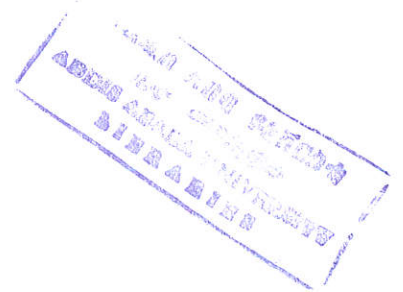


ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)



**AN INVESTIGATION INTO STUDENTS' WRITING
RELUCTANCE
DURING UNIVERSITY WRITING COURSES**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' reluctance to writing in ELT classroom. The study took place in the context of university writing courses.

For the purpose, the perspectives of those who are directly experiencing such apathetic academic behaviors were the main subjects of the study. In addition, course instructors, who are close to students, were also the source of information. Moreover, attempts were made to obtain data about the students' disengaged behaviors through systematic observations of classrooms in live situations.

The researcher used both deductive and inductive analysis methods. The data collected through instructors' interview and classroom observations were analyzed through content analysis methods. In addition, the responses to the items in the students' questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive statistical techniques.

The study went through two stages: describing features that characterize reluctant writers and exploring student beliefs about what hindered their engagement with writing in English classroom. The results of stage one of the study revealed that uncooperativeness in group activities, unwillingness to show their work for proofreading, skipping necessary steps of writing tasks, tending to copy others work, and disorganized and tattered works are among the characterizing features of reluctant writers.

Results from stage two of this research suggest that lack of necessary sub skills, lack of confidence in academic writing, language teachers' reluctance to read students' works, failure of teachers' to explain appropriate strategies, and students' self-beliefs about future career goals were among the main factors influencing students' engagement.

The results of this study implied that reluctant students are a large group of many of our writing classrooms and therefore language teachers in general and writing teachers in particular can identify success factors with these students by focusing on promoting their engagement with the writing process. Thus, understanding who reluctant writers are and what they believe about what hindered their engagement will equip the writing instructors for designing effective intervention strategies to promote the engagement.

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is all known that across departments in different faculties, Ethiopian university students take writing courses. For instance, students of departments under faculties like Agriculture, Health Science, Engineering, and Business and Economics are expected to take the course Sophomore English. Likewise, courses like Intermediate English and Advanced Composition are among the writing courses given to students of the Department of Foreign Language and Literature. Technical Report Writing Skills, as it can be understood from the course description, is a course aimed at furnishing students in study areas like Engineering and Economics with the requisite skills of report writing. Some of these courses are given as a one semester course and others as two semester courses. In broad terms, these courses are aimed at equipping students with necessary writing skills so that they would be able to write well and meaningfully during their stay in the university and after graduation. From my few years experience as a teacher and from my preliminary survey I have made, I came to understand that the teaching of these courses is not free from limitations.

Further, my casual observations seemed to suggest that the teaching of these courses may still be influenced by the students' level of responsiveness to the demands of writing tasks. Many students lack willingness to actively engage with classroom writing practices. Besides, some of the answers that students write to essay type questions in examinations give no sense to the reader. To this effect,

various local research findings (e.g. Getnet, 1999; Alamirew, 2005; Tsegaye, 2006) revealed about the students' extremely poor performance as well as their tendency of self-withdrawal from writing tasks.

After extensive effort to provide clear and meaningful writing context in the classroom, I could see a number of students are yet reserved, avoiding and unconfident to express their thought through writing. Many students lack desire and commitment to persist at the face of writing practices. Students continue not to feel comfortable and motivated with writing tasks. Sometimes, the whole class becomes reluctant and which was really daunt and disheartening to the teacher.

Locally, though a number of researches have been conducted on the teaching of writing skill, only few works have been done on the writing problem of students. Tsgaye (2006) investigated, "The writing problem of preparatory II students with reference to Injebara Preparatory School". According to the findings of the research, preparatory students have very serious writing problems in all parameters of writing skill such as grammar, organization, and choice of diction as well as content and mechanics.

Alamirew (2005) worked on "The perception of writing, writing instruction and students writing performance". His main objective was investigating the beliefs, efficacy and attitude of both teachers and students in the teaching learning of the writing skill, exploring how writing is taught and assessing to what extent students can write in English.

The above researches, however, did not focus on students' nature of engagement in writing activities. And, hence the present study wanted to fill this gap in the area.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research was to investigate writing reluctance among university students. On this base, the study attempted to:

1. describe the specific characteristics that reluctant student writers display in the context of EFL writing practice; and
2. explore students' beliefs about what hindered their engagement in writing.

1.3 Research Questions

The focus of this research was on analyzing the students' reluctance to writing. Therefore, the following basic research questions were asked:

1. What are the specific characteristics of reluctant student writers?
2. What do students believe or feel about what has influenced them to be reluctant writers?
3. What are the implications of the students' apathetic academic behaviors and self-beliefs associated with reluctance to the pedagogy of writing?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Many research works have been conducted in various areas of language teaching and learning. Among the research areas, students' writing problem is the one which has got the attention of researchers in the field of language pedagogy. As to the knowledge of the present researcher, however, no local research yet has been attempted to

investigate in to students' writing reluctance. Since the present study put in to account this particular problem in the context of EFL writing classroom, it was hoped that it might have the following contributions in the area of teaching and learning language in general and writing in particular.

1. The study is expected to give some light to those who are engaged in the nation's English Language syllabus design and implementations program at large.
2. It might have some indications for the classroom English language instructors in the way they teach writing skill, strive to promote students' desire and motivation to writing and reclaim reluctant writers.
3. As the concept 'writing reluctance' is not yet addressed by local researchers, it might serve as a springboard for other researchers who are interested in this area.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on investigating the students' reluctance to write. The study was confined to university students and the specific skill writing. The researcher believes it would be more comprehensive if it considered other levels and language skills like speaking and reading.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

This research has limitations for some reasons.

Firstly, studying students' reluctant nature is technically difficult because of the diverse subjective behaviors that students could exhibit in the context of writing classroom. Besides, many reluctant

writers, no longer wishing to be known as failures, hide their reluctance by wearing different masks. They become more concerned about shielding themselves especially when they know that they are being observed. Thus, the researcher believes that writing reluctance is not simple and straightforward behavior to be studied through obtrusive observation method as it was used in the present study, though it was the supplementary tool. Therefore, this study lacks complete information in this regard.

Secondly, the topic, as expounded in Chapter Two, is yet under conceptualized and under researched. Hence, the scarcity of literature from current educational discourse limited the insights gained through this research. Nevertheless, it has been attempted to include the available recent publications related to the area.

The researcher also admits that adequate techniques were not used to distinguish reluctant and sufficiently engaged students.

Chapter Two

2. Review of Related Literature

This review synthesizes literature on 'writing reluctance' by importing materials from other areas of study. It particularly derives ideas from the notions of "disengagement", "unwillingness to communicate" and "writing apprehension" since the notion of "writing reluctance" has not sufficiently been traced by the researchers.

2.1. Approaching to Understand the Concept of 'Reluctance'

It would be appropriate at this point to clarify the concept of 'reluctance', which has been applied to 'learning' generally and to 'writing' rarely. The concept is under researched (Bius, 2007). Similarly, the concept has not been well developed theoretically in educational discourses. Nevertheless, in this review, attempts have been made to include the available recent publications related to the area.

Very little literature (e.g. Hawthorne, 2008: 3) has addressed the concept of 'reluctance' some what indirectly. It is referred to as "the lack of enthusiasm or interest in the academic tasks that students are required to accomplish at school."

Almost all of the existing little literature, regardless of their common feeling about what exactly reluctance mean, do affirm the fact that reluctance is present among the students and that it affects the behaviors and academic achievements of students in schools. The literature on students' apathy or 'disengagement' (Steinberg, 1996, as cited in Hawthorne, 2008), for example, reveals that over one third of high school students are found to be unable to fully engage with many of the academic subjects that they are "required" to take at school.

Though there does not seem to be particular definition of “reluctance” in the literature, theories in the fields of psychology as well as language learning offer us some insight in to the understanding of what 'reluctance' means. The current theories of "disengagement" "unwillingness to communicate" and “writing apprehension” have a bearing on the notion of "reluctance". Therefore, this review attempts to synthesize literature on these theories and integrates research results on them to develop the concept of 'writing reluctance'.

2.1.1 The Notion of Disengagement

Learning involves active process of integrating and organizing new information, constructing meaning, and monitoring comprehension in order to develop sound understanding of a subject matter. This process of learning demands learners’ motivation to engage themselves purposefully and actively in it. No matter how much effort is made by the teacher, learning will not occur if the learner fails to engage him or herself actively in the actual process (Richards & Rodgers, 1991: Blumenfield, Hoyle & Meece, 1988).

By implication, “disengagement” is students’ presence in tasks rather inactively and the lack of commitment and efforts to integrate and organize information to construct meaning and to monitor comprehension. According to Smith & Elley (1997), students disengage because of their perceived inability to perform well and lack of confidence. They state as:

Sometimes because they [students] do not see themselves as potential ‘doers’ of the activity they have observed. It is not for them. Sometimes it is because they do not see a need for it. Or it’s too hard, too risky. Their efforts only result in criticism, or mistakes to correct, or even ridicules. Or perhaps they have too little respect or liking for the teacher (Smith & Elley, 1997:55).

The term 'disengagement' is used in two main ways in the literature. In one dimension, it is used behaviorally in parallel with terms like absence of "pupil's attention" and "pupil's involvement" (Berliner, 1987; Smyth, 1980). This construct of disengagement describes students' behavior in relation with: (1) academic tasks i.e. students who are not doing the work required (how could the "quality" of the work is affected) are referred as "disengaged" or (2) academic learning time, which is the combination of "off-task time" with "failure" (Berliner, 1987). In other words, the more students experience off-task behavior and the more they fail to succeed in the learning process at the same time.

The other model thinks about disengagement cognitively. This is related with how a student feels and thinks about an academic task and he or she values and use his or her cognitive strategies (Ainley, 1993; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). It is believed that (e.g. Tuckman, 1999; Smith, 1982) if students are not engaged cognitively, learning is likely to be hampered severely.

This view is also supported by cognitivists theory which underlines the need of mental processes in association with active involvement in the tasks for learning to occur (Spada, 2004). These theorists assert that behaviorists have failed because they have missed the cognitive importance Of "engagement" and have only emphasized on the behavioral elements. Researchers like Csikszentmyi (1975), however, argue that the psychological concept disengagement involves both the cognitive and behavioral implications. It is when someone lacks committed approach to an activity that he/she is referred to as disengaged. Thus, understanding of this theoretical and research bases offer us insight to analyze who a reluctant learner is.

The other concept that seems to have a bearing about the notion of "reluctance" under it is the theory of "unwillingness to communicate."

2.1.2 The Notion of Unwillingness to Communicate

In modern language pedagogy, great emphasis is placed on “communication”, which is the heart of language teaching (Guiora, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 1991). By researchers interested in the area of communication, the way communication occurs, functionally, in the process of language teaching and learning has been linked to a variety of individual and contextual characteristics.

