

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

**Evaluation of writing tasks: Grade Nine New
Textbook in focus**

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Advisor: Dr. Italo Beriso

May 2015

Addis Ababa

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By: Meron Mesfin

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of foreign languages and literature
(Graduate Program) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL)**

May 2015

Addis Ababa

Declarations

I declare that this thesis is my original work and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have been fully acknowledged.

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Evaluation of the writing tasks: grade 9 English textbook in focus

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the extent to which the writing tasks (activities) in the currently in use Grade 9 English textbook are well structured and organized in such a way that they could promote writing skills. The writing tasks were identified and analyzed base on the basic components of communicative tasks as well as the evaluation checklist for the communicative tasks suggested by Nunan (1989). Textbook analysis (content analysis), focus group discussion and questionnaire were the instruments used by the researcher, for availably sampled teachers and randomly selected students. To evaluate and interpret the data, the researcher wed qualitative methods. Findings of the study revealed that most of the writing activities do not fulfill many of the relevant criteria stated in the checklist which enable the students to communicate through writing in and outside the classroom. The findings also indicated although the goals (Objective) of the writing tasks clearly stated in the textbook for the students and teachers, they lack variety. Similarly, the contents as inputs are familiar to the students and satisfy the needs and interests of the learners but they do not provide enough information due to lack of adequate authentic materials together with their implementation. In a similar fashion, the activities in the course book satisfy the principle of meaningfulness, purposefulness, real worldliness and suitability of the use of pair/group work, yet they lack motivational values, variety, and authenticity; and are barley limited in including stages of tasks and topics raising high level of thought. Furthermore, the roles of students and teacher are clearly stated in the textbook, teacher's guide and syllabus in giving guidance, facilitating and counseling roles to the teacher leaving the entire task to the learners. However, in a few activities the teacher's roles are not clearly stated. Finally, the settings of the activities are flexible rather than fixed even if they do not provoke the use of pair/group work to a large extent. It is, therefore, recommended that textbook writers consider incorporating the six basic components of communicative tasks in the learner's textbook when preparing the materials.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Language is the vehicle of social interaction and we need effective language to function properly in the work place, social interaction, and indeed, for functional literacy. Teaching language effectively is a very challenging, but desirable activity for teachers and language learning is a mastery of the four language skills, it calls for well designed teaching procedures and techniques to enable students to make use of the target language appropriately. Writing is one of the four major skills that teachers often neglected. Most teachers felt that most high school students are weakers in writing than in other skills and that more practice is crucially needed than is found by simply following the textbook. As a result, the teaching of writing should be targeted on developing students' writing ability.

According to Hedge (1988) class room writing tasks should reflect the ultimate goal of enabling students write whole texts which form connected, contextualized and appropriate pieces of communication. Writing as a means of developing students' general ability in English is of a paramount value to be thought and learned successfully. To achieve this skill, the active involvement of both teachers and learners is extremely important in the process of teaching and learning although teachers have to begin to think about some of the reasons why students find it difficult to write in English.

Writing is an integrative skill and an important, constructive and a complex process. I think this is because writing a solidly reasoned text requires mental discipline and close attention to a set of logical rules creating a written text in

which there is an overall topic sentence supported by well-reasoned, convincing evidence in an organized manner is more challenging than writing a free or expressive paper. Besides, such a written text obliges you carefully sort out, think through and organize your ideas in sound and logical way. Thus writing is a process of continuing discovery which involves a series of steps and needs thinking critically. At the sentence level these include control of content format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writers must be able to structure and integrate information in to cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts.

Having said this about the nature of writing, the researcher will focus on the main purpose of this paper which is about writing tasks. There have been a lot of researches and theories in the last twenty years on the use of task in language teaching, particularly tasks which involve interaction between learners. Tasks are basic building blocks in any language teaching activity from either a language acquisition or a construct by researchers and language teachers, letting learner's perform in a way which is directly or indirectly similar to the target language use.

Writing activities refer to tasks that learners are supposed to perform after learning a given academic facet. There are lots of writing activities which students are put to carry out. They are too vast, for they take and possess different forms and features across various instances. The range of activities include; providing a model sentence with different lexical items, inserting grammatical form, composing sentences from tabular information, joining sentences, inserting the right conjunctions, etc. Writing tasks are also used to provide reinforcement of language items like structure, vocabulary, markers etc. Here, writing is being used to assist memory and development of the other skills.

Communicative tasks are also very important for developing learners L2 writing skills. Communicative output activities allow students to practice using all of the language they know in situations that resemble real settings. In these activities, students must work together to develop a plan, resolve a problem or complete a task. Tasks are considered to be key process in language learning (Richards and Rogers, 1986). Nunan (1989) points opportunities to interact in the foreign language; allow learners to incorporate authentic texts in to learning, and let learners use their own insight. In addition, the activities or tasks to be included in language courses need to be prepared under rigorous planning and preliminary investigation. In other words, tasks need to address learners' needs, interest, motivation, etc.

Discussions at tasks mainly focus on some key features which distinguish an event as "Task" from another as "Exercise" or "Activity" to be called a "Task", it should be meaning based, goal oriented, out come evaluated and real world related (Nunan,1989). If writing tasks include the criteria i.e. meaning based, goal oriented, outcome evaluated and real world related, they let learners practice writing to be; independent and able to write without much help; fluent and write smoothly; easy and understandable; creative and write their own ideas not copying what has been written; comprehensible and their writings will easily be understood by themselves and others.

Researchers have outlined principles for communicative task design. Task design is the most important element in Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT). No task, no task based language teaching. The same is true of communicative task design. These principles include; the principle of reasonable task difficulty, the authenticity principle, the principle of meaningful tasks and the principle of some focus on language form.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There is awareness that the mastery of communicative skills in English is necessary in both academic and non-academic situations. It has long been recognized that English is growing in importance as an international language of communication. Written English, in particular is said to be one of the most widely used modes of communication. In spite of this role of writing and attention it has received from scholars, the mastery of the writing and by student of English as Foreign or Second Language skill remains a major difficulty. As Second Language Acquisition, researchers believe, writing in English is a useful tool for language learning besides the role it plays in communication (Little John, 1993, Raimes 1991 Mchay, 1994). Strengthening this fact, Saville Troike (1984) says “..... The language skill which most likely to develop..... (Academic) competence is writing”.

But one of the reasons for writing to remain difficult would be inappropriate designing and preparation of communicative tasks because tasks are basic building blocks in any language learning. Besides, tasks facilitate language learning and ultimately learners perform in a way which is directly or indirectly similar to the target language. For all these benefits questions like how writing tasks should be designed? And what should be included? should be considered. According to Nunan (1989), language learning task requires specification of four components; the goals, the inputs, the activities derived from the input, and roles implied for teachers and learners. According to him, goal is related to the answer that a teacher might give to the question “why did you get learners to engage in task X?” in put refers to the data that form the point of departure for the task. Activities specify that learner will actually do with input which forms the point of departure for the learning task. And roles refer to the part that learners and teachers are expected in

carrying and learning tasks as well as the social interpersonal relationships between the participants.

The researcher has been using new grade-9 textbook 2011 and making her students practice almost all the writing activities presented in the textbook. However, most of the time the researcher finds her students fail to express their ideas in most of the activities and complain about the clarities of the tasks presented, the familiarities of the issues they write about, clues given and appropriateness of the activities. But when the researcher come with other writing activities from other reference books like “Headway”, the learners would express their ideas through writing based on contexts or situations given in the tasks without any problems. Thus, the following are researcher’s hypothesis considering the above components that are stated by Nunan (1989) and others as evaluation criteria; the current grade 9 English textbook writing tasks included some problems as mentioned above. Moreover, some of the writing activities do not encourage learners to apply classroom learning to the real world because they lack authenticity and clarity. There are still tasks without input to refer. Regarding the problems encountered, the researcher will evaluate the nature and design of writing tasks in the new grade-9 students’ textbook in promoting writing ability of the students.

The researcher has also tried to see researches conducted on language tasks and writing skills. Some of these studies are mentioned below. The first one which is related to my topic is Abebaw Desalegn’s paper which focuses on an evaluation of the listening tasks presented in the new grade-12 text book in 2012. The findings in the study revealed that in most of the listening tasks, the objectives are clearly stated but they are very general. The inputs of the tasks have verbal and non-verbal materials form but only some of the tasks contain non-verbal materials. The numbers of contrived materials exceed the authentic one .The other one is

Mazengia Mekonnen's (1982) thesis. It is a paper on content analysis of high school English textbook in terms of performance objectives and its result reveals that the then content of English textbook was essentially satisfactory under the existing difficult teaching and learning circumstances that manipulated learning activities and “know that” experiences are suitable for mechanical and knowledge behavior. The study also indicates that the communicative activities and direct experiences were not built into the content of grade 9 and 10 textbook.

My study is different from the above studies mentioned because it is confined to evaluate the nature and design of writing tasks in the new grade - 9 students' English textbook in promoting writing ability of the students. The focus of the first research, Abebaw Desalegn's is on evaluation of listening tasks and the second research, Mazengia Mekonnen's is on the evaluation of high school English textbook .The only similarity with my paper is that the first paper focus on evaluating tasks. However, my paper and Mazengia Mekonnen's papers are different in that his study emphasizes on analyzing all contents of grade 9 and 10 textbook in terms of performance objective while mine focus on solely evaluating writing tasks of the new grade-9 English textbook.

Thus, even though the researchers tried to touch the areas of writing activities in their studies, they didn't give a detail evaluation about the appropriateness of writing tasks (activities) in meeting major writing tasks design criteria by considering the learners' needs and interests. However, my study will be able to evaluate the nature and design of writing tasks presented in the currently in use grade - 9 students' English textbook in detail.

1.3 Significance of the study

It is true that the teaching of writing skill can be improved if there is better understanding of implementing communicative language activities needed for better writing.

As encouraging interactive class room, to a large extent, relies on the design and arrangement of the tasks, so that textbook writers and syllabus designers will be benefited from this study. Its implications may help English teachers have immediate relevance to evaluate their current practice in relation to handling and managing writing tasks. Furthermore, the findings get the students benefit in improving their performance of English and the way they practice writing activities in the classroom.

In general, the research will give insight related with promoting extensive writing practices. Besides it will help teachers find out their problems in teaching writing and the perception they and their students held about writing.

1.4. Scope of the study

The study will be limited to evaluate the nature and design of writing tasks presented in the new grade-9 English textbook in light with the current theories of communicative tasks using Nunan's (1989) frame work. This grade is chosen because the researcher believes that for grade nine students, it is their first year to be in the high school so that they can easily overcome the challenges they face in writing and to be beneficiary in their writing skills where required.

1.5. Limitations of the study

Evaluation of tasks in a textbook requires a critical analysis of every unit by a group of experts. This would be possibly done with an available resource and time. However, due to shortage of resource and time the researcher will not participate experts in the detail analysis of every task in every unit of the English for Ethiopia grade 9 students' textbook. Therefore, this study will be limited to the evaluation of the nature and design of writing tasks presented in the new grade 9 English textbook depending on the checklist to evaluate writing tasks using Nunan's (1989) framework of the current theories of communicative tasks.

1.6. Objectives of the study

1.6.1. General objective

The major objective of this study will be evaluating the nature and design of writing tasks in the new Grade 9 English Textbook in the light of the current theories of communicative tasks using Nunan's (1989) frame work.

1.6.2. Specific objectives

The following specific objectives were derived from the above general one and formulated based on the components of communicative tasks discussed by Nunan (1989). Therefore, the study will attempt to achieve the following specific objectives.

- A. To analyze the components of the writing tasks considering the input, the explicitness of the goal of writing tasks and the roles of teachers and students

- B. To identify some of the strong and weak sides of the writing tasks depending on the checklist of evaluating communicative tasks.
- C. To evaluate the nature of the writing tasks according to the checklist for evaluating the writing tasks.

1.7 Research questions

The basic and specific questions of the study are stated as follows:

1.7.1. Basic research question

The following is basic/research question of the study.

1. Are the nature and design of the writing tasks appropriate in improving the writing ability of the learners?

1.7.2. Specific research questions

The following specific research questions are derived from the above basic research question.

2. Are the writing tasks presented in the textbook prepared in light with the current theories of communicative tasks preparation (Nunan's frame work, 1989)?
3. Are the goals, settings and inputs in each task appropriately used?

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Concept of Writing

Different language schools define the term writing in different ways. For instance, Byrne (1988) defines writing as the act of forming graphic symbols that is letters or combinations of letters related to the sound we make when we speak on a flat form of some kind. Added to this, Zamel (1982) explain that writing is a process of exploring ones thought and learning from the act of writing itself what these thoughts are. However, writing as a skill of medium of communication is beyond producing graphic symbols; it also involves meaningful arrangement of symbols, words, Phrases, sentences, in accordance with certain language conventions.

Today, writing is involved in many of the activities that people engage in. The skill of writing enhances language learning as students practice with words, sentences, and paragraphs to communicate their ideas. In other words, writing skills offer learners opportunities to experiment with the language. Apart from these, writing increases learner's creativity and ability to solve problems (Hedge, 1988). Thus it gives students the opportunity to develop their feelings of self worth and self-image.

