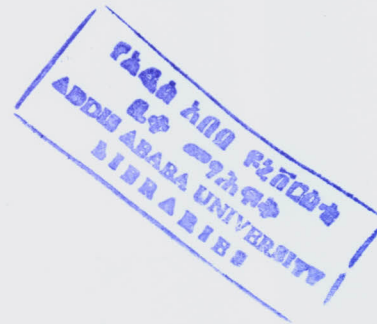


ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
(GRADUATE PROGRAM)

**SOME CAUSES OF WRITING PROBLEMS OF SECOND YEAR
ENGLISH MAJORS AT ABBIYI ADDI COLLEGE OF TEACHER
EDUCATION**

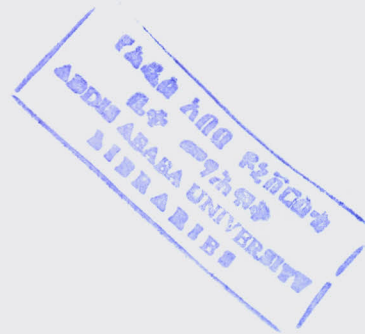


BY
MOLLA ASMARE

JUNE, 2009

**Some Causes of Writing Problems of Second Year English
Majors at Abbiyi Addi College of Teacher Education**

**By
Molla Asmare**



**A Thesis Submitted To The
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
(Graduate Program)**

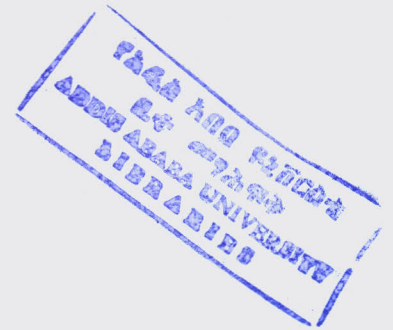
**In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

June, 2009

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies

**Some Causes of Writing Problems of Second Year English
Majors at Abbiyi Addi College of Teacher Education**

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to investigate the major causes of students' problems in writing in English. The study was carried out in Abiyyi Addi College of Teacher Education with special reference to second year English major students. From the total of 160 students, 50 of them were taken using a simple random sampling method. Moreover, all the six language teachers were taken as the subjects of the study. So as to obtain relevant and sufficient information, the researcher used questionnaire and interview as instruments. The findings of the study reveal that the students have a lot of problems in writing in English such as problems in using appropriate grammar items, problems of organizing ideas, problems in using correct punctuation marks and correct spelling. In addition to this the students have difficulties in using appropriate cohesive devices when they write in English. Students' lack of practice in writing in English since lower grades, lack of adequate time during writing exercises, focusing on mechanics and grammar than on contents in teaching writing, less help from language teachers in writing, inappropriate feedback given by teachers in writing, inappropriate activities in the module and the difficult nature of the writing skill itself are found to be the major causes of students problems in writing in English. Finally, on the basis of the findings, recommendations are made.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Raimes(1991:408), the teaching of writing has passed through various stages. The first period (1966-1976) was a period when the focus was on the teaching of form. During this period, the audio-lingual was the main approach. It was believed that speech was primary and writing secondary. Bratt(1972:33) also states that writing skill has been grossly neglected in the audio-lingual approach to language teaching. Similarly, Raimes(1983)states that during the audio-lingual era, speaking was seen as the core element of language teaching while writing was not given prominence in language teaching/learning.

However, Foley and Thompson (2003) in Misrak (2007:6), emphasize the importance of writing in second language learning by arguing that second language learning is not only learning the oral languages i.e. speaking and listening but it is important to consider how to learn to communicate through writing.

The next period that run from (1976-1986) was a period during which the teaching of language focused on the writer (Raimes, 1991:409). What the writers do as they write was the main interest of the language teacher. The third period that run from 1986 onwards was the time during which the focus was on the content (.411).

Writing skill is an integral part of language that plays a major role in expressing ideas and opinions. White and Arndt (1999:1) write, "Through writing, we are able to share ideas, arose feelings, persuade and convince other people." According to Reimes (1993:3) the fact that people frequently have to communicate with each other in writing is not the only reason to include writing as a part of a second language syllabus. There are additional and very important reasons: writing helps students learn

have a chance to be adventurous with the language; helps students to go beyond what they have just learned.

Hedge (1988:5) also states that a good deal of writing in the English language classroom is undertaken as an aid to learning; for example, to consolidate the learning of new structures or vocabulary or to help students remember new items of language. In this context, writing allows students to see their progress and get feedback from the teacher, and also allows teachers to monitor students and diagnose problems encountered.

This shows that writing plays a predominant role in language learning. However, compared to speech, effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy so that there is no ambiguity of meaning; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis; and a careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structures to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter and the eventual readers (Hedge, 1988).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The teaching of writing helps students to develop and apply the grammatical structures, vocabulary and other important language aspects. Mulamba (1993:1) as cited in Italo (1999) says that students' success largely depends up on their mastery over writing in academic setting. This shows that writing plays a significant role in students' academic success, as students, particularly at college level are expected to express their ideas, feelings and opinions in writing. Davies (1988) writes that writing is a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience.

However, Rivers (1981) as cited in Italo (1999: 291) says that many college and university students with four, five even six years of study of another language behind them are unable to express themselves in a clear, correct and comprehensible manner in writing. Students' problems in writing may occur because of many factors. One of the causes for the challenge might be the complex nature of the writing skill it self. Byrne (1988:4) states that certain psychological, linguistic and cognitive factors make writing a complex and difficult discourse medium for most people in both native and second language. Raimes (1983) states,

When students complain about how difficult it is to write in a second language, they are talking not only about the difficulty of finding the right words and using the correct grammar but also about the difficulty of finding and expressing ideas in a new language. (p. 13)

According to Nunan (1991:36), writing is the most difficult skill to learn as it involves a number of elements such as mechanics, content format, grammar, vocabulary etc. In addition to this, students' interest in English language in general and in writing skill in particular affects students writing. According to Leki (1991:9), the desire on the part of the writer to communicate some thing is very important because it is much more difficult for students to write about some thing they have no interest in.

The type of feed back which teachers give to their students is another major cause for students' poor performance in writing. According to Alamirew (2005:95), the kind of feed back the learners get from their teacher influence their success in writing. The methods which are used by the teachers in teaching writing are also causes which affect students' writing. With regard to this, Almirew (2005:94) says that the way writing is taught influences the improvements of writing skills.

Researches were conducted on different issues in relation to writing indifferent times. Yonas Adaye (1996) studied on the teaching of writing

as a process and he found out that students showed changes in their perceptions about the writing skill after they had the college English courses and the students writing ability was improved after using the new material. Italo Beriso, (1999) conducted a research on the comparison of the effectiveness of teacher versus peer feedback in AAU with reference to second year students and concluded that there was no significant difference between the writing performances of group 1 students who received feedback from their teachers and group 2 students who received feedback from their peers. He also concluded that re-writing improves students' writing significantly. Alamilew G/Mariam (2005) studied the perception of writing, writing instruction, and students writing performance. He found out that the majority of the students in all the schools were studied below average in their ability in writing. With regard to students' attitudes to learning English in general and the learning of writing skill in particular, he found out that they all tend to have positive but not strong attitudes. Gremew Lemu (1999) conducted a research on the requirements in writing for academic purpose at AAU with reference to four departments in focus. The study indicates that there were various aspects of academic writing in which students had deficiencies such as lack of cohesion and coherence in writing, problems of tenses and shortage of basic vocabularies. Moreover, the result shows that many students find it difficult to meet the requirements and expectations of their instructors.

Most of the studies focused on the students' performances in writing. However, there has been no study on the major causes of the students' problems in writing in English. Therefore, studying the major causes of students' problems in writing in English makes this research different from the others.

Therefore, this research seeks answers to the following leading questions.

1. What are the major problems of students in writing in English?
2. What are the major causes for students' problems in writing in English?
3. Do teachers and students give attention to writing skills as they do for the other skills?
4. What is the support that students get from their teachers to improve their writing skills?
5. What types of attitudes do students have towards writing skills?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main aim of this study is to investigate the major causes of the students' problems in writing in English.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Investigate the problems students have in writing.
- Investigate the types of attitudes students have towards the writing skill.
- Assess the support that students get from their teachers in writing classes.
- See the priority that teachers and students give to the writing skills.

1.4 Significance of the Study :

The research is hoped to be significant for the teachers because they may see the major causes of their students' poor performances and they might be able to take appropriate measures so as to alleviate the causes of poor performances in teaching writing. The research might also be

significant for students because it may help them see the major causes of their poor performances in writing in English and may take appropriate measures to minimize their problems in writing. The research may also be significant for curriculum designers and text book writers for they may take the major causes of poor writing in to account when designing activities for the teaching of writing. Further more, the study is expected to be significant for other local researchers as a spring board for further studies.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

The study was limited to the major causes for students' poor performance in writing in English. More specifically, the study focused on fifty second year English major students and six English language teachers in Abbiyi Addi College of teacher education.

1.6 Limitation of the study

It would have been better if the study had included large number of students and teachers in all the three governmental Colleges found in Tigray. However, the researcher had time constraints and financial inadequacies.



CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Writing: Concept

Different scholars define writing in the following ways. Hedge (1988:89) says that writing is the way in which a writer puts together the pieces of the text, developing ideas thorough sentences and paragraphs with in over all structure. Byrne (1988) on his part says that writing involves encoding of some kind of massage i.e. we translate our thoughts in the language. Zamel (1982:197) defines writing as a process of exploring one's thoughts and learning from the act of writing itself what these thoughts are. "Writing is not only the presentation of our thoughts in graphic symbols but also a process of discovering and making meaning." (p. 166). Mc Donough and Show (1993:177) state that writing is primarily massage oriented.

There fore, it is possible to say that writing is not only the representation of graphic symbols but also a means of communication in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences. We write to express our ideas, feelings, opinions and beliefs in our every day communication.

