

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
ORAL PREPARATION AS
COMPARED WITH OTHER
METHODS OF TEACHING
THE WRITING SKILLS

A Thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Addis Ababa University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in TEFL

by

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June, 1990

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to my advisor, Dr. G. Despatie, for his indefatigable guidance and encouragement. In spite of his invaluable assistance, however, my advisor is by no means accountable for any faults that may appear in the thesis.

I should appreciate Brother Feleke Gosa for his generous assistance and encouragement as well as for selflessly bearing the full responsibility for our family during my engagement in the Graduate Programme.

My friend Girma Wube', who provided me with the material I most needed for the study deserves special mention.

I am grateful to Tesfa Zewdie, Desta W. M., and Haile M. Abbebe for helping me with the statistical computations. I wish to thank my colleagues Tesfaye Mihzentu and Taddese G.M. for teaching and scoring the sample writings. My sincere gratitude is due to W/t Chuchu Mamo and Abeba Workye who meticulously and patiently typed the paper. I would like to thank the freshman students in the Departments of Statistics and Chemistry for voluntarily participating in the study.

I further appreciate the help and encouragement I received from my old friends Getachew Tesemma and Kasa Dgigu. My gratitude is also due to Fikirte Tullu, Tsegaye M.Ab, and Kiros H.G. who have helped me in various ways.

The fund received from SAREC to finance the project, and the British Council Library which has been a rich source of material are duly acknowledged.

Demeke Dessu.

Abstract

This study was designed to examine the effectiveness of oral preparation as compared with the incidental method of teaching the writing skill. Two groups of freshmen in the Departments of Chemistry and Statistics (Addis Ababa University) were randomly selected and taught Personal letter writing and Report writing techniques.

The students in the former department were divided into smaller conversational units and did all the writing assignments in groups. The other group of freshman students carried out the tasks individually as practised in Freshman English courses.

After each mode of writing had been practised for two weeks, a composition test was administered to the subjects in identical situations for both groups. The writing samples were then analysed and compared in terms of the mean T-unit length index which is recognised as a valid measure of syntactic maturity.

The results indicated that the learners in the study group were producing T-units which were consistently, but not markedly longer than those written by the members of the control group.

The data further showed that the average mean T-unit length output of the freshman students whose writings were considered in this study was extremely low by both native and ESL standards. In the literature, for example, the mean T-unit length produced by a typical fourth grade writer on a free writing task was reported as 11.3 words, while the score for the freshmen sampled in the present study was generally below 11 words per T-unit.

Techniques of teaching which were established in research as the most effective procedures for enhancing the syntactic fluency of writers have been suggested as possible solutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The English language has a prominent function in the educational system of Ethiopia. It is taught as a subject in all the government schools beginning in grade three through to the sophomore level. As a medium of instruction, English takes over from the Amharic language at the beginning of the junior high school (grades 7 and 8), and serves up to the graduate programme.

Although the question of replacing English as the language of instruction has long been under discussion, no practical decision has yet been made. Hence, studies pertaining to the techniques of teaching the various skills in English still remain pertinent.

Writing, as one of the major skills in language teaching courses is known to be a powerful tool of learning. Among other things, it serves as an aid to retention, and provides the learner with some concrete evidence that he or she is making progress (Byrne, 1979:7).

Ethiopian University and college students need the writing skill in order to cope with their essay type examinations and to write reports and research papers. In short, an Ethiopian student can hardly expect a University degree, even from the Department of the Ethiopian Languages, without a certain degree of competence in written English.

Thus, most of the higher institutions of learning in the country introduce some writing exercises in the Freshman Programme and offer an extensive composition course at the sophomore level.

Important as it is pedagogically, writing is often the least emphasised skill in programmes of language instruction. One of the major reasons for the neglect is that it is the most difficult task for both native and non-native learners. Widdowson has the following comment with regard to this claim:

In my experience writing is usually an irksome activity and an ordeal to be avoided whenever possible. It seems to require an expense of effort disproportionate to the actual result. Fortunately for myself-esteem, this experience is a common one. Most of us seem to have difficulty in getting our thoughts down on paper ... getting the better of words in writing is commonly a very hard struggle. And I am thinking now of words which are in one's own language. The struggle is all the greater when it is not.

(Widdowson, 1983:34-47)

Whyt is writing difficult ?

This medium of communication is chosen when there is a need to transfer information to a reader who is not present, or who may not even be known to the writer. Consequently, communication in writing is not supported by a constant interaction and feedback, etc., between the writer and the

reader. The absence of immediate reaction demands that the writer anticipate what is likely to happen and provide for any possible failure of communication from a lack of shared knowledge (Byrne, 1979:1-3; Widdowson, 1983, 39-44).

The only way a writer communicates successfully with his reader is by the organisation of his sentences into a coherent whole which is as explicit and complete in itself as possible. To produce a text which has an appropriate discourse potential, the writer needs to have some idea of the purpose of the interaction which involves relating the act of writing to some preceding situation. He should also know who he is meant to address and why (Ibid.).

In addition to fulfilling these normal conditions for writing, the writer has to ensure that his text conforms to standards of social conventions. Successful communication, therefore, generally presupposes the automation of syntactic rules so that the mind will be free for the interactive processes (Ibid.).

In second and foreign language situations where syntactic rules have not yet been mastered, there is a problem that the mind will be highly engaged with linguistic matters leaving little spare capacity for the communicative function of the text. These are some of the problems which make writing a difficult task for the native speaker and more so for the non-native learner (Ibid.).

Thus, teachers and methodologists who realise the problems learners face, especially those who are dissatisfied with the controlled exercise approaches to the teaching of composition, suggest that manipulation be minimised in teaching. They argue that this can be achieved by providing guidance and help through a variety of pre and post writing activities. These include providing appropriate information and stimuli and priming learners through oral preparation or group discussion on assigned topics in class.

1.1.1. Source of the thesis title

The question: "Is pupils' writing better when they discuss what they are going to write about before they begin?" is suggested as a topic for action research in Davis and Parker (1978:213).

Brause and Mayher also suggest the same question for a similar study in Language Arts, 61/5, Sept. 1984:516-518 as: 'If students write about topics they have discussed in class, do they create a better text?'

As no research reports were included in the sources acknowledged, this candidate proposed: 'The Effectiveness of Topic Discussion in Class as a Method of Teaching Writing', as a possible title for his thesis. The title was later modified into its present form at the recommendations of the D.G.C. (Department Graduate Commission, I.L.S.).

1.1.2. Why writing ?

The writing skill has been selected for two reasons. The first of these is that owing to the problem of the unreliability of scoring or quantifying student compositions, no candidate in the A.A.U., Graduate Programme has attempted to examine the writings of students as total patterns of behaviour.

Research reports, on the other hand, indicate that at least some aspects of written composition, the syntax of student writers, for example, can be measured quite objectively. Moreover, methodologists on testing the writing skill note that given commitment and thoughtful planning, student scripts can be rated holistically with a reasonable degree of reliability.

The second reason relates to the importance given to free expression in Communicative Language Teaching.

In spite of the difficulties associated with it, writing is an essential skill in academic English. Such a skill requires an informed teaching which can be better accomplished through some kind of diagnostic examination of the performance of the learners.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Many teachers complain that a large number of students who join A.A.U., every year lack the essential skills for self-expression in the written medium. For instance, freshmen are often held to do poorly on essay tests, not because they do not know the answers, but because they cannot explain their ideas on paper. Teachers consider this weakness as the major cause for the high rate of attrition among freshmen.

Hence, there seems to be a felt need for attempting to develop the writing abilities of the freshmen. Such an attempt may involve the investigation of a specific technique of teaching on the performance of the learners and thereby diagnose their strengths and weaknesses.

The present study will attempt to examine the effectiveness of oral preparation in the form of group discussion on the written performance of Addis Ababa University freshmen.

In the writing exercises of the English textbook (Freshman English 101A, Conroy, 1985) students are provided with cues and carry out their exercises on individual bases. The aim of the present study is to check whether the students will be able to produce better texts if they are allowed to work in groups.

Thus, to investigate the effectiveness of interaction on writing, one group of freshmen will be divided into smaller conversational groups. They will then prepare rough drafts on the writing assignments and discuss the drafts in groups - and then rewrite the assignments. The teacher collects the final copies and indicates the errors to be corrected in groups, and so on.

Another group of freshmen will work on their writing assignments individually as practised in Freshman English 101A.

The two groups of freshmen will then write compositions on the same topics (both writing on assigned topics without group discussion). The outputs of the two groups will then be compared in terms of syntactic complexity, the amount of language output, and the ratio of errors to error-free words.

The study will then attempt to address the following questions:

- i) Does group discussion practice during the project teaching enable the students to produce more mature or fluent sentences ?
- ii) Does this hold true across different modes of writing (i.e., objective and subjective modes) ?
- iii) Is there any correlation between syntactic skill and the rated quality of student scripts ?

- iv) What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of A.A.U. freshmen in writing ?
- v) Has the project teaching helped the subjects to achieve some progress in writing ?

1.3. Importance of the Study

- i) The study may generate some pedagogically useful information by pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of A.A.U. freshmen in written English.
- ii) It may serve as a springboard for further research on writing.
- iii) If group discussion helps the subjects to improve the quality of their written performance, it will be recommended for use in both the Freshman Programme and at the sophomore level.
- iv) It will also indicate the correlation between syntactic skill and the rated quality of composition.
- v) It is hoped that the project teaching will contribute to the improvement of their skills in writing.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

The target population of the present study were two groups of freshmen who were enrolled in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Addis Ababa University, in the current Academic

Year (1989-1990). The decision to treat only two groups of students was entailed by problems relating to the analysis of written work, especially within the time available for this work.

In addition, due to the shortage of time and other related facilities, the period of the project teaching and practice had been limited to a course of five weeks.

These limitations coupled with the problems of group work (see Chapter 2) are likely to have an impact on the results of the study.

1.5. Hypothesis and Definition of Terms

1.5.1. Hypothesis

The attempt in this study is to examine whether pre-writing oral preparation and peer editing will enable the subjects to produce more complex sentences. Hence, the following Null (H_0) and alternative (H_1) hypothesis are made:

H_0 = Group work during the composition course will not enable the writers to produce longer T - units than those students who will not have such opportunities.

H_1 = Group work during the composition course will enable the writers to produce longer T-units than those students who will not have such opportunities.

1.5.2. Definition of terms

The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of group discussion as a method of teaching composition. Although written performances can be quantified and compared by the holistic method of evaluation, the application of the procedures require training and a great deal of experience. As these qualifications are difficult to claim, a decision has been made to assess the effect of the teaching method on the syntactic maturity of the learners. That is because this aspect of the writing skill is said to be objectively measurable in T - unit lengths. In addition, the T - unit index may reveal the effect that group discussion which is a fluency activity in oral performance may have on syntactic fluency in written work.

Terms related to the T-unit index and other expressions used in this study are defined below:

1.5.2.1. Syntactic Maturity refers to the ability to use embedding and deletion transformations to say more in fewer words. It is the ability to manipulate the syntax of a language (Wittig, 1983:171-177).

1.5.2.2. T-unit: A T-unit is a single main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses or phrases are embedded within that main clause. T-units are the shortest grammatically complete sentences that a passage can be cut into without creating some fragment. The 'T' in T-unit stands for

'terminable'. Grammatically, a T-unit can be terminated with a period or other terminal mark (Hunt, 1977:92-93).

Example: 'The men are standing on the corner and they are laughing' is considered as two T-units, with the first T-unit containing seven words ending at the comma, and the second containing four words beginning with 'and'.

However, in 'The men who are standing on the corner are laughing' there is only one T-unit consisting of ten words (Kameen, 1983:162:170).

1.5.2.3. The mean T-unit length stands for the mean number of words per T-unit. It is obtained by counting the total number of words in the passage and dividing it by the number of T-units (Hunt, 1977:93).

1.5.2.4. Accuracy work: practice in vocabulary and grammar to make sure that students get something right (Byrne, 1987:6-7).

1.5.2.5. Fluency work: Opportunities to use the language freely through a combination of class, pair, or group work (Ibid.).

1.5.2.6. Group work: Co-operative language practice between small groups of students (3-6 in most cases) pooling efforts in a given task (Pincas, 1982:126).

The expressions 'group work', 'group discussion', and 'oral preparation' are alternately used in this study.

1.5.2.7. Controlled writing: Writing in which students follow exact instructions so as to produce correct written work, e.g. filling in blanks, sentence combining, etc., (Ibid.: 25).

1.5.2.8. Guided writing: Writing in which the student has more freedom than in Controlled writing but less than in Free writing, because of assistance such as given outlines, a model to copy, etc., (Ibid.: 26).

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1.1. Introduction

This chapter summarises some of the methods of teaching and assessing written composition. It, however, begins with a brief description of writing as a skill and then presents a few problems held to interfere with the teaching of writing to non-native speakers of the English language. This is followed by some representative procedures of teaching used in the free writing tradition as well as in the controlled and guided approach. The next subsection deals with current trends, i.e., strategies recommended by scholars who are dissatisfied with the controlled and guided approach. The group discussion technique which is the major concern of the present study is also reviewed in this subsection.

The final part of the chapter presents a review of the procedures for both formative and summative assessment of writing. A summary of Hunt's experiment on syntactic maturity is also included here in order to expound his view of maturity in writing and to exemplify how this is measured.

Although the Ethiopian Secondary School English Syllabus has little concern for the writing skill, most of the comprehension passages in the textbooks are accompanied by a wide range of free response questions which are meant to

be answered in writing. Grammatical exercises like sentence combining and transformation (e.g. active to passive) constitute the other writing activities in the texts. It is, therefore, assumed that most of the methods reviewed here are applicable to A.A.U. freshmen who are now exposed to the English language for over ten years and have had some writing practice through the exercises just mentioned.

2.1.1. What is writing ?

Donn Byrne (1979:1) defines writing as the production of a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways to form a coherent whole, i.e. a text.

Widdowson (1978:61-62) distinguishes between writing as usage and writing as use. Writing as usage (composing), he notes, is the act of making correct sentences and transmitting them through the visual medium as marks on paper.

Writing as use, on the other hand, is more than just putting sentences together, for the writer spends a great deal of time rereading what he has written and considering how an effective discourse might develop from his effort.

2.1.2. Categories of writing

Writing can be categorised on the basis of a variety of factors. The rhetorical method, for instance, recognises

the descriptive, narrative, expository, and argumentative modes (see 2.3.1.). Gorman writes that although the discussion of such distinctions may be useful for university students who wish to write research papers, they are unlikely to help learners to write with any degree of spontaneity (Gorman, 1979:190-202).

Writing can also be classified on the basis of content, purpose, and audience. Along this line, Rivers (1968), Allen and Widdowson (1979) distinguish between the expressive and creative modes of writing.

The expressive form refers to the expression of original ideas in a consecutive way for such practical purposes as the writing of instructions, reports, concrete descriptions or essential correspondence connected with everyday affairs (Rivers, Ibid.:294).

Creative writing, on the other hand, is a process whereby the writer 'talks to himself' on paper. In spite of its general educational importance, the usefulness of this mode of writing is limited in that it tends to produce a highly personal style - literature which has little or no social function (Allen and Widdowson, Ibid.:136).

2.2. Teaching writing: Problems

2.2.1. Problems

Many writers on foreign language instruction complain that writing courses often fail to enable students to use what they have learned in normal communicative situations. Rivers (1968) and Widdowson (1979), for example, attribute the problem to the approaches adopted for teaching.

In this connection Rivers makes the following comment:

To be literate in the native language implies the ability to read and write. ... This approach to native language learning has transferred to the foreign language classroom without much consideration of its appropriateness or inappropriateness for students who do not already have the spoken form of the language at their command.

(Rivers, 1968:291)

According to Rivers, the approach is inappropriate for the following reasons:

- i) many students will not be required to write in the foreign language after they have completed their studies;
- ii) the few who may need to write for professional purposes, will only write for specific purposes on a clearly defined proposal or project ;
- iii) the essential criteria for success in student essays are accurate and idiomatic expression, rather than literary style.

Thus, Rivers believes that non-native learners find it difficult to write on unspecified topics and without a clearly indicated purpose and audience for the message (Ibid. 291-295).

The other approach held responsible for the communicative inefficiency of the non-native learners of the English language is the one that combines situational presentation with structural practice. Widdowson reports that what is taught through this approach is the ability to compose correct sentences and that this ability does not ensure communication. He, therefore, suggests that the approach be modified in order to incorporate the teaching of communicative acts. That is, instead of selecting the language items to be taught on the basis of linguistic forms like the universal present tense or the passive in scientific discourse, for example, communicative acts which the scientist most commonly performs such as classification, deduction, generalisation, and so on, must be emphasised (Widdowson, 1979:117-121).

2.3. Methods of Teaching Writing

Although many textbook writers always have some specific techniques to recommend as to how their materials may be used, there seems to be no general agreement among teachers about the methods of teaching the writing skills (Gorman, 1979:189).

Gorman (Ibid.:192-193) identifies three major areas on which composition teaching may focus. These include what to say (content); how to sequence what is said (organisation); and how to express what is said (expression).

Content in writing may involve the consideration of whether the writer has presented the subject selected with a degree of adequacy depending on his/her general ability and the information available. In relation to content, the teacher may analyse a script by judging whether the writer has said what he/she wanted to say with a measure of clarity.

Organisation, according to Gorman, refers to the manner of structuring the content within paragraphs and in the whole essay. This may be examined in relation to whether the proposition that is dealt with is properly introduced or concluded. If the proposition has several events the teacher may check whether these are treated in accordance with their relative significance.

Expression, on the other hand, constitutes the learner's use of grammar and other orthographic conventions. Expression is a matter that considers the writer's choice of items of vocabulary and syntax in relation to the level of formality adopted.

Gorman further writes that after deciding the skill or skills to be taught at a particular time, the teacher needs to determine the degree of freedom with which the student should be required to work (Ibid.).

2.3.1. The Free writing methods

Pincas (1982:126) briefly defines free writing as "writing in which the student is given a topic but no additional assistance". Gorman reports that a few of the traditions developed along the lines described by Pincas were: the Free expression, the Literary model, and the **Rhetorical methods**.

The Free expression approach, according to Gorman (1979:190-202), is often associated with Erasmus (1960). One aspect of this programme involved motivating students to write rapidly and extensively with little attention to the number or type of errors they made. Erasmus' justification of this procedure was based on his conviction that it was more important to get the student produce a wide range of material than to produce a perfect copy. Every new use of a language item, he argued, would add to the enrichment of the learner's language experience, and that was worth the errors he had made.

One of the prominent features of the Literary model method involves providing students with extracts from the works of famous authors and employing these for certain forms of stylistic discussion and limitation (Ibid.).