2.2 Definition of Task

There have been a lot of researchers and theories in the last twenty seven years on the use of tasks, in language teaching, particularly tasks, which involve interaction between learners. Tasks are basic building blocks in any language teaching activity from either a language acquisition or a communicative perspective and have been

considered as important components within curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation (Nunan 1991). In task based language teaching, syllabus content and instructional process are selected with reference to the communicative tasks will (either actually or potentially) need to engage in and outside the classroom also with reference to theoretical and empirical insights in the social and psycholinguistic processes which facilitate language acquisition (Abdulatiz Hajji, Ismael 2011). TBLT can be described as a language course whose syllabus or teaching and learning activities are organized around tasks (Nunan, 1988; Markee 1997).

There are many common issues related to task definitions. Van den Branden (2006) interprets various definitions of 'task' for two purposes: as language learning goals, and as an educational activity. According to Long (1985) 'task' is a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. In addition, Crookes (1986) defines 'task' as a piece of work or activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course or at work. Thus a task is an activity which requires learners to use language with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective. According to the definition of 'task' as language learning goals, by Van Den Branden (2006), there is emphasis on a close link between tasks performed by the learners in the language classroom and in the outside world on the primacy of meaning. He emphasizes that 'the things learners do with the target language in the classroom (i.e. the classroom tasks) should be related to or derived from what the learners are supposed to be able to do with the target language in the real world. Besides, he points out, based on the belief that tasks can foster language acquisition, they are supposed to elicit the kinds of communicative behavior (such as the negotiation of meaning) that naturally arise from performing real-life language tasks.

As an educational activity, Prabhu (1987), defines task as an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process .

2.3 The Nature of Writing Tasks

It has been argued that learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is a first, second or foreign language. All children except those with physiological disabilities learn to comprehend and speak their native language. Not all of these learn to read, fewer still learn to write fluently and legibly. White puts it this way:

Writing is not a natural activity. All physically and mentally normal people learn to speak a language. Yet all people have to be taught how to write. This is a crucial difference between the spoken and written forms of a language. There are other important differences as well. Writing unlike speech, is displaced in time. Indeed, this must be one reason why writing originally evolved since it makes possible the transmission of a message from one place to another. A written message can be received, stored and referred back to at any time. It is permanent in comparison with the ephemeral here one minute and gone the next character of spoken language-even of spoken language this is recorded on tape or disk (white 1981:2).

As Bell and Burnaby (1984) point out, writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information

in to cohesive and coherent paragraphs and text. There are two approaches regarding the concept of writing.

2.3.1 The Product Approach

The product approach to writing focuses on the end result of the act of composition, i.e. the letter, essay, story and so on. The writing teacher who subscribes to the product approach will be concerned to see that the end product is readable, grammatically correct and obeys discourse conventions relating to main points, supporting details and so on. The focus in class will cue words and developing sentences and paragraphs from model of various sorts.

2.3.2 The Process Approach

Those, who advocate a process approach to writing, see the act of composition from a very different perspective, focusing as much on the means whereby the completed text was created as on the end product itself. In order to find out more about how writers arrive at their final product, researchers studied writers as they went about their work. One of the most important discoveries, according to Zamel (1982), was that the act of composing involves through several stages as writers discover, through the process, what it is that they are trying to say. In other words, one does not sit down and simply record in a liner fashion what it is that one wants to say. The ideas are then refined, developed and transformed as the writer writes and rewrites successful writing, then involves;

- Mastering the mechanics of letter formation;
- Mastering and obeying conventions of spelling and punctuation;
- Using the grammatical system to convey one's intended meaning;

- Organizing contents at the level of the paragraph and the complete text to reflect given (new information and topic) comment structures;
- Polishing and revising one's initial efforts;
- Selecting an appropriate style for one's audience.

Since activities (tasks) specify what learners will actually do with the impact which forms the point of departure for the learning task, they should be parallel with 'the real world' as closely as possible. This is because language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message not the medium. On the subject of this, Richards and Rogers (2001) reveal that learning activities are selected according to how well they engage the learners in meaningful and authentic language use rather than mechanical practice of language patterns. Students are somehow involved in activities that give them both the desire to communicate and a purpose which involves them a varied use of language.

2.4 Criteria's to identify a good writing task

Writing activity (task) should come up with the following aspects/points.

a) Writing cannot be isolated as a skill

Writing is inevitably integrated with other skills. In the classroom it often comes after exercises using the other skills, e.g. from oral grammar to a written exercise. Furthermore, it is not possible to learn to write at any level unless one can also read. Firstly, one needs to read what one writes and secondly as a writer one has to consider who the reader is, what he knows and how he will understand and react to what is written. Finally one can only improve one's writing by modeling it on reading texts.

b) Two aims of written exercises (activities)

Writing activities are usually set with one of the two aims. Firstly, there are those exercises used to provide reinforcement of language items (e.g. structures, vocabulary, markers, etc) recently taught. Here, writing is being used to assist memory and the development of the other skills. The most common activities in this category are gap filling or single sentence transformation where the focus is on the grammar, i.e. the form of the language. Secondly, there are exercises where the aim is to train students in the skill of communicating through writing. It is important to recognize this definition, as frequently teachers think they are training writing when they are doing little more than reinforcing language patterns introduced earlier.

c) Any written task needs some purpose behind it

In the classroom, as with the other skills, any written task needs some purpose behind it. This is more difficult with writing because many learners are never going to write in a foreign language outside the exams and classroom. In fact, people other than professionals or students seldom write any language. We therefore need to try to create writing tasks that are as close to real life tasks as possible and cultivate sort of purposes students might have for writing outside the English classroom. These will conclude; writing for one self, e.g. not one can understand one self written messages and letters, directions instruction, form-filling, short essays for the other subjects, etc. Thus, when we set writing tasks we need to think about whether the sort of writing being set is realistic to our students.

d) Writing tasks should encourage acquiring and learning language

Any completed piece of writing should be as accurate as possible, but in the process of writing a student should concentrate primarily on ideas rather than grammar. Unless the writing is aimed specifically at reinforcing and memorizing a language structure, the content of what is written should always be more important than the form. Thus writing tasks should encourage students to think about what they are saying.

e) Writing activities should make students work on cohesion, spelling, grammar, coherence, vocabulary, handwriting, paragraphing, etc.

Activities must be interesting and motivating to do. They should be contextualized clearly and where possible they should have realistic purposes, that enable students to express their own ideas or write about themselves, or if not, at least enable students to produce a piece of meaningful writing. They should be graded in terms of language appropriate to the experiences of students. Finally, writing skills should be practiced in class as well as at home. If students are to develop writing skills, they need to work on writing skills activities in class under the teacher's supervision as well as writing out of class.

f) The task has to be motivating

What is motivation? Motivation is the most important factor affecting success in language learning. According to Harmer (1991), "Motivation is some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action. If we perceive a goal which is something we want to achieve and if that goal is sufficiently attractive, we will be strongly motivated to do whatever is necessary to

reach that goal. This means that if students are highly motivated, they succeed regardless of the methods used or the circumstances in which they study.

Ur (1996) claims that motivation on its own is rather difficult to define, it is easier and more useful to think in terms of the motivated learner; one who is willing or even eager to invest efforts on learning activities and programs. “She adds that there are many ways to motivate learners, but one of the most important is to make the tasks and lessons interesting. This requires careful choice and planning of topics and tasks, and most of all, the teachers’ ability to transmit his/her own motivation to the students. Adding to this, Willis (1996), mentions motivation as one of the essential conditions for effective language learning. She says that motivation is the key to success in language learning and satisfaction. If students get good results, they will be more willing to continue participating in class and use the language outside the classroom. Atkins, Hailom and Nuru (1996) also mentions that students are more likely to participate actively if they believe that participation in the activity will be enjoyable and relevant to something they need to learn.

g) The task has to address the students’ needs

A successful task has to address the students needs, be appropriate to achieve the goals and design according to the proficiency level of the students, that is not too easy, not too difficult but challenging. Regarding needs, Nunan (1999) mentions that “rather than fitting students to course, courses should be designed to fit students”. In order to find out what the needs of specific group of students are, a need analysis has to be carried out. A need analysis is sets of tools, techniques and procedures for determining the language content and learning process for specified groups of learners. He makes a distinction between two types of needs objective

(those that can be diagnosed by teachers based on analysis of personal data, language proficiency and patterns of language use) and objective needs (the students' wants, desires, expectations, or other psychological manifestations of a task). The latter are more difficult to diagnose and in many cases can only be stated by the students themselves. Both are important and should be taken in to consideration when designing a course.

h) The task has to be meaningful to the students

Another important characteristic of tasks is that they have to be meaningful to the students. This principle is an important element in communicative language teaching. Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Consequently learning tasks should be selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use rather than tasks which merely promote mechanical practice of language patterns (Johnson 1982, Littlewood 1982, as quoted in Richards and Rogers, 2001). Holliday (1975) also emphasizes that in a meaningful task, students are asked to exchange information among themselves in a small group and or with the teacher. This kind of students' collaboration has two benefits. First, the whole class activity participates in a task of the time and students can then compare their findings when the task is over and second, the meaningful task is rehearsed in class for later use in real communication outside the classroom.

i) The texts in tasks should be authentic

The other characteristic of communicative task is the use of authentic texts. Nunan (1999:79-80) defines authentic texts and those that have been produced in the course of genuine communication and not specially designed for language, teaching purposes. Authentic texts provide students with practice on listening to

and reading genuine language drawn from a variety of sources. Examples of authentic materials include text, video tapes, mini lectures, TV and radio, field trips, community resources, student knowledge, web resources and visual aids (posters, maps, bulletin, etc) selected mostly from those produced for native speakers of the language.

Letting learners practice with these materials will help them cope successfully with genuine communication outside the classroom. They contain language features different from the ones we might be focusing on in the particular class, so if some students are not developmentally ready to internalize the target feature, they can benefit from other linguistic aspects included in the texts, for example vocabulary and expressions. As a result, individual students will probably be learning different language aspects.

j) The task must have a purpose that goes beyond a classroom exercise

If a task is to be genuinely communicative and promote language use the students should have a desire to communicate, they should have a purpose for using the language, and this purpose, should be the most important part of the communication (Harmer, 1991). Therefore the student's attention should be centered on content, what is being said or written and not on the language form that is being used. Moreover, the writing tasks should let learners practice writing in class as well as at home. However, they shouldn't be prepared or made for learners practice only grammar and vocabulary in the class. If students are to develop writing skill, they need to work on well designed writing skill activities in class under the teacher's supervision as well as writing out of class.

The task should include pair or group works. According to Hedge (1988:12), collaborative writing in the classroom generates discussions which encourages an

effective process of writing. This would let students exchange their writings or compositions so that they become readers of each other's work. This is an important part of the writing experience because it is by responding as readers that learners will develop an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else. Moreover, when students work in pair or small group to write about something every student in the group would get a chance to contribute this part either in generating ideas or correcting grammar so that their writing skills will be improved. Thus, the writing should preferably be fair for pair or group work.

k) The task should include a pre task, a while task, and a post task

According to (Nunan, 1985, Prabhu, 1987 and Willis 1996), a task implementation or completion involves three stages: pre-task, while task and post task stages. The pre task stage refers to the stage where the learners prepare for the task completion; in this stage, the learners may be;

- exposed to the target language or provided with the language support that is necessary for the task completion.
- given an opportunity to understand the task goal or outcome and procedural aspects of the task.
- familiarized with the topic or schema.
- given time to plan the task completion.

The while task stage refers to the stages where the learners do the “main” learning activity that may include processing, producing or interacting in the target language (Nuan, 1985). A wide range of tasks can be used. In this stage the

learners perform the activity by themselves (Prabhu, 1987). Generally the learners have to understand the task input in order to complete the task.

Finally, the post task stage is the phase after the main activity is completed. In this stage, the task outcomes are assessed and feedback is given. A number of post stage activities are possible as following:

- Consciousness raising activities (Willis 1996)
- Practice of words, phrases, patterns, and sentences
- Teacher lead work correction
- Feedback delivery; the teacher gives oral or written feedback on the task outcome and the accuracy of the learning language
- Doing a related task that can be completed right away or as home work

2.5 Communicative Tasks

Different educators and researchers have tried to define the concept of communicative tasks in their literatures. Nunan (1989:11) defines a communicative task as “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as communicative act in its own right.” In different syllabuses, the communicative task is defined as “a kind of activity that involves learners in various activities or situations in which it is required to negotiate meaning and make choices in what, when and how to learn.”

Similarly, it is defined by Prabhu (1987:24) as “an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process.” Also Jane Willis (1996:34) defines communicative task as a goal oriented activity with clear purpose. Doing a communicative task involves achieving an outcome, creating a final product that can be appreciated by others. Examples include compiling a list of reasons, features or thing that need doing under particular circumstances; comparing two pictures or texts to find differences; solving a problem or designing a brochure. In the same way, it is also defined as “an activity or goal that is carried out using language, such as finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, writing a letter, etc.” (Richards and Rogers 2001).

