share thoughts and ideas and so on.

On the other hand, writing is an activity that needs a continuous hard work to bring active improvements on and it is developed in academic centers. For instance, elementary schools, high schools, colleges and universities are the different institutions in which learners enhance thought portrayal through written matters.

However, even though students get the chance to develop their writing skills in these different academic institutions at different levels the road they go by is not all plain that makes them face several problems.

This research; therefore, took a particular focus on students' problems of writing in Sophomore English course at a university college named Admas (AUC). This specification was intentionally made for the basic reasons that it is a course which all students enrolled in the degree program in higher educational institutions take and it is given to improve their expressive

ability through the most personal, most professional and most difficult productive skill, writing.

Alongside this fact, having written and/or any other kind of communication with no purpose is like swimming in the middle of an ocean without a compass. It is a text of no or almost no faults that builds up effective communication in life. To avoid communication breakdown, therefore, a well written text plays the melodious symphony of meaning and content transmission.

Nonetheless, people's need to meet a set of purposes is not always well paved; it is mostly challenged by several factors that hinder effective learning of writing interrupting the series of steps the process has to go through.

In simple terms, problems of learning writing are factors that block writers not to effectively achieve their purposes resulting from various reasons which lead to unsuccessful hit of the center of set objectives.

It is unquestionable that students face an overwhelming number of problems to learning writing in their way to go through the long way of academic career. Here, then, comes the basic concern of this study: challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course with a special and particular reference to the case at Admas University College (AUC), Addis Ababa.

McCrimmon (1969) said that Sophomore English is troublesome to learn since learners are supposed to know everything about writing before they get a chance to study any of it.

Apart from this, the rationales behind choosing the institution understudy, AUC, were the following. First, it is an institution of numerous branches across the country serving at a larger extent in coverage. It also enrolls a large number of teachers and students of diversified background.

Furthermore, it is a complex academic institution in which almost all students are put in to learning written communication as central as the yolk of an egg. Moreover, like other institutions, the media of instruction used to teach students is English.

Overall, in consideration of all the points raised above, the researcher looked thoroughly into the research title.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Education highly seeks awareness creation, know how promotion, behavioral change, and readiness to change the cosmos positively. These come, in fact, later to providing learners with sufficient skills and knowledge because what learning takes is many. And with a need to look into these components everyone in the academic world takes his or her own part. However, what is so crucial is not taking part in the process. It is rather effectively carrying out the stakes.

Obviously, people's understanding varies across respective instances. One understands swiftly, the other too slowly. One might have rehearsal ability, the other another. Any way, it is through productive means these skills can come to the faces of evaluators. And, the one means is writing.

Nonetheless, many learners of writing come in to facing problems manifested at different times and levels in schools. Maguire (2002), strengthened this idea as no matter how good and effective a written communication may be, yet the fact is that it does face certain challenges which need to be paid more attention.

Additionally, through years, numerous researches have been conducted in relation to the effect of challenges on learning writing and on effective written communication both in national and international levels. However, as far as the researcher's knowledge is concerned the specific topic under discussion, challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore

English course, has not been studied and addressed so far at national level with in such a large and complex organization as AUC. The study therefore sought answers to the following questions.

- What are the prevalent challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course?
- What are the impacts of these challenges on students' learning of writing?
- What are the possible remedies to reduce and/or alleviate these problems?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In an effort to investigate the problem under discussion at AUC the study addressed the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was investigating the challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Making the above umbrella point of stand the heart of the research the specific areas of discussion in the study were:

- identifying the prevalent challenges to learning writing in this specific setting and situation
- dealing with the impact of the problems on students' learning of writing

1.4 Significance of the Study

The benefits that this study offers include the following.

- It makes both teachers and students of similar context like AUC conscious of how learning challenges affect development of writing.

- It also aids colleges and universities in looking into means of achieving their educational plans and strategies paying serious attention to challenges of learning writing and their effect.
- Moreover, it gives an insight to curriculum developers to emphasize the problems which come as a result of challenges of learning writing in meeting good educational performance.
- Far more all, this study is used as a reference material for junior students in particular and for the University Colleges at large.
- Finally, it serves as a springboard for researchers who need to make further research in the area.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study investigated challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course with reference to students enrolled at AUC, Addis Ababa. The total number of students at the university college was about 2400 placed in three different campuses namely: Olympia, Meskel and Misrak, and teachers concerned with teaching English were 16. Particularly, nearly 160 students were taking Sophomore English during the semester of the study in the Olympia Campus. From this population, 48 students and 8 teachers were selected as sample respondents.

Again, as a result of the contributing factors which are stated next and some more others the study was delimited in scope in such a way that it was manageable enough to the researcher. Though a lot of factors challenged the researcher in conducting this study, what have to be prioritized are presented in the next sub-chapter.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The following three basic reasons and other related factors had been considered in planning to make the study confined to AUC, assessing the challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course.

The first reason is economic constraint. It was not the expectation that the researcher would find all costs in need of conducting the research if the scope was much more broaden than this. Second is shortage of time which was forecasted to go against studying the title more in detail. The other one was lack of manpower to accomplish such tasks as distributing data gathering instruments, collecting and analyzing them as well as interpreting results found. Moreover, as a result of the potential constraints presented above observation was not employed as a data collection instrument.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is consisted of five consecutive chapters. The first chapter deals with the basic introductory elements of the research which the researcher has come through. The second one presents a review of related literature to the title of the study. Similarly, while the techniques used to accomplish the research are discussed in the third chapter the fourth one covers the presentation of findings and their detailed analysis. Finally, in the fifth chapter, recommendations are drawn as per the conclusions reached. Appendices and other preliminary components have also accompanied this research paper.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with a review of literature related to writing skills, learning writing in Sophomore English course and challenges of learning writing. Basic and general information concerning these variables and ideas directly related to the study are discussed.

Among the verbal and non-verbal media of communication the most formal, personal and situationally preferable one is writing. It serves working functions by reinforcing procedures of effective communication. It is also vitally significant for the advantage of such points as speedy preparation, possibility of keeping records, size manageability and degree of formality.

However, prior to coming up with this activity people are put in to formally learning writing in schools and other academic institutes. This is what matters most shaping their ability to write and capacity to jot down ideas and feelings.

In relation to this, on the way to bring their writings out students face with a lot of challenges. Therefore, this paper has made a study in this area discussed after elaborating its basic essence in the following way.

2.2 Writing

2.2.1 Writing Defined

Writing is of a crucial significance in achieving common understanding between communicators. It is an intellectual and emotional exhibitionism. Regardless of the form of a work, it reveals thoughts and values of its creator. Fletcher (1996) stated that writing skills help the learner gain independence, comprehensibility, and creativity in writing. If learners have

mastered these skills, they will be able to write so that not only they can read what they have written, but also other users of that language can read and understand it.

Moreover, although how writing fosters critical thinking is not clear, theoreticians and practitioners alike agree that writing promotes both critical thinking and learning.

Even though many linguists and communication experts have stated some as a meaning outline it is hardly possible to find a single perfect definition of writing whose origins are largely unclear.

One from many that explains writing better is offered by Byrne (1988:1). He demonstrated that:

“Writing simply is the act of forming graphic symbols: making marks on a flat surface of some kind. But it is clearly much more than the production of symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged according to certain conventions to form different units of writing.”

This delineation briefly depicts that writing is a meaningful set of graphics formed with tacit consent put on a piece of surface aimed at portraying an idea as speech production does. It is the representation of language in a textual medium through the use of a set of agreed signs or symbols.

Despite the difference in the use of terminologies to define what writing refers to, all agree that writing, the specific ability which helps writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message, plays a pivotal role to achieve effective communication. What they stress on is: ‘writing is a means to an effective end.’

2.2.2 Good Writing

2.2.2.1 What is a good writing?

Many people believe that good writing is about having skill and an aptitude for writing. This, however, is not always the case. Although talent is an important component of being a good writer, there are a number of other factors that contribute to a great writer.

The fundamentals, of course, are always important. Writers need to possess in-depth vocabulary knowledge. They also need to understand punctuation, spelling and grammar.

Apart from knowledge of the basics, good writing is much more than just correct writing. It is writing that responds to the interests and needs of readers.

Briefly, the basic features of good, effective writing are presented to be the following. Good writing has a clearly defined purpose. It also makes a clear point. It further supports that point with specific information. The information are also clearly connected and arranged.

Good writing is presenting relevant information to the reader in a manner that it is easy to understand. Peha (2011) stated that it is not that hard to tell whether a piece of writing is good or bad admitting that things get more challenging if one has to explain why that is. Bearing this in mind, Peha continued, a certain writing which is named good in its nature is characterized by the following basic attributes.

It incorporates ideas that are interesting and important, i.e. the heart of the piece - what the writer is writing and the information he or she chooses to write about is. These ideas are then organized in a logical and effective

manner; organization refers here to the order of ideas and the way the writer moves from one idea to the next. Individual and appropriate voice is the other vital feature which is all about how the writing feels to someone when he/she reads it; it is the expression of the writer's personality through words. Another is specific and memorable word choice, for good writing uses just the right words to say just the right things. Smooth and expressive sentence fluency is also vitally significant to make a given subject matter easy-to-understand and fun to read with expression. Finally, correct and communicative conventions make the writing consistent and easy to read.

2.2.2.2 What is good writing necessary for?

It should be well known that the act of writing is intrinsically valuable to learners. It crystallizes one's thoughts in a way that nothing else can. Supporting this idea Kondrat (2009) said that learners learn more from writing papers than they do from working in the laboratory. They rarely find writing easy, but they always find it rewarding.