The Rhetorical approach can be characterised by its recognition of modes of writing such as description,

narration, exposition, and argumentation. Gorman notes that the division makes the various ways of ordering sentences within paragraphs and paragraphs within complete texts.

Pincas (1982:63-64), however, states that although it is often advisable to teach the major styles of writing mentioned earlier separately, most writing consists of a mixture of two or more of them. Academic writing, for instance, requires exposition to outline and discuss factual information, and the argumentative mode to present a series of approaches to issues and problems. In academic discourse, the narrative and descriptive forms of writing are also employed in order to present the sequence of historical or experimental events as well as to describe people in history and events in science.

The Rhetorical tradition also encourages the use of schemes like analysis, contrast, analogy, and so on, for organising texts and presenting arguments. Distinctions among loose, periodic and balanced sentence types are also observed in the rhetorical approach to teaching composition (Gorman, Ibid.).

However, many writers on teaching the writing skill question the adequacy of the Free expression approach as used along traditional lines. Pincas (1982:110-124), for example, proclaims that although the aim of all composition courses is to develop the ability to write independently, that goal can be achieved only through carefully selected

preparatory exercises. What Pincas means to say is that students must be taught what they have to write, and free writing should be considered as a writing which has been practised under control and finally accomplished without control.

Byrne (1979:24-25) also has an objection especially to the writing assignments used in the "grammar-translation method" and the "direct method". In these methods, he writes, students wrote "composition" on such contrived topics as: My family and My daily programme. The difficult nature of such assignments and their lack of reality resulted in a large number of errors in the students' writing. According to Byrne, the conviction that this had a negative effect on learning and that it resulted in writing being deferred until students reached an advanced level, brought about various forms of controlled and guided activities which focused on grammatical exercises.

2.3.2. The controlled and guided approach

The terms 'controlled' and 'guided' can be distinguished by the degree to which the student is allowed to work independently. Byrne (Ibid.) further describes them as follows: Controlled writing refers to activities where learners are given all or most of the language they must use. They may, for example, be required to arrange sentences to form a text, or to complete sentences.

Guided exercises apply to activities in which students are provided help in the form of ideas through visual material, oral discussion, reading or dialogue.

Byrne reports that various attempts have been made to develop the controlled and guided exercises into free composition. And the materials which incorporate these attempts along with their generators are classified into four representative categories by Allen and Widdowson (1979:136-142). The following section of this review presents these procedures:

2.3.2.1. Substitution in frames (e.g. Moody, 1966)

The frames in these exercises are grouped in such a way that a succession of choices from left to right will generate a paragraph, a letter, or a short composition as opposed to tables which provide single sentences. As the selection of interchangeable forms is not automatic, the student is required to determine meaning through lexical choices. The exercises are organised in four stages in order to give the student more freedom progressively. In the fourth and final stage of the exercise the learner is required to write a paragraph of his or her own on the basis of the model exercises.

2.3.2.2. Sample Composition with selective structure practice (e.g. T.C. Jupp and John Milne (1968)).

The purpose of these exercises is to provide the learners with detailed instruction in language and subject-matter without restricting their freedom for personal expression.

These exercises are also organised in four stages. At stage one the statement of the assignment is given (e.g.: 'Write a report on one of the cars using the data produced in the table below...', Byrne, 1979:102).

The second stage includes a structure practice relevant to the task assigned, and at stage three a sample composition where the necessary structures are exemplified is presented.

At the final stage, the learner (a) writes down sentences using the structures practised; (b) rereads the sample composition; (c) writes a composition along the lines suggested by the sample; (d) gets his work read by a friend.

2.3.2.3. Modification of model paragraphs (e.g. Dykstra, Port and Port, 1966).

In these exercises students are given passages on which they perform a variety of operations like the alteration of grammatical features, lexical insertions, and so on.

The materials are organised in the form of a roughly programmed course to fit learners at different levels of competence.

Allen and Widdowson report that the original text consisted of a collection of forty-two passages all about the adventures of Ananse the spider, a character in West African folklore. The writers have also reproduced a series of instructions to show the types of operations students perform. The numerals in the following instructions refer to the grading on the basis of difficulty on a scale of 1-58:

1. Copy the passage.
4. Rewrite the entire passage changing Ananse to the spiders. Change the pronouns where necessary.
14. Rewrite the entire passage in the active voice.
36. Rewrite the entire passage adding adjective clauses beginning with who, which, or that after the following words: young, man, mother, village, etc.
58. Create a folklore of your own about Ananse the spider. Use between 100 and 150 words (Allen and Widdowson 1979:138).

The three types of exercise based on the notion of parallel texts are successful in preparing the learner to write letters, folktales, personal histories, etc. They, however, fail in enabling the student to deal with scientific writing. That is because in scientific writing the arguments are more specific and need to be treated as unique texts. Allen and Widdowson recommend the following method which is based on an intensive study of a single text as more suitable for scientific writing (Ibid.:139).

2.3.2.4. Guided paragraph building

These exercises are arranged in four stages. At stage one the learner examines the groups of terms and joins each group according to the hints given. At stage two he/she rewrites the sentences in a logical order adding connectives where necessary to produce a coherent paragraph. At the third step, he/she compares the paragraph with a correct text provided elsewhere in the material. At the final stage the learner writes the paragraph again on the basis of a set of notes (Ibid.).

The procedure follows:

- A. Use the additional material in the box below and combine the following words into a sentence. Omit the underlined words. 'Number your sentences and begin each one with a capital letter'.

1. an acide will affect litmus
an acid will react with washing soda
it will give off carbon dioxide

turn/red/and/it/giving

2. the metal disappears
hydrogen is liberated

and

3. one class of bases is called alkalis
they will dissolve in water
they will form solutions
they will affect red litmus

Special/, /, /and/ which/ turn/ blue/

- B. Create a coherent paragraph by rewriting the eleven sentences in a logical order (eight groups of words have been omitted). Before you rewrite the paragraph, add the following material to the sentences.

2. in the latter case
6. a further characteristic of acids is that they

- C. Reread the paragraph and make sure that the sentences are presented in a logical order. Give the paragraph a suitable title.
- D. Without referring to your previous work rewrite the paragraph using the following cues:

.... acid _____ litmus red washing
soda _____ carbon dioxide

(Ibid. 139-141).

2.3.3. Current trends in teaching writing

2.3.3.1. Controversies

There are different views about the degree of control that should be exercised in teaching the writing skill. Rivers (1968:294-295), for example, insists that writing practice should proceed from highly guided elements of vocabulary and spelling to a more flexible production. She further notes that learners should first master the mechanics of good writing so that they may fully concentrate on the process of selection among possible combinations when they start the actual writing.

The simple rule of one problem at a time, Rivers contends, will minimise the possibility of making mistakes and will facilitate more effective learning.

Byrne (1979:27-29) and Ann Raimes (1983:258-272), on the other hand, believe that the principles of the controlled and guided approach have been misapplied by concentrating on the elimination of errors. They argue that guidance and control should be tempered with occasions for free expression.

The following observation may summarise Byrne's position.

... guidance need not indeed should not imply tight control over what learners write ... If, for example, we accept that errors in speech are not only inevitable but also a natural part of learning a language, then we should accept that they will occur and to some extent should be allowed to occur in writing too.

(Byrne, 1979:29)

In light of the many difficulties that students face in learning to write a foreign language, however, the proponents of the guidance. Without-control-approach to teaching accept that there is a need for guiding learners in various ways towards a mastery of the writing skills. But, they argue that if the aim of teaching is to enable the students to achieve a reasonable communicative competence, more attention should be paid to whether the

learner has successfully put together a piece of writing that could satisfy the intended communicative function. This ability can be developed through a systematic teaching method which engages the students in writing activities as total experiences (Byrne 1979:27; Peacock, 1986:2).

These writers recommend some strategies which they think can minimise control in teaching. The strategies include priming and motivating learners through a variety of pre-writing activities. Pre-writing activities can, for example, be carried out by using the text as a basic format for teaching and by encouraging students to help one another through oral preparation in groups.

The following part of this review will deal with pre-writing activities.

2.3.3.2. Pre-writing activities (e.g. Peacock, 1986; Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987)

The pre-writing stage is a phase at which the learner chooses a topic or thinks about an assigned topic selecting and sorting ideas and information. As most students find it difficult to begin free writing without preparation and guidance, the teacher needs to familiarise the students with the target task by:

- i) defining and elaborating the task. This may involve encouraging learners to write to a known audience such as classmates and friends and assigning concrete topics which are close to the learners' everyday life and communicative competence.
- ii) providing stimuli. Textual and visual stimuli help to provide content or subject matter so that students may not stray into irrelevance and poor organisation of argument in their writing.
- iii) providing worksheets or checklists. After students have been familiarised with a particular mode of writing checklists can be used to give guidelines, direction and an increased sense of purpose.

Other pre-writing activities may take the following forms:

2.3.3.2.1. The use of the text as a basic format
(e.g. Byrne, 1979; Raimes, 1983)

Since the aim of teaching writing is to develop the learners' ability to produce a text, one way of providing guidance is to use the text as a basic format for practice even at the early stages of instruction. Writing activities can be made more realistic and interesting by using texts like letters, reports and ~~narratives~~ (Byrne, 1979:27).

Among many others the text can be used to teach the following points:

i) Integrating writing with the other skills.

According to Byrne (Ibid.:28), one of the methods of achieving integration between skills is relating a writing activity to some prior activity like a conversation or something read. An advertisement for a job which involves reading, for example, may lead into talking about it which involves speaking and listening. This may then lead into applying for the job which constitutes note-taking and writing. Thus, Byrne writes, both linguistic and contextual guidance can be made more realistic to the learners.

ii) Content and organisation

Texts can be used to introduce the desired varieties of writing (e.g. narration, description) by exposing the learners to the appropriate modes through reading. Encouraging learners to read a text closely will develop their awareness of what the writer says and to why or how he or she says it. In addition, the organisational difficulties of the students on the level of content can be minimised by encouraging them to determine how a particular statement in a text is related to what has preceded and what will follow (Byrne, (Ibid.:99-100); Raimes, 1983:268-269).

iii) Content analysis

At the oral preparation stage, the teacher can present text (or content) analysis through a simple personal letter. He may begin by asking the students the purpose of the letter, for example. The learners' attention can then be directed to some of the methods the writer has used to achieve his purpose, that is to why the author wrote certain things and expressed them in particular ways. Such an analysis at the pre-writing stage can be followed by an assignment whereby students transform short personal letters into dialogues and then to formal notes (Byrne, Ibid.:10-12).

A non-personal communication (a text addressed to a reader unknown to the writer) can be presented by focusing on the differences between personal and non-personal communication. The teacher may then encourage the students to examine the ways the writer has used to present points to an unknown reader. These may include such techniques as sequencing and supporting statements, defining and exemplifying them, and so on (Ibid.: 14-15).

Pedagogically, text analysis can help the learners to realise that writing is an attempt to communicate an intended message by establishing and maintaining contact with the reader. It can also show that a text has an identifiable structure (Ibid.).

iv) The grammar of cohesion

To provide practice in idioms and correct usage, passages from which function words are omitted can be used. Content words can also be practised by omitting the words and providing three or four choices in which only one word is the original word of the author. Exercises on the lexical level can later be extended into the prediction of larger chunks of form and content. In this case, the teacher may dictate one sentence from a paragraph and ask the students to predict the next sentence with its connectors. The grammatical and lexical links of the text can be fully analysed through these activities. In addition, such exercises are useful for developing the learners' awareness of the voice, movement and direction of the text (Raimes, 1983:269-271).

Raimes illustrates what the grammar of cohesion involves by the following lines from the New York Times:

An upstate utility company spent several months and who knows how much money dunning a man who had moved from Greenwood Lake to Brooklyn. It finally succeeded in locating him and the man paid. He had owed the company one cent.

(The New York Times, Dec. 15, 1978, in Raimes, 1983:271)

The cohesive devices in this text are: reference:

pronouns -- it, him, he

articles -- the man, the company (previously
a man, a company)

conjuncts -- finally

verb tense had moved,

indicating had owed

time sequence

lexical links -- repetition of man and company;

association of paid-owed,

money - cent

Students can be encouraged to go through passages circling the links and connecting them to referents which include examining articles, vocabulary, tenses, and so on. This, Raimes concludes, is a lot of grammar for any composition class (Ibid.).

2.3.3.2.2. Group discussion

Byrne (1987:59) defines the term discussion as 'any exchange of opinions or ideas'. In real life, people usually discuss topics such as politics or education when something provokes them. For example, they may have just read an article on education which annoys them (Ibid.).

If the teacher wants students to talk about a topic in the classroom, he or she must also find some way of involving them in it. Such possibilities include:

- i) Questions: What is the purpose of education ?
- ii) Provocative statements like: For most people education is a waste of time.
- iii) Visual material: The teacher may show the picture of an object and ask the students what it is used for, who makes it, and so on. This, Byrne writes, is enough to elicit suggestions or objections for two minutes or longer.

The problem with this kind of whole class activity, however, is that all the students will not be able to participate. Therefore, discussions should normally be done in groups so that everyone gets the chance to join in (Ibid.:59-60).

2.3.3.2.1. Group discussion in writing

Fluency activities such as group or pair work are more difficult in writing than in any of the basic language skills. That is because, as writing is an artefact deliberately fashioned for the use of others, it has to fulfil certain standards of acceptability. Thus, accuracy in this way, becomes a necessary condition for fluency (Widdowson, 1983:42; Brumfit, 1984:85-86).

But, Brumfit seems to be in favour of fluency activities in writing classes when he writes:

... Nonetheless, the gap between the creativity of young writers in mother-tongue and the activities of second-language learners is very striking, and we need to ask whether there is not a role for genuine writing, even if accompanied by formal incompetence, in the second-language classroom.

(Brumfit, 1984:86)

According to Brumfit (Ibid.:87) the major importance of group work is its ability to stimulate natural language use. He also notes that although natural language use to most people is discussion and conversation, these activities have the following effects on reading and writing:

Reading and writing may well develop out of a secure foundation of linguistic interaction, and a classroom dominated by the literate abilities may be less efficient as a language-learning environment than one in which the reading and writing arise out of a genuine language using community, even if the language being genuinely used is an interlanguage or a pidgin.

(Brumfit, 1984:87)

2.3.3.2.3. The role of group discussion in learning writing

Pre-writing oral preparation in groups or pairs is now the most widely used activity to prime learners for composition tasks. Students working on the same assignment talk about the best way of approaching it in terms of information, functional language needed and organisation (Peacock, 1986:73; Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987:137).

As learners talk and listen to one another, new ideas can be sparked off and may help them to recall subject-matter. In addition, students enjoy writing activities more, if they are allowed to collaborate, because they feel less isolated and get ideas from one another (Peacock, 1986:73, Byrne, 1987:51).

During the pre-writing talk, learners join in activities which involve writing notes and plans; talking and listening, and reading and responding to worksheets and longer written texts. Thus, they gain in oral fluency, social skills and confidence that pave the way for the writing task (Peacock, p. 74).

Interaction is also held to reinforce the awareness of audience in the student writer. When he/she discusses an assigned topic with a partner or a group, the writer will be compelled to consider his audience. Writing for a variety of audience adds to the flexibility of the writer, while writing with the teacher in mind, makes most students feel uncomfortable, for the teacher is often seen as a critic (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987:137).

2.3.3.2.4. Class organisation for group work

Donn Byrne gives the following advice about the size and the ~~form~~ formation of groups:

Since there is no hard and fast rule for groups, the classroom furniture and the type of activities can be the deciding factors. With desks or tables which are easy to move, eight students in each group is a good guide. But, where the furniture is heavy and difficult to move, students had better work in groups of four.

On the other hand, if students have to share ideas, a larger number of students in each group is more advisable. However, the teacher should not forget that the more groups he has, the more difficult it will be for him to control.

With regard to the composition of groups, Byrne recommends mixed ability grouping in which fast and slow learners work together and help one another.

A good group activity can take half a lesson or perhaps the whole lesson. But many group activities can be done in ten to fifteen minutes (Byrne, 1987:75-77).

2.3.3.2.5. Writing activities

Discussion can be organised either as a whole class activity or in pairs or small groups. A whole class discussion can be led by the teacher's explanation of the assigned topic. The writing of a newspaper report, for example, can be preceded by the teacher's explanation and whole class discussion of copies of the national newspaper.

This can be followed by a small group talk on worksheets to determine the appropriate points for the writing task. The learners thus have a clear guidance and help about the context and purpose of the assignment (Peacock, 1986: 74-75).

Other collaborative activities are:

- i) Students in groups brainstorm a topic (i.e. collectively write down all the ideas that occur to them in connection with a given topic), or:
- ii) A writing workshop (i.e. students consult each other as they write in the classroom, or a group of students put together a single co-operative essay, the teacher providing feedback or answering questions about grammatical phrasing, lexical items or the validity of a point, or the order in which to present information (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987:137);
- iii) Making sentences from jumbled words and making paragraphs from jumbled sentences (Byrne, 1987:52);
- iv) Writing parallel texts. The students are given a model paragraph and write similar paragraphs with the help of key words, or:
- v) Questions on a text: Learners set questions in groups which they then exchange with another group (Ibid.:104).

2.3.3.2.6. Problems with group work

One of the major objections to group work in teaching writing relates to the difficulty of integrating fluency and accuracy activities (See 2.3.2.2.1.).

Brumfit reports that one possible solution to this problem is adopting a strategy where one part of the composition course consists of strictly controlled and guided exercises, and the other part encourages free writing which would be considered for its ideas, with no consideration of mechanical errors unless they impeded communication.

The other solution includes creating a situation for a group revision and correction of written work. In this way, an accuracy activity is turned into a fluency exercise, for talking about accuracy, according to Brumfit, may be fluency talk (Brumfit, 1984:86).

Other objections to group work:

- i) If students read and discuss a model during the oral preparation stage, they will produce a similar or an identical text. In response to this, Peacock (1986: 70-71) writes that whatever the subject set may be learners select their own words and express them in such a way that they communicate a unique set of meanings. Besides, using non-verbal stimuli - pictures and diagrams can avoid this weakness in situational composition (Heaton, 1974:133).

- ii) Students will not talk in English. Students will, of course, use their mother tongue especially when they are excited. And this is natural when they want to communicate. But the teacher must provide activities which are roughly at the appropriate level to enable students to make the best use of what they know (Byrne, 1987:78).

- iii) The best students do most of the work and impose their ideas on others. This is possible in mixed ability groups. But, students generally work harder in collaborative activities, because they are more involved. Even then, the teacher should join groups and settle problems whenever he observes something is seriously wrong (Ibid.).