The definitions given above share one thing in common. That is, they all imply that communicative tasks involve communicative language use in which the users’ attention is focused on meaning rather than linguistic structure. A communicative task has a specific objective that must be achieved. This means that they are goal-oriented. The focus here is on understanding and conveying meanings in order to complete the task successfully. While learners are doing communicative tasks, they are using language in a meaningful way.

2.6 Components of communicative task

One of the scholars, Nunan (1989) classified task components into five categories; goals, input, activities, roles, and setting. Candline (1987) on the other hand, lists seven components: input, roles, setting, actions, monitoring, outcomes and feedback. Stem and Shavelson (1981) also suggested six components: content, material, activities, goals, students and social community. But the focus of this research will be on Nunan’s components.

Goals	Task	Teacher role
Input		Learner role
Activity		Setting

2.6.1 Goals

Goals are the general intentions behind any given learning task (Nunan, 1989). Goals may relate to a range of general outcomes (communicative, affective or cognitive) or may directly describe teacher or learner behavior. Communicative activities with no goals cannot encourage learner's interest in language learning. Therefore, goals are the necessary elements of communicative tasks.

The overall goal of all communicative tasks are to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, and through this to exchange information ideas, opinions, attitudes and feelings and to get things done. The other goal of communicative task is to acquire information from more or less public sources in the target language (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, documents, films, written reports, etc) and using this information in some way. The third goal of communicative task is to listen to, read, enjoy, and respond to creative and imaginative uses of the target language (e.g. stories, poems, songs, rhymes, drama) (Clark 1987:226).

The other point worth nothing is that goals are not always explicitly stated, they can usually be inferred from an examination of a task. In each specified task the goal may differ. However, there is rarely a simple one-to-one relationship between goals and tasks. In some cases, a complex task involving arrange of activities might be simultaneously moving learners towards several goals.

2.6.2 Input

In the theories of SLA, scholars agreed that for learning a modern language, learners must be exposed to a considerable amount of language input either in natural or artificial teaching settings. Rod Ellis (1999) considered that input is used to refer to the language that is addressed to the foreign language learner either by a native speaker or by another foreign language learner in addition there should be some new information that the learners have not known. In other words, the input should be at a slightly higher level than the students are capable of using, but at a level that they are capable of understanding.

Input refers to verbal or non verbal materials, which task participants have to deal with when performing a task. While verbal materials may be spoken or written language, non verbal materials include pictures, photos, diagrams, charts, etc. it also refers to the data that form the point of departure for the task. Generally, input is a term used to mean the language that the students hear or read.

According to Cunnig Worth (1995) and Tomilson (1998), teaching materials can be enriched through authentic, inputs. Authentic materials are any materials which have not been specifically produced for the purpose of language teaching. Richards and Rogers (2001) elaborate the advantages for including authentic languages in ELT materials. These are that they have positive effect on learner motivations, provide exposure to real language, support a more creative approach to language teaching and they provide authentic cultural information about the target language. So, as far as input is concerned, we should expect teaching materials to present exponents at language that will serve as a means to offer to learners' routes towards language knowledge and to the language capabilities which the course aims at teaching.

2.6.3 Setting

“Setting” refers to the classroom arrangements specified or implied in the task, and it also requires consideration of whether the task is to be carried out wholly or partly outside the classroom. It also implies the instructional setting where pedagogical conditions are treated (Nunan, 1989).

“Setting” also refers to a certain environment in which every task is performed for the relationship between task participants, roles and each setting. Anderson and Lynch (1988) advocate the effectiveness of group work compared to that of individual work for general pedagogic reasons (e.g. increasing the cooperation and cohesiveness among learners). On the other hand, Li and Anderson (1993) indicate that advanced learners preferred individual work to group or whole class work based on their beliefs that group activities would not be helpful in improving their academic grades. As mentioned above the research results of classroom settings show some mixed findings. Thus, it suggests that classroom arrangements should be flexible rather than fixed, allowing task participants to make use of different settings in different learning situations.

2.6.4 Activities

The Oxford dictionary defines an activity in different ways. For instance, an activity is the condition in which things are happening or being done. It is a thing that a person or group does or has done. Similarly, the Cambridge dictionaries define activity as the situation in which a lot of things are happening or the work of a group or an individual to achieve an aim. It is something that is done as a work or for a particular purpose.

Activities specify, what learners will actually do with the input which forms the point of departure for the learning task. Nunan (1989), proposes three general ways of characterizing activities, (a) rehearsal for the real world (authenticity); (b) skills use; (3) fluency/accuracy. Classroom activities should parallel with the real world as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message, not the medium.

Many studies have concentrated on exploring activity types that best stimulate interactive language use in real world or classroom situation. Depending on the different scholars proposed different activity typologies, Clark (1987) proposed seven activity types, Patison (1987) also proposed several activity types which were different from his typologies, Prabhu (1987) proposed three general classifications based on three principal activity types, etc.

The researcher used Prabhu's activity typologies because the other typologies are directly or indirectly are related to Prabhu's three general typologies. These are:

a) Information gap activity:- which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another or from one to another, or from one place to another generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language. One example is pair work in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information and attempts to convey it verbally to the other.

b) Reasoning-gap activity:-which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. One example is working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables. Another is deciding what course of action is best for a given purpose and

within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended.

c) Opinion-tap activity:-which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion of social issue. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one's opinion, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions.

On the other hand, Atkins, Hailom and Nuru (1996) stated various types of writing activities that help to develop writing skills. These are;

- Joining sentences together with conjunctions
- Joining sentences together to make a story.
- Completing a dialogue
- Writing a parallel paragraph
- Writing parallel letter
- Writing a parallel text about yourself and your family
- Recording words to make sentences
- Expanding notes into a letter
- Completing a text

- Recording sentences to tell a story
- Writing a set of school rules
- Listening a dictation and making notes
- Writing a procedure
- Offering advice
- Completing a letter

2.6.5 Learner's roles

'Roles' refers to the part that learners and teachers are expected to play in carrying out learning tasks as well as the social and interpersonal relationship between the participants (Nunan, 1989). Learner's role refers to background knowledge, confidence, personality, motivation learning pace, ability in language skills, cultural knowledge or awareness, and linguistic knowledge (Richards and Rogers, 2001)

The development of communicative language teaching has had a dramatic effect on the roles that learners are required to adopt. This is particularly true for writing tasks in which students are invited to exchange their writings so that they become readers of each other's work. This is an important part of the writing experience because it is by responding as readers that students will develop an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else, (White 1987:11). Besides this, providing opportunities for collaborative writing in the classroom would enable students to generate discussion which encourages an effective process of writing. They can easily correct their errors if they are made to

exchange their writing and work in group giving them little help or guidance instead of having everything done by the teacher.

Student's role should go through certain process which leads to successful piece of written work. They should think about what they want to say and who they are writing for. They then draft out sections of the writing and as they work on them they will review, revise and edit their work. In other words, they should have a sense of purpose, audience and direction in their writing.

2.6.6 Teacher's roles

Richards and Rogers (1986) suggest that learner roles are closely related to the functions and status of the teacher. As they point out, some methods are totally teacher dependent, while others view the teacher as a catalyst consultant or guide. For instance, traditionally, the role of the teacher in the writing class is to provide correct models to set tasks and to provide corrective feedback. The role of the learner is rather passive with the target language forms.

However, in the communicative language teaching, teachers' roles refer to teacher function, his degree to control over learning tasks, teacher responsibility as to content and interactional patterns between teachers and learners (Richards and Rogers, 2001). Moreover, the teacher is a facilitator to help the communication among participants run through so that the learners express their ideas better. The teacher can also function as an observer and put himself into learner's position to assume and notify their difficulties.

2.7 Task based teaching and task-supported teaching

In order to use task-based language teaching in the classroom for the purpose of making language teaching more communicative, by careful analysis of general principles and definitions of task, it is possible to place any definitions of task on a continuum from a strong version (task based teaching; Willis 1998), to a weaker version (task-supported teaching: Ellis 2003). With consideration of the balance between meaning focused activity (Willis 2003), introduces task supported language teaching as “some methodologists have simply incorporated tasks into traditional language based approaches to teaching”. Others, more radically, have treated tasks as units of teaching in their own right and have designed whole courses around them (Ellis 2003:27). Ellis (2003) acknowledges that TBLT is somewhat complex and suggests that the strong version of TBLT may be more theoretically desirable, while task-supported teaching is more likely acceptable to teachers. He adds that in both cases, tasks have been implemented to make language teaching more cooperative. Therefore, tasks are an important feature of communicative language teaching (CLT).

Skehan (2009) divides task characteristics into strong and weak forms of the task-based approach. According to him in a strong form of task based approach, “tasks should be the unit of language, and in this view, the need to transact tasks is seen as adequate to drive forward language development as though second language acquisition. While a weaker form of task-based instruction would claim that “tasks are a vital part of language instruction, but they are embedded in a more complex pedagogic context”. Therefore he points out that a weak form of task-based instruction may be preceded by focused instruction which is dependent on task performance, and this version of task-based instruction is very close to general combinative language teaching (Skehan 2003). This also could be compatible with

a traditional presentation, practice, production sequence, (PPP) only with production based on tasks rather than more stilted and guided production activities (Littlewood 1981).

2.8 Evaluating Tasks

Nunan (1989) points out a list of questions which can act as a guide in the evaluation of task. The list of questions can be used in a variety of ways. It may not be necessarily needed to answer all questions in task in evaluation. He suggested that at particular times (when, for example, the teacher is trying out a new task for the first time, or using a task which is familiar to the teacher but not to the students) that the teacher records the lesson in which the task is introduced on audio or video tape and use this tape to aid the reflection as he/she evaluates the task.

❖ A checklist for evaluating communicative tasks

Component	Questions
Goals and rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is the goal or goals of the task obvious to you or to your students? • Is the task appropriate to the learner's proficiency level? • To what extent does the task reflect a real-world or pedagogic rationale? Is this appropriate? • Does the task encourage learners to apply class room learning to the real world? • What beliefs about the nature of language and learning are inherent in the task?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the task likely to be interesting and motivating to the students?
Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What form does the input take? • Is it authentic? • If not, are they appropriate to the goal of task?
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the activities appropriate to the communicative goals of the task • If not, can they be modified to make them more appropriate? • Is the task designed to stimulate students to use bottom-up or top-down processing skills? • Is there an information gap or problem which might prompt as negotiation of meaning? • Are the activities appropriate to the input data? • Are the activities designed in a way which will allow learners to communicate and cooperate in groups?
Roles and settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What learner and teacher roles are inherent in the task? • Are they appropriate? • What levels of complexity are there in the classroom organizations implicit in the task? • Is the setting confined to the classroom?
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the task actually engage the learner's interests? • Do the activities prompt genuine communication interaction among students? • To what extent are learners encouraged to negotiate meaning?

Grading
and
integration

- Does anything unexpected occur as the task is being carried out?
- What type of language is actually stimulated by the task
- Is this different from what might have been predicted?
- Is the task at the appropriate level of difficulty for the students?
- If not is there any way in which the task might be modified in order to make it easier or more challenging?
- Are the tasks structured that they can be undertaken at different levels of difficulty?
- What are the principles up on which the tasks are sequenced?
- Do the tasks exhibit the 'task continuity' principle?
- Are the range of macro skills integrated into the sequences of tasks?
- If not, can you think of ways in which they might be integrated?
- At the level of the unit or lesson are communicative tasks integrated with other activities and exercise design to provide learner with mastery of the linguistic system?
- If not, are there ways in which such activities might be introduced?
- Do the tasks incorporate exercises in learning how-to-

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evaluation

learn?

- If not, are there ways in which such exercises might be introduced?
- What means exist for the teacher to determine how successfully the learners have performed?
- Does the task have built into some means where by learners might judge how well they have performed?
- Is the task realistic in terms of the resources and teacher-expertise it demands?

CHAPTER THREE

Research methodology

3.1 Research Design

It was mentioned under the objectives of the study that the main aim of this study was to examine or evaluate the writing tasks presented in the new grade 9 students' textbook. The research evaluated the writing tasks whether they were well structured or organized in a way that they could promote writing skills. In order to achieve this objective, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative approach was used as it gives rich information. Qualitatively, focused group discussion (FGD) and some part of content analysis were treated; whereas questionnaire and the rest of content analysis were quantitatively analyzed. The quantitative approach was used because it gives factual information. Thus, in evaluating the writing tasks, it was necessary to group the activities based on the components of communicative tasks as well as their particular characteristics and then to express them in terms of numbers and percentages for interpretation. In addition to this, some typical examples of the writing activities were evaluated and described.

3.2 Sources of Data

The major sources of data for this study were the new grade -9 students' textbook, teacher's guide, and the syllabus. The main target of the study is the writing tasks in the students' textbook. The researcher chose the new grade 9 textbook because it is the book of learners who are sitting for the national examination after a year and because the book is recent and contains plenty of tasks in the four skills that help the learners to improve their language skills.