The ability to write enables them to communicate with greater effectiveness. Ideas, thoughts, and dreams can be spread throughout the world.

The inevitable and ascertaining importance of writing can be presented in several ways. In other words, the ability of each person to write well could prove to be vital in varied forms. Pro to this idea, Kelly (1999) alerted that specific and prominent than any other thing, writing skills can be the ticket to better college grades and greater academic achievement. All in all, with the many uses for writing, it would appear evident that people should be made aware of its importance.

Concerning the importance of writing, looking in to a list of benefits it gives, Kondrat (2009) presented that written communication is a basic tool for people to express their ideas, and learn about those of others. It also

maintains that the person's writing is to form the reader's opinion about the individual's personality and abilities. Next is the list of these benefits.

- Excellent writing is sure to earn respect. Poor writing will, on the contrary, be difficult to understand, and will leave a bad impression about the individual.
- Writing structures and crystallizes one's thoughts, improving learning in such a way.
- Writing improves the effectiveness of the person's word usage in both written and oral speech.

Similarly, a list of the following merits of writing for learners can be made. First, it helps learners express themselves. Secondly, it prepares them for employment. Thirdly, it is how much of the world communicates. If they do not write, they cut themselves off from a large community. Fourthly, it can be a great instrument to help them know more about the way they think; it can solidify ideas and thoughts, and allow the learners to reflect on them better than if the ideas remain evolving in their head. Fifthly, writing is one of the ways that students translate their thoughts for other people by. Finally, writing assists them with other language tasks as well i.e. it helps them learn how to form language, how to make a logical argument, or how to persuade.

Furthermore, Kelly (1999) depicted more other additional advantages of writing. From effective written works, we can see where our ancient civilizations started and where our current civilization is headed. Writing forever defines communication in that written words leave an account of a scene when spoken communication is not possible. The writing process helps to hone our speaking abilities and perhaps change the way people view us.

Generally, taking all the points listed above in to account it can be said that

good writing is necessary for the following and more other significances.

It is the primary basis up on which people's work, learning, and intellect will be judged. It helps them express who they are as persons making thinking visible, being portable and permanent. It also lets them move easily among facts, inferences and opinions without getting confused and without confusing readers. Moreover, it fosters the ability to explain a complex position to readers by promoting the ability to pose worthwhile questions. Additionally, it helps people refine ideas while giving others feedback requiring the anticipation of readers' needs; the ability to anticipate demonstrates intellectual flexibility and maturity. Furthermore, it stimulates people to extend a line of thought beyond gut responses; it equips with the communication and thinking skills.

2.2.2.3 Features Considered in Good Writing

Jones (2008) provided three essentials jump out right away to make a piece of writing good. These are: practice, trust, and judgment.

Everyone has to practice every day. After many years of daily practice a competence can actually be built up. Daily writing is the place to innovate, experiment, try on other voices. Trust is what fuels good writing which is about having a good relationship with creative self and works in several ways. Additionally, inspiration comes from trusting in the writing process; judgment is all about perspiration which refers to the conscious grind, bringing the intellect to bear on each and every aspect of the process.

In other words, if practice is what keeps one in shape as a writer, and trust is the inner work of writing, then judgment is involved with the actual performance. It is the 'big game' where a writer gets to apply training, draw from the well of creativity, and produce a fine piece of writing.

It is in account of these three marks which are every time inseparable that good writing comes in to being. Moreover, the following aspects are also put central.

2.2.2.3.1 Purposes of Writing

Knowing one's purpose before ever putting pen to paper ensures that whatever words fall in front of readers' eyes are all part of an overall structure that is carefully crafted to illicit an appropriate reader response.

Although the idea of purposes of writing, set objectives planned to be met at the accomplishment of a given writing activity, is vast as Byrne (1988: 2) stated it is helpful to keep in mind some of the many uses we are likely to make of writing. A great deal of these purposes have been stated and suggested by several researchers and experts in the areas of language and communication.

For instance, Roman Jakobson's model of the communication situation offered a good framework for classifying the varied purposes of writing in to some particular pieces. This model depicts that writing can be seen as having six general types of purpose, each type of purpose focusing on one of the parts of the communication model.

First, the writer which is called the expressive purpose comes. One may write simply to express his/her feelings, attitudes, ideas, and so on. This type of writing doesn't take the reader into consideration; instead, it focuses on the writer's feelings, experience, and needs.

Reader is the second one or the conative purpose. Conative writing seeks to affect the reader. Persuasive writing is conative; so is writing intended to entertain and arouse the reader's feelings.

Context, the third purpose, deals with informative purposes which refers to something external to the writing itself, with the purpose of informing the reader.

Message, fourthly, serves poetic purposes. These purposes focus on the message itself - on its language, on the way the elements of language are used, on structure and pattern, and both on the level of phrase and of the overall composition.

Fifth, phatic purposes are played by contact. They establish and maintain contacts between the writer and the reader. The use of greetings and closings in letters is one example of phatic purpose in writing.

Codes finally have metalinguistic purposes. Comments on a piece of writing are metalinguistic. An author's preface to a book is an example of metalinguistic purpose in writing.

Generally, writers write either because they are required to or because they choose to write for their own reasons. In either case, reflection on different purposes for writing can help one produce the most piece of writing. These purposes are then the reasons to make a writer write letting him/her get benefited from.

2.2.2.3.2 Elements of Writing

It is not an easy task to list all the elements of writing down. This is because the criteria to name a given writing good are varied in form and consideration.

Some five elements of writing were pointed out by CQ (2004) on the basis of the role they play to reinforce objectives of good writing. These are *purpose*: clear audience, subject, and genre; *direction*: proper structure, organization, logical order; *ideas*: connection to readers, specific details, variety; *style*:

expression, word choice, sentence variety, figurative language, etc...; and *presentation*: spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, neatness, etc.

On another basis, Anteneh (2004: 24), citing Johns (1990) and Hinds (1987) in Johns (1990), presented the following list of elements in interactive and social-constructionist approaches referring respectively to involving in dialogue with audience, and the written product considered as a social act that can take place only within and for a specific context and audience.

A. Language

1. The spelling is correct and consistent.
2. There is accurate and appropriate use of grammar and syntax.
3. Selection of appropriate tone and style is important.

B. Layout and organization

1. The layout is relevant to the text-type.
2. The text has sections or paragraphs which have clear focus.
3. There is a clear linking between each section paragraph/sentence and the previous and the following one.
4. The methods of organization are clearly identifiable (similarity/contrast, pros/cons, before/after)
5. The punctuation helps the reader understand the organization.

C. Relevance to the task and regard for the reader

D. Clarity

On the other hand, there are two key elements in an effective writing style. One is readability, meaning the use of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in such a way as to communicate facts and ideas clearly. The other is elegance, meaning the use of appropriate and interesting words,

phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to produce graceful, unobtrusive prose that will keep a reader's attention and interest.

Furthermore, Humphrey (2009) expressed that the elements of a good writing do not need to be a mystery. They do not go beyond the circle of the following set. These are:

Appropriate Vocabulary: substituting more descriptive and higher-level words for more accuracy

Careful Word Choice: choosing words that are more precise and more vivid, because vivid words paint a word picture

Complexity: adding complexity, explaining the entire idea or situation (adding sub-details to the sentence, such as a cause or effect, time reference, explanation of logic or reason)

Structural Clarity: making the direction and main idea of the paper perfectly clear by using sub-points balanced in importance and type, using transition words and phrases and sentences, and building the action or detail from one paragraph to the other

Style: being aware of personal choices in phrasing, word choice, punctuation, etc., and being consistent with these across any piece of writing

Variety: varying sentences in length and type and eliminating unnecessary words

Finally, even though the elements of a good writing offered are not the same at all bases it is of a great benefit to bear in mind that what sets an exceptional writing apart from the average one is paying careful attention to the small details and finer points by taking the above elements in to account.

2.2.3 Difficulty of Writing

Anteneh (2004) said that writing is the most difficult language skill. The attention that a writer has to give to grammar, vocabulary and text properties, like cohesion and coherence, makes writing relatively a difficult skill.

Nunan (1991) also supported this with the idea that writing is clearly a complex process, and competent writing is frequently accepted as being the last language skill to be acquired.

As Anteneh (2004) cited Nunan (1991) in Italo (1999), writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. Italo (1999) further argued that writing involves psychological, linguistic and cognitive factors and this makes it demanding. To this end, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) in Italo (1999) stressed that writing is probably the most complex constructive act that human beings are ever expected to perform.

2.2.3.1 Why is writing difficult?

The main reason for the difficulty of writing is that it is a process, not a problem to be solved or a question to be answered. Good writing most often comes from an iterative cycle of drafting, revising, and editing. This often turns students off, because they would rather look at something once, solve it, and move on.

Hedge (1988: 7) emphasized that a great deal of writing in the English language classroom is undertaken as an aid to learning; for example, to consolidate the learning of new structures or vocabulary or to help students remember new items of language. In this context, the role of writing is little different from its role in any other subject.

Moreover, Byrne (1988: 4-5) looked at the problems in writing under three headings: psychological, linguistic and cognitive – although these inevitably overlap to some extent.

i Psychological Problems

Writing is essentially a solitary activity and the fact that we are required to write on our own, without the possibility of interaction on the benefit of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult.

ii Linguistic Problems

In writing, unlike in speaking, we have to compensate for the absence of considerable range of devices at our disposal to help get our meaning across. We have to keep the channel of communication open through our own efforts and to ensure that the text we produce can be interpreted on its own.

iii Cognitive Problems

Writing is learned through a process of instruction. We have to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures which are less used in speech, or perhaps not used at all.