Burgoons (1976), the originator of the notion and the prominent researcher in the area, states that the lack of consistent tendencies that individuals display in the degree of L1 talk suggests one’s disposition away from communication, given the choice. According to Burgoons, the absence of this personality based disposition towards verbal behavior corresponds to “unwillingness to communicate”. Later, researchers like McCroskey & Richmonds (1982) have worked on the conceptualization of “shyness” which emerged from the existing theory: the notion of “unwillingness to communicate”. Thus, the unwillingness to communicate and shyness constructs of these authorities have something in common, that is, both of them clearly proposed the existence of personality traits that are likely to hamper the acquisition of language.

Extending the original L1 unwillingness to communicate framework, further researches have been conducted in second language learning area particularly on the students’ “unwillingness to write” in relation with the other construct – “writing apprehension”(Dally & Miller, 1975a; 1975b; Dally & McCroskey, 1984). The next sub-section is devoted to discussion of what writing apprehension mean and its integration with the present research construct writing reluctance.

2.1.3 The Notion of Writing Apprehension

There is no considerable difference among scholars in defining writing apprehension. Dally, one of the major proponents of the construct, defines writing apprehension as "a person's general tendencies to approach or avoid situations perceived to demand writing accompanied by some amount of evaluation" (1978: 10). Others use it equivocally with "writing anxiety". Leki, for example, states it as ". . . research on **writing anxiety** developed out of studies of **communication apprehension** . . . and referred to the problem as **writing apprehension** [Emphasis added] Leki, cited in Young (1999: 65).

Both references, "writing anxiety" or "writing apprehension", address to the same problem that many of us do experience. Many of us are petrified at the thought of having to get started to express our idea through writing. Some even suffer from a phobia, or a persistent, irrational fear that cause them to avoid specific situations demanding writing. It is this 'fear' or 'dread' which is referred to as writing apprehension (Young, 1999).

Writing apprehension is found to be affecting highly one's disposition towards writing. This clear and consistent relationship between the level of person's apprehension and his or her way of approaching writing tasks, for instance, is revealed in Faigley, Dally & Witte's (1981) explanation as:

Highly apprehensive writers find writing unrewarding, even punishing. Consequently, they avoid whenever possible, these situations that require writing . . . , and when they must write they experience more than normal amounts of anxiety... This anxiety is reflected in the behaviors they display as they write, in the attitudes they express about their writing, and in their written products (p. 14).

From the foregoing discussion, we can understand that students who have high writing apprehension are more likely to exhibit lower levels of motivation and poor quality of engagement in writing tasks. The abnormal anxiety they have paralyzes their performance, and their frustration can be observed in the unwilling behavior they display to persist on writing. Thus, according to Dally & Miller (1975), it is this tendency that students develop to hate writing referred to as “unwillingness to write”.

To put in a nutshell, research works on the conceptualizations of “disengagement”, “unwillingness to communicate” and “writing apprehension” did not originate from nil; rather they emerged out of the impressions from existing theories. This understanding enhances the contention and belief of the present researcher on that importing ideas from other study area/s and synthesizing a concept of study is a scientific and scholarly trend in the field of research. This research on ‘writing reluctance’, therefore, has developed out of studies on the above umbrella conceptions. Now, given awareness of these theories and research arguments in relation to them, it seems appropriate to shift to the conceptualization of the term “writing reluctance” and develop an operational definition of it at this point.

2.2. The Notion of Students’ Writing Reluctance

Based on the insights from the above three theories, the model of the undergoing research, writing reluctance, can be defined as:

the degree of students’ cognitive and behavioral unwillingness to persistently engage with the set writing tasks.

Though it is believed that giving a common and an all inclusive definition of a term or a concept in social science is impossible, the researcher believes that it is important to adapt the above definition for the following three reasons. One, the fact that literature on this area is scarce, as it has been discussed in the introductory section, is also reflected on the absence of particular definition of this concept. Second, so, it seems important to clearly sensitize the reader to the phenomenon being investigated. And, third, it seems important to indicate the level of divergence and/or convergence of this construct with the former related concepts: "disengagement", "unwillingness to communicate" and "writing apprehension".

In the above crude definition, some key terms seem to need further elaborations. The first key term which seems to need elaboration is the expression "the degree of". Then, why it is said "the degree of"?

Since writing imposes some amount of discomfort which is evoked by an inevitable writing anxiety, it is human to those students who can be referred as 'naturals' for writing and to professional writers even to experience some level of fear and resistance to get starting the writing process. Young (1999: 65) agrees with this saying:

Anecdotal account suggest that even professional writes experience a resistance to beginning the writing process ... Many people also experience "writer's block", whereby even after the writer bites the bullet, puts away the vacuum cleaner, and sits down to write, no words come, or every word, phrase, or sentence written down seems completely unacceptable and is scratched out and thrown out.

Thus, we can understand that writing is not something that one picks up a pen and paper and produces it immediately. Rather it is a process with complexities and difficulties. It is a painful skill almost to all. Some individuals, however, have actual difficulty with writing and they approach writing tasks in a state of high apprehension that

not the same as 'writing reluctance'; rather the former can be the best predictor to the latter. Therefore, given understanding of the existence of various degree of reluctance to writing, this research focuses on identifying those students who are high-writing -reluctant and describing their particular characteristics.

Next, the phrase "cognitive and behavioral" seems to raise a question to the reader's mind unless it is further elaborated.

The process of writing involves both the invisible mental processes like memory, logic, intuition, emotion, conscious and subconscious reactions, and the visible physical movement of hands, use of eyes, etc (Gebhardt & Rodrigues, 1989). The construct "reluctance" to writing, here, highly converges with the psychological term "disengagement" that has both behavioral and cognitive implications. In other words, it is used here to describe lack of both cognitively and behaviorally committed and effortful approach to the writing process. Thus integrating this knowledge together, the current researcher believes that the students' reluctant behavior to persist in the writing process is manifested both overtly through their visible off-task behaviors as well as in their written products, and covertly through their non-observable attitudes and perceptions they express about writing in general and their individual writing abilities.

The term "unwillingness" seems also to be further discussed. Acquisition of any skill in language learning highly demands one's self-willingness to involve, given the opportunity. To put it in other way, if a student lacks willingness to engage actively and respond to the writing task demands which are properly designed and set for accomplishment, there is every reason to believe that he/she is expressing "unwillingness" to persist in the writing process. Thus, the

undergoing study deals with those students "*who can write, but will not to*".

To this end, however, it diverges from the 'unwillingness to communicate' construct in that the unwillingness to communicate research mainly focuses on "*language communication*" whereas the current construct focuses on the area of "*language learning or acquisition*" particularly into students' nature of disengagement during composing process.

It seems also necessary to reason out why the expression "persistently engaged" is used here. Writing is one of the most painful and complex skills to learn. It requires students to exert more cognitive and physical effort and to persist longer in the face of difficulties that writing tasks pose on. In other words, writing demands one's strong intrinsic motivation and perseverance to accomplish the given tasks. Literature in recent studies also agrees with this saying "... as they [writers] grapple with writing's complexities and frustrations, learn to be patient, persistent, and flexible" (Bruning and Horn, 2000: 26). The current researcher, therefore, assumes that reluctant writers are students who fail to persistently practice writing skills.

2.3. Who Are the Reluctant Writers?

Reluctant writers come in different sizes and shapes, may be male or female, and can be found at most of our schools and universities today. Buis (2007: 5) claims that, "there is usually at least one reluctant writer in every class. Sometimes there may be half a dozen or so." They are not born reluctant writers, of course, and they do not enter school like this; yet, somewhere along the way, they lose heart. They have become "disillusioned", according to Buis (2007: 6),

because they have "little power over what they can say and write". Buis adds, these are students who have become convinced that they have no connections to others, no ability, no voice, and no significant role to play. They begin to feel hopeless and marginalized. They develop a vivid sense of their limitations and become anxious or even apprehensive. Thus, the following section is devoted to the detail identification of the specific characteristics of reluctant writers.

2.3.1. Some Characteristics of the Reluctant Writers

Characteristics of the reluctant writers are difficult to set up. This is because different scholars describe the nature of reluctance from different perspectives as it can be manifested in different ways. But, at a general level, we can see some of the behaviors that reluctant writers commonly share.

To begin with, a quotation from Anderson, which talks about his personal experience as a language teacher, seems to be a good starting.

I once asked two students the same question: the first was a reluctant writer, and the second was an eager writer. I asked them why we write at school. The reluctant writer said "because you make us". The eager writer said "Because it's fun". At the same time, my heart was made heavy and it soared. (2009: 14).

Thus, we can understand from the above discussion that reluctant writers are students who scowl when you mention a writing activity. They see writing skill as a mere course or subject to be taken as a mandate in the curriculum. And, the way they value the writing skill and their goal of learning are too much different from those of the "eager" students to write.

The reluctant writer, according to Oglan (1997), has specific characteristics that distinguish them from other types of writers, such as "independent writers", as he puts it. Reluctant writers, as Oglan states, they circumvent starting writing, ask how to spell a word before writing it, write about actual events rather than use their imagination to create stories. They sometimes struggle with finding a topic to write about, they tend to do just one draft, and also avoid revising and editing to make their writing better.

Buis (2007: 6) describes reluctant writers as students who present themselves as "uncooperative" and "oppositional". More often according to Buis, they appear withdrawn, sleepy, or indifferent. Some reluctant writers, Buis adds, no longer wishing to be regarded for their insights and understandings, minimize their participation as a safeguard. They hide their feelings behind "bravado" or veil them in silence. They hope to remain invisible. They become more concerned with the need to shield, rather than share, their ideas. They wear masks to survive. In other words, they may be convinced that the teacher knows they are failures and need to act the part.

Buis further puts them as those students who are likely to become "hard to like", "hard to teach" and "need more effort" to the teacher.

To put in a nutshell, some of the major characteristics that reluctant writers display, according to Anderson (2009: 12), are listed below:

1. They are usually reluctant readers
2. They usually have poor spelling and punctuation skills.
3. They are easily distracted from writing and reading tasks.
4. They work slowly, and their work is frequently incomplete.
5. Their written work is often messy.
6. Their notebooks are frequently disorganized and tatty.

7. They avoid starting writing and use excuses, such as "I can't find my pen".
8. They will not share their written work in a group.
9. They sometimes lack life experience and exposure
10. They usually have some difficulty with reading.
11. They have sometimes developed strategies for masking reluctance
12. They switched off the teacher's instructions and explanations
13. They tend to adapt or adopt their neighbors work.
14. They are prone to procrastinate the writing assignments and go out of the deadline.

2.4. Reasons for Students' Reluctance to Write

Now, that we have identified the reluctant writer. The next important question to be answered is "why the students are reluctant?" It is important because, as stakeholders, Anderson (2009: 16) argues, "the more information [we] have [about the sources of students' reluctance to write], the better equipped [we] will be to transform the students into eager writers." Thus, this section is devoted to the discussion of some of the roots of students' reluctance at the general level.