3.3 Research Tools

As Patton (1990:44) presented, no single source of data can be trusted to provide comprehensive perspectives, based on that, multiple sources of information were sought and used. So, three kinds of instruments were used to gather data in this research. These are content analysis, focus group discussion and questionnaire.

Content analysis was the major instrument used in this study because it is a research tool focused on the actual content and internal features of a text. It will serve as useful purpose in yielding information helpful in evaluating or explaining social or educational practices. It also offers several advantages such as it can allow for both qualitative and quantitative operations, it can be used to interpret text for purpose; it can provide valuable data, it will be reliable when done well and considered as a relatively “exact” research method (Berelson 2001). The second major research tool was used is focus group discussion (FGD). It is because FGD is a good way to gather people from similar back ground or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest.

The participants in the (FGD) were guided by the researcher by introducing the topics for discussion and helping the group to participate in a lively and natural way. Focus group discussion also provides an insight into how a group thinks about an issue and the range of opinions and ideas. Then a detail and rich report was prepared after the session was finished. Any observation during the session was noted and included in the report. The third research tool used is questionnaire because it is useful to gather factual information. It lets the sampled people to pass their discussions or feelings on the issues raised freely without any bias or pressure. In short, it gives freedom to the people that respond to the questionnaire.

It also strengthens the information would be gathered by the other two research tools.

3.4 Subjects of the Study

The target populations in the study were mainly teachers and students in the evaluation of writing tasks. All the four English teachers in Jiva Primary and Secondary School were target population in the study. They were selected by available sampling technique because there are only four teachers. The second target populations in the study were forty pupils which is the total number of Grade 9 students in the school. Among these, thirty students were selected by random sampling method in which to give equal chance to every students.

3.5 Procedures of Data Gathering

The researcher first explained the purposes and benefits of the study clearly in detail to the subjects of the study. Next, a pilot study was conducted for the students to check whether the questions in the questionnaire were understandable enough to the students which were not sampled for the actual study but from similar grade level and background. Because the objective of pilot study is to test and improve instruments and to have awareness for possible problems that might be encountered while administering the actual instruments. After this, the researcher made a bit of modification on every few questions its having challenging and ambiguous words. Then, the researcher administered question for the students who were chosen by random sampling; (FGD), for all the four English teachers that were selected by available sampling and content analysis by evaluating each writing task under each unit.

3.6 Method of Data analysis

The researcher used Nunan's (1989) framework to analyze the data that were gathered from the textbook about the writing tasks (activities) by the three research

tools. These are content analysis, focus group discussion (FGD) and questionnaire. All the writing tasks in the new Grade - 9 textbook were analyzed focusing on their goals, input, activities, roles, and settings.

The researcher also used checklist to evaluate each writing task under each unit of the textbook in relation to the teacher guide and syllabus. Finally, the researcher gave conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the research.

3.7 Data organization and Presentation

Data from the textbook were organized and put into categories. These categories included the evaluation of writing tasks based on the components of communicative tasks such as goals of tasks, inputs, activities, roles of learners and teachers, and setting under the evaluation of the writing tasks (activities). The occurrences of this basic component of communicative tasks were tallied, tabulated and discussed descriptively. Besides, evaluation of the nature of writing tasks in each unit under each component (element) in relation to the checklist were described and discussed qualitatively and quantitatively.

To ease the analysis of the questionnaire, the researcher has taken the results of strongly agree and agree together and disagree and strongly disagree jointly, undecided remained in between for the focus group discussion, for its being qualitative, the researcher used qualitative words and expressions to describe and analyze the data. For some of the tasks and related aspects that could be quantified in the content analysis, tables were used and analyzed in percent (%) and numbers, where as those activities which were not suitable for quantification, were analyzed qualitatively.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data presentation and Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the writing tasks (activities) presented in currently in use Grade 9 English textbook are well structured or organized in accordance with the theories of communicative task preparation. In order to achieve this, the researcher used three research methods. They are content analysis, focus group discussion and questionnaire. The data gathered by content analysis, focus group discussion (FGD) and questionnaire were analyzed and discussed in this section as follows:

Respondents' profile

In the focus group discussion there are four (4) English teachers; three male and one female. They all teach in Jiva Elementary and High school. All these teachers possessed BED in English with a minimum of two years of teaching experience in the subject English. In the questionnaire, all the respondents are students of grade 9. The total number of grade 9 students in Jiva Primary and Secondary School is 40, of which 30 students are selected randomly.

4.1 Content Analysis; Data from the Textbook Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool focused on the actual content and internal features of a text. It is a very good research method because it provides valuable data through analysis of texts and activities. It also indicates pertinent features such a comprehensiveness of coverage, appropriateness of a text, and so on. Bernard Berelson (2001,74). Thus, the research used it to analyze the writing activities (tasks) from the textbook.

4.1.1 Writing tasks (Activities)

Grade 9 English Textbook has twelve units in which each unit is divided in the seven sections. Introduction (brainstorming activities), speaking, listening, reading, language focus (grammar, social expressions, study skills, etc) vocabulary and writing. In each unit, the writing activities are placed or presented at different positions. Table 1 below presents the total number of writing activities in the textbook with their mode of presentation.

Table 1: Distribution of writing activities in grade 9 English text Book

Units	Number of writing activities	Pages on which the activities are presented
One	3	11,16 and 17
Two	3	23,26 and 32
Three	3	45,47 and 55
Four	3	67,73 and 79
Five	3	85 and 89
Six	3	100,102 and 105
Seven	2	122 and 129
Eight	4	140,144, 149 and 152
Nine	3	162,170 and 171
Ten	3	181,188 and 189
Eleven	3	200,204 and 206
Twelve	6	210,210,213,220,220 and 221
Total	38	36

As it is indicated in the table above, there are 38 writing activities in the 12 units of grade 9 English textbook. The distribution of the writing tasks in different units is uneven. For instance, unit five and seven contain two activities whereas unit eight has four activities, unit 1, 2,3,4,6,9,10 and 11 contain the same number of activities i.e. three while unit 12 comprises six activities. This implies that the distribution of the writing activities under the writing section of each unit of the textbook varies from unit to unit. This might not give equal opportunity to the learners to express their ideas in practicing the writing activities in each unit because they do not get equal number of activities under the writing section of each unit.

4.1.2 Evaluation of the writing tasks

The writing tasks presented in the currently in use grade – 9 English students' textbook are evaluated based on Nunans' (1998) framework for evaluating communicative tasks as follows:

4.1.2.1 Aspects in Relation to Goals

Goals are the general intention behind any given learning task and provide a point of contact between the task and the broader curriculum (Nunan 1989). So, the first important feature to be treated in evaluating a communicative task is to check the existence of a key list of objectives that provide students with an opportunity to determine for themselves, where they are going and what they can expect to achieve.

Table 2. The objectives of writing activities in Grade 9 English textbook

No	Components of communicative tasks	Units	Occurrence of the writing tasks goals (objectives) in each unit
1	Goals	One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a form with a necessary Information about themselves • Writing an informal letter to a friend or relatives • Rewriting
		Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing adscription of their locality • Writing a personal letter to different agencies
		Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a diary • Writing a description of their hobbies or activities they did during the past time
		Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a leaflet about nutrition • Writing sentences while listening • Writing sentences with their correct punctuation
		Five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing sentences about Ethiopian statistics for HIV/AIDS • Writing a story
		Six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a biography of a famous person • Writing a news broadcast • Write an essay introduction
		Seven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a paragraph about where they live

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a letter to a newspaper
		Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing definitions of words to do with banking • Writing an essay conclusion about a certain discussion
		Nine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a summary • Writing an informal letter • Completing a paragraph • Writing about an Ethiopian tradition
		Ten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-arranging sentences to make an appropriate paragraph • Writing class newspaper
		Eleven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a description of an animal • Writing a story
		Twelve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a guided essay about disability and discrimination • Writing a topic sentence and a brief outline of the main idea • Writing a paragraph using linking words & discourse markers • Writing a research report

Objectives have to be stated clearly and concisely because the outcomes from the tasks might depend on the explicitness of the objectives. They should also identify clearly what the students should be able to do and provide the means by which they can determine for themselves whether they have achieved or not. As it can be

seen from the above table, the textbook provides objectives for the writing sections throughout all units. This gives opportunities to the learners to contemplate what they are expected to perform when practicing the activities. This might be achieved by providing learners with activities related to each objective.

Although most of the objectives of teaching writing skills are stated under the writing section of each unit, they lack variety to a large extent and repeated in most of the units. For instance, the objectives “writing an informal letter” and “writing an essay” are repeated in units 9,6 and 2 and this might not arouse the students motivation and interest rather it makes them bored and they do not generate ideas when practicing writing. However, most of the objectives of teaching writing skill are explicitly stated in such a way that the students could easily understand how to practice the writing activities in each unit of the textbook. This helps the students to know well what and how they are going to do a task in accordance with the pre-suggested goals. Furthermore, the objectives have also been speculated in the syllabus of the textbook though the students do not have the syllabus in hand. They would be benefited indirectly by their teacher. The textbook has a teacher guide which involves specific objectives for each section in each unit and this enables the teacher to get additional directions and guidance on how to manage the students when doing the activities. This makes the textbook of good quality for it does make the students master the syllabus objectives for written English.

Therefore, since goals (objectives) are the necessary elements of communicative task and they play a very important role in the whole process of communicative activities, it would be possible to say that the goals (objectives) of the writing tasks in the textbooks are clearly stated to a large extent.

Table 3: The inputs of writing in grade 9 English textbook

No	Components of communicative tasks	Unit	Input of the writing activities		Occurrences of the writing tasks impacts in each unit
			Authentic	Inauthentic	
2	Input	One	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data form • Written letters • Written sentences
		Two	0	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written text • Written situation • An instruction
		Three	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures • Data table • Written instruction
		Four	0	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written text • An instruction • Written text
		Five	2	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data table • Pictures
		Six	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures • a news report • Written essay
		Seven	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures • Written letter
		Eight	0	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words from the written text

		Nine	0	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written essay • Written text • An informal letter • Written topic sentences • Written text
		Ten	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures with sentences • Written ideas for a newspaper with picturing • Newspaper stories
		Eleven	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture of an animal • Instructions • Written sentences
		Twelve	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures of disabled people • An instruction • Written topic sentences • Pictures of disabled people • Written sentences • An instruction
	Total	12	13/38	25/38	38

4.1.2.2 Aspects in relation to inputs

As it has been stated in the literature, input data refer to verbal or non verbal materials which task the participants have to deal with when performing them. So, it is suggested that language input must be comprehensible and motivating for the material to be useful as the major part of the language input comes from it.

In the currently used grade 9 English textbook there are 38 writing activities under the writing sections of the 12 units. In all the writing activities, to a large extent, an attempt was made to design the contexts of activities as input in accordance with the goals of the tasks for they are selected on the basis to the student experience and exposure. There are inputs for all the 38 writing activities in various forms. In the above table, the number of inputs of the writing activities indicated together with their authenticity.

Table 3 above shows that there are 13(34%) activities which involve authentic inputs and the remaining 25(66%) activities lack authentic inputs. This indicates that many of the writing activities presented in the textbook do not promote the use of pictures, illustrations, diagrams, graphs, etc.

This also reveals that regarding this component of communicative task, a due consideration is not made in emphasizing addressing learner's needs, interests and preferences. Lack of such authentic materials (visual aids) will influence the interest of students thereby affecting their engagement in doing the activities. Moreover, since there are various students with different learning styles or multiple intelligences, not providing with such authentic and supporting materials would be resulting in depriving such diverse students of the opportunity of learning comfortably with their own learning preferences and pace. Therefore, it would be

possible to conclude that contents as input do not give sufficient information to the students because of lack of authentic materials.

4.1.2.3. Aspects in Relation to activities

Table 4: the activities in the writing section of grade 9 English textbook

No	Components of communicative tasks	Units	Occurrence of the writing activities in each unit
3	Activities	1 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a form with personal information (individual) • Writing an informal letter (individual) • Correcting punctuation errors (individual) • Writing a description of a place (in group) • Writing down notices written in English (in group) • Writing a letter (individual)
		3 4 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching sentences with pictures (individual) • Writing a diary (individual and pair) • Writing a description about their hobbies (individual) • Writing a leaflet about nutrition (individual) • Dictation (individual) • Re-writing a passage with the correct punctuation (individual) • Completing sentences about the given table (individual) • Writing a story (individual)
		6 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Biographies about famous people (in pair) • Making a news program (in group) • Writing an essay introduction (in pair) • Writing a description of where they live (in group)

		8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a letter (individual) • Writing definition of words (individual) • Writing an essay (in group) • Making a summary (individual) • Re-writing words (individual)
		9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing an informal letter (in pair/ individual) • Writing a paragraph (individual) • Writing a description of Ethiopian coffee ceremony (in pair)
		10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-arranging sentences (individual) • Writing a class newspaper (in group) • Writing a letter (individual)
		11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a description of an animal (individual) • Writing a story (individual) • Writing sentences with the correct form of the verb (individual)
		12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and asking questions (individual) • Writing an essay (individual) • Writing topic sentences (in group) • Writing paragraphs (individual) • Group research & report (in group)

In table 4, above, all the writing activities under the writing sections of each unit are indicated together with their mode of practicing i.e. individually, in pairs or group. They are presented in such a way that students practice writing in various forms, learning different skills rather than sticking to writing paragraphs and stories only because writing is inevitably integrated with other skills. In most of the units the writing activities often come after exercises using other skills, e.g. from grammar to written exercises, from reading, listening or speaking to making notes

or writing comprehension exercises. This would let learners be aware about the situations they write for because they have already involved in the situations practicing other skills under reading, listening, speaking and language focus sections. Furthermore, the topics raised under the other skills are still discussed in the writing section in modified and advanced forms. In this regard the writing activities are highly stitched or interwoven with the other activities in other skills.