2.2 Approaches of Writing

2.2.1 Product Approach

The product approach of writing focuses on the finished products of the writing work rather than the process. Nunan (1989) says that the product approach to writing focuses on the end result of the act of composition, that is the letter, essay story and so on. The writing teacher who uses the product approach will be concerned to see that the and product is readable, grammatically correct and obeys discourse conventions relating to main points, supporting details and so on. According to Getnet (1994:9), the product approach is an orientation whose primary focus is the end result of what students produce. Formal accuracy and correctness in grammar, spelling, use of vocabulary,

convention of lay out etc are given the utmost priority. According to Byrne (1988:21), the product approach of writing is an accuracy oriented approach that focuses on the control of mistakes in order to eliminate them from written works. Raimes (1983:6) says “in the control approach of teaching writing students are given sentences to copy and manipulate grammatically and correctly with very limited opportunity of making mistakes.” Hedge (1988:8) suggests some points which students should include in the product approach of writing. These include:

- Getting the grammar right
- Having a range of vocabulary
- Punctuating meaningfully
- Using the conventions of layout correctly.
- Spelling accuracy
- Using a range of sentence structures
- Linking ideas and information across sentences to develop a topic
- Developing and organizing the content clearly and convincingly.

2.2.2 The Process Approach

The process approach of writing focuses on the composing process of writing in stead of on the written final products. Encouraging students to have a sense of purpose and audience, while writing about a certain topic, is the major task of teachers who teach in line with the process approach. Hedge (1988:9) says that good writers appear to go through certain processes which lead to successful pieces of written work.

He has proposed the following steps that good writers should follow in the process approach of writing.

1. The writers start with an over all plan in their head.
2. They think about what they want to say and who are they writing for.
3. They then draft out sections of the writing and as they work on them they constantly reviewing, revising and editing their work.

2.3 Types of writing activities

2.3.1 Controlled Writing

In this kind of writing, error is not tolerated and students are expected to write accurately. This could be achieved through practice with structure. (Reid 1993). According to Raimes (1993), in controlled composition grammar, vocabulary and syntax in context are usually expected to be reinforced. Besides, the students are also expected to use every important point of the conventions of writing English such as intonation, punctuation, correcting words and spelling.

However, in these types of writing, the students are deprived of their rights of thinking, visualizing or generating ideas of their own in the written drills they practice. Since the focus is language of structure, second language writing students are not creative or productive. Because of this, scholars like Hedge (1988) discourages using controlled writing by calling it s the “writer’s block”.

2.3.2 Guided Writing

It is a type of writing used as a bridge between the controlled and free writing. According to Pincas (1982:126), in guided writing there is a partial freedom ad partial control. Raimes (1983) suggests that guided writing is different from that of controlled writing because guided writing uses different techniques that would lead students to write similar paragraphs, by giving sample paragraphs, providing first sentence, last sentence and even an outline to fill out. Others also recommended various guided exercises that would help writing students use as a model such as reproduction of a model paragraphs, using lists of vocabulary and expressions as sentence combinations, dialogue completion, parallel writing and so on (Pincas 1982, Byrne 1988, Reid 1993).

2.3.3 Free Writing

In this type of writing, the students are expected to bring their own personal feelings and knowledge to the topic they write about. Of the three types of writing, free writing encourages students to generate ideas of their own. In free writing activity, the teacher is expected to facilitate conditions and give clear instructions that would help students to be able to write about any topic they like regardless of grammar, spelling, punctuation etc.

When students do not focus on errors and attempt to write what they want to say, their power and confidence over their second language will develop. In this kind of writing, students write about what they are familiar with and interested in (Leki, 1991).

Hedge (1988:44) says that as free writing is the result of the flow of ideas, one should put his ideas on paper as quickly as possible because the focus of free writing is on generating ideas. Raimes (1983) also says that writing teachers and students should stress on content than on form. She further says that the students should never worry about form in their writing at the beginning. They should stress on content and fluency with limited error correction.

2.4 Students' Problems in Writing

According to Shanghness (1979:415), the major difficulties of students' are related to hand writing and punctuation, syntax, common errors (i.e. problems in the inflection of regular verbs and nouns, subject verb agreement and the use of articles), spelling, vocabulary and beyond the sentence (i.e. problems in presenting and elaborating on a central idea). According to Byrne (1988:4), the major problems in writing are psychological, linguistic and cognitive problems.

2.4.1 Psychological Problems

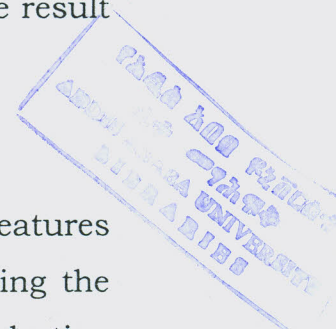
Psychological problems are the problems related with the writer's sense of isolation while writing because of the absence of any physical interaction and feedback from the teacher. Byrne (1988:4) says that writing is a solitary activity and the fact that we require to write on our own with out interaction or the benefit of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult. Cumming (1986) in Boughey (1997:127) says that in contrast to speaking, writing is produced and received in a context which is devoid of support for the communication of meaning. The result is that, in writing, meanings must be explicit.

2.4.2 Linguistic Problems

Byrne (1988:4) says that because of the absence of the prosodic features in writing, the writer has to compensate these features by keeping the channel of communication open through his/her own efforts by selecting appropriate structures and by using appropriate connecting devices so that the text can be interpreted on its own. Similarly, Hedge (1988: 5) states that so as the writer to compensate the absence of the prosodic features in writing, he/she has to write with high degree of organization, careful choice of vocabulary and using complex grammatical devices. Grammatical problems (mechanical problems), sentence structure problems and problems of diction are linguistic problems that hamper students' effective writing in English.

2.4.2.1 Grammatical Problems

Students have a number of problems in their second language writing. "As verbs take different forms depending on tense and subjects they are used with, they create problems for second language writing students" (Tyner, 1987). Similarly, Kharm (1987) in Melese (2007:12) states that students have problems with subject verb agreements, pronoun references, and connectors.



2.4.2.2 Sentence Structure Problems

Sentences reflect various syntactic structures (Reid, 1983). However, incapable student writers use run-on, incorrect, and fragmented sentences (West 1966, in Tsegaye 2006:16). Kharma (1986) says that those students who have the problem of writing good sentences structures are unable to produce longer sentences requiring subordination and coordination. According to Zamel (1983:22), cohesive devices are crucial in writing. However, the linking devices have been found to be problematic for English language students.

2.4.2.3 Problem of Diction

A good writing or composition should consist of appropriate and varied range of vocabularies used along with proper grammar and varied range of sentence structures (Norish, 1983; Alamirew, 2005). According to Reid (1983) in Melese (2007: 13), when the writer practices the choice of vocabulary that would reflect a concern for the reader and the purpose of writing, the composition written by the student would be come sensible to his/her reader. However, writing in a second language using the appropriate words in the appropriate place is a problem for students. For example, White (1980) says that usually students use 'big words' in their essays to impress the reader, their teacher. The effort to impress the reader leads to a problem of diction.

2.4.3 Cognitive Problems

The cognitive problems that students face include problems of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, content and organization.

2.4.3.1 Punctuation Problems

According to Byrne (1988:16), the fact that punctuation has never been standard to the extent as spelling, makes it problematic. Similarly, as

Carrol and Wilson (1995:191) state “students’ writing encounter punctuation problems as there are no universal rules of punctuation.”

2.4.3.2 Capitalization Problem

Capital letters are useful for sentence initials, the beginning of important words, in topics, headings etc (Kroll, 1991). However, students have problems in using capitalization properly. There are reasons for students’ problems in using proper capitalization. “The rules of capitalization are not universal and classifying nouns as proper and common nouns is difficult for students” (Gowere et al., 1995) in Tsegaye (2006:17).

2.4.3.3 Spelling Problem

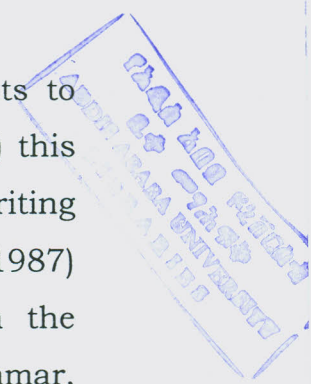
Owing the influence of other languages, variant pronunciations and other historical reasons, the English spelling system which has become inconsistent is complex for students (Gowere et al, 1995) as cited in Melese (2007:55).

2.4.3.4 Content Problem

In writing, learners face problems of exploring ideas and thoughts to communicate with others (Clifford, 1987). According to Leki (1991) this could be because of the traditional methods teachers use to teach writing for spelling, punctuation, and mastering grammar. Clifford (1987) suggests that teachers should encourage students to focus on the message, ideas or thoughts they wish to convey rather than grammar, spelling, punctuation and others.

2.4.3.5 Organization Problem

According to Kharma (1986), students have the problem of structuring the paragraph, topic development of a paragraph, structuring the whole discourse and a theme in a discourse. “The most common students’ problem in paragraphing is either the paragraph is not limited to a single topic or the single topic is not developed or exemplified adequately”



(West, 1966: in Tsegay 2006:17). Raimes (1983) says that the other problem of organization in students' writing is the difficulty of differentiating a topic and supporting ideas or generalizations and specific details. Pincas (1982) has also showed that students have the problems of writing united paragraphs because of their failure to use cohesive devices appropriately.

2.5 The major causes of Students' problems in Writing

2.5.1 The Difficult Natures of Writing

Writing is a complex process because it requires the mastery of grammatical devices, conceptual (thinking) and judgmental (have purpose and activating) elements (Byrne 1988, Heaton 1990). Byren (1988: 4) also classifies the writing complexities into psychological, linguistic and cognitive problems. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:6) say that since writing doesn't come naturally but rather gained through continuous effort and much practice, it becomes a complex skill. Norish (1993) states the following about the complexity of writing.

In written medium, information has to be transmitted without any aid from sources other than the language itself. It seems to follow from this that more attention is needed to be paid to the language as a code in short to the grammatical and lexical system than is the case with speech. (p. 65).

Bell and Burnaby (1984) cited in Nunan (1989: 36) say the following concerning the difficulty of writing:

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 and letter for action. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts.

