

TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS AT THE FIRST YEAR LEVEL  
AT ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO COLLEGE ENGLISH

A THESIS PRESENTED TO  
THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN TEFL

BY  
YONAS ADAYE

JUNE, 1996

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES


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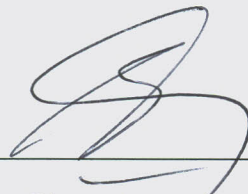
  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My deep appreciation and heartfelt thanks go to my advisor Dr. Hailom Banteyirga who has given me the insight into the research and showed me the direction to carry it on. I also like to thank him for his courageous, critical and constructive support he gave me throughout the research process.

Ato Worede Yisehak who has been of a great help and source of my inspiration to complete this study successfully; Dr. Gebremedhin Simon who helped me morally and materially, and Mr. J.D. Atkins who has been supplying me with essential materials for the study, deserve my admiration and gratefulness.

I am also indebted to Ato Getnet Tizazu and Wondwossen Tamirat for their materials support and friendly cooperation and Ato Yalew Endawoke of the Department of Educational Psychology for his help in statistical analysis and interpretations.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the ILS, Kennedy and Graduate library workers for their genuine and professional cooperations.

## **ABSTRACT**

In this descriptive study, an attempt is made to see (1) the ways the writing abilities are taught in the first year classes that are currently using the new Freshman English materials; (2) the effectiveness of the writing tasks in the new materials in reshaping the students' perceptions about their writing abilities.

The sample of the study is composed of 198 subjects: 184 students and 14 instructors. 134 students and 14 instructors answered multiple choice and open-ended questions in the questionnaires prepared for them. The other 50 students who were followed for three weeks were given two general proficiency tests: pre and post test. They were observed in class along with their instructors and twelve of them were interviewed.

The responses of the 134 students on their perceptions of writing in high schools and university were calculated using the t-test at a significance level of 0.05. The findings show that students' perceptions about writing abilities changed significantly in university.

Similarly, the effectiveness of the writing tasks in improving the students' abilities in writing were assessed. 5 The results indicated that the students showed significant

improvements in their writing abilities. However, these students did not show prominent changes in specific writing skills like planning and reviewing.

By the use of questionnaires and classroom observations, the methods employed by teachers in the teaching of writing were also studied. According to this study, writing abilities were not taught as a process as shown in the new materials. Rather, the methods could be described as gradual approximations to teaching writing as a process.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the instructors need to be given orientations as to how to teach writing as a process. It is also recommended that more motivating writing tasks ought to be included to supplement the writing tasks in the new materials.

Finally, further research is suggested in instructors' feedback and classroom interaction behaviours during the writing lessons, and the use of revision in improving the first year students' writing abilities.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Subj.	=	Subject
H.S.	=	High School
Univ.	=	University
X	=	Mean
SD	=	Standard Deviation
$SD^2$	=	Variance
$\Sigma X$	=	Total Number
S.	=	Student
Inst.	=	Instructor

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

A number of the first year students of Addis Ababa University have serious difficulties in communicating to their instructors through writing. Many instructors complain that they cannot make any sense out of what the students write. As these complaints and some of the answers the students wrote to essay type questions in the examinations show that the students lack the required writing abilities to meet the academic demands in the university.

In order to help the first year students to cope with the difficulties in writing, the Foreign Languages and Literature Department of Addis Ababa University has been developing new Freshman English materials. These materials are developed on the basis of a task-based approach to language teaching. In these materials the teaching of writing skills is assumed to be a process approach to writing.

This is because a large number of findings in the areas of composition instruction suggest that teaching writing abilities in a foreign language is a challenging undertaking (Hedge, 1988; Raimes, 1987; Widdowson, 1984). More recent studies indicate that writing involves the fullest possible

functioning of the brain which entails the active participation of both the left and right hemispheres. These findings also assert that higher cognitive functions such as analysis and synthesis develop fully only with the support system of verbal language, particularly with written language (Carroll and Wilson, 1993; Cooley, 1992; Gagne et al., 1993).

The inherent challenging nature of writing further surfaces in the interactive processes it presupposes. It involves physical, psychological and social interactions as a writer engages in formulating the audience, content, and purpose in the actual writing processes. Hence, writing is a non-linear, exploratory and generative process whereby the writer engages in all the operations of writing: brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, proof-reading and publishing (not necessarily in this order, however). This nature of writing calls for a positive, encouraging and collaborative workshop environment in which students can work through the composing processes so that they can develop their writing abilities (Brooks and Grundy, 1990; Hedge, forthcoming; Silva, 1993; Troyka, 1990; Zamel, 1982, 1983).

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The objective of this study is to describe how teaching writing skills is taking place in the first year classes that are using the new Freshman English materials. Based on the description, the study attempts to see how effective the new Freshman English materials are in:

- 1) reshaping the students' perceptions about writing abilities;
- 2) improving students' writing proficiency; and
- 3) treating writing as a process.

Furthermore, the study is expected to give some light to those who are engaged in:

- a) teacher training;
- b) teaching materials development;
- c) the teaching of writing as a process.

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The study is significant because of its direct relevance to the immediate and long run needs of the Department. It takes into account the actual classroom practice of teaching writing using the new Freshman English materials that are developed and being tried by the Department.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to the first year level specially to those classes that are taking College English: the new Freshman English materials. More specifically, the study concentrates on seven sections randomly selected from the twenty sections that are using the new materials.

#### **1.5 Definitions of Key Terms**

##### **1.5.1 Writing**

In this research, writing is defined as a communicative act where students actively engage in solving problems and making meanings in a graphic or written form for communicative purposes.

##### **1.5.2 Writing as a Process**

In this study writing as a process refers to the act of writing by a student or group of students in a recursive fashion. It means writing to find ideas to write about; organising ideas before writing; drafting, revising and proofreading to edit before and after writing a 'final' copy.

##### **1.5.3 Writing as a Product**

In this research writing as a product is defined as any written text or the final output prepared pedagogically or otherwise to be used as a model for a writer to imitate and produce a parallel text.

#### 1.5.4 Task-based Approach

The phrase 'task-based approach' is used in this study to refer to the principle on which the new Freshman English materials are grounded, developed, and designed.

#### 1.5.5 The New Freshman English (Course) Materials

This title is used in this study to refer to the teaching-learning material in Freshman English classes. Alternative phrases include 'College English', 'recent Freshman English materials and the new materials'.

### **1.6 Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis has six parts: The first part states the problems, objectives, significance and scope of the research. In this part basic terms as they are used in this work have been defined for the sake of convenience and clarity of the study. The second part deals with literature review that are pertinent to the research.

The third part of the thesis discusses the research design: the subjects, instruments and procedures of collecting data for the study. The fourth part focuses on the analysis of the data gathered in light of the previous research findings dealt with in the second part, insights drawn from classroom observation and data collected during the research.

The fifth part discusses the findings, draws conclusion, presents recommendation and points out further research insights based on the present study. The final part presents bibliography and appendixes that have been used as sources, supplements and tools for the research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 The Process and Product Paradigms

The studies carried out in the areas of composition instruction from 1945 to 1990 (Kroll, 1990; Raimes, 1991; Silva, 1990) point out that there are four approaches to teaching writing: controlled or guided writing; current-traditional rhetoric; process approach to writing; and English for Academic purposes (EAP). However, when the underlying principles of each approach are closely considered, the above division becomes superficial. It can be argued, that based on the basic theoretical frameworks of language education, the above four approaches to teaching writing can be categorised under two paradigms: process and product (Carroll and Wilson, 1993; Cooley, 1992; Flower and Hayes, 1982; Gagne et al., 1993; Murray, 1981).

The two paradigms can be divided into different branches. The product paradigm is classified as controlled or guided composition; current-traditional rhetoric; and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Whereas, the process paradigm is divided into cognitivists' approach and expressivists' approach to teaching writing (Krapels, 1990; Raimes, 1985; Troyka, 1990; Zamel, 1982, 1983).

These two paradigms have been discussed separately below based on their fundamental principles and practices of teaching writing abilities.

### 2.1.1 Product Paradigm

The principle of product paradigm is derived from the behavioural psychology and structural linguistics. In this paradigm learning in general is understood as habit formation and language learning in particular is regarded as imitating the model in order to master the patterns of a language.

The fundamental argument in this school of thought is based on the assumption that children learn by mastering the component parts before grasping the entire subject: sounds before words; words before phrases, clauses or sentences; and sentences before paragraphs or other larger texts, all carefully arranged and sequenced (Gursky 1991; Lado, 1964; Mackey, 1965; Weaver, 1979).

In product approach, teachers and textbooks transmit information to students who are expected to be passive receivers and transmitters of the information back in the drills or tests. The emphasis is on the memorisation of facts rather than on problem solving and creative thinking. In order to make sure that students have learned the facts and absorbed the information, they are tested, drilled and retested regularly.

The roles of the students in this paradigm are explicitly stated: students study structures and patterns of the language; do the drills designed by the textbooks and the teacher; imitate the models, manipulate the elements and

produce a parallel text. To achieve this goal, the lesson plan is tight; the classroom arrangement is rigid; group work is discouraged and considered to be cheating; and individual learning is praised and promoted.

Likewise, the teacher's roles include: maintaining order and control over the students; breaking down the writing lessons into small parts that can be taught, practised, tested, retaught and retested. The teacher is the sole authority and source of the writing abilities. As a result, the entire teaching-learning process is teacher-centred.

In this paradigm writing skill is regarded as secondary or in some cases inferior (White, 1988:5). Writing is important to reinforce language which had already been learnt in spoken form (Byrne, 1991; Hedge, 1988; Raimes, 1983). What is crucial is correct use of form and copying models both of language and text. The focus from the start is on the product which is some one else's writing.

The Product approach has been divided into three component parts in this study. As was already pointed out, they are controlled or guided composition; current-traditional rhetoric; and English for academic purposes.

#### 2.1.1.1 Controlled or Guided Composition

The basic principles the controlled composition holds are that 'language is primarily speech' (Stern, 1983; 158)-from structural linguistics; and, learning is habit formation-from behaviouralist psychology. From these principles it follows that the main concern of controlled composition is practising previously learned discrete items of language. In this sense, learning to write in a foreign language is regarded as an exercise in habit formation.

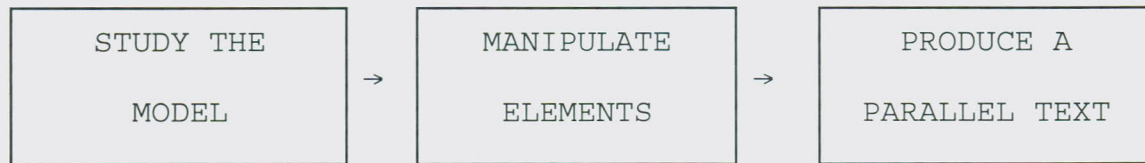
#### 2.1.1.2 Current-traditional Rhetoric

This branch of product paradigm combines native speaker's composition instruction with Kaplan's (1967) theory of contrastive rhetoric (Silva, 1990). The underlying assumption is that the 'syntactic structure' and 'sequence of thought' of the native speakers' are distorted by the foreign language writers. The emphasis again is on accurate imitation of the model.

#### 2.1.1.3 English for Academic Purposes

English for academic purposes (EAP) is an extended version of controlled composition and current-traditional rhetoric. The canon of the EAP is that a foreign language writer should produce a written text that fits the models of the language and rhetorical structure of academic discourse community (Horowitz, 1986; Hedge, in press; White and McGovern, 1994).

In general, the product paradigm may be represented by the following model - (White, 1988:5);



Briefly, what the model depicts is this: so as to develop the writing abilities, the students are provided with the model as a starting point; then, they analyse the text to study the features of form, content and organisation, and manipulate the linguistic items and rhetorical patterns. After the students have studied the model and manipulated the elements, they are provided with the new input as a basis for a parallel writing text.

On the contrary, language classroom realities in the Ethiopian context reveal that regarding form as a mold into which content is poured is less likely to be a productive way of teaching writing skills and strategies. Writing activities such as copying organisational plans or imitating model sentences, seem to fail to encourage creative thinking and involved writing. What they do may be is to inhibit writers from actively engaging in writing activities (Britton, 1975; Emig, 1971; Murray, 1982; Troyka, 1990; White, 1988).

Furthermore, experience and research results show that focus on accuracy more than the communicative occasion requires is likely to be self-defeating in the language teaching-learning process. In communicative language teaching the focus should be 'on the ability to understand and convey information content...' (Johnson, 1981; Widdowson, 1984).

The consequence of over emphasis on the formal features of the language in the language classrooms can be observed from the written output of the first year students at Addis Ababa University. The essays they wrote in different examinations for different courses demonstrated that most of the written works were below the required academic standard. However, these students have had the exposure to grammar and vocabulary lessons for more than twelve years. Some researchers in the Ethiopian context (Tesfaye, 1991; Wondwosen, 1992) report that teachers' feedbacks to the students' writing activities fail to promote the students' writing abilities. Similarly, Getnet (1993) found out that focusing exclusively on surface features during marking the students' written works is less likely to advance the learners writing skills. These studies suggest that the teachers' feedbacks encourage students to mechanically imitate the forms at expense of content, organisation and creativity.

What the above arguments suggest is that restricting students to mimick and regurgitate the tight academic conventions, expressions and organisation, appears to have

little effect in promoting the students writing proficiency. In addition, focusing on the predicted outcomes and denying students the right to explore, plan, draft, revise, discuss, edit and discover, seems to go against the basic precept of education which is concerned with unexpected outcome or discovery (Britton, 1975; Emig, 1971, 1977; Flower and Hayes, 1982; Smith, 1983). What is more, psychologists contend that almost from birth children engage in search for meaning, structure and order; then, language proceeds from meaning as the learners draw on their experiences, culture and previous knowledge to understand the text and extract information from it (Gagne, 1993; Flower and Hayes, 1982; Vygotsky, 1962).

Eventhough the product approach concentrates more on form and model than content and involved writing, its practical contribution in writing pedagogy should not be underestimated. It can be argued further that product approach is of significant value in specifying an audience during writing activities. It serves as a monitor model by reminding a writer to be formal or informal in his/her writing depending upon who his/her reader or audience is. It is also important in serving as a means for editing, specifying purpose, proper diction, socially acceptable rhetorical structure etc. Moreover, product paradigm helps students to transform one form of information accurately into another form. eg. non-verbal (graphs, charts, ...) to verbals (sentences, paragraphs, ...) etc. Its focus on grammatical accuracy, its emphasis on sentence level, and, above all, its sequenced and

linearly arranged approach to teaching of writing might be of use in different situations. The fundamental questions I raise however, are when should we focus on grammar, style, mechanics ...? and how? Is language by nature sequenced? Do children first learn sound, then words, then sentences...? Though, language is systematic, it is not linearly arranged.

It is in this final point where product approach to writing fails to recognise recursive nature of writing and heuristic characteristics of learning in general. Carroll and Wilson (1993:336) summarise the writing lesson in the product paradigm as follows:

When students engage in the[product oriented] class of... writing, they can avoid writing altogether by providing shells with no interior: spelling, punctuation, sentences, paragraphs, structure and coherence.... This type of writing does not show the mind at work, it shows writing conventions at work.

## **2.2 The Process Paradigm**

The process paradigm is based on the principle that learning is a process of discovery. Writing as a process, as many research findings confirm, is also process of discovering meaning. These will be dealt within this section.

## 2.2.1 Principles, Research Findings and Models of Writing as a Process

### 2.2.1.1 Principles and Research Findings

In the process paradigm the fundamental principle of learning in general is regarded as heuristic or discovery process and language learning in particular is considered generative or creative course of action. The bases of this paradigm are cognitive developmental psychology, and communicative language teaching (Bloom, 1956; Bruner, 1990; Emig, 1971; Flower and Hayes, 1982; Gagne et al., 1993; Piaget, 1976; Vygotsky, 1962). Based on these premises, researchers in composition process assert that learning to write involves distinctive thinking processes that can be organised in a visible form. This visible form has a hierchical organisation that contains elements of the writing processes in it. Consequently, in the process paradigm, writing is understood as a goal oriented and recursive act where a writer discovers meaning and shape through the writing process (Flower and Hayes, 1982; Cooley, 1992; White, 1988).

In this paradigm students are considered to be active participants, and the learning environment is flexible, collaborative, positive and non-threatening type. By the same token, the learning process is learner-centred, teacher-centred and task-centred where teacher evaluation, peer evaluation and self-evaluation prevail (Carroll and Wilson, 1993; Raimes, 1985, 1987; Zamel, 1987). Teachers' role is

explicit: they are not only interested readers but facilitators, co-authors and co-oditors in the composition process.

Various research findings, based on case studies involving protocol analysis bring into light the composition processes of both L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> writers. Most of these studies were carried out at Freshman and above levels (Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1987); (Krapels, 1990; Raimes, 1983,1985,1987; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1987).

These findings suggest that the main difficulties in writing process to these students emanate not from the lack of grammar knowledge or even not from limited vocabulary but from the lack of writing skills. In other words, lack of competence in writing in English results more from the lack of composition competence than from the lack of linguistic competence. Zamel (1987), for instance, concluded that L<sub>2</sub> writers (her subjects) did not view composing in L<sub>2</sub> problematic in itself. Despite the fact that they did have individual difficulties with spelling and expressions, none of them viewed grammar and other mechanical considerations as areas of particular concern. She further suggests (p.700) that 'certain composing problems transcend language factors and are shared by both native and non-native speakers of English.'