There are many reasons why students may be reluctant to write. Though it is difficult to set up their exclusive divisions, it seems important to group some of the reasons addressed by scholars in to two major categories: pedagogical and psychological reasons, for our convenience in the discussion of this review.

2.4.1. Pedagogical Reasons

According to Richards (1990); Nunan (1991); and Zamel (1987), some of the pedagogical reasons for the students' reluctance to write may include boredom, poor knowledge of the necessary sub skills, lack of interest in the topic, little success that students had experienced, the language teacher, lack of writing culture, and/or the kind of examinations and tests. Besides, the teaching of writing by Plasma TV is also found, in some local research works, to be a potential factor for students' lack of desire to writing. Each of these will explicitly be discussed below.

2.4.1.1. Boredom

Students who struggle with writing generally dislike practicing writing; however, this is exactly what they need. The reason for students' boredom can be many. Richards (1990), for example, claims that some students are just bored because they are used to the fast - paced stimuli of television and video games. Teribble (1996), on the other hand, points out students are typically bored with or overwhelmed by traditional writing instruction. Traditionally, writing was viewed mainly as a tool for the practice and reinforcement of specific grammatical and lexical patterns, a fairly one-dimensional activity, in which accuracy was all important content and self-expression virtual non - priorities. To paraphrase Teribble (1996: 118), students were purely 'writing to learn' as opposed to 'learning to write'.

For various reasons, as Nunan (1991: 88) claims, writing usually appears an extremely daunting task for students (and for teachers!, too). First of all, the main focus when a writing task is assigned has traditionally been on the final product. Nunan adds the need to produce a coherent, well - written text can be a great source of stress

and boredom to the writer if the intervening stages in the process of creating this text are overlooked. Thus, the product approach results in rather making students to feel writing as more daunting and less manageable.

2.4.1.2. Lack of interest in the topic

The less a writing activity can engage the learner as a person, the less it will capture his/her imagination and spark his/her de-motivation. In the contrary, making an activity attractive involves a consideration of what our students might need to write outside the classroom and of what they are interested in, as highlighted by White, Rand & Arndt (1991: 49). As Raimes (1985) comments, students have no intellectual or emotional investment in what they are writing about. They are saying something that nobody cares about in order to practice something else. Thus, when teachers fail to provide interesting and stimulating topics to write about, to develop activities with 'fun', which engage students' interest, and to design tasks where students have a more genuine purpose to write, then students tend to avoid the writing activities inevitably.

2.4.1.3. Poor knowledge of the necessary sub-skills

There are many sub skills involved in the writing task and it is important for students to be able to use each of these automatically as possible. Indeed, the process of writing is a complex activity and requires a juggling and coordination of many skills at the same time. In relation to this, Richards (1990) points out that some of the many sub skills necessary for writing: organizational, grammatical, lexical, and mechanical skills.

Richards further elaborates that after selecting the topic, the students need to consider at least five basic activities or subtasks to be done: (1) pre planning and organizing, (2) writing the draft, (3) proofreading

and rewriting, (4) editing (or elaborating and enhancing the content, and (5) writing the final (Terrible, 1990: 19). Thus, this demands students to be competent in knowledge of grammar, use of appropriate punctuations, and organizational skills.

Some students may have difficulty thinking of the appropriate words or expressions they want to use while writing. In addition to all the hardships that writing creates, students also experience the difficulty of "how to say it" (Silva, 1993). To put in other words, many students are often frustrated of having ideas but not being able to find the L2 forms for expressing them, of knowing what to say but not how to say it. Silva contends that many students tend to give up expressing their ideas through writing for their feeling that what they have written couldn't truly express their thought.

Others have difficulty with spelling. Students who struggle with spelling often become frustrated when attempting to express their ideas in writing. Thus, the less knowledge the students have on each sub skill, the more challenging and frustrating it will be for them to start writing.

2.4.1.4. The Language Teachers

The teachers themselves could be considered responsible for making the students acquire the skill by using appropriate strategies and processes. Teachers also could influence the students' desire to write on the way they treat the students and give feedback to their works. In relation to this, Clark and Peterson (1989) believe that teachers have a share in the attitude that students develop towards or away from the writing activities.

2.4.1.5. The Kind of Examinations

According to Alamirew (2005), the English language teachers express their belief on that the format of examinations, tests and exercises to

be designed and developed have a significant effect on the students' attitude and practice in the writing skill. Mostly, examinations, tests and tasks/exercises are of objective types. In the school leaving examination or in the university entrance examination, for example, we do not find a single subjective question that makes students write in English. Instead, the tests and final examinations are of objective types where we find true/false, matching, and multiple choice questions. Besides, the exercises in the text books do not require students to write in English. These problems would obviously, influence the students in giving little or no attention to the writing skill. Teachers of other subjects seem to follow the same trend. Thus, it aggravates the problem.

2.4.1.6. The Teaching of Writing by Plasma TV

As far as the effect of teaching of writing by Plasma TV is concerned, a handful of local research findings, (e.g. Alamirew, 2005; Misirak, 2008) reported that both the teachers and students who participated in the studies have positive attitude towards Plasma TV lessons. Nevertheless, they express their belief on that there is shortage of time for the students to perform tasks as recommended. The research reports continue to show that students are passive listeners to the TV teacher lecturing on the process of writing and various task procedures. This may be because the plasma lessons do not consider students' ability as they are unidirectional. Thus, this results in the development of attitude of ignorance and reluctance in the sense of 'I could not cope up with it'.

2.4.1.7. Lack of Writing Culture

In relation to this, most of the language teachers who participated in the interview sessions of Alamirew's research (Alamirew, 2005) said

that students do not like to write in English. In fact, I, the researcher, know from experience, they do not like to write in Amharic, too. This may be mainly due to the lack of practice in writing. This culture is not developed in our students. Wittrock (1989: 50) agrees with this belief saying, "Learners' background knowledge and their practice in using the strategies influence their perceptions about teaching and learning." Thus, this results in low engagement.

2.4.1.8. The Little Success that students had experienced

Here, I would like to begin with the quotation from Anderson (2009: 13). He thinks back and expresses his introspection as the reluctant mathematician as:

I think back to my own schooldays, when I hated math . . . I hated it because I couldn't do it. I had very little success. Each day, my equations were wrong, and the ugly red crosses next to them emphasized that I was not very good at mathematics. Each year, the math got more and more complicated, and each year my self-esteem lowered as the frequency of crosses increased . . . I did not know my multiplication tables, I did not know how to divide, I did not know how to add carrying numbers, my math book looked like something the dog had buried and dug up again. I had number of strategies to avoid math. I would offer to stack the books shelves, I would "lose" my pencil, I would spend ages setting up the page, making sure that the lines down the center were perfect. I would copy down the equations and then peek at my neighbor's work and copy her answers. I was good though I did always make at least half of them wrong so that the teacher wouldn't get suspicious. Sometimes I would write down any old number and look astonished when it turned out to be the incorrect answer . . . In fact, I was a reluctant mathematician, and I displayed exactly the same characteristics as the reluctant writer.

From the above quotation, we can understand that usually students are reluctant to write because they had very little success, and they have simply switched off. In other words, after the successive failures

they have experienced day after day or/and year after year, they will become self-convinced that they are lost and they could never cope up it any more.

2.4.2. Psychological Reasons

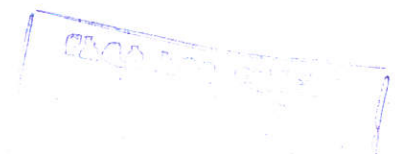
The roots of students' reluctance may also be more of psychological. Reluctant writers may have also developed their attitude of ignorance and reluctance as a result of growing fear or anxiety or their self-efficacy beliefs on writing.

2.4.2.1 Writing Apprehension

As number of researches (e.g. McCuthcheon, Schuffer & Wycoff, 1994) demonstrate that high "communication apprehension" as a major reason of "unwillingness to speak", a handful of researches which have been conducted on the area of writing also agree with the fact that high writing apprehension as major predictor of writing reluctance. In relation to this, for example Young, by citing Raisman (1982), states that:

Students often cope with writing apprehension by choosing careers that do not require much writing, by avoiding writing situations altogether, and by completing writing assignments as swiftly as possible without giving much thought to them, so as to minimize the discomfort evoked by writing anxiety (1999: 65).

Researches continue to show that students who are highly anxious about their writing often avoid writing and writing instructions, thus neglecting opportunities to develop their writing skills. They also approach writing differently from low- apprehensive writers. They take fewer risks in their writing, write shorter compositions, are less straight forward and clear when they write, compose longer sentences, use more Jargon and nominalizations, and are more prone to



procrastinate (Smith, 1984; Dally and Miller, 1975 a, 1975b," Fox, 1980; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Raisman, 1982). Young suggests that it is possible to conclude that writers with high apprehension are writers with much frustrations and poor writing skills.

2.4.2.2. Low Self – efficacy Beliefs on Writing

There are no major disparities among psychologists in defining self-efficacy. According to Schunk, as quoted in Williams and Burden (1997: 14), self-efficacy is defined as "students' beliefs about their capabilities to apply effectively the knowledge and skills they already possess and thereby learn new cognitive skills". Likewise, Bandura, the prominent psychologist in this area, defines self - efficacy as, "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (1994: 71).

In relation to the effects of self- efficacy, Skualvik, stated in Alamirew (2005), affirms the fact that the beliefs learners have influence their performance. Bandura (1994) also states that the beliefs people have influence on their behavior, feelings, motivation and their thinking, which are important cognitive and affective factors that determine their day-to-day activities. This, then, affects the efforts they put in and their perseverance for accomplishing their tasks. To use his words: "Self -efficacy beliefs influence motivational and self regulatory processes in several ways . . . Most people engage in tasks in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not" (Bandura, 1994: 67)

High efficacy influences our self-regulated learning. In relation to this, Pintrich and Garcia, stated in Alamrew (2005), point out that high self - efficacious students tend to persist longer than other



students who had low self - efficacy. Bandura has stated a similar relationship.

In the discussion above, we understand that self - efficacy beliefs influence the emotional experiences of people and their degree of involvement in performing a task. Bandura, as stated above, tells us that people who have low-self- efficacy consider difficult tasks as tough and tend to refrain from attempting them. Pajares also states that people with low self efficacy could have an exaggerated judgment of the level of difficulty of things to be done. This means self efficacy affects people's emotional reactions, effort and perseverance in doing their tasks.

Hawthorne (2008) has stated a similar relationship between students' self efficacy beliefs and their perseverance in the face of writing tasks' difficulties. He points out that reluctant writer are likely to have low self-efficacy beliefs for writing, and suggests that we [teachers] must work to foster their positive self efficacy beliefs.

Chapter Three

3. Research Design and Methodology

In the preceding chapter, a review of related literature has been presented. Based on the ideas of the review, in this chapter, a description of the design of the study and the methodology employed are given. An attempt is made to justify why a certain approach or method is more appropriate than others are, for his study. Also, justifications for using certain instruments of data collection are discussed.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

As explained in Chapter One, the principal objective of this study was to describe the characteristics of students who are reluctant to practice writing, and to explore their beliefs about what hindered their engagement in writing class.