Similarly on the difficulty of writing skill, Abu (2001: 30) states that writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers

alike because writers must balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanics. In this regard, Ur (1996: 163) reveals, “much higher standard of language are normally demanded in writing than in speech: more careful construction, more precise and varied vocabulary, and more correctness of expressions in general. Ur further states that writing is a mess business which requires passing through a number of untidy drafts before reaching a final version. ”

2.5.2 Lack of Students' Motivation

According to Zamel (1997) in Italo (1999: 46), the writing class should take in to account the learners purposes for writing. Writing tasks can be developed rapidly when students concerns and interests are acknowledged, when they are given numerous opportunities to write and when they are encouraged to become participants, Davies (1998:25) says that learners will be encouraged to write if writing tasks motivate them and keep them interested. On the other hand, according to Leki (1991:9), the desire on the part of the writer to communicate some thing is very important because it is much more difficult for students to write about something they have no interest in. Silva (1997) in Thomsan (2003:361) believes that it is both “reasonable and motivating’ to allow students to choose their own topics and that when students are allowed this freedom, their work is more successful. Similarity, Hudelson (1989) in Thomsan (2003:25) found out that the quality of writing was better when students were allowed to make decisions about their topics. In addition, Pincas (1982: 4) says that for all ages and levels, motivation is increased if writing is placed in a realistic context. Byrne (1988:2) says that most of us write less well if we are obliged to write about something that we don't want to write.

2.5.3 Inadequate Time

Hedge (1988:11) states that the idea of time need to be given attention because writing activities by nature have different stages which need ample time. Students need time for gathering ideas, organizing their ideas, writing drafts, proof reading and re-writing. Colions and Gethen (1980) in Kroll (1990:140) observed that much of writing stems from a number of constraints that must be satisfied and coordinated at various “structural levels,” that is over all text structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure and word structure. They argued that the attempt to coordinate all these requirements is a staggering job, thus the amount of time allotted to produce a wiring might affect the level of mastery of the above items. In line with this, white and Arndt (1991) in Italo (1999: 47) say, “time is needed to incubate, sift and shape ideas. Of all the skills, writing is one which most benefits from time.” In the process approach to teaching writing, the quality of students’ written work can be affected by the amount of time that they are allowed. According to Quantum and Chakraverty (2000:22), writing, which is an important part of language learning, is essentially a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topics. Similarly, Raimes (1983: 25) says that time is a crucial element in the writing process and an element that distinguishes writing from speaking. Time may also be a key factor in producing a text with full of control over organization and coherence. In addition, many students and teachers feel that writing under time pressure is a very unnatural situation and perhaps can not lead them to produce papers that are truly representative of their capabilities (Kroll, 1990: 140).

2.5.4 Lack of Practice

According to Davies (1998:25), "writing is essentially a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience. This takes a lot of practice. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:6) say that writing doesn't come naturally but rather gained through continuous effort and much practice. In addition, Italo (1999:32) states that the learners must take the responsibility for their learning if meaningful learning is to take place. He also adds that the best ways to learn any skill would be to practice it. To become best driver, the best way is to drive. Similarity, to become proficient writer, the best way is again to writer a lot. Furthermore, hedge (1988:11) says, "my own experience tells me that in order to become a good writer, a student needs to writer a lot".

2.5.5 Teachers' Ways of Giving Feedback

Zamel (1985: 79) states that teacher's feedback can be effective if teachers respond to students writing as genuine and interested readers rather than as judges and evaluators. Similarly, Byrne (1988:29) says that if we are to be truly readers rather than judges, we should perhaps look not so much at what the learners have failed to achieve but rather at what they actually succeeded in doing. This might help students writers to appreciate receiving comments and use them in their revisions. Similarly, Edge (1989) in Ancker (2000:20) says that when we teachers decide to correct our students, "we have to be sure that we are using correction positively to support learning." Ferris (1995:49) says that teachers should not abandon constructive criticisms but should place it side by side with comments of encouragements. Ellis (1994) in Lipp and Ockay (1997:13) remind us that students' motivation is closely linked to language acquisition. To motivate students, the writing teacher should included comments of praise and encouragement in their written feedback. If teachers see their students' response as the end of the

interaction, then students will stop there. If, however, the response includes specific direction on what to do next, there is a chance for application of principles (Lees, 1979: 265). On correction errors, Norish (1983:71) says “when considering correction of errors as the stage of more or less free writing, it is useful and stimulating exercise for the students to check their work in groups or pairs. This saves the teachers’ time and encourages communication among the students.” However, in most cases, the teachers’ feedback is unclear, inaccurate and unbalanced. As a result, the feedback given doesn’t help students develop their writing skill (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990: 155). Zamel (1985) also found out that the written responses given by teachers were vague and abstract which do not help students revise their writing. In addition to this, the corrections EFL teachers made were related to surface level problems, that is, focusing on spelling, tense and punctuation forgetting content and organization of the writing that affect meaning and communication (Zamel, 1985; Cited in Alamirew, 2005: 100). According to Cohen and Robbins (1976) cited in Tesfay (1995:9), the correction of students written errors is often ineffective in reducing errors because teachers correct mistakes inconsistently.

2.5.6 The Role of Teachers in Writing

Teachers should play important roles for the effectiveness of writing skill which is important for students’ day to day communication. Hedge (1988:8) states that some of our students know already what they need to write in English. Others may be uncertain about the nature of their future needs. Our role as teachers is building communication potential. “In the process of composition, the teachers’ role is to provide an environment in which students will learn about writing, see models of good writing, get plenty of practice in writing” (p: 24). Similarly, Byrne (1988: 49) mentions some roles of the teacher in developing the writing skills of the students. These are: firstly, teachers should get the right

balance of writing activities. Secondly teachers should ensure that the type of writing activities and the formats used to practice are sufficiently varied so that the students do not get bored. This shows that practice materials should be selected from various sources. However, according to Aboderin (1984:37), through laziness or incompetence, many teachers stick religiously to the design of text books. "The teachers provide no stimuli, no pre-writing activities, nor relevant language development before launching the students in to the free writing exercise" (p. 37). "

2.5.7 The Methods used in teaching Writing

The teaching of writing becomes more effective if it is linked with the real life of students. In addition, if the focus of the lesson is on meaning rather than on form and if it is integrated with other skills, writing will be successful.

Silva (1990) says that the effectiveness of teaching the writing skill is determined by the teacher him/her self. According to Alamirew (2005: 94), the way writing is taught influences the improvements of writing Skills. Silva (1990) in Italo (1999: 30) states that the main concern of teachers in using controlled writing is to focus on accuracy and correctness and to avoid errors as much as possible. "In controlled writing errors are not tolerated and students are expected to write accurately. This could be achieved through practice with structures" (Reid, 1993). Hedge (1988:8) says that in the product approach of writing, the teacher is not in a position to help his/her students during the writing process. Instead, he/she uses the students' written works for evaluative purpose, i.e. in order to diagnose their weaknesses and strengths. Harmer (2000) states the following on the product approach of teaching writing:

When concentrating on product, we are only interested in the aim of the task and in the end product. Then, the teacher gives more attention to the formal aspects of writing such as

grammar, spelling, punctuation and careful selection of vocabulary. (p. 257).

However, according to Clifford (1987), teachers should encourage students to focus on the messages, ideas, or thoughts they wish to convey rather than focus on grammar, spelling, punctuation and others. In the process approach of teaching writing, the students are active participants and the learning environment is flexible, collaborative, and positive (Yonas, 1996: 15). However, according to Shangness (1979: 417), ESL teachers must avoid hunting solely mechanical errors or focusing exclusively on meaning.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Method

According to Kumar (1996), descriptive methods attempt to describe systematically a situation, problem or phenomenon. There for, the researcher used descriptive research method since it is important in gathering data of what people think, feel and do.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 College

There are three Governmental Colleges in Tigray Regional State. Out of these Colleges, Abbiyi Addi College of Teacher Education was purposely selected because the researcher had familiarity to the College. The researcher taught in this College for two years and it was hoped his familiarity would help him easily access the College to gather data for the study.

3.2.2 Students

From 160 second year English major students, 50 students were selected from five sections i.e. 10 students from each section using simple random method.

3.2.3 Teachers

There were six English Language teachers who taught English courses at Abbiyi Addi College of Teacher Education. All of the English Language teachers were data sources of this study.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

3.3.1 Questionnaires

3.3.1.1 Students' Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed to gather data from the students. The items in the questionnaire were mainly close ended, but the students were also given opportunities to express their own ideas if they had something to add other than the given options.

The questions in the questionnaire were designed to gather data mainly on:

- The problems that the students had in writing in English;
- The major causes of students' problems in writing;
- The support students got from English language teachers to improve their writing skills;
- The students' attitudes towards the writing skills; and
- The place of the writing skill in and outside classroom.

The questionnaire was designed in English and administered to the students in the presence of the researcher in order to explain points which were not clear to the students.

3.3.1.2 Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire contained closed ended items, but teachers were also given opportunities to express their own ideas if they had something to add other than the given options.

The content of the teachers' questionnaire was almost similar with the content of the students' questionnaire.

The questions in the teachers' questionnaire were designed mainly on:

- The problems their students had in writing;
- The major causes of students' poor performances in writing in English;

- The support that they gave to students to help them improve the writing skills; and
- The place given to writing skill etc.

3.3.2 Interviews

3.3.2.1 Students' Interview

A semi structured interview was designed to gather additional data from the students. From 160 students, ten students were selected for the interview by drawing lots. The content of the interview was similar to that of the students' questionnaire.

3.3.2.2 Teachers' Interview

Similarly, semi structured interview was conducted with three teachers. The teachers were selected based on their availability and willingness. The main area of focus of the interview was almost similar with the area of focus of the teachers' questionnaire.

3.4 Data organization and Analysis

Data obtained from questionnaires were organized and presented in tables using percentages. Further more mean value was calculated to analyze the data obtained. However, data gathered through the interviews were described qualitatively. During the data discussion, attempts were made to compare and contrast the quantitative and qualitative data gathered for the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data from the Students' Questionnaire

4.1.1 Most Practiced Language Skills

Item 1 asked students to rank language skills that they feel need to be practiced in EFL classes using a 1-6 scale. Table 1 below presents their responses.