From the above research reports it follows that since writing processes are cognitive processes and since cognitive processes are to some extent, universal, then it would be logical to state that writing processes are to some extent universal (Watson, 1992; White, 1988).

Accordingly, teaching writing as a process requires supplying the brain with rich experiences in interesting and meaningful contexts, rather than with isolated and decontextualised grammar exercises. Teaching writing as a process, hence, calls for the writing tasks that engage both the left and right sides of the brain. Recent studies in the brain research reveal that the left hemisphere of the brain specialises in verbal language, linear, logical and analytic skills; whereas, the right part of the brain specialises in visual, spatial, synthetic, holistic, intuitive and creative acts simultaneously. The studies further elaborate that the left brain processes are enriched and supported by the right brain processes. Viewed from the perspective of teaching writing as a process, both sides of the brain should be in full function so as to process the information, construct meaning out of it, and get the message across (Ackerman, 1992; Cain and Cain 1991; Clark, 1992; Lemonic, 1995).

The implication of the brain research is that students in the English class during the writing lesson not only should focus on purpose, but also be given freedom to choose topics, styles, genre, and mode. They should be free to write alone,

in groups or ask their teacher as to how to proceed with their writing. The main point is how does the brain best processes during any given activity, not what is the best way to keep the students busy doing the same task in the same way at the same time. Research results show that all the brains do not work in the same way (Carroll and Wilson, 1993; Lemonic, 1995).

The product approach which insists that students have to learn the right way before they break the rules, simply does not work for every learner. The underlying principle of the product paradigm i.e. the practice of teaching bits that grow into bigger bits: sounds before letters; letters before words; words before sentences; sentences before paragraphs; paragraphs before larger pieces of discourse does not tone with the learning theory of individual differences.

On the contrary, the process approach is grounded on the principle that all knowledge is embedded in other knowledge: parts and wholes interconnect; students, therefore, should be invited to write whole pieces of discourse - not lines of letters out of context, lists of unrelated words, isolated sentences or single paragraph. The emphasis in this paradigm is that students should be encouraged to write fluently, confidently, extensively, creatively and logically. It follows, then, that all learners are whole-brained with the capacities that have not yet been tapped.

However, it should be pointed out that the process approach does not marginalise modelling for classroom instructions. The emphasis is that writing should take place within situations that have meaning where students engage in transforming or interpreting the given task. In this relation, researchers recommend that writing tasks be related to students' culture every day lives, present or previous experiences (Lay, 1982).

In this sense, teaching writing entails teaching the various forms of writing so that students think through the writing problems and the needs of their audience to determine the most appropriate genre (Murray, 1982; Peril, 1979). Hence, what teaching writing as a process requires is the teachers that respect, and respond to their students not only for what they have done but also for what they may do as a result of planning, drafting and reviewing of their writing assignments.

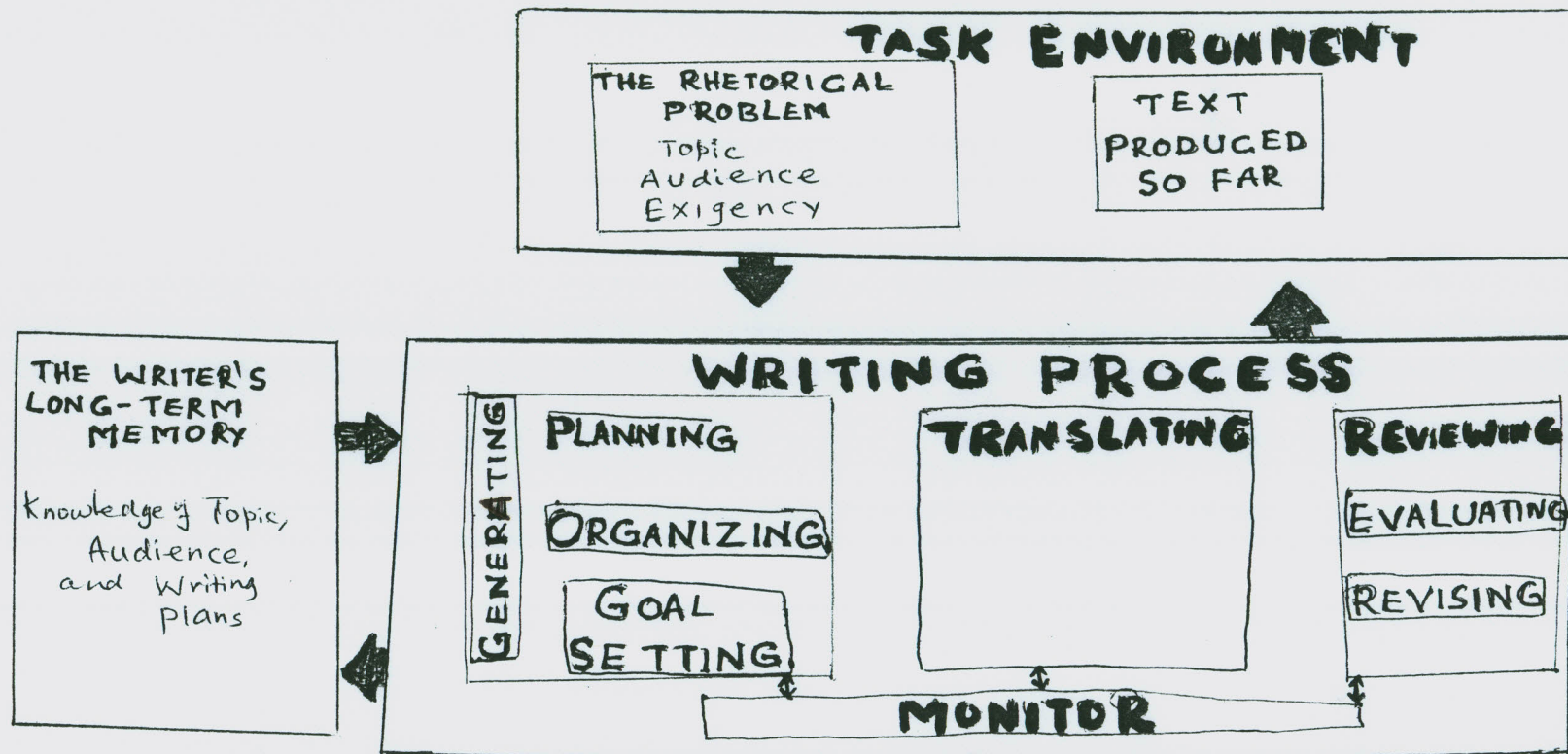
Studies in composition instruction further indicate that writing is a highly complex act that requires many levels of thinking: writers do not exactly know what it is they will say before they write; so, writing is a process through which meaning is discovered. 'We do not write in order to be understood; we write in order to understand' (Murray, 1982:4). What this points to is this: composition instruction should concentrate on generating, formulating and refining the writer's ideas. In other words, revision should be the main component of the writing instruction; the writing teachers

should intervene throughout the composition process; and students should learn to view their writing as somebody else's reading. Further, before knowing how to teach writing, the writing teachers need to know how their students write, i.e. rather than investigating what students write, teachers ought to study the composing process itself. Composition process studies based on protocol analysis highlight this fact in the following words.

...teachers who watch what students do before, during, and after they write in addition to studying the writing itself, will better comprehend the composing processes and capabilities of their students (Carroll and Wilson, 1993: 307).

#### 2.2.1.2 The Writing Model

Because writing is essentially a thinking process its direct reference is cognitive process rather than habit formation. Recursiveness and simultaneity are features of the writing process as they are of the thinking process. The following writing model depicts writing as a process summarising the above descriptions and arguments about the writing process.



Structure of the writing model: Process Paradigm

source: Flower and Hayes, 1982 P.370

The model distinctly delineates the various processes that the writing act involves. The arrows indicate that *information* flows from one box or process to another. For example, knowledge about the writing assignment or knowledge from memory can be transferred or used in the planning process. In the same manner, information from planning can flow the other way. As the authors, Flower and Hayes (1982: 386-387) strongly state, what the arrows do not mean is that such information flows in a predictable left to right circuit i.e. from one box to another as if the diagram were a one-way flow chart. This distinction is extremely important because such a flow chart implies the very kind of product paradigm against which many composition researchers have been arguing.

Another significant concept the model highlights is one of the central premises of the cognitive process theory: writers constantly, i.e., instant by instant are arranging, developing and organising a chain of cognitive processes as they integrate planning, remembering, writing and rereading. The multiple arrows are unfortunately the weak indications of the complex and active organisation of thinking processes which the authors work attempts to model.

Moreover, what the above model implies is that processes of writing can be different for different writers. Likewise, each student has a unique composing processes. This difference is manifested in every 'phase' of the writing. As

there are good writers or skilled writers there are poor or unskilled writers. In research carried out by Jacob (1982) and Pianko (1979), for instance, good writers made many changes during the process of reading their papers at intervals of writing. Other researchers (Leki and Carson, 1994) corroborate that good writers described their primary objectives by using the revision skill as a way of finding the form or shape of their argument. Rewriting i.e. going back from reviewing to translating (drafting), then to planning and back again to reviewing is a constant process for good writers.

These findings were replicated by many researchers including Blanton (1987) and Arndt (1987) and they arrived at the conclusion that in the first draft good writers are ego-centric - they organise their ideas according to their own schemata that is according to their background knowledge rather than according to the readers' expectations and experiences. These writers turn the 'writer-based prose' to 'reader-based-prose' (Flower, 1979) during revision by considering how the reader is to be addressed to and affected by what is written.

Poor writers, on the other hand, found to be more concerned with the surface features of the writing process: spelling, mechanics, grammar etc. They start revising and editing at the early stage of the development of writing processes. As a result, they remain stuck for longer time

before they find the meaning and shape of their writing (Peril, 1979).

Good writers, on the contrary concentrate on getting the message across, getting the ideas down on paper. They leave surface features such as grammatical accuracy or mechanics for the 'final' phase of the writing process development (Raimes, 1983, 1985; Zamel, 1982, 1983).

The model further shows that there are various types of the process approaches to writing. Some researchers go so far as to claim that the 'process approach is not an approach; it is many approaches (Liebman-Kleine, 1987: 783). She further contends that there will never be a process approach to writing because writing is so complicated a process which involves the various intellectual, emotional and social aspects of a writer. Besides, some proponents of process paradigm like Elbow (1973), Smith (1983) and others assert that writing process should focus on expressing inner feelings and it should be a means of self-expression whereas others like Emig (1971), Flower and Hayes (1982) stress that writing should aim at solving problems; it should be more responsive or interactive, being a means to have 'communication with the community' rather than 'communion with oneself' (Widdowson, 1984). These different branches of the process approach that seem apparently conflicting but actually complementing have been separately discussed below.

### 2.2.2 Types of the Process Approach to Writing

The process approach to writing has been divided into two major approaches: the cognitive or classical approach and expressive or romantic approach.

#### 2.2.2.1 Cognitive Approach

The cognitive approach to teaching writing as a process pinpoints that writing is a problem solving mechanism. The key terms are "process" and "thinking". This approach identifies higher order thinking skills - analysis and synthesis (Bloom, 1956) - with problem solving activities. The pioneers of the approach, Emig, (1971, 1977) and Flower and Hayes (1982) strongly state that students are required to plan extensively. And the planning act should concentrate on the rhetorical problems: defining them; placing them in a larger context; making them functional; exploring their parts; generating alternative solutions; and, arriving at a well supported conclusions about them. In more specific terms, once the problems have been identified, and the paper has been planned students continue the writing processes: they put their thoughts in visual forms onto papers; review their work by evaluating, revising and editing.

This branch of the process approach to writing is based on the protocol-analysis. The conclusion is that writing processes are not linear or formulaic but rather they are recursive. Thus, the writer's mental processes are of central

importance in cognitive approach to teaching writing as a process (Johns, 1990; Silva, 1990, 1993; Troyka, 1990; White, 1988).

#### 2.2.2.2 Expressive Approach

This group is considered the most radical of the process approaches. Its fundamental belief is that "all good writing is personal, whether it be an abstract essay or a private letter. ~~It is not~~ In this view writing is considered a creative act in which the process implies self-discovering other than problem solving.

Pedagogically, in the expressive approach, the writing lesson should be non-directive: the tasks should be designed to promote the students' fluency and power over the writing activity. The writing tasks ought to include diary or journal writing, clustering, writing personal essays that concentrate on 'stream of consciousness' in which students write freely and uncritically so that they can get down as many words as possible (Britton, 1975; Cooley, 1992; Elbow, 1973; Murray, 1982).

Despite the apparent differences, the two branches supplement each other in many ways. Writing journals or clustering is being used in many process writing classrooms. The aim of clustering is to find out the meaning and it is done most of the time at the drafting and sometimes planning phases. Clustering technique is also being used in classes

that are using the new Freshman English materials in order to expand the branches of ideas so that the students can categorise different ideas into groups and later use them for their writing assignments.

In the similar way, journal writing can be used in classes to help students to be more familiar with the writing work in the university.

In both cognitive and expressive cases there has been planning, drafting and revising. Hence, the two branches of process approach complement each other in a number of ways.

### 2.2.3 Phases of the Writing Processes

According to the study results in the process paradigm, there are three main phases in the writing processes. This division, however, is false because these phases are no more phases but they are hierarchies under which other 'phases' are embedded. Process paradigm regards writing as recursive a coined term from linguistics to mean 'embedment' of one process under another.

Nevertheless, for this study the three developmental levels or phases discussed are planning, drafting, and reviewing. These stages are known by different terms by a number of composition researchers and instructors. For example planning is known by 'pre-writing, previewing, preliminary writing...; drafting by 'writing' 'while writing'

translating...; and, reviewing by post-writing, revising, reviewing... (Friedlander, 1990; Murray, 1984; Proett and Gill, 1986; Spack, 1984; Sullivan and Van Becker, 1982).

#### 2.2.3.1 Planning

The planning phase includes generating ideas, setting goals and organising ideas (Flower and Hayes , 1982; Troyka, 1990).

Generating ideas refers to dealing with the writing problems: hunting for and gathering of information pertinent to the writing problem or the writing goal. This activity is sometimes referred to as brainstorming. It involves discussing with other members in the class or outside the classroom to activate the prior experiences stored in the long-term memory. It also includes reading and free-writing to discover more ideas relevant to the intended goal of the writing activity.

Setting goals deals with defining the writing problems in terms of the content and purpose of the writing act. It is a leading light for writers. The writers can discover or rediscover their goals as they try out a range of possibilities which are later organised into a coherent set of goals.

As writers strive to generate ideas that are suitable for their writing purpose, they create unshaped concepts and

goals. These ideas take shape and can be categorised in different forms under organising activities. Organizing is concerned with setting superordinate and subordinate ideas which are essential in the writing process.

It should be pointed out that these subdivisions of planning 'phase' interact with each other. Writers can start off with goal setting and go back to generating ideas and organising activities. Alternatively, they can begin with generating ideas and end up with goal setting in order to come to drafting stage. These webs of the meaning making activities demonstrate the recursive nature of the writing process and embedment of one or more elements in one 'phase' of the writing development.

#### 2.2.3.2 Drafting

Drafting is the phase in which the writers formulate their ideas into words and put them onto paper in graphic forms. Conventionally, this phase is known by the term 'writing'. At this level of development of the writing process, the writers' primary concern is writing down the ideas onto paper in line with their own experiences and expectations without considering the needs or requirements of the readers.

At this stage, writers use different strategies to manipulate the ideas generated and organised in terms of the writing goal at planning stage. They engage in writing fluently without considering grammatical correctness; they

start selecting various rhetorical patterns or styles, words or phrases from long-term memory.

As the writers move in the continuum of the writing process to drafting point, they take the fragments of ideas and words and organise them in sentences, paragraphs or longer discourse. These activities help the writers to uncover what is contained in their writing. Some writing experts contend that 'drafting' is more descriptive term in the writing process. This is because the word drafting conveys the idea that the final product of the writing process is the result of a number of versions each draft being successively closer to what the writers intend to communicate clearly to readers (Cooley, 1992; Flower and Hayes, 1982; Troyka, 1990).

#### 2.2.3.3 Reviewing

Reviewing mainly includes evaluating and revising. It also implies proofreading, editing, and publishing. It also involves deleting, reformulating, cutting, moving different parts of writing to different positions, adding the new ones, rethinking and even sometimes going back to the beginning point.

One of the main elements in reviewing phase is evaluating. It weighs the value of information collected in the preceding phases. It considers their significance in relation to the writing goal, the audience, the acceptable patterns of the discourse community etc. Moreover, the level

of formality, the types of rhetorical structure: descriptive, argumentative, narrative, or expository are assessed at this phase of the writing process.

The revision process comes during or after the evaluation process. At this level the writers change 'writer-based-prose' to the 'reader-based prose'. It is at this level that the writers concentrate more on surface features of their writing: grammar, punctuation, spelling, accurate vocabulary.

However, it should be noted that the writing process is uninterrupted-process where there is no 'final' about it; one phase implies another phase preceding it or following it.

What is closely related to teaching writing as a process in general and to reviewing skill in particular is responding to the written work that will be discussed presently.