2.4. Assessment of the writing skill

2.4.1. Formative and summative assessment

The literature on composition evaluation distinguishes between formative and summative assessment, the distinction being based on the purposes of the evaluation.

2.4.1.1. Formative assessment

The purpose of this form of assessment is to describe what the learner is trying to do with the target language. The teachers' judgement generally takes the form of descriptive

comments rather than number or letter grades. The individual is looked at in relation to his previous performance instead of in comparison with others. To direct his teaching on the basis of the learner's patterns of behaviour, the teacher keeps a record book which provides him information about the progress and weaknesses of his class (Charter, 1984:21; Peacock, 1986:42).

i) Correction of written work

As a part of the teaching process the regular correction of composition should be more sympathetic and encouraging to the learners rather than negative and judgemental (Chater, 1984; Gannon, 1985). The writers, however, complain that many teachers demotivate their students and distort their judgements by focusing their correction on the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and usage. Such an approach, according to these writers, does not only overwhelm the learner, but also draws attention away from the communication of ideas which is the most important function of writing.

ii) Some suggested solutions

Writers suggest the following as possible solutions to the problem mentioned above:

- a) evaluating students' writing holistically, that is, by considering the effect of the whole piece of writing (Greenhalgh, and Townsend, 1984:811-822);
- b) overlooking many of the mechanical features and concentrating on only a few of these at a time - for practical teaching purposes (Gannon, 1985);
- c) sharing the responsibility with the learners.
Students can be encouraged to correct surface level linguistic errors either individually or in groups. The teacher should direct the correction of specific teaching points by reading the scripts ahead of time; and
- d) indicating the errors leaving the actual improvement for the student(s);
- e) indicating the lines where the errors occur without specifying the number of errors and where exactly they occur. These ('d' and 'e') can be shown in the margins by using correction keys, such as 'S' for 'spelling', 'W/o' for 'word other', etc., (Brumfit, 1980).

2.4.1.2. Summative assessment

The main use of this form of assessment is to report evaluatively on the learners language development. It refers to more formal tests than formative assessment and can have more of a shaping influence on a teaching programme (Dillon, 1984:339-340).

Oller (1979) notes that the main difficulty in using writing tasks as tests is the problem of quantification, that is, converting performances to scores. Grades awarded to student compositions are often unreliable in that a group of scorers give different grades to the same script, or the same scorer awards varying grades to the same work at different times. Moreover, since the writer has the opportunity to cover up weaknesses by selecting simple ideas and familiar patterns of language, the information the writing test provides becomes less valid (Cooper, 1977; Oller, 1979).

2.4.1.2.1. Evaluating writing holistically

The success of any writing task is dependent on the writer's competence to manipulate a number of features, like content, organisation, syntax and grammar, etc. When the assessment of a piece of writing is based on the overall effect of these features, the evaluative procedure is holistic (Greenhalgh and Townsend, 1981:811-822). Cooper (Ibid.) comments that although the holistic evaluation of writing demands commitment as well as time and effort, it is the most valid and direct means of rank ordering students by writing ability.

The most widely used strategies of evaluating writing holistically are: general impression marking and the analytic scale.

General impression marking is the simplest procedure in which the scorer:

- i) quickly scans a sample of scripts and sorts them into categories (e.g. Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor), and
- ii) awards each script a number or letter grade by determining where the paper fits in the categories (Heaton, *Ibid*; Cooper, 1977).

A multiple scoring system (where more than one scorer marks the test) is a necessary condition if the test is to be used to make important decisions. In addition, although scales as narrow as from 0-5 or as wide as from 0-20 can be used in general impression marking, the full range of the scale must be used, especially if the test is intended for significance testing or ranking. That is because grades that bunch between 9-12 on a scale of 20 points, for example, cannot discriminate clearly between examinees (Ibid.).

The analytic scale, on the other hand, is a device in which the different features of writing (for example, content, organisation, grammar) are isolated for the purpose of scoring. That is, the chief examiner decides in advance the specific features for scoring the composition including the weight to be given to each feature and attaches the feature list to the answer sheets (Harris, 1969; Heaton, 1974).

2.4.1.2.2. Improving the effectiveness of tests

The effectiveness of a writing test can be improved in a variety of ways. One method of achieving this is providing the examinee with information and stimuli necessary for the task. Harrison, 1983 believes that the aim of a writing test is to elicit genuine data for the assessment of the testees ability of self-expression, rather than to evaluate his 'creative powers'. Moreover, as there is generally a specific purpose for any writing in real life, the examiner must ensure that the examinee has something to say for a certain purpose with an implicit or explicit audience in mind (Ibid.).

Heaton and Harrison recommend that topics for composition tests focus on the examinees' own experiences (for example, an accident on the road or in the house, etc.). Assigning letter and report writing as well as using dialogues, tables, and pictures, containing information are useful instruments for situational composition. Oller writes what follows about the importance of providing a specific situation and content in composition tests:

When the writer is motivated to write about something that has personal value to himself and that he would want to communicate to someone else, the examiner would succeed in eliciting valid information about the writing ability of the examinee.

(Oller, 1979:384)

2.4.2. Assessment of maturity in writing

2.4.2.1. What is maturity in writing ?

Kellogg Hunt (1965); Christensen (1967), and others have provided useful information about the ages at which children begin to use a given syntactic structure. They have also identified the syntactic patterns of both professional and non-professional writers (Lee Odell, 1983:98).

This information has, of course, implied a definition of maturity in writing and has influenced teaching, ~~or~~ evaluation and research. But, it has not answered the question as to what is meant by 'mature' writing. That is, as the view lacks a clear relationship to a theory of cognitive development, it is uninformed by a definition of what constitutes a mature person (Ibid.).

Furthermore, researchers (for example, Loban, 1963); Kameen 1983) recognise that syntax is not the only thing that matters in writing, and that content, organisation, audience effectiveness, and so on, play a role. But, they hold that syntactic structures are worth investigating, for they represent an aspect of composition which can be objectively analysed, and as such, can provide some useful hints about writers and the teaching of writing.

2.4.2.2. Hunt's theory of syntactic maturity

Hunt (1977:91-104) believes that describing the syntax of school children will enable teachers to help the children more in their writing, and perhaps in their speaking and reading. He thus studied the free writings of children in the sixties and made two broad claims known as: the T-unit length hypothesis, and the number of consolidations hypothesis.

2.4.2.2.1. The T-unit length hypothesis

This hypothesis states that "as schoolchildren get older, the T-units they write tend to get longer -- measuring length as the mean number of words per T-unit" (Ibid.: 93).

About his choice of the T-unit as an index of syntactic maturity, Hunt writes:

The reason for defining a T-unit as distinguished from a sentence is simply that the T-unit turns out, empirically, to be a useful concept in describing some of the changes that occur in the syntax of the sentences produced by schoolchildren as they grow older. When we know what a T-unit is we can understand certain measures of maturity that we could not understand without it (Ibid.).

The experiment:

To check the validity of the T-unit length hypothesis Hunt devised an experiment which involved 300 schoolchildren

and adults. Fifty students were selected out of several hundred in each grade (G₄, G₆, G₈, G₁₀, G₁₂). Twentyfive authors and twenty-five unskilled adults (high school graduates) also took the test).

A rewriting instrument known as the 'Aluminium' passage was used to show how children consolidate extremely simple sentences to produce longer T-units. The subjects were given the passage and were required to rewrite it in a better way by combining sentences, changing the order of words, and omitting repeated words without leaving out any information.

The following six lines of the passage were used to show how children and adults rewrote it (see Appendix ... for the full text used).

1. Aluminium is a metal.
2. It is abundant.
3. It has many uses.
4. It comes from bauxite.
5. Bauxite is an ore.
6. Bauxite looks like clay.

(Ibid.:94).

A typical fourth grader wrote:

Aluminium is a metal and it is abundant. It has many uses and it comes from bauxite. Bauxite is an ore and looks like clay.

(Ibid.:95).

Four years later, a typical eighth grader wrote:

Aluminium is an abundant metal, has
many uses and comes from bauxite.
Bauxite is an ore that looks like clay.

(Ibid.)

While the only thing the fourth grader did was to co-ordinate two pairs of T-units and a pair of predicates, the eighth grader did not co-ordinate any full T-units. Instead, he transformed the predicate adjective of the second input into a prenominal adjective, 'abundant metal'. He co-ordinated inputs 1, 3, and 4 and changed input 6 into a relative clause.

A typical skilled adult whose articles appeared in 'Harpers' and 'Atlantic' rewrote the passage as:

Aluminium, an abundant metal with many
uses, comes from bauxite, a clay-like ore.

(Ibid.)

The typical adult, as did the fourth grader, changed input 2 into a prenominal adjective, 'abundant' metal', and reduced input 1 to an appositive, 'aluminium, an abundant metal'. He changed the verb 'has' from input 3 to the preposition 'with', and the predicate 'looks like clay' into the modifier 'clay-like'. He also transformed input 5 into an appositive, 'bauxite, a clay-like ore' (Ibid.:95-96).

In his 5 T-units, the fourth grader produced 25 words at an average of 5 words per T-unit. The eighth grader

produced 20 words in 2 T-units. The output of the skilled adult was 13 words in a single T-unit.

Thus, in the three sample writings, the T-unit length hypothesis made on the basis of the free writings of the children was confirmed (Ibid.:96)

Hunt reports that for the larger population of (300) writers in the 'Aluminium' experiment words per T-unit increased at every two-year interval, and the difference was significant at the .01 level. The figures for G₄, G₆, G₈, G₁₀, G₁₂, average adults, and skilled adults were: 5.4, 6.8, 9.8, 10.4, 11.3, 11.9, and 14.8 (Ibid.).

2.4.2.2.2. The number of consolidations hypothesis

The second hypothesis claims that successively older students consolidate a successively larger number of simple input sentences (S-constituents) into a single T-unit. When writers consolidate, they usually employ sentence-combining transformations, that is, they reduce one of the sentences to something less than a sentence, perhaps to a phrase or a single word (Ibid.).

In the experiment above the fourth grader consolidated 6 input sentences into 5 T-units (or main clauses). His 5 T-units were derived from the 6 input sentences, (6 S - constituents). His average input sentences per output T-Unit

were, therefore, 6 divided by 5 (1.2). The eighth grader consolidated the same 6 input sentences into 2 T-units. His average is, thus 6/2 (3) input sentences per output T-unit. The skilled adult combined the six input sentences into one output T-unit (Ibid.:96-97).

For the 300 subjects in the study a computation of their 10,000 input-output structures demonstrated that the number of input sentences per output increased at every age level. The scores for G₄, G₆, G₈, G₁₀, G₁₂ and skilled adults were 1.1, 1.6, 2.4, 2.8, 3.2, 5.1 (Ibid.).

2.4.2.3. The T-unit index in research

As an index of syntactic maturity the T-unit is described as follows:

This unit of syntactic analysis is objective and easy to compute and in the last ten years it has gained increasing recognition as a far more valid index of syntactic complexity than other measures, including sentence length (Dick Allwright, 1988:219)

According to Stephen P. Witte, in addition to the normative research carried out by Hunt and others, the T-unit has been used in several other studies on written composition. Some of these include:

- i) Experimental research to assess the effects of writing instruction and writing curricula on writing performance. Example: Mellon (1969); O'Hare (1973); the Miami

University team (1978), and so on. This body of research suggests that writing T-units significantly longer than those 'normally' associated with one's age group can be taught and learned systematically (Witte, 1983:171-177).

- ii) Research to distinguish among texts said to represent different modes of discourse. Example: Perron (1976, 1977); Crowhurst (1978), etc. The research strongly recommends that different types of texts tend to elicit different T-unit lengths (Ibid.).

- iii) Research to determine if there was a correlation between syntactic skill and the rated quality of Esh writing. Example: Kameen (1983). The study indicated that T-unit length, especially, the incidence of long T-units (21+words) was apparently a powerful index for differentiating between the writing of 'good' and 'poor' college level Esl writers. 'Good' writers produced 18.40 words per T-unit, while 'poor' writers consolidated 14.30 words/T-unit (Ibid.:162-170).

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

3.1. Sampling

The subjects of the present study were two groups of freshmen currently enrolled for the Second Semester Programme (1989 - 1990 Academic Year) in the Departments of Chemistry and Statistics, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Addis Ababa University.

The faculty consists of six different departments, namely: Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Physics, Mathematics, and Statistics. From among these, the Departments of Chemistry and Statistics were randomly selected by lot. According to the information obtained from the office of the Freshman Co-ordinator, the total enrollment of the two departments was 99 and 55 respectively. The 99 students in the Department of Chemistry were grouped into three sections (A, B and C), while those in the Statistics Department were divided into two sections (A and B). The division into sections was based on mere alphabetical order on the Faculty list.

The second lot cast to select one group of students from each department fell upon Chemistry 'C' and Statistics 'B' each of which consisted of 32 and 28 students respectively. Chemistry 'C' was then selected as the study group by the final lot.

3.2. Procedures for group organisation

As the major purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of group work in developing the writing skills, the experimental group was divided into smaller conversational units.

With regard to the procedures for forming smaller groups within a classroom, Byrne (1987) (see Chap. 2) recommends ability grouping, while Brumfit (1984:81) holds that students should be given the freedom to decide who goes in which group. Self-selected groups, according to Brumfit, "will be both supportive and flexible enough to accommodate all but the most antisocial elements of a class".

Brumfit's suggestion was adopted here, for grouping students according to their writing abilities was found to be practically difficult in this particular case. Moreover, as the subjects had only just been streamed into a new department, it was felt that most of them were not yet familiar enough with one another to interact freely and comfortably if they were pushed into compulsory relations.

Thus, the freshmen in the study group were briefed on the advantages of collaborative work and were then urged to form groups of three which they readily did. Groups of three were favoured, because smaller groups could allow the students ample time to discuss each other's rough drafts and problems within the time available in each session.

3.3. Modes of Writing taught

Personal (or informal) letter writing and Report writing were selected for the teaching designed for the study. One of the reasons for the choice was that these modes of writing are said to be the most common forms of functional composition with explicit purposes which many educated people need to perform in real life, and which could be introduced at the early stages of a writing course (Byrne, 1979).

On the other hand, the two modes represent clear distinctions in terms of purpose, language, and style. The informal letter, for instance, is written with a known reader in mind, and the subject matter often involves the personal lives of the writer and the recipient (for example, home, books, interests, and friends). The language used is more intimate than formal, that is, contracted forms and words like 'alright' for 'all right', and so on, are permissible (Humphreys, 1950:1-3).

In reports, on the contrary, a general readership is assumed, and the emphasis of the subject matter is on facts. A clear, impersonal style, good paragraphs and careful punctuation are demanded (Betterton, 1942:25-29).

Moreover, these modes of writing provide opportunities for teaching other useful skills. The personal letter, for instance, can be used to introduced the difference between

formal and informal English as well as to familiarise the layout of the letter. Report writing, on the other hand, incorporates note taking and summarising skills which are of paramount importance in academic English.

Furthermore, the distinctions between the two forms of writing outlined earlier are expected to provide a framework for examining the impact the nature of these modes of discourse may have on the performance of the students. Nevertheless, the subjects of the present study will not be required to observe the stylistic subtleties at this stage.

3.4. Project teaching

The project teaching and testing activities lasted for a period of five weeks. That is, each form of writing was offered for two weeks, and the fifth week accounted for the pre and posttesting activities. Classes met three times a week, each contact hour lasting sixty minutes.

The same instructor who was also teaching in the regular Freshman Programme taught both the control and the study groups. The instructor was given adequate orientation about the purpose of the project teaching and he also read the Review of Literature (Chap. 2) with a special emphasis on group discussion techniques. The assistant instructor received teaching materials and feedback from the researcher through personal conferences. The researcher had observed the study group in session once every week.

3.4.1. Methods of teaching

A combination of some of the methods reviewed in chapter two were used with more emphasis on: Sample composition with selected structure practice (see 2.3.2.2.); Pre-writing activities (2.3.3.2); Using the text as a basic format (2.3.3.2.1).

3.4.2. Teaching informal letter writing

The introductory lesson on the informal letter was based on a material from (Carrier, 1981:8-10). Andy's informal letter to Sally (see Appendix .F.) and Johnson's 'formal' letter to Mr. Hawkes were used as sample texts.

The texts were used for the pre-writing oral practice on language, comprehension, text analysis, and for the demonstration of the format of the personal letter. This was accompanied by rewriting activities which were based on given prompts. Later, assignments such as the following were given.

Instructions: Imagine that you were Sally (or the recipient of Andy's letter). Read the letter carefully and write a reply to your friend in response to what you have read.

Use the following guide:

- i) Write your address, date and salutation;
- ii) Thank your friend for the letter, and say when you received it,
- iii) Express your pleasure at what your friend has done and is doing - moving into new flat, repainting, etc.;
- iv) Write about your exam results; what you are doing now;
- v) Promise to visit him/her after your final exam.

Before the students wrote this and the subsequent assignments, however, they were familiarised with the necessary functional language through texts like 'thank you' letters, letters of congratulation, invitation, and so on, which were read and explained by the instructor.

3.4.3. Teaching Report writing

The teaching of this mode of writing focused on newspaper reports with a particular emphasis on accident stories. The pre-writing explanations and the language practice were based on a material "Writing a newspaper report" (Mary Stephens (1986:67-69), (see Appendix E).

Other familiarisation activities included sequencing exercises in which the students rearranged jumbled sentences according to the order they happened (see Appendix C).

These activities were followed by a brief explanation and practice on note-taking and writing summaries from notes, Byrne (1979:77-78).

Example: Write a formal report from the notes below using full sentences:

10:30 Emergency call-accident on
A47 between Dunmow/Wallfield -
2 cars and 1 lorry involved.

In the report this will be:

"At 10:30 there was an emergency call.
The caller said that there had been an
accident on the A47 between Dunmow and
Wallfield. There were two cars and one
lorry involved in the accident."

(Carrier, 1981:57).

Later, the students read news stories for a given time (e.g. ten minutes) and took short notes from which they reproduced the texts in their "own" language. Alternatively, they took notes from newspaper stories read to them by the instructor (usu. two times) and produced summaries from the notes. In all of these cases, however, guidance was provided through questions on the texts to which it was suggested that the answers should be in note form. (See Appendix D for selected exercises).

3.4.4. Teaching the Control and the Study groups

In teaching the control group, the teacher followed his familiar procedures and saw to it that students wrote the tasks assigned after each lesson. He then corrected the scripts by clearly identifying the errors or mistakes and giving the correct forms whenever necessary. In the end, he returned the compositions with comments on the weaknesses and the strengths of the writers.

In the study group, the pre-writing exploratory work was based on the usual whole-class teaching through explanation and questions. But, when it came to the actual writing, students in this group wrote their rough drafts on the cues provided individually, and discussed their drafts in their groups. They then wrote the final copies in person. Alternatively, they discussed the cues, compared and improved their notes in their groups and prepared the final work individually.