In some of the units under the writing sections, there are rooms for the practice of grammar, vocabulary, transitional words, mechanics, etc in addition to exercising writing. The most common exercises in this regard are gap filling, single sentence transformation, re-writing words, sentences & paragraphs, constructing sentences from pictures where the focus of these activities are on the grammar, i.e., the form of the language and vocabulary. For instance, under the writing section of unit 5, the students are asked to complete the sentences with determiners looking at the table given (see Appendix E). Again, on page 105, exercise A 6.11, unit six, the students are asked to write an essay using both compound and complex sentences and different conjunctions.

Similarly, on page 181, exercise A 10.6, unit 10, the students are ordered to rearrange sentences to make a story using sequencing words like first, then, next, after that, etc (see appendix E). Since skill are well taught with integration, the learners will get the opportunities of learning grammar and vocabulary in a communicative and meaningful way focusing on the use to a large extent without totally ignoring the usage because they are provided with contexts or situations which let them practice the grammar and vocabulary in a communicative way. Apart from the grammar and vocabulary, under the writing sections of some units, there are attempts to some extent, to consider reading, listening and speaking in such a way those students write from what they listened to, read and presented

orally what they wrote. For instance, under the writing section of unit three, page 48, exercise A. 3.12, the students are asked to make a conversation about each other's diary they wrote. Again, on page 149, units 8, exercise B8.6, the students are asked to write a summary about the given topic and read it out loud to the rest of the class (see Appendix E). Similarly the learners are also let to write sentences from a dictation made by their teacher, on page 73, unit four, and exercise B 4.3.

However, topics in most of the writing activities are presented straight forward and focus on simple utilization of writing skill and discussions completing texts, practicing grammar, writing stories and letters, writing sentences from simple pictures tables and diagrams etc. These are necessary to practice writing but there should also be topics and activities that push learners to involve themselves in high level of thought such as writing to argue against or for, to reasoning logically, etc and this might broaden their dimensions. As it has been mentioned in the literature review, unlike the other skills, writing is challenging because it needs deep thought. So, students should be accessed to some kind of topics and activities that enable them to involve in creative writing.

Besides, some topics are repeated raising similar issues such as “write a formal or informal letter to....”, “write a story about....” etc.... Therefore, it is advisable including topics and activities raising familiar issues and go to more sophisticated ones.

The writing activities under each unit are practiced individually in pair and in groups. Since there are students with different learning styles, or multiple intelligences, providing them activities with various modes of practicing such as individually, in pairs or in groups will bring them opportunity for learning comfortably with their own learning preferences and pace. As it can be seen in the

table 4 above, in some of the writing activities students are invited to work in pairs or group. Providing students the opportunity for group (collaborative) writing in the classroom would enable them to generate discussion which encourages an effective process of writing. In addition, they can easily correct their errors if they are made to exchange their writing and work in group giving them little help or guidance. However, according to Li and Anderson (1992), there are also students who prefer individual work than group or whole class work especially advanced learners based on their beliefs that group activities would not be helpful in improving their academic grades. In fact, all activities should not only focus on group/pair or individual work rather there is a need to be flexible and let learners practice individually, or in pairs /groups or both according to the type and nature of the activity. In the textbook students are also invited to practice writing individually to a good extent.

Table 5. Nature of the writing activities in fulfilling characteristics of communicative tasks

No	Motivation			Meaningfulness			Real wordiness			Purposefulness			Suitability of tasks for pair/group work			Stages of tasks)		
	No of activities			No of activities			No of activities			No of activities			No of activities			No of activities		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
1	1	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	3	0	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
2	2	1	3	2	1	3	3	0	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	2	3
3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3
4	1	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	3	0	3	0	3	3	2	1	3
5	1	1	2	2	0	2	1	1	2	2	0	2	0	2	2	1	1	2
6	2	1	3	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	3	2	1	3
7	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	0	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
8	2	2	4	2	2	4	3	1	4	3	1	4	1	3	4	1	3	4
9	1	2	3	3	0	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
10	1	2	3	1	2	3	3	0	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	2	3
11	1	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	0	3	3	1	2	3
12	3	3	6	4	2	6	4	2	6	4	2	6	2	4	6	3	3	6
Total	18	20	38	26	12	38	29	9	38	27	9	38	15	21	38	17	21	38
%	47	53	100	68	32	100	76.5	23.5	100	71.5	23.5	100	45	55	100	45	55	100

A) Regarding motivation value

As it has been mentioned in the literature part, scholars in general agree that motivation is the most important factor affecting success in language learning. If students are highly motivated, they will succeed regardless of the methods used or the circumstances in which they study (Harmer, 1991). So, to achieve this, topics of writing tasks need to be highly attractive and appealing that can win the students' interest, and drive them to work on. However, table 5 above shows that 58% of the tasks are interesting to do. This might be because of some of the topics under the writing sections of some of the units that are repeated and not appealing to win the learners interest focusing on creative writing. For instance, such topic “write a formal and an informal letter about... and write a story about ...” are repeatedly presented under the writing sections of unit 1,5,7 9 and 10 respectively.(see appendix E)

Apart from repetition, the activities are presented in such a way that do not seem appealing to the learners' interest and make them involve in the activities actively and interestingly. For instance, the activities under the writing sections of unit 1, 9, 10 are presented in a way that do not attract the learners to be involved in practicing them (see appendix E).In exercise B18 unit 1, page 16, the learners are asked to follow the format of an informal letter given as a sample and write a short letter to a friend that describes their first day at school. Again in exercise B7.3, unit 7 page 128 the students are to made to read in order to answer the questions asked about the sample letter then asked to write a letter. In exercise A9.13, unit 9, page 762, the learners are asked to decide about the layout of an informal letter given in unit 1 and then asked to write.

In addition, in exercise B10.7, unit 10, page 189, the students are ordered to write an informal letter responding to one of the stories listed in the unit again. So, how could the learners be motivated having such forced dull activities and approaches? Concerning this, Atkins, et al. (1996) mentioned that students are more likely to participate actively if they believe that participation in the activity will be enjoyable and relevant to something they need to learn.

Moreover, though letting learners practice vocabulary and grammatical aspects such as gap filling, completing a text (passage) with given words, sentence level writing, etc in their writing is helpful, but it shouldn't be more than expected. Rather there should be writing tasks that focus on meaning (use) to a large extent and let learners express their ideas through writing without any hindrance. However, some more writing activities emphasized on vocabulary and grammatical aspects and focus on simple utilization of writing and discussion.

B4.12 Writing 2: Punctuation

Rewrite this passage with the correct punctuation:

where are you going asked fanose

i am going to the market to buy lots of food and drink my cousin aret is coming to visit me from addis ababa and she enjoys eating lots of healthy foods she leads a very healthy lifestyle replied almaz

what are you going to buy asked fanose

i am going to buy lots of fresh fruit and vegetables and rice she also likes fish so i will buy some tuna and salmoafor dessert i will buy a cake as treat for her as she doesn't eat sweet foods very often said almaz

how long is your cousin staying asked fanose

she will be staying for two nights i am looking forward to seeing her why don't you join us for dinner tonight said almaz

i would love to replied fanose what time shall i come

eight o clock, see you later

see you later i will bring some fresh fruit juice for us to enjoy said fanose

B11.7 Writing: Revising verb forms

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets [past simple, past continuous or present perfect].

- 1 How many of the pens have you (give) your brother?
- 2 I (celebrate) my birthday last week.
- 3 The woman (.wash.) her baby already this morning.
- 4 Since you arrive) here first, why didn't you knock at the door?
- 5 My aunt (feed) the baby in the room.
- 6 Last year the people (bring) a number of gifts to the chief.
- 7 This morning. Zebiba (say) he (fee!) very unhappy.
- 8 When I get there, the old man (demand) some money.
- 9 When she see: me. she (think) I was you.
- 10 An¹ those the children who (play) behind the house?

In the above examples, in the writing section of unit 11, the learners are asked to change the verbs in brackets into their correct form and complete a sentence. In writing sections of unit 10, the learners are asked to rearrange jumbled sentences and write in its correct sequence to make a meaningful paragraph. Also in unit 4 the learners are asked to re-write a paragraph with a correct punctuation. Here the students are practicing grammar, vocabulary and punctuation to a large extent though the topics are not that much appealing to the learners' interest. The activities focus on facts and do not have rooms for the learners to express their opinions about the issues raised in the situations. They just let the learners know the grammatical aspects of the words rather than practicing writing in making them put their ideas in the way they like. In this regard Nunan (1989) advises that learning tasks should not be too easy to practice and too much difficult but challenging then the learners will be motivated to do whatever is necessary to reach the goal.

- **Regarding meaningfulness**

Another important characteristic of tasks is that they have to be meaningful to the learners so that they support the learning process. Tasks should be selected according to how well they engage the learners in meaningful & authentic language use rather than tasks which merely promote meaningful practice of language patterns. In the textbook most of the writing activities provided are meaningful to the students. Table 5 shows that the majority (68%) of the writing activities promote the principle of meaningfulness. Let us see the following examples from the textbook.

A3.12 Writing: Keeping a diary

A diary is a record of your daily activities. This is Moges's diary for last week. Read it and answer the questions below.

Monday 14th August	<i>Went to visit my cousin Halima. Fetched water from the well.</i>
Tuesday 15th August	<i>Went to the market with Mother. Played football in the afternoon.</i>
Wednesday 16th August	<i>Played with my friend Ibrahim in the morning. Helped Mother change the wheel of the car.</i>
Thursday 17th August	<i>Helped my cousin Abel mend the puncture on his bicycle. Went to the football match with him in the afternoon.</i>
Friday 18th August	<i>Helped weed the garden. Went to pray in the mosque with Father.</i>
Saturday 19th August	<i>Fell out of a tree and broke my arm. Father took me to the clinic.</i>
Sunday 20th August	<i>Stayed at home and played with my sister. Visited my grandparents in the afternoon.</i>

- 2 On which day did Moges play football?
- 3 When does Moges go to the mosque?
- 4 What was the date when Moges went to the football match?

- 5 Where did Moges go last Monday?
- 6 Did Moges help his father on 20th August?

Look at Moges's diary again and create your own diary for last week. Write the day of the week and the date on the left side of the page. Write what you did each day on the right side.

Work in pairs to ask and answer questions about each other's diaries. Example:

Student A: What did you do last Monday, Gebre?

Student B: In the morning / went to school. In the afternoon /...

B12.9 Writing: Group research and report on local disability

Work in groups to research the range of special needs in your area, the support systems that are in place and make recommendations for improving the situation. Then write an essay about your research and the findings.

Suggested paragraph topics might be:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Support systems for children
- 3 Support systems for adults
- 4 Recommendations

Students are asked to write a record of their daily activities of two to three paragraphs as per the given diary and then write one or two paragraphs about what their partner did during last week after they work in pairs. In this activity, the learners would get the exposure to express their ideas to the fullest focusing on meaning rather than simple mechanical aspects of a language. It is not a form based activity that limits the learners of focus on usage rather it lets them write the story in their own way using their opinion. It encourages them for creative writing.

In the second task the learners are asked to make a research about local disabilities and write an essay about their findings. This also actively engages the students to describe about the situation given sharing ideas with their friends. As we can observe, both activities are not form based rather they are communicative, authentic and meaningful for the students.

B) Regarding Real wordiness

As it has been mentioned in the literature part, tasks with a real world rationale require learners to approximate, in class, the sort of behaviors required of them in the world beyond the classroom. Classroom task should develop students' ability to express their ideas through writing freely focusing on meaning and going beyond a class task. The activities should not be confined to a more practice of language patterns or forms instead, they should be able to engage the learners in real communication (i.e. what they possibly do outside the classroom).

As it is indicated in table 5, most of the activities under the writing section fulfill this criterion. 76.56% of the writing activities in the text book make learners have real communication through writing being in pairs, groups or individually where as 23% of them, not yet. In this regard, Zamel (1989) says that tasks that have real wordiness will result in communicative acts that mirror those occurring outside the classroom. Since majority of the writing tasks in the textbook let learner participate writing instructions, discussion and keeping them use the target language, students will get the exposure to communicate through writing in the classroom as well as outside the classroom in their real life.