2.2.4 Basic Methodologies of Writing

Varied kinds of methodologies can be considered crucial throughout the course of a writing process. These methodologies are presented in different forms.

For instance, Nunan (1991: 86) classified these basic methodologies in to writing as product and writing as process.

Writing as product emphasizes a product oriented approach focusing on the end result of the learning process. Process approaches, on the other hand,

focus more on the various classroom activities which are believed to promote the development of skilled language use.

Product oriented approaches to the development of writing favor classroom activities in which the learner is engaged in imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language. In this approach writing classes should be devoted in the first instance to shorter units of writing like sentence formation and grammar exercises.

Methodologically, these activities and more others find their way into practice in the process approach to writing. In this approach, the focus in the first instance is on quantity rather than quality, and beginning writers are encouraged to get their ideas on paper in any shape or form without worrying too much about formal correctness. The approach also encourages collaborative group work between learners as a way of enhancing motivation and developing positive attitudes towards writing.

On the other hand, the following series of steps are recommended as effective and basic methodologies in the writing process. The first one is creativity, where it all begins. This lets the writer have a refined and organized process of writing. Next comes expanding on thoughts, idea generation. The other one is thinking of many related terms and picking out the best ones to use. The fourth step is making oneself ready against spontaneous ideas. One never knows when a good idea is going to hit him/her. And the last one is looking for final thoughts. Writing on a particular topic or idea is never finished; it is a perpetual work in progress.

2.2.5 Writing Activities and Programs

Both writing activities and writing programs are interlocked. One lies within the presence of the other. While writing activities refer to tasks that learners are supposed to perform after learning a given academic facet about a topic, writing programs are the range of plan of these activities to be done and

achieved in some specific way. The next couple of ideas also distinguishes and explains these two concepts.

2.2.5.1 Writing Activities

Writing activities provide learners with a series of prompts about a writing and/or reading process. There are a lot of writing activities which students are put to carry out. They are too vast, for they take and possess different forms and features across varied instances. However, McDonough and Shaw (2003) in Anteneh (2004) broadly divided these activities in to three: controlled sentence construction, free composition and the home work function. The range of activities also include: providing a model sentence and asking students to construct a parallel sentence with different lexical items, inserting grammatical form, composing sentences from tabular information and joining sentences to make a short paragraph, inserting the right conjunctions.

The end of doing the writing activities well results in discovering the following writing goals as defined by Hampton (1989).

- Writers are independent when they are able to write without much assistance.
- Writers gain comprehensibility when they can write so that it can be read and understood by themselves and others.
- Writers are fluent when they are able to write smoothly and easily as well as understandably.
- Writers gain creativity when they can write their own ideas, not copying what has already been written, so that they can be read and understood

2.2.5.2 Writing Programs

It has been said that writing programs are the range of plan of writing activities to be carried out and achieved in a particular way.

Broughton (1980: 117-118) recommended that there should be a program to develop written works which functions all the way through the educational system. Such a program lists the main types of writing which is felt students should be able to master by the end of their education. It is fairly easy to draft the main points which would need to be included in such a program, but too little is known about exactly how students learn to write effectively to be able to relate these points to a satisfactory learning. There are a number of strong reasons for this being desirable.

Broughton (1980: 117-118) strengthened the idea claiming that the strongest reason is that writing is – to the practiced user – an extremely fluent and easy activity for at least part of the time, but very often some learners can only be fluent at the expense of accuracy. At the same time, as the conventions of writing are more restricting than those of speech – we are less tolerant of deviation – the need of the writer to be accurate is very great.

It seems convenient, then, to structure writing programs through three main stages. These are controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing.

Generally, the controlled stage concerns itself with the production of accurate language in context, the guided stage with the organization of material which is given, and the free stage with the production by the student of both content and language.

2.2.5.2.1 Goals of the Writing Programs

Broughton (1980: 119-120) delineated that in most language learning courses, there is a tendency for language to be presented as a number of separate items, related to situation and communication act. And when writing is used to reinforce work which has been initially presented, it often reinforces either at the direct sentence level, or in relation to dialogues or

situations which are not those usually expressed through writing. It is the responsibility of the writing program particularly to train students to produce sequences of sentences which express their meaning most effectively. Since, both when we speak and when we write, we work not through isolated sentences but through blocks of sentences, this should be a more natural activity than using exercises which consist of lists of sentences without any context whatsoever. Nonetheless, the ability to put sentences together effectively needs systematic encouragement, and sometimes explicit teaching, and part of the work in a writing course involves teaching students to be sensitive to the rules of discourse in English.

It is not possible to teach explicitly everything a writer needs to know about English, but fortunately for teachers the learning of language takes place to a great extent unconsciously.

Clearly the goal of writing programs is to help students correct their mistakes, although natural writing does not result primarily from exercises in avoiding mistakes. So it needs to fit help with correction into a framework of more positive development of writing skills.

2.3 Learning Writing

In simple and concise terms, learning refers to the process of acquiring persistent knowledge by study. It is an internal process in the learner with a relatively permanent change in his or her behavior.

Learning writing means learning to think. Students might be sentenced to thoughtless mechanical operations or facilitated to improve their ability to think. Hampton (1999) explained that if students' readiness for more involved thought processes is bypassed in favor of jamming more facts and figures into their heads, they will stagnate at the lower levels of thinking. But if students are encouraged to try a variety of thought processes in

classes, they can develop considerable mental power. Learning writing is one of the most effective ways to develop thinking. Thus, writing to learn can have additional positive effects in helping students mature as effective communicators even though the initial goal is to help students become better learners.

Learning writing is all about enabling to produce a grand and well developed written work of instructed context. This involves a set of tasks that help students think through key concepts or ideas presented in a course.

Broughton (1980: 116-117) made clear that the following pedagogical aspects need to be considered if the goal of the English learning is to enable students to produce fluent, accurate and appropriate writing. These aspects are:

1. Mechanical problems with the script of English which refers to the importance found when students are moving from a language which uses another form of writing;
2. Problems of accuracy of English grammar and lexis;
3. Problems of relating the style of writing to the demands of a particular situation;
4. Problems of developing ease and comfort in expressing what needs to be said.

2.3.1 Why learning writing?

According to Stephen J. Davies (1998) learning how to write in English is important for many language learners, particularly for those who are studying at colleges and universities. Writing is essentially a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience. This takes a lot of practice.

Although the ability to produce error free writing is desirable, learners will be encouraged to write if writing tasks motivate them and keep them interested.

There are many reasons to learn writing. The most important one is communication. If one doesn't learn writing, he/she will have a hard time communicating with readers.

In addition to this, learning writing can help in other aspects of life. It can also lead to a monetary value. Without learning how good writing is produced the world would be in anarchy and chaos. Bad writing skills can lead to misinformation or wrong and ambiguous message. Good writing skills can lead to a much needed confidence boost. Generally, good writing results from learning which is important for people in both personal and professional lives.

2.4 Challenges of Learning Writing

Daoud (1998: 113) demonstrated that learning academic writing in EFL/ESL contexts is often described as challenging. (Anteneh 2004: 22) also fostered that due to the complex nature of writing, students often experience difficulties becoming frustrated and overwhelmed, as they struggle to develop these skills.

Writing is the most important form of communication. It would appear, however, to be one of the hardest to master, for written words require thought and organization. But no matter how hard writing might appear to be, the fact that many people have written well has forever changed history, defined communication, shaped our society, and honed our ability to speak.

Another idea was raised by Raimes, 1983; Hedge, 1991; and McDonough and Show, 1993 in Anteneh (2004) that learning writing can be difficult and complex process for any student and teacher.

Moreover, Bloomfield (2004) stated that writing is a hard work and all the marvels of modern technology have not made it any easier. Vast resources now lay just keystrokes away, but the basic art of assembling one's thoughts into engaging prose is little changed since the days of paper and pencil. While mindless information doubles every three years, thoughtful writing still proceeds at an old fashioned pace.

These challenges come in to being accounted for several reasons. Many times, a student tends to forget different kinds of rules in terms of writing. There are aspects in writing which students do not see as an important part of the structure they create. Most often than not, students are not very comfortable in utilizing formal words in their units of writing.

In addition to this, there are many students who are having great difficulties in writing. Due to the language barrier, foreign students have a greater tendency to fail written assignments because of their inability to write various assignments properly.

Furthermore, such similar challenges as the situation they learn writing in trigger students' effective undertaking of writing tasks which highly need a more focused concern, especially for learners of English as an L2.

Through the skill of writing several opportunities could be opened such as employment opportunities and the likes. Through reading different kinds of materials more and more writing skill is acquired by the student. There are many ways to which a student could learn fast. In reality most students must be capable of acquiring various types of writing skills. However, if they are not serious of the actions they want to take therefore, all the learning which they have acquired will be useless. Hence, students must realize the value of learning writing, for it is a basic skill that they would learn which could not be taken away from them. In the end, the students must closely work on their skill in writing activities to be able to fulfill the needs of a class.

In conclusion, the long way of learning writing puts learners alongside facing a number of challenges which are difficult to prognosticate. As these challenges are too broad, dealing with them within a particular scope does not become as simple as it is thought. As a result, prioritizing the general and specific objectives of the present research the title under discussion is studied in-depth pointing out the methodology and procedures as well as the analysis in the following way.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

3.1 Study Design

The main purpose of this study was investigating the challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course.

In methodological terms, the study was designated in the following fashion. A paired approach research was adopted employing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Both forms of analysis were used simultaneously.

Supporting the mixed use of these two techniques Rossman and Wilson (1991) asserted that it is useful to enable confirmation or corroboration of each other via triangulation and to develop analysis, providing reach details.