In correcting the protocols, the instructor pointed out the locations of the errors or mistakes by underlining without specifying whether they were problems in grammar, vocabulary, agreement or spelling, and so on. The students then made the actual improvements in groups.

Pincas (1982:vi) in Writing in English points out that the members of the groups could actually work together; they could discuss the exact words and sentences to be used.

The teacher's role is to move around the room, helping each group with whatever is required, vocabulary grammar and making sure that everyone is involved.

3.5. Testing

In order to gather data and examine the effect of oral interaction on the complexity of written sentences, three tests (a Pretest and Posttests 1 and 2) were administered to the subjects of the study.

The Pretest was given before the commencement of the course to establish whether there was a significant difference between the two groups of freshmen in writing ability. The freshmen in both the control and the study groups were brought together and wrote composition on the topic of The Day I Joined Addis Ababa University. The topic was chosen not only because it referred to the students' recent experience, but it was also closely related to a writing assignment entitled The Most Memorable Day in My Life that they had in the fourth Unit of the Freshman English 101A course. Before the students wrote the test, they had a model text: The Day I Joined the Air Force read and discussed to them (see Appendix D).

The two Posttests were administered in the same manner at the end of each topic designed for the study (see Appendix D).

3.6. Procedures for data analysis

The procedures used for segmenting the students' written performance into T-units were a combination of the methods used by Loban (1963) and Hunt (1977).

Loban's index, known as the communication unit, is similar to the T-unit used by Hunt. Loban (Ibid.:82) states that although the communication unit was used to analyse the spoken language of school-children, the procedures can equally well be employed for the analysis of written composition.

3.6.1. The T-Unit index

In order to exemplify what he means by the T-unit, Hunt uses a passage that a typical fourth grade pupil wrote as a single sentence. The passage runs as:

I like the movie we saw about Moby Dick
the white whale the captain said if you
kill the white whale Moby Dick I will
give this gold to the one that can do it
and it is worth sixteen dollars they tried
and tried but while they were trying they
killed a whale and used the oil for the
lamps they almost caught the white whale.

(Hunt, 1977:63)

This passage can be cut into T-units as:

1. I like the move we saw about Moby
Dick the white whale
- 2 the captain said if you can kill the
white whale Moby Dick I will give this
gold to the one that can do it

3. and it is worth sixteen dollars
- 4 they tried and tried
- 5 but while they were trying they
killed a whale and used the oil
for the lamps
- 6 they almost killed the whale. (Ibid.:93).

The passage has six T-units, and a total of 68 words. The mean T-unit length can be obtained by dividing the number of words in the passage by the number of T-units (in this case $68/6 = 11.3$).

3.6.2. The Communication unit

A.F. Watts (1948:65-66) as Loban (1963:6-7) quotes him, defines the communication unit as "a group of words which cannot be further divided without the loss of their essential meaning". "I know a boy with red hair", according to Loban (Ibid.), is a unit of communication the essential meaning of which will be altered, if "with red hair" is omitted, for "I know a boy" does not have the same meaning as "I know a boy with red hair".

Loban notes that the words contained in a single communication unit include only one independent clause, or they are answers to questions which lack only the repetition of the question elements to satisfy the criterion of an independent clause. However, 'Yes' can be accepted as a unit of communication when it is an answer to questions such as, "Have you ever been sick?" Thus, communication units are not exclusively syntactic but are

also semantic, and can be identified by their meaning and form (Ibid.:6-7).

The example below illustrates how communication units are tallied. The slant line (/) marks the end of each communication unit.

Transcription of subject's language	Communi- cation units	No. of words in each com.U.
I'm going to get a boy 'cause he hit me./	3	11
I'm going to beat him up an' kick him in his nose / and I'm going to get the girl, too./		13
		9

(Ibid.:7)

In the last two communication units, the compound predicate that has the same subject stands as one unit while the compound sentence becomes two communication units. That is because, such a sentence can be split without the disappearance of essential meaning (Ibid.).

3.6.3. Difficulties in usage and grammar

In his analysis of oral performance, Loban identified language problems which he described as mazes, partial expressions, and unanalysable constructions. Mazes included occurrences such as hesitations, false starts, and meaningless repetitions which were not necessary to the

communication units (p.8). Unanalysable elements constituted constructions which could not be analysed with certainty (p. 14), while partial expressions were sentence patterns which were incomplete for one reason or another (p.827). When mazes were removed, the remaining utterance constituted an acceptable communication unit. The procedure involved bracketing the undesirable elements in the actual transcript and circling the number of words in the mazes.

Example:

	Transcription of subject's lang.	Com. Units	No. of words in com. units
1.	I'm going ... "I'm goin' to build a flying saucer / but I can't think how yet." /	2	3 - 8 7
2.	"When I was fixin' ready to go home, my mother called me up in the house / an' an' have to I have to get my hair combed". /	2	16 1 - 4 - 7
3	I saw a hunter program last Sunday / an' he, an' snow time he had to have lot uh wah - h when he, uh, not too many dogs, he ... and that is all I think of that picture". /	2	7 18 9

(Ibid.)

In number 1 above, there are two communication units. A maze with three words occurs at the beginning of the first communication unit. In number two, the first communication unit comprises 16 words and this is followed by a maze of 4 words. The maze is accompanied by the second communication unit of seven words.

3.6.4. Patterns of Communication Units

Loban classifies communication units under the following nine patterns and one partial or incomplete unit.

<u>"Pattern</u>	<u>Examples</u>
one	Mary eats. Or Mary is home.
two	Mary eats strawberries.
three	Strewberries are berries. Strawberries are good.
four	Mary threw the dog some biscuit.
five	They elected Mary president. They thought Susie conceited.
six	Here is Mary. There are four houses on Lime Street.
seven	How does he do it ? Is he here ?
eight	Strawberries were eaten by Mary.
nine	Go home. or Let us go home.
ten	Any incomplete unit," (Ibid.:14-15).

3.6.5. Procedures for Scording and analysis

3.6.5.1. Scoring compositions

The scripts produced by the students on Posttest 1 have been scored holistically on a scale of 0-10 by two independent instructors with over ten years of experience in teaching Freshman and Sophomore English. The purpose of the scoring was to check the correlation between syntactic fluency as measured in T-unit lengths and the rated quality of composition as evaluated holistically.

The raters were advised to follow the recommended procedures of general impression marking, such as, for example, sorting the scripts into "Very good", 'Good' or 'poor' on the first reading and scoring them on the final reading.

3.6.5.2. Procedures for data analysis

This sub-section presents a summary of the methods used for analysing grammatical errors and segmenting compositions into T-units.

3.6.5.2.1. Grammatical errors

The grammatical errors in the student compositions had been classified into ten linguistic categories as determined by the subjects' output on the Pretest. The categories included Agreement, Articles, Capitalization, Prepositions, Punctuation, Spelling, Syntax, Tense, Vocabulary and 'Other' (miscellaneous errors).

As some of the errors were found to be difficult to classify into one group or another, the following explanation was included along with a textual exemplification presented in the subsequent sub-section.

i) Errors in vocabulary, for example, involved confused uses of lexical items and the uses of wrong word forms (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns).

Example: I looked many students
I asked the gatekeeper for entrance.
I travelled alonely.

ii) Deviations in syntax included omissions of subjects, objects, or verbs; the misuse of stative passives and connectives; unidiomatic expressions; faults in word order and other problems in sentence construction.

Example: I said good-bye to my family on 11, 1989.

After we have completed the forms we allowed to go.

I went to my home.

I said, "We ^ better go now".

I met students whom I knew them.

We had also lunch.

No problem appeared on me.

ii) The lack of concord between nouns and verbs, pronouns and referents, and among other expressions had been classified as problems in agreement.

Example: There was many students in the hall.

Monday, September 15, was one of the important day in my life.

iv) Other miscellaneous errors involved less frequent faults in the scripts like, separating common compound words (for example, 'class room' for 'classroom'; 'break fast' for 'breakfast'); joining words which are normally written separately, and syllabication problems.

3.6.5.2.2. Procedures for T-unit analysis

One of the difficulties in the use of the T-unit index is said to be the absence of fixed procedures for segmenting

texts into T-units (Witte, 1983:171-177). Thus, some procedures had been devised for use in this study on the basis of other related works (e.g. Loban, 1963; Hunt, 1977; Kameen, 1983). Thus:

i) Years (e.g. 1990); and expressions of time (when written in words as 'ten-thirty', or in figures as '10:30') were tallied as single words.

ii) Abbreviations and contracted forms were counted as full words (e.g. 'didn't' = 2 words; A.A.U. = three words).

iii) Irrelevant words, phrases and fragments in the scripts were enclosed in square brackets. That is, the brackets set off constructions the omissions of which resulted in correct sentences. Thus, such elements were excluded from the total word count tabulated for each student.

Example: Monday, Sept. 18, 1989 / this day / was the most important day in my life.

I ~~w~~ was / never went to Jimma.

I returned / back to my / home.

The freshman party / which / is to be held on Easter Eve.

Each bracket above was scored as a single problem in Syntax.

iv) But, errors in Vocabulary which, if omitted did not result in an improved version, were underlined and scored as errors, but maintained as parts of the text.

Example: The hall can accompany many students.

v) Faulty repetitions were also put in square brackets and left out.

Example: I did not know where the / the / office was. The redundant 'the' was tallied as an error in Article although it was just a slip of the pen.

vi) Carets () were used to indicate omissions.

Example: I arrived Addis. The caret in this example was scored as a problem in Preposition.

vii) Finally, the protocols were segmented into T-units. The T-unit length (words per T-unit) was obtained by dividing the number of words in the protocol by the number of T-units.

The procedures outlined above and in the previous sections were applied to a composition completed by subject No. 7 (Control Group) on the Pretest. The writing was reproduced in its original form and was not untypical of the kind of writing performed by many of the subjects. The lines were numbered for ease of reference.

The Day I Joined A. A. U.

1 Meskerem 11, 1982 E. C. was an important day
2 on which I join A. A. U. / ^T ^{Prep} Thursday, 11^S 1982 in
3 the morning I said "good-by ^{Prep} ^{Sp} ^{Prep} my family" / ^{Cap} since
4 my family's home ^{SP} is ^T 10 kilo^O meter ^{Ag} [away] ^S from
5 the bus station ^{Prep} I ^T should go on foot. / I
6 started my journey ^{SP} in the morning. / I ^{SP} arrived
7 at ^{ARE} bus station which is ^T found in Debre Zeit
8 at about 10:00 a.m. / I didn't get ^{ARE} bus as soon
9 as I ^{SP} arrived there. / But ^S I ^{Prep} queued ^{Prep} a half
10 hour and got at about 10:30 [hour] ^S. / ^{Cap} since
11 the bus was fast ^{Prep} I ^T could arrive at ^{Cap} 'legehar'
12 after one hour ^S ^{Sp} journey. / From ^{Cap} 'legehar' I ^{SP} arrived
13 at ^{Cap} 27 kilo ^{Cap} by ^{Sp} bus and went to the registration
14 place ^V which was [in] ^{Prep} ^{Cap} hall 4. / The hall ^T can
15 accompany ^V many students. / ^{Prep} ^{Ag} From these students I
16 ^V got three students whom I knew [them] ^S. / After registra-

Correction Key:

Ag: Agreement	Sp: Spelling
Art: Article	S: Syntax
Cap: Capitalisation	T: Tense
Prep: Prepositions	V: Vocabulary
Punc: Punctuation	O: Other

The slant line (/) marks the end of each T-unit

Grammatical and T-unit analysis for Subject No. 7
(see p. 71).

Grammatical errors

Type of error		total as %
Spelling	(10)	21.28
Capitalisation	(7)	14.89
Syntax	(7)	14.89
Tense	(6)	12.77
Prepositions	(5)	10.64
Vocabulary	(4)	8.51
Punctuation	(3)	6.38
Agreement	(2)	4.26
Article	(2)	4.26
Other	(1)	2.13

T-unit analysis

Number of words: 150 (155 - / 5 /)
Number of T-units: 13
T-unit length (W/T-u): 11.5

TABLE I: Pretest Results

(Control Group, N = 23)				
S. No.	No. of Words	No. of T-u	Words/T-u	No. of Errors
1	117	12	9.8	35
2	131	13	10.1	23
3	85	8	10.6	9
4	132	10	13.2	10
5	187	16	11.7	29
6	142	17	8.3	23
7	150	13	11.5	47
8	115	9	12.8	23
9	121	14	8.6	13
10	104	7	14.9	7
11	95	8	11.9	21
12	102	10	10.2	25
13	97	8	12.1	11
14				
15	85	6	14.1	6
16	164	18	9.1	25
17	82	10	8.2	19
18	77	8	9.6	20
19	90	9	10.0	30
20	93	7	13.3	10
21				
22	110	11	10.0	9
23	70	7	10.0	1
24	86	10	8.6	14
25	80	8	10.0	11
26				
27				
28				
29				
Tot.	2515	239	248.6	421
Mean	109.34	10.39	10.81	1:5

TABLE II: Pretest Results

(Study Group N = 28)				
S. No.	No. of Words	No. of T-u	Words/T-u	No. of Errors
1	106	7	15.1	11
2	128	9	13.8	26
3	90	10	9.0	13
4				
5	146	13	11.2	6
6	172	16	10.8	18
7	86	10	8.6	11
8	170	13	13.1	10
9	154	15	10.3	17
10				
11	75	7	10.7	12
12	92	11	8.4	10
13				
14	93	11	8.5	13
15				
16	76	9	8.4	11
17	149	16	9.3	25
18	83	7	11.9	8
19	83	7	11.9	3
20	83	6	13.8	9
21	93	10	9.3	24
22	100	9	11.1	10
23	99	12	8.3	19
24	92	10	9.2	20
25	88	10	8.8	24
26	98	9	10.9	13
27	104	10	10.4	8
28	103	8	12.9	11
29	80	8	10.0	12
30	79	8	9.9	7
31	73	7	10.4	7
32	110	9	12.2	10
Tot.	2905	277	298.65	368
Mean	103.75	9.89	10.65	1:7

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research questions presented in Chapter 1 (see 1.2) are discussed in relation to the data collected from three writing tests.

Topic 1 (Pretest) was an autobiographical account that followed the format of freshman writing familiar to the subjects. This test was administered to determine whether there was a significant difference between the groups in writing ability in terms of the paradigms used in the study, i.e., mean T-unit length, number of words, and error-word ratio.

The second test (Posttest 1) was a personal letter based on specific purposes and audience.

Topic 3 (Posttest 2) was a newspaper story -an impersonal topic for a general reader.

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Results of the Pretest

Tables I and II on page 73 show the results of the Pretest. 51 students (23 from the control and 28 from the study group) reported for the test.

The subjects in the control group wrote a total of 2515 words in 239 T-Units. The average word output and the

computed mean T-unit length (\bar{x}_1) for the group were 109.34 and 10.81 respectively with an error-word ratio of nearly 1:5.

The study group produced a total of 2905 running words in 277 T-units. The group average word count was 103.75 with a computed mean T-unit length (\bar{x}_2) of 10.65. The error-word ratio for this group turned out to be about 1:7.

The raw data indicate that the control group slightly exceeded the study group in both average word and mean T-unit length outputs while the error-word ratio was in favour of the study group.

The standard deviation (Sx_1) and the variance (S^2x_1) were 1.899 and 3.608 respectively for the control group. For the study group (Sx_2) and (S^2x_2) were observed as 1.870 and 3.497 respectively. An 'f' test showed that the variance between the groups was not statistically significant, meaning that the groups were homogeneous with respect to their performance on the Pretest. That again means that a 't' test can be applied to check the difference between the groups in their mean performance. Thus, a statistical computation carried out by using the formula:

$$t_{ob} = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\frac{(N_1-1)S_1^2 + (N_2-1)S_2^2 \left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2}\right)}{N_1 + N_2 - 2}}$$

TABLE III: Results of Postt. 1.

(Control Group N = 21)				
S. No.	No. of Words	No. of T-u	Words/T-u	No. of Errors
1				
2	136	13	10.5	15
3	136	11	12.4	14
4	134	12	11.2	8
5	108	12	9.0	22
6	123	10	12.3	34
7	153	15	10.2	8
8	87	8	10.9	8
9	165	16	10.3	18
10	118	12	9.8	8
11	68	6	11.3	19
12	81	10	8.1	10
13	137	14	9.8	11
14				
15	160	14	11.4	17
16	71	6	11.8	17
17	106	10	10.6	26
18	85	8	10.6	16
19	121	11	11.0	27
20	107	12	8.9	12
21				
22	133	15	8.9	19
23	163	16	10.2	11
24	84	6	14.0	13
25				
26				
27				
28				
Tot.	2476	237	223.2	328
Mean	117.9	11.28	10.63	1:7

TABLE IV: Results of Postt. 1.

(Study Group N = 24)				
S. No.	No. of Words	No. of T-u	Words/T-u	No. of Errors
1				
2	128	12	10.7	9
3	144	11	13.1	5
4				
5	174	18	9.7	10
6	117	12	9.8	10
7	94	9	10.4	9
8	105	8	13.1	9
9	152	12	12.7	13
10				
11	148	13	11.4	7
12	101	9	11.2	10
13				
14	132	11	12.0	24
15				
16				
17	152	14	10.9	5
18	148	15	9.9	11
19	115	12	9.6	5
20	109	9	12.1	10
21				
22	128	15	8.5	16
23	161	15	10.7	14
24	90	7	12.9	10
25	130	10	13.0	26
26	106	10	10.6	16
27	161	12	13.4	13
28	135	14	9.6	14
29				
30	130	11	11.8	11
31	130	12	10.8	12
32	117	10	11.7	12
	3107	281	296.6	281
	129.5	11.71	11.23	1:10

showed that the difference between the two groups was not significant at the .05 level of confidence and 49° of freedom.

4.1.2. Results of Posttest 1

Tables III and IV on p. 76 show the results of Posttest 1. Twenty-one students from the control group and 24 from the study group wrote Posttest two.

The control group wrote 2476 words in a total of 237 T-units. The average word output for the group was 117.9 with a mean (\bar{x}_1) T-unit length of 10.63 words. The group error-word ratio was barely 1:7).

The study group, on the other hand, produced a maximum of 3107 words in 281 T-units. The mean T-unit length (\bar{x}_2) was 11.23 and the error-word ratio rose to 1:10.