At the point I shall state the underpinning methodological basis for choosing the research setting, the research subjects, and the methods of data collection and analysis. To begin with, it is often argued (e.g. Zamel, 1985; Taylor, 1981; Stern, 1975; Rubin, 1975) that a sound pedagogy of writing must begin with a thorough understanding of how students learn or not to learn. I particularly assume that understanding the behaviors often associated with ‘not learning’ would generate more relevant insight in Ethiopian context where multiple factors influence students’ learning in negative ways. As reluctance (as expounded in Chapter Two) is an importance concept associated with learning determinants, the methodology of studying reluctance must consist of a multiple stage data elicitation and analysis research tasks. It in fact combines both *inductive* (in which theoretical generalizations are developed from the data) and *deductive* (in which hypothesis are derived from theory and then tested against



empirical observations) approaches. That is, in his endeavor to analyze data and draw logical conclusions about students' writing reluctance, the researcher oscillates between data and theory constantly, revising the theory by means of more data and onwards to the refinement of the theory and sometimes his entire research approach. In the following section, I would present the research setting and subjects, methods of data collection and analysis.

3.2 The Research Setting

The setting chosen for this study was Wolaita Sodo University. It is one of the recently established government higher education institutions, which were the results of the capacity building strategies undertaken by the Ministry of Education in order to enhance the number of universities and to alleviate the shortage of educated man power in the country at large. The university is found at a town Wolaita Sodo, which is around three hundred and ninety kilometers away towards the south from the capital -Addis Ababa.

It was selected as the research setting for it has not yet got other researchers' attention as compared to the formerly established universities of the nation, and it was believed to be more accessible setting for the researcher to keep on there long and collect adequate data for the success of the study.

Besides, the level was chosen, for this study, as it was believed that university students have had enough writing lessons as compared to those of other lower levels. To put it in other way, though, in the educational curriculum of Ethiopia, English has got the status of a major foreign language that is compulsory and highly valued subject (Bender, et al. 1976) starting from Grade One, the extent at which some complex skills of it like writing skills are being taught and

learned particularly at secondary schools is not adequate as some local research findings (e.g. Alamirew, 2005) attempted to suggest. Therefore, it was felt that studying a problem among subjects who are below the university level and who has not got enough exposure to practice the skill would seem to be rather unfeasible and hypocritical.

At university level, however, the fact that particular writing courses like "Sophomore English", "Intermediate English Skills I and II", "Advanced Composition Skills I and II", and "Technical Report Writing Skills" are given shows the due concern assigned to writing.

3.3. Subjects of the study and Sampling Techniques

The target population of the study were current year (i.e. 2009/10) entry students and English language instructors at Wolaita Sodo University.

Sampling I

According to the information the researcher obtained from the registrar of the university, at the beginning of this academic year, the university enrolled one thousand seven hundred and forty nine students who were assigned to study in twenty three major study areas (departments) under the following faculties: Natural and Computational Science, Social Science, Business and Economics, Health science, Agriculture, School of Law, and Civil Engineering. The target populations were the students belonged to twelve sections that were taking the writing courses at the current semester. Out of these sections, the researcher used only four sections for the successive observation. The sections were selected systematically by picking up any third one from the list of sections for the five faculties. The following table summarizes this.

Table I: *Number of students, with their respective faculties and sections used in the study*

Faculty	Section	Number of Students
Business and Economics	II	40
Agriculture	III	38
Health Science	I	45
Civil Engineering	I	35

Regarding the instructors, the staff profile the researcher got from the Department of Foreign Language and Literature revealed that 11 instructors were currently engaged in teaching while other 3 were on a study leave. The researcher selected purposively five instructors who have taught at least one of the writing courses, see Appendix I, to respond to the designed interview. This was done on the basis of the assumption that they may have more experience regarding the reluctant nature of students through the course of their teaching writing courses.

Sampling II

Study two of this research, since it is an exploratory investigation, required systematically selected subjects who had been identified and were to be taken as parts of the further exploration. To this end, employing some kind of objective measurement that will help to classify the students into reluctant and non reluctant seems essential so as to avoid possible overlapping among the subjects. Thus, how can we measure students' degree of reluctance?

For this purpose, as far as the reach of this researcher's knowledge is concerned (till the time this study was completed, of course), unlike some related constructs like "writing apprehension" (Daly & Miller, 1975), there is no objectively designed tool to measure the level of one's "writing reluctance". This is may be because the construct 'writing reluctance' is at the stage of infancy i.e. the concept has only recently got the attention of researchers.

To this end, some local researchers, Fikirte (1996) for example, who focused on classifying students in terms of their classroom behavior claim that a students' self-evaluation questionnaire is a better tool for such a classification. This researcher, however, felt that the information seem to be more unreliable when such a measurement is used to identify individuals in terms of their behavior because it is doubtful whether the students respond to the questionnaire genuinely especially when the behavior of the students to be assessed through the questionnaire is a negative trait such as 'reluctant nature'.

The present researcher, therefore, contended that, based on the continuous observation of the way each student performs and behaves while doing classroom activities, one can tell that a certain group of students are reluctant and others are non- reluctant or eager to write. Hoping that their experience can enable them to do so, English language instructors were asked to carefully pick up those students who displayed off-task behavior and regularly distracted from the writing tasks. Thus, thirty eight students were selected from the four sections which had been taken for successive observation, and were used to complete the designed questionnaire.

3.4. Data Gathering Methods

To gather data on the specific characteristics that reluctant students to write display, English language instructors were interviewed individually. They expressed their beliefs on the reluctant behavior that students exhibit. To corroborate data gathered through the interview, different writing lessons in four selected sections were successively observed by the researcher using an observation guideline. The researcher attempted to observe and record in his own words those events which were not included in the guideline.

In relation to exploring the students' beliefs about the sources of their reluctance to write, a questionnaire was administered to the selected thirty-eight students. Two types of data, data via open-ended and closed-ended questionnaire, were gathered. The open-ended part of the questionnaire was administered first in search of information about each respondent's individual belief and reflection on what has influenced him/her not to engage willingly in the set writing tasks. Then, the closed-ended items, of course on a separate page, of the questionnaire were administered to the same subjects immediately after they had finished their reflections on the open-ended part of the questionnaires. This part aimed at eliciting information on their level of agreement and/or disagreement on the list of the given statements.

Thus, in an attempt the researcher made to collect the necessary data, these were the major data gathering instruments used. The preceding sub-sections are devoted for a detailed description of each of these instruments.

3.4.1. Description of the Instructors' Interview

This is the main instrument which was believed, comparatively, to be more effective method in collecting data for such a qualitative study. In relation to this, Wilkinson and Bhandarka (1992: 200) argue that:

The observational method is understandably not so effective in giving information about person's perceptions, beliefs, feelings, motivations, anticipations, future plans, past and private behaviors. The interview method is quite effective in giving information about all these aspects.

Experienced instructors were interviewed individually to elicit information on the behaviors that reluctant writers among the students they had taught have displayed. For the purpose of this study, a brief discussion had been made with ELT instructors of the selected university to initiate their awareness on the problem, and thus, they had deliberately been informed one month a head of the interview to direct their attention to the specific characteristics that reluctant students to write display during the writing lesson.

This was done on the bases of the belief that observing students with different reluctant behavior in the classroom is a common experience of all who are involved in the process of language teaching and learning. For this purpose, no one has a better access and exposure than the language instructor him/herself. Hawthorne (2008), the prominent researcher in the same problem area, also shares common feeling regarding describing the characteristics of reluctant writers.

The semi-structured interview questions were designed on the basis of the theoretical assumptions discussed in the literature review section. The questions were related to the areas like what the instructors noted on the ways such students approach writing, behave in group activities, choose a writing topic, collect pre-hand information, plan their work, organize their ideas, follow necessary steps, and get and

use others' feedback. The instructors were also asked about the strategies, if any, such students use to avoid writing or to mask their reluctance. Besides, questions about working speed, and nature or quality of written products of such students were also included in the interview.

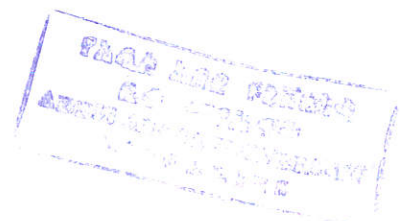
3.4.2. Description of the Observation Guideline

As explained earlier, the main aim of the observation was to obtain information which could consolidate or refute the beliefs English language instructors revealed through the interview. For this purpose, non-participant and obtrusive observations were made through a guideline.

The guideline was designed in accordance with the process approach of teaching writing activities assuming that the instructors mostly set and administer the classroom writing tasks in such a commonly accepted procedure of teaching writing.

The aim of this observation guideline was to assess whether or not there were reluctant writers, and what observable characteristics do they display. For the convenience of the observation, the guideline is divided in to four sub- sections: logistical reluctance, requisite skills reluctance, procedural reluctance, and substantive reluctance. This division in fact was made on the mere basis of the researcher's intuition about the manifestations of students' reluctant behavior in the context of EFL writing classes. The leading questions are given under each of these divisions (For further reference, see Appendix II).

This helped me to correlate it with what the experienced language instructors has said about characteristics of reluctant writers.



3.4.3 Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed for students and it involves both open-ended and closed ended types of questions. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of the discussions in the literature review.

I believed that the open-ended type of brainstorming questionnaire were extremely valuable for gaining an in to how reluctant writers feel about writing and what has influenced more their engagement with writing activities. For the purpose, even though interviewing seem to be more appropriate means to uncover the subjective beliefs of students, the researcher's fear for that the subjects would not be feeling comfortable to articulate genuinely about their reluctance enforced him to rely on the open-ended questionnaire for gathering necessary data. In relation to the advantages of questionnaire over interview, Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 122) identify the following major merits. One, the respondents will feel more comfortable than in a one-on-one interview. The second advantage is that it allows the subjects to provide very important but sensitive information when anonymity is guaranteed. It also enables to involve more subjects so that more information will be gathered. Hence, attempts were made to obtain the substance of students' reflections for this study through open-ended questionnaire.

As to the closed-ended part (See Appendix III Direction II) the technique used to measure the students beliefs' on what hindered or

influenced their persistence in engaging with the writing activities was the Likert technique for all of the items. The Likert scale was chosen because, as Ebel (1979: 371) states, it is "easier to use in developing an attitude scale than other techniques, and gives almost equally good results." In the Likert technique, the subjects respond to each item on a five - point scale of agreement. Their score on the item depends on the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements.

At the beginning of the administration process, the students were told about the objectives as well as significance of this research. They were also told about the confidentiality of what ever reflections they would give to the questionnaire. They were asked to give their frank responses and comments at the end of the questions.

Thirty-eight students who were selected by the ELT instructors for this purpose (refer to *sampling II* in section 3.3 for detail) were given the open-ended part of the questionnaire first. The respondents were told to brainstorm on each question and write their feelings in either English or Amharic languages as they feel better comfortable. This was done to ease possible communication barriers that might have occurred may be due to their poor proficiency in either of the languages.

