

Students' Perceptions and Teachers' Practices of Teaching and Learning Writing Skills: The Case of Four Selected Secondary Schools in Hawassa City Administration, South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State of Ethiopia

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Abstract: The main objective of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of learning writing and teachers' practices of teaching writing with reference to four selected secondary schools in Hawassa City Administration. To achieve this objective, the researcher employed a descriptive methods design. Two hundred thirty-six grade eleven and twelve students were made to fill in a close-ended questionnaire, and 12 students were interviewed. The students were selected using random sampling technique. Moreover, 12 English language teachers were selected using random sampling technique and were interviewed. Classroom observation was also conducted. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus, this study employed a mixed approach. The findings of the study revealed that majority of secondary schools students have no good perception on learning writing; they are not well aware of the importance of learning writing. They also perceive learning writing challenging. The findings also disclosed that the practice of teaching writing in secondary schools is found to be unsatisfactory; it is far less to meet the objectives in the textbooks and the syllabus. Finally, recommendations were forwarded based on the conclusions so as to promote the students perceptions and maximize the practice of teaching and learning writing in secondary schools.

Key terms: Perceptions, learning, writing, practices, teaching

Date of Submission: 16-12-2017

Date of acceptance: 31-01-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is unlike spoken language; it requires the reader to understand and interpret what has been written. It is believed that writing demands a great deal of skills and conventions such as writing readiness and grammatical rules to become a proficient and effective writer. Writing is not just writing down ideas, but it is how these ideas are presented or expressed effectively. The highly demanding process of writing requires a number of skills and conventions like organization of ideas, a high degree of accuracy in choosing the right words and also the right use of complex grammatical devices. Besides, writing demands the writer to carefully choice vocabulary and to understand grammatical patterns and be able to write sentence structures that are appropriate to the subject matter. Moreover, writing is fundamental to effective communication (Driscoll, 2012). Writing allows us to share our communication not only with our contemporaries, but also with future generations. It permits people from the near and far distance past to speak to us. It is one of the language skills with multidimensional importance in various corners of human life. It is also a language skill which needs a great sort of attention to be the most successful in any academic level of learning. It is a skill which serves as a vital requirement outside the school; writing ability has a significant role on students' success. Although writing is an essential skill, many students at secondary schools are not interested in it. According to Caroll (1990), a study conducted in Vietnam revealed that many students were never required to learn proper spelling or grammar. The students considered "English" and "writing" as nothing else but spelling and grammar. They thought writing as an inevitable failure. They believed that it would not be always easy to achieve good writing because they did not only identify good writing with proper spelling and grammar but also they were even not aware of the importance of writing skills in their learning. They often got low marks on writing skills tests and this affected their academic success. In fact, students often have many basic mistakes in written works regarding spelling, grammar, punctuation and organization. The English language syllabus for grades eleven and twelve provides a growing focus on the four macro-language skills; however, our students' perception of learning writing is getting worse (Solomon, 2004). Moreover, there are mixed findings regarding our secondary schools' teachers' practices of teaching this skill. It is obvious that when students have better perceptions on learning this

skill and teachers give attention for teaching the skill by effectively applying the principles suggested, students' writing skills will be improved and thus their academic success too.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's personal experience, our secondary schools' students are not good at writing. There are also local studies which confirm this; researches disclosed that the teaching of writing is ineffective and the writing performance of the students is poor (Geremew, 1999; Alamirew, 2005; Desalegn, 2011). As noted by Solomon (2004), one of the major weaknesses of Ethiopian students at different levels is writing in English and the situation is worse in secondary schools. Solomon (2004) is of the view that most students at secondary school level do not produce written texts which meet the required standard. Moreover, Tsegaye (2006) found that grade twelve students are unable to write a single meaningful sentence let alone large texts like paragraphs or essays. Hailemariam (2012) adds that it is a common phenomenon that the level of Ethiopian students' language skill in general is very low after they have learnt the language from grade one to university level. Particularly, their writing skill is often found to be below the expectations. The present study differs from the aforementioned studies. Firstly, it differs from Alamirew's (2005) studies in two different ways. Alamirew conducted his study on perception of writing, writing instruction and students' writing performance and it was conducted before the implementation of the current textbook (published in 2011), which might have got answers to his findings; however, the present study gives due regard not only to students' perceptions of learning writing but also to teachers' practices of teaching this skill. Secondly, it differs from Desalegn's (2011) study because Desalegn conducted his study on the practice of teaching writing skills at a university level; however, this study is on secondary schools. Thirdly, it goes in difference with Hailemariam's (2012) study in that Hailemariam conducted his study on problems grade ten students face in writing. The other point which makes this study different from other studies is that it is conducted in the context of the current student textbook (published in 2011), and the research setting and the context where this research is conducted are different. On account of these, it was believed that there is a gap which had not been studied.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of learning writing and teachers' practices of teaching writing with reference to four selected secondary schools in Hawassa City Administration. Specifically, the study was meant to investigate:

1. Students' perceptions of learning writing
2. Teachers' practices of teaching writing

Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Do secondary schools' students have better perceptions for learning writing skills?
2. Do secondary schools' teachers effectively practice the teaching of writing skills?

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a descriptive-method research design. Moreover, a mixed-method approach was used; to be specific, quantitative data were obtained through close-ended questionnaire and classroom observation checklist and qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, the data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques employed in this study include purposive, random and availability sampling. The selection of the grade levels as well as schools (Hawassa Tabor Comprehensive and Preparatory School, Saint Daniel Comboni Secondary and Preparatory School, Hermann Gmeiner School, and Hawassa Addis Ketema Secondary and Preparatory School) was purposive. The schools were selected due to their longer service years and high student population. Since the number of students was unmanageable (2,356 students), to fill in the questionnaire, 236 students were selected randomly by lottery system. The researcher believed that this study would benefit a lot if it undertook the total teachers who were likely to have different level of education, work experience, and their own styles of teaching and thus availability sampling was used to include teachers to fill in the questionnaire. For the observation, nine teachers were selected randomly. Twelve students and twelve teachers were selected randomly for the interview.

Instruments of Data Collection

Questionnaire

Based on the objectives of the study and related literature, a close-ended questionnaire was designed for students. The questionnaire was designed in a five-point Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It focuses on students' perceptions of learning writing. In order to achieve validity, the researcher's most senior colleagues were asked to comment on the questionnaire and their comments were duly addressed. Cronbach's alpha was computed on SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 20 to examine the reliability of the items of the questionnaire. The computation showed that the items were reliable at above 0.78.

Classroom Observation Checklist

The observation checklist was meant to obtain data on the practices of teaching writing in the selected schools. It was prepared in a Yes/No form. So as to achieve its validity, the researcher's most senior colleagues were asked to comment on the checklist and their comments were duly incorporated. Twenty-seven periods of writing classes were observed.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were employed. In order to achieve validity, the researcher requested some of his senior colleagues to comment on the items of the interviews regarding content, organization and grammatical structure and their comments were duly incorporated.

Methods of Data Organization and Analysis

Data obtained were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. Data collected through the questionnaire and classroom observation checklist were categorized into themes and fed into the computer and then imported to the software called SPSS version 20 for analysis. The researcher used percentage and frequency. Data obtained through interviews were transcribed and summarized and analyzed qualitatively. Then, the results were discussed and implications were drawn according to the views of the majority of the interviewees.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Questionnaire

The following table shows the results of the questionnaire administered in order to obtain data on students' perceptions of learning writing.

Table 1: Results of Questionnaire

No	Items	Responses									
		Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Undecided (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Writing is as challenging and demanding as any other language skill.	6	2.5	17	7.2	37	15.7	142	60.2	34	14.4
2	Writing is a more challenging language skill than the other language skills.	66	28.0	109	46.2	38	16.1	18	7.6	5	2.1
3	The effort to write continuously is the technique which helps me improve my writing skills.	21	8.9	42	17.8	28	11.9	141	59.7	4	1.7
4	In order to develop my writing skills, I prefer writing individually to writing in pairs/groups.	73	30.9	108	45.8	39	16.5	11	4.7	5	2.1
5	I write because I see my friends write or I am under the influence	15	6.4	81	34.3	77	32.6	47	19.9	16	6.8