According to the raw data, there was an increase in average performance on Posttest 1 as opposed to the Pretest. The average word output for both groups rose from 106.55 on the pretest to 123.7 on Posttest 1. The average number of T-units for both groups also increased from 10.14 on the Pretest to 11.50 on Posttest 1. The mean T-unit length average for the groups also rose steadily from 10.73 on the Pretest to 10.93 on Posttest 1. There also was a similar progress in the proportion of error-free words to errors.

TABLE V: Results of Postt. 2

(Control Group N = 20)				
S. No.	No. of Words	No. of T-u	Words/T-u	No. of Errors
1				
2	97	11	8.8	31
3	126	13	9.7	28
4	131	14	9.4	11
5	127	14	9.0	26
6	120	10	12.0	22
7	125	12	10.4	19
8	172	16	10.8	24
9	110	12	9.2	22
10	136	14	9.7	36
11				
12	138	12	11.5	21
13	128	14	9.1	30
14				
15	152	12	12.7	21
16	79	11	7.2	22
17	144	17	8.5	39
18	112	10	11.2	14
19				
20	111	12	9.3	9
21				
22	134	12	11.2	23
23	141	11	12.8	18
24	89	11	8.0	20
25	113	13	8.7	19
26				
27				
28				
29				
Tot.	2485	251	199.2	455
Mean	124.3	12.55	9.96	1:4

TABLE VI: Results of Postt. 2

(Study Group N = 25)				
S. No.	No. of Words	No. of T-u	Words/T-u	No. of Errors
1				
2	94	12	7.8	19
3	106	11	9.6	13
4				
5	142	11	12.9	7
6	140	15	9.3	14
7	80	10	8.0	11
8	108	12	9.2	12
9	137	13	10.5	25
10				
11	154	15	10.3	22
12	128	12	10.7	6
13				
14	118	11	10.7	33
15				
16	108	10	10.8	11
17	151	15	10.1	30
18	115	12	9.6	12
19	87	9	9.7	11
20	112	8	14.0	14
21				
22	109	10	10.9	7
23				
24	111	13	8.5	17
25	126	13	9.7	46
26	140	11	12.7	15
27	120	13	9.2	22
28	121	10	12.1	11
29	91	10	9.1	14
30	123	14	8.9	18
31	139	12	11.6	23
32	104	11	9.5	6
Tot.	2966	293	255.4	419
Mean	118.6	11.72	10.22	1:6

On the other hand, the study group which performed a little below the control group on the Pretest maintained its lead in error-word ratio and exceeded the control group in terms of all the other indices outlined above. Especially interesting was the variation in mean T-unit length. While this unit slightly dropped for the control group from 10.81 on the Pretest to 10.63 on Posttest 1, it jumped from 10.65 on the Pretest to 11.23 on Posttest 1 for the study group. The difference between the groups in mean T-unit length, that is, between (\bar{x}_1) and (\bar{x}_2) , therefore, was 0.6.

4.1.3. Results of Posttest 2

Tables V & VI (p. 78) depict the results of Posttest 2. Forty-five students (20 from the control group and 25 from the study group) sat the test.

The students in the control group wrote 2485 words in 251 T-units with an average number of 12.55 T-units for each writer. The average word output and the mean T-unit length (\bar{x}_1) being 124.3 and 9.96 respectively. The error-word ratio for the group was something like 1:4.

The total word and T-unit count for the study group turned out to be 2966 and 293 respectively. The average word output and the computed mean T-unit length (\bar{x}_2) were 118.6 and 10.22 respectively with an error-word ratio of 1:6.

The raw data show that there was an overall drop in performance on Posttest 2 in contrast to the Pretest and Posttest 1. The average number of words produced by both groups on Topics 1 and 2 was 2750.75 but 2725.5 on topic 3. The average T-unit output for the two groups was 10.82 on Topics 1 and 2, but 10.09 on the third Topic. The average mean T-unit length which was 10.79 on the first two tests dropped to 10.01 on the final test. Similarly, the error-word ratio declined from 1:7 to nearly 1:6 on the average.

In addition, the results of Posttest 2 varied for the two groups in a few different ways. On the level of average word and T-unit output, the control group exceeded the study group. In respect to mean T-unit length and error-word ratio, however, the study group excelled the control group.

Comparisons made on Posttests 1 and 2 separately, and on the combined results of the two tests revealed that the differences in performance between the two groups were not significant statistically (see combined results in Tables VII and VIII, Appendix A)

4.1.4. Analysis of grammatical errors

Table IX on page 82 presents the analysis of grammatical errors observed in the subjects' scripts on the three tests.

The table shows that error in Capitalization constituted the bulk of the problem for both groups of students on the Pretest, and remained the same throughout the three tests for the control group. The problem gradually, but consistently dropped for the study group.

On Posttest 2, errors categorised as 'Other' became a major source of difficulty for the control group and comparatively more serious for the study group. (See Appendix C for the frequency of errors tallied for each writer.)

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. The T-unit index

In the T-unit theory subordination is considered as a more mature and difficult form of expression than simple sentences joined by 'and' or 'but'. The unit measures fluency in both the spoken and written mediums. Although its segmentation and analysis involve isolating and excluding language tangles which do not make semantic sense or elements which are impossible to classify, the T-unit does not account for relations among ideas or for grammatical accuracy as such. In respect to this Lohan writes:

TABLE IX: Grammatical Errororp

Error on the Pretest	Type of error	Total as % (Control group)	Total as % (Study group)
	Capitalization	19.00	19.54
	Spelling	17.10	9.24
	Prepositions	13.78	17.93
	Syntax	12.83	9.51
	Vocabulary	11.63	14.13
	Tense	7.60	10.05
	Articles	6.41	4.35
	Punctuation	4.99	6.25
	Agreement	1.67	1.90
	Other	4.99	7.07
Error on Posttest 1.	Capitalization	25.30	16.37
	Prepositions	14.94	17.79
	Vocabulary	14.94	12.46
	Punctuation	10.37	10.68
	Spelling	9.76	12.46
	Syntax	7.32	9.96
	Articles	6.10	5.69
	Tense	3.96	4.98
	Agreement	2.13	4.27
	Other	5.18	5.34
Error on Posttest 2.	Capitalization	15.16	12.17
	Vocabulary	12.09	20.29
	Syntax	11.21	12.17
	Articles	10.55	7.40
	Punctuation	3.35	8.11
	Spelling	6.81	7.40
	Prepositions	6.59	11.93
	Tense	5.71	3.58
	Agreement	4.84	5.97
	Other	18.68	10.98

... Obviously, fluency with words unaccompanied by organisation or coherence can be a vice rather than a virtue, but the ability to find words with which to express oneself - and to find them readily - is normally one mark of success with language (Loban, 1963:29).

One of the major conventions of written English is to use sentences that represent complete units of information through a main statement and qualifications as single units. Although too many bits of information tend to defeat the reader, ~~for~~ more clarity and readability are achieved by the use of a variety of sentences consisting of a main statement plus a maximum of one or two qualifications rather than through a monotonous series of simple sentences (Kirkman, 1980:6-10).

Originally, the T-unit was used to get information about children's syntactic development. In the subsequent years, however, it was employed in a variety of pedagogical and textual research both in the native and non-native language situations and influenced teaching, evaluation and research (see Chap. 2, pages 46 and 51).

One of the characteristic traits of the T-unit is that its length varies across discourse samples (see Chap.2, p. 52). Witte (1983:171-177) reports that the variation is more pronounced among inexperienced writers. The data presented in 4.1 above indicates that the students whose writing was examined in this study appeared to use different

T-unit lengths on the Pretest and Posttest 1, on the one hand, and on Posttest 2 on the other. The average mean T-unit length for both groups on Topics 1 and 2 was 10.79, but only 10.01 on Topic 3. Thus, it seems possible to relate this variation to the unstability of the T-unit across discourse samples mentioned above.

In addition, the overall quantitative decline in performance on Topic 3 in contrast to the first two Topics may suggest that the students in both groups have found Topic 3 more challenging than Topics 1 and 2. In other words, it may be that the need to call on recent personal experience (Topic 1, Pretest), and the explicit purpose and audience (Topic 2, personal letter) have facilitated writing more than did the reporting of factual information to the general reader (Posttest 2).

The letter which Saida wrote to her friend Tsion is reproduced and discussed below in an attempt to justify the assumption made above - the effect of explicit purpose and audience on writing.

*Saida - Workneh

P.O. Box 1286

A.A.

*Ethiopia

March 29, 1990

1 *DEAREST Tsion.

2 How are you ? I am fine. How is life
3 going at Gondar ? I hope you have liked it by
4 now. By the way, I have received your letter

4 yesterday. I can't tell you how pleased
5 I was to hear that you got good grades
6 in your first semester exam.

7 Tsion, Learning in Arat Killo Campus
8 is very difficult because even if you work
9 very hard, you might not get good grades.
10 Anyway, mine was good and I have Joined the
11 Department of STATISTICS. I think you will
12 come in Addis for the coming holday. I am
13 looking forward to see you soon. I can't
14 tell you how I have missed you for the past
seven monthes.

15 Tsion, I want you to come to the annual
16 freshman party to be held on the eve of the
17 Ethiopian Easter. At Hilton hotel in may 4,
18 1990 from 8 pm - 5pm. I hope you will be there.

Yours truely
Saida-Workneh
(Signature)

It seems that Saida started the task a bit awakwardly.
For example, she wrote her address inappropriately. The
layout of the salutation including the period were not
appropriate either. Moreover, the first four sentences
were very short indeed, perhaps indicating some strain
due to lack of experiance.

But, ideas seem to flow towards the middle of the first paragraph and afterwards. The last sentences of paragraphs 1 and 2, for instance, are forceful and fluent. The statement made freely in the first sentence of the middle paragraph seems unlikely to be written if Saida had a teacher audience in mind, instead of an intimate friend, "DEAREST" Tsion, who is addressed at the beginning of every paragraph.

It also sounds that the writer had too many things to say to bother about the instructions given in the test, and the model text she had heard (see Appendix D). She did not, for example, thank her friend for the letter she had received. Nor did she congratulate Tsion in the way she had been taught and directed in the test. As she had already said "I can't tell you how pleased I was ..." (end of first para.), it seems difficult to think that she was evading the required task by not expressing her pleasure at her friend's coming to Addis.

The last paragraph turned out to be the poorest, perhaps indicating the writer's inability to allocate her paper and time for the major task required in the test (invitation), and thus ended her letter by giving dangerously confused place, date and time for the party. On the basis of her total performance, however, it is possible to guess that Saida would not end the first

sentence of the last paragraph at 'Easter' and start a new sentence with 'At' if she were not in haste.

In spite of the fact that Saide appeared to be highly preoccupied with her own ideas in this test, she almost did nothing but reproduce the model text on the report-writing task (see Appendix G).

A further distinguishing feature of the communication unit (or the T-unit) is that its amount increases gradually from one school year to another, Loban (1963:33). In Hunt's rewriting experiment for a population of 250 schoolchildren, for example, words per T-unit for grades 4 to 12 increased at every two year interval, the figures being: G_4 , 5.4; G_6 , 6.8; G_8 9.8; G_{10} , 10.4; G_{12} , 11.3. And these figures were significant at the .01 level (see Chapt. 2 , p.50).

Although Hunt had used a rewriting instrument on which the mean T-unit length produced even by professional writers was only 14.8 words (see Chap. 2, p. 50), the difference between his eighth and tenth grade writers was just 0.6.

The difference in mean T-unit length between the control and the study groups on the guided writing in this study was 0.6 (Posttest 1) and 0.26 (Posttest 2), or 0.43 on average. On the face of the slow development of the T-unit mentioned earlier, therefore, it seems difficult to undermine the superiority the study group has gained

over the control group in a period of four weeks of collaborative activities. Moreover, the inability of the study group to gain markedly may also be explained in terms of the gradual increase of the unit.

With regard to the T-unit length, Hunt, 1977 claims that successively older children or skilled writers consolidate a larger number of basic sentences into single T-units, thus reducing the number of units by combining them in a complex fashion (see Chap. 2, p. 49).

Tables V and VI above show that the control group in the present study slightly exceeded the study group by the average amount of words and T-units they wrote on Posttest 2. But the students in the study group tended to excel those in the control group by the average mean T-unit length they produced on the same test. A possible reason for these variations may be that the students in the study group were reducing their number of words and T-units by combining them more skilfully.

That is to say that the students in the control group were perhaps writing sentences like: "The fire started in the kitchen", and "The fire spoiled the holiday", thus producing more words and T-units. The subjects in the study group, on the other hand, were probably producing lesser words and T-units by using sentences such as: "The first which started in the kitchen spoiled the holiday".

4.2.2. Grammatical errors

Table IX on page 82 shows that Capitalization was the major source of trouble for both groups of students, especially in the Pretest. The subjects not only found it difficult to start their new sentences and proper names or days and months (Sunday, September) with capital letters, but also used capital letters in the middle of their sentences manifesting little sensitivity to the conventions. (See lines 8 and 11 in Saïda's letter above, for example).
The freshman who wrote: "I departed From my Family For the
First time" was not an outstanding exception among the two groups of students considered here.

The writing samples of the students illustrate a general tendency towards the use of subordinating devices. However, attempts to use subordination often result in restraining the expectations of the reader and in a breakdown of syntactic control. In the sample reproduced in Chapter 3, p.71 for example, the writer made two such attempts: "ince my family's hom is ten kils meter away from t e bus station I should go on foot" (lines 3-6); and "Since the bus was fast I could arive at 'legehar' after one hour journy" (lines 10-12). Both of these attempts reflect the difficulty outlined earlier. (See Recommendations, Chap. 5, for suggestions).

In Posttest 2, errors categorised as 'Other' became the most serious for the control group (18.68%) and comparatively more frequent for the study group (10.98%). Among other things, this category designates faults associated with the splitting of compound words which are commonly written together. The increase in the amount of this problem may be explained by the fact that the sample text which the students read in preparation for the test consisted of compound words like, 'firemen', 'everyone', 'everybody' thus, providing more opportunities for errors.

On the other hand, errors in Vocabulary and Syntax became more severe for the study group and ranked higher for the control group on the same test. This was taken as a further implication of the assumption that this task turned out to be more demanding than the other two forms of writing. A closer reading of the compositions indicated that some students, particularly those in the control group, tended to reproduce the model, thus making lesser errors in Vocabulary and syntax than the study group.

The writing samples of many of the students in the study manifested lack of general control of simple sentences, and little awareness of the use of subordinating devices, and so on. However, there also were a few freshmen whose work demonstrated control of sentence structure with fewer errors in word forms and a definite awareness and use of

subordination. A few samples have been appended to show, at least minimally, the range of differences that prevailed among the students (see Appendix G).

4.2.3. Correlation

Writing samples completed by both groups of subjects on Posttest 2 were evaluated holistically by two instructors on a scale of 0-10. The scores of each group of students was correlated to their mean T-unit length output on the same test by using the formula:

$$r = \frac{E(XY) - E(X)E(Y)}{S_X S_Y}$$

The mean rated quality score for the control and the study groups was 7.29 and 8.04 respectively. The average mean T-unit length computed for the control and the study groups was 10.63 and 11.3 words respectively (see 4.1.2. above). The correlation (r) between syntactic fluency and the rated quality of writing was observed to be -0.9 for the control group, and -0.2 for the study group. That means, there was a negative correlation between syntactic complexity and the rated quality of writing for both groups of students in this study. In other words, the correlation indicates that the longer the T-units the students produced, the lower the rated quality of their writing.

As it was pointed out earlier (see 4.2.2) the students' attempts to use subordination often resulted in confusing the reader and breaking down syntactic control. This problem might have resulted in long T-unit writers being awarded poorer grades by the holistic evaluation.

In a related literature, Loban (1963:61) points out that complex sentences sometimes reflect confusion rather than control. Thus, it may be concluded that the subjects who produced longer T-units in the present study mostly did so not because they were fluent writers, but because they could not control basic sentence structures.

Kameen (1983:162-170) who puts the figure for long T-units at (21+) words writes that there was an apparent correlation between the incidence of long T-units and the rated quality of his college level ESL writers. The mean T-unit length for Kameen's 'Good' and 'Poor' writers was 18.40 and 14.30 words respectively.

The T-unit length produced by Hunt's typical fourth grade native speaker was 11.3 words (see Chap. 3, 3.6.1.).

The tables presented in 4.1 above show that the mean T-unit length produced by individual writers in this study ranged from 7.2 to 15.1 words. However, the average mean T-unit length written by both groups of students

was generally less than 11 words, that is, below that of an average fourth grader and/or approximating the output of a below-average native speaker. It may, therefore, be observed that the average words per T-unit output of the subjects of the present study is startlingly low by both native and ESL standards.

This result in freshman writing ability correlates with what Mendida reported about the reading ability of freshmen at Bahr-Dar Teachers' College (one of the out-laying campuses of Addis Ababa University). In his M.A. thesis, Mendida (1988) reported that the freshmen he dealt with read textbooks of grade four difficulty level with the help of the teacher.

4.2.4. Group discussion

The practical benefits that group activity has in the teaching of writing include the overcoming of boredom and frustration which sitting and writing silently entail. It is also believed that collaborative work provides opportunities in which student writers have to interact with each other both in speech and writing. They, thus write for a real reader, not to please the teacher, or get an answer right. Scholars believe that these situations develop confidence and enhance competence (see Chap. 2, pp.33-40).

At the beginning of the project teaching, the 28 subjects in the study group formed 9 smaller groups. Group discussion was then initiated by asking the students to arrange a given list of qualities in the order they would wish their friends to have. The list of qualities was: 'amusing, attractive, good tempered, helpful, intelligent, similar interests' (Byrne, 1987). The assignment was given to both groups of students and the study group almost unanimously put 'similar interests' first and 'amusing' or 'attractive' last, showing that there was teamwork. There was more disagreement in the responses of the control group.

Observations of subsequent classes indicated that everybody was busy talking, reading, and writing. However, the verbal interactions were not loud or heated showing perhaps that the students were conscious of the classroom atmosphere. Some groups stayed behind at the end of classes discussing their assignments. Others were seen following the teacher and asking questions on correction points. One group of students (Group No. 6) turned in decorated letters, probably showing more commitment to the assignments. The remarks of the students which were gathered verbatim at the end of the project teaching were also positive. Moreover, their final results consistently, but not significantly, showed that they were gaining more than the members of the control group which had to work individually.

4.2.5. Tests and Subjects

4.2.5.1. Tests

The samples of writing were drawn from controlled situations identical for all subjects. The time allowed for each test was 40 minutes.

The Pretest was given on Feb. 2, 1990, just before the beginning of the project teaching. Although the title of the test, The Day I Joined Addis Ababa University was related to a writing assignment used in the first semester English course, some familiarisation activities were carried out before the test.

Posttest 1 was completed on 29 March, 1990, after two weeks of teaching following the Pretest. However, as the teaching was interrupted by a series of student demonstrations, the test was administered behind the actual schedule.