Immediately after the students had finished the open-ended questions session, the closed-ended questionnaire was distributed and they were asked to complete it individually. Here also the students were told to do it honestly. Then, their responses were collected and calculated to find out the underlining factors by which the students' engagement was influenced more. The findings were used to compare (or corroborate) with the results of the open-ended data.

3.5 Data Analysis

After the data had been collected, the responses to the open-ended tools (interview, observation and open-ended questionnaire) were analyzed using content analysis methods.

After the tape scripts of the instructors' responses had been transcribed, the responses for the interview questions which focused on eliciting personal data of the instructors were thematically analyzed by coding and categorizing them. The rest parts of the interview questions were designed to ask the instructors about their beliefs on reluctant nature of students to write. Instructors' responses to these questions were analyzed through reading them thoroughly, and then identifying key words and phrases which were used by the interviewees to describe specific characteristics of reluctant writers.

The data obtained through observation, however, were analyzed by presenting the emergent themes and patterns through sample verbatim like quotes from the researcher's (an observer, too) account to authenticate the analysis and discussion of data gathered through the interview.

As to the data obtained through the open-ended questionnaire, after the students' responses, which were written in Amharic, were translated into English, they were read thoroughly; then important concepts were identified, fused, and discussed so as to synthesize the students' beliefs and feelings about what factors influenced them to be reluctant writers.

On the part of responses to the closed-ended questionnaire, simple descriptive statistics, computing the central tendencies, was applied after the students' response was counted and tallied. Then, the data obtained through both the open-ended and closed ended items were

crosschecked in order to triangulate and decide some major factors which have influenced the students' desire to engage with writing willingly.

Chapter Four

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

As stated in the preceding chapter, the main objective of this study is to describe the characteristic of reluctant students to writing and to explore their beliefs on the sources of their reluctance. In order to achieve this, the following three specific questions, as mentioned in Chapter One, are required to get answer:

- a. What are the specific features that characterize reluctant students in the context of EFL writing practice?
- b. What do reluctant writers believe /feel about what has influenced them to reluctant student writer behavior?
- c. What are the implications of the students' beliefs associated with reluctance to the pedagogy of writing?

Thus, attempts were made to find answer for these research questions and the results of the study are presented in the sub sequent pages.

4.2. The Personal Data of the Subjects

The personal data of the instructors who participated in the study were obtained through interview. It was believed that these data are relevant for the study in that they could give the researcher insight about the instructors' qualification, their teaching experience of English language in general and writing courses in particular.

The questions and responses of the semi-structured interview for English language instructors in the study are given in Appendix I.

4.2.1 Qualification and Experience

The results computed from the tape script show that (see Appendix I) the majority of the instructors (80%) had MA in TEFL and Literature and 20% had BA in Foreign Language and Literature. About 20% of the respondents were assistant lecturers and 80% were lecturers in the Department of Foreign Language and Literature at the Wolaita Sodo University. The majority of these instructors (60%) taught for over ten years and 20% taught between five and nine years and only 20% taught for less than five years. In addition, all of them have taught at least one, and at most four of the writing courses at the university level. Thus, it is hoped that their experience as well as exposure would give them enough access of observation and identifying the nature of students' repugnance to writing in the classroom.

4.3 Characteristics of Reluctant Students

This part attempts to present the results of data obtained through instructors' interview and classroom observation. It focuses on describing specific features that characterize reluctant student

writers. The data were discussed and analyzed through content analysis methods, and were organized thematically as being:

4.3.1 High Presence of Reluctant Students

Almost all of the interviewees expressed that it is often the heart break for them seeing number of students in a class who fail to write willingly and well even a sentence within a given twenty or thirty minutes, leave alone to master the skills that the teacher has toiled so long and hard to teach. Below are some of the instructors' responses, when they were asked whether or not they come across with students who are reluctant to write in the classes they taught through the course of their career.

I am sorry to say so . . . almost all of the class sometimes. . (I2)

Really, it is my headache . . . students hate this course . . . I feel sorry for myself whenever I think how difficult it is to teach such students . . . (I1).

Yes, ninety five percent . . . they seem hopeless. . . (I3).

Yes, it is common to see students often avoid writing . . . either in high school or at university level . . . students don't like writing . . . (I4)

Most of the students are unwilling . . . They show no commitment . . . (I5)

(See Appendix I)

From the interviewees' response, we can understand that the number of reluctant writers highly dominate the teaching and learning atmosphere of some of our classrooms. The instructors' innermost feeling revealed this. It also seems to agree with the existing theories. According to Buis (2007), for instance, it is in fact hard for the teacher who is teaching in a classroom condition where many of the students are reduced to reluctant writers.

My observation also affirms the same fact. In two of the writing classes I observed, more than three-fourth of the students in the classes were exhibiting reluctant behavior to write willingly. Here is my record of the situation:

In sections III and IV, the students were told to write a paragraph on given topics. Ahead of it, discussions were made on the topic with the students in order to help them get the necessary information to be organized into paragraph later on. Nevertheless, after the instructors waited for thirty or so minutes in the class walking among the students to offer necessary help, they could not find more than two or three students who came with a written paragraph. The rest of the students were sitting without writing even a sentence on the page....

Thus, as a teacher, I too, share the same feeling with these instructors about the real situation of many of the students in our writing classes today.

4.3.2 Off-task Behaviors and Tattered Works

The instructors expressed as they believe that it is easy to identify characteristically reluctant writers through the behavior they display and by their written products. The following are some of the key expressions used by the respondents, when asked whether or not they believe that reluctant students have specific characteristics that distinguish them from the other writers:

Yes, they seem to be bored off . . . (I5)

Ya, you can read their face easily . . . the way they approach writing activities. . they feel no comfort. . . Highly anxious . . . terrified when the teacher comes nearer . . . (I1)

Of course, they usually look disturbed . . . even they disturb others by asking irrelevant questions like "May I use red pen . . . ?" . . . easily distracted from the writing tasks . . . (I3).

Yes, they work carelessly . . . Truly speaking, I couldn't make sense out of the number of works written by such students . . . either in class works, assignments ... Poor . . . sometimes nothing at all ...(I2)

Ea, they tend to hide themselves . . . they pretend to act . . . but you can identify from their poor and ragged written works . . . (I2). (See Appendix I).

Some of the interviewees revealed that, in some cases where the number of good writers dominates in a classroom, it might be difficult to identify the reluctant ones because they shield themselves under the active involvement of the eager writers. But all of the instructors conveyed their belief on that; characteristically reluctant writers can be identified by their off-task behavior and their tatty works. These instructors' belief seems to agree with what theorists like Oglan (1997) and Anderson (2009) say. (Refer to section 2.3.1 in Chapter Two for detail).

The reality checks of my observations were also considerable. In the classes of my focus, I could easily identify those reluctant students whenever I directed my attention towards them. Their frequent destructions from the given writing practices were their common features. Attempts were also made to identify and analyze written products of some students who had displayed off-task behavior during the composing processes. This was done after the instructors had collected the papers of the entire class. Shabby works (few samples are attached at Appendix IV) of these students seem to be good indicators of their features.



4.3.3 Lack of Personal Initiatives to Cooperate in Group

Activities

With respect to the way reluctant students behave in group activities, almost all of the respondents expressed that such students seem to be quite uncooperative and disengaged. The following are some of the instructors' expressions, when they were asked what they noted on how reluctant students act or behave in group works.

Most of the times . . . like to be in a group having large number of students . . . May be they are more concerned to hide themselves silent in . . . (I5).

Physically they are present in a certain group . . . but mentally distracted and inactive . . . (I3).

They rather discuss issues in Amharic . . . or tend to divert the attention of other members in a group . . . (I1)

They join a certain group only because you made them to do. . . but contribute nothing . . . do not share . . . (I2).

The finding of the researcher's observations seems to be substantial to these empirical perceptions. A handful of students during the discussions made in the pre-writing sessions were sitting silent and inactive. Some were neither producing ideas nor taking notes which help them in the later organization of their paragraphs. And, many were using Amharic to ask or express their ideas. Thus, this seems to underline what Buis says about the nature of reluctant writers in group works. "In extreme cases, reluctant writers present themselves as uncooperative . . . More often, they appear withdrawn, sleepy, bored, or in different" (Buis, 2007: 6). Since these students do not brainstorm before they start to write, it is often noticed that they are not confident enough to start writing.

4.3.4 Switched-off to Task Instructions and Explanations

In search of further information about the nature reluctance that students display, the instructors were asked whether or not reluctant writers pay attention when task instructions and explanation are given. The following are some of the key words and phrases used by the respondents to this question.

No . . . I see students doing something else while I was giving task instructions . . . Finally, such students... ask you irrelevant question to kill their time given . . . (I1)

. . . . such students come up with written works which make no sense for the reader and confusing even . . . (I2)

Even they do not try what they are told to do . . . (I4)

They are too late to comprehend you . . . when they are told to do something; they end up with doing something else . . . (I5)

(See Appendix I)

From the foregoing responses of the instructors, we can understand that reluctant writers are known to not giving due attention to task instructions and explanations. This is may be because of their failure to comprehend the instructors, as the respondents thought, or may be due to their self-belief as a writer and disliking attitude they have developed towards writing in general. To this effect, Anderson (2008) noted that students often tend to switch-off to ideas for which they feel they had not developed the necessary required skills and knowledge before. In other words, after the successive failures they have experienced day after day or/and year after year, they will become self-convinced that they are lost and they could never cope up it any more. Young (1999) also claims that switching-off to task

instructions is one of the strategies that students use to avoid a task they hate.

4.3.5 Unwillingness to show their work to colleagues

The other behavior that the interviewees tried to reveal about the traits of reluctant student writers is their unwillingness to share their works with others. Some of the instructors' responses, when they were asked whether or not reluctant students are willing to share their work with their partners, are the following.

Not at all. They don't totally want to show their work . . . I think that they fear their work will look stupid . . . (I1)

Oh, they do not like it . . . unless you force them to do so . . . (I3)

They have no confidence on their work . . . Because they have fear of evaluation . . . (I5)

From the instructors' responses above, we can understand that reluctant writers do not bother to proofread their work by some one like a colleague or a teacher or even a parent in order to make the necessary amendments or sometimes to add an important point. According to Zamel (1987), however, good writers are those who give their work to proofread by someone else, take comments and work accordingly to improve the quality of their work. Reluctant writers lack these characteristics.

4.3.6 Skipping core steps of writing tasks

Almost all of the instructors interviewed revealed as they believe that the common behavior that the reluctant students share actually is skipping core steps of writing tasks. That is, they tend to seek short-

cut completions of the task. They begin drafting, sometimes even their final drafts, before collecting necessary information, making outlines, and planning their work properly. They jump other necessary steps like editing and revising their work for different aspects of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, etc. Some ways of expressing this fact can be seen in the interviewees' responses given below.