Therefore, since the present study was concerned with the investigation of challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course, these two approaches were used in an interlocked manner.

3.2 Research Setting and Subjects

3.2.1 Research Setting

The research was conducted at Admas University College, Olympia Campus, Addis Ababa, on students who were taking Sophomore English course. This academic institution was purposefully selected because the researcher had the experience of working there.

3.2.2 Subjects of the Study

Because the whole population was too large, the target populations in the study were 8 English teacher and 48 student representatives at Admas University College.

The study targeted Degree program students who were enrolled at Admas University College to take Sophomore English in the regular program. The

total number of students at the University College in Addis Ababa was nearly 2400* placed in three different campuses. From this total population 160* students were taking Sophomore English in the second semester of the 2010/2011 academic year. Among them a sample of 48 students taking Sophomore English was selected using simple random sampling technique.

In addition, 8 teachers who had been and were giving Sophomore English were selected merging simple random and purposeful sampling techniques. While the former was used to the respondents of distributed questionnaires, the later was employed to the interviewees. The purposeful selection was used with the aim of gathering rich data referring specifically to chosen informants who could and had the authority to offer detailed information.

These responding populations were made aware of the purpose of the research prior to giving their answers. Additionally, they were emphatically told the vital significance they have in taking part in the study to come up with sound findings. Furthermore, the researcher assured the subjects that confidentiality would be preserved.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

3.3.1 Sources of Data

As presented by Patton (1990: 244), because no single source of data can be trusted to provide comprehensive perspectives multiple source of information are sought and used. So, two kinds of instruments were employed to gather data. These were questionnaire and interview. In order to make the findings further solid and grand the target respondents were given enough time and space to present whatsoever they felt as right for respective items in all of the tools used.

* The source of these data is the registrar of the University College.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique was done making an integrative use of random and purposive sampling techniques. Because Admas University College enrolls a great number of students compared to other Ethiopian private academic institutions it would be difficult to address every one. Therefore, the respondents were randomly selected. This method yielded equivalent proportion to ensure the representativeness of the sample to the general population. This also helped the researcher get far from bias. By the same token, similar technique was employed in combination with purposive sampling to teacher participants. The later was used to two interviewees who were teaching Sophomore English and two authority figures in the University College.

3.3.3 Procedures of Data Gathering

Precisely presented, the respondents were approached in the following way. After having personal introduction, the purpose of the study was told and the benefits to be found after the study accomplishment were delineated.

Next, a pilot study was conducted prior to distributing the final questionnaires to find relevant information. Then, the questionnaire was distributed first and the interview second both of which were prepared in English, for all the target populations were set to teach and learn Sophomore English in the English language.

These two tools were also chosen because they were quick and could make the respondents as nearly free as a bird on the sky. The details are presented as follows.

3.3.3.1 Pilot Study

The objective of the pilot study was to test and improve instruments and to have awareness for possible problems that might be encountered while administering the actual instruments.

Student participants of the pilot study were selected from the same university college, but another campus named Meskel. The researcher selected the pilot sample for the reason that the students were taking the same course at the same level and program. From this sample, 30 respondents were selected using random sampling. On the other hand, six teachers of the same department in the University College took part in piloting the questionnaire items that validated the final tool.

Based on the information obtained from the pilot study, the instruments were revised as deemed necessary (Appendices I and II). Items that were detected as confusing to participants to respond were paraphrased, and some of them totally omitted (Appendix V).

3.3.3.2 Questionnaire

In this study, the questionnaire incorporated both open ended and closed ended items some of which were made to be crosschecking like 1.1.2, 1.1.4, 1.1.6, 1.1.8, 1.2.1, 1.3.2, 1.4.2 and 1.4.5 on students' questionnaire (Appendix I), and 1.1.3, 1.1.6, 1.3.2 and 1.4.4 on teachers' (Appendix II). These items verified respondents' feedback.

The items were totally 16 and 20 for teachers and students, respectively grouped under four categories with a plan of paving the way in the analysis process.

The closed ended items, 5 and 9 for teachers and students, respectively were provided with Likert type scales from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'. These are 'Strongly agree' numbered 1, 'Agree' numbered 2, 'Disagree' numbered 3 and 'Strongly disagree' numbered 4. But, for the rest of the closed ended items other scales of groups, intensity and quantity were provided (Appendices I and II).

The responses of both teachers and students were summed up and presented in percentages.

The questionnaires distributed both to teachers and students consisted of four main parts. The first part with 7 items for teachers and 9 for students dealt with teacher and student related challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course. The second part was aimed at collecting information about challenges related to learning barriers and strategies. Designed to gather data concerning challenges related to other language skills the third part of the questionnaire presented 2 questions for both teachers' and students' groups. Finally, the fourth part presented questions of inquiring institutional and other pedagogic challenges.

One of the sampling techniques used was simple random, as a result, it was not exactly known which sex dominated. Because the number of teacher respondents was manageable and the students' questionnaire was filled during class hours there was 100% return rate.

3.3.3.3 Interview

The interview was designed to obtain data that could validate information gathered through questionnaire. In the present study, 6 and 4 questions were prepared for teachers and students, sequentially. In addition to these leading questions, some others were added during the interviewing process to elicit stands respective to set items.

The interview questions discussed ideas parallel to the questionnaire items. This was done to meet the objective of triangulating respondents' views.

The questions used on interviews (Appendix III and IV) were not refined by the pilot study, for they were prepared with the same intention as the questionnaire.

Two purposefully selected teachers, who were giving Sophomore English during the time represented in the analysis as K1 and k2, and two authority figures in the University College labeled in the discussion as K3 and K4, as well as 8 randomly selected students were interviewed made key informants.

All interviews were conducted at the University College and participants granted permission for the interviews to be recorded using audio-equipment suitable for data collection all of which were interviewed individually.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

With the aim of achieving the central objectives of this research, investigating challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course, the responses found using the two basic tools of data gathering, questionnaire and interview, are analyzed procedurally. The items on the questionnaire were grouped under four categories, teacher and student related challenges, challenges related to learning barriers and strategies, challenges related to other language skills, and institutional and other pedagogic challenges, in order that ideas raised could be manageable presented in the circles of these four general and widely dominant sets of challenges of students in learning any language skill.

The above grouping was done so as to facilitate data comparison and well implement data analysis as Paton (1990) suggested.

Responses to open ended questionnaire items were thoroughly read first, and numbers encircled for the closed ended ones were statistically executed succeeded by a critical listening to tape recorded interviews.

This chapter, therefore, deals with the above four general points of analysis which include the prevalent challenges students face in learning writing in Sophomore English course, though there are others alongside which are not addressed in this study. Additionally, what has to be noted here is that all the points in the next analysis are made in the context of Sophomore English.

4.2 Teacher and Student Related Challenges

4.2.1 Teacher Related Challenges

4.2.1.1 Teachers' Mastery and Experience of Teaching Sophomore English

One of the most crucial aspects of students' learning of writing is teachers' experience and knowledge of the subject matter they teach. It was bearing this in mind that students were asked to give their feedback. However, teachers were not asked because it was thought that clearer and impartial answer would be found from students since the item was intended to inquire about teachers. Similarly, because 8.3% of the responses gathered from 48 students concerning this idea employed inconsistent answers in the crosschecking item they were rejected.

Mastery and experience in this context take in to account their manner of teaching and instruction to achieve the objectives of the course in the eyes of the students.

The whole data gathered is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Students' view towards teachers' mastery and experience of teaching Sophomore English

Item: Your teachers of Sophomore English show lack of ability, experience and mastery of the course they teach.		
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Student Respondents	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	2	4.13
Agree	10	20.83
Disagree	27	56.25
Strongly disagree	5	10.41
Responses rejected	4	8.3
Total	48	99.92

The above table shows that 56.25% of the respondents disagreed with teachers' lack of experience and knowledge to teach Sophomore English while 10.41% disagreed strongly which means teachers have the required abilities. On the contrary, 20.83% and 4.13% of these students agreed and strongly agreed respectively, that teachers' lack of training and mastery of the subject matter they teach is one of teacher related challenges.

Pointed out in the open ended items, respondents on the disagreeing and strongly disagreeing side admitted that what their teachers have acquired is not insufficient but they had better take further training.

Furthermore, having accepted the priority of knowledge and experience of teachers in learning writing in Sophomore English course some of the respondents explained that some teachers are good enough while others are not sufficiently experienced. They also recommended the need to further teachers' training for the betterment of their learning.

Students' interview additionally showed that teachers' carelessness as well as poor preparation and readiness to be supplemented with teaching aids are manifested as common teacher related problems.

4.2.1.2 Teachers' Use of Cooperative Work

With a principle of "one for all; all for one", cooperative learning, the grouping and pairing of students for the purpose of achieving an academic goal, has been widely researched and advocated throughout the professional literature. The term 'cooperative learning' refers to an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful. Johnson and Johnson (1986) also supported this idea further demonstrating that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking.

Beatty et al (1999) stated that collaborative teaching-learning differs from didactic teaching in that goals, learning tasks, and assessment are designed as a cooperative effort between the teacher and the students.

They also quoted Heimlich (1996) who said that when engaging in collaborative methods, the instructor should think about three areas. First, focus upon the content that is the explicit agenda for the activity as well as the process that will best facilitate learning. Second, use inherent motivators to engage the individuals in interactions which include conflict, cooperation, challenge and content. Finally, account for the diversity of learning styles that will likely be present among the learners. It is up to the facilitator to determine the best method for fostering collaborative learning.