This test involved the writing of a personal letter to a contrived friend. The communicative tasks required include: 'thanking', 'congratulating', 'expressing pleasure', and 'inviting'. The instructor helped the students start by reading them a model letter (see Appendix D).

Posttest 2 was administered on April 17, 1990 after the writing of accident stories had been taught for two weeks following Posttest 1.

The students wrote an accident story on the headline Hotel Fire Spoiled Holiday. The task involved reading a story, note-making, and rewriting. The subject-matter of this test was closely related to the letter written in Posttest 1 in order to simulate the reporting of observed facts (see Appendix D), p.).

4.2.5.2. Subjects

Although the Faculty enrollment list shows the number of students in Statistics 1B and Chemistry 1C to be 28 and 32 respectively, only 25 of the former and 28 of the latter reported for the regular classes. Almost all of these attended the irregular sessions arranged for the project teaching. Since attendance was voluntary, a few of the students missed one or the other of the Posttests. A few others had their results excluded for not taking the Pretest (see Tables VII and VIII, Appendix A).

Six of the subjects (no. 3, 12, 13, 15, 17, 23) in the control group were girls. There were no female students in the study group. Table X below shows that on the Pretest, the average performance of the female students was below that of the group average in their own section and in the study group in terms of all the paradigms used in the study.

On Posttest 1, the average mean T-unit length for the girls was still less than the group output. But, their average word and T-unit outputs exceeded the group averages in their own section and in the study group.

Table X: Results of Female Students

S. No.	Pretest			Posttest 1			Posttest 2		
	No. of words	No. of T-u	Words/ T-u	No. of words	No. of T-u	Words/ T-u	No. of words	No. of T-u	Words/ T-u
3	85	8	10.6	136	11	12.4	126	13	9.7
12	102	10	10.2	81	10	8.1	138	12	11.5
13	97	8	12.1	137	14	9.8	128	14	9.1
15	85	6	14.1	160	14	11.4	152	12	12.7
17	82	10	8.2	106	10	10.6	144	17	8.5
23	70	7	10.0	163	16	10.2	141	11	12.8
Tot.	521	49	65.2	783	75	62.5	829	79	64.3
Mean	86.83	8.17	10.63	130.5	12.5	10.44	138.17	13.17	10.49

On Posttest 2, however, the female subjects' average output rose above that of the group average in their own section and in the study group in terms of average word and T-unit count as well as in mean T-unit length manifesting some more progress than the male subjects.

The attendance register showed that none of the girls missed the sessions designed for the study. A closer reading into the girls' protocols, nevertheless, indicates that they

have taken advantage of the unmanageable nature of Posttest 2 by tending to reproduce the model text. Thus, it will be difficult to relate their superiority to certain findings in the literature which report that girls seem more prolific than their male counterparts. For example, Loban (1963:67) reports that the boys in the high group were superior to the girls in the same group, while girls in the low group made scores better than those of the boys in the low group.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

Writing is an instrument of both communication and self-expression. Students in the higher institutions of learning, however, need writing in the English language in order to pass essay type examinations, and to write term and research papers.

In spite of its pedagogical significance, however, the writing skill is often neglected in language teaching courses. One of the reasons for the neglect is that the task turns out to be the most difficult for both native and non-native language learners. Further problems that are associated with this skill include the lack of methods of teaching and evaluation which are acceptable to all teachers and textbook writers. Some writers recommend strictly controlled exercises while others advise that free expression should be encouraged even in the early stages of language teaching programmes.

Although scholars differ with respect to the approaches for teaching, they accept that in non-native language situations, effective functional writing should be emphasised rather than creative self-expression. Writers also believe that non-native learners find it difficult to write on unspecified subject-matter and without

clearly indicated purpose and audience and suggest that writing for such learners should be as close as possible to genuine language use.

Many writers on writing further recommend group discussion in which students are encouraged to help each other as a profitable technique of teaching composition. The technique, the scholars, argue, facilitates the integration of language skills. In addition, talking on an assigned topic is believed to provide subject-matter and the required functional language to the learners.

For the assessment of writing, holistic evaluation which considers the total effect of composition is often recommended as an effective device provided that there is careful planning. Another index of measurement of, at least, one aspect of writing is said to be the T-unit. This index of syntactic analysis has been recognised as a much more valid unit of syntactic maturity than other measures.

In the present study an attempt was made to examine the effectiveness of group discussion on the syntactic maturity of Addis Ababa University freshmen currently enrolled in the Departments of Chemistry and Statistics. The students in Chemistry 1C were allowed to discuss assigned topics and notes before they wrote, and then to edit each other's scripts on the basis of guidelines

provided by the instructor. The freshmen in Statistics 1B, on the other hand, followed the familiar method in which writers sit silently and work individually.

Both groups of students practised the informal or personal letter writing and newspaper reporting during the five-week project teaching. At the end of the teaching, writing samples were drawn from tests administered in identical situations for all subjects. The scripts were then analysed in terms of the amount of words produced, mean T-unit length, and the ratio of errors to error-free words.

The results of the analysis can be summarised as follows:

As pointed out in Chapter 1, (see 1.2) the major purpose of the study was to examine whether group discussion as a method of teaching composition could contribute to syntactic fluency in writing. As a matter of fact, the raw data collected from the three writing tests indicated that the subjects in the study group who had performed slightly below the control group on the Pretest were producing better texts in terms of the mean T-unit length on the subsequent Posttests. However, the superiority the study group gained over the control group was not significant statistically, perhaps for the reasons stated in Chapter 4 above.

On the basis of the statistical figures, therefore, the Null hypothesis (H_0) stated in Chapter 1 (see 1.5.1.) was accepted, and the alternate hypothesis (H_1) was rejected.

The consistent, but statistically insignificant differences between the mean performances of the two groups of subjects in favour of the study group may suggest that collaborative work tends to be a helpful technique of developing syntactic maturity in both the subjective and objective forms of texts. But the specification of purpose and audience as well as writing about recent personal experiences tend to facilitate writing as opposed to reporting to a general audience.

The correlation between syntactic skill and the rated quality of writing indicated that the two scores were negatively and significantly correlated for the control group, and negatively but non-significantly correlated for the study group.

The overall average performance of the two groups on Posttest 1 tended to be better than the performance on the Pretest, probably showing that the students were gaining steadily from the project teaching in terms of all the paradigms used in the study. But, this tendency was blurred on Posttest 2, perhaps owing to the instability of the T-unit across text types.

The analysis of T-units and that of grammar suggested that the freshmen whose writings were considered in the present study had serious difficulties both on the syntactic and grammatical levels of writing in the English language. Their average mean T-unit length output roughly approximated that of a below average fourth grade native speaker of the language.

5.2. Recommendations

The analysis of the writing samples of the freshmen involved in this study shows that they have serious difficulties with both the mechanical and syntactic aspects of writing. There also seems to be a gap among the students in writing ability. Unless the gap is filled before the students begin to take full academic loads, those, who for one reason or another, have more deficiencies in writing will be dangerously at a disadvantage in the academic competitions among students with very different needs.

With what the analysis of the syntax and grammar of the language of freshmen showed in mind, the following solutions are suggested:

1. The frequency of mechanical errors such as capitalization, spelling, and so on, tend to make diagnosis and systematic teaching very difficult in the Freshman Programme. Therefore, teachers need

to combat the problem by assigning short guided writing tasks, by correcting the errors more sparingly and by encouraging the students to help each other in groups or pairs.

2. Since the problems in the use of subordinating devices are far more than surface errors, teachers must help students before and after essay writing. In addition to ~~the~~ usual sentence combining practices, sentence break-down exercises in which students split complex sentences into meaningful word groups which will eventually lead to the isolation of linking devices are often recommended (e.g. Mc Devitt, 1989:19-23).
3. As there seems to be a range of difference among freshman students, the deficient students should be identified and be given intensive language courses before they start taking the normal academic load of the Freshman Programme.
4. As a writing task with an explicit audience and purpose has been observed to facilitate the generation of ideas, at least, composition tests in the Freshman Programme must be based on such assignments.
5. High schools have to give more emphasis to writing and develop the awareness of the conventions of written English.

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Appendix A: Summary of Words/T-Unit Output on the Three Tests

TABLE: VII Control Group

S. N.	Pre test N=23	Post test 1 N=21	Post test 2 N=20	Post t. Av. N=19
1	9.8			
2	10.1	10.5	8.8	9.7
3	10.6	12.4	9.7	11.1
4	13.2	11.2	9.4	10.3
5	11.7	9.0	9.0	9.0
6	8.3	12.3	12.0	12.2
7	11.5	10.2	10.4	10.3
8	12.8	10.9	10.8	10.9
9	8.6	10.3	9.2	9.8
10	14.9	9.8	9.7	9.8
11	11.9	11.3		
12	10.2	8.1	11.5	9.8
13	12.1	8.8	9.1	9.5
14				
15	14.1	11.4	12.7	12.1
16	9.1	11.8	7.2	9.5
17	8.2	10.6	8.5	9.6
18	9.6	10.6	11.2	10.9
19	10.0	11.0		
20	13.3	8.9	9.3	9.1
21				
22	10.0	8.9	11.2	10.1
23	10.0	10.2	12.8	11.5
24	8.6	14.0	8.0	11.0
25	10.0		8.7	
26				
27				
28				
Mean	10.81	10.63	9.96	10.33

TABLE VIII: Study Group

S. N.	Pre test N=28	Post test 1 N=24	Post test 2 N=25	Postt. Av. N=23
1	15.1			
2	13.8	10.4	7.8	9.3
3	9.0	13.1	9.6	11.4
4				
5	11.2	9.7	12.9	11.3
6	10.8	9.8	9.3	9.6
7	8.6	10.4	8.0	9.2
8	13.1	13.1	9.2	11.2
9	10.3	12.7	10.5	11.6
10				
11	10.7	11.4	10.3	10.9
12	8.4	11.2	10.7	11.0
13				
14	8.5	12.0	10.7	11.4
15				
16	8.4		10.8	
17	9.3	10.9	10.1	10.5
18	11.9	9.9	9.6	9.8
19	11.9	9.6	9.7	9.7
20	13.8	12.1	14.0	13.1
21	9.3			
22	11.1	8.5	10.9	9.7
23	8.3	10.7		
24	9.2	12.9	8.5	10.7
25	8.8	13.0	9.7	11.4
26	10.9	10.6	12.7	11.7
27	10.4	13.4	9.2	11.3
28	12.9	9.6	12.1	10.9
29	10.0		9.1	
30	9.9	11.8	8.9	10.4
31	10.4	10.8	11.6	11.2
32	12.2	11.7	9.5	10.6
Mean	10.65	11.23	10.22	10.78

TABLE XVII : Appendix C: Rated Quality of posttest 1
(scale : 0-10)

(Control Group N=21)				Study Group N=24)			
S.N	Sc1	Sc2	Av	S.N	Sc1	Sc2	Av.
1	.	.	.	1	-	-	-
2	8	8	8	2	7	8	8
3	8	8	8	3	9	9	9
4	9	8	9	4	-	-	-
5	7	6	7	5	9	9	9
6	6	6	6	6	8	8	8
7	8	8.5	8	7	8	8	8
8	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
9	8	7.5	8	9	9	8	9
10	7	7	7	10	.	.	.
11	6	6	6	11	8	8	8
12	8	7	8	12	7	7	7
13	8	7.5	8	13	.	.	.
14	-	-	-	14	6	5	6
15	7	6	7	15	.0	.	.
16	6	5.5	6	16	.	.	.
17	7	7	7	17	8	8	8
18	5	5	5	18	9	8	9
19	5	5	5	19	8	8	8
20	8	8	8	20	9	9	9
21	-	-	-	21	.	.	.
22	9	9	9	22	9	8.5	9
23	9	9	9	23	7	7	7
24	7	6.5	7	24	7	7	7
25	.	.	.	25	6	6	6
26	.	.	.	26	7	7	7
27	.	.	.	27	9	9	9
28	.	.	.	28	9	8	9
				29	.	.	.
				30	8	8	8
				31	8	8	8
				32	9	8	9

X	7.29	8.02
r	-0.86	-0.2

Appendix B: Data on Grammatical Errors

TABLE XI Data on Grammatical Errors in the Pretest
(Control Group N= 23)

S.N	Ag	Art	Cap	Prep	Punc	Sp	S	T	V	O	Total
1	-	1	5	3	-	12	5	3	4	2	35
2	-	1	3	5	3	2	4	1	3	1	23
3	-	-	3	-	3	-	-	1	2	-	9
4	-	-	1	3	-	2	-	2	2	-	10
5	1	2	1	4	-	7	6	3	5	-	29
6	-	1	5	2	4	-	5	3	3	-	23
7	2	2	7	5	3	10	7	6	4	1	47
8	-	1	5	1	4	2	3	6	1	-	23
9	1	1	4	-	-	1	2	-	1	3	13
10	-	2	2	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	7
11	-	3	7	4	-	5	2	-	-	-	21
12	-	1	4	9	-	5	-	-	4	2	25
13	-	2	1	2	-	1	3	1	-	1	11
14	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
15	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	1	-	6
16	-	2	-	7	1	2	5	-	2	6	25
17	-	2	2	1	1	6	4	-	2	1	19
18	1	-	6	5	-	1	3	-	3	1	20
19	1	1	12	1	-	8	1	3	1	2	30
20	-	1	-	2	-	2	-	-	4	1	10
21	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
22	-	2	1	1	-	3	-	-	2	-	9
23	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
24	-	1	1	-	1	1	2	-	2	-	14
25	-	1	4	-	-	1	1	1	3	-	11
26	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
27	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
28	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
To.	7	27	80	58	21	72	54	32	49	21	421

TABLE XII : Data on Grammatical Errors in the Pretest
(Study Group N = 28)

S.N	Ag	Art	Cap	Prep	Punc	Sp	S	T	V	O	Total
1	-	1	1	2	-	-	1	3	3	-	11
2	-	2	2	4	2	1	4	3	7	1	26
3	-	-	1	3	2	-	3	2	2	-	13
4											
5	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	-	6
6	-	-	7	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	18
7	-	2	1	4	-	-	1	1	2	-	11
8	-	2	1	-	1	-	-	2	3	1	10
9	-	-	5	3	1	3	1	1	1	2	17
10											
11	1	-	7	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	12
12	-	1	2	2	-	-	2	1	1	1	10
13											
14	1	-	5	-	3	-	1	1	-	2	13
15											
16	-	1	2	2	1	2	-	1	1	1	11
17	1	1	9	2	2	2	2	-	2	4	25
18	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	2	-	2	8
19	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	3
20	-	1	1	2	-	2	-	1	1	1	9
21	-	2	5	7	2	1	3	-	4	-	24
22	-	-	1	-	-	2	2	-	1	4	10
23	1	-	3	2	-	3	3	3	4	-	19
24	1	-	6	3	1	2	1	2	3	1	20
25	-	1	9	4	3	1	2	2	2	-	24
26	-	-	1	6	-	1	2	2	1	-	13
27	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	1	1	8
28	-	1	2	3	-	1	1	2	1	-	11
29	-	-	-	7	-	1	-	1	2	1	12
30	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	1	1	1	7
31	-	-	-	1	-	3	1	-	1	1	7
32	-	1	1	-	2	2	-	-	3	1	10
To.	7	16	72	66	23	34	35	37	52	26	368

TABLE XIII : Data on Grammatical Errors in Posttest 1
(Control Group N= 21)

S.N.	Ag	Art	Cap	Prep	Punc	Sp	S	T	V	O	Total
1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2	-	2	2	3	-	5	2	-	1	-	15
3	-	1	3	2	1	1	2	-	4	-	14
4	1	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	1	1	8
5	-	-	7	4	1	3	1	-	5	1	22
6	2	1	11	4	7	1	2	-	4	2	34
7	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	3	-	8
8	-	1	4	1	-	3	-	-	3	-	8
9	1	-	6	1	1	1	4	1	2	1	18
10	-	1	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	8
11	-	-	4	2	5	-	3	1	1	3	19
12	-	1	3	2	-	1	-	2	1	-	10
13	-	2	3	2	2	-	-	1	1	-	11
14	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
15	1	-	4	3	1	3	-	1	1	3	17
16	-	3	4	1	-	-	1	2	5	1	17
17	1	2	7	1	4	3	1	2	4	1	26
18	-	2	4	4	-	1	2	1	2	-	16
19	2	-	3	5	3	3	4	1	4	2	27
20	-	-	1	4	1	2	-	1	3	-	12
21	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
22	-	1	5	4	2	3	-	-	2	2	19
23	-	2	3	1	1	1	1	-	2	-	11
24	-	-	6	1	2	1	1	-	1	1	13
25	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
26	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
27	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
28	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
To.	7	20	83	49	34	32	24	13	49	17	328

TABLE XIV Data on Grammatical Errors in Posttest 1.
(Study Group N= 24)

S.N	Ag	Art	Cap	Prep	Punc	SP	S	T	V	O	Total
1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
2	-	2	1	1	1	-	3	-	1	-	9
3	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5
4	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
5	-	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	3	-	10
6	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	3	2	1	10
7	1	-	1	2	-	-	1	1	2	1	9
8	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	1	-	3	9
9	-	-	3	-	3	1	-	-	6	-	13
10	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
11	1	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	1	1	7
12	-	-	1	3	3	-	2	-	1	-	10
13	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
14	-	-	6	4	2	4	4	1	2	1	24
15	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
16	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
17	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	5
18	-	-	4	1	1	3	-	-	-	2	11
19	-	2	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	5
20	2	1	-	2	-	2	1	2	-	-	10
21	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
22	4	1	1	-	4	4	1	-	1	-	16
23	2	-	2	4	1	1	3	1	-	-	14
24	1	-	2	1	1	1	3	-	1	-	10
25	-	4	3	4	1	6	3	-	5	-	26
26	-	2	2	5	-	2	2	2	-	1	16
27	-	2	1	5	1	-	1	1	1	1	13
28	-	-	1	4	2	2	-	2	3	-	14
29	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
30	-	5	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	11
31	-	1	5	2	1	-	2	-	1	-	12
32	-	-	3	3	3	2	-	-	-	1	12
To.	12	16	46	50	30	35	28	14	35	15	281

TABLE XV : Data on Grammatical Errors in Posttest 2
(Control group N= 20)

S.N	Ag	Art	Cap	Prep	Punc	SP	S	T	V	O	Total
1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
2	-	4	3	3	1	4	4	-	2	4	31
3	4	2	2	2	1	4	2	1	6	4	28
4	-	-	1	-	3	-	1	-	1	5	11
5	2	3	-	3	-	3	3	3	2	7	26
6	-	-	9	1	2	-	3	1	5	1	22
7	2	2	1	1	-	1	5	-	4	3	19
8	1	2	1	1	4	-	3	2	3	7	24
9	1	3	7	-	-	1	3	-	3	4	22
10	2	6	7	3	2	2	6	1	4	3	36
11	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
12	2	2	5	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	21
13	-	5	5	2	2	3	1	1	4	7	30
14	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
15	1	3	2	1	1	-	1	9	1	2	21
16	1	2	3	1	-	2	5	-	2	6	22
17	3	6	5	1	2	2	-	2	10	8	39
18	-	2	3	-	-	1	1	2	1	4	14
19	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
20	-	1	-	2	1	-	3	-	-	2	9
21	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
22	1	-	3	1	6	2	2	1	2	5	23
23	-	-	2	2	5	3	2	-	-	4	18
24	1	2	7	2	-	2	-	-	1	5	20
25	1	3	3	2	-	-	5	2	2	1	19
26	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
27	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
28	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
To.	22	48	69	30	38	31	51	26	55	85	455

TABLE XVI : Data on Grammatical Errors in Posttest 2
(Study Group w= 25)

S.N	Ag	Art	Cap	Prep	Punc	Sp	S	T	V	O	Total
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	3	1	2	2	1	1	4	-	4	1	19
3	1	2	1	2	-	-	-	2	2	3	13
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	3	7
6	-	-	3	3	1	-	1	-	6	-	14
7	1	1	-	2	4	-	-	-	2	1	11
8	1	-	2	2	-	1	1	-	4	1	12
9	-	5	3	4	2	1	3	-	5	2	25
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	1	1	5	1	1	-	3	-	3	7	22
12	1	-	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	6
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	1	1	4	3	3	4	7	2	3	5	33
15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	2	1	-	1	-	3	2	-	1	1	11
17	-	3	4	5	-	3	1	1	10	3	30
18	-	1	-	2	-	1	1	-	2	5	12
19	-	-	-	2	4	3	-	-	2	-	11
20	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	2	14
21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	-	1	1	1	2	-	1	1	-	-	7
23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
24	1	-	2	1	3	-	6	-	3	1	17
25	9	3	6	2	3	2	4	5	7	5	46
26	-	-	1	2	2	1	2	1	6	-	15
27	2	2	7	3	4	-	3	1	-	-	22
28	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	5	2	11
29	-	1	5	1	2	-	-	1	3	1	14
30	-	4	4	3	1	2	2	-	7	2	13
31	1	1	-	4	1	4	7	-	4	1	23
32	1	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	6
To.	25	31	51	50	34	31	51	15	85	46	419

Appendix D: Writing Tests

Pretest: Autobiography

Instructions Write a composition on the topic: The Day I Joined A.A.U.