No . . . They are not interested to write even their first draft leave alone to go through the other steps. . (I1).

Most of the time, students go to their final stage writing . . . but their work is full of grammar, punctuation, spelling . . . errors . . . you can't make any sense out of it . . . (I5)

They don't like to persist . . . they are impatient (I2).

Unthinkable . . . they rash to . . .as I think most of the time they lack ideas to write well developed essay (I3)

They simply jot down something on a paper and stop there . . . If a student tried to go through the steps properly, you can see the results on his paper . . . But . . . (I4)

From the foregoing discussions, we can understand that reluctant students do not want to exert more cognitive and psychological effort and to persist longer in the face of difficulties that writing tasks pose on. This seems to agree with the literature in recent studies like Bruning and Horn (2006), in Hawthorne (2008: 26) says, "Reluctant writers are students who fail to persistently and patiently practice writing skills". Besides, Young (1999) states that seeking for short-cut completion is one of the avoidance tactics that students who hate writing do use.

5.3.7 Avoid starting writing

The next interview question which was forwarded to the instructors is, whether there were strategies or tactics that reluctant writers use to avoid or procrastinate writing. The listed below are some of the reluctant students' strategies as mentioned by the instructors.

They usually start writing after killing much time . . . spend much time doing unnecessary things like preparing a page, cutting a piece of paper, underlining it . . . (I1)

. . . Sit ideal. . . Discuss other issues. . . to divert others' mind or kill time. . . there are also students who ask permission for getting ill (I2)

Some students even seen writing or reading other notes. . . When . . . asked what they are doing, they say they are thinking about it . . . (I4)

They put their idea on two or three lines and sit ideal as if they finished it (I3).

They use different pretexts:

I forgot the assignment as we are told to do

I was studying for exams

I was sick, or my friend was sick and I took him to the hospital.

I could not get enough reference . . .(I5)

Thus, the foregoing perception of the instructors enables us to deduce that reluctant writers are known to disliking writing and they have number of strategies to avoid it. Many of them displayed exactly the same characteristics as Anderson (Anderson, 2009:13) had been displaying as a reluctant mathematician (Refer to section 2.4.1.8 in Chapter Two for the detail).

4.3.8 Develop strategies for masking their reluctance

The instructors were also asked to describe what, if any, strategies they have noted that reluctant student writers use to shield their reluctance. Some of the respondents' key expressions are the following.

Yes, some times they are tough . . . they keep themselves silent within the involvement of the active ones...(I2)

Oh... especially in a class were many are engaged,... they copy others' work just as they sometimes tend to do in exams (I5)

Yes, such students are concerned to hiding their reluctance...they might seem acting a part... aa.. they might write something wrong or irrelevant and finally they get surprised when they are told they are wrong(I1)

My observations also affirm the same truth. During the composition process, I could see some students simply highlighting their former notes to pretend that they were writing so that the instructor would not be suspicious. Some were also seen that they write a word or a phrase then erase it, then write again and erase it. Then, they sit and look around or up the roof, etc to been looked as if they were thinking and planning, but when you watch them out they produce nothing meaningful. These seem rather strategies they use to masking their reluctance and ignorance to write.

4.3.9 Passive writers

The other way that the interviewees attempted to describe reluctant writers' behavior is in terms of their working speed; they work very



slowly. In relation to this, the instructors put their belief. Below are some of the key expressions that were used by the instructors.

Extremely sluggish . . . They work very slowly . . . never submit their work on time. . . their work is not complete and well organized . . . (I3)

...when I order them to write something, most of them are passive ...they don't submit their work on time... then, I ... (I5)

They are too late to complete a certain work and submit inI think many students do not think and plan a head of time ...(I1)

In addition to their low working speed, the above respondents revealed that the work of these students is likely to be disorganized and incomplete. This seems because of their failure to properly plan the work and use their time. Time is, however, one of the necessary elements for developing writing and therefore its proper managing skill during the composing process is quite recommended for a good writer (Raimes, 1991).

4.3.10 Adaptive or adoptive reluctance

The instructors revealed that such students commit adaptive or adoptive reluctance. They submit forged or plagiarized assignments. What follow are the key expressions used by some of the instructors when they were asked if they had any further comments to add at the end of the interview session

They try to copy from others' work . . . Mostly their assignments are direct copies of others' work . . . yes, you can easily identify . . .(I5)

Most of the time, if you are giving them home taken assignments, their papers would be something either written by a certain

scholar or a direct copy of their class partner. . . they even copy from a text or...(I1)

From the above discussions, we can understand that reluctant students never want to use their effort and produce their own original written works. It seems that they have no passion to try and look their own products. They are not willing to enjoy practicing writing despite the given time and opportunity to do it at their home.

4.4 Students' Self-beliefs about their Reluctance

This part attempts to present results of stage two of the study i.e. exploring students' self-belief about their reluctance. The relevant data, as explained in Chapter Three, were obtained through questionnaire having two parts. The next subsequent sections are devoted for the discussion and analysis of these data.

4.4.1 Discussion and Analysis of Responses for Open-ended Questionnaires

Almost all of the respondents expressed their positive, but not strong, attitude towards learning the writing skill. What follow are the responses given by some of the students for the question asking whether or not they liked to learn writing skill.

I liked if I would write in English whenever but I can not ... (S8)

I like it but I fear it. Because it is difficult to ... Even I am worried about other courses due to writing course ... (S₃)

I like but I can not I do not have good skill (S30)

English is my favorite subject. I scored good grade in high school... but writing is my problem still now (S38)

I know it is important ... I like ... but I avoid it. To tell you the truth I avoid it ... because I don't want to waste too much time on it and to miss my good grades on the other courses ... (S₁₀)

It is very important I will write reports, assignments in English and other courses ... I will do research like you are doing now (S₂₀)

The students, however, expressed that they avoid writing because they perceived themselves as they are not good at writing. Relatively, such students seem to giving much emphasis to the other major courses they take. They also expressed that they approach writing skill with apprehensions. This seems to agree with the beliefs of different theorists. Pajares (1996), for instants, says that people tend to do tasks in which they think they could do and avoid those they can not do. Dally & Miller (1975b) believe that people with high writing apprehension tend to avoid writing courses like Advanced Composition and they look writing rather as unrewarding. The situation that these students are seems to prove these existing beliefs. In search of information about what their reluctance to writing emerges from, the students were asked to list down those reasons that they believe as factors which have influenced them to reluctant students' behavior. Below are some of the students' responses from which many of them were mentioned frequently.

Less emphasis was given to writing skill since primary level ...

The plasma TV influenced my desire ... I could not cope up with its pace...

I hope I will work in Amharic when I am at Job after graduation ... Therefore, why do I bother whether I am effective writer or not

I don't think that I am good writer..

My teachers didn't read and check my works ...

I have difficulty with grammar ...

I hate to write whenever I am given too much assignments and papers at a time.

Leave alone in English; I don't like to write in Amharic ...

My instructor is too aggressive, I am afraid of his face to show him whatever I write ...

I can't produce good idea to write ...

English language is really the most difficult to me to understand ...

I did not think that writing was as such a valuable skill so far ...

My English language teachers were incapable to enlighten, and explain writhing skill well in classroom ... They do not give assignments ... even.

I have already poor foundation ... Therefore; I am hopeless about writing skill ... I feel I can not bring any good performance that I had not it so far

Almost ninety-five percent of exam formats were objective types...

I hate writing course because of my bad grades ... I loved it so far, but after midterm exam results ...

Time given for classroom activities is too short ...

From the above list of responses, we can realize some major reasons why students are reluctant to writing. Thus, many students are reluctant to write because of their lacking in knowledge of the

necessary sub-skills, confidence in their writing ability, writing culture, comprehension of English language, enforcement and proper insight to writing from their teacher, and pre-hand awareness about the value of writing skill. Besides, some of the students expressed that they are deficient in the ability of writing since high school days but the reason behind this may be, according to the respondents, the deficiency of interest in the English classes and the failure of the English language teachers in general and writing teachers in particular to explain and enforce writing in the classroom. Many high school classes in Ethiopian context, as some empirical researches tried to prove (refer to section 2.4 in Chapter Two), fall short in elucidating the basics of writing may be due to the teachers' lack of knowledge and skill or giving less emphasis to the writing skill. Thus, this makes more students flunk in the exam and hate writing.

According to the respondents, the classroom instructors also influence the students' desire to write by unfair grading and humiliating feedback they give on students' paper. Language instructors (or teachers) were also blamed for their reluctance to read and correct students' written works on time that prevalently contributes for the students' reluctance to write. In addition, the students revealed that the objective type of examinations and tests which do not require much writing made students to give little attention to writing skill. A handful of students also disclosed that they developed dislike towards writing due to the fast and unidirectional approach of Plasma teacher during high school and preparatory levels.

Some students also believe that they have only poor foundations about writing and therefore they have developed a sense of "I am not favored to love it and be effective writer as some specially gifted students are likely to do it." Such ill belief of the students, evidently, seems not to contradict the existing premises on the literature. Buis

(2007:6), for example, puts her belief that, “reluctant writers, some where along the way, they lose heart ... They become convinced that what they write have no power anymore.” Anderson (2009:14) also claims that reluctant writers have stood on “shaky foundations” for so long. They feel that once they have missed it on their way and are self-convinced that they would never come back again and acquire the required skills so as to rebuild any solid foundation about writing. That is, they feel that writing skill would never be something to be done lovely and willingly to them anymore.

4.4.2 Analysis and Discussion of Responses for Closed-ended Questionnaire

Table 2: *Reasons for Students' Reluctance to Write, Frequencies, Percentages, and Mean of Students' Responses*

Reasons for reluctance		Frequencies & percentages												Mean		
		SA		A		UN		D		SD		total				
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Boredom	4	10.5	8	21	1	2.6	1	4	36.8	1	28	3	8	100	2.4
2	Lack of interest in the topic	2	5.3	4	10.5	3	7.9	2	1	55.3	8	21.1	3	8	100	2.23
3	Lack of confidence in academic writing capability	1	28.9	1	32.6	4	10.5	7	18.4	4	10.5	3	8	100	3.5	
4	Writing anxiety	1	39.5	1	39.5	3	7.9	5	13.2	-	-	3	8	100	4.05	
5	Little success in high school learning of foreign language	6	15.8	1	47.7	6	15.8	1	2.6	5	13.2	3	8	100	3.34	
6	Difficulty with thinking words	1	28.9	1	50	3	7.9	4	10.5	1	2.6	3	8	100	3.93	
7	Difficulty with spelling	6	15.8	1	50	1	2.6	9	23.7	3	7.9	3	8	100	3.42	
8	Difficulty with grammar	1	26.3	1	50	2	5.3	6	15.8	1	2.6	3	8	100	3.89	
9	Difficulty with organization of ideas	1	26.3	1	50	2	5.3	7	18.4	3	7.9	3	8	100	3.6	
10	The effect of learning writing through plasma TV	1	39.5	1	44.7	3	7.9	4	10.5	-	-	3	8	100	4.08	
11	Lack of writing practice (or culture)	1	31.6	1	34.2	4	10.5	6	15.8	3	7.9	3	8	100	3.66	
12	The effect of examination & test types	2	5.3	2	53	1	8	47.4	7	18.4	9	23.7	3	8	100	2.3
13	Reluctance of teachers to read and correct students' written works	1	28.9	1	39.5	8	21.1	4	10.5	-	-	3	8	100	3.88	

Key:

SA= strongly agree

A= agree

D= disagree

UN= undecided

SD= strongly disagree

F= frequency

As can be seen from the above data, all the respondents expressed their beliefs (favorable, unfavorable, or neutral) on all of the given statements about the reasons for their reluctance to writing. The mean values to lack of confidence in their academic writing abilities, writing anxiety, difficulty with vocabulary to be used, difficulty with grammar, failure to organize their ideas well, the effects of learning writing through plasma TV, lack of practice in writing, and teachers' reluctance to read students' written work all approximate to the value of "agree". This seems to indicate that a hand full of students believe that the aforementioned factors are the more valid reasons for their repugnance to writing. In addition, half of the students, 19 (50%) for each, expressed their agreement, but not strong, as they think that they are reluctant to write because of their lacking in capability with word knowledge or choice, spelling, grammar and organization of ideas. In other words, these represent to what is referred in the literature review (see section 2.4.1.3 for details) as poor knowledge of the necessary sub-skill. This seems to agree with the existing theories and other researches in the field. For example, according to Richards (2002), the less knowledge the students have on these sub skills, the more challenging and frustrating for students to start writing.