TABLE 1

Rank of language skills that practiced most in the classroom

Skills	Ranks											
	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
a. Reading	7	14	28	56	11	22	3	6	0	0	1	2
b. Grammar	35	70	5	10	5	10	4	8	0	0	1	2
c. Vocabulary	3	6	11	22	6	12	24	48	3	6	3	6
d. Speaking	4	8	2	4	18	36	9	18	8	16	9	18
e. Listening	0	0	1	2	3	6	5	10	14	28	27	54
f. Writing	1	2	3	6	7	14	5	10	25	50	9	18
TOTAL	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100

As indicated in Table 1 above, 35 (70%) of the students agreed that grammar should be practiced most in the classroom. Twenty eight of the students ranked reading as the second most needed skill that should be practiced most in the classroom. Seven of the students ranked reading first and 11 (22%) of them ranked it third. Eighteen of the students gave the third rank to speaking. Twenty four of the students (48%) gave fourth

rank to vocabulary. The table also shows that half of the students ranked writing fifth. It is also shown in the table that 27 (54%) of the student gave the last rank to listening. From the data obtained in the above table, it is possible to conclude that the majority of the students ranked the skills as follows: grammar, reading, speaking, vocabulary, writing and listening.

4.1.2 Language Skills most Practiced outside Classroom

Item 2 asked students to rank the language skills using a 1-6 scale to show the skills that they usually practiced outside the classroom. The aim was to discover to what extent the students practice the English language skills that they reported most needed to be practiced in Table 1.

TABLE 2

The skills practiced most outside the classroom

Skills	Ranks											
	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
a. Reading	9	18	20	40	3	6	7	14	7	14	4	8
b. Grammar	5	10	10	20	6	12	24	48	2	4	3	6
c. Vocabulary	1	2	4	8	24	48	6	12	8	16	7	14
d. Speaking	29	58	5	10	4	8	5	10	2	4	5	10
e. Listening	3	6	6	12	6	12	5	10	4	8	26	52
f. Writing	3	6	5	10	7	14	3	6	27	54	5	10
Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100

Table 2 shows that 29(58%) of the students reported that they practiced speaking most outside the classroom. Twenty of them (40%) gave the second rank to reading. Nearly half of the student respondents, 24 (48%) gave the third rank to vocabulary. Similarly, 24(47%) of the students gave grammar the fourth ranked. Twenty seven of the students reported

that writing was the second least practiced skill. The majority of the students agreed that listening was the least practiced skill outside classroom.

As it is shown in Table 2 above, writing was ranked as the second least practiced skill outside classroom. This shows that listening and writing are among the least practiced skills outside classroom.

4.1.3 Importance of Writing in Language learning

In Item 3, the students were asked whether writing is as important as other language skills.

TABLE 3

The importance of writing in language learning

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Yes	50	100
B. No	0	0
Total	50	100

As Table 3 depicts, all of the students agreed that writing is as important as other English language skills. This contradicts what the majority of the students report in Tables 1 and 2 earlier. This indicates that though all of them believe that writing is as important as any language skill, the majority of them do not practice writing outside classroom as they do other skills.

4.1.4 The Importance of Writing as other Language Skills

Item 4 asked the students why they said that writing is as important as other language skills. Table 4 demonstrates the result.

TABLE 4**What makes writing as important as other language skills**

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Writing is a skill that I need for academic purposes; writing essays, paragraphs etc	48	96%
B. Writing skill is one of the requirements for me to get a better job	45	90%
C. Writing skill is important for me to communicate with each other	43	86%

As depicted in Table 4 above, nearly all of the students said that writing is important for academic purposes. Forty five (90%) of the students reported that writing is as important as other language skills because it would help them to get better jobs in their future life. The table also indicates that 43(86%) of the students said that writing is as important as other language skills since it helps them to communicate with each other. Though the majority of the students agreed that writing is as important any English Language skills, it is possible to conclude that they give least attention and priority to it (see Tables 1 and 2).

4.1.5 Types of Writing Activities

Item 5 asked students the types of writing practices they do in the classroom. The aim was to investigate the types of writing activities most practiced in the classroom.

TABLE 5**Writing activities used in the classroom**

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Joining sentences together	48	96
B. Completing dialogues	37	74
C. Writing parallel paragraphs	29	20
D. Reordering jumbled sentences	40	80
F. Free writing	10	20

As depicted in Table 5 above, nearly all the students (96%) said that they do joining sentences together as the major writing activity in writing

classes. 37(74%) of the students claimed that they do completing dialogues as the major writing activities in the classroom. 40(80%) 29(58%) and 10(20%) of the students said that they do frequently reordering jumbled sentences, writing parallel paragraphs and free writing activities respectively. From the data in Table 5 above, the majority of the students agree that joining sentences, completing dialogues and reordering jumbled sentences are frequently practiced writing activities in the classroom. As it is shown in the table, few of the students claimed that free writing is practiced in the classroom. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that less emphasis is given to practicing free writing activities in the classroom. Therefore, teaching writing focuses on controlled writing activities where students could not practice free writing activities. This might indicate that the teaching of writing focuses on more controlled writing activities that emphasis accuracy in writing. However, focusing mainly on controlled writing activities deprived the rights of students to generate ideas of their own in writing practice. According to Leki(1901),when students do not focus on errors and attempt to write what they want to say, their power and confidence over their second language will develop.

4.1.6 Problems in Writing in English

Item 6 asked students whether they had problems in writing in English.

TABLE 6

The existence of problems in writing in English

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Yes	50	100
B. No	0	0
Total	50	100

In table 6 above, all the students agreed that they had problems in writing in English.

4.1.7 Types of Writing Problems

In item 7, the students were asked the problems of writing in English they had. The aim was to investigate the major problems that students encountered when they write.

TABLE 7

Types of Problems in Writing in English

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Difficulty in the content (message) of the topics	45	90
B. Difficulty in using appropriate grammatical items; for example when to use passive and active construction	43	86
C. Difficulty in organizing ideas according to their logical order	46	92
D. difficulty in using appropriate punctuation marks, correct spelling and appropriate words	44	88

As shown in Table 7 above, 43(86%) of the students said that the problem they had was the problem in the usage of grammar; for example, when to use passive and active constructions. 46(92%) of the students said that they had difficulty in organizing ideas in logical orders when they write in English. The other 44(88%) of the student respondents replied that they had difficulty in using appropriate punctuation marks, correct spelling and appropriate use of vocabulary items. As shown in the above table, 45(90%) of the students agreed that they lacked ideas when they write paragraphs or essays in English. All this indicate that the students had problems of using correct grammar, correct punctuation and correct spelling, and lacked to develop paragraphs/essays and skill

of organizing ideas in writing. This goes with the findings of other researches. According to Rivers (1981), as cited in Italo(1999), many college students are unable to express themselves in a clear, correct and comprehensible manner in writing. Similarly, Shanhness(1979) says that the major difficulties of students are related with punctuation, subject verb agreement, spelling, vocabulary and problems in presenting and elaborating on a central ideas.

4.1.8 Receiving Feedback

Item 8 asked students whether they had received feedback from their teachers in writing exercises.

TABLE 8

Receiving feedback

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Yes	50	100%
B. No	0	0
Total	50	100

As shown in Table 8 above, all of the students agreed that they had received feedback in writing exercises, which might indicate the help they received from teachers.

4.1.9 Frequency of Receiving Feedback

In item 9, the students were asked how often they received feedback on writing exercises. The aim was to see how often they receive feedback.

Table 9 demonstrates the result.

TABLE 9

Frequencies in receiving feedback

Reponses	Frequency	%
A. always	6	12
B. sometimes	28	56
C. rarely	16	32
Total	50	100

As shown in Table 9 above, above half of the students 28(56%) said that they ‘sometimes’ received feedback in writing exercises. Only 6(12%) of them said that they ‘always’ received feedback, and 16(32%) of them reported that they ‘rarely’ received feedback on writing exercises. From this, it is possible to say that only few students receive adequate feedback on writing activities as 56% receive ‘sometimes’ and 32% ‘rarely’.

4.1.10 Focus of the Feedback

In item10, the students were asked to report areas of focus of the feedback they receive from teachers. The aim was to see the types of help students received from their teachers.

TABLE 10

The writing components students received feedback on

Responses	Frequency	%
A. on the content (message) of paragraphs or essays	8	16
B. on correcting grammar	45	90
C. on correcting mechanics, punctuation, spelling etc	47	94
D. on the use of vocabulary items	26	52
E, on organization of ideas	10	20

As shown in Table 10 above, almost all the students 47(94%) indicated that they received feedback on correcting mechanics such as the use of punctuation marks and correct spellings. 45(90%) of them said that they received feedback on correcting grammar errors. More over, 26(52%) of the students reported that they received feedback on the use of vocabulary items. Only 8(16%) of them claimed that they received feedback on the content (message) of their writings. Similarly, few of the student respondents 10(20%) of the students reported that they received feedback on organization of ideas. As indicated in the above table, only

few of the students claimed that they received feedback on contents and organization of ideas. Thus, the feedback that the students received mainly focused on the corrections of surface level problems such as spelling, tense and punctuation ignoring content and organization of the writing which affect the meaning of what they write.

4.1.11 Receiving Help in Writing

Item 11 was intended to find out the types of help the students received from their teachers other than the feedback given to them on what they write.

TABLE 11
Receiving other help in writing tasks

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Yes	43	86
B. No	7	14

As indicated in Table 11 above, 43(86%) of the students agreed that they received other helps from their teachers. Only 7(14%) of them said that they didn't receive other helps other than receiving feedback on what they write.

4.1.12 Types of Help They Receive :

Item 12 asked students to report the types of helps they received in writing exercises other than feedback given to them on what they write.

TABLE 12
Helps received other than feedback in writing

Responses	Frequency	%
A. the teacher gives me supplementary sources other than the module	20	40
B. the teacher gives me help on my writing outside the classroom	10	20
C. the teacher gives me model paragraphs or essays to study	16	32

As depicted in Table 12 above, twenty of the students said that their teachers gave them supplementary materials to help them improve their writing skills. Ten of them 20% said that their teachers helped them to write paragraphs or essays outside the classroom. 16(32%) of the students reported that their teachers gave them model paragraphs and essays to study. Data in Table 12 shows that the students received less helps from their teachers to improve their writing skills. However, according to Hedge(1988), the teacher's role in writing is to provide an environment in which students will learn about writing, see models of good writing, and get plenty of practices in writing.