#### 2.2.4 Responding to the Written Work in the Process Paradigm

Feedback is an integral part of the writing process. In this context feedback is understood as input from a reader to a writer in form of comments, questions, suggestions so that the writer can produce a reader-based-discourse as opposed to a writer based discourse (Keh, 1990). In the process paradigm responding to written work means primarily focusing on how the students plan, draft, review, and how they manage surface features as a means of editing and proofreading. The response can be given from two sources: the teacher and the peer group.

#### 2.2.4.1 Peer Response

Peer response, sometimes known as peer editing or peer critiquing is done by class members other than the teacher during the writing process. Peer response is encouraged in process paradigm for a number of reasons: it saves the teacher's time on certain tasks; it is more at the learners level of development in writing; learners can gain a greater sense of audience with several readers other than the teacher (Britton, 1975); students learn more about writing process through critically reading others' papers.

In addition, studies in roles of peer-feedback in improving students' writing abilities show that peer feedback is more advantageous in theme writing and grammar usage than that occurs under evaluation procedures carried out by the teacher (Beaver, 1977; Chaudron, 1984; Hardaway, 1975; Keh, 1990). However this finding needs the qualified statements. The pilot study I carried out with Freshman students highlights some thing different. Students doubt their peer members' correction and some of them expressed negative tendency to peer evaluation. This, of course, could be explained in terms of the students' experience with group writing and revising or giving feedback. Moreover, the type of language education they had was entirely teacher-centred and therefore the only source of correction had been the teacher rather than the peer group who were not in a better position than the rest of the class. Similar findings come from Mangesdorf (1992) confirming that the majority of the

students still give priority and significance to teacher's response to their written work.

#### 2.2.4.2 Teacher Response

Teacher response to students written work has been grouped under two categories: conferencing and written comments. In conferencing the teacher discusses with the students in groups or individually their writing assignment. Studies indicate that conferencing is extremely useful and found to be effective in improving the students writing abilities and other related language skills. The main reason is that in conferencing students discuss their specific difficulties in writing with the teacher. They also talk to the teacher confidently and get feedback on the spot. One student in a research carried out by Keh (1999) reported that he improved not only his writing ability but also he learnt how to talk to people. Similar results were reported about the advantages of conferencing elsewhere (Gagne, 1993:339; Leki, 1990:57; Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990:155). Despite these positive findings, the actual classroom experience in conferencing shows <sup>some</sup> sort of uncomfortable feelings. For instance, some students want the teacher to write the points explicitly and give them so that they will study rather than discuss with the teacher in groups or individually. However, this might be due to the new role, students experience with their teachers in interactive classrooms.

Written comments are the second type of feedback given by the teacher. When the written feedbacks are clear, and detailed, they produce positive attitudes from students. But, when they are very general like 'good' or 'improve' the responses these comments produce are negative (Cohen and Cavalanti, 1990:155). It should be pointed out at this juncture that due mainly to the past learning experience, students even do not read the teacher's comments as the pilot study shows. But, through gradual training, feedback might become a fundamental element of teaching writing as a process.

In the process paradigm the role of feedback, be it from the peer group or from the teacher, is significant in promoting the students' writing abilities. It should be noted that in both peer and teacher response the feedback is understood as a sort of collaborative writing rather than fault finding as it is the case in product paradigm.

On the whole, the process approach to writing focuses on the writers before, while, and after they write. By doing so, it encourages the teachers as well as the students to focus more on the process of meaning making than on memorising grammar rules.

Nevertheless, letting students at the first year level choose their own topic and write poems or personal essays would be self-defeating in the context of this research. It would be very difficult to differentiate creative use of the

English syntax from the wrong grammatical arrangement of the students due to the L<sub>1</sub> interference. This implies that the students should be given guidelines, topics and language input, then gradually approximate to choose their own topics. Similarly, students can not be left to choose their own title rather they are dictated by the academic discourse community to abide by the regulations that monitor academic standard. This again implies that students should be taught what is acceptable genre for laboratory report writing and what format is suitable for history or literature assignment. In addition, following as a clinical case study each student's way of writing in classes of forty students; collecting each student's written work at each phase needs a systematic and thorough understanding of teaching writing as a process. It also requires training teachers how to teach writing as a process.

However, be it a laboratory report, history assignment or literary criticism, all involve thinking process. If students are taught how to plan: set goals, generate ideas and organise their work logically; if they are taught how to draft their own work, revise, critically proofread and edit, then, as research findings show, they will develop their writing abilities suitable for various disciplines.

To sum up, in thIS chapter the two major paradigms, process paradigm and product paradigm have been discussed. The principles, models and major research findings about both categories have been dealt with.

In the first chapter, it was mentioned that in the new materials the writing skills were considered to be treated as process. To date, Teshome Daba (1995) has worked his MA thesis on the new materials. He compared the students' attitudes to the task-based approach and traditional approach in learning English in the Ethiopian context. He found out that the students prefer the task-based approach to the traditional one. However, he did not focus on the way the writing skills <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ taught using the new Freshman English materials.

Getnet (1993) has raised the process and product approaches to teaching writing and giving feedbacks to the students written works in the second year level. He came to the conclusion that many teachers who participated in his study were found to be more concerned with the surface features than the content areas and organisations. He recommended that the process approach should be adapted to both teaching writing and giving feedbacks to writing assignments.

Even though, other researchers such as Mamo (1982), Tesfaye (1991) and Wondwosen (1992) worked in the areas of

writing and feedbacks for the writing assignments, so far there are no literature that deal with teaching writing at the first year level at Addis Ababa University.

The present study is based on the new Freshman English materials. It focuses on the students' perceptions about the writing abilities and the effectiveness of the writing tasks in College English in improving the students' writing competence and performance. It also treats the teachers' perceptions about the roles of the writing tasks in the new materials in helping the students to convey information contents effectively in writing. Furthermore, the study concerns the teachers methods of teaching writing at the first year level at Addis Ababa University.

To this end, the methods of collecting data and procedures of analysing and arriving at conclusions are described in the third chapter under the design of the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.1 Subjects of the Study

The subjects that have been involved in this study are the following:

1. 134 students that are enrolled in five sections (two sections from natural and three sections from social sciences) and that have been using College English since the first semester;
2. 50 students of two sections, one from natural and the other from social sciences who did not use College English in the first semester;
3. 20 instructors who have been using College English to teach: FLEn 101 and 102;
4. 12 students that have been selected from among 50 students for the purpose of focused observation and interview;
5. 2 instructors who have been selected randomly out of 20 instructors to be observed in their classes.

### 3.2 Design of the Study

The design of the study is summarized in the following table.

Table 1  
Design of the Study

	Purpose	Instrument	No. of Subjects
1	To describe the way writing is being taught	- observation -interviews and open-ended questions	14* 15
2	To see whether the students' perception about writing abilities have been reshaped	questionnaire	134
3	To see whether there are improvements in the students' writing abilities	pretest posttest	50 50
4	To see how instructors perceive their methods of teaching writing and the new Freshman English materials in improving the students' writing abilities	questionnaires	20

\*It should be noted that when the classroom observations were made, the focus mainly had been on the instructors' way of implementing the writing tasks and the way the students perform the writing activities. It is for this reason that the total number of subjects observed is 14: that is 12 students and 2 instructors. Further, students have been selected from two sections of 50 students on the basis of their performance in general English proficiency test which is described in the following section.

### **3.3 Procedures of Data Collection**

In order to assess the effects of the new Freshman English materials on the students writing abilities and their perceptions, questionnaires have been developed for both students and instructors (see appendices A and G). The students' questionnaire has been divided into two major categories: the students' perception about the writing abilities in high school; and, their perceptions about the writing abilities in the university. It is further subdivided into nine categories. These categories are students perceptions about:

- 1) the importance of writing abilities as compared to other macro-skills;
- 2) the level of difficulty of the writing skills as compared to other macro-skills;
- 3) the needs and requirements of writing abilities;
- 4) their emotional involvement in the writing activities;
- 5) micro-skills needed to improve the writing abilities;

- 6) the actual implementation of the writing activities;
- 7) feedbacks to their written works;
- 8) the writing tasks; and
- 9) open-ended questions.

The questionnaire has been filled by 134 students that have randomly been selected out of the total population of 1995 i.e. 6.716%.

The data collected have been computed and tabulated; then the significance of the change of perception about the writing abilities in the students have been calculated using the t-test.

The instructors' perceptions about the effectiveness of the writing tasks in College English and their methods of teaching writing in changing students' perceptions about the writing skills as well as improving their writing abilities have been collected through questionnaires.

The questionnaire comprises three categories: the instructors' perception about the writing tasks in engaging and challenging the students and by doing so, improving their abilities to communicate in writing effectively and as required. The second part is about the instructors' method of treating writing. This includes whether they allow students to plan, draft and revise before and after preparing a writing assignment, and the way they give feedbacks for the students'

written products. The third part concentrates on the instructors' general comments on the course material: whether the writing skills in College English are treated as process; whether teaching writing as a process is effective in improving the students' writing abilities.

Moreover, classroom observation has been made to see how the writing skills being taught and learnt. The technique of observation includes the following:

- dividing students in small groups of four or five members;
- labelling each group as G1, G2, G3, G4, G5.
- focusing on each group what they do before, while and after writing, then collecting their writing assignments marked by the instructors;
- observing what the teacher does as students write;
- focusing on the teachers' methods of teaching writing;
- planning, discussing, reading, speaking before students write;
- drafting, clustering, composing;
- revising what they have got down on papers; revising not only simply for spelling or grammar but also for ideas, content, organisation.

To this end, two sections that did not use College English for their FLEn 101 course have been selected randomly. In order to closely observe each stage of students' writing, limiting the number of subjects became important.

Accordingly, pretest was administered; it was general English proficiency test that focuses on linguistic competence, organising skills, note-taking abilities and paragraph writing from given notes (see Appendix D and E ). Based on this technique the following subjects were selected from two sections out of 50 subjects.

Table 2

Subjects for focused observation and interviews

Selection Criteria	No. of high scorers	No. of medium scorers	No. of low scorers	No. of total subjects
General English proficiency test	4	4	4	12

### 3.3.1. Assessment Criteria for General Proficiency Test

The general English proficiency test has four parts. The first part deals with grammatical accuracy while the second part requires the students to manipulate their organising skills.

The third part focuses on the students' abilities to take notes from reading texts whereas the last part calls for the skills of writing paragraphs using the given notes.

Assessment criteria for the first two, i.e. for linguistic competence and organizing skills, the answer keys <sup>were</sup> prepared by the researcher and given to the markers.

For the last two i.e. note taking and paragraph writing, the assessment criteria has been developed by the researcher based on the assessment device prepared by the Department (see Appendix F).

### 3.3.2 Assessing Open-Ended Responses

In order to supplement the quantitative data obtained from both the instructors and students, open-ended questions were included in the questionnaires. The answers to these questions have been treated to substantiate the numerical data.

In the students' questionnaires there were two questions (1) whether their perceptions have changed after taking College English and (2) whether students have shown improvement in their writing abilities after using the new materials. The responses have been used for substantiating the findings through numerical data and interviews.

Similarly, the instructors were asked two open-ended questions: whether teaching writing as a process improves the students; writing abilities, and whether the writing skills have been treated as a process in the College English classes. These responses have also been used to support the quantitative data gathered from the instructors.

On the whole, based on the above devised techniques and procedures, the next chapter describes the data collected, presents the findings, discusses the implications and leads to conclusions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on research data analysis and findings presented and analysed. An attempt is also made to see possible implications of the findings.

It is sub-divided into four sections. The first part deals with the rationale for focusing on the perceptions of the students, and the overall results of changes of perceptions in the first year students about the writing abilities after learning English through the new Freshman English materials. The second section describes the pretest and posttest results and their possible implications.

The third part treats the instructors' responses to the questionnaires concerning the nature of the writing tasks in College English, the actual implementations of these tasks and general comments on the effectiveness of the materials and teaching methods on improving the students' writing abilities. The fourth part discusses possible factors that might have brought about changes in the perceptions of and improvements in the students' writing abilities.

## 4.2 The Rationale for Studying Perceptions and Overall Results of Changes in Perceptions

### 4.2.1 The Rationale for Focusing on Perceptions

In order to advance the students' competence and performance of writing, it is necessary to enquire into their perceptions about writing. This is because the students' perceptions about what they are learning and what they need to learn, strongly influence their receptivity or 'openness' to learn (Allwright and Bailey, 1990; Carson and Leki, 1994). Studies in second language acquisition assert that 'language teaching is above all a matter of getting and keeping the learners' attention' (Allwright and Bailey, p.169); and the learners' receptivity is to a greater extent related to their attention - the key element which 'converts inputs into intakes'. In other words, the most attentive students are likely to be the most receptive ones because they perceive that the lesson is most important to them.

It is on the bases of these fundamental assumptions and research results that the focus has been made on the students' perceptions about the writing abilities and skills in high schools and at university. Accordingly, a questionnaire of 30 items has been designed and administered (see appendix A). It should be made clear from the outset that the number of subjects that took part in the perceptions study is 134 and the level of significance is 0.05 for all computations in this research).

As it is noted in the third chapter, the contents of the 30 item questionnaire are divided into two major parts. The first part deals with the quantitative data where the students are required to show their choices numerically; whereas, the second part is concerned with the qualitative types in which case the students have to express their opinions to the open-ended questions. The responses to the open-ended questions have been used as supplements to quantitatively given responses. In addition, interviews and classroom observations have been made to substantiate the results obtained from the quantitative data.

The quantitative data in turn are sub-divided into eight sections. The first section is about the students' perceptions of the importance of the writing skills as compared to the remaining macro-skills in high schools and in the university while the second section is concerned with the students' perceptions about the difficulty level of the writing skills in relation to other macro-skills in both institutions.

The third section deals with the students' perceptions about the needs and requirements of the writing abilities in the two institutions; whereas, the fourth one compares their perception about their own emotional feelings during the writing lessons in the English classes in high schools, and in the university.

The fifth part requires the students to compare their perceptions about the importance of micro-skills to improve the writing abilities. And the sixth part requires them to

compare their beliefs about the actual implementations of the writing tasks in both high schools and in the university.

In the seventh part the students are asked to compare their perceptions about the nature and focus of feedbacks given to them from their teachers for their written works; whereas, in the eighth part they are required to compare their perceptions about the characteristics of the writing tasks in the two institutions.

Each of the categories briefly discussed above is separately presented, accompanied by the qualitative data from the open-ended questions, interviews and classroom observations.

To begin with, the overall change in the students' perceptions about the writing abilities after using the new Freshman English materials has been presented below.

#### 4.2.2 Overall Results of Changes in Perceptions of Students about the Writing Abilities

The overall result of changes in perceptions of the students about the writing abilities represents the general results of the quantitative data gathered by means of the above mentioned questionnaire. In other words, the overall result is the total average result of the eight categories listed above. It has been calculated using t-test value from the raw score given in the following table.

Table 3.1  
 General Perception Scores about the Writing Abilities in the  
 First Year Students both in High School and University

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	68	97	26	79	90	51	82	79
2	66	93	27	83	88	52	88	78
3	79	83	28	75	88	53	88	71
4	75	95	29	69	96	54	82	70
5	81	90	30	71	87	55	74	82
6	70	87	31	67	87	56	83	73
7	67	90	32	74	93	57	98	105
8	74	87	33	86	89	58	77	89
9	74	88	34	59	95	59	74	91
10	62	77	35	78	85	60	87	96
11	79	98	36	88	105	61	78	74
12	64	88	37	76	91	62	81	93
13	91	90	38	74	98	63	88	78
14	67	90	39	74	93	64	76	88
15	61	79	40	81	86	65	77	77
16	77	95	41	55	96	66	82	81
17	71	91	42	75	79	67	95	98
18	81	90	43	66	98	68	87	81
19	49	89	44	71	92	69	81	85
20	73	96	45	84	93	70	84	92
21	72	104	46	82	88	71	86	78
22	76	105	47	76	81	72	85	97
23	78	95	48	64	103	73	73	84
24	70	84	49	44	87	74	93	100
25	78	86	50	79	90	75	87	

Table 3.1 Continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ. Code	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	90	94	96	83	101	116	95	99
77	62	81	97	71	93	117	83	85
78	86	95	98	84	93	118	67	91
79	87	81	99	73	90	119	79	92
80	85	90	100	86	99	120	83	91
81	81	91	101	72	91	121	74	81
82	84	87	102	76	85	122	80	78
83	81	89	103	84	80	123	71	81
84	86	82	104	74	71	124	79	83
85	69	97	105	71	85	125	89	88
86	85	92	106	81	87	126	81	78
87	57	83	107	75	92	127	90	83
88	73	88	108	78	69	128	79	88
89	83	84	109	80	88	129	72	86
90	83	90	110	82	83	130	77	84
91	93	87	111	90	83	131	74	93
92	57	103	112	82	80	132	85	84
93	85	76	113	81	76	133	83	89
94	78	93	114	78	77	134	68	83
95	81	98	115	72	81			

Table 3.2

Results of the Statistical Analysis of the above ~~raw~~ scores

High School		University		T-test value
X	SD	X	SD	
77.51	4.929	88.08	4.615	10.290

As the above raw score results indicate after using College English, the students have showed statistically significant change in their perceptions about the writing abilities. This finding implies that the first year students after taking the College English course have realised that writing skills are more essential, more difficult, more required and needed in the university than they were in high schools. The t-test value at 10.29 signifies this claim that the students make.