However, the mean values to the effects of the types of examinations and tests, difficulty with spelling and little success in high school learning of English approximate to the value of "undecided". Thus, most of the students seem to be neutral on their belief about the effect of these factors on their desire to write. The mean values of boredom and lack of interest in the topic, 2.40 and 2.23 respectively,

approximate the value of “disagree”. Hence, it seems that boredom and lack of interest in the topic are not the prevalent reasons for students’ reluctance to writing. These findings seem to contradict the existing premises in the literature.

From the observable gap between the open-ended and closed-ended data, we can understand that information which was different from the existing premises about sources of students’ reluctance to write came out of the students’ true experiences and feeling. For instance, factors like lacking in comprehension of English language and awareness about the value of writing skill, unfair grading and humiliating feedback, too many works at time, despair due to poor foundations, future occupational goal of the students, and the teacher’s personality or behavior were among the sources for students’ reluctance as emerged from the students’ responses for the open-ended questionnaire.

4.5 Implications for writing pedagogy

It is important that language teachers in general and writing instructors in particular believe that writing is a skill worth learning and practicing in our day-to-day life. To this effect, Raimes (1991: 415) notes “..., while students need to learn how to pass exams, they also need to perceive writing as a tool for professional and personal lives”. This is important because our attitude towards writing can either promote our learning to write or undermine our efforts. Rives (1998: 308) also believes that writing is a skill which must be practiced persistently.

Despite its real-world value, the results of the data gathered for this research suggest that many students avoid the writing practice in today’s EFL classes though some seem to express their positive

attitude towards learning to write. Practically, when they were observed during classroom activities, they seem to lack passion and inclination towards writing. Much more surprisingly, the data revealed that the number of such reluctant students is highly dominating the teaching-learning atmosphere of our EFL writing classrooms. These findings seem to underline the existing theoretical beliefs about high presence of reluctant student writers in classrooms. Buis (2007: 6), for example, states that “reluctant writers are a large group of any classroom.” The results of this study also revealed that reluctant students have specific features that characterize them. They are mainly distinguished by the behavior they display and their written products. This also affirms the existing characterizations of reluctant writers by different researchers and theorists like Oglan, 1997; Daly & Miller, 1975; Anderson, 2009; and Faigley, Daly & Witte, 1981.

This seems to imply that writing pedagogy is still influenced by students’ lack of perseverance to practice it. The reality checks of the existing beliefs about the behavior of reluctant student writers seems to give insight for writing teachers about the reluctant nature of such students and calls for their awareness to tackle this problem.

The results of data for stage two of this research also suggest that students have self-beliefs about their reluctance. In relation to this, results of the present research data seem to contradict in some areas with the existing research findings. Hawthorn (2008), for example, in his endeavor to explore the reasons for students’ writing reluctance found out that lack of interest in the topic and boredom are the main factors influencing students to reluctant writers. Findings of the present research, however, suggested that these two are not as such underpinning influencing factors for students’ reluctance. Nevertheless, the results of the present study seem to agree and reinforce the findings of Hawthorne’s research in that many students

are more likely to be influenced by factors of English language teachers, writing instructors, self-efficacy beliefs, lack of necessary sub-skills and knowledge.

The implication of this to writing pedagogy is that language teachers in general and writing instructors in particular have to know that reluctant students have self-beliefs and perceptions about themselves as writers and the roots of their reluctance. Thus, the more the teachers have information about reluctant writers, the better they will be equipped to design intervention strategies to help reluctant students in writing classrooms.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to review the objectives, methods and the main findings of the research.

The general objective of this research was to analyze writing reluctance among university students. The specific objectives were to: (a) describe the characteristics of reluctant student writers, and (b) explore the students' beliefs about their reluctance.

To achieve these objectives, interview for English language instructions, observations of writing instructions, and questionnaire for students were used. Then, the results of various research tools used to generate data for the study were discussed and analyzed by applying both inductive and deductive approaches. Thus, the prevalent findings of the research are summarized as in the subsequent sections.

5.1.1 The major findings of the research

This part attempts to summarize the prevailing findings of the research.

5.1.1.1 Characteristics of reluctant student writers

The major features that characterize reluctant student writers are the following.

1. They are often noticed as uncooperative and disengaged in group activities.
2. Since they do not brainstorm at pre-writing stages, they are not confident enough to start writing immediately.

3. They are looked to be unwilling to show their work to colleagues' for proofreading.
4. They tend to skip necessary steps of writing tasks and seek to short cut completion of their tasks.
5. They are passive writers and their works are often incomplete.
6. Their notes are tatty and disorganized
7. They tend to copy others' finished work.

5.1.1.2 Students' beliefs about their reluctance

The results of this research revealed that students have their own beliefs about what has hindered their engagement in writing practices. The major reasons for student' reluctance to writing are lack of necessary sub-skills, writing culture and confidence in academic writing abilities, poor foundations they have on writing skill, failure of English language teachers to explain important techniques or proper methodology, teachers' reluctance to read and give feedback to students' written works, unfair grading, and humiliating remarks that teachers write on students written works. Further, the findings of the research revealed that students' writing reluctance also have solid bases that can be traced to factors like the fast-paced and unidirectional lessons of Plasma TV, objective formats of examinations and tests that do not require much writing, students' self-beliefs about future career goals, and teachers' behavior in a classroom.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the main findings of this research the following recommendations are proposed.

5.2.1. Introduction

The central and relevant questions worth raising at this juncture are: How can the findings of this research be incorporated into the teaching and learning of writing in Ethiopian context? How can the results of this research together with the theoretical considerations in to students reluctance to write, as expounded in Chapter Two, be brought together to benefit the teacher of writing as well as the reluctant writer in his/her classroom?

Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam (1999), cited in Hawthorne (2005) argue that to be effective in teaching writing it is necessary to address several different problems. Firstly it is important to reflect the complex and demanding nature of writing. Secondly it is necessary to begin with thorough understanding of how students learn or not learn. Thirdly it is necessary to teach strategies which aid students in managing the processes involved in writing. Thus, the recommendations of the present researcher combing with the dimensions that have been identified by different researchers to be needed for promoting the desire and engagement of reluctant writers can then be summarized as being:

1. It seems important that writing teachers and students be aware of the nature of writing i.e. writing is a highly recursive, complex and multi-faceted activity (Chimombon, 1986; Blanton, 1987; Richards, 1990; Raimes, 1991; McDonough, 1995; Tribble, 1996). This may suggest that writing entails a lot of time, perseverance and persistence on the part of student writers

before they master and use it effectively. It also requires one's willingness to approach it committed and effortful. As Sommers (1980: 384) in Italo (1999) writes, "Writing develops like a seed, not a line". Or as Zamel (1985: 79) notes "Writing involves producing a text that evolves over a time". It looks imperative that student writers should be willing to actively involve, both physically and cognitively, in the set writing tasks and practice writing skill patiently and persistently. It also looks imperative that student writers should be given opportunity to write and rewrite until they have fully communicated some intended message in their mind. To this effect, the researcher would like to recommend that writing teachers should help their students to realize the nature of writing and what it requires before students embark on writing.

2. The results of this study seem to suggest that reluctant writers are a large group of EFL classrooms and many times these students appear withdrawn from classroom writing instructions. Buis (2007), however, argues that they should not be left behind the screen. The present researcher shares this view and the impetus to do this research largely emerged from the researcher's firm belief that reluctant writers need not to be lost from our writing programs. English language instructors should identify success factors with these students by focusing on promoting their engagement with the writing process.

3. I recommend that we, English language teachers in general and writing teachers in particular, do not cajole them or remediate them. We do not have to blame them for lack of success. Rather,

we can build on their strengths and teach them what it takes to be authentic writers. If they do not write willingly and well, instead of giving up on them or feeling sorry for ourselves, we can take a deep, hard look at what to do. We can begin this changing their attitude, for example.

Thus, it is this researcher's contention that understanding who reluctant writers are and what they believe about themselves as writers, and their barriers for writing is crucial for designing effective interventions to improve writing outcomes. It is believed that the findings of this research will equip more the writing instructors in this way.

5.2.2 Suggestions for further research

The results of this research may help writing teachers to realize the reluctant behaviors and beliefs on the reasons for students' reluctance to write. However, the fact that this research used a small sample of subjects in Wolaita Sodo University might have its own bearing on the generalizability of the results of this research. This, therefore, calls for further research at school, college and university level to reinforce and enrich the findings of the present study or otherwise. Further, from the gaps in the literature, the researcher would like to suggest that future research consider the following research questions.

1. Identifying the particular characteristics of reluctant writers. What are their beliefs about writing in general and specific genre writing tasks? What do they think of themselves as writers?
2. Are they more likely to be boys or girls? What level of skills do they have as writers?
3. What cognitive strategies do they use in writing, and what motivational orientations do they have for writing tasks?
4. It will also be necessary to discover which writing tasks are seen as more "authentic" and motivating than others. Are expressive or transactional writing tasks seemed as more motivating?
5. Is the audience the writing is aimed at more important in determining engagement than the genre being used?

6. What are the social, personal and academic goals of reluctant writers? Can this give guidance to teachers as to what tasks are more likely to engage these students?