Therefore, to enhance personal and collective responsibility in learning writing, students' cooperative learning should be encouraged in planning their own writing activities and how they will learn writing more effectively.

Hence, for making writing effective through cooperative learning, the instructors' assistance to students' collaboration serves a magnificent role. In relation to this, respondents showed their views in the following way.

Table 2: Students' view towards teachers' encouragement of cooperative work in learning writing

Item: Teachers encourage you to cooperatively work and enhance your learning of writing.		
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Student Respondents	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	8	16.66
Agree	27	56.25
Disagree	5	10.41
Strongly disagree	1	2.08

Responses rejected	7	14.58
Total	48	99.98

This table depicts that a large number of student respondents, i.e. 56.25% and 16.66%, respectively, agreed and strongly agreed that teachers encourage them to collaboratively work for the enhancement of their learning of writing in Sophomore English course. On the other hand, 10.41% and 2.08% of them disagreed and strongly disagreed, in their order, with this idea.

However, 7 answers forwarded by the target respondents are rejected because 3 of them did not respond at all whereas the other four did not explain consistent to the responses given in the closed ended item.

In their responses, both to the open ended items and interview questions, a number of students reflected that most if not all of the teachers try their best to let students carry out tasks collectively. They further expounded that teachers give feedback on students' works, offer group assignments and motivate them to practice writing.

On the contrary, some respondents who disagreed with this replied that their teachers assume collaborative work as unsuitable to teach students writing in Sophomore English course. As a result, the respondents concluded that the teachers become confined to their lecturing function only imparting their knowledge and transmitting what their mind is entangled with.

Moreover, an interviewee pointed out that this method of teaching is employed infrequently which could have been supportive to the development of students' critical thinking and other skills. He also added that this could result from teachers' lack of motivation and weakness to follow up the activities undertaken by students.

4.2.2 Student Related Challenges

4.2.2.1 Students' Readiness and Interest to Learn Writing

Regarding this question only teachers were asked to answer because it dealt with student related challenge.

Scholars in the area of communication and pedagogy strongly support the need to learners' focused attention to learn what they are supposed to learn. Similarly, all teacher respondents viewed this idea in the context of learning writing in Sophomore English course as follows.

Except one respondent to a questionnaire item, all others, both interviewed and involved in the questionnaire, agreed that students have lack of readiness and interest to learning writing. This magnifies the challenge students confront because of a factor brought about by themselves.

The only respondent argued that students' have good motivation to learn writing, but the majority said most students are not enthused, though there are some. Further delineating this, they said students' readiness is the other face of their interest since both are interlocked. Therefore, because of their lower level of interest and readiness they find learning writing difficult and activities troublesome to perform. Students do not also show keen enthusiasm to progress their skill of writing which is frequently manifested in the following ways. They do not attend classes and add their own personal effort outside the classroom. Additionally, they do not do assignments properly and submit home works in time.

Another justification given was students develop lower level readiness because they think learning writing is so much simple and easier.

4.2.2.2 Students' Background

One of the factors accounted for student related challenges in learning writing in Sophomore English course is their background, and lack of

experience of learning writing. In light of this, Abdulatif et al (2008: 21) stated that students' previous experience and their background of English has a great influence on their performance at higher academic levels, like universities, to properly transmit their messages and feelings through writing. One of the reasons mentioned is that students in their lower classes learn writing for the mere sake of accomplishing given contents.

Alongside this, the present study looked into the effect of students' background on learning writing in Sophomore English course.

Thus, the next table presents the respondents', both teachers' and students', view to this particular subject of analysis.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on the effect of students' background on learning writing

Item: Students' background affects their learning of writing.				
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Respondents' Distribution			
	Teachers		Students	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	6	75	33	68.75
Agree	2	25	15	31.25
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Responses rejected	0	0	0	0
Total	8	100	48	100

As the table illustrates, 75% teacher respondents strongly agreed that students' background affects learning of writing a lot where as the rest 25% replied with agreement.

A word for word statement of a teacher respondent understood from his experience is put next:

At the stage of learning writing in elementary and high schools students concentrate on other matters of the course by ignoring learning writing as if it does not have any advantage. After that they only focus on those matters which they are familiar with by leaving out learning writing.

It was also added that students' background affects learning because of lack of awareness on how to understand learning procedures and methods of handling writing.

Moreover, K2 forwarded that students do not practice writing in high schools and elementary schools which affects their experience in later stages. As a result, they do not become motivated to learning writing focusing only on what national exams give more concern to i.e. grammar, vocabulary and reading.

Apart from this, although 5 student respondents elaborated on the open ended item that their background does not affect their learning of writing supported by other two student interviewees a 100% agreement on the visible effect of background on learning of writing in Sophomore English course was held by the remaining ones.

More specifically, 68.75% of the respondents strongly agreed with the idea while the remaining 31.25% just agreed.

It was also understood from the students' interview that writing demands a strong background. As it is a productive skill it needs students' continuous practice. It is not something that can be mastered overnight. However, the respondents said, the problem with their background creates a clear gap with what they are supposed to master and be acquainted with since their background lays the foundation.

Over all, even though some scholars argued that writing is more of an endowment than learned, prior knowledge heavily affects learning writing.

To put it another way, gathered responses showed that background of learning writing establishes the base of enabling learners to develop writing.

4.2.2.3 Students' Cooperation

Cooperative learning, a transactional process with an open exchange of ideas between and among learners and between learner and facilitator, fosters the development of critical thinking through discussion, clarification of ideas, and evaluation of others' ideas.

Galbraith (1991) expressed that the collaborative aspect of learning writing is grounded in the constructivist theory, which proposes to foster experiential learning and to capitalize upon the diversity that individuals can bring to the table. In order for writing through collaborative learning to be successful there must be a belief in the constructivist principles that a higher quality learning will result when participants construct meaning based on the experiences of the individual members.

Abebe (2007) delineated that a primary motivation for collaborative learning is the opportunity for learners to help each other learn. Students can learn from each other by giving and receiving help: recognizing differences between their own and others' perspectives seeking new knowledge and internalizing problem solving processes that other students use or those which are created jointly with others.

Quoting Heimlich (1996) Beatty et al (1999) also listed the following characteristics of effective collaborative learning teams: participation, social grounding, collaborative learning conversation skills, performance analysis and group processing, and promotive interaction.

Totten et al (1991) alerted that, in spite of these merits, most of the research findings on collaborative learning of writing emphasized that there is little empirical evidence on its implementation at the university college level.

The table below portrays the information collected regarding this succeeded by explanations teacher interviewees offered.

Table 4: Perspectives towards students’ cooperation to enhance learning writing

Item: Students work cooperatively to improve their learning of writing.		
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Respondents’ Distribution	
	Teachers	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	1	12.5
Agree	1	12.5
Disagree	5	62.5
Strongly disagree	1	12.5
Responses rejected	0	0
Total	8	100

It was presented previously under teacher related challenges that teachers support students’ cooperative work. Nonetheless, shown by the dominant percentage of respondents in this context, teachers disagreed that students do not cooperatively work with themselves to improve their learning of writing. These respondents reflected that they provide students with more particular tasks and exercises, and make learning writing practically happen, not theoretically. They further play such roles as creating favorable situations to make students love working in groups, facilitating working, counseling and analyzing errors as well as helping students maintain a plausible language condition in which they can discuss and correct each other’s work.

The respondents, however, stressed that despite the presence of all these advantages students do not find themselves working cooperatively.

K1 and K2 also supported this idea saying that students think writing activities cannot be done with their colleagues. K1 further said that although students' learning in small groups encourages them to ask questions, explain and justify their opinions, articulate their reasoning, and elaborate and reflect upon their knowledge, thereby motivating and improving learning these benefits are only achieved by active and well-functioning learning teams. Placing students in a group and assigning them a task does not guarantee that the students will engage in effective collaborative learning behavior.

Strengthening this Vygotsky (1986) forwarded that when the learners have a rich variety of experiences and opinions to share, this method leads to a greater understanding than would be possible when new information is filtered and processed only through the experiences and understanding of the individual learner.

4.2.3 Common Challenges Related to Both Teachers and Students

4.2.3.1 Teacher-Student Relationship

It is always supported in the area of language teaching that strong teacher-student relationship plays a vitally significant role for the successful achievement of effective learning. Different language experts also believe that writing is a learned art, with students being taught all the formal and technical aspects and relying primarily on their own creativity and teachers' guidance on their way forward.

Thus, teachers' and students' acquaintance is a factor to learners' writing knowledge acquisition which was inquired in this study from the subject respondents by the following item.

The next table states respondents' views concerning this.

Table 5: Students' response towards teacher-student relationship in teaching and learning writing

Item: There is a strong teacher-student relationship to make students' learning of writing effective.		
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Student Respondents	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	2	4.16
Agree	11	22.91
Disagree	26	54.16
Strongly disagree	7	14.58
Responses rejected	2	4.16
Total	48	99.97

Having the dominant percentage majority of students replied that there is no strong student-teacher relationship. This percentage consists of 54.16% disagreeing and 14.58% strongly disagreeing respondents. Opposite to this, 22.91% and 4.16% agreed and strongly agreed, successively, while the rest 4.16% forwarded invalid answers that are rejected in this analysis.

Clarifying their views on the crosschecking open ended item the disagreeing and strongly disagreeing side said that the connection is a loose one which needs more improvement when the others said with strong integration teachers create a language environment in which the students can involve themselves in the task of writing.

In relation, most student interviewees agreed that the teacher-student relationship is not as strong as it has to be. Again, they noticed that because of this infirm student-teacher relationship the teacher usually offers technical elements of writing having no room for practical issues of the skill in which students become tedious to learn. They further suggested that although this is the reality at hand it is a great boost for students and

somehow for teachers to develop such type of stronger relationship. It should also be known that this rewards both parties by sharing knowledge and reflecting diversified ideas as the integration comes to be more and more concrete.