4.1.13 Causes for Students' Problems in Writing

Item 13 (a-j), were designed to find out major causes of students' problems in writing in English.

TABLE 13

The extent to which the causes of students' problems in writing affected their writing

No	Causes of problems in writing	The extent it affects						Mean
		3 a lot		2 to some extent		1 little		
a	I haven't practiced writing in English starting from lower grades	41	82	7	14	2	4	2.7
b	I don't have interest in writing in English because I feel that writing is not as important as other language skills	15	30	12	24	23	46	1.8
c	I don't get adequate time in practicing wiring	40	80	8	16	2	4	2.6
d	I do not get appropriate feedback in practicing writing	30	60	16	32	4	8	2.4
e	The difficult nature of writing skill itself since it demands knowledge of grammar, mechanics, organization etc	37	74	9	18	4	8	2.6
f	teaching writing focuses on grammar, mechanics etc than on communicating writing	40	80	6	12	4	8	2.6
g	I receive less help from language	29	58	16	32	5	10	2.5

	teachers							
h	I don't like practicing writing skill	10	20	15	30	25	50	1.7
i	activities in the module are not designed appropriately	33	66	12	24	5	10	2.4
j	I do not get materials in practicing writing	12	24	10	20	28	56	1.1
							Grand mean	2.2

As indicated in Table 13 above, 41(82%) of the students responded that lack of practice in writing in English starting from lower grades was the cause for their poor performance in writing in English. However, 7(14%) and 2(4%) of the students said that lack of practice affected to their writing in English 'to some extent' and 'little' respectively. The calculated mean value 2.7 indicates that lack of practice in writing in English affected negatively students' writing. Grabe and Kaplan (1999) say that writing doesn't come naturally but rather gained through continuous effort and much practice.

Nearly half of the students 23(46%) said that lack of interest in writing was not the cause of their problem in writing. 40(80%) of the students reported that the inadequate time given to writing exercises affected their writing skill 'a lot'. According to Hedge (1988), attention should be given to time because writing activities by their nature have different stages which need ample time. Students need time for gathering ideas, organizing their ideas, writing drafts, proof reading and rewriting. As shown in the table, 30(60%) of the students reported that the inappropriate feedback given by teachers affected their writing a lot. But only 16(32%) of the students responded that it affected them to some extent. The mean value calculated to item 'd', 2.4, indicates that the inappropriate feedback given by the teachers affected students' writing in English to some extent. Table 13 depicts that 37(74%) of the student agreed that the difficult nature of writing skill has affected their writing in English negatively. The calculated mean value of item 'e', 2.6, indicates that the difficult nature of the writing skill affected a lot

students' writing in English. Focusing on grammar and mechanics than on communicating in teaching writing, with the calculated mean value 2.6, was one major cause that affected negatively their writing in English a lot. 29 (58%) of the students responded that less help they received from their teachers in writing exercises affected their writing a lot. 33(66%) of the students claimed that the inappropriate writing activities in the module were the causes for their poor performances in writing which affected their writing skill negatively. Negative attitudes towards the writing skill and lack/shortage of materials with the calculated mean value of 1.7 and 1.1 were among the causes of the problems in students' writing that affected their writing little.

From the data in Table 13, it is possible to conclude that lack of practicing in writing skills, inadequate time given to practicing writing exercises in classes, the teachers' focus on giving feedback on grammar and mechanics in teaching writing, the difficult nature of the writing skill itself and less help that the students receive from teachers in writing are found to be the major causes of students' poor performance in writing in English that affected students' writing a lot. Generally, the grand mean value calculated 2.2, indicates that the major causes of students problems have negatively affected students' writing in English.

4.1.14 Help Received in the classroom

In Item 14, the students were asked to report the help that they received when they practiced writing English in the classroom. The aim was to investigate types of help that the students received in the classroom to develop their skills.

TABLE 14

Types of help received in practicing writing

No	Types of Help	3		2		1		Mean
		Always		Sometimes		Rarely		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
a	my teacher gives me the topics him/her self	22	44	18	36	10	20	2.3
b	My teacher invites me to produce topics of my own interest and he/she helps me at different stages of writing.	4	8	8	16	38	76	1.2
c	My teacher gives me comments on my first draft and encourages me to rewrite my final draft.	5	10	9	18	36	72	1.4
d	my teacher gives me feedback only on my final draft	27	54	18	36	5	10	22.4
e	my teacher encourages me to give emphasis to content other than form during writing	6	12	12	24	32	64	1.4
f	my teacher helps/guides me revise my paper,	11	22	9	18	30	60	1.6
g	my teacher asks questions and lets me discuss before and while writing.	15	30	10	20	25	50	1.8
h	My teacher lets me focus on punctuation, spelling, and grammar.	37	74	10	20	3	6	2.7
							Grand mean	1.9

As indicated in table 14 above, 22(44%) of the students said that their teachers 'always' gave them the writing topics themselves. Where as, 18(36%) of them reported that their teachers 'sometimes' gave them the topics themselves. On the other hand, 10(20%) of them said that their teachers 'rarely' gave them the writing topics. When we look at item 'b', 38(76%) of the students agreed that their teachers 'rarely' invited them to produce their own topics. The calculated mean value 1.2, of item 'b' indicates that the teachers 'rarely' invited their students to write on their

own topics. The majority of the students i.e. 36(72%) of them also revealed that their teachers 'rarely' gave them comments on their first draft and 'rarely' encouraged them to rewrite their final draft. The calculated mean value 1.4 of item 'c', which is almost equal with the value of 'rarely', indicates that teachers rarely gave comments on students' first draft and rarely encouraged them to rewrite their final draft. When 27(54%) of the students said that their teachers 'always' gave them feedback only on their final draft, 32(64%) of them agreed that their teachers' rarely' encouraged them to give emphasis on content than on form. When we look at Item 'h', 37(74%) of the students said that their teachers 'always' focused on correcting grammar, punctuation and spelling. Generally, the calculated grand mean 1.9, indicates that the students 'sometimes' received the provided helps in teaching writing skill. From the result obtained in the above table, it seems that the students received help more on controlled ways while practicing writing in the classroom. In addition to this, it seems that the teachers focused more on the product approach of teaching writing and it is possible to say that the teachers seem more likely inclined towards the traditional ways of teaching writing.

4.1.15 Attitudes of Students to Writing Skill

In Item 15, students were asked the types of attitudes they have towards writing skill. The aim was to check whether students have positive or negative attitudes towards the writing skill.

TABLE 15
Students' attitudes towards writing skill

No	Students attitudes towards writing skill	3		2		1		Mean
		Always		Sometimes		Rarely		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
a	I like to write in English	36	72	12	24	2	4	2.8
b	I think it is easy for me to write paragraphs or essays in English	5	10	7	14	38	76	1.6

c	I think that I am good at writing in English	11	22	22	44	17	34	1.8
d	I think that writing in English is important to me for my future life	35	70	10	20	5	10	2.6
e	I find it easy to write what I want to write in English	10	20	12	24	28	56	1.6
f	I try my best to get the right word or phrase while writing in English	15	30	23	46	12	24	2.0
g	I think writing in English is a lot of fun (pleasurable experience)	14	28	25	50	11	22	2.0
h	I think I write in English as good as most people	6	12	30	60	14	28	1.8
							Grand mean	2.3

As indicated Table 15 above, 36(72%) of the students said that they 'always' liked writing in English. On the other hand, 38(76%) of the students responded that they 'rarely' thought that it is easy for them to write paragraphs or essays in English. The calculated mean value of item 'c', which is 1.8, indicates that students 'sometimes' thought that they were good at writing in English. 35(70%) of the students reported that they 'always' thought that writing is important for their future life. On the other hand, 28(56%) of the students 'rarely' found it easy to write what they want to write in English. The calculated grand mean 2.3, which is approximately the same with the value of 'sometimes', indicates that students have positive but not strong attitudes towards writing skills.

4.2 Data from the Teachers' Questionnaire

4.2.1 Language Skill (s) that need(s) most Practicing

Item 1 asked the teachers to rank language skills using a 1-6 scale to show the skill(s) that they feel need(s) most practice in classroom. Table 16 below presents their responses.

TABLE 16
Language skills practiced most in the classroom

Skills	Ranks					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	F	F	F	F	F	F
a. Reading	1	3	2	0	0	0
b. Grammar	5	1	0	0	0	0
c. Vocabulary	0	1	4	1	0	0
d. Speaking	0	1	0	4	1	0
e. Listening	0	0	0	1	0	5
f. Writing	0	0	0	0	5	1

As indicated in table 16 above, of the six teachers, five felt that grammar is the most important skill that needs most practicing in the classroom. While three of the teachers ranked reading as the second most practiced skill, the other two responded that reading is the third most important skill that needs practicing in the classroom. The majority of the teacher respondents i.e. four of them felt that vocabulary is the third most important skill that needs practicing in the classroom. On the other hand, speaking is ranked fourth next to grammar, reading and vocabulary. Five teachers ranked writing as the fifth most important skill that needs to be practiced in classroom .Of the six teachers, five of them ranked listening as the least important skill that needs to be practiced

least when compared with grammar, reading, vocabulary, speaking and writing.

From the data obtained above, it is possible to conclude that the majority of the teachers ranked the skills from the most needed and most practiced to the least needed and least practiced as follows: grammar, reading, vocabulary, speaking, writing and listening. The result gained from the students' questionnaire confirmed this fact except they exchanged the ranks of speaking and vocabulary (See table 1 of the students' questionnaire).

4.2.2 Importance of Writing

In item 2, teachers were asked whether they think that writing is as important as other language skills. The result is indicated in table 17 below.

TABLE 17
Importance of writing skills

Responses	Frequency	%
A. Yes	6	100
B. No	0	0

As shown in Table 17 above, all the teachers reported that practicing writing is as important as practicing other language skills. But, according to the teachers' response in Table 16 earlier, they gave the greatest priority to grammar and almost the least priority to writing skill. It is possible to say that the teachers' responses in Table 16 earlier contradict with their responses given in Table 17 above. What is very interesting here is that there was no agreement between the teachers' beliefs about the importance of writing as other language skills and what they actually taught in classroom.