For instance, under the writing section of unit 6 the students are asked to discuss in groups to prepare a news broadcast and then write a script for the broadcast followed by a weather forecast. The area also asked to read their news to the class.

In this activity the students are highly encouraged to have real communication through writing and speaking. It is also open for the students to put their opinions and suggestions both through writing and speaking. Similarly, under the writing section of unit 7, page 129 the students are given a sample letter which was written by a student to her local news paper and then asked to answer the questions that follow the letter and finally write a similar letter for a local newspaper. Here, the learners are provided authentic materials with authentic language and this helps them to follow similar language use when they write the letter about one topic they have decided to write.

This activity motivates learners to involve in other situations that occur in their surroundings. In other words it engages learners in real communication through writing focusing on meaning rather than language patterns/forms. Thus, most of the writing activities elicit real communication though some improvements should be made on some of the tasks.

C) Regarding purposefulness

If a task is to be genuinely communicative and promote language use, the students should have a desire to communicate, they should have a purpose for using the language and this purpose should be the most important part of the communication (Harmer, 1991). Therefore, the students' attention should be centered on content what is being said or written and not on the language form that is being used. According to table 5 above, 71.5% of the writing tasks in the textbook have communicative purpose that goes beyond the classroom whereas 23.5% of them lack clear purposes. Since in real life writing needs a purpose, similarly in the classroom, as with the other skills, any written task needs some purpose behind it. Let us see the following writing activities:

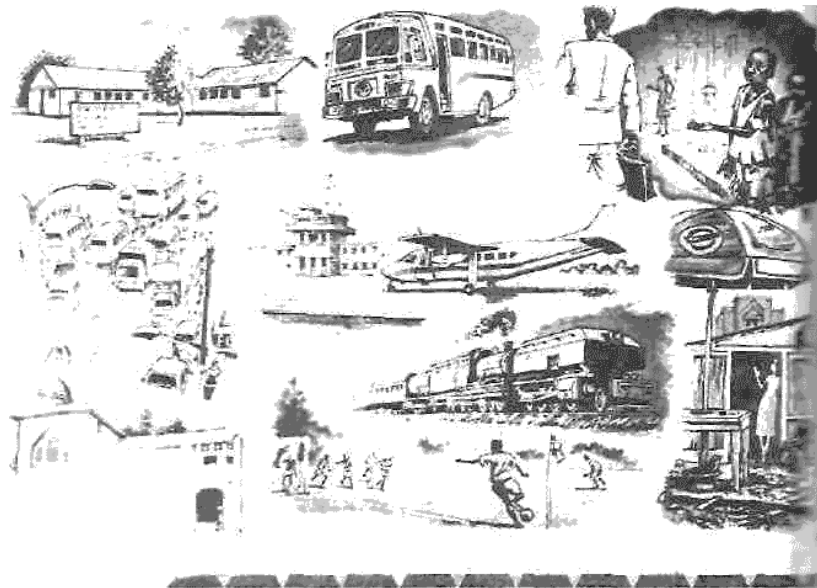
B9.9 Writing: An Ethiopian tradition

Look at the description of the Japanese tea ceremony earlier in the Unit. Now write a similar paragraph about the Ethiopian coffee ceremony, using the reading text as a guideline. Mention in your description: who takes part; where it takes place; what happens; if there are any special clothes or equipment required; and so on.

Work with a partner to identify the topic sentences in your respective paragraphs. Identify the same key points and any differences. Give appropriate feedback to your partner.

A7-6 Writing: Where I live

Work in a small group and look at all of the pictures. They show scenes from a typical town. Discuss what each picture shows.



*Think about your own town. What do you think needs to be improved? Make a list of six things that are the most important. The pictures you discussed in exercise 1 may **help** you, but you can think of other ideas too. **Examples:***

I think we need a bigger hospital. There are not enough beds.

In my view we need to do something about the terrible traffic jams in the town centre.

When you have completed your list, compare it with a list prepared by another group. Then work on your own to write one or two paragraphs describing where you live now, how it could be improved and how you think it will change in the future.

Both activities in the above example have a purpose that goes beyond the classroom. The first activity invites the learners to describe Ethiopian coffee ceremony using given text as guideline. They are also asked to identify the topic sentences in their respective paragraphs. In this activity the learners are describing Ethiopian coffee ceremony, identifying topic sentences. Logically identify the same key points and any differences and give an appropriate feedback to their partners focusing on the content what is being said or written (meaning) not on the language form what is being used. The second activity let the learners first interpret information, make a list of six things that are the most important, compare it with a list prepared by another group and then write paragraphs of their own. Here, the students are not only interpreting and reporting the information needed, they also take part in solving the problem of their town by suggesting what needs to be improved. The two activities in the above example have purposes that go beyond the classroom. However, there are other activities which lack clear purposes and only require learners to manipulate forms without giving attention to meaning and communication aspect of it. From this, it can be deducted that though most of the writing activities in the text book elicit real communication and have a purpose that goes beyond classroom exercises, there are still activities that need special attention.

D) Regarding suitability of tasks for pair or group work

As it can be seen from table 5, 45% of the writing activities in the text book promote the use of pair or group work while 55% of them encourage the use of individual work. In this regard Hedge (1988:2) says that collaborative writing in the classroom generates discussions which encourage an effective process of writing. This would let students exchange their writing or compositions so that they become readers of each other's work. Group work activities also enable

students to practice some of social skills like self confidence, tolerance, listening to each other giving and respecting opinions or ideas, decision making, conflict management, etc by involving students in different roles in pairs or groups.

To mention some examples, under the writing section of unit 2 page 26 the learners are ordered to have a discussion in groups about where they might find examples of English notices outside the school. And write them down or bring some examples to class. Again in Exercise A6.8 unit 6 page 102 the students are ordered to read a given headline and weather forecast for a news broadcast and then work in groups to write their own news broadcast and read the news to the class by their representatives. Similarly in exercise A12 10, unit 12, page 213, the students are asked to discuss in group on given topics generating ideas which are related to discrimination of disabled people and then write a brief outline of the main idea. There are still some other activities such as “work in pair or group and write about...” discuss in group or pair” in the textbook, which lead students to get bored. Therefore it would be possible to conclude that most of the writing activities in the textbook promote individual work. However, the textbook also gives the chance to pair/group work though some of them need some adjustment to be varied.

E) Whether the tasks include a pre task, a while-task and a post task activity?

According to the information from the literature, another characteristic of vital importance for successful performance of tasks is that the activity must include a pre-task, a while task and a post-task. Although we find different terminologies, methodologists generally agree that a task must include an introduction, the task itself and a follow up.

As it is indicated in table 5 above, only 45% of the activities under the writing section of the textbook include the three stages and all the remaining (55%) tasks do not include the phases. However, as it is mentioned in the literature part, a task or an activity is expected to have such stage. A pre-task stage introduces (familiarizes) the topic to the students by giving them brainstorming activities or some introductions/clues about the topic to the students. The while task stage will help students to integrate various language skills and sub skills. The post-task stage helps to identify the extent to which they have understood or active their goals or follow up achievement.

B2.8 Writing: Finding out about a holiday

Write a letter to a travel agent to ask about the kind of the holiday that you would like most. Ask about the type of accommodation, the local attractions, the cost of the holiday and the best time of the year to visit.

In the above example the learners are asked to write a letter about a holiday, the local attractions, and the cost of the holiday to a travel agent. In the second example the students are asked to write a story pretending as one of the animals they have gathered information by themselves. In both activities the learners are provided the while task without a pre and a post task that give them opportunity to understand the task goal or outcome, procedural aspects of the task and provide them feedback. Besides, both activities seem to focus on testing rather than having stages to let learners practice writing getting enough clauses or details and examples.

Additionally, under the writing section of unit 12, exercise B12.9, the students are asked to make a group research and report on local disability without any written or oral guide that help them to go further (through) the given task. However, there are some examples of activities having stage. For example, under the writing section of unit 10, page 188, the activity has a pre-task, a while task and post task. It first gives clear guidance and brainstorming activities about “a school newspaper” together with some example. Then it lets them work in groups to write a class news paper using the given ideas.

4.1.2.4 Aspects in relation to roles

According to the information in the literature role refers to the part that learners and teachers are expected to play in carrying out learning tasks as well as interpersonal relationship between the participants.

Table 6 Roles of learners and teachers in the writing activities in grade 9 English textbook, teachers guide and syllabus.

No	Components of communicative tasks	Unit	Occurrences of the roles of learners and teachers in each unit
	Roles of learners	1 2 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a form with some information about themselves • Writing a letter to a friend, • Not stated at all • Writing a description of where they live • Finding and writing down some notices in English in the community • Writing a letter to a travel agent • Not clearly stated • Writing a diary

		4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated at all • Writing a leaflet about nutrition • Listening to the teacher and writing down sentences • Rewriting a passage with a correct punctuation
		5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing sentences about Ethiopia statistics of HIV/AIDS
		6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated at all
		7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a biography of a famous person • Not clearly stated • Writing an essay introduction
		8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing about where they live • Writing a letter to a local news paper
		9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing definitions of words • Writing essay conclusions • Writing a summary • Rewriting words using the spelling rules/doubling consonants
		10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing an informal letter • Writing a paragraph • Writing about an Ethiopian tradition
		11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rearranging sentences to make a paragraph • Designing and writing a school news paper • Writing a letter to a news paper
		12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated at all • Writing a story called “A day in the life of an animal” • Completing sentences with their correct forms of verbs
		12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a guided essay about disability and discrimination • Writing some questions referring to a given picture

Roles of teachers	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing a topic and writing an outline about it • Joining sentences using linking words or discourse markers • Writing about how a disabled person feels • Making a group research and report on local disability • Providing students with a form that they can complete. • Not stated • Writing sentences on the board and inviting students to put the sentences in their correct punctuation
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking suggestions from the class • Giving the students a list of 20 common verbs and explaining meaning • Writing a sample descriptive paragraph on board
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated • Not clearly stated • Giving list of words and show them how to classify the words into verb and lexical set
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated at all • Reading a description of food item • Giving spelling rules highlighting any exceptions e.g. protein
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated • Not clearly stated
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding the students and giving prompts for each sentences the students made • Not stated at all • Help the students identify characteristics of a good introduction
	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving examples of comparatives and

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> superlatives • Not clearly
		8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated at all • Helping students identify the characteristics of a good • Conclusion and language use • Not clearly stated • Writing a variety of verbs • Not clearly stated
		9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not clearly stated • Explaining the function of topic sentences and writing examples on the board • Not stated at all
		10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated at all • Not stated at all • Not stated at all
		11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not clearly stated • Revising topic sentences and models of the writing of a paragraph with topic sentences and supporting ideas
		12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not stated at all • Giving the students a writing scaffold i.e. topic sentences, paragraph headings • Recommending useful language patterns • Referring back to reading text as model

According to the information from table 6 above, under the writing sections of each unit the roles of the learners are clearly stated.

In fact, in few activities the roles are not clearly or at all stated. These roles are not only stated in the textbook, they are also stated in the teacher’s guide with how to practice each task and syllabus as well in different approach. In most of the

activities the learners are seen doing the tasks in pairs /groups by themselves having guidance and clues from the teacher. Each writing activity requires the cooperation and participation of every student so that they would get the opportunity to share ideas from different angles and correct their errors exchanging their writings. However, in some of the activities the learners' roles seem similar such as writing a letter, writing a story, etc. instead; the students should be left to have various roles in types and difficulty level because they will be highly interested to carry out their roles.

Unlike the traditional pedagogy (e.g. drills and the like) which gives power to the communicative tasks (such as role plays, problem solving tasks and solutions) are expected to give much more control to the learner. As we can observe from the table 6 above, in most of the writing activities the roles of the teacher are giving guidance, showing how to do something, asking and eliciting examples, encouraging students to do the tasks and presenting it in the class, etc. this maximizes learners degree to control over learning tasks and how much more time to carry out their roles actively making the teacher their director counselor or facilitator in showing directions so that the learner would express their ideas better. Especially the teacher's roles in the teachers guide are presented in promoting students centered approach and empowering the learners to involve in the activities actively having little guidance from the teacher. They are also indicated with different techniques or methods of helping the learners to perform the tasks having clearly understood what, why and how to do.

In general, we can conclude that the roles of the teacher and the students are clearly stated to a large extent in the textbook, teacher's guide and syllabus though in some activities they are not clearly or at all stated, and repeated now and then.

4.1.2.5 Aspects in relation to setting

As it has been mentioned in the literature part, setting refers to the classroom arrangement specified or implied in the task, and also requires consideration of whether the task is to be carried out wholly, in pair /group or partly inside and/or outside the classroom. It also implies the instructional setting where pedagogical conditions are treated.