The overall effect of College English in reshaping the students' perceptions about the writing abilities can also be substantiated by the answers the students gave to open-ended questions. 134 subjects were asked whether their beliefs about the writing abilities have changed after taking the College English course. Their responses are reported in the following table.

Table 4

Overall Effect of College English on Reshaping  
the Students' Perceptions about the Writing Abilities

Response	Subjects	%
Yes, our beliefs have changed	100	74.64
No, our beliefs have not changed	12	8.96
Yes, to some extent our belief have changed	11	8.20
No response	11	8.20
Total	134	100

The students responses to open-ended questions further indicate that the students' views and attitudes towards the writing skills have changed (see Appendix B for the students' responses to open-ended questions).

It should be noted, however, that this finding should not be taken as an exclusive result of the College English course because there are many factors and limitations. As we can see in table 4 above, about 25% of the subjects either did not respond, or doubted the changes in their perceptions or stated that their beliefs have not changed. This implies that despite statistically significant change (at the t-value of 10.29) it is appropriate to be cautious about the change of the students' perceptions about the writing abilities after using the new Freshman English materials. This will be further revealed as we deal with each category in the next sections.

#### 4.2.3 The Importance of the Writing Abilities

134 subjects were enquired through the questionnaire to decide whether the writing abilities are more important than the remaining macro-skills in the university as compared to in high schools (see questions 1.1 to 1.3 in Appendix A). The difference in perceptions about the importance of the writing abilities in the two institutions has been calculated using t-test. The result of perceptions change can be observed from the raw score tabulated below:.

Table 5.1  
Scores of Students' Perceptions about the Importance of the  
Writing Abilities as Compared to Other Macro-Skills

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	8	9	26	11	9	51	4	6
2	9	9	27	8	7	52	8	7
3	6	6	28	7	7	53	10	12
4	5	11	29	7	12	54	9	5
5	9	6	30	8	7	55	7	7
6	11	11	31	6	9	56	11	11
7	8	10	32	10	8	57	7	10
8	10	8	33	10	6	58	7	11
9	8	6	34	5	12	59	10	11
10	8	8	35	11	6	60	9	12
11	10	12	36	10	12	61	7	5
12	6	7	37	9	11	62	7	7
13	10	12	38	7	10	63	8	9
14	7	9	39	6	6	64	9	11
15	9	6	40	8	10	65	6	7
16	9	11	41	3	9	66	9	9
17	5	12	42	6	6	67	10	12
18	8	8	43	9	8	68	7	5
19	4	12	44	7	12	69	6	3
20	8	10	45	9	11	70	5	8
21	8	11	46	9	9	71	7	11
22	10	12	47	10	10	72	8	10
23	11	11	48	5	11	73	6	9
24	8	9	49	4	7	74	7	11
25	10	9	50	7	9	75	9	12

Table 5.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	8	8	96	12	11	116	12	12
77	6	10	97	9	10	117	7	6
78	12	9	98	8	9	118	6	8
79	7	6	99	4	4	119	6	7
80	5	10	100	4	9	120	11	9
81	8	10	101	6	12	121	6	8
82	6	11	102	8	8	122	9	9
83	9	10	103	8	9	123	6	3
84	9	5	104	9	7	124	7	7
85	5	11	105	6	8	125	7	8
86	7	9	106	9	9	126	5	4
87	4	8	107	8	12	127	7	6
88	6	11	108	8	5	128	11	4
89	8	9	109	7	7	129	6	7
90	9	8	110	5	6	130	7	8
91	9	12	111	7	10	131	11	11
92	5	12	112	6	8	132	8	7
93	10	7	113	8	9	133	10	9
94	11	12	114	6	6	134	6	8
95	6	8	115	6	6			

Table 5.2

The Statistical Analysis Results of the Students Perceptions about the Importance of the Writing Abilities

High School		University		t-test Value
$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
7.69	1.98	9.75	2.77	4.6506

The t-test value which is 4.650 implies that there is statistically significant change in the students' perceptions about the importance of the writing abilities after using the new materials.

However, it should be noted that this finding does not necessarily imply that the reading, speaking and listening skills are less important. Rather, what it implies is that the students have realised the significance of the writing skills better after taking FLEn 101 using the new materials than before they took the College English course.

In the interviews and open-ended questions, the students stated that they thought writing was less important than the rest of the skills. But, it is after they took the College English course, that they realised that 'writing is the basic contributor' to development of the academic skills (See Appendix B and C).

This perception of the students further suggests that they understood writing as an essential skill for them to be academically successful in the university. This might be due to the new Freshman English materials more emphasis on productive skills than the high school materials or the old Freshman English materials.

In the new materials, for instance, the students are expected to be active participants. The writing tasks in College English, the classroom observations, and the interviews held with students show that the students in the College English classes interact with each others and with their instructors. The instructors roles, as the observations made indicate, are not limited to explanation and directions. The instructors work with their students, organise the students in the groups, direct the students what to do in the tasks, intervene when the students go out of the tasks set; in short, they facilitate the learning process. These roles of the teachers reflect the process paradigm and it may not be surprising if students regard productive skills as essential ones for them to be successful in the university.

More specifically, during brainstorming sessions students underline, and scribble some points they want to say; during the listening sessions, they take notes; during the reading sessions students reorganize and re-write scrambled paragraphs, answers to the comprehension questions; and during the speaking sessions, they discuss and write down the points they are going to speak about. As classroom observations further show, writing skills have been incorporated into every exercise.

#### 4.2.4 The Level of Difficulty of the Writing Skills

The students' perceptions about how difficult writing is when compared to speaking, reading and listening in high schools and in the university have been compared (see question 2.1 to 2.3 in appendix A). As it can be observed from the following statistical analysis table the t-test value is 4.510. This indicates that the students' perceptions about the level of difficulty of the writing skills have changed significantly after they took the College English course. This means that the students have perceived the writing skills as more demanding than the rest of the macro-skills in the university than in high schools. The raw scores in the following table depict the above statements.

Table 6.1  
Scores of Students' Perceptions about the Level of Difficulty  
of Writing Abilities in Comparison to Other Macro-Skills

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	8	11	26	8	11	51	6	6
2	6	9	27	7	8	52	4	5
3	7	6	28	8	6	53	8	8
4	6	11	29	9	8	54	8	5
5	6	11	30	9	3	55	7	7
6	7	5	31	5	9	56	3	3
7	8	10	32	5	7	57	9	11
8	5	9	33	8	8	58	9	7
9	9	8	34	6	12	59	4	5
10	6	6	35	7	8	60	11	12
11	11	12	36	11	12	61	5	3
12	6	9	37	7	10	62	5	5
13	9	8	38	9	9	63	12	8
14	9	12	39	6	6	64	8	8
15	7	9	40	6	10	65	6	9
16	7	11	41	12	12	66	8	6
17	9	9	42	9	9	67	12	10
18	7	9	43	7	10	68	10	7
19	8	12	44	9	10	69	7	7
20	4	12	45	10	11	70	4	3
21	9	12	46	4	9	71	12	12
22	6	10	47	4	8	72	7	12
23	6	11	48	9	12	73	10	7
24	8	9	49	3	12	74	7	7
25	9	9	50	11	10	75	7	9

Table 6.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	7	8	96	11	12	116	11	12
77	5	6	97	11	6	117	10	10
78	10	10	98	8	6	118	5	9
79	9	8	99	6	9	119	9	7
80	7	9	100	11	12	120	7	9
81	8	12	101	4	6	121	8	9
82	11	10	102	5	6	122	6	4
83	11	9	103	8	8	123	9	12
84	5	5	104	9	8	124	7	7
85	6	6	105	9	8	125	10	10
86	9	10	106	9	8	126	6	4
87	5	8	107	9	8	127	6	12
88	6	10	108	6	7	128	9	7
89	6	9	109	7	7	129	11	9
90	7	8	110	8	9	130	7	9
91	9	7	111	7	9	131	8	7
92	5	12	112	9	6	132	8	8
93	8	6	113	4	6	133	110	11
94	8	12	114	9	9	134	5	8
95	12	12	115	5	9			

Table 6.2

Statistical Analysis Results of the Students' Perception about the Level of Difficulty

High School		University		T-test Value
X	SD	X	SD	
7.62	2.135	8.63	2.320	4.510

This finding implies that the students became aware of the challenging nature of the writing skills as a result of using the new materials during the writing lessons in College English classes. Consequently, students prepare themselves devising different strategies to tackle their writing problems. The following extract from the interviews supports the above quantitative result.

... we always organise our ideas, we think so much about what we are going to say... we exchange our papers in our groups. We correct, comment each others' works. In this way we help each other see our mistakes.

Even though, the fact is that students have realised the demanding nature of writing after they took College English, it should not be generalised that this change of perceptions is the result of College English alone. There could be other factors some of which will be raised in the discussion section towards the end of this chapter.

#### 4.2.5 The Needs and Requirements of Writing Abilities

In this research, it is found out that students perceive the needs and requirements of the writing abilities differently for different institutions. They showed their preference in the questionnaire set to them (see questions 3.1 to 3.5 in appendix A). They need the writing ability to take notes, to answer essay type questions, to do better in other courses and to express their feelings in writing. The table below shows the scores obtained about what students perceive about their writing needs and requirements.

Table 7.1  
 Scores of Students' Perceptions about their Writing Needs and Requirements  
 in High School and University

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	11	20	26	17	18	51	17	17
2	10	20	27	14	20	52	16	19
3	10	15	28	8	20	53	12	8
4	14	20	29	8	18	54	13	15
5	13	16	30	13	20	55	15	20
6	10	18	31	9	20	56	20	20
7	11	15	32	13	19	57	18	20
8	7	20	33	19	20	58	12	19
9	13	17	34	9	15	59	9	19
10	10	18	35	10	20	60	16	20
11	16	17	36	15	20	61	19	17
12	5	20	37	11	17	62	16	19
13	15	18	38	14	20	63	11	18
14	11	17	39	17	20	64	11	18
15	9	15	40	16	17	65	14	18
16	12	20	41	5	17	66	17	17
17	14	20	42	11	15	67	17	19
18	15	19	43	9	20	68	15	20
19	5	16	44	11	15	69	15	19
20	13	20	45	13	18	70	15	18
21	10	20	46	18	18	71	18	20
22	12	20	47	15	19	72	15	17
23	11	19	48	11	20	73	12	17
24	13	19	49	5	20	74	20	20
25	11	16	50	12	17	75	16	20

Table 7.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	16	19	96	18	20	116	16	20
77	6	18	97	10	20	117	16	20
78	15	19	98	14	20	118	9	17
79	18	19	99	15	20	119	6	19
80	16	19	100	15	20	120	14	17
81	11	20	101	15	20	121	13	15
82	15	19	102	12	20	122	13	16
83	12	18	103	15	18	123	14	20
84	14	20	104	14	14	124	17	17
85	11	20	105	12	19	125	14	14
86	10	19	106	15	20	126	11	14
87	7	12	107	8	19	127	16	20
88	14	15	108	12	11	128	12	20
89	14	20	109	19	20	129	9	17
90	12	14	110	16	20	130	12	18
91	20	20	111	14	18	131	13	17
92	5	20	112	13	16	132	17	15
93	13	17	113	19	12	133	17	19
94	13	19	114	11	15	134	10	18
95	14	20	115	13	17			

Table 7.2

Results of Statistical Analysis of the above Raw Scores

High School		University		T-test value
X	SD	X	SD	
13.04	3.413	18.13	2.225	15.478

The finding is this: when the students' perceptions about the needs and requirements of the writing abilities in high schools and in the university are compared, the students perceived that the needs and requirements for writing abilities in university is more than in high schools. This, perceptions difference has been calculated and the t-test value is found to be 15.578. This result is statistically significant. The implication of this finding seems to suggest that the students became conscious of the significance of the writing abilities as a result of the College English course. Further implication of this result is expressed by the students in open-ended questions and interviews. They strongly state that they need further writing assignments and activities to improve their writing because they need the writing skill not only for the academic success like in note taking, report writing etc. in the university, but also for their further career development (see Appendix B and C).

Both qualitative and quantitative data imply that more writing tasks to be included in the College English course. However, this quest for more motivating writing tasks, and activities should not be considered to be stirred by only the new materials.

#### 4.2.6 The Students' Emotional Feelings During the Writing Lessons in the English Classes

The students' perceptions about the emotional feelings during the writing lessons in both institutions have been compared as the following table displays.

Table 8.1

Scores of Students' Perceptions about Their Emotional Feelings During the Writing Lessons in the Two Institutions

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	6	10	26	10	10	51	9	7
2	7	8	27	9	9	52	7	8
3	8	9	28	7	7	53	8	7
4	7	6	29	8	11	54	7	6
5	11	7	30	7	11	55	7	6
6	7	7	31	7	9	56	7	6
7	9	8	32	11	11	57	8	8
8	7	9	33	7	8	58	9	5
9	6	9	34	4	10	59	10	7
10	8	9	35	8	7	60	10	6
11	10	7	36	9	8	61	6	8
12	9	9	37	10	9	62	8	10
13	6	8	38	7	9	63	10	8
14	8	9	39	8	10	64	8	7
15	7	7	40	10	9	65	7	8
16	5	6	41	3	10	66	8	9
17	8	8	42	9	7	67	8	9
18	3	10	43	5	11	68	8	7
19	6	9	44	5	8	69	10	9
20	8	12	45	9	12	70	9	9
21	7	11	46	6	8	71	7	7
22	6	7	47	8	10	72	7	5
23	4	7	48	7	11	73	8	7
24	7	10	49	3	7	74	7	8
25	7	5	50	11	8	75	7	8

Table 8.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	7	9	96	9	9	116	7	5
77	5	7	97	8	7	117	6	5
78	7	7	98	8	10	118	10	8
79	7	6	99	7	6	119	8	6
80	9	7	100	7	9	120	6	6
81	9	6	101	6	7	121	5	7
82	8	7	102	9	6	122	8	6
83	9	6	103	7	7	123	7	8
84	7	8	104	6	6	124	6	6
85	9	9	105	8	8	125	6	6
86	7	5	106	8	9	126	10	9
87	8	8	107	10	7	127	9	8
88	8	8	108	9	7	128	6	7
89	9	7	109	7	7	129	8	8
90	7	8	110	9	9	130	9	6
91	9	7	111	11	5	131	6	9
92	6	9	112	6	5	132	8	9
93	6	8	113	8	6	133	7	7
94	8	7	114	8	9	134	7	7
95	6	6	115	7	7			

Table 8.2

Results of the Statistical Analysis of the above Raw Scores

High School		University		T-test value
X	SD	X	SD	
7.54	1.597	7.82	1.582	1.465

As it is already reported in table 8.2 above the t-test value is 1.465. This figure tells us that there is no significant change in the students' perceptions about their emotional feelings in the two institutions. In other words, in this research it has been found out that the students' perceptions about the emotional feelings during the writing lessons in both institutions have shown no change even after they took the College English course.

The questions were whether they feel happy during the writing lessons, whether they fear making mistakes in writing, and whether they want to get everything right in their writing in both institutions (see question 4.1 to 4.3 in appendix A).

Various points can be raised why the finding shows no difference in emotional feelings during the writing lessons. Researches carried out in our Department (Getnet 1993; Tesfaye, 1991; Wondwosen, 1992) state that the teachers' focus during marking the students' written works have a substantial influence on the students writing abilities.

As the research findings indicate, the aim of the writing lessons in the Ethiopian high schools has been making the students master the discrete grammar rules, spellings, mechanics and accurate meanings of isolated words before they write. But, these surface features can be mastered subconsciously or automatically as the students concentrate on

processing the information content (Johnson, 1981; Hailom, 1982, Prabhu, 1987; Widdowson, 1978).

Moreover, the audience of the students' writing in the majority of the cases are the teachers; the students were not given the opportunity to write on the topics of their choices to write to specified audience. This situation, as research findings suggest, does not encourage students to feel free in the English classes during the writing lessons in high schools (Britton, 1975; Wondwosen, 1992).

Given these realities, the above finding could not be regarded as exaggerated. Students should fear making mistakes because in several instances they are evaluated on the bases of their writing and marked as 'passed' or 'failed'; and that is done by the teachers. Students need to strive to get 'everything correct' because the topics are not their choices; the written works are collected not at drafting stages to allow some margins of errors, but they are collected at the 'final' stage where they should be appropriate and accurate.

However, as we can see in the table above, there is a slight difference in total sum in both institutions. It shows that, to some extent the students are freer or more relaxed in the university than in high schools. This suggests that the writing tasks in College English to some extent allow the students to be more confident than that of high school texts. This finding is supported by the students' response to the

open-ended questions and interviews. The students have stated that the writing tasks make them express their feelings freely and confidently. They further assert that College English has a tremendous contribution in developing their writing skills and minimising fears of making mistakes in writing.

However, it should be emphasised that this finding does not suggest that there are no differences at all in the students' perceptions about their emotional feelings in the two institutions. What it suggests is that the difference calculated using the t-test value is not statistically significant.