4.2.3 The Uses of learning Writing Skill

In item 3, teachers were asked what makes writing skill as important. The aim was to identify the major importance of writing skill. The result is demonstrated in table 18 below

TABLE 18
Advantages of writing skills

A. Writing is a skill that students need for academic purposes; writing essays, paragraphs etc	6
B. Writing skill is one of the requirements for students to get a better job	1
C. Writing skill is important for students to communicate with each other	5

As depicted in Table 18 above, all the teachers agreed that writing is as important as other language skills because it is a skill that students need for academic purposes, to write essays, paragraphs etc. Five of the teachers reported that writing is as important as the other language skills since it helped students to communicate with each other. On the other hand, only one of the teachers said that writing is a skill that students need to develop for getting better jobs.

4.2.4 Types of Writing Activities

Item 4 asked the teachers the types of activities they used in teaching writing. The aim was to see whether the emphasis in teaching writing was on fluency or accuracy writing activities. The result is indicted in table 19 below.

TABLE 19**Writing activities used in the classroom**

Responses	Frequency
A. Joining sentences together	6
B. Completing dialogues	5
C. Writing parallel paragraphs	3
D. Reordering jumbled sentences	6
F. Free writing	2

As indicated in Table 19 above, all the teachers reported that they used joining sentences together using different connectors as the major writing activity while teaching writing. Similarly all the teachers said that they used reordering jumbled sentences as the major writing activity in teaching writing. Five of the teachers revealed that they used 'completing dialogues' as the major writing activity in writing exercises. On the other hand, three of the teachers used writing parallel paragraphs as a writing activity when only two of them reported that they used free writing as a writing activity in the classroom. Here, it seems that the teachers focused mainly on controlled and guided writing activities and very few of them used free writing. It seems that the majority of the activities emphasized and focused on practices that have very little to do with creative process writing.

4.2.5. Students' Problems in Writing

Item 5 asked teachers if their students have problems in writing in English. Table 20 demonstrates the result.

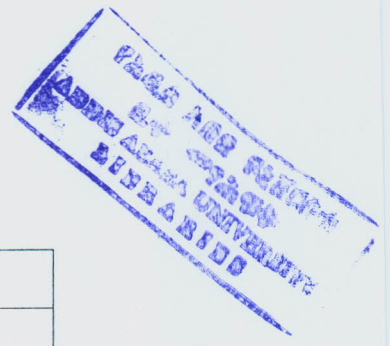


TABLE 20
Students' problems in writing

Responses	Frequency
A. Yes	6
B. No	0

In the table 20 above, all the teachers responded that their students have problems in writing in English.

4.2.6 Types of Students' Problems in Writing in English

In item 6, teachers were asked the types of problems their students have in writing in English. The aim was to investigate the major problems that students encountered when writing in English.

TABLE 21
Types of problems that students have in writing

Responses	Frequency
A. Difficulty in the content (message) of the topics	6
B. Difficulty in using appropriate grammatical items; for example when to use passive and active construction	5
C. Difficulty in organizing ideas according to their logical order	6
D. difficulty in using appropriate punctuation marks, correct spelling and appropriate words	4

As depicted in table 21 above, all of the teacher respondents reported that their students had major problems in organizing ideas according to their logical orders and problems in content (messages) of the paragraphs or essays they write about. Five of the teachers responded that their students had problems in using appropriate grammatical items for example when to use passive and active constructions and four of them revealed that their students had problems in using appropriate

punctuation marks and correct spelling. From the result obtained above, it seems that that the teachers agreed that their students had serious problems especially on exploring ideas and thoughts to communicate with others and organizing ideas appropriately when writing paragraphs or essays. According to Leki(1991), learners face exploring of ideas because of the traditional methods teachers use to teach writing for spelling, punctuation and mastering grammar. The result also indicated that students had problems on grammar, punctuation, spelling and usage of appropriate vocabularies.

4.2.7 Giving Feedback for Students

Item 7 asked teachers whether they give feedback to their students in writing exercises. The result is shown in table 22 below.

TABLE 22
Giving feedback to students

Responses	Frequency
A. Yes	6
B. No	0

In table 22 above, all the teachers responded that they gave feedback to their students.

4.2.8 Frequency of Giving Feedback

In item 8, the teachers were asked how often they gave feedback to their students in writing lessons. Table 23 shows the result.

TABLE 23
The frequency of giving feedback

Responses	Frequency
A. always	0
B. sometimes	5
C. Rarely	1

As shown in Table 23 above, of the six teachers, five of them said that they sometimes gave feedback to their students in writing exercises. On the other hand, only one of the teachers responded that he/she rarely gave feedback to his/her students during the writing exercises. However, none of the teachers always gave feedback to their students in writing exercises. Feedback is believed to be more helpful if it is provided on a regular basis. But from the data obtained above, it is possible to say that almost all the teachers sometimes gave feedback to their students in writing exercises.

4.2.9 Focuses of Feedback

In item 9, the teachers were asked on which writing components they gave feedback in writing exercises. The aim was to see whether the teachers focused on the mechanical aspects of writing or on the important writing components while giving feedback. The result is shown in table 24 below.

TABLE 24
Writing components the teachers give feedback on

Responses	Frequency
A. the content or message of the paragraph or essay	2
B. correcting grammar errors	6
C. correcting mechanics (such as punctuation, spelling etc)	6
D. the use of vocabulary items	1
E. the organization of ideas	2

As shown in Table 24 above, all of the teachers responded that they gave feedback focusing on correcting grammar errors and correcting mechanics such as punctuation and spelling. Only two of them responded that they focused on the content or message of the paragraph

or essay and on organization of ideas while giving feedback. Only one of the teachers said that he/she gave feedback on the usage of vocabulary items. In the previous table 21, five of the teacher respondents agreed that their students have difficulty in the content (message) of the topics and six of them said that their students have problems in organizing ideas and in using appropriate vocabularies. But in the above table 24, only two of the teachers said that they gave feedback on the contents of the topics and on organization of ideas and only one said he/she gave feedback on usage of vocabularies. Here it is possible to say that the majority of the teachers ignored giving feedback on content, on usage of vocabularies and on organization of ideas though they knew that their students have problems in the content of the topics, in the usage of vocabularies and on organization of ideas. Based on the data obtained in Table 24 above, it is possible to deduce that the teachers focused on the mechanical aspects such as grammar, spelling and punctuation more than focusing on the content and organization of ideas when giving feedback in writing exercises+. Here it seems that the teachers are still in the traditional ways of teaching writing skills.

4.2.10 Giving other Help in Writing

Item 10 asked teachers whether they gave other helps other than feedback in writing exercises.

TABLE 25
Giving help other than feedback

Responses	Frequency
A. Yes	6
B. No	0

As depicted in table 25 above, all the teachers responded that they gave helps to their students in addition to giving feedback in writing exercises.

4.2.11 Types of Helps in Writing

Item 11 asked teachers the types of supports they give to their students to help them improve their writing skills in English. The result is shown in table 26 below.

TABLE 26

Type of helps given to improve students writing skills

Responses	Frequency
A. Use supplementary sources other than the module	2
B. Help to write outside the classroom	2
C. Give model paragraphs or essays to study	3

As indicated in table 26 above, three of the teachers responded that they gave their students model paragraphs or essays to study so that the students could write other paragraphs or essays accordingly. Two teachers reported that they used supplementary sources other than the module to help students improve their writing skills and they gave their students help to write outside the classroom. Here it seems that the teachers gave little help to their students in writing exercises. According to Aboderin(1984:37), through laziness or incompetence, many teachers stick religiously to the design of text books.

4.2.12 Major Causes of Students' Problems in Writing

In item 12 (a-j), the teachers were asked the major causes of students problems in writing in English. The aim was to find out to what extent the major causes of students problems in writing have affected their students' writing in English.

TABLE 27

**Major causes of writing problems and the extent they
affect students' writing in English**

No	Causes of writing problems	The extent it affects			Mean
		3 a lot	2 to some extent	1 little	
		F	F	F	
a	lack of practice in writing in English starting from lower grades	6	0	0	3.0
b	lack of interest in writing in English because students feel that writing is not as important as other language skills	5	0	1	2.7
c	the students are not given adequate time to practicing wiring	6	0	0	3.0
d	students do not get appropriate feedback in practicing writing	1	5	0	2.2
e	the difficult nature of writing skill itself since it demands knowledge of grammar, mechanics, organization etc	3	2	1	2.3
f	teaching writing focuses on grammar, mechanics etc than on communicating writing	6	0	0	3.0
g	students receive less help from language teachers	3	3	0	2.5
h	students have negative attitudes towards writing skill	2	3	1	2.2
i	activities in the module are not designed appropriately	4	2	0	2.7
j	student do not get materials in practicing	2	3	1	2.2
				Grand mean	2.6

As depicted in table 27 above, the teacher respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the provided factors have affected their students writing in English. Accordingly, all the teacher respondents i.e. six of them said that students' lack of practice in writing in English since lower

grades was the factor that affected a lot their students' writing. Where as, five of the teacher respondents replied that lack of interest in writing in English affected a lot to students' writing because students feel that writing is not as important as other language skills such as reading, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary. But only one of the teachers responded that lack of interest affected little to students writing in English. Since the calculated mean value of item 'b' is 2.7, which is approximately equal with the mean value of 'a lot' which is 3.0, we can say that students' lack of interest in writing in English affected students' writing skill a lot. In the students response about to what extent did lack of interest affect their writing in English, almost half 23(46%) of them said that it affected them little (see table 13 of students' questionnaire).

When we look at item 'i' of Table 27 above, four of the teachers said that the inappropriateness of the activities in the module was one of the factors which affected a lot to students writing in English. Two of them replied that the inappropriateness of the writing activities affected little students writing in English. Since the calculated mean value of item 'i' is 2.7, which is approximately similar with the mean value of 'a lot' which is 3.0, we can say that the inappropriateness of the writing activities in the module affected a lot to students' writing. The teachers also reported that major causes of students' problems in writing such as not getting appropriate feedback, the difficult nature of the writing skill it self, less help from language teachers, students negative attitudes towards the writing skill and not getting appropriate materials

in practicing writing with the calculated mean values 2.2, 2.3, 2.3, 2.2, 2.2 respectively affected their students writing in English to some extent. Generally, based on the data obtained above, students' lack of practice in writing in English, lack of interest in writing in English, inadequate time during the writing classes, the focus on grammar and mechanics than on communicating writing and the inappropriate writing activities in the students' modules are found to be the major causes of students' poor performances in writing in English which affected negatively to students' writing in English. The calculated grand mean 2.6, which is approximately similar with the mean value of 'a lot', indicates that the major causes of students' problems in writing in English which are mentioned under Table 14 above affected students writing a lot.