Table 7: The setting of the writing tasks in grade – 9 English textbook

No	Components of communicative activities	Unit	Occurrences of the writing tasks setting in each unit
	setting	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and pair work • Individual work
		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work • Group individual work • Group work
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work • Individual and pair work
		4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work • Individual work • Individual work
		5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work • Individual work
		6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair work • Group work • Group and pair work
		7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work • Individual work
		8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work • Group work

		9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual /pair work • Individual work • Individual /pair work
		10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work • Group work • Individual work
		11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work • Individual work • Individual work/group work
		12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work • Individual work • group work • Individual work • Individual work • group work

As shown in the above table, the writing activities under each unit are practiced individually, in pairs and in groups. However, most of the writing activities promote individual work which is not suggested as the most effective and appropriate classroom organization. The learners are not invited to work in pair/group being provided with collaborative writing activities that enable to do effective process of writing. It is good to have the activities to be done or practiced individually only but it should not be more than expected like it is given in the textbook. There are students that prefer individual work to group or whole class work especially advanced learners based on their beliefs that group tasks would not be helpful in improving their academic grades (Li and Anderson, 1992). Thus, it is suggested that classroom arrangement should be flexible rather than fixed; allowing task participants to more use of different settings in different learning situations, and those roles for the teacher should be dynamic in order to control

class modes. Additionally, if the learners are allowed to work in pair or group work, they can easily correct their errors by exchanging their written work. Therefore according to the table above it can be concluded that the settings of the writing communicative tasks presented in the students' textbook, teachers guide and syllabus, to a large extent, does not give opportunities for learners to learn and use the language in a more natural and meaningful way by helping them to communicate easily through writing. So, there is a need to make modifications on most of the settings in making them flexible for both pair and group modes.

4.2 Focus Group discussion Analysis

Focus group Discussion (FGD) is a good way to gather people from similar background or experiences to discuss specific topics of interest so that fruitful data will be gathered (Berelson, 2001). This is because the data gathered are from different minds about a specific topic or issue after exhaustively discussed among the people under the guidance of the researcher. In the current study, in the FGD, there are 3 male and 1 female high school English teachers from the same school. All of them possessed BED in English language with a minimum of two years of teaching experience. They exhaustively discussed on the question raised by the researcher under her facilitating role. The data gathered via FGD were analyzed below. Their direct responses (words) to the questions were attached in the appendix E.

1. To what extent are the writing tasks inviting for teaching writing?

In their discussion, a number of ideas exchanged about the issue raised in the above question by the four (4) teachers. They finally conclude that the writing tasks are not much interesting to teach writing because they do not include guidelines on correcting or formats of feedback. The tasks were designed to be

practiced in a form of simple exercise without a framework to be used as an assignment or activity. Moreover, the writing tasks presented in the textbook were not catchy to make students exert energy to express their ideas freely. The teachers also suggested that the writing activities should have motivational values because if students are motivated, they are more likely to participate and go through the writing activities regardless of the methods used or the circumstances they are. Therefore, the tasks are not that much inviting to teaching writing and in turn the learners may not be eager to invest efforts in learning writing.

2. To what extent does the writing task let individuals learn by themselves?

As the teachers stated in their discussion, some of the activities let learners learn by themselves as well as in groups. However, in those writing tasks there is little opportunity for learners to practice the skill by themselves with those materials because there is no given means of assessing progress or indication/suggestion for correcting errors rather the teacher is a necessary element in utilizing the tasks leaving no room for 'self-teaching'.

3. To what extent do you think the writing tasks consider students' background knowledge?

According to the discussion made by the teachers on the issue raised in the above question, in most of the writing activities the topics and areas of consideration of the writing tasks are often related to environments students come from. This has a strong relevance in letting learners write about issues they are familiar with and in turn they improve their writing skills. They also said, in some writing activities the situations given to write about are not familiar with the students' background and this may hinder them from expressing their ideas freely.

4. To what extent are the writing tasks integrated with the other three skills-reading, listening and speaking?

The writing tasks in each unit are very well interwoven with the other skills because they often come after exercises using other skills, e.g. oral grammar to a written exercise, from reading or listening to making notes or written composition exercises. They also add, topic areas, prompts, examples, supporting details, etc are derived from other activities for other skills. For instance, reading texts are often used to provide input (either as supporting details or prompts). The textbook in each unit uses the listening and reading skills as input and the speaking and writing skills for the practice (output) of the learnt materials.

5. How far do the writing tasks use authentic materials?

Concerning authentic materials, they went through all the writing tasks having made a detailed discussion and stated their ideas in the following way. Although there are a few materials that are authentic (taken from a real world use application, news, etc), the implementation of these materials lacked creativity and produced a sort of forced dull activity that do not motivate learners to pursue engaging themselves doing the tasks.

6. How far are the goals of the writing tasks clear for both teachers and students?

In a similar fashion the teachers made their discussion on the above question and reflected their expertise ideas. As they said in most of the writing activities, the goals (objectives) were clearly set at the beginning of each unit and in subsection of every writing activity for both students and teachers. Especially, for teachers they are listed in the syllabus and teacher's guide. However, in some of the activities only professional (teachers) can easily drive goals for the provided tasks

(activities), but from the students stand point, the tasks could not be anything more than a task they have to do.

7. How far do the writing tasks provoke high level of thought being in the context of student' background?

The professional (teachers) in the FGD to a large extent, agreed that topics in the writing sections of each unit are pretty straight forward and focus on simple utilization of writing skills and discussion. Brainstorming ideas are mostly common topics that do not challenge students much to exert energy and pursue practicing the tasks. According to khashen (1985), in the target language there should be some new information that learners have not known, the input should be, in other words, at slightly higher level than the students are capable of using but at a level that they are capable of understanding. This the writing tasks, to a large extent, do not provoke raise high level of thought being in context of the students, background knowledge.

8. To what extent have the writing tasks include a pre-task, while task, and a post task?

The discussion revealed that the three phases are included to some extent. The pre-writing phase is taken up by other activities used as prompts and thus may be covered to a good extent. However, the while writing tasks are limited to brainstorming and the actual writing; Post activities are almost non-existent. In fact, in a very few writing activities the three phases are included.

To sum up, the FGD analysis of the discussion made by six (6) teachers under the guiding or facilitating role of the researcher shows that the writing activities seem to lack motivational value (inviting) and they have little opportunity for learners to practice the skills by themselves. Regarding background knowledge, although the

tasks to a large extent consider this area, there is a need to modify some of the tasks. In contrary, the tasks are highly interwoven with the other skills. However, there should be more authentic materials together with their good implementation. Concerning the goals, they are clearly stated for both teachers and students. But topics are pretty straight forward end focus on simple utilization of writing and discussion. Finally, the inclusion of stages in tasks is limited to a large extent.

4.3. Questionnaire analysis

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of printed or written questions and others, prompts for the purpose of gathering information (data) from respondents. They are limited by the fact that respondents must be able to read the questions and respond to them. In this study a close ended questionnaire was used to gather data from the sampled 30 respondents. All the respondent in this school are Grade 9 students. The researcher distributed 30 questionnaires to the sampled 30 students and got all of them answered properly.

Table 8 data gathered through questionnaire presents in the table below

No	Items or statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total
1	The writing tasks (activities in your textbook have clear instructions	10	33.5%	15	50%	3	10%	2	6.5%	0	0	100
2	The writing task (activities in each unit are interesting and motivating	6	20%	5	16.5%	1	4%	13	43	5	16.5%	100
3	The writing	6	20%	10	33.5	2	6	7	23.5	5	1.5	100

	activities in the textbook are clear enough to you to express your idea that any difficulty about the situation given											
4	The writing activities are suitable for discussion and writing in pair or group	2	6.5%	7	23.5%	1	4%	16	53%	4	13%	100
5	The goals (objectives) of the writing tasks in your text book are clear for the students	5	16.5%	19	63%	1	4%	3	10%	2	6.5%	100
6	The writing tasks in you text book consider the students background knowledge	3	10%	14	46.5%	3	10%	6	20%	4	13.5%	100
7	The writing tasks in the text book raise high level of thought in considering the students background knowledge	2	6.5%	8	27%	2	6.5%	15	50%	3	10%	100
8	The writing activities in the text book presented with clear & sufficient	6	20%	15	50%	0	0%	7	23.5%	2	6.5%	100

9	contents (clues) or situations. The writing activities are presented in relation to or integration with other three skills i.e. reading listening and speaking	7	23.5%	16	53%	1	4%	4	13%	2	6.5%	6.5
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As it is shown in the above table, the data that has been gathered from the respondents (students), reveals that the instructions of writing tasks in the textbook is so vivid, and do not let learners struggle with for understanding. Of the sampled respondents 34%, 50% 6% and 0% have responded strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. The rest 10% failed to show their judgment, for their own reason. Having this, it is possible to say that above 85% of the learners are not suspected to be lost from the intended way, being misled by the quality of instruction of the task, during practice of writing. So, clarity in the instruction of writing task in the textbook is not a big problem, since it does not block understandings though it could not satisfy very few learners who are 10%.

Unlike the other skills, writing requires high level of thought as it challenges deep mental process. That is why students try to put themselves away from writing tasks. So, to ease this challenge, topics of writing tasks need to be highly attractive and appealing that can win the students interest, and drive them to work on. But the data that has been collected from the students on grade nine (9) textbook's writing task, does not reveal this. 59.5% of the respondents, who are 43% and 16.5%

responded disagree and strongly disagree respectively, are not interested in the topics. Only 36.5% of the respondents are comfortable with it. The remaining 4% could say nothing. This means majority of the students are not enjoying the writing tasks, being deprived of the appetite of writing. So, the topics of the writing tasks in this textbook are not inviting.

Textbook is a main source for both teachers and students. Especially for students its importance could not be easily expressed for its being a source of information, and also a guide for practice just creating situations. If so, the activities are expected to be clear enough and easily understandable so that the students could work on by themselves. As the data given in the above table tasks on writing are not much appreciable concerning clarity of situation, and encourage independent practice, as it satisfies almost half of the students 53.5%. It is tough and challenging for 40% whereas 6.5% is unable to decide. This indicates that the tasks are left with much work to be done to make the situation clear enough and satisfy the needs of those discouraged ones.

Group and pair works, and discussions are methods that are highly recommended to be used to prove active learning, and make the lesson more effective, involving the learners directly in activities and problem solving. Therefore, activities to be used must provide the students with such opportunities so that they would be actors in the process of learning, just sharing ideas and experiences with one another. Coming to the target task, it is only 30% respondents that has shown positive attitude towards the suitability of the task for discussion, pair and group work. Although the number is not higher than those who are dissatisfied or disagreed with who are 66%, while the rest 4% are neutral. This data let us feel the gap with the activity in which an improvement needs to be made in order to get it suitable to involve all the students.

Activities are suggested to be given to learners with a clear and meaningful purpose, as they need to be aware of the objective they work for. If they know it, they can add even more effort to bring the desired change. It motivates them rather than blindly pushing forward for the sake of just what they wanted to do. The writing activities in the textbook are relatively appreciated in this area. The objectives are not obscure for most of the students. According to the data collected, 79.5% of the students do not get confused of the objectives of the tasks. However, still there is a gap that could not treat the rest 16.5% who responded disagree and strongly disagree, whereas 4% of them failed to pass their judgment.

Tasks particularly that require generating idea from the learners are advised to put the students' background knowledge. Because the prior knowledge they have assisted them as a stepping stone of digging further applying high level of thought. That is, what learning is just widening what is already acquired as an input. However, writing activities in this textbook have a big gap that needs to be bridged to involve the students that are discouraged which are 43.5%, almost half. It is a failure treating only 56.5% of the students putting the rest aside while it is supposed to participate all the learners. So, the tasks' design should be revisited carefully.

Learning is not only about knowing facts but also upraising level of thought and maturing problem solving ability. Therefore, tasks are frequently used in school to promote high level of thinking in students. But being a task is not enough to encourage high level of thought. It requires logical and careful design, based on background knowledge of the students. It needs to be a bit challenging, being what they know while they strive more to express their ideas on the given topics or dig up for a solution, they apply full energy and deep thinking which high level of thought is developed. However, grade 9 textbook's writing tasks seem designed to

be the reverse, which encourage lower level of thought. The tasks require the students to complete tables, writing sentences, giving short answers, etc. as it can be seen from table 5 above, 60% of the sampled students are not in favor of the way the tasks have been designed except 33.5% of them. Although 6.5% of them failed to put their decision. So this data gap indicates that the tasks do not encourage high level of thought.

Clue is the most important technique to be used in teaching and learning process, particularly in doing tasks. The main contribution of its presence is keeping students in the track, paving the way they wanted to move on. If there are enough clues on the given situation, there would be very low opportunity to be lost. Moreover, success increases with self confidence. According to table 5 above, concerning this area, the clues in this textbooks writing activities satisfy 70% of the students, whereas 30% of them not yet. So, a bit more than half of the students could be helped, it is not sounding to say that the clues given for the tasks are clear enough in showing directions to the students. Because those who do not have any clue have to have it to be more comfortable for independent practices.