The implication of this finding is that there is a great need to allow the students to engage in realistic writing where the teacher becomes interested reader, not only the evaluator; the students need to be the readers and evaluators of their works and that of their classmates' as well; and the students' written works need to be collected at planning, drafting as well as product stages.

#### 4.2.7 The Importance of Micro-Skills to Improve the Writing Abilities

In order to see the students' perceptions about the importance of some of the micro-skills to improve the writing skills in the two institutions, comparison has been made (for details see questions 5.1 to 5.4 in appendix A). In this study it is found out that the students chose grammatical

accuracy and vocabulary knowledge as very important micro-skills to improve their writing skills when they were in high schools. After taking the College English course, however, their preference is shifted and they have started to focus on getting the message across. Both the t-test value which is 11.583 and the students' responses to open-ended questions support their choices and changes in perceptions.

The main findings of this category can be described in the following statements: (1) the students used to believe that in order to improve the writing skills, studying grammatical rules and vocabulary knowledge were very important micro-skills; (2) they have reshaped their beliefs after taking the College English course, that learning the basic principles of writing is more important than simply studying the isolated and decontextualised grammatical rules and vocabulary to improve the writing skills and abilities. The following statistical analysis table depicts the quantitative results.

Table 9.1  
Scores of Students' Perceptions about the Importance of  
Micro-Skills in Improving Their Writing Abilities

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	11	14	26	13	15	51	13	13
2	13	16	27	14	14	52	15	15
3	14	15	28	11	14	53	14	12
4	11	15	29	14	15	54	11	14
5	13	15	30	12	13	55	12	14
6	11	15	31	12	15	56	12	11
7	9	14	32	11	15	57	15	16
8	11	15	33	14	13	58	12	16
9	9	13	34	12	14	59	12	15
10	11	14	35	11	15	60	10	16
11	12	16	36	12	15	61	10	11
12	8	10	37	12	16	62	14	14
13	13	15	38	7	16	63	13	10
14	11	12	39	11	12	64	11	14
15	9	12	40	10	14	65	8	10
16	11	14	41	15	15	66	10	9
17	11	15	42	12	15	67	12	13
18	7	12	43	12	15	68	12	13
19	8	15	44	12	11	69	12	14
20	10	15	45	15	15	70	12	13
21	11	15	46	9	12	71	13	15
22	12	16	47	12	11	72	11	14
23	10	12	48	9	14	73	11	14
24	12	15	49	6	10	74	16	15
25	12	15	50	15	14	75	15	15

Table 9.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	14	16	96	12	13	116	13	16
77	11	13	97	11	15	117	14	16
78	15	15	98	14	16	118	10	16
79	14	13	99	14	16	119	15	16
80	12	12	100	12	13	120	14	13
81	12	10	101	12	115	121	13	16
82	10	15	102	10	15	122	13	12
83	9	10	103	12	13	123	11	15
84	15	16	104	11	12	124	13	15
85	10	16	105	12	13	125	14	13
86	14	16	106	11	13	126	13	16
87	13	15	107	9	14	127	16	16
88	12	11	108	12	15	128	8	14
89	14	15	109	12	15	129	14	14
90	14	13	110	14	15	130	12	14
91	13	16	111	13	14	131	14	16
92	11	14	112	12	16	132	14	16
93	13	15	113	15	12	133	11	15
94	10	16	114	13	15	134	14	15
95	16	16	115	10	16			

Table 9.2

Results of the Statistical Analysis of the above Raw Scores

High School		University		T-test value
X	SD	X	SD	
12.00	1.977	14.13	1.668	11.583

However, this finding does not imply that fluency should be promoted at expense of accuracy. It means when the students focus on getting the message across, when they concentrate on interpreting and processing the given information content, they can also improve their level of accuracy (Hailom, 1982: Widdowson, 1984).

The classroom observations, responses to open-ended questions and interviews also substantiate the above findings.

In the classes that were observed and in the writing tasks in College English, it was seen that the emphasis has been on both the content and the form. In the two classes that were observed, isolated grammar practice was not treated for the sake of improving the writing skills.

To the open-ended questions students stressed that their beliefs about grammatical accuracy has changed. They assert that they need the writing skills, grammatical rules and vocabulary knowledge to improve their writing skills and abilities.

#### 4.2.8 The Actual Writing Activities

The actual writing experiences of the students in both institutions have been enquired (see questions 6.1 to 6.4 in appendix A). The following table shows the students' perceptions about the actual experiences of writing in the two institutions.

Table 10.1  
 Scores of Students' Perceptions about the Actual Writing Practices  
 in the English Classes in High Schools <sup>and</sup> in the University

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	11	11	26	11	12	51	13	16
2	12	11	27	11	13	52	9	19
3	10	15	28	11	15	53	8	14
4	12	16	29	12	13	54	12	14
5	14	13	30	12	10	55	11	11
6	10	12	31	10	14	56	11	15
7	10	13	32	13	12	57	13	18
8	12	17	33	12	14	58	13	14
9	12	13	34	12	13	59	13	11
10	7	11	35	12	13	60	18	15
11	13	8	36	13	15	61	11	15
12	13	12	37	10	12	62	14	16
13	10	15	38	11	11	63	9	16
14	14	13	39	15	14	64	13	12
15	12	12	40	11	13	65	10	15
16	11	15	41	15	12	66	12	12
17	12	14	42	9	12	67	11	15
18	10	14	43	14	11	68	9	15
19	10	11	44	11	12	69	12	15
20	11	15	45	9	16	70	15	15
21	14	15	46	11	13	71	10	14
22	14	15	47	8	11	72	15	13
23	11	15	48	15	15	73	12	13
24	12	11	49	10	14	74	15	18
25	11	13	50	12	13	75	12	14

Table 10.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	12	15	96	11	14	116	10	16
77	7	15	97	10	12	117	11	12
78	14	13	98	14	13	118	13	12
79	11	12	99	14	12	119	12	13
80	11	16	100	12	15	120	14	13
81	9	17	101	11	11	121	8	11
82	8	17	102	9	15	122	13	14
83	16	15	103	8	15	123	8	11
84	10	15	104	11	13	124	11	14
85	13	15	105	10	12	125	16	13
86	15	20	106	12	11	126	14	19
87	12	11	107	12	15	127	7	14
88	10	13	108	10	13	128	15	14
89	10	13	109	15	13	129	14	11
90	17	17	110	7	15	130	12	11
91	7	15	111	11	17	131	13	12
92	6	12	112	12	16	132	10	14
93	10	17	113	15	10	133	11	12
94	13	11	114	9	13	134	5	10
95	11	10	115	12	14			

Table 10.2

Results of The Statistical Analysis of the above Raw Scores

High School		University		T-test value
X	SD	X	SD	
11.52	2.070	13.58	2.278	7.783

The responses have been computed and compared. The findings are reported as follows: (1) the students pointed out that practising sentence constructions, copying from blackboards and books are the main writing activities in high schools; (2) practising note-taking, organising and writing essays and paragraphs are the main writing practices in College English classes; (3) the students' perceptions about the practices that can promote writing abilities have been calculated and compared with the practices they considered less useful to advance their writing abilities; (4) the result at t-test value is 7.783 which is statistically significant.

The results of the study imply that the students need more discourse level writing in order to improve their writing abilities. This finding suggests that the students have perceived what is required to improve the writing abilities at university. That is to say the students have realised after using the new materials that rather than simply practising isolated sentence constructions, engaging themselves in purposeful practices such as note-taking, paragraph writing, essay writing... can improve their writing competence and performance.

In the open-ended questions the students stated that before they took the College English course, they had not tried to write about anything in English on their own. But after actually practising different types of writing activities in the College English classes they started to write with confidence.

However, it would be difficult to ascribe every improvement to College English. Other variables like teachers' methods, the students previous experiences, the writing assignment in different courses other than the English courses might have influenced the results. So, the interpretations of this finding should also take these factors into account.

#### 4.2.9 The Teachers' Feedbacks to the Students' Written Works

According to the quantitative and qualitative results, students seem to be critical about the feedbacks from the teachers. As it is shown in the table below the t-test value is 3.478 which is statistically significant. In this study it is found out that (1) the students consider feedbacks to be essential components of the writing process; (2) the students perceive that teachers in the university give feedbacks more frequently than in high schools; (3) they have also realised that teachers in the university focus more on content than on surface features when marking the students' written works. The following table displays the students' responses quantitatively.

Table 11.1  
Scores of Students' Perceptions about the Feedback  
to Their Written Works Given from the Teachers

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	9	14	26	9	14	51	12	11
2	8	14	27	14	13	52	13	9
3	13	14	28	11	16	53	17	11
4	14	14	29	11	14	54	14	9
5	12	12	30	8	14	55	11	12
6	9	14	31	12	12	56	10	6
7	8	16	32	9	14	57	17	19
8	12	11	33	13	14	58	12	13
9	11	15	34	6	15	59	12	15
10	8	11	35	13	13	60	14	9
11	10	15	36	13	16	61	14	13
12	14	15	37	12	13	62	12	17
13	15	12	38	10	17	63	12	8
14	6	13	39	12	13	64	13	14
15	7	10	40	14	11	65	15	17
16	12	14	41	8	13	66	14	13
17	11	13	42	9	11	67	15	17
18	14	15	43	10	15	68	15	14
19	9	13	44	11	15	69	12	13
20	14	13	45	12	14	70	14	16
21	9	15	46	8	11	71	18	7
22	12	16	47	12	8	72	14	17
23	13	13	48	10	16	73	13	8
24	13	11	49	7	15	74	14	16
25	11	12	50	7	15	75	15	14

Table 11.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	17	15	96	5	20	116	15	18
77	11	14	97	8	13	117	14	10
78	11	14	98	14	13	118	11	17
79	15	13	99	11	13	119	18	17
80	14	15	100	15	17	120	14	17
81	11	16	101	13	15	121	13	13
82	13	12	102	14	16	122	13	114
83	12	15	103	15	12	123	10	10
84	15	13	104	8	9	124	11	14
85	11	15	105	10	14	125	20	16
86	13	13	106	12	10	126	12	11
87	7	14	107	11	15	127	18	8
88	12	17	108	13	9	128	14	15
89	17	10	109	10	13	129	11	13
90	14	17	110	10	12	130	14	12
91	14	12	111	15	12	131	5	14
92	8	17	112	15	13	132	14	11
93	13	10	113	12	13	133	11	12
94	13	11	114	13	9	134	12	16
95	12	17	115	12	7			

Table 11.2

Results of the Statistical Analysis of the above Raw Scores

High School		University		T-test value
X	SD	X	SD	
12.05	2.758	13.27	2.660	3.478

In response to open-ended questions some students were critical about the teachers responses to their written works (see appendix B for the detail). They reported that they could not decide whether they improved their writing ability because the instructors failed to give them feedbacks. This issue is raised in the fourth section supported with figures.

#### 4.2.10 The Nature of the Writing Tasks

The students' perceptions about the nature of the writing tasks in College English and in the ENE (English for New Ethiopia - high school English text books) have been gathered through the questionnaire: (for the detail please see questions 9 and 10 in appendix A). The following table shows the finding about students beliefs concerning the nature of the writing tasks in both institutions.

Table 12.1

Scores of Students' Perceptions about the Writing Tasks

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
1	4	8	26	3	7	51	5	6
2	2	5	27	4	4	52	6	6
3	4	8	28	3	7	53	5	5
4	2	6	29	2	7	54	6	4
5	4	7	30	2	5	55	4	5
6	3	7	31	2	5	56	5	5
7	3	8	32	2	6	57	6	8
8	3	6	33	4	6	58	4	5
9	9	8	34	2	6	59	6	6
10	2	5	35	4	5	60	2	3
11	4	5	36	4	7	61	2	6
12	3	7	37	3	6	62	3	7
13	5	6	38	4	6	63	6	8
14	4	5	39	4	7	64	4	6
15	3	6	40	3	6	65	6	6
16	4	7	41	2	6	66	4	6
17	4	4	42	4	7	67	6	7
18	4	6	43	3	5	68	5	6
19	2	4	44	4	6	69	4	8
20	5	6	45	3	7	70	4	6
21	4	6	46	4	4	71	5	5
22	4	8	47	4	6	72	5	7
23	4	7	48	3	8	73	3	5
24	3	5	49	2	6	74	4	8
25	5	4	50	3	5	75	4	6

Table 12.1 continued

Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.	Subj. Code	H.S.	Univ.
76	6	7	96	2	5	116	5	6
77	3	6	97	2	8	117	4	7
78	3	7	98	6	6	118	4	5
79	5	5	99	3	8	119	4	8
80	6	7	100	7	7	120	4	6
81	5	8	101	5	5	121	5	5
82	4	5	102	3	5	122	4	4
83	4	5	103	4	5	123	3	5
84	6	5	104	4	4	124	4	6
85	2	7	105	2	5	125	5	5
86	5	5	106	6	5	126	5	6
87	2	6	107	5	5	127	4	6
88	2	6	108	5	5	128	5	6
89	2	4	109	5	4	129	2	4
90	3	5	110	5	5	130	5	5
91	5	6	111	6	4	131	5	6
92	5	5	112	5	4	132	2	8
93	5	7	113	5	3	133	5	5
94	4	6	114	5	5	134	4	6
95	5	5	115	5	7			

Table 12.2

Results of the Statistical Analysis of the above Raw Scores

High School		University		T-test value
X	SD	X	SD	
3.97	1.233	5.82	1.206	12.754

For this category the students were asked to compare the writing tasks in the two institutions i.e. whether the tasks in the new materials and in ENE are equally challenging, and motivating.

As the table of statistical analysis above shows the t-test value is 12.754. Based on this result the findings can be summarised as follows (1) the students reported that the writing tasks in College English classes are more challenging, and motivating than the writing tasks in high school English textbooks; (2) the result is calculated at the t-test value and found out to be statistically significant.

To open-ended questions, the students stated that the writing tasks in College English are suitable for independent studies; they also said that the tasks initiate them to do more writing. As it is already noted in the second chapter, the writing tasks in process-oriented classes should be involving the students. The tasks should engage both the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Moreover, the tasks should be intrinsically motivating so as to engage the students and help them to process the information content effectively (Carrol and Wilson, 1993; (Byrne, 1991; Prabhu, 1987).

If we consider the writing tasks that are exclusively meant to develop the writing abilities we can find a number of non-verbal activities like writing from tables, graphs, charts, etc. in College English. This nature of the tasks

seems to reflect the fundamental aim of the writing tasks in College English which is meant to promote the academic writing skills. They concentrate on skills such as describing, arguing for and against, research writing, organising, report writing, etc.

In the classroom observations, it was revealed that when the teachers felt that the tasks given in the new materials were not sufficient, they included extra writing materials (see some of the materials in appendix I).

Despite the heavy emphasis on the academic writing skills, in College English, the students were not given chance to write on the topics of their own choice so as to extend the academic writing skills. As research findings suggest, students can write more fluently and confidently on the subjects of their choice, by doing so they can develop their academic writing skills.

#### **4.3 The Students' Writing Abilities after Taking the College English Course**

##### **4.3.1 Results of Pretest and Posttest**

One of the research questions raised in the previous chapters is whether the new materials are as effective in improving the students writing abilities as they are in reshaping their perceptions about the writing abilities.

To this end, two sections, one from natural sciences and the other from social sciences, were selected randomly. The students in these sections did not use the new materials in the first semester (FLEn 101) course. They were 50 in number and all of them came to the university on the basis of the ESLCE results. They all were taught FLEn 101/102 by the qualified teachers, according to the standard of the university; and their backgrounds vary educationally, socially, economically, geographically, etc.

Before they began to use the new materials, the students were given general English proficiency test prepared by the researcher (see the pretest in Appendix D). After they were taught for five weeks using the new materials, they were given the posttest (see Appendix E). Both tests were similar in content; they comprised linguistic competence (grammar awareness), organising ability, note-taking ability and paragraph writing from the given notes. The results are reported in the following table (Note that instead of using the students names the serial numbers are used).

Table 13.1

## Results of Pretest and Posttest

Subj. Code	Pre- test (50%)	Post- test (50%)	Subj. Code	Pre- test (50%)	Post- test (50%)	Subj. Code	Pre- test (50%)	Post- test (50%)
1	29	29	18	30	35	35	45	45
2	30	35	19	43	41	36	44	45
3	31	32	20	29	28	37	31	34
4	33	36	21	32	39	38	28	33
5	31	32	22	33	39	39	34	34
6	31	30	23	33	33	40	14	24
7	32	29	24	37	39	41	32	37
8	27	27	25	30	31	42	37	33
9	40	40	26	38	38	43	32	38
10	31	48	27	35	40	44	39	31
11	32	36	28	27	33	45	39	31
12	33	33	29	35	40	46	35	39
13	39	41	30	32	34	47	35	46
14	27	28	31	40	44	48	32	34
15	27	29	32	30	35	49	33	31
16	30	35	33	44	44	50	25	26
17	31	37	34	39	39			

Table 13.2

## Results of Statistical Analysis of the above Raw Scores

Subj.	Pretest		Posttest		T-test value
	X	SD	X	SD	
50	33.12	1.021	35.4	1.201	3.77

As it can be seen from the table, the t-test value is 3.77. In other words, in this study, it has been found out that the new materials are effective in improving the students' writing abilities.

The specific areas where the students showed improvements have been investigated by means of error-analysis and content-analysis techniques. This parameter has been developed by the researcher based on the writing skills assessment criteria of the Department (see Appendix F).