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview for English language instructors

A. Background information

1. What is your qualification?

BA	MA in TEFL	MA in Literature
1	2	2

2. Your academic rank?

Assistant lecturer	Lecturer
1	4

3. For how many years have you worked in teaching profession?

10 years and above	5-9 years	1-4 years
3	1	1

4. What writing courses have you taught at the university level?

Sophomore English	Intermediate English-I	Intermediate English-II	Advanced Composition-I	Advanced Composition-II	Technical report writing
3	3	2	1	2	2

B. Questions about characterizing features of reluctant writers

5. *In the course of your career, have you ever come across with students who are reluctant to engage with writing practice willingly? If your response is yes, can you guess their size in the class you are teaching currently?*

Instructor A: Really, it is my headache. Many students hate this course. Therefore they do not like to participate in classroom writing activities unless you force them to do. I feel sorry for myself whenever I think how difficult it is to teach such students who are de-motivated.

Instructor B: I am sorry to say so. No difference; almost all of the class sometimes become quite silent and reluctant to write.

Instructor C: Yes, ninety five percent of the students lack confidence on their ability to write. Sometimes, they seem hopeless and you yourself really feel it hard to teach such students.

Instructor D: Yes, it is common to see students often avoid writing. Though it is difficult to guess their exact number, because their number varies from class to class, either in high school or at university level I have taught many students don't like writing.

Instructor E: Most of the students are unwilling to be engaged in writing activities. They show no commitment.

6. *Do you think that such reluctant students have specific characterizing features? How can they be distinguished from the other students who are may be actively involving in the writing practice?*

Instructor A: Ya, you can read their face easily. You can identify even from the way they approach writing activities. They feel no comfort whenever writing tasks are given; especially they hate classroom works that they are to do individually. Highly anxious, about writing and terrified when the teacher comes nearer to watch them.

Instructor B: Eaa, they tend to hide themselves. Some students are tough; they pretend to act as they are engaged in the activities, but you can identify from their poor and incomplete written works if you pay attention to them and know your students well.

Instructor C: Of course, they usually look disturbed even they disturb others by asking irrelevant questions like “May I use red pen . . . ?” .They are easily distracted from the writing tasks, they sit silent, look not committed.

Instructor D: Yes, they work carelessly. As I think they approach writing as killing time and tiresome. Besides, they don't like to take risk and be committed.

Instructor E: Yes, they seem to be bored off. They are not eager and confident to write. As they have poor background knowledge in English, they don't know logical and grammatically correct sentences.

7. *How do they behave in group activities like brainstorming during pre-writing stages? Do they take personal initiative to be cooperative?*

Instructor A: They are sometimes ordered to activities in group. Many students rather discuss issues in Amharic or in their mother tongue. And some even are idle during the discussion. They don't look to

brainstorm and take notes. They are not interested when they are urged to use the English language for communication. And, some students reflect their hatred to writing or tend to divert the attention of other members in a group.

Instructor B: They join a certain group only because you made them to do. But they contribute nothing, produce no idea, and keep themselves silent; they do not share

Instructor C: Physically they are present in a certain group, but mentally they look distracted and inactive. They lack sense of cooperation.

Instructor D: students show little interest in group works. Reluctant students tend to isolate themselves.

Instructor E: Most of the time reluctant students like to be in a group having large number of students May be they are more concerned to hide themselves silent in the group with large number of students.

8. *Are they likely to share their written works with colleagues for proofreading and comments?*

Instructor A: Not at all. They don't totally want to show their work. I think that they fear their work will look stupid.

Instructor B: Reluctant students first they do not want to show what they have done to their class mates for comments. This is may be because they look comments as discouraging.

Instructor C: Oh, they do not like it, they are unwilling to share comments unless you force them to do so. Even some students don't want to show it to the instructor

Instructor D: Of course many students in classes I am teaching currently pretend to share their works each other. Specially if you make them to do

Instructor E: They have no confidence on their work and they don't want to show their work to others. Because they seem to have high fear of being evaluated and judged about their work.

9. *Do they give due attention when you give task instructions and explanations? And are they likely to work accordingly? How could you realize that?*

Instructor A: No, I don't think so, I see students doing something else while I was giving task instructions, sometimes I shout to get their attention, but some of the students are still careless. Finally, such students are to ask you irrelevant question to kill their time given.

Instructor B: Actually it might be difficult to judge whether or not students are paying attention to your presentation. You can't simply identify this through observation. But the written products of these students may tell you something about the nature of them. Such students come up with written works which make no sense for the reader and confusing even.

Instructor C: I personally realize that students give attention when task instructions are given. But the difference comes when you see their answers or written papers; which are mostly incorrect, irrelevant and confusing.

Instructor D: Even they do not try what they are told to do. Some complain that the instruction is not clear to them even though it is the simplest matter that anybody can understand it, some raise questions to kill time. Questions like how many pages are we going to write? How many lines? On what do we write ?

Instructor E: They are too late to comprehend you when they are told to do something; they end up with doing something else.

10. Have you noted that such students are following the necessary steps to develop their written work? For example, do they write preliminary drafts edit and rewrite patiently? How could you realize that?

Instructor A: No. They are not interested to write even their first draft leave alone to go through the other steps. If some one tried to go through the necessary steps, it would be possible to see results on the final paper.

Instructor B: They don't like to persist in proofreading, editing and revising their work. They do not plan and write outlines first. They are impatient.

Instructor C: Unthinkable they rush to the end. They have no patience to do these. Most of the time their paragraphs do not exceed two or three sentences which are full of grammar, punctuation, word selection, cohesion errors

Instructor D: They simply jot down something on a paper and stop there and sit idle as if they finished their work. When you come to them and look their work, it is something done just to pretend. If a student tried to go through the steps properly, you can see the results on his paper.

Instructor E: Most of the time, students go to their final stage writing . . . but their work is full of grammar, punctuation, spelling . . . errors . . . you can't sense it

11. What about their written works? Are they likely to submit the work completed in the given time? Is their work well organized? What about their working speed as compared to the other students?

Instructor A: Poor, and sometimes nothing at all. As I have said earlier, most of the students are not able to construct even a sentence which is grammatically well. As to their speed, it takes them too long to write a sentence.

Instructor B: Truly speaking, I couldn't make sense out of the number of works written by such students either in class works, assignment papers.

Instructor C: Extremely sluggish. I am talking about the majority. They work very slowly. Many of them never submit their work on time. Their work is not complete and well organized. Of course, there are few who are working well.

Instructor D: Most of the students' works submitted in the given time. And their work looked well organized as per to the given criteria. But still there are some students who have been doing irrelevant work and mostly delayed.

Instructor E: In the case of submission, many times I leave the class just without collecting a piece of paper after waiting so long for and giving them much time to complete their work. I sometimes get tired of it and feel despaired about the students' poor performance in the course.

12. Have you noted any strategies that such students use to avoid writing practice or to masking their reluctance? What, for example....?

Instructor A: They usually start writing after killing much time. They spend much time doing unnecessary things like preparing a page, cutting a piece of paper, underlining it, etc.

Instructor B: Some students sit ideal or sometimes discuss other issues which are personal and irrelevant. I think they do this to divert others' mind or kill time.

Instructor C: They put their idea on two or three lines and sit ideal as if they finished it

Instructor D: Some students even write notes of other courses or they read irrelevant materials. When you come to them and ask what they are doing, they say they are thinking about it. Really it is annoying for

the teacher sometimes to see such student who are mocking on their life

Instructor E: They use different pretexts like “I forgot the assignment as we are told to do “ or “I was studying for exams” or “I was sick, or my friend was sick and I took him to the hospital. “ or “I could not get enough reference”

13. *Please, do you have anything else that you noted about the characteristics such students do display during the composing process?*

Instructor D: They try to copy from others' work. Mostly their assignments are direct copies of others' work. Some times they copy from books and magazines even. Yes, you can easily identify this. One can talk without hesitation as it is not their product.

Appendix II: Observation Guideline

No.	Manifestations of students' reluctant behaviors	yes	No
	<p><u>Logistical reluctance</u></p> <p>Are there students, if any, who are not ready with necessary equipments like pen, notebook, etc.?</p> <p><u>Requisite skills reluctance</u></p> <p>Are there students who do not pay attention for instructions?</p> <p>Are there students who lack sufficient cooperation in group works?</p> <p>Are there students who lack sufficient engagement in making necessary references to other sources?</p>		
	<p><u>Procedural reluctance</u></p> <p>Are there students who avoid not to start writing?</p> <p>Are there students who are frequently distracted from writing tasks?</p> <p>Are there students who are seeking for short-cut completion of the work?</p> <p>Are there students who are struggling for finding a topic, spelling, or vocabulary, etc?</p> <p>Are there students who submit incomplete work?</p> <p>What about the papers of such passive writers?</p>		
	<p><u>Substantive reluctance</u></p> <p>Are there students who tend to copy their partner's work?</p>		

Appendix III: Questionnaire for Students

Dear respondent,

I am conducting a research on the problem area: “Students’ writing reluctance”. This questionnaire is designed to gather information on students’ self-beliefs about what has hindered their engagement in writing activities. As this is not a test, there are no right or wrong answers for the questionnaire items. Therefore, the researcher requests you to give your frank responses honestly after reading each item very carefully.

Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire will be a great contribution to the success of the study.

Thank you.

Background information

Your department _____

age: _____

Code _____

sex: _____

Direction I: please read each question found in the next page carefully, and write your feeling or responses. You can use either English or Amharic language to write your well discussed responses.

Direction II: Please read each statement found in the page carefully, and mark a tick (√) to show what your feeling is with respect to every statement in only one of the five spaces provided at the right side of the statements.

Strongly Agree (SA) = 5
 Agree (A) = 4
 Undecided (UN) = 3

Disagree (D) = 2
 Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

		SA	A	UN	D	SD
1	I do not like to be engaged in writing activities whenever:					
	1.1 I am bored of the way writing skill is taught.					
	1.2 The topic and activities fail to interest me.					
2	I do not like writing more because of:					
	2.1 the teacher's way of correcting my written work is discouraging me.					
	2.2 I know that I am poor in writing as compared to other students.					
	2.3 I am influenced by my high school learning of English in which in have never been successful.					
	2.4 I have difficulty thinking the words I want to use while writing.					
	2.5 I have difficulty with spelling when I attempt to express my ideas in writing.					
	2.6 I have difficulty with organizing my ideas well.					
	2.7 I am always shocked with fear whenever I am asked to write something in English.					
	2.8 I have difficulty with using appropriate grammar while writing.					
3	I give little attention to writing skill due to:					
	3.1 the examinations, tests and exercises do not require much writing.					
	3.2 the teaching of writing by plasma TV could not help me to like it and write effectively.					
	3.3 my English language teachers do not often read and correct my works					

Appendix IV: Sample of Reluctant Students' Papers

I was born in 1981 in Debalie Woreda.
In 1989 I was entered into the school in grade one.
At that time I have heavy works this heavy works
affects my education. In the result which leads I have
not got good marks. I work many works like watching
for keeping cows & goats & fetching water & other house
works.

Appendix IV: Sample of Reluctant Students' Papers

my life history

when I learning in preparatory it is 2005
it was in Jijiga and I have took the
exam in 2001 during I am learning in
the preparatory every thing going on well
and I make more effort in order to pass
the exam, since I have made more effort
I have passed easily. After that I come
in wedyta soda university.