Contrary to this, few student interviewees forwarded that having a good relationship with students, teachers encourage learners to do well in writing by providing them with tasks that are suitable to their experience and background.

To sum up, all of them agreed that for all kinds of teaching smooth teacher-student relation is important and the teacher must open effective means to students to know and learn from their problems and be eager to solve and assist them to have confidence.

Similarly, an illustration provided by a teacher interviewee, K₁, reflected that they find informal teacher-student relationships stronger than the formal ones. This kind of relation refers to the integration preserved outside the circle of formal academic, educational connections.

To present all in a nutshell, specific to writing, the relationship does not let students have closer instructors to consult. In other words, it is not strong which exposes learners to tackle difficult circumstances by themselves in spite of sharing it with their teachers.

4.2.4 Other Limitations

The item presented regarding this gave both student and teacher respondents enough space to forward limitations they thought were remaining. The next delineation also expounds the data gathered concerning this.

Student respondents stated that a lot of limitations challenge effective learning in Sophomore English course. Primary of all is students' limited language proficiency and knowledge of vocabulary that results in their

confinement to using only active words to express their feelings. This also leads them to concentrate only on known topics of narrow scope.

Secondary is the way teachers teach writing which is more product oriented, not process oriented. Scholars have also been dealing with these two approaches. For instance, Muncie (2002: 180) argued that process approach focuses on the writer, the creativity and individualism of writing, and the process of writing as a whole, starting from the generation of ideas through to the editing of work, as well as following studies of how successful writers write. However, the product approach focuses on finished products of the written work rather than the process that helps in having perfect product.

The former approach involves a situation in which students are encouraged to produce writing that is clear and precise and that communicates with ease and clarity through the process. Teachers also encourage students to write a lot and have a clear sense of purpose and evidence while writing on a given topic. This means that writing instruction includes sufficient in-class and out-class activities for writing and writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. In other words, this approach treats all writing as a creative act that requires time and positive feedback.

The third one is again related to teachers. The respondents introduced that some instructors are disinterested in teaching writing and are not ready to tolerate students' faults. Viz, they do not continually and patiently follow up the progress of students' writing skills.

On the other hand, teachers forwarded the following points as factors that trigger students' successful learning of writing in Sophomore English course.

First, enabling students learn writing skills in Sophomore English course is not usually student centered which should rather be made letting them carryout writing activities by themselves. Secondly, students make learning

writing only a classroom activity that does not go outside with them. Lastly, students' attitude towards writing highly matters. Most students believe that writing is born talented, not skill developed. They also believe that writing is not used in their future career but for the fulfillment of their study program.

4.3 Challenges Related to Learning Barriers and Strategies

4.3.1 Challenges Related to Learning Barriers

Barriers in this context refer to natural as well as manmade factors that hinder the learning process, and the data gathered regarding this are illustrated in the following table succeeded with a brief analysis.

Table 6: Students' answer towards the effect of barriers to learning on their learning of writing

Item: Students face barriers to learning like language use and physical problems directly related to their learning of writing.		
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Student Respondents	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	9	18.75
Agree	39	81.25
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Responses rejected	0	0
Total	48	100

As per the results found, 81.25% of the total student respondents agreed that they face learning barriers like semantic and physical hindrances while 18.75% strongly agreed. But, no respondent disagreed and strongly disagreed.

A set of justifications to these stands was alerted in the next way. The respondents agreed that they are challenged by the following barriers among other things. Students' unfamiliarity with topics given to write about is the one which implies the level of difficulty of topics. The other is the divorced nature of classroom activities from the real world.

Additionally, student interviewees agreed that physical barriers and semantic barriers usually challenge them. Here physical barriers and semantic problems refer in their order to learning obstacles like noise of other interfering sounds from outside during students' learning which would similarly happen in learning other courses and teachers' use of difficult language thinking that the learners could easily understand what is meant.

Teachers, on their part, answered that students definitely face barriers to learning writing in Sophomore English course and in other academic programs too. They supported this perspective of their own differently. For instance, the teaching-learning process is most of the time made one sided and mechanical, i.e either student or teacher centered. Students also do not get immediate feedback on their assignments to take lessons from their mistakes. Likewise, students centralize points of learning to their particular knowledge specific to the scope of their understanding which creates a barrier in association with lack of confidence.

Moreover, K2 added that students face different sorts of challenges directly related to learning writing in Sophomore English course by giving abstracting as an example. By abstracting the respondent meant that students focus their attention only on some details of their interest by omitting others during the writing process.

4.3.2 Challenges Related to Learning Strategies

Oxford, Ehrman and Larine (1992:440) agreed that learning strategies are the specific behaviors or actions, often conscious, used by students to

improve or enhance their learning process which are attacks that learners make on a given problem, and are mainly related to processing storage and retrieval of information.

Scarcella and Oxford (1992: 63) also demonstrated that learning strategies are particular actions, behaviors, steps or techniques to tackle a difficult task used by learners to enhance learning.

Methodologists also believe that identifying the strategies helps to monitor students and to advise them on how to develop and use learning strategies for their success.

Similarly, because the answers found to this question in the present study were diversified as the item type allowed it to be a classification of learning strategies, on the basis of their contribution to learning as direct and indirect strategies made by Oxford, Ehrman and Larine (1992) has been used in this analysis.

Based on this, the responses have been categorized into metacognitive strategies: higher executive skills that may entail planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production of writing, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed; cognitive strategies: mental steps or operations that learners are expected to process both linguistic and sociolinguistic content; socioaffective strategies: strategies that involve the social interaction the learner has and learners exposure to use writing to communicate with the other group of people; and compensation strategies: techniques that enable the learner to fill the gap of knowledge when he/she gets limitations in writing. These strategies are the subgroups presented under the above umbrella categories, direct and indirect strategies.

Majority of the respondents answered that learners of writing in Sophomore English course mostly use such kinds of metacognitive strategies as

selective attention, delayed production, and self directions. On the other hand, a brief interview response of K2 showed that they do not commonly use planning, prioritizing and goal setting strategies.

Concerning cognitive strategies, some respondents replied that students use rehearsal but not others like organization, and elaboration.

Contrarily, only few number of respondents supported students' use of socioaffective and compensation strategies such as encouraging themselves and guessing, respectively.

Functional planning, empathizing, and circumlocution were also listed as general learning strategies of writing which students do not usually use.

Illustrating these points further with ideas presented later all respondents agreed that students' range of language learning strategies for enhancing their writing skills is poor. The ideas include the following. Because of demotivation many students do not make use of learning strategies. Other than using effective learning strategies students use only traditional approaches. Though some of them use learning strategies of their own preference, basically metacognitive strategies, it does not result in achieving their target. This is made unconsciously with no clear awareness of their importance in making their learning of writing plain.

Generally, the responses showed that students usually make use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies but not the later two. Further delineated by target interviewees' explanations possess both observable and unobservable use of strategies whose absence highly challenges them in their way to enhance their learning of writing in the course under discussion.

Supporting this, Wenden cited in Wenden and Rubin (1987) presented the following important features of learning strategies of writing. Some of the

strategies are visible while some others are invisible. Some of them contribute to learning directly and some others indirectly. Again, some of them can be consciously deployed and some others unconsciously. Moreover, they are flexible or amenable to change.

However, all of the respondents agreed, what matters most is students' conscious use of several kinds of writing strategies suitably to tackle difficult tasks and their knowledge of the implication of strategies to successful learning of writing.

More other points were also claimed in the following manner by teacher respondents. Because students' use of learning strategies is poor the teacher needs to create a plausible language environment in which students can react to writing. Additionally, so as to make students use effective learning writing strategies they should be set activate in pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing stages.

Above all, Ur (1996:168) suggested that learners vary in their use of writing strategies, so what is recommended is suggesting learners to use various possible strategies, encouraging individuals to experiment and search for one which is personally perfect.

4.4 Challenges Related to other Language Skills

4.4.1 Provision of Writing Compared to Other Skills in Sophomore English Course

It has been advocated by scholars that students' learning of language skills should involve all skills given intermingled. For example, Broughton (1980) stated that a successful writing course must select the conventions and styles which are most likely to be useful to the students, but a great deal of the sensitivity which the students need in the use of language will develop unconsciously from spin-off their reading and talking in the rest of the

English course, so writing cannot be seen as something separated from the other activities.

However, as Sophomore English is a writing course it possesses a different attribute. The following table also demonstrates the data collected from both teacher and student respondents regarding this.

Table 7: Responses towards the provision of writing skills compared to other language skills

Item: Writing is given integrated with other language skills in Sophomore English course.				
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Respondents' Distribution			
	Teachers		Students	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	0	0	0	0
Agree	1	12.5	0	0
Disagree	5	62.5	35	72.91
Strongly disagree	2	25	7	14.58
Responses rejected	0	0	6	12.5
Total	8	100	48	99.99

Seen from the above table, 87.5% and 87.49% teacher and student respondents, respectively believed that writing is not given integrated with other language skills in Sophomore English course. They said that it is isolated and offered independently which seems to be given a backseat. In other words, it is given solitarily not accompanied with other skills, not supported and made supplemented.

The remaining 12.5% teacher respondents replied that the course has an implicit integration with grammar and vocabulary, though not with the basic skills, so they agreed with the essence of the given item.