In order to specifically see and compare the differences in the writing abilities of the students after they used College English for five weeks, 12 students' were observed while they were writing and then their papers were collected. As it was pointed out in the third chapter, these students were selected based on their performance in general proficiency test. They were labelled as below average, average and above average according to their results.

Their papers and the ways they wrote were studied carefully and the following points were discovered as common for the-below-average students in pretest: (1) the amount of ideas was very small; (2) there was no planning or revision; (3) ideas were not clearly developed; (4) no specific examples were mentioned; (5) communicative ability was extremely poor; (6) spelling errors were common; (7) grammar errors, particularly tense and subject-verb agreements errors were

wide-spread; (8) one paragraph has been divided into different paragraphs.

The posttest results of these students have shown some improvements in the following areas: (1) the amount or the quantity of writing has increased to some extent; (2) there was an attempt to organise ideas in coherent manner; (3) communicative ability showed some improvements. Other areas like grammar spelling, indentations have shown no difference.

The average students writing was seen in the pretest results, and the common features include (1) indentation problems; (2) lack of clarity of ideas; (3) relatively small amount of ideas; (4) organisation problems; (5) some of the grammatical aspects such as subject-verb agreement, and spellings; (6) lack of planning and revision.

The posttest results of these students have shown significant improvements in the amount of ideas and organising skills. But, the surface features like plural markers, tenses, and accuracy of spelling showed relatively small amount of improvements.

In pretest, the-above-average students showed deficiency in planning before they wrote. The contents of their writing was clear and coherent in the pretest. However, there were grammatical and spelling errors without blocking

**communication.** During the pretest these students were observed to make changes particularly in spellings and words in a form of revision.

After they took College English, the -above- average students showed some changes in planning their writing assignments. They also showed some changes in revision but could not go beyond spellings and words. However, there has been no substantial change in their spellings, capitalization, grammatical and mechanical errors.

On the whole, after five weeks of learning English using the new materials, the students showed some progress in the following areas:

1. the amount of ideas generated;
2. planning before writing;
3. to some extent organising ideas and developing them logically;
4. to some extent indenting one paragraph into different paragraphs has been minimised.

Despite some improvements in these points, there are other areas that need to be improved, specially:

- 1) in the areas of revision, proof reading and editing;
- 2) organising, coherence of ideas and logical development;
- 3) accuracy in spelling, grammar, vocabulary mechanics, and capitalization.

When the overall effect of College English is considered, there is statistically significant change in the students writing abilities. This finding is also supplemented by the open-ended questions and interviews. The students responses to whether College English has improved their writing abilities, have been reported in the following table.

Table 14

The Students' Responses: Whether College English has Improved Their Writing Abilities

	Subjects	%
Yes, College English has improved our writing abilities	78	58.20
Yes, College English has improved our writing abilities to some extent	25	18.66
Undecided because instructors don't give feedbacks	9	6.76
No, College English has not improved our writing abilities	16	11.94
No response	6	4.44
Total	134	100.00

As it can be observed from the above table, out of 134 subjects 78 or 58.20% have responded that College English has improved their writing abilities; whereas, 25 or 18.66% of the subjects cautiously stated that their writing skills have shown some improvements. On the other hand, 16 subjects or

11.94% have reported that College English has not helped them to improve their writing abilities while 9 or 6.76% of them were undecided because their instructors did not give them feedbacks for the writing assignments. Finally, 6 subjects or 4.44% wrote no comments.

In like manner, the students responded in the interview that after taking the College English course, they improved their writing abilities.

Nonetheless, the findings reported in this study concerning the lack of accuracy in grammar, spelling, mechanics and capitalization in the students' writing seems to contradict the existing notion: when students engage in learning the content of a language they acquire the form of that language (Hailom, 1982; Widdowson, 1978). It should be made clear that it is extremely difficult to conclude that the task-based approach does not help the students to improve the linguistic competence. Rather, what this finding reflects is that students are gradually moving from totally teacher controlled and accuracy-based way of writing to full discourse, purposeful and meaningful writing in College English. Moreover, the findings reveal that there was no sufficient linguistic inputs in the high school ENE textbooks, despite heavy emphasis on discrete grammar rules and isolated list of vocabulary.

Furthermore, the above result of t-test value and responses from the students as well as the instructors imply that there is a strong desire to improve the writing abilities from the students side. Therefore, there is a need to focus on form in the new materials in more varied and motivating ways. However, this does not mean that there should be more focus on form than the academic needs demand.

When we consider the second parts of the new materials we can see that there are writing tasks which involve various techniques of academic and scientific writing. These parts of the new Freshman English texts seem to be fully devoted to raising the students awareness about the role of accuracy in transforming and interpreting data in academic writing. These writing tasks as they stand seem to some extent to articulate with the students writing needs, and requirements of the academic discourse community.

It seems rational to state that among other things College English has contributed for the overall improvements of the students' writing abilities. The finding is further supplemented by the instructors' responses.

#### 4.3.2 Instructors' Responses

In order to find out the instructors' responses about the effectiveness of College English in reshaping the students beliefs and improving their writing abilities, 20 instructors that have been teaching FLEn 101 and FLEn 102 using the new

materials, have been requested to fill in the questionnaires. The questionnaires have been divided into three parts: the nature of the writing tasks; the actual implementations of the writing tasks; and general comments on teaching writing as a process.

#### 4.3.2.1 The Nature of the Writing Tasks

Out of 20 instructors (100%), 14 instructors or (70%) responded to the questionnaires (see Appendix G). The instructors were requested to give their suggestions and observations whether the writing tasks in College English encourage the students to plan, draft, revise, proofread and edit their writing assignments before submitting to their instructors. The instructors were also asked to give their opinions: whether the writing tasks are challenging and up to college level; whether they balance between content and form; whether these tasks prepare the students for required academic writing; and whether they are suitable for independent studies, i.e. without the help of the instructors.

The responses given by the instructors are computed by comparing the expected mean and the actual mean. Then, the difference has been calculated by using the t-test value and the scores of statistical analysis are given in table 15.1.

Table 15.1

The Nature of the Writing Tasks In College English: The Instructors' Responses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1	4	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	28
2	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	4	21
3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	20
4	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	28
5	4	2	3	1	4	3	4	2	4	3	30
6	3	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	21
7	4	2	1	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	27
8	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	30
9	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	36
10	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	4	2	28
11	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	29
12	4	1	1	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	30
13	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	40
14	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	38
$\sum X$	49	35	36	36	41	38	43	43	44	38	406
$\bar{X}$	3.5	2.5	2.57	2.93	2.71	3.07	3.07	3.07	3.14	2.71	28.79
$SD^2$	0.3928	0.5357	0.9592	0.9591	0.9235	1.0612	0.4949	0.6378	0.6938	0.7755	36.1538

$E(X)$  = Expected Mean = 25      t-test value = 1.069;

$A(X)$  = Actual Mean = 29

The finding can be summarised as follows: (1) the teachers' responses as depicted in the above table indicate that the nature of the writing tasks is not effective in improving the students' writing abilities; (2) the mean difference, on the other hand, shows a positive tendency to suggest that the tasks are effective in improving the students' writing abilities.

When interpreted, the t-test value at 1.069 implies that there are sharp differences in the way the teachers perceive the writing tasks. For instance, we can compare respondents number 13 and 14 with respondents 2 and 3 in the above table. In the same manner, if we compare the responses these instructors gave to open-ended questions (see Appendix H) we can see divergence in the ways they understood task-based approach to language teaching and teaching writing as a process.

However, the above t-test value does not imply that the writing tasks in College English are demotivating, below college level or discouraging the students to deal with. What the t-test value indicates is the difference of views of the instructors and the relative nobleness of the concept of task-based approach to language teaching and teaching writing as a process. This further suggests that there is the need for orientation of these concepts to some of the instructors in workshops, seminars and so on.

However, this finding does not correspond with the teachers' responses to the actual implementations of the tasks in the College English classes.

4.3.2.2 The Actual Implementations of the Writing Tasks:  
The Instructors' Methods of Teaching Writing

The actual implementations of the writing tasks in the two classrooms have been closely observed by the researcher for three weeks. (See appendix J). Interviews were also held with the students in these classes during and after the writing lessons. (See appendix C).

So as to substantiate the observations and the students' responses in the interviews, the teachers were asked to respond to the questionnaires about the implementations of the writing tasks (See appendix G part II). They were requested to give their opinions whether the students feel comfortable during group writing; whether they are taught and encouraged to approach writing as a process: plan, draft, review; at which stage they collect the students' written works; and, the focus of marking the written works i.e. either they focus more on form or content. The result is reported in table 15.2.

Table 15.2  
The Actual Implementations of the Writing Tasks: The Instructors' Responses

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Total	Grand Total
1	2	2	2	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	19	47
2	4	2	3	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	24	45
3	4	1	2	1	1	4	3	2	2	1	21	41
4	4	2	3	2	3	3	1	3	4	2	28	56
5	2	3	3	1	2	4	2	2	3	3	25	55
6	2	1	2	1	1	4	2	2	3	2	20	41
7	3	2	2	1	1	4	4	2	2	1	22	49
8	3	1	3	1	1	4	2	3	4	1	23	53
9	3	1	4	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	26	62
10	4	2	3	1	2	4	2	3	4	3	28	56
11	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	4	30	59
12	2	4	3	1	1	4	3	3	3	1	25	55
13	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	4	2	2	26	66
14	2	2	3	1	2	3	2	3	4	4	26	64
$\Sigma X$	41	29	39	17	22	50	34	39	41	31	343	749
$X$	2.93	2.07	2.79	1.21	1.57	3.57	2.43	2.79	2.93	2.21	24.50	53.29
$\Sigma D^2$	0.6378	0.7806	0.3112	0.3112	0.3878	0.3878	0.5306	0.13112	0.7806	1.1684	10.2692	13.0407

t-test value = 5.25

As it can be seen from the above table, the instructors responses indicate that the actual implementations of the writing tasks are effective in improving the students' abilities. The responses are found to be statistically significant at the t-test value of 5.25. This finding implies the following: (1) the teachers methods of teaching writing in the College English classes have helped the students to improve their writing abilities; (2) as corollary of the first one, the teachers encourage the students to approach writing as process, and teach them how to plan, draft, revise, proof-read and edit before submitting their writing assignments.

Nevertheless, the classroom observations and error and content-analysis of the students' written assignments show that the students lack revision skills which are key elements in the process approach to writing. Therefore, the above finding should be interpreted with caution. What it may suggest is that the teachers' methods of teaching writing have contributed to the improvements of the students' writing abilities and changing of their beliefs about the writing skills and abilities. In other words, it is not only the materials that reshape the students perceptions and advance their skills and strategies in writing but the methods have also prominent roles to play.

Moreover, the instructors' responses to open-ended questions reflect the above findings. They were asked whether teaching writing as a process promotes the learners' linguistic competence and communicative abilities in writing.

Their answers to this question was positive and critical. They highlighted the significance of teaching writing as a process in this way: 'to write is to write is to write is to write is to write.' They strongly stated that teaching writing as a process is commendable and essential way to improve the learners' confidence, fluency and accuracy in writing. They also suggested that all the teachers should be informed about teaching writing as a process. (See appendix H). From their responses it follows that methods are as important as materials and the above t-test value reflects this basic assumption in teaching and learning writing at a process.

#### 4.4 Discussion

In this research, the students' perception about the writing abilities before and after taking the College English course have been studied using questionnaires, interviews and open-ended questions. Their writing abilities before and after using the new materials have been assessed on the bases of pretest and posttest results.

In the same way, the instructors' perceptions about the effectiveness of the writing tasks in the College English texts in improving the students' confidence, fluency and

accuracy in the writing skills have been found out through questionnaires. Similarly, the instructors were asked to give their opinions about the fruitfulness of teaching writing as a process in promoting the students' writing competence and performance in the university.

As noted in the preceding sections, students have shown progress in the writing skills and changes in their perceptions about the writing abilities after using the new Freshman English materials.

Various causes can be mentioned as positive factors for the improvements of the students' writing skills and the changes in their perceptions about the writing abilities such as the students' <sup>individual</sup> efforts, relatively print-rich environment of the campus, different writing assignments in other courses, <sup>and</sup> the students' background. But, the major causes seem to be (1) the nature of the writing tasks in the new materials and (2) the teachers' methods of teaching writing.

The nature of the writing tasks in College English has been described as motivating, challenging and up to college level by the significant number of the students (74%) or 100 students out of 134. Though it was not statistically significant, the instructors also expressed that the writing tasks in the new materials are challenging and to college level. The responses given from both the instructors and the

students supplemented by the classroom observations and interviews suggest that the nature of the writing task brought about the improvements in the students' writing skills. The students have been required to practise writing of different forms and levels: paragraphs, reports, essays, notes, summaries from listening as well as reading; transforming different forms of information e.g. from non-verbals (graphs, piecharts, tables, diagrams...) to verbals; interpreting information by analysing and synthesising the given data, etc. These writing tasks comprise various rhetorical forms: descriptive, expository and argumentative, which are essential forms of academic writing skills.

Nonetheless, not all the writing tasks are motivating and engaging. Responses from the instructors and the students reveal that some topics like AIDS are over-emphasised; requiring the students to write on such issues may demotivate their feelings. In the new materials in both FLEn 101 and 102 there seems to be no opportunity for the students to engage in personal writing as extension of academic writing. It is stated in the new materials that the principal aim of College English is to help the students to meet the academic requirements. However, studies (Carroll and Wilson, 1993; Peyton et al 1994; Raimes, 1991; Zamel, 1987) assert that allowing the students to explore and discover meanings in writing on the topics of their own choice makes them fully involve in the writing process which is fertile ground for developing academic writing skills.

The instructors' methods of teaching writing have been considered to be one of the causes for the improvement of the students' writing skills. In reply to the open-ended questions, the instructors stated that they encourage the students to plan, draft, revise, proof-read and edit before giving the writing assignments. They were also observed using extra writing materials when they felt that the writing tasks in the new materials were insufficient to satisfy the students' academic writing needs. Moreover, some of the students in the interviews acknowledged their instructors for the improvements these students showed in the writing skills.

The results of the students in the posttest, on the other hand, indicate that the students after using the new Freshman English materials have not shown improvement in an essential area of writing: revision. Apparent reason for this seems to be lack of training. Besides, the instructors have responded in the questionnaires that they collect the students' written works at the product stages in which they mark the students' writing as 'good' or 'bad'. For instance, in the two classes that were observed, there was no specific comments written on the margins of the students writing, pointing out what to change, cut off, add, modify, reorganise, revise or edit. In some other cases, as already stated, some instructors fail to give feedbacks to the students writing assignments due to which the students could not know whether they improved their writing abilities or not.

On the whole, the findings that are reported in this chapter should be interpreted with care. Given a number of extraneous variables, limitations and subjectivity of the responses given from the instructors as well as the students, it would be inappropriate to claim conclusive findings in this study. In this study, an attempt has been made to assess the effectiveness of the writing tasks in improving and developing the students writing abilities from both instructors and students' views. What is more, an effort has been done to see whether writing skills have been taught as a process in the first year classes that are using the new materials. The findings have been summarised in the following chapter.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS,**  
**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1 Summary of the Major Findings**

In this descriptive study three questions were raised: Do the students' perceptions about the writing abilities change after they use the new materials? Are the writing tasks in the new materials effective in improving the students' writing abilities? How is writing being taught in the first year classes that are using the new materials?

In line with these questions, four techniques of data collection have been devised: Classroom observations, interviews, pretest/posttest, and questionnaires. The major findings obtained using these techniques are reported below.

1. In order to see if the students showed changes in perceptions about the writing abilities, 134 students that had been using the new materials were randomly selected. They were asked to show their perceptions about the writing abilities in high schools and in the university. The difference was computed and compared. It was found out that the students showed significant positive changes in perceptions about the writing abilities after they took the College English course.

2. To see whether, the new materials helped the students to improve the writing abilities, pretest and posttest were administered. The results indicated that the students improved the writing abilities after using the new materials.
3. So as to find out whether writing was being taught as a process, the instructors were asked through the questionnaires. Their responses varied: some said 'no'; others said 'yes'; and, some were undecided. However, the classroom observations and the way of the writing assignments handled by the instructors showed something different. It can be described as progression from guided and paragraph level in FLEn 101 to full discourse and realistic writing in FLEn 102. The approach to teaching writing in the new materials is not a process approach in proper sense of the concept. It is rather a gradual approximation to the process approach. The study seems to suggest that the writing skills in the new materials are treated as integrated approach to teaching writing.
4. In this research, it is found out that the writing tasks in the new materials, and the instructors' methods of teaching the writing skills, are the major causes for changes in perceptions and improvements in the writing abilities of the students.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

On the bases of the findings, it can be concluded that the students show changes in their perceptions about the

writing skills after they have taken the College English courses. In the same manner, their writing abilities improve after using the new materials.

The main causes for the improvements of students' writing abilities are the nature of the writing tasks and the actual implementations of these tasks by the instructors.

From the classroom observation, the instructors responses to the questionnaires and the way the instructors mark the students' writing assignments, it may be concluded that writing skills are not taught as process in the classes that are using the new materials. Rather in College English, writing is being treated as an integrated skill.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made.