4.2.13 Helps in Practicing Writing in Classroom

In item 13 (a-h), the teachers were asked about the types of helps that they give to their students while practicing writing in the classroom. The aim was to investigate whether the teachers give help based on a product or process approaches of teaching writing.

TABLE 28
Types of help given in practicing writing

No	Types of Help	3	2	1	Mean
		Always	Sometimes	Rarely	
		F	F	F	
	I give them the topics my self	4	2	0	2.6
	I invite them to produce topics of their own interest and I help them at different stages of writing.	0	2	4	1.3
	I give them comments on their first draft and encourage them to rewrite their final draft.	0	2	4	2.3
	I give them feedback only on their final	4	2	0	2.6

	draft				
e	I encourage them to give emphasis on content other than on form during writing	0	2	4	1.3
f	I help/guide them revise their paper,	0	1	5	1.1
g	I ask questions and let them discuss before and while writing.	0	1	5	1.1
h	I let my students focus on punctuation, spelling, and grammar.	5	1	0	2.5

In the above Table 28, four of the teachers said that they always gave the writing topics themselves to their students while two of them replied that they some times gave the writing topics. On the other hand, when two teachers said that they some times invited their students to produce their own topics, four of them responded that they rarely invited their students to produce their own topics. In item 'b', the calculated mean value of 1.3 which is approximately equal with the value of rarely which is 1, indicates that the teachers rarely invited their students to produce their own topics. In Item 'c', the majority of the teacher respondents i.e. four replied that they rarely gave students comments on the students' first draft and they rarely encouraged them to rewrite their final draft. But two of them responded that they sometimes gave comment on the first draft and sometimes encouraged their students to rewrite their final draft. In item 'd', the majority of the teachers i.e. four of them always gave feedback only on the students' final draft and two of the teachers said that they sometimes gave feedback only on the final drafts. The mean value 2.7 indicates that the teachers always gave feedback only on the final draft. In item 'e', when two of the teachers sometimes emphasized on content than on form, the majority i.e. four of them rarely focused on content than on form. But according to Clifford (1987), teachers should

encourage students to focus on the message, ideas, or thoughts rather than on punctuation, grammar, spelling and others.

In the last Item 'h', five of the teacher respondents said that they always let their students focus on punctuation, spelling and grammar in writing while the other one of them replied that he/she sometimes focused on punctuation, spelling and grammar in writing. The mean value 2.8 which is approximately equal with the value of always which is 3.0, indicates that the teachers always focused on punctuation, spelling and grammar in teaching writing. The calculated grand mean 1.9, indicates that the teachers performed the recommended helps/supports sometimes in the teaching of writing. From the result obtained above, the majority of the teachers gave the topics of writing themselves, they gave feedback only on the final drafts and they focused on punctuation, grammar and spelling than on content. Therefore, it is possible to say that the teachers were inclined towards the traditional ways of teaching writing. "In the product approach of writing, the teacher is not in a position to help his/her students during the writing process. Instead he/she uses the students' written works for evaluating purposes (Hedge, 1988:8)."

4.3 DATA FROM STUDENTS' INTERVIEW

The student interviewees were asked four general questions (see appendix C). The interview lasted for about ten to fifteen minutes with each interviewee. The interview was recorded and analyzed in the following ways.

The students were asked whether they have problems in writing and to report about the types of problems in writing in English. All the students agreed that they had problems in writing in English. The writing problems that the students reported include: errors in using grammar, punctuation marks and spelling. They also said that they had problems

of shortage of ideas when they started to write paragraphs or essays on certain topics. In addition, they had problems of developing details and writing main ideas of paragraphs. More over, they had problems of organizing paragraphs or essays and using cohesive devices appropriately.

The second question asked students to report the major causes of their problems in writing in English. All the students agreed that the time given in writing was one of the causes that created problems on developing their writing skills. They said that writing by its nature is difficult and it needs more time to practice it freely. In addition, the majority of the students reported that lack of practice in writing in English became one of the causes for their poor performances in writing in English. Nearly all the students agreed that their teachers focus on grammar and mechanics than on contents and organizations of ideas in teaching writing was one of the causes for their inability in writing in English efficiently. More over, the teachers' ways of giving feedback in writing exercises, less support from language teachers and the demotivating nature of the writing exercises in their module were taken as the major causes of students' poor performance in writing by the majority of the students.

The students were also asked to report the supports their teachers give them to help them improve their writing skills. Only three of the students agreed that their teachers sometimes used additional resources to help them improve their writing skills. Few of the students also reported that their teachers rarely used model paragraphs so as to help them write similar paragraphs accordingly. However, the majority of the students agreed that their teachers offered them little helps in and outside the classroom. The students added that their teachers almost did nothing in

the process of writing except giving the writing topics and rarely corrected the final products.

Finally, the students were asked to report whether they receive feedback and on which writing components they received feedback. All the student interviewees agreed that they sometimes received feedback. Almost all the students agreed that they received feedback mainly on grammar, punctuation and spelling than on contents and organizations of ideas in paragraphs or essays.

4.4 DATA FROM TEACHERS' INTERVIEW

The teacher interviewees were asked four general questions (see appendix D). The interview lasted for about ten to fifteen minutes with each interviewee. The interview was analyzed in the following ways.

The teachers were asked on whether they give emphasis to writing as they do for the other skills. All the teachers reported that they gave almost the least emphasis to the writing skill. The teachers added that their students wanted them to pay attention to the other skills to writing. According to the teachers even some of the students considered the time spent to writing skill as wasting it in vain. The teachers also agreed that they sometimes escaped the writing exercises and rushed to the other skills for their students didn't want to deal with some of the writing exercises in some instances.

The second question asked to students was whether their students have problems in writing in English. All the teachers agreed that the students had a lot of problems in writing. According to the teachers, their students could hardly write well organized paragraphs. The students also had problems in using correct grammar, correct spelling and appropriate punctuation marks. In addition, all the teachers agreed that the students had difficulties in using appropriate connectors while writing paragraphs or essays. More over, the students had problems of shortage of ideas

when writing paragraphs and they could hardly identify the topic sentences from the details in paragraphs or essays.

The next question asked to teachers was to report on the types of helps they give to help their students minimize the problems in writing. All the teachers agreed that they did very little to minimize their students' problems in writing in English. One of the teachers said that he sometimes used supplementary sources to help his students improve their writing skills. On the other hand, two of them reported that they stick to the writing exercises found in the module and rarely used other supplementary sources. All the teachers also agreed that they never arranged tutorial classes particularly on writing so as give the opportunities to their students to practice writing.

The teachers were asked a question to report the major causes of their students' problems in writing in English. All the teachers agreed that their students rarely practiced writing. As writing is a skill that needs a lot of practice, lack of practicing writing became the major cause for students' poor performance in writing in English. According to the teachers, students' lack of interest in writing in English was one of the major causes that affected students' writing. More over, the writing activities found in the module are not motivating. Most of the activities focus on grammar and as a result they didn't encourage creative writing. All the teachers also agreed that the difficult nature of the writing skill itself was another cause for students' problems in writing in English because it involves a number of elements such as mechanics, grammar, contents and usage of appropriate vocabularies simultaneously. The teachers also believed that their attention mainly on grammar and mechanics than on communicating through writing became the major cause for their students' inability to write in English effectively. In addition, inadequate time given during the writing exercises was mentioned as the cause for students' problems in writing.

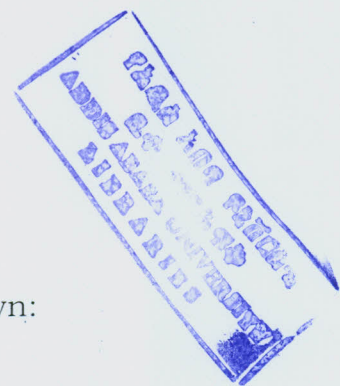
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

- Writing skill is almost a neglected skill when compared with the other skills and most emphasis was given to grammar teaching.
- In the teaching of writing, the teachers mainly focus on more controlled types of writing activities and the students have less freedom in expressing their ideas and feelings using free writing activities.
- Students have problems in writing in English especially problems in expressing ideas and problems in organizing ideas in paragraphs or essays. In addition, they have problems in using correct grammar items, correct punctuation marks and correct spelling.
- It is revealed that the teachers give little or no additional help in teaching writing other than giving feedback and they mainly stick to the modules instead of providing students other supplementary resource
- When teachers give feedback on writing exercises, they mainly focused on grammar, punctuation and spelling forgetting correcting on contents and organizations of ideas though they know that their students have problems on contents and organizations of ideas when writing paragraphs or essays.
- Students' lack of practice since lower grades, inadequate time given to students during writing exercises, the focus on grammar and mechanics than on contents and organization of ideas in teaching writing, the de-motivating nature of the writing activities, less help from English language teachers and the inappropriate



ways of giving feedback in writing exercises are found to be the major causes for students' problems in writing in English.

- The students have positive attitudes to the writing skill though not strong.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. English language teachers need to give considerable attention to the writing skill in order to upgrade the students' writing abilities right from lower grades.
- ii. The teachers should use varieties of writing activities in teaching writing so as to make the teaching of writing interesting and to help students express their feelings and ideas freely in writing in English.
- iii. In teaching writing and giving feedback, the teachers should pay attention to contents and organizations of ideas than focusing mainly on the mechanical aspects such as grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- iv. The modules developed for College students should be revised and the writing activities should be designed based on the students' interest and level of understanding so as to bring the required writing abilities of students.
- v. In teaching writing, the teachers should use varieties of supplementary materials other than the module so as to meet the interests of most of the students and to help them improve their writing skills.
- vi. The teachers should arrange tutorial classes specially for teaching writing to help their students get adequate time in practicing the writing skills in the classroom.