4.5 Other Pedagogic Challenges

4.5.1 Institutional Challenges

4.5.1.1 Administrative Problems

For the basic goal of meeting the working objectives of any academic institution efficient performance of the administration plays a pivotal role. It is the base on which every stuff stands firm. Despite the fact that institutional administration is the corner stone its inefficiency pulls back the run of the teaching-learning process. This badly works to learning language skills that need a great attention for their maximum achievement.

The following analysis is made putting this stand central preceded by the tabular presentation of the data gathered using closed ended items.

Table 8: Answers towards the contribution of the University College to the improvement of students' learning of writing

Item: The University College works well to help you improve your learning of writing for a better effectiveness.		
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Student respondents	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	1	2.08
Agree	18	37.5
Disagree	21	43.75
Strongly disagree	0	0
Responses rejected	8	16.66
Total	48	99.99

The above data found from students revealed equivalent reflections to the supporting and opposing sides of the given proposition. On this basis, 19 respondents supported and 21 opposed while the remaining 8 responded unfeasible replies that are rejected in this analysis.

In the open ended and interview answers supporting student respondents showed that though it is restricted in capacity and coverage the University College is doing its best. Moreover, in addition to offering the course, Sophomore English, in different semesters the administration supplies readable materials.

However, the respondents in the opposing side argued that the role played by the administration is not as such magnified and to the expected level.

Similarly, teacher respondents took these two sides even though many of them belonged to the supporting corner. Hence, their responses to the given open ended item manifested that supporting ones noticed the administration fulfilling worthwhile supplementary materials in connection with writing and establishing a literature club to make students actively participate in. Additionally, K3 said that the university college puts its efforts for the effectiveness of students' learning of writing in Sophomore English course by setting suitable programs for the teaching-learning process, assigning the right teachers and indicating the reference materials for writing using both electronic and printed media.

On the other hand, no interview but a questionnaire item showed that nothing peculiar and special is done for writing, rather it is treated like any other subject matter and even as a forgotten skill.

4.5.1.2 Supply of Materials

To make learners familiar with the contents of the course they take, academic institutions give priority to readable materials much more prominent than any other resource. And budget is allocated for their sound availability. However, a problem that comes in association with this creates triggering challenge for students that they are expected to overcome in their learning. This subtopic also deals with responses found from students and teachers regarding the supply of materials by the University College for the demand of books used in Sophomore English course.

Table 9: Feedback on the supply of materials by the University College for the demand of books

Item: What do you think is the supply of textbooks and other readable materials of writing skills by the University College?				
Level of adequacy	Teachers		Students	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Sufficient	2	25	0	0
Average	6	75	12	25
Insufficient	0	0	36	75
Responses rejected	0	0	0	0
Total	8	100	48	100

Parallel to the responses found concerning administrative problems a large number of teacher respondents, 75%, replied that the supply of materials by the University College is average while the remaining 25% said it is sufficient. Contrarily, 75% students forwarded that the university college does not supply readable materials for writing sufficiently.

These data were similarly elaborated during the interview. For example, K₄ pointed out that despite the fact that the University College supplies adequate number of text books for the course students do not make use of this advantage. On the other hand students argued with this idea saying that it is hard to be sufficiently supplemented with materials in the library for this course.

4.5.2 Other Pedagogic Challenges

4.5.2.1 The Nature of Textbooks

Using closed ended items, the basic intention of this part of the analysis is looking into the perception of both sample teachers and students towards the nature of textbooks that learners of Sophomore English are instructed to use.

Table 10: Considerations towards the nature of textbooks

Item: The textbooks have employed subject matters incompatible to the goal of enhancing learning writing in Sophomore English course.				
Degree of Agreement and Disagreement	Respondents' Distribution			
	Teachers		Students	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	0	0	3	6.25
Agree	3	37.5	25	52.08
Disagree	5	62.5	16	33.33
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Responses rejected	0	0	4	8.33
Total	8	100	48	99.99

As it is observed from the table above, 62.5% of teacher respondents said that textbooks do not encompass incompatible subject matters to enhance students' learning of writing in Sophomore English course. These respondents expounded this stating that the contents are relevant and substantial as well as manageable which provide learners with adequate examples, however the agreeing ones argued that the textbooks at all are unnatural, not contextualized and monotonous.

Another reflection which lays in the middle of these two stands said that the contents are designed to suit the level of educational programs that learners are enrolled in even though its suitability to the students' level of understanding and writing is under question.

In the students' part, 52.08% and 33.33% agreed and disagreed, respectively, but the rest 8.33% failed to offer validated responses.

Additionally, a supporting student said the contents seem to be communicative that was made more solid and strengthen by K4's statement

as most of the contents seem to be localized in line with the interest of the textbook developers. However each instructor can adapt them.

In opposition to this, a student interviewee disagreed that elements of the course contents are presented bit-by-bit encompassing unnatural subject matters because of employing a lot of examples and other portrayals adopted from abroad. This interviewee further stressed that this does not work in own context.

4.5.2.2 Class Size and Students' Learning of Writing

Deighton in Girma (2007) defined class size as a number of students assigned to and enrolled in a specific class under the direction of a specific teacher. The size of the class has great role in creating a favorable environment for the process of teaching and learning. Strengthening this idea, Wade (1980) stated that the smaller the class size, the better the learning becomes. So, the class size should be small if possible. Girma (2007) also said the larger the environment, the more difficult the teaching and learning programs will be.

Large class size, exceeding the optimum classroom-student ratio for providing appropriate instructional opportunity, results in affecting teacher-student classroom interaction in several ways. On the contrary, small class size benefits both the teacher and students in the teaching learning process. Benbow et al. (2007:8) explained this as follows.

"Smaller classes allow teachers to engage their students in a differentiated fashion, that is, teachers can cater their instruction in ways that engage individual students. [sic. In these classes] teachers are [sic. also] able to pay closer attention to all students, there by holding them accountable for participation."

Regarding this, the data collected concerning the effect of class size on students' learning of writing in Sophomore English course in the particular context under study showed a mixed reflection of students' views. However, the respondents who said that large class size that affects students' learning of writing is seen covered the largest percentage from both teachers' and students' side.

These reactors affirmed that because the class size is not small enough it is impossible to assist students and give them corrections. K₃ also supported this supporting that it is true that large class size affects students' learning of writing which hinders the teacher to identify the strong and weak points of every student in the class in their writing activities. This in turn results in a problem for the teacher to give feedback to the students at the spot, i.e the feedback delays. Moreover, a teacher respondent wrote that there are as many as 60 students enrolled per class. Even the instruction could not reach evenly to everyone in the class.

Student interviewees also agreed that this large class lets students not get the chance to be followed up carefully and materials to be provided for them become scarce.

On the other side, a few respondents resisted what was confirmed by the above group of sample subjects. They presented such rationales as the number of students in classes is not a serious problem and class size does not have potent impact on learning writing. What matters most is the methodology employed by the instructor for strengthening their argument.

Generally, as presented by UWO in Girma (2007), the problem of large class size goes beyond the physical problems of being heard and seen and finding ways to deliver materials clearly and forcefully to a large group.

Finn, Pannoza and Achilles (2003) concluded that when students are placed in smaller classes they become more engaged, both academically and

socially. With strong social and academic engagement, academic achievement increases.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter deals with conclusions reached based on the results found and recommendations made parallel to the conclusions.

5.1 Conclusions

The present study was aimed at investigating challenges students confront in learning writing in Sophomore English course at AUC. On this basis, the questionnaire provided to teacher and student respondents in gathering their reflections incorporated scales of different degree and spaces for clarifying opinions. Similarly, the interview gave the respondents the chance to forward their feelings freely. Thus, a sort of generalization was made on collected data to group them to a defined set. Finally, the following conclusions were drawn.

Most assigned teachers do not manifest lack of mastery and experience of teaching Sophomore English. Moreover, they do assist learners to cooperatively work and enhance learning of writing through collaboration by which students can learn from their weaknesses and their partners' strengths. These results showed that teacher related challenges are not sever and prevalent problems that block learners from effectively achieving the purposes of learning writing in Sophomore English course.

However, it was confirmed that students' readiness and interest are among the highly triggering problems to their learning of writing. They do not show keen enthusiasm to enhance their skills supplementing with all the advantages to be found outside the classroom and their lower level readiness makes them not think critically about the benefits of learning writing.

Additionally, a complete agreement was held by both student and teacher groups towards the effect of students' background on their learning of writing. Their previous experiences of English have great influence on their performance at the University College level. One of the reasons for this is lack of awareness on how to understand learning procedures and methods of handling writing.

Moreover, contrary to teachers' assistance of students' cooperative work, a prevalent hindrance of students' learning of writing was found to be their loose cooperation in carrying out learning activities together. This problem results from such factors as learners' overwhelmed sentiment of making writing theoretical and worthless.

Students' learning of writing is also deflected by other contributing teacher and student related defects. These include weak teacher-student relationship to make students' learning of writing effective. This problem is also prevalent in which the infirm integration of the two parties retards the speedy pace of students' learning. In addition, the informal nature of their integration tends their relationship to focus on non academic stuff. Alongside all these challenges, students' limited language proficiency and knowledge of vocabulary as well as the product oriented nature of teachers' mode of teaching were found to prevail in challenging students' learning of writing.

Another point is that problems related to learning barriers and learning strategies interrupt students' learning writing. Since the ultimate goal of learning is developing communicative competence avoidance of learning barriers and wise employment of learning strategies play a great role. It was verified that physical and semantic hindrances, learners' abstraction, and provision of the course in a one-sided and mechanical manner are among the prevalent barriers that negatively influence students' learning of writing. Students usually employ metacognitive and cognitive strategies, but not

socio-affective and compensation strategies to tackle difficult writing tasks. Nonetheless, it is suggested in the areas of pedagogy and linguistics that the interwoven use of all the strategies is much more successful to learning and operating writing tasks than their isolated implementation.