#### **5.3.1 The Nature of the Writing Tasks**

In the present study, the writing tasks in the new materials are found to be to some extent effective in promoting the students' confidence, fluency and accuracy in writing. However, some of the writing tasks in College English need to be supplemented by additional writing tasks that are intrinsically motivating to students and encouraging them to write on the topics of their own choice so as to extend the academic writing skills.

### 5.3.2 The Methods of Implementing the Writing Tasks

The teachers methods of teaching the writing skills have been found to be influential in advancing the students writing abilities. But as the findings in this research show, the students lack reviewing skills which are key elements in the process of writing. Therefore, the students that are using College English should be taught how to review, evaluate and revise their writing assignments. To do so, instructors need to be informed about the process approach to teaching writing.

### 5.3.3 Further Research

As the present study is a first attempt to see the effectiveness of the writing tasks in the new materials, and the methods of teaching writing in the classes where these materials are being used, there might be some aspects which have not yet adequately and critically been dealt with. Hence, further comprehensive and rigorous research is recommended , particularly on:

1. the teacher's behaviour in responding to the students' writing assignments in classes that are using College English;
2. the teacher's classroom interaction during the writing lessons in the College English classes;
3. distinct nature of the writing tasks in College English in relation to the academic writing requirements;
4. the role of revision in improving the students' writing abilities at the first year level with special reference to College English.

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## APPENDIX A

(Questionnaire for students)

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

The purpose of this questionnaire is to see whether the new Freshman English material has reshaped the first year students' perception about writing abilities in English.

To this end, the questionnaire has been divided into two categories: students' perception about writing abilities in high schools, and their perception about writing abilities in the university i.e. before using College English (the new Freshman English material) and after using it. Each category is labelled with numbers or values of given alternatives. There are clear instructions for each section.

Students are requested to answer all 30 questions on the questionnaire paper itself.

Thank you in advance.

### QUESTIONNAIRE

- I. For questions 1 to 3 compare your understanding or perception about writing abilities in English when you were in high school and when you are in the university. Tick (✓) under only one of the following alternatives. Note that each alternative has a specific value.

Strongly agree = 4

Agree = 3

Disagree = 2

Strongly disagree = 1

	My belief about writing when I was in high school				My belief about writing now in the University			
	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
1. Writing abilities are more important than								
1.1 speaking abilities								
1.2 listening abilities								
1.3 reading abilities								
2. Learning to write is more difficult than learning								
2.1 to speak								
2.2 to listen								
2.3 to read								











13. Write in two to three lines about your feelings whether the writing lesson given in College English has improved your writing ability.
  
14. After taking College English has your belief about writing been reshaped? State in three or four sentences.

Thank you for your sincere cooperation.

## APPENDIX B

### The students' responses to open-ended questions

The students were asked two open-ended questions: (1) whether the writing lessons given in College English have improved their writing abilities and (2) whether their beliefs about writing abilities have reshaped as a result of these tasks.

Fifteen students' responses out 134 subjects have been selected randomly: nine for the first question and six for the second question.

(1) On improving the writing abilities

S1: Writing skills in English is a very multipurpose scheme, i.e. it is applied on various fields. For example, when taking down notes from lectures, when taking down notes from reference books, and writing formal researches or informal letters... This is due to the Freshman English materials

S2: First of all, without English writing skills how can I \*being educated all \*corces [courses] here in the university? In order to express my idea to communicate with others even with the people of developed countries by letters my writing skills needed.

\* ~~The~~ original ways of the students' writing <sup>are</sup> retained.

- S3: The writing skills in College English are useful to me because they help me express my ideas better... they help me understand other subjects because writers of other textbooks apply similar writing skills... in my academic life, I will be writing ~~so~~ many articles, essays, lab reports, research reports, etc. ~~So~~... the writing skills research are absolutely essential to me.
- S4: The writing tasks in College English make me to express freely and confidently ... College English has an immense contribution on my writing skills. Now I could express without fear any ideas in my own sentences. I understand errors are the basis of better performance as one errs and learns from it.
- S5: I don't think College English has improved my writing abilities because my teacher won't (do not) return our papers after evaluation - even he won't let us see it. so, how could we learn from our mistakes...
- S6: I don't think that the writing lesson given in College English has improved my writing abilities b/c our essays were not usually returned.... I don't know where my mistakes are...
- S7: The writing lesson given has improved my writing ability but not that much because most of the time the correction has not given to me by lecturer...
- S8: The writing lessons given in College English has improved my ability. Because most of the tasks initiate us something to write...

S9: My writing ability is developed more and more at the same time my interest of essay too. So I appreciate the new materials.

S10: How can I improve my writing skills while I have no interest and knowledge of like Pokot tribes, AIDS, Fuelwood Carriers... which are the sole possessions of the course?

(2) On reshaping the students' perception about the writing abilities.

S1: I thought when I were in high schools as though writing were less important than speaking. But now my opinion lies on the fact that writing should be taken as the basic contributor for the rest of our knowledge.

S2: It shaped me to be a good writer. The lesson which is given College helps me not only to take notes for other subjects during lecture but help me to improve the language skills.

S3: After taking College English my belief about writing has been reshaped and I think this ability as the major ability in English language...

S4: Before I took the course I had never tried to write about something. It was really seems to me very difficult but now I got experience to write every idea of mine whether it is bad or good about something.

S5: After taking the College English my belief about writing is reshaped. I understand its advantage and sometimes I practice it...

S6: I have improved my writing ability and I have learned that the more I write the more I will improve my writing ability.

## APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS (The cassette is available)

### Section 1 (Social Sciences)

The students were writing, while the teacher was explaining vocabulary lesson before beginning the writing activities in class.

They were asked why they write (to check whether they write for a purpose or simply do because they were told to write.)

S1: I write to recall, use the ... then later ... in order to refer some other time

S2: To collect ideas ... definitions I want to write not to forget;

S3: I want to guess (pause) writing helps me to guess.

(They were also asked about the writing tasks they dealt with already).

S1: The tasks are interesting in this text because it gives me a lot of ideas. I had no ideas like fuelwood carriers

S2: The tasks focuses on more issues ... when we learn writing we learn many things from our previous mistakes for sure it ( ) is ... it gives courage to write, we can use our skills of writing for other purposes too.

S3: [College English or the new materials] it lacks variety, the unit focuses only on one topic. ... the College English helps me to improve my writing skill; to assess so many points; I learned so many social affairs. These are very important

The most important and fascinating topic which I came across is the passage (pause) it was told by our instructor - fuelwood carriers. That was really interesting and , eh, and fascinating really. It helps me to look them thoroughly, and I try to see each and every of daily problems and even though I have no power to lend them my hand eh... I realise that I develop some positive outlook to them.

S4: Secondary school we not have like this ... The first semester English FLEn 101 [the old materials] was not interesting. It was about agriculture only ... this [the new material] this one only on gender issues..

S5: This new material makes us talk, and discuss, that much and we are told to write reports and paragraphs (pause - inaudible) on we wrote and talk using our own words ... this helps us to improve our speaking and writing abilities.

## Section 2 - Natural Science

Whether they plan, write drafts, revise, etc.)

S1: We exchange our papers inside our group, we correct,

comment each other's works, In this way we help each other see our mistakes .... Before we write we always organize our ideas. We think so much about what we are going to say and then we write step by step, In first we introduce we are going to talk or what we want to say, and then finally we conclude our ideas. We generalise what we want to say ...

S2: I make more writing paragraphs based on this experimental material [the new material] and I improve my writing.

(whether the writing skills they gain from the new materials help them to write better in other courses ... they replied as follows)

S4: Yes, taking notes for instance; to take notes from books, taking lectures from teachers; it improves...

(Some students complain about the examination. What they learn in class and what appears in exam do not match... students responses are the following)

S5: Of course, I observed, the exam and this experimental group is different and if we do this experiment we do our reading and in the examination there is reading passage, if we are practising reading this, we are easily understand whatever it says, and grammar, no grammar is in detail we refer the library, and from others we can answer.

S6: (With different opinion)... The materials we do in groups should be as tough as the passages we face in the exam. And it has to be more related to our life. In writing tasks the topics should be more that we like.

S1: (again more on writing tasks)

This project helps, I think it helps us... to discuss to express our feelings; to relate things with the real world; to improve our grammatical and vocabulary capacities... helps us to feel confident when we comment when it comes to lecture, note taking, yes it helps in note taking. When it comes to lab reports they have their own way of writing. For experimental research they have their procedures and all the requirements... we can use this English in a different format.

S2: This material helps a lot to improve my writing abilities, especially essay writing helps to write other things in other courses.

S3: Language skills we had [in high school] there was shyness... no tendency to have like this... essay writing but nowadays as the curriculum or the course guide us we are supposed to have what (pause... inaudible) based on that we are really improving our language skills. It helped to write fluently or show fluency in writing, we simultaneously advancing grammatical construction as well as vocabulary so that it really helps for the fluency of the language.

## APPENDIX D

### PRETEST

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Time: 1 hour

The aim of this test is to see the linguistic, organising, note-taking, and paragraph writing abilities of the first year students in their writing abilities before using the new Freshman English materials.

The test comprises four components in this order.

- I. Linguistic competence.
- II. Reorganising.
- III. Note-taking.
- IV. Paragraph writing from given notes.

Dear Student,

You are requested to attempt all the questions in the given time. It should be clear to you that this test is for a research purpose and it is essential for the researcher to have your honest and reliable information. All information about your test results as well as the interviews you will give, will be kept confidential. So, please, feel free.

Thank you in advance.

**I Grammar: Focus on Accuracy**

Choose and write the letter of the best answer for the following questions in the space provided against each question number.

- \_\_\_ 1. You can come here any day but tomorrow. One of the following sentences is nearest in meaning to the given sentence which one is it?
- A. You can come here only tomorrow.
- B. You can come here any day other than tomorrow.
- C. You can come here any day including tomorrow.
- \_\_\_ 2. Fekadu was ill. He was able to attend the class. The best combination of these sentences is
- A. Fekadu was able to attend the class even he was ill.
- B. In spite of his illness, Fekadu was able to attend the class.
- C. Despite of his illness, Fekadu was able to attend the class.
- \_\_\_ 3. Alemu is not intelligent. He is not hard worker. These sentences can best be combined as
- A. Alemu is neither intelligent nor hard worker.
- B. Alemu is not only intelligent but also hard worker.
- C. Alemu is either intelligent or hard worker.

- \_\_\_ 4. Would you mind \_\_\_\_\_ the window, please?  
A. to open      B. be opening      C. opening
- \_\_\_ 5. By the time I arrived, I was \_\_\_\_\_ late.  
A. already      B. eventually      C. therefore
- \_\_\_ 6. How old do you have to be --- you can drive?  
A. until      B. before      C. since
- \_\_\_ 7. The members look forward to \_\_\_\_\_ you to the committee.  
A. joining      B. welcoming      C. meeting
- \_\_\_ 8. The injured man was taken to hospital \_\_\_\_\_ ambulance.  
A. with      B. in      C. by
- \_\_\_ 9. I can't remember \_\_\_\_\_ the letter yesterday.  
A. post      B. posting      C. to post
- \_\_\_ 10. They looked \_\_\_\_\_ for the lost money.  
A. diligently      B. diligence      C. diligent
- \_\_\_ 11. She always had an interest \_\_\_\_\_ and an aptitude \_\_\_\_\_ science.  
A. on/to      B. in/to      C. in/for
- \_\_\_ 12. The colours were beautiful when the sun set \_\_\_\_\_ the sea.  
A. on      B. over      C. above
- \_\_\_ 13. Why don't you sit \_\_\_\_\_ me?  
A. next      B. beside      C. close

- \_\_\_ 14. She did not study for the test; \_\_\_\_\_, she scored one of the highest grades.  
A. nevertheless B. consequently C. furthermore
- \_\_\_ 15. I won't go to the party \_\_\_ you come too.  
A. except b. although C. unless
- \_\_\_ 16. Kebede, along with Aster, \_\_\_ vacationing in Awasa.  
A. are B. is C. will
- \_\_\_ 17. All the members, including John, \_\_\_\_\_ Desalegn to be re-elected.  
A. wants B. want C. wanting
- \_\_\_ 18. Helen had lost the race \_\_\_ she still maintained her confidence  
A. and B. but C. or
- \_\_\_ 19. He was a charismatic leader; \_\_\_\_\_, he had many followers.  
A. nevertheless B. rather C. consequently
- \_\_\_ 20. His belief \_\_\_\_\_ and dedication \_\_\_\_\_ the cause bore fruit.  
A. in/to B. on/with C. to/for

## II Reorganising

Rearrange the following scrambled sentences and write the number of the right order in the space provided below. The first one is given to you.

1. Farmers decided to grow more crops.
2. No rain fell.
3. They grew more crops.
4. The remaining soil was very poor.
5. The area became a desert.
6. As a result, the crops died.
7. The rich top soil was carried away by wind erosion.
- 1- 8. The population was expanding.
9. They removed the original vegetation and ploughed the fertile grassland.

## III. Note-taking

Read the following paragraph and write the note of it in the spaces given below .

Study habits have a greater effect on a student's grades than any other single factor. Many students may complain that they "just can't do" maths or literature, etc, but their inability stems from faulty work habits. Of course, some people do excel in particular subjects and apparently spend little time in preparation, but if they continue this habit they will eventually be overtaken by the hard worker who might

lack some of the natural aptitude for a subject. At times it might seem virtually impossible to study every night for every class: a student can feel like a juggler running out of hands. When grades are sent out it is usually obvious what classes a student has been serious about: more often, the lower scores reflect a lack of serious study. All too often, some students give up efforts to adjust their study habits. However, dedicated and diligent students soon after come to an understanding that their grades reflect, to a greater extent, their study habits.

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#### **IV. Paragraph Writing**

Write a short paragraph of about 180 words on one of the following topics using the notes given.

1. My Primary School Life.
  - the name, location, distance from Addis, etc.
  - your memory about it, etc. you can add more from you.
2. The Person I Admire Most
  - can be a leader, sportsman, teacher, etc.
  - what is his/her special feature you admire?
  - the reason for your admiration.
3. My Village/Town
  - where it is situated.
  - the scenery , landscape, ....
  - your feeling and dream about your village

## APPENDIX E

### POSTTEST

Addis Ababa University

Institute of Language Studies

**Foreign Languages and Literature Department**

General English Language Proficiency Test

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: 1 hour.

The aim of this test is to see the linguistic, organising, note-taking, and paragraph writing abilities of the first year students after using the new Freshman English materials for one month.

The test comprises four components:

- I. Linguistic Competence
- II. Reorganising
- III. Note-taking
- IV. Paragraph writing from given notes.

Dear Student,

You are kindly requested to attempt all the questions in the given time. It should be clear to you that this test is for a research purpose and it is essential for the researcher to have your honest and reliable information. All the information about your test results as well as the interviews you gave will be kept confidential. So, please, feel free.

Thank you again.

**I. Linguistic Competence**

Choose and write the letter of the correct answer on the spaces provided against each number for the following questions.

- \_\_\_ 1. You can consult your instructor any weekdays but on Mondays, about your progress. One of the following sentences is nearest in meaning to the given sentence, which one is it?
- A. You can consult your instructor only on Mondays.
  - B. You can consult your instructor any weekdays except on Mondays.
  - C. You can consult your instructor any weekdays including Mondays.
- \_\_\_ 2. Abebe had no parents to help him. He was able to complete his studies successfully. The best combination of these sentences is:
- A. Abebe was able to complete his studies successfully even he had no parents to help him.
  - B. Though Abebe had no parents to help him, he was able to complete his studies successfully.
  - C. Abebe was able to complete his studies successfully because he had no parents to help him.

- \_\_\_ 3. Sofia is not intelligent. She is not hard working either. These sentences can best be combined as:
- A. Sofia is neither intelligent nor hard working.  
B. Sofia is not only intelligent but also hard working.  
C. Sofia is either intelligent or hard working.
- \_\_\_ 4. Do you mind \_\_\_\_\_ the door, please?
- A. to open B. be opening C. opening
- \_\_\_ 5. By the time I arrived at the bus station, the bus \_\_\_\_\_ left.
- A. eventually B. had already C. therefore
- \_\_\_ 6. How old do you have to be \_\_\_\_\_ you can have a driving licence?
- A. until B. before C. since
- \_\_\_ 7. We look forward to \_\_\_\_\_ your letter soon.
- A. receiving B. receive C. have received
- \_\_\_ 8. She went to England \_\_\_\_\_ plane.
- A. with B. on C. by
- \_\_\_ 9. 'I can't remember \_\_\_\_\_ you yesterday.'
- A. to meet B. meeting C. meet
- \_\_\_ 10. She looked \_\_\_\_\_ for the lost purse.
- A. diligently B. diligence C. diligent
- \_\_\_ 11. He always had an interest \_\_\_\_\_ and an aptitude \_\_\_\_\_ science
- A. in/to B. to/in C. in/for
- \_\_\_ 12. The colours were beautiful when the moon appeared \_\_\_\_\_ the seas.
- A. on B. over C. above

- \_\_\_ 13. 'Why don't you come and sit \_\_\_ Aberra?'
- A. next            B. beside            C. close
- \_\_\_ 14. Almaz did not study for Maths exam. \_\_\_; she scored one of the highest grades.
- A. Consequently    B. Nevertheless    C. Therefore
- \_\_\_ 15. I won't go to the meeting \_\_\_ you come too.
- A. except            B. although            C. Unless
- \_\_\_ 16. Berhanu, as well as, Aster \_\_\_ vacationing in Awasa.
- A. are            B. is            C. will
- \_\_\_ 17. All the committee members, together with Ketema, \_\_\_ Eshetu to be re-elected.
- A. wants            B. Want            C. wanting
- \_\_\_ 18. Helen had lost the opportunity to go abroad, \_\_\_ she still maintained the confidence in her work.
- A. and            B. or            C. but
- \_\_\_ 19. Nelson Mandela is a charismatic leader; \_\_\_, he has many followers.
- A. rather            B. Nevertheless    C. Consequently
- \_\_\_ 20. Her belief \_\_\_ and commitment \_\_\_ the cause won her international recognition.
- A. in/to            B. in/for            C. to/for

**II. Reorganising**

Rearrange the following scrambled sentences and write the numbers of the right order in the space provided below.