Scholars suggest that language is well taught integrating the skills as they support one another, and that even one can dare to say they are inseparable. Thus, materials that are used for language teaching are supposed to treat the four skills at a time, writing task needs to promote reading, speaking and listening too. This is one of the strong sides of grade nine (9) textbook's writing task. As data in the table shows about 76.5% of the respondents have witnessed this strength while 19.5% of the sampled students are against. The remaining 4% have remained in the middle failing to decide either. In short, the tasks have positive side concerning integration of skills even if they need modification still in order to involve all students equally.

In conclusion, results from questionnaire analysis indicate that instructions in the textbook under the writing section are so vivid though most of the tasks do not seem to be enjoyable or motivating to do. Besides, though the situations given in the writing tasks are clear enough to half of the sampled students, much should be done to make them too much clear for all the learners. However, the tasks are not fair for group or pair work because it only satisfies 30% of the students and need to be paid special attention to be improved. On the other hand the goals (objectives) are explicitly stated so that the students would not be obscured in what to do and how and why. Regarding background knowledge, only 56.5% of the learners background knowledge is considered and the rest of them not yet. Topics in the writing tasks are also limited to practicing simple facts sentences, completing a text, etc, rather than raising high level of thought and widening learners thinking and reasoning ability. In addition, clues in the tasks are not too much clear enough. However, they are highly interstitched with the other skills.

Discussion and summary of the findings

The products of the three research tools content analysis, focus group discussion and questionnaire were analyzed and discussed as follows. First, the researcher grouped similar questions from content analysis, focus group discussion and questionnaire under the major five components of communicative tasks' goals (objectives), input, activities, roles and setting. Then their results were discussed according to the components in the light of Nunan's (1989) checklist.

- **Goals (objectives)**

Concerning goals (objectives) of the writing tasks, the data from content analysis revealed that most of the goals (objectives) in the writing activities were clearly stated in the textbook, teachers guide, and syllabus though they lack variety and

some of them were repeated now and then. Again, the respondents in the focus group discussion agreed in their discussion that many of the tasks' goals were set clearly even though some activities' objectives could be driven only by professionals (teachers) from the provided writing tasks. Similarly, data from the questionnaire analysis indicated that 79.5% of the respondents (learners) were in favor of clarity of the goals of the tasks. In this regard, the three tools showed similar results to a large extent and this meets one of the criteria of communicative tasks of Nunan (1989).

- **Input**

The following are the findings of the inputs of the tasks. Regarding authenticity, result from the content analysis reveals that only 34% of the activities involve authentic inputs and all the remaining 66% of the tasks lack authentic inputs. Moreover, data from the FGD indicates that a few materials have authentic text which were taken from a real world use/application, BBC, etc. but implementation of these materials (texts) lack creativity and produced a sort of forced dull activity that do not motivate learners. As it can be seen from the tools above contents as inputs do not give sufficient information to the students due to lack of adequate authentic materials or inputs.

Regarding the input as background knowledge and contexts or clues, results from the content analysis indicate that most of the texts as inputs are familiar to the learners. Similarly, data from the FGD shows topics and situations to a large extent related to environments the students come from and familiar to them. The finding from the questionnaire also reveals that 70% of the learners (respondents) witnessed that the familiarity and clarity of input as background knowledge and clues or contexts though the rest lack clarity.

- **Activities**

There are also important findings in relation to activities of the writing task. Regarding motivational value of the writing activities, findings from content analysis shows that only 46% of the activities in the textbook are motivating the learners promoting writing whereas 54% of them are not interesting. When coming to the FGD, their discussion indicates that some of the activities are not that much interesting to teach. Similarly, the result from the third tool reveals that only 36.5% of the respondents are comfortable with it, the remaining 59.5% of the respondents are not interested. More or less the three tools shows that the writing activities in the textbook lack motivational values to a large extent. Apart from this, the writing activities were also analyzed by the extent to which they are integrated. To this end, the information from the content analysis FGD show that the tasks are very well interwoven. Surprisingly 76.5% of the respondents in third tool witnessed for the tasks being integrated. So, this is the best met criteria of communicative tasks.

The activities were also analyzed in terms of including topics raising high-level of thought. In line with this, data from content analysis and FGD reveals that topics and contexts are very limited to simple utilization of writing and discussions instead of raising or providing situations for the practice of high level of thought such as arguing for or against logically reasoning and convincing people through writing. Again, the third tool shows that only 33.5% of the learners (respondents) are in favor of topics raising or providing situations for the practice of high level of thought but the remaining 60% of them are not provided with such kinds of topics. These similarities indicate that topics and situation in the textbook are limited to simple utilization of writing and discussions.

The other point which is worth nothing is the inclusion of stages of tasks such as pre-tasks, while-task, and post-task. Considering this only 46% of the activities have the three phases or stages of tasks according to the information in the content analysis. Similarly, the second tool also shows that the stages are included in a very limited approach in some of the writing tasks. Although there is no related question raised in the questionnaire about stages of tasks, it is possible to say that most of the tasks are very limited in including the three stages of tasks since similar results obtained by the two major tools.

Finally, the activities are analyzed regarding meaningfulness, real wordiness and purposefulness by the research tool, content analysis. According to the data from content analysis, 70.3% of the writing activities promote the principle of meaningfulness, 75.6% of them fulfill the real wordiness criterion and 70.2% of the tasks have communicative purposes that go beyond classroom activities. Therefore, the three of them fulfill the principle of communicative tasks to a large extent.

- **Roles**

Regarding roles, results from the content analysis reveal that the roles of learners and teachers are clearly stated to a large extent in the textbook, teachers guide and syllabus. However, in some of the writing sections, the roles of teacher and students are not clearly or at all stated as it was shown in the table 6. In contrast to this, data from FGD indicates that some of the activities let the learners practice the activities by themselves as well as in small groups. In this regard, the third tool questionnaire reveals that 70% of the respondents notify the clarity of roles together with the situations given to express in carrying out the activities by the learners. Besides, more than 80% of the respondents agreed that the instructions

were very clear in each activity thereby roles would be easier to be carried out. Therefore, though there is a degree of difference in the tools, it is likely to say that the roles of learners and teachers are clear to a good extent.

- **Setting**

Setting is the other component of communicative task to be analyzed here. Regarding the suitability of the writing activities for pair or group work, data from the content analysis shows that 45% of the writing activities are good or convenient for pair/group work. Similarly, result from the FGD indicates that, some of the writing tasks are suitable for pair and group work and encourage learners to work jointly without totally ignoring individual mode of practicing a task. Moreover, data from the questionnaire indicates that 30% of the learners responded that the tasks in the textbook are suitable for pair and group work. Finally, in line with this, it is suggested that classroom arrangements should be flexible rather than fixed; allowing task participants to make use of different setting in different learning situations, and those roles for the teachers should be dynamic in order to control class modes. So, a due consideration should be given to the setting or class organization in incorporating various modes.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusions

This study has analyzed the extent to which the nature and design of the writing activities (tasks) in grade 9 students' textbook promoting writing skill. In order to evaluate these activities, this research paper used Nunan's (1989) framework which considers the components of tasks (goals, content as inputs, activities, roles of students, roles of teacher and setting) as well as the checklist for evaluating tasks.

As the findings from the three research tools such as content analysis, focus group discussion and questionnaire revealed, most of the writing activities presented in the new grade 9 English textbook do not fulfill many of the criteria's stated in the checklist (criteria's for evaluating communicative tasks) which enable students to communicate through writing in and outside the classroom. Therefore, the following conclusions have been made based on the findings held in the study.

The goals (objectives) of the writing tasks are clearly stated in the text book for the students and teachers though they lack variety and repeated now and then. The contents as input are familiar to the students and meet the needs and interests of the learners. However, they do not provide enough information to the learners because of lack of authentic materials. The activities in the textbook satisfy the principles of meaningfulness, real wordiness, purposefulness, suitability for the use of pair or group work without ignoring individual work but they lack motivational values, variety and authenticity. They are also very limited in including a pre-task, a while-task and a post-task and topics that raise high level of thought. The role of the

students and teachers are clearly stated not only in the textbook but also in the teacher's guide and syllabus. Teacher roles are guiding, facilitating and counseling leaving the entire task to the learners. However, in a few activities the teacher roles are not clearly or at all stated. They are also repeated now and then for both the students and teacher. Most of the setting of the writing activities are flexible rather than fixed; allowing task participants to make use of different settings in different learning situations so that they are suitable for pair or group work or individual work. However, some of them lack clarity.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the researcher of this study believes that there should be a revisit on the writing activities (tasks) in the textbook. To this end, the following recommendations have been given.

- Curriculum designers and textbook writers should consider the inclusion of the six basic components of communicative tasks in the students' textbook. They also have to include pleasing features in the activities in order to promote the learners' writing skills.
- Material developers have to survey the needs and interest of learners for selection of writing activities and the topics on which to base these activities. They should also include situations or background, etc that win the interest of the learners and make them exert energy.
- Teachers should try to make some adjustments on the writing tasks in the way they motivate and enable learners to communicate through writing in and outside the classroom.

- Students should be clearly informed of the roles they are expected to play and strategies or techniques of developing learners' confidence and being independent learners.
- Furthermore, research should be done in the area of ELT text evaluation with regard to other skills (such as reading, listening and speaking)

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Appendices

Appendix A

A checklist for evaluating communicative tasks

2. Goals

- To what extent is the task goal or goals of the task obvious to students and teachers?
- To what extent does the task reflect a real world or pedagogic rational? Is it appropriate?
- Does the task encourage learners to apply classroom learning to the real world?
- Is the task likely to be interesting and motivating to the students/

3. Input

- What form does the input take?
- Is it authentic?
- If not, is it appropriate to the goal of the task?

4. Activities

- Are the activities appropriate to the communicative goals of the task?
- If not can they be modified to make them more appropriate?
- Is there an information gap or problem which might prompt a negotiation of meaning?
- Are the activities appropriate to the input data?
- Are the activities designed in a way which will allow learners to communicate and cooperate in groups?

5. Roles and settings

- What learner and teacher roles are inherent in the task?
- Are they appropriate?
- What levels of complexity are there in the classroom organization implicit in the task?
- Is the setting confined to the classroom?

Adapted from David Nunan (1989)

Appendix B

A checklist for Evaluating the Nature of Writing Tasks (Activities)

- a. Do the writing tasks motivate learners in addressing their needs and interests?
- b. Do the writing tasks elicit real communication through writing?
- c. Do the writing tasks promote purposefulness?
- d. Do the writing tasks promote meaningfulness?
- e. Are the writing tasks integrated with the other three skills i.e. reading, listening and speaking?
- f. Are the writing tasks suitable for individual and pair work or group work?
- g. Are the writing tasks authentic?
- h. Do the writing tasks include a pre-task, a while task and a post task?

Appendix c

Questionnaires for teachers

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate students

Department of foreign language and literature

Questions for focus Group Discussion (FGD) with teachers

Dear teachers,

The main purpose of the questions below is to obtain data for the study entitled “An Evaluation of writing tasks presented in the new Grade 9 Textbook”. The data you give will be only used for research purpose. Your genuine answers are of the highest value for the result of the study

Thank you in advance for your cooperation

The following are questions for discussion by the focus group that are four teachers being coordinated or facilitated by the researcher

- To what extent are the writing activities (tasks) inviting for teaching writing?
- To what extent the writing tasks let individuals learn by themselves or in group?
- To what extend do you think the writing tasks conceder the students' background knowledge?

- To what extent are the writing tasks integrated with the other three skills – reading, listening and speaking
- How far do the writing tasks use authentic tasks?
- How far are the goals of the writing tasks clear for both teachers and students?
- How far do the writing tasks provoke high level of thought being in context of students' background?
- To what extent have the writing tasks included a pre-task, a while-task and a post-task activity?

Appendix D

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate students

Department of foreign language and literature

Questionnaire for the students

Dear students,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain data or information for the study entitled “An Evaluation of writing tasks presented in the new Grade 9 textbook. The data or information you give will be only used for the result of the study. You do not need to write your name on the questionnaire.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation

- Read each item carefully and then give your opinion by putting a tick (✓) to words your choice in each box. The range is form “strongly Agree to” strongly Disagree”.

Key: 5= Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3= undecided 2= Disagree 1= strongly Disagree

No	Item	5	4	3	2	1
1	The writing tasks (activities) in your text book have clear instructions					
2	The writing tasks (activities) in each unit are interesting and motivating to do.					
3	The writing activities in the text book are clear enough for					

	you to express your ideas without any difficulty about the situations given				
4	The writing activities are suitable for discussion and writing in pair or group.				
5	The objectives of the writing activities in your text book are clear for the students.				
6	The writing tasks in your text book consider the students background knowledge.				
7	The writing tasks in the text book raise high level of though in considering the students background knowledge				
8	The writing tasks in the text book are presented with clear and enough contexts (clues) or situations.				
9	The writing tasks are presented in relation to or integration with the other three skills (reading, listening & speaking).				

Thank you very much!

Appendix E

Writing tasks (activities) from the new grade 9 English textbook