Furthermore, the provision of writing in Sophomore English course in connection to other language skills is weak which greatly affects learners' knowledge acquisition. Because the course is confined to this productive skill, writing, the chance for other language skills to get a room for practice is narrow.

Again, the reference materials that students are instructed to refer to incorporate incompatible subject matters with attaining the goals of students' learning writing.

Apart from all these, institutional and other pedagogic challenges cause unpleasant atmosphere for students' learning of writing. This means, although no significant domination regarding administrative problems was found, it was portrayed that large class size creates difficulties to students in their learning of writing.

In general, from the results obtained, it was seen that there are prevalent challenges that students meet in learning writing in Sophomore English course.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made.

- The most crucial factor to learn any subject in the academic world is learners' readiness and interest. However, students' enthusiasm to learning writing in Sophomore English course has been found to be low. Therefore, to create a conducive learning atmosphere for learners,

teachers should adopt suitable methods of teaching that could arouse students' learning needs.

- To enhance students' learning of writing all stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Education (MoE), should give due attention to the English language subjects given at lower classes to enable the students have strong basic background for their higher level educations. This definitely enriches them with experiencing effective learning procedures of the skill and shouldering more tight writing activities.
- Meeting the benefits of collaborative work ascertains effective learning of language skills. The same works to learning writing. To get learners' advantage of this, teachers should make use of teaching mechanisms that further promote learners' cooperative work despite the fact that what at the moment prevails as a challenge is dominantly student related.
- The University College should set up situations for learners to consult their teachers on how to tackle troubles in their journey to effective academic achievement by which strong teacher-student integration could be reserved. This might be done by making teachers allot consultation hours and following up how it progresses and goes on.
- The effect of barriers to students' learning of writing makes successful knowledge acquisition down. It should, therefore, be paid a critical look by the University College. The responsibility for overcoming these barriers and ensuring the success of learning falls up on the more senior, the better-authorized body, i.e the management. This cultivates sound learning of writing in Sophomore English course.

- Concerned bodies should also work to equip learners' with conscious employment of all kinds of learning strategies in an intermingled way. The implication is that effective learning focuses on learners. Therefore, emphasis should be given to helping learners know how to learn. Thus, the learners in turn will develop 'learner autonomy' – 'the ability and willingness to take responsibility for their own learning, to initiate and take risks.'
- So as to fix poor mixed provision of writing with other skills in Sophomore English course, although the course is more of a writing course, the contents of the subject matter should be seen, revised if necessary, and supplemented with other supporting syllabi by the MoE.
- As such prevalent challenges as enrolling students in large size classes, allocating insufficient budget for the demand of textbooks that reinforce learning writing and some other pedagogic problems are concerned with the administration, the management of the University College should avail a touch of hard work. Implementing contemporary approaches to working operations also facilitates overall organizational performance.

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ACRONYMS AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

ACRONYMS

AUC: Admas University College

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

L2: Second Language

MoE: Ministry of Education

K1-K4: Key Interview Informants

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Challenge: something needing great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and which therefore tests a person's abilities

Large Class Size: a number of students assigned to and enrolled in a specific class under the direction of a specific teacher

Learning: the process of acquiring persistent knowledge by study

Learning Barriers: natural as well as manmade factors that hinder the learning process

Learning Strategies: particular actions, behaviors, steps or techniques to tackle a difficult task used by learners to enhance learning

Pedagogy: the study of the methods and activities of teaching and learning

Sophomore English: a university course given for students to improve their expressive ability through writing

University College: a level of academic institutions that similarly functions equivalent to university

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Students' Questionnaire

Section I

Introduction

First of all I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your willingness to take part in this study and respond the following items. I, then, kindly request you to know the significant role you are playing in alleviating or reducing the problem understudy by providing your clear and freer response. Know also that confidentiality will be preserved.

Research Title: Investigation of Challenges Students Face in Learning Writing in Sophomore English Course

Objectives: Investigating the problems students face in learning writing with the aim of identifying the prevalent challenges, looking in to the impact they put on students' learning, and indicating directions to solve them.

Date: _____

Place: Admas University College

Section II

Questions

Direction

Circle only the number of your choice you think shows the right answer for closed ended questions and write your brief answers for the open ended ones on given spaces.

1.1 Teacher and student related challenges

1. Your teachers of Sophomore English show lack of ability, experience and mastery of what they teach.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

2. What do your teachers' knowledge and experience of the subject matter they teach seem?

3. Your background affects your learning of writing.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

4. If your answer for the above question is 1 or 2, how does it affect your learning of writing?

5. There is a strong teacher-student relationship to make students' learning of writing effective.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

6. What does the teacher-student relationship to strengthen learners' learning of writing look like?

7. Teachers encourage you to work together and enhance your learning of writing.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

8. What kind of roles do teachers play in promoting students' cooperative work in improving learning writing?

9. What (other) limitations do teachers have in making students' learning of writing happen?

1.2 Challenges related to learning barriers and strategies

1. You face barriers to learning like language use and physical problems directly related to their learning of writing.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

2. What sort of barriers to learning hinder your learning of writing?

3. What is your range of language strategies use to supplement effective learning of writing?

1.3 Challenges related to other language skills

1. Writing is given integrated with other language skills in Sophomore English.

1	2	3	4
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

2. How is writing given in comparison with other language skills?

1.4 Institutional and other pedagogic challenges

1. The university college works well to help you improve your learning of writing for a better effectiveness.

1	2	3	4
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

2. What does the university college do for the effectiveness of your learning of writing?

3. What do you think is the supply of textbooks and other readable materials of writing skills by the University College?

1	2	3
Sufficient	Average	Insufficient

4. The textbooks that you are instructed to use have employed incompatible subject matters to the goal of enhancing learning writing.

1	2	3	4
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

5. What do the contents of textbooks of writing that you are supposed to use look like?

6. How does the class size affect your learning of writing?

Appendix II

Teachers' Questionnaire

Section I

Introduction

First of all I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your willingness to take part in this study and respond the following items. I, then, kindly request you to know the significant role you are playing in alleviating or reducing the problem understudy by providing your clear and freer response. Know also that confidentiality will be preserved.

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Date: _____

Place: Admas University College

Section II

Questions

Direction

Encircle only the number of your choice you think shows the right answer for closed ended questions and write your brief answers for the open ended ones on given spaces.

1.1 Teacher and student related challenges

1. What does students' readiness and interest towards learning writing seem?

2. Do you think that students' background affects their learning of writing?

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

3. If your answer for the above question is 1 or 2, how does it affect their learning of writing?

4. What does the teacher-student relationship to strengthen learners' learning of writing look like?

5. Students work cooperatively to improve their learning of writing.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

6. What kind of roles do teachers' play in promoting students' cooperative work to improve learning writing?

7. What (other) limitations do students face in making their learning of writing effective?

1.2 Challenges related to learning barriers and strategies			
1. What sorts of barriers to learning hinder students' learning of writing?			
2. What is the students' range of language strategies use to supplement effective learning of writing?			
1.3 Challenges related to other language skills			
1. Writing is given integrated with other language skills in Sophomore English.			
1	2	3	4
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. How is writing given in comparison with other language skills?			
1.4 Institutional and other pedagogic challenges			
1. What does the University College do for the effectiveness of students' learning of writing?			
2. What do you think is the supply of textbooks and other readable materials of writing skills by the University College?			
1	2	3	
Sufficient	Average	Insufficient	

3. The textbooks that students are instructed to use have employed incompatible subject matters to the goal of enhancing learning writing.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

4. What do the contents of textbooks of writing that students are supposed to use look like?

5. How does the class size affect students' learning of writing?

Appendix III

Students' Interview Questions

Section I

Introduction

First of all I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your willingness to take part in this study and respond the following items. I, then, kindly request you to know the significant role you are playing in alleviating or reducing the problem understudy by providing your clear and freer response. Know also that confidentiality will be preserved.

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Date: _____

Place: Admas University College

Section II

Questions

1. What do you think are teacher and student related challenges that affect your learning of writing?
2. What problems do affect your learning of writing in relation to learning barriers and strategies?
3. What sorts of problems are seen on your learning of writing in relation to other language skills?
4. What kinds of administrative and institutional challenges trigger your learning of writing?

Appendix IV

Teachers' Interview Questions

Section I

Introduction

First of all I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your willingness to take part in this study and respond the following items. I, then, kindly request you to know the significant role you are playing in alleviating or reducing the problem understudy by providing your clear and freer response. Know also that confidentiality will be preserved.

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Date: _____

Place: Admas University College

Section II

Questions

1. Do you work with your students when they are writing, encouraging them to revise and edit their work as they go along?
2. Do your students ever collaborate on learning writing?
3. What do you think are other teacher and student related challenges that affect students' learning of writing?
4. What problems do affect students' learning of writing in relation to learning barriers and strategies?

5. Does writing take place in separate lessons in your students' program or is it integrated with other language skills?
6. What kinds of administrative and institutional challenges do trigger students learning of writing?

Appendix V

Revised and Omitted Items

Revised Items

1. Writing is offered merged with other language skills.

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

2. What do you think is the budget allocation of the University College for the demand of textbooks and other readable materials of writing skills?

1

2

3

4

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Omitted Items

1. Who acquaint themselves with the dynamic nature of writing skills?

1

2

3

4

Teachers Students Both teachers and students Neither teachers nor students

2. To what extent do the subject matters in other skills reinforce students' learning of writing?

1

High

2

Medium

3

Low

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any university.

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