Time: 40 mins

Date:

- Guide: 1. the date
what happened
2. how you felt
alone or with friends
travel, where
3. what happened - morning
- afternoon
- evening
4. how the day ended
how you felt

Model: The Day I Joined the Air Force

Monday, 3rd September, 1961 was an important day in my life. It was the day I joined the Air Force.

On Sunday evening, I said goodbye to my family and friends. I felt sad, but excited. I travelled by train to an Air Force Training Camp. The train journey was a very long one. I travelled all through the night from Glasgow to eastern England.

I arrived at the training camp at six in the morning. I looked for aeroplanes, but I did not see any. I felt very tired. I was taken to a small hut and given a bed. But I did not have time to sleep. A loud bell rang at seven-thirty. It was time for breakfast. After breakfast, we marched and queued for boots and uniforms. Then we marched and queued for medical inspection. We marched and queued all day.

At the end of the day, I felt disappointed, tired and lonely. I had not seen any aeroplanes. I had marched all day. I had not liked anyone. I did not want to be in the Air Force. I wanted to go home. But I did not go home for two years.

(Taken from T.C. Jupp and John Milne, 1980)

- Comprehension: 1. Why was Mon. 3rd Sept., 1961, an important day for the writer ?
2. How did he feel on Sunday evening ?
3. How long did he travel ?
4. When did he arrive at the camp ?
5. How did he feel ?
6. What happened at 7:30 a.m. ?
7. What did he do all day ?
8. Where did he want to go ?
9. What tense are the verbs in the passage? why ?

Language: 1. Adjectives describing important days and your feelings:

Events
exciting
interesting
disappointing
happy

Feelings
disappointed
excited
interested
wonderful

Posttest 1: Personal Letter

Date: 29 March, 1990

Instructions: Imagine that you have just received a letter from your friend who is at Gondar College of Medical Sciences. He/She has told you that he/she has been successful in his/her exams and that he/she is coming to Addis in early April.

Now, write a letter to your friend thanking him/her for his/her letter; congratulating him/her on his/her exam results, and expressing your pleasure at his/her coming to Addis. At the same time, invite him/her to the Annual Freshman Party which is going to be held on the Eve of the Ethiopian Easter.

Guide: This guide may help you.

1. write your address, date, salutation
2. thank for letter
3. congratulate on exam results
4. express pleasure at his/her coming to Addis
5. invite to party, give: date, place, time, other details
6. end your letter appropriately

Time: 40 mins

Sample text: When the students had prepared or had tried to prepare their own drafts, the following letter was read to them.

Note: 'Easter holiday' was the relevant topic of talk, and perhaps writing when this task was assigned.

Addis Ababa University
Faculty of Science
P.O.Box 1176
Addis Ababa

29, March, 1990

Dear (recipient's name),

Thank you very much for your warm letter which arrived two days ago. I was delighted to get your letter and to hear that you have passed all your exams. Congratulations on your excellent grades! You must have worked hard to get such results.

On top of that, I am very glad to hear that you are coming to Addis on April 10. I have some good news for you which I hope will interest you. We are having the Annual Freshman Party at Gennet Hotel on Eve of the Ethiopian Easter. So, I am writing to invite you to our grand party.

As you know, the Eve of the Ethiopian Easter is on Saturday, April 14. The party begins at 8:00 in the evening and ends at 5:00 a.m.

Do try and come as I am sure it should be a lovely evening! You are, of course, welcome to bring someone with you if you want to.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Your affectionate friends,

(writer's name)

Posttest 2: Newspaper Story

Date: April 17, 1990

Instructions: Read the following story about a hotel fire which interrupted the Annual Freshman Party last week. Then, write a story about the fire to the Faculty newspaper explaining what happened. Use the headline: Hotel Fire Spoiled Holiday

Time: 40 mins

Guide: Answer these questions in note form to get your points.

1. When and where was the party ?
2. Where did the fire start, and who noticed it ?
3. When did people start racing for the door ?
4. when and from where did help come ?
5. what was the result of the fire ?

Model: Hotel Fire Spoiled Holiday

Addis Ababa University freshmen had a marvelous party at Gennet Hotel last week. Unfortunately, the party was interrupted by a fire that started in the kitchen.

On Saturday evening, April 14, the lounge on the ground floor of the hotel was crowded with A.A.U. students. Everyone was drinking and dancing when, suddenly, a sharp cry and shouts of confusion came from upstairs.

First, only a few students noticed the fire. But, when the smoke began to fill the room, everyone raced for the door. However, the front door was closed. Thus, people dashed and joined crowds at other exits. Everyone was crying and coughing.

Fifteen minutes later help arrived from the fire brigade. Firemen fought their way into the room and soon everyone was safely out of the building. Luckily, nobody was seriously hurt. A few boys were slightly wounded while some girls lost their garments in the confusion. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

(Adapted from H. McCree and S. Malkiat
1972; M. Stephens, 1986)

1 Informal letters

A Text

24 Hills Rd,
Cambridge,
November 27th.

Dear Sally,
Thanks for your letter. It seems ages since I saw you last - lovely to hear from you.
Glad you're enjoying yourself at college. Your new course sounds very interesting - but too much like hard work for me.
I've had enough hard work moving into the new flat (new address above). I've repainted most of it, and put up new pictures etc. Now I'm saving up for new furniture to match the paint!
Hope you can drop in when you're home on holiday. Give me a ring when you come back.
All the best
Yours,
Andy.

B Vocabulary

ages	= a long time
saving up	= saving my money
to match	= to suit; to look good with the colour of the paint
drop in	= visit, come round to the house
give me a ring	= telephone me
all the best	= best wishes

C Comprehension

- 1 Who lives in Cambridge?
- 2 Where is Sally?
- 3 What has Andy just done?
- 4 What is he going to do soon?
- 5 What does Andy want Sally to do?

D Analysis

- 1 How does Andy know that Sally is doing a new course?
- 2 Are Andy and Sally friends, relatives, or lovers? Is it possible to say?
- 3 Where does Sally's family live? Is it possible to find out?

E Discussion

- 1 Why do people write letters to each other? What is the difference between a letter and a telephone call?
- 2 Do you prefer to write to people or to telephone them? Why?
- 3 This letter is hand written. A lot of letters are type written.
Is there any difference between them in your opinion? Do you think one sort is more interesting or more friendly? Why?

G Writing Practice

1 Being informal (see also Unit 2)

When we are speaking or writing to people we know well, we use informal language. Sometimes we shorten words, or use different words. Look at the first sentence of the text:

Thanks for your letter. It seems ages since I saw you.

In a formal letter this would be:

Thank you for your letter. It seems a long time since we met.

So, *thanks* and *ages* are more informal or friendly. Using this list of formal and informal words, re-write the formal letter below, making it more friendly. (David Johnson is writing to Simon Hawkes.)

Formal:	Informal/friendly:
proposition	suggestion
thank you	thanks
opportunity	chance
yours sincerely	yours
I would like to	I'd like to
visit us	drop in
telephone me	give me a
if you are in	ring if you're
the area	passing

Dear Mr. Hawkes,

Thank you for your letter. I was very pleased to hear from you, as it is a long time since we last met. I hope you are well. I would like to have an opportunity to talk about your business proposition. Please telephone me, or visit us if you are in the area.

Yours sincerely,

David Johnson

David Johnson

F Language Practice

1 Contractions

When we speak or write to friends, or speak quickly, some words become shorter, or disappear completely. Look at this example from the text:

It is lovely to hear from you.

LOVELY TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Now shorten these sentences in the same way:*

- a I am glad you're enjoying yourself.
- b I hope you can drop in.
- c I have been working hard this week.
- d Have you got any money?
- e Would you like a cigarette?

- 2 Here is an example of a different sort of contraction:

I have had enough hard work.

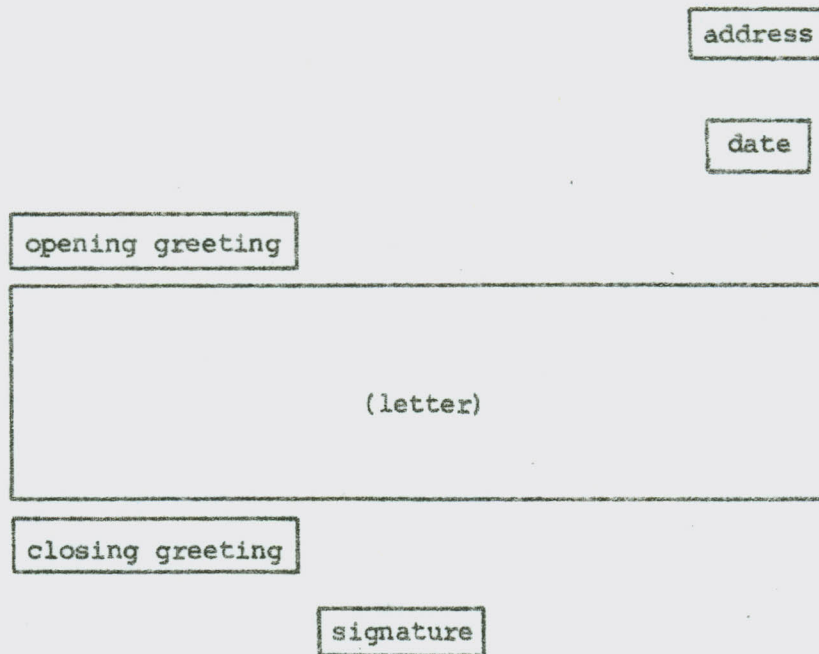
I'VE HAD ENOUGH HARD WORK.

Shorten the has/have/am/are/not words in the same way:*

- a I am saving my money.
- b She has bought a new car.
- c They could not help me.
- d We are going to America for the summer.
- e They have painted their house.

2 Letter forms

Look again at the text in Section A. Look at the shape of the letter:



Practise using this shape. Write a letter to your parents, just writing your address, the date, and the greetings—leave the letter out!

3 Parts of a letter

Informal letters have different parts, with different phrases for different things. Here are some examples:

- a Thanking the letter-writer
- Thanks for your letter.
 - It was nice to hear from you.
 - I was glad to hear from you.

- b Asking about health etc
- How are you?
 - I hope you're well.
 - How's your job?

- c Giving news
- I've just got a new car.
 - I finally passed my exams!

- d Making suggestions/invitations
- Why don't you come for the weekend?

Letter Writing

Use the prompts given below to write a complete letter:

King's Hotel
Buckingham Avenue
London W1

20th June 1986

Dear Pablo,

Now / we / be / here / one / week / I / think / I /
better / write / tell / you / how / we / get / on.

When / we / first / arrive / we / can / not / understand /
anyone! / However / we / be / slowly / get / use / to
everything / and / begin / enjoy / our selves. English
people / be / very helpful / and / friendly / but / they /
be / always / in a hurry !

We / stay / hotel / near oxford street. of course /
we / already / do / a lot / sightseeing / and also go /
theatre / every night /. I / do / plenty / shopping / too.
Some things / be / really / quite cheap !

Well / must / dash / now / post letter. We / really /
look / forward / see / you / when / we / get back / next
month.

Love
Maria

(Mary Stephens, 1986)

UNIT 16

Writing a newspaper report

To start you thinking:

Do you ever read British newspapers? If you do, which ones do you read? (If possible, bring one to class.)

Do you like your newspapers to a) inform you about important events, b) entertain you, or c) do a mixture of both?

Do you think that the style of a newspaper which is mostly concerned with communicating important events will be different from that of a newspaper which is mostly trying to entertain? In what way will it be different?

The following article recently appeared in a local newspaper.

Notes

A

Notice that writing a newspaper report often requires the narrative techniques practised in Unit 9. The first paragraph may give a brief summary of the story, which is then expanded in the following paragraphs. The final paragraph often includes comments or quotations from a spokesman. What information are we given in each paragraph of this newspaper report?

B

A newspaper report often contains many Passive forms of the verb. Underline examples of these in this report.

C

How many different past tense forms can you find in the text?

TEENAGER ATTACKED ON WAY HOME FROM DISCO!

A 14-year-old boy was attacked and robbed on his way home from a disco last Saturday night. He was taken to a nearby hospital, but released soon afterwards with minor cuts and bruises.

Paul Janson spent the evening at a local disco, a short walk from his home. He left before his friends because he had promised not to be home late. As he was walking through Smith Park, a deserted and badly-lit area, he was attacked by a man he later described as dark-haired, of medium height and in his early twenties. The man took his wallet, containing £20, and his gold watch. Luckily, a car was just turning into Smith Street as the attack occurred. The driver saw what was happening, and rushed to Paul's assistance. The attacker then ran off in the direction of the High Street.

Police have warned local inhabitants to be on their guard and not to walk alone through the park after dark. 'Paul had a lucky escape,' a police spokesman commented, 'but the next victim might not be so fortunate'.

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UNIT 16

Narrative tenses

Which of the following sentences would it be correct to use when describing an attack which took place last week?

- 1 a) A boy has been attacked last Saturday night.
- b) A boy was attacked last Saturday night.
- 2 a) He spent the evening at a disco.
- b) He has spent the evening at a disco.
- 3 a) A car was just turning into Smith Street when the attack occurred.
- b) A car just turned into Smith Street when the attack occurred.
- 4 a) He left before his friends because he promised to be home early.
- b) He left before his friends because he had promised to be home early.

Word search

Find words in the text which correspond to the following:

- allowed to go home
- marks on skin caused by knocks or blows to the body
- a dark area
- happened
- to his help
- person speaking on behalf of a group
- person who is the subject of an attack

Passives

ACTIVE	PASSIVE
A man attacked him.	He was attacked by a man.

Newspaper articles often contain examples of the Passive form of the verb, especially when they want to draw attention to the event itself, rather than the person responsible.

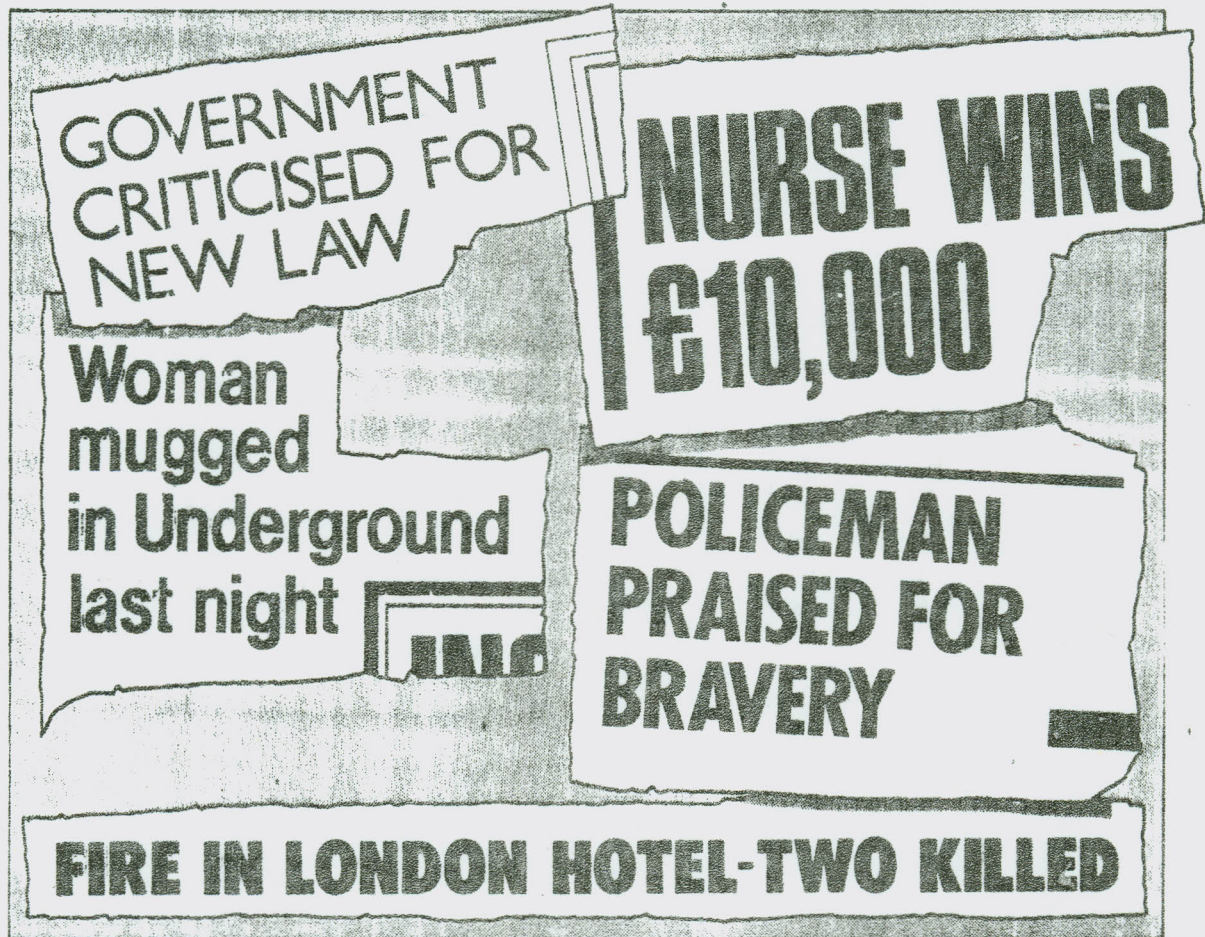
Change the following into the Passive form:

- 1 Someone mugged an old man yesterday.
- 2 They are questioning the attacker at the moment.
- 3 They will close the factory tomorrow.
- 4 They have signed a new peace treaty.
- 5 They had closed the road for six months.