1. The dogs were separated from their masters and were put into large fields.
2. For instance, they wagged their tails, they barked and growled, and they fawned on animals with possessed food.
3. Psychologists observing them found that they reacted towards each other in much the same way as they used to respond to people.
4. Recently an experiment was held with a group of dogs to find out how much of their behaviours was, in fact, simply a result of human environment.
5. Puppies born to those dogs and kept out of contact with people showed the same behaviour patterns: they were extremely wild and afraid of human beings.

The correct order: \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Note Taking**

Read the following paragraph and write the note of it in the space given at the end of the paragraph.

## Living away from home

Living away from home can be one of the most difficult yet rewarding experiences of a young person's life. The transition from living at home to living on your own is rarely smooth: lack of family contact, for example, is more difficult than one may have thought. And things that were taken for granted at home like warm affection of parents and friends, three course meal, etc. are suddenly missing and a young person painfully feels these void. However, the environment can be stimulating and, by effectively dealing with the aforementioned problems, a youth's character can be developed and a sense of responsibility may be instilled in him/her. When a young person makes this move, he/she will certainly appreciate his/her family and home more than before. At the same time he/she will gain independence and a tremendous feeling of accomplishment and adventure.

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**IV. Paragraph Writing**

Write a short paragraph of about 180 words on one of the following topics using the notes given.

1. My future plan i.e. the person I like to be in the future.
  - reasons for your decisions to be the person you like to be
  - ways of achieving the goal you dream about
2. My ideal wife/husband
  - your criteria for a good wife/husband
  - how you would make a successful marriage
3. The Wild animal I like most
  - why?
  - distinctive features that attracted your attention and won your praise or admiration.

## APPENDIX F

### Assesement Criteria

1. Communicative Ability	- communicates the content clearly and fluently; causes no difficulty to understand	5
	- communicates the content clearly and fluently, but with few difficulties	4
	- communicates the content, but with some difficulties	3
	- communicates the content but with many difficulties	2
	- communicates the content, but with very many difficulties	1
2. Organisation of Ideas	- clearly and logically <sup>and</sup> organised; sufficient <sub>n</sub> relevant materials are used	5
	- clearly and logically organised; some relevant materials are used	4
	- organisation of ideas shows some difficulties in clarity and logicity; some relevant materials are used	3
	- organisation of ides shows many difficulties in clarity and logicity; few relevant materials are used	2
	- organisation of ideas shows very many difficuties in clarity and logicity; few or no relevant materials are used	1

3. Grammar and Vocabulary	- shows a very wide range of control over and appropriacy in grammar and vocabulary	5
	- shows a wide range of control over and appropriacy in grammar and vocabulary	4
	- shows an average range of control over and appropriacy in grammar and vocabulary	3
	- shows below average range of control over and appropriacy in grammar and vocabulary	2
	- shows extremely limited range of control over and appropriacy in grammar and vocabulary	1
4. Surface Features	- shows no faults in spelling, shapes of the English conventional orthography, and punctuation	5
	- shows few faults in spelling, shapes of the English conventional orthogrpahy, and punctuation	4
	- shows some faults in spelling, shapes of the English conventional orthography, and punctaution	3
	- shows many faults in spelling, shapes of the English conventioal orthography, and punctuation	2
	- shows very many faults in spelling, shapes of the English conventional orthograph and punctuation	1

## APPENDIX G

Questionnaire ~~to~~ Teachers

Addis Ababa University

Institute of Language Studies

Foreign Language and Literature Department

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect your opinion about the effectiveness of College English in improving the learner's writing abilities and reshaping their perception about the writing abilities in English.

For the sake of convenience, the questionnaire has been divided into three parts: your suggestions on the nature of the writing tasks; the implementation of the writing tasks; and your general comments on the writing tasks.

For each section, there are specific directions.

Thank you in advance.

For questions 1 to 11 you are kindly requested to circle ONE of the numbers on the left side of the questions to indicate your preference. Note that 4 = Strongly Agree; 3 = Agree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

1. The writing tasks in College English:  
the new Freshman English materials,  
promote the students' writing abilities. 4 3 2 1
2. The writing tasks in College English  
encourage students to approach writing  
as a process of discovering meaning. 4 3 2 1
3. The writing tasks in College English  
encourage students to plan, draft,  
revise, proofread and edit their writing  
assignments. 4 3 2 1
4. The writing tasks in College English are  
challenging to the students. 4 3 2 1
5. The writing tasks in College English are  
up to college level. 4 3 2 1
6. The writing tasks in College English are  
motivating; as a result, students are  
self-motivated and initiated to do the  
tasks. 4 3 2 1

7. The writing tasks in College English activate the students' previous experiences so that the students relate what they know already to their new learning experience to maximise their understanding. 4 3 2 1
8. The writing tasks in College English strike the balance between content and form in their focus on the language learning process 4 3 2 1
- 9 The writing tasks in College English prepare students for required academic writing 4 3 2 1
- 10 The writing tasks in College English are suitable for independent studies i.e. without the help of instructors. 4 3 2 1

II. For questions 12 to 18, would you please circle the numbers of your choice as you have done for the above. Note again that 4 = Always; 3 = usually; 2 = sometimes; 1 = Never.

- 11 Students feel comfortable when they write in classes
- |                 |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1. individually | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. in groups    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
- 12 Students are encouraged by the instructors and the tasks to plan, draft, revise and proofread before they submit the writing assignments to the instructors
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 13 The students' written works are collected by the instructors at
- |                   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Planning level | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Drafting level | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Product level  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
- 14 The focus of marking the writing assignments is
- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Surface level: grammar, vocabulary, spelling, mechanics, formality | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Content and organisation   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Both 1 and 2 equally   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

- 15 Students are encouraged and taught how to read feedbacks given to them and revise the written works using these feedbacks. 4 3 2 1

III. Could you please comment on the following questions.

- 16 In your opinion, are the writing skills in College English treated as process-oriented?

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- 17 Do you believe that teaching writing as a process can improve the students' writing abilities?

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**APPENDIX H**  
**Instructors' Responses to Open-ended Questions**

The questions were about the instructors opinions.

(1)Whether writing skills in College English are treated as process (2) and, whether teaching writing as a process can improve the students' writing abilities.

Inst.1: 1. As a whole, they are treated as process-oriented.

2. Yet, it does.

Inst.2: To both questions said 'Yes'. No explanation was given.

Inst.3: 1. Agreed 'absolutely' that writing skills in College English is treated as process. He/she also agreed on the second question.

2. This is because it helps to provide explicit training in the component skills of writing.

Inst.4: 1. They are not sufficiently process oriented. There should be separate units devoted to writing alone to teach writing as a process.

2. Yes. But this should be effected with the recognition that people do the same think in amazingly different ways.

Inst.5: 1. They are biased towards process. This does not mean that product has no place. Because I can hardly put a clear-cut demarcation between process and product.

2. 'It can improve. But, I think it is also important. For me the end result is as important as the process. The way you handle it is very important.'

Inst.6: 1. 'I don't think [writing skills in College English are treated as process]. What we receive from the students is the final written work. We do not see how they plan their writing and how they write the first draft and how they revise and proofread it.'

2. 'Yes, of course [teaching writing as a process can improve the students' writing abilities]. If students are made to pass through all the steps in the process, they are likely to be good at writing.'

Inst.7: This instructor says no to number 1 and yes to number 2 without any explanation.

Inst.8: Like the above instructor, this says 'I'm afraid no' to the first question and just 'yes, I do agree strongly' to the second question.

Inst.9: 1. 'No, the aim of the exercises here seems to be to give very rudimentary skills like copying which should have been dealt with in much earlier stages.'

2. 'Yes, but the artificial difference that is claimed to exist just for the sake of making research should not be allowed to undermine the importance of the final product.'

- Inst.10: 1. 'There is a progression from 101 to 102. The initial writing tasks in 101 are guided indeed several are rather grammar exercises in the form of paragraph writing than real writing skills... By the middle of 101, however, the focus shifts to process writing. 102 is almost exclusively process writing though guided grammar type exercises do exist in some units.'
2. 'Definitely, but it needs support in the form of guidelines to students...'

**APPENDIX I**

Extra Writing Tasks  
prepared by the Instructor  
On Organising Ideas)

I

- A) But the strange thing is that nobody seems to live there.
- B) A is a large two-story house with an ample garden.
- C) I don't like to stand there and stand in, but even a quick glance tells you that everything is perfectly kept.
- D) Or is it?
- E) Along the street firm where I live is a house that is something of a mystery.
- F) But no one that I know can.
- G) The garden is neat and tidy, and the house itself is freshly painted and clean.
- H) Perhaps the people who live opposite could see the point.
- I) From when they leave until their next visit, the house is completely empty.
- J) This is surrounded by a high wall, and the only spot where you can see inside is the gate.
- K) The only persons you ever see are the man and the housekeeper, who come early in the morning two or three times a week, and go away in the late afternoon.

II

- a) In a way, cartoons are like the pages of a history book.
- b) Cartoons are one of the highest forms of social commentary and this seems to apply in most countries.
- c) They reflect important events.

- d) They give us a pictorial history.
- e) They show us ways of eating and drinking habits.
- f) They reflect styles of dress, hobbies, architecture and even the weather.
- g) Cartoons reflect many aspects of the way of life of a country.

#### Main Idea

The tremendous sale of paperback books has revealed that the average reader is interested in a wide variety of subjects.

#### Details

- The books priced inexpensively.
- Can be purchased in bookshops and at news agents.
- Millions of readers unable to unwilling to spend money on hard-bound books.
- Regular purchasers of paper backs.
- Large sales of classics in paperback edition.
- Interests of reading public not limited to western stories only.

## APPENDIX J

### Classroom Observations

As it was already pointed out in the body part of the thesis, two Freshman classes that were using the new materials had been selected for observation purpose. Brief descriptions of how writing was being taught in the experimental classes, the classes that were taking the College English course, is presented below.

Section 1: College of Social Sciences, Sidist Kilo

This section was observed for three weeks. The lesson units covered were 'Gender Issues' and half of 'Tourism'.

When the instructor and observer entered the class the students had already been in their groups. But for the sake of the study one group was asked to comprise six members and the rest consist of four and five. The total number of the groups in this section was five (G1,G2,G3, Gr, G5).

The instructor explained the aim of the day's lesson and then she set the writing tasks to be completed. It was subtitled as 'prejudice about girls in Ethiopia'. The students were required to discuss and complete the table.

The students discussed the meaning of 'prejudice' some translating it into Amharic. The instructor, later on went round and helped them with the meaning of the term. They then went on filling in the gaps in the table. Immediately, after they completed filling the blank spaces, they started writing the assignment.

G4, the group selected for focused observation had six members: two top, two medium and two low scorers. All of them were writing individually. The two medium and one of the low scorers were seen to check for spelling, bite their nails, stop writing now and then. One of the top scorers finished the writing and started drawing some pictures. (She was asked why she was drawing and the reply was that she had finished writing and she had nothing to do - this was recorded in the cassette referred to in Appendix C).

In this particular group it was observed that:

- the students discussed to generate ideas;
- the instructor initiated the discussion;
- the instructor went round and made sure that the students were doing the assignment they were supposed to do, explained the concepts, showed how to go about filling the table and writing the assignment (developing the separate list of ideas into coherent discourse);
- the students started writing after brainstorming while they were writing or after they wrote;

- they were not told in that session, how to revise, when to revise what to focus on during revision by the instructor;
- the students did not revise to check how they organised their writing, whether they made the information content clear, whether there were grammatical errors or misused words, etc.
- the instructor collected the writing assignment.

In the following session the marked papers were given to the students. By permission, the researcher collected back the marked papers from the students. In the paper the following comments were <sup>written</sup> ~~written~~:

- 'good', 'very good', 'paragraph two needs further examples', 'paragraph three needs more detailed ideas', 'seen';
- simply a tick ( √ );
- there was no specific comments on grammatical or spelling errors;
- there was no specific comments either by underlining, circling or writing on the margins of a sentence or of a paragraph showing the mistakes made and giving directions what to add, cut out, delete, replace, change positions, reorganise the ideas, give specific examples, make meanings clear, etc.

After giving back the papers, the instructor did not encourage the students to read the comments written on the

paper. She did not give the students time to read the comments, <sup>or</sup> ask about the comments. Rather she chose two 'good papers' and read them aloud to the class to motivate them to write well.

In the following three sessions the students discussed vocabulary, grammar, reading, speaking and listening lessons. During each lesson there were writing activities for different purposes and of ~~different~~ <sup>different</sup> levels. For instance during listening the students were taking notes, in speaking sessions, they were writing down some points that they were going to talk about in their groups, etc. Most of the writing during these sessions was sentence and paragraph level. Most of the writing tasks that were intended for exclusive writing skills were given as homework and it was extremely difficult to describe how students wrote.

In general, the teacher, in the section mentioned above, treated writing as an aid to reinforce what is learnt in the form of listening, discussing, reading, vocabulary or grammar. She taught writing as integrated skill. She also included extra-writing activities when she felt that the writing assignments in College English were not sufficient (These tasks are included in appendix I).

Section 2: Natural Sciences, Arat Kilo.

At the time of observation this section was dealing with 'Tourism', the second unit of FLEn 102.

The instructor introduced the unit, explained the conceptual meaning of tourism giving brief examples:

'to tour means to visit and tourists are the people who are interested in visiting different places'. He then highlighted the general and specific objectives of the unit. The students were already in five groups (G1,G2,G3,G4,G5) each consisting of five members except the two groups that were made to comprise six, and four members for the purpose of the research. He then asked them whether they like to be tourists, what potential Ethiopia has for tourist attraction, etc.

The students were asked to do brainstorming activities and writing tasks which involve filling the gap. It requires them to recall the location of historical sites and natural beauty centres with brief descriptions of each. They first silently read the questions and started discussing. This time the focus was on the six students in G1. They were observed and the following activities were seen.

- during brainstorming session which was meant for oral activities, the students were found to be scribbling, underlining, writing on the margin of each question given;
- after the discussion they wrote to fill in the gaps individually;
- one student (the top scorer) was drawing the historical sites, rather than describing them in words;

- exchanged the list of names, locations and brief descriptions of historical sites and natural beauty centres;
- one of the medium scores, read loudly, what he wrote and other listened to him, checking their lists;
- the instructor went round, checked whether the students were doing the activities;
- he then called the class back to the whole class discussion;
- turn by turn each group presented their reports to class;
- the researcher collected the students paper to see the product of their planning stage which was observed in class;
- the instructor collected the previous session writing assignments which was given as homework.

In the following sessions, the points raised above were expanded in listening, reading, vocabulary, grammar and speaking lessons.

During the listening lesson the students were asked to arrange the organization of ideas in line with the sequence of the speaker. To do so, they copied the statements (main ideas) read them carefully and listened attentively, they wrote the number against each main ideas. For the next listening activities they were asked to take notes. In all these listening activities the students were observed to use the writing skills.

Similarly, in reading sessions the students were underlining, writing on the top of some words their meanings in Amharic. They also wrote the main ideas on the margins of some paragraphs.

For vocabulary, grammar and speaking activities they used the writing skills.

In the sixth session there was a debate against and for Top-down tourism and against and for Eco-tourism. There were four students in each side and the instructor was mediating the debate.

At the end of the unit of the students were given the writing assignment. This time they were required to write argumentative essay about Eco-tourism and top-down tourism. As it could be predicted, the students became familiar with the topic and it is assumed that they might not run out of ideas when they write<sup>e</sup> because all the skills had been integrated.

The writing assignments marked by the instructor were collected and the following features were observed:

- at the end of each paper 'good', 'ok' 'excellent' (↓) or a tick were marked;
- occasionally, some mistakes of grammar and spelling were corrected;

- there was no specific comment as to what should be improved, be it ideas, organisations, grammar;
- the students were not asked and guided how to revise their work after they wrote;
- all the papers were collected at the product level.
- all the papers were given back to the students and, the students were not given time to read the comments; the instructor did not encourage them to see the comments and ask if they did not understand the comments written on the papers.

On the whole, it was observed that the writing skills in the College English class were treated as a means of integrating other skills. In the two classes that were observed it is extremely difficult to say writing is being taught as a process.

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my work and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Yonas Adaye

Signature: 

Place: Institute of Language Studies

Addis Ababa University

Date of Submission: June 1996