- vii. Writing is a skill that needs continuous practice. Taking this in to account, the students should practice writing a lot so as to minimize their problems in writing in English.
- viii. The teachers seem to incline towards the traditional ways of teaching writing skills. Therefore, seminars, workshops and in service trainings should be organized so as to introduce English language teachers with new teaching writing approaches that would bring change in students' writing abilities.

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Appendix A1
Addis Ababa University
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A Questionnaire to be completed by Students

Dear student,

This questionnaire is designed for a study purpose. Its main objective is to investigate factors affecting students' writing in English. The success of the study depends on your genuine responses to the questions. Therefore, you are kindly requested to fill in the questionnaires honestly and frankly. There is no need to write your name.

Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

Molla Asmare

Part I. Answer the following questions as appropriate to you based on the instruction/s/ given

1. Which one of the followings do you practice most in the class? (Rank them using a 6-point scale: 1-most practiced; 6-least practiced)
A. Reading___ B. Grammar___ C. Vocabulary___ D. Speaking___ E. Listening___ F. Writing___
2. Which one of the followings do you practice most outside the class room? (Rank them using a 6-point scale: 1-most practiced;6-least practiced)
A Reading___ B. Grammar___ C. Vocabulary___ D. Speaking___ E. Listening___ F. Writing___
3. Do you think that practicing writing is as important as practicing other language skills? A. Yes B. No

A2

4. If your answer to Item 3 above is "Yes", what are the reasons that make practicing writing important? Tick as appropriate for you from the followings. Ticking more than one answer is possible.

A. Writing is a skill that I need for academic purposes; writing essays, assignments etc.

B. Writing skill is one of the requirements for getting a better job.

C. Writing skill is important for communicating with others.

D. If any other, please specify _____

5. If your answer to Item 3 above is "No", why do you say that writing is not as important as other skills? Ticking more than one answer is possible.

A. Because exams such as school and national exams do not cover (include) writing skills.

B. Because I rarely use writing skill outside the classroom.

C. If any other, please specify _____

6. What kinds of writing practices do you do in the classroom? Ticking more than one answer is possible.

A. Joining sentences together

B. Completing dialogues

C. Writing parallel paragraphs

D. Reordering jumbled up sentences

E. Free writing on different topics

F. If any other, please specify _____

7. Do you have problems in writing in English?

A. Yes

B. No

A3

8. If your answer to Item 7 above is "Yes", what problems do you face in writing in English? Tick as appropriate to you from the followings. Ticking more than one is possible.

- A. I usually worry about the contents of the topics given in writing.
 - B. It is very difficult for me to use appropriate grammar items; for example, when to use passive and active constructions.
 - C. I have difficulty in Organizing ideas according to their logical orders.
 - D. I find difficulty in using appropriate punctuation marks, correct spelling and appropriate words.
 - E. If any other, please specify _____
-

9. Do you receive feedback from your teacher in writing exercises?

- A. Yes B. No

10. If your answer to Item 12 is "Yes", how often do you receive feedback on writing exercises?

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Rarely

11. On which one of the following areas do you receive feedback?

- A. On the content or message of the writing exercises
 - B. On correcting grammar errors
 - C. On correcting mechanics (such as punctuation, spelling etc)
 - D. On the use of vocabulary items
 - E. If any other, please specify _____
-

12. Do you receive any help other than receiving feedback from your teacher(s)? A. Yes B. No

13. If your answer to Item 15 above is "Yes", please indicate the type of help that you receive from your teacher.

- A. The teacher gives me supplementary sources other than the module
- B. The teacher gives me help on writing outside the classroom.

A4

C. The teacher gives me model paragraphs or essays to study.

D. If any other, please specify _____

Part II. Tick as appropriate to you by putting a tick (√) mark to indicate to what extent do the following causes of students problems in writing in English affect your writing .

3=a lot 2=to some extent 1= little

A5

No	Factors that have affected my writing in English	3	2	1
1	I haven't practiced writing in English starting from lower grades			
2	I don't have interest in writing because I feel that it is not as important as other skills such as reading, vocabulary, and grammar			
3	I do not get adequate time to practice writing in English in writing classes			
4	I do not get appropriate feedback from my teacher in writing lessons			
5	writing skill is difficult compared to others skills itself (e.g. it demands knowledge of grammar, mechanics, appropriate use of vocabulary, organization, etc)			
6	Teaching writing focuses on grammar, mechanics etc other than on communicating using writing			
7	I get less help from my teacher			
8	I do not like practicing writing skill			
9	The activities in the module are not interesting			
10	I don't get different materials on writing			

A5

Part III. Tick (√) as appropriate to you about the following to indicate the help that you receive from your teacher in practicing writing.

3=always 2= sometimes 1= rarely

No	Types of help I receive from my teacher on practicing writing in English	3	2	1
1	My teacher gives me the topics him/her self			
2	My teacher invites me to produce topics of my own interest and helps me practicing at different stages.			
3	My teacher gives me comments on my first draft and encourages me to rewrite my final draft.			
4	My teacher gives me feedback only on my final draft			
5	My teacher encourages me to give emphasis on content other than on form during writing			
6	My teacher helps/guides me revise my paper,			
7	My teacher encourages me through questions and class discussions before and while writing.			
8	My teacher focuses on correcting punctuation, spelling, and grammar.			

Appendix B1
Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

A questionnaire to be completed by teachers

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is designed for a study purpose. Its main objective is to investigate factors affecting students' writing in English. The success of the study depends on your genuine responses to the questions. Therefore, you are kindly requested to fill in the questionnaires honestly and frankly. There is no need to write your name.

Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

Molla Asmare

Part I. Answer the following questions as appropriate to you based on the instruction/s/ given

1. Which one of the followings do your students practice most in the class? (Rank them using a 6-point scale: 1-most practiced; 6-least practiced)
a. Reading___ B. Grammar___ C. Vocabulary___ D. Speaking___ E. Listening___ F. Writing___
2. Do you think that your students' practice on writing is as important as practicing other language skills? A. Yes B. No
3. If your answer to Item 3 above is "yes", what are the reasons that make practicing writing important?
A. Writing is a skill that students need for academic purposes; writing essays, assignments etc.
B. Writing skill is one of the requirements for students to get a better job.

B2

C. Writing skill is important for students to communicate with others.

D. If any other, please specify _____

4. If your answer to Item 3 above is "No", why do you say that writing is not as important as other skills?

A. Because class exams do not include writing skills.

B. Because the students rarely use writing outside the classroom.

C. If any other, please specify _____

5. What kinds of writing practices do you use in teaching writing in the classroom?

A. Joining sentences together

B. Completing dialogues

C. Writing parallel paragraphs

D. Reordering jumbled up sentences

E. Free writing on different topics

D. If any other, please specify _____

6. Do your students have problems in writing in English?

A. Yes B. No

7. If your answer to Item 5 above is "Yes", what are the problems that your students face in writing in English?

A. Students usually worry about the contents of the given topics

B. It is very difficult for students to use appropriate grammatical items; for example, when to use passive and active constructions.

C. Students have difficulty in organizing ideas according to their logical order in writing in English.

D. Students have difficulty in using appropriate punctuation marks, correct spelling and appropriate words.

B3

E. If any other, please specify _____

7. Do you give feedback for your students in writing lessons?

A. Yes B. No

8. If your answer for item 9 is yes, how often do you give feedback for your students?

A. Always B. Sometimes C. Rarely

9. On which one of the following writing components do you focus when giving written feedback?

A. On the content or message of the paragraph or essay

B. On correcting grammar errors

C. On correcting mechanics (such as punctuation, spelling etc)

D. On the use of vocabulary items

E. If any other, please, specify _____

10. Do you give your students any other help other than giving feedback in writing exercises? A. Yes B. No

11. If your answer to Item 10 above is "Yes", what types of help do you give for your students to help them improve their writing skills?

A. I use supplementary sources other than the module

B. I give my students help to write outside the class.

C. I give them model paragraphs or essays to study

D. If any other, please specify _____

B4

Part II. Tick as appropriate to you by putting a (√) mark to indicate to what extent do the proposed causes of students problems in writing have affected your students' writing in English. Tick only once for each item

3=a lot 2=to some extent 1= little

No	Causes of students problems in writing	3	2	1
1	Lack of practice in writing starting from lower grades			
2	Lack of interest in writing because students feel that writing is not as important as other skills such as reading, grammar and vocabulary			
3	The students are not given adequate time in practicing writing in the class			
4	Students do not get appropriate feedback in practicing writing			
5	The difficult nature of the writing skill itself (since it demands knowledge of grammar, mechanics, appropriate vocabularies , organization etc)			
6	Teaching writing focuses on grammar, mechanics etc than on communicating in writing			
7	Students receive less help from language teachers			
8	Students have negative attitudes towards writing skill			
9	Activities in the module are not designed appropriately			
10	Students do not get materials in practicing writing			

B5

Part III. Tick (√) in the boxes as appropriate to you for your role in the teaching of writing skills

3=always 2= sometimes 1= rarely

No	Types of help I give to my students when they practice writing in English	3	2	1
1	I give them the topics my self			
2	I invite them to produce topics of their own interest and I help them at different stages of writing.			
3	I give them comments on their first draft and encourage them to rewrite their final draft.			
4	I give them feedback only on their final draft			
5	I encourage them to give emphasis on content other than on form during writing			
6	I help/guide them revise their paper,			
7	I ask questions and let them discuss before and while writing.			
8	I let my students focus on punctuation, spelling, and grammar.			

Appendix C

STUDENTS' INTERVIEW

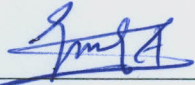
1. Do you have problems in writing in English? What are the major problems that you have in writing in English?
2. What are the major causes for your problems in writing in English?
3. Do your teachers take measures so as to alleviate your problems in writing? What types of measures do they take?
4. Do your teachers give you feedback in writing exercises? On which writing components do they focus?

Appendix D

1. Do you give emphasis to writing skill as you do for the other skills?
If not why?
2. Do your students have problems in writing in English? What types of problems do they have in writing?
3. What are the major causes for your students' problems in writing in English?
4. Do you take measures so as to minimize your students' problems in writing? What types of measures do you take?

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all the sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledge.



MOLLA ASMARE