Newspaper headlines

Writing a newspaper headline is similar to writing a message or a note. It is usual to omit articles, auxiliaries and some prepositions. Passive forms are also commonly used.

- 1 Say what the following headlines mean. Use complete sentences and be careful of tenses.



- 2 Now suggest headlines for the following stories:

- 1 Someone rescued a man from drowning off a popular holiday beach yesterday.
- 2 The government has just introduced a new, tough law on drinking and driving.
- 3 Six people have been rescued from a sinking ship in the North Atlantic.

First and final paragraphs

Study the Notes on the first page of this unit and then write a first and a final paragraph for the newspaper report below. Before you begin think about the following questions:

Paragraph one

- How many fans were injured?
- Where was the match?
- When was it?
- Which teams were playing?

Paragraph three

- Did a spokesman make any comment?
- Were any lessons learnt for future matches?

VOCABULARY

surged forward
moved forward in waves

a barrier
something that controls movement

trapped
unable to escape

trampled underfoot
crushed under people's feet

a fleet of ambulances
a number of ambulances working together

in a critical condition
very seriously hurt

TWENTY INJURED AT FOOTBALL MATCH

Paragraph one

.....

Paragraph two

The accident happened when United scored their first goal. As fans surged forward, a barrier collapsed, and people were trapped and trampled underfoot. A fleet of ambulances took the injured to a local hospital, and twenty people have been detained. Two of these are in a critical condition.

Paragraph three

.....

Written tasks

- 1 Thieves broke into a house in your neighbourhood a few days ago. Write the report which appeared in a local newspaper the next day. Use the plan below as a guide and the vocabulary in the box on the left to help you. Remember to use a suitable headline for your report.

Paragraph one

USEFUL VOCABULARY

to be horrified
to be insured
to damage
to force (a lock)
to overturn (furniture)
to slash (material)
to smash (a window)
to steal
fingerprints
insurance

Introduction: A short summary of events. Where did this happen? To whom? When? What was stolen?

Paragraph two

Development: Narrate the events as they happened. How did the thieves get in? Where were the usual occupants of the house? What did the thieves do? Was anyone hurt? Did anyone see the thieves?

Paragraph three

Conclusion: Have the police got any clues? Did anyone make a statement after the robbery?

- 2 Write a newspaper report about a special event (pop festival, sporting event etc) which took place in your area recently.

Report Writing

Below you will find a number of sentences. Arrange them into the best order. Pay particular attention to the linking words and words which refer back to other words in your arrangement. Rewrite the story as a paragraph.

1. A car then had to swerve to miss her. (5)
2. An old lady was crossing the road. (2)
3. But the bus driver had seen what was happening. (7)
4. She stopped to pick it up. (4)
5. There was nearly a bad accident at the corner of Red Lion square today. (1)
6. Suddenly a gust of wind blew her hat off. (3)
7. It narrowly avoided crushing into a bus. (6)

(Taken from J.Norrish 1983:68)

Listen to the following report and take short notes of the major events. Then re-write the report from your notes.

One Killed, 16 Seriously Injured In Road Accident

ASSELA (ENA)- One passenger was killed and 16 others seriously injured when a public transport bus overturned at a point 16 kms. outside the town of Assela in Chilalo Awraja.

The mini-bus with 40 passengers abroad overturned as it was being driven with top speed from Nazareth to Assela, according to the traffic police.

The passenger who died in the accident was a 30 year old pregnant woman. The 16 passengers who suffered serious injury are receiving treatment while 23 others were released soon following the accident after receiving first aid treatment at the Assela Hospital.

The driver, Gebre-Michael Bahta, is under investigation.

(The Ethiopian Herald Vol.XLVI, No. 16, 30 Sept.1989)

Use these questions as a guide:

1. What was the major result of the accident ?
2. When did the accident happen ?
3. Where did it happen ?
4. What was happening then ?
5. Who died in the Accident ?
6. What happened to the other travellers ?

Read the following passage and describe the disaster that almost happened.

From the moment an airplane takes off to the moment it lands, every moment is watched on radar screens. Air traffic controllers tell the pilot exactly when to turn, when to climb and when to come down. The air traffic controllers around a busy airport like London- Heathrow may handle 2500 planes a day. Not all of them actually land at the airport. Any plane that flies near the airport comes under the orders of the controllers there

Even a small mistake on their part could cause a disaster.

Recently such a disaster almost happened. Two large jets were flying towards the airport. One was carrying 69 passengers and had come from Toronto. The other was carrying 176 passengers from Chicago. The air traffic controller noticed on his radar screen that the two planes were too close to each other. He ordered one to turn to the right and to climb. But he made a mistake. He ordered the wrong plane to do this. So, instead of turning away from the second plane, the first plane turned towards it. Fifteen seconds later it flew in front of the second plane. They avoided each other by the smallest part of a second. The distance between them was less than that of a large swimming pool. This is an example of the danger that grows every year.

(Taken from Byrne, 1979: 75-76)

Answer these questions in note form to get your points:

1. What were the two planes doing at the time ?
2. Where had they come from ?
3. What did an air traffic controller do and why ?
4. What was the result ?
5. What was narrowly avoided ?

Appendix F: Aluminum

Directions: Read the passage all the way through. You will notice that the sentences are short and choppy. Study the passage and then rewrite it in a better way. You may combine sentences, change the order of words, and omit words that are repeated too many times. But try not to leave out any of the information.

Aluminum is a metal. It is boundant. It has many uses. It comes from bauxite. Bauxite is an ore. Bauxite looks like clay. Bauxite contains aluminum. It contains several other substances. Workmen extract these other substances from the bauxite. They grind the bauxite. They put it in tanks. Pressure is in the tanks. The other substances form a mass. They remove the mass. They use filters. A liquid remains. They put it through several other processes. It finally yields a chemical. The chemical is powdery. It is white. The chemical is alumina. It is a mixture. It contains aluminum. It contains oxygen. Workmen separate the aluminum from the oxygen. They use electricity. They finally produce a metal. The metal is light. It has a luster. The luster is bright. The luster is silvery. This metal comes in many forms.

Appendix G

Control Group

Subject No. 18: The Day I Joined A.A.U.

Starday, Sep. 8 I was preparing to come A.A.U./ I became disappointed because I separated from my family for the first time./ Sunday, I started traveling to A.A.U. with my brother./ when I reached A.A, I was interested and happy./ Wednesday, I came to A.A.U. In the morning./I entered the University by Quene with other students./ In the University, I got my countries' students./ He surprised when he saw ./

Subject No. 23: The Day I Joined A.A.U.

I don't remember the exact date I arrived at A.A.U./but I know it was Monday, 8 in the morning./ I came by car and headed through the gate and saw many students whom I didn't recognize,/ but after a while I saw some of my friends / and we copied our respective programs. / I was so excited about everything. /At noon we all went home by taxi./

Subject No. 3:

Addis Abeba University
P.O.Box 1176

29 March, 1990

Dear Hanna,

Thank you for your letter/, it has been so long you have written, / and it is nice to hear from you good news./

Congratulation in your examsresult / I was very happy and proud of you sucess. / You must have work hard./ I was glad to hear that you will are coming in Addis Abeba in April, because it will be a good occasion for us to have a party together./ We are preparing an annual freshman party which is going to be held on the eve of our Easter./ I hope you will be able to come and join us at Africa hotel on April 13, 1990, at 8 0'clock / the night /. /But it will be good if you contact me before April 13./

Come as soon as you can, I wish your a good vogage.

Subject No. 4:

Addis Ababa University
P.O.Box 1176

March 29, 1990

My Dear Kebede Abebe,

How are you ? / I hope you are well. / I am well, indeed. / I recieved your letter on march 25. / Thank you very much for your letter. / It was by far an interesting one, because your grades written in your letter pleased me very much. / I hope you will keep up your grades for this semester in the same way as the first semester. / Infant I got your grades as good as I expected. / What do you think about this semester lesson ? / I hope it will be good for you. / Abebe, I was also pleased when I heard your coming Addis on April 10. / Would you come to our freshman party, which is going to be held on the eve of the Ethiopian Easter ? / Please write me soon so that I can meet you / and you will join our party. / I hope you will be the member of our party.

Yours sencerely

Mesfin Workneh

Subject No. 11:

A.A.U.
Science Faculty
P.O. Box 1176
March 29. 1990

My Dear Hussan Mohammed

First of all I thank so mach for your letter that you write on March 29, 1990. /Hussan How are you?/ Congratulation about your exam results/ and I have some news for you / that our frashman party which is going to be held on the eve of the Ethiopian Easter on April 10, 1990 in Adamma Ras Hotel./ I hope you will be came to our party /

Your friend

Mustefa Kedir

Subject No. 16:

A.A.U.
P.O.Box 1176
29 March 1990

To my dear Kcbede,

I hope you are well, I ensured your health by the letter that I have received today. / I congratulate your successful results./ I become glad When I know your coming in Addis by the letter. / Annually freshman party will be held on the eve of Ethiopian Easter. / The places which I arrange to meet you is the Wabi Shebele Hotel on Sunday, at 9:00 0'clock in the morning./

Yours Sincerely

Salie Ayalew

Subject No. 23

Tinsae Yohannes
P.O.Box 1124
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

March 29, 1990

Dear Almaz,

How are you / / How are your friends and relatives? /
I am very fine and so is my family. / I received your
letter just the day before yesterday / and I can't
tell you how excited I was when I found out that it
was from you. / I am very glad about your successful
grades, congratulations, / you should be proud of
yourself / and so will be your parents when you tell
them. / I am so pleased about your coming to Addis, /
it will be ffun having you around. / You know what ?
/the A.A.U. is going to have the anual freshman
party / and I would appreciate it if you could accept
my invitation and attend this party which will be
held at / the / Ethiopian Hotel on /the/ Easter eve,
starting from noon/ and everybody is going to come,
/you could even meet some of your old friends and
have a real good time. /

Well Almaz, I am looking forward to seeing you
soon. /

Lore, Tinsae

Subject No. 2 HOTEL FIRE SPOILED HOLIDAY

Fresh man party was held at Genet Hotel las week, on Saturday evening 15 March, 1990 / /interuppted by the/ fire broke out from kitchen./

Alunge was crowded by A.A.U. students / Every one was drinking and dancing / suddenly they heard shout of coffusion and stopped dancing./ At first few /were/ noticed the fire / but after the room filled with smoke every body noticed and started to flee, raced for the door and crowded at the door / few could be out of the room./ After a while firemen arrived there for help luckily no one hurt severly. /All got out the room safly./

Subject No. 15 (Saida) HOTEL FIRE SPOILED HOLIDAY
17th March 1990

The A.A. fresh men students had a grand Annual freshmen party at Gunet hotel last week on Saturday evening April 14, 1990. /Unfortunately this party was inturrupted by the fine which started in the kitchen./

At first nobody seems to know that there / has / started a fine as they were dancing and drinking at the lounge on the ground floor of the hotel / eventually some saw the fire / and as the smoke fills the room every body starts to cought and knew that there started fine / and they began to struggle to save their lifes / but the front door was locked / so they use the back exit./

Shortly after the fine has started /the// fine men arrive and help them to go out safely and controlled the fine. / And some of the boys who were slightly hurt was taken to / the/ hospital / and some of the girls flee parting./ The cause of this accident is under investigation./

Subject No. 23: HOTEL FIRE SPOILED HOLIDAY

Last week the Addis Ababa University had a breathe-taking Annual freshman party at Genet Hotel./ Unfortunately this marvellous party was interrupted by a sudden fire attack, which was believed had started in the kitchen./

It was Sat. evening April, 14 1990 / the loung on the ground floor was crowded with youngsters having fun and enjoying themselves./

Suddently, shouts and better cries came from one of the rooms upstairs / but as the music was so high there was no one who noticed except for some. / As the smoke started to fill the room everyone rushed to their way out crying and coughing / and everything was such a mess./

However, firemen fought their way in and put out fire and saved many lives./ Lukily no one was hurt except for some small injuries./

The cause of the fire was order investigation./

Study Group

Subject No. 2: The Day I joined A.A.U.

It was on Friday, September 21, 1990 [the day] I joined A.A.U. / I travelled from [my] home (National theater) to A.A.U. by /a/ cab and reached at nine in the morning. / I went to the gate guard of Arat Killo's A.A.U. and asked him where the register office is. / He pointed me [the] to the office. / At the place where the registration is taking place I met some of my high school friends / and I was very much happy when I saw them. / We chat each other until the registration hour reached. / Finally, after we have registered we went out from the compound and spent a four hours together. / Because of all the above I was very much happy at that day. /

Subject No. 5: The Day I Joined A.A.U.

One of the most unforgettable and important day in my life was the day I joined Addis Ababa University. / It was on September 11, 1989. / The day was dedicated to introducing us to the new environment, / and it is commonly known as the orientation day. / I didn't have to travel long because I was already in the city, though I arrived a little late. / On that day I met with many people from different regions and backgrounds. / I even had a chance of talking ~~until~~ some foreigners. / In the morning we were given lectures about the University. / In the afternoon we visited the compounds. / We had to visit both 'Arat Killo', and 'Sidist Killo'. / In the end we were all tired and weary. / After I saw all those things I was nervous. / I never thought I would be able to finish even the first semester. /

Number of words used 146

Subject No. 7:

Addis Ababa University
Faculty of Science
P.O. Box 1176

29 March 1990

Dear Derege,

Thank you very much for your letter which arrived two days ago./ Congratulate on your examination result./ As you told me you study hard to get a better result./ I am glad to hear from you that you will come Addis Ababa on April 14, 1990./ The Annual Freshman Party is going to be held on the eve of the Ethiopian Easter./ Is it possible to join us in Ethiopia Hotel on April 14, 1990./ at 9 O'clock ? I hope we meet and joy ourselves by visiting various historical places./ Good bye./

Sincerely yours,

Seifu Gelan

Subject No. 9:

Addis Ababa University
Faculty of Science
P.O. Box 1176

March 29, 1990

Dear /my respected/ Teshome,

Thank you very much for your warn letter which I have received just now./

Congratulate on your results,/ I could understand that all your hard works didn't fall on the ground/ that is you have scared such a good result due to you daily study,/keep it up!/
/

I am very glad also to hear from you that you will come here in April./

I have news for you which I think will interest you, / there will be a Freshman party which will be held on the ~~Eve~~ of the Ethiopian Easter from 9.00 Am to 11.0 Am at Christmas Hall. / will you please be able to meet me at the party ? / I am sune you will be happy at the part./

Write me as soon as this letter reached you so as I will arrange all things before you come here./ Give my greetings to Taye./

Your best friend,

Sisay Kebede.

Subj. No. 11: HOTEL FIRE SPOILED HOLIDAY

Addis Ababa University
Faculty of Science
P.O. Box 1176
29th March, 1990

Dear Abebe,

I am very glad to get a letter from you as it seems a long time since we met last./

Abebe, I recived your second letter on Saturday / and I am very happy. / Congratulation for your exam results. / Your hard work and active study helps you to score such a good grade./ It is / a / nice of you,/ keep it up./

I am very glad as you told me in your letter that you are coming to Addis at March 28 / The annual freshman party is going to be held on Easter Eve./ All the freshman students are invited to the party at Abenet Hotel starting from 9:00 O'clock to 2:00 O'clock at night./ Would you like to join us at Abenet Hotel for the party ? / If you do so, I will be very happy. / Please telephone me soon or visit me just when you come home./

Sincerly yours

Tadele Tereda

Subject No. 5: Hotel Fire Spoiled Holiday

Last week, on April the 14th 1990, the Addis Ababa University Freshmen were having an exciting party at Genet Hotel./ Unfortunately, a fire brock-out and spoiled the wholething. / The fire, as discribed by one of the firemen later on, had started in the kitchen./ At that time the students were dancing and enjoing themselves down in the Coktale room./ Suddenly a lunch of boys rushed from upstaus and announced what was going on./ Then everybody raced to the main door which was found locked from / the / outside./So all the students had to find their own ways out of that terrible & unfortunate encident. /They did so through other emergency exits. /Firemen came a few minuts after it had started and put everything under control./ Later on one of them described the fire as a deliberate action. Lukily there was no serious casuality./

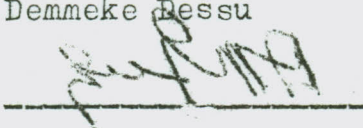
Subject No. 26: HOTEL FIRE SPOILED HOLIDAY

On April 14, Saturday afternoon the wonderful Annual Freshmen party which took place at Genet Hotel was interrupted by the unexpected fire. / The fire was started from the kitchen which was found beside the lounge. / While the fire was getting harder and harder all the freshmen were dancing, drinking and enjoying themselves. /

Unfortunately, a sharp noise heard from the kitchen and all the freshmen got silence and noticed what was happened. / As they all knew a fire started in the kitchen, they raced to the front door, / but the door which they dashed was locked. A fearful cry was heard from the girls / and the room was crowded. / Finally a firemen came and saved / all of / their life. / According to one of the firemen no one was seriously injured, except a few girls lost their property. / The cause of the fire was under investigation. /

Declaration

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

Name: Denmeke Bessu
Signature: 
Place: Institute of Language Studies
Addis Ababa University

Date of Submission: June 4, 1990