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	of my teacher.										
6	The teacher makes learning writing stimulating and enjoyable.	6	2.5	21	8.9	46	19.5	114	48.3	49	20.8
7	The teacher motivates me to write in English outside the classroom.	4	1.7	18	7.6	54	22.9	117	49.6	43	18.2
8	The way the teacher gives feedback on my writing tasks motivates me.	14	5.9	31	13.1	114	48.3	65	27.5	12	5.1
9	The teacher's method of teaching writing skills is convenient to me.	1	.4	11	4.7	52	22.0	156	66.1	16	6.8
10	Writing in English is something I like to do.	2	.8	18	7.6	69	29.2	126	53.4	21	8.9
11	I am motivated to learn writing.	4	1.7	12	5.1	52	22.0	140	59.3	28	11.9
12	I feel relaxed when expressing my ideas through writing.	13	5.5	27	11.4	77	32.6	110	46.6	9	3.8
13	I am motivated to write outside the classroom.	6	2.5	29	12.3	21	8.9	179	75.8	1	.4
14	My reading experience helps me develop my writing ability so I read a lot.			25	10.6	59	25.0	135	57.2	17	7.2
15	When I start writing, my priority is to concentrate on grammatical, spelling, and punctuation accuracy.	74	31.4	90	38.1	31	13.1	31	13.1	10	4.2
16	To learn writing more effectively, high knowledge of grammar is more important than the ability to write.	49	20.8	110	46.6	29	12.3	40	16.9	8	3.4
17	To learn writing more effectively, the ability to write is more important than high knowledge of grammar.	13	5.5	32	13.6	26	11.0	126	53.4	39	16.5
18	The writing tasks in the textbook help me think more about my writing because they are related to things I do outside the classroom.	1	.4	2	.8	76	32.2	122	51.7	35	14.8
19	I believe that writing is a skill which helps me a lot on my success.	7	3.0	49	20.8	112	47.5	56	23.7	12	5.1
20	Writing classes add value on my knowledge and skills.	5	2.1	41	17.4	87	36.9	101	42.8	2	.8
21	Practicing writing in the classroom helps me	21	8.9	73	30.9	99	41.9	41	17.4	2	.8

	develop my writing ability.										
22	Writing makes me communicate with other students in the class.	6	2.5	16	6.8	55	23.3	132	55.9	27	11.4
23	My being good at writing skills helps me do other subjects more successfully.	2	.8	16	6.8	110	46.6	104	44.1	4	1.7
24	I believe that learning writing helps me improve the development of the other language skills.	34	14.4	64	27.1	104	44.1	29	12.3	5	2.1
25	The testing system in my school encourages me to learn writing.	2	.8	18	7.6	41	17.4	116	49.2	59	25.0

As indicated in the above table under item number 1, majority of the respondents, 142 (60.2%) and 34 (14.4%), disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the item and were of the perception that writing is not as challenging and demanding as any other language skill such as reading, listening and speaking. Whereas, 6 (2.5%) of the respondents stated their strong agreement and 17 (7.2%) stated their agreement. Investigating the responses given to item number 2 in the table above, majority of the respondents, 66 (28.0%) and 109 (46.2%), strongly agreed and agreed respectively that writing is a more challenging language skill than other language skills. However, 18 (7.6%) of the respondents stated their disagreement and 5 (2.1%) of them stated their strong disagreement. This view is supported by Nunan (1989) who points out that "writing is an extremely complex, cognitive activity for all which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously". Accordingly, there are studies which claim that writing and learning to write has always been one of the most complex language skills. Nunan (1989) states "it is easier to learn to speak than to write no matter if it is a first or second language". Moreover, it can be related to psychological, linguistic, and cognitive factors; this applies to writing in L1, L2, and FL. Langan (1987) and Gunning (1998) also agree that writing is difficult. They state that writing is both more complex and more abstract than talking. Moreover, Parker (1993) supports this view when he states that writing could be a torment to students. In addition, Pearsall and Cunningham (1988) advocate that writing is definitely "hard work". Therefore, it is evidently true that writing poses a number of problems to the students, as it is a skill that is difficult to master. In responding to item number 3 in the table above, 21 (8.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 42 (17.8%) of the respondents stated their agreement and were of the perception that the effort to write continuously is the technique which helps them improve their writing skills. Majority of the respondents, 141 (59.7%), however, disagreed to the item. The purpose of question number 4 in the above table was to identify the perceptions of students on the preference of group or pair learning in developing their writing skills. Since writing is a social act which requires the co-operation of different individuals who have relationship with the subject matter under discussion, it would be learnt more effectively if the students had the perception and practice of working together. As can be seen from the responses in the table above, 73 (30.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the item and were of the perception that they prefer writing individually to writing in pairs or groups. Moreover, 108 (45.8%) of the respondents forwarded their agreement on their preference to write individually. This shows that majority of the respondents were of the view that writing skills would be developed better through the individual effort of the learner than pairs or groups. As indicated in the above table under item number 5, 15 (6.4%) and 81 (34.3%) of the respondents agreed that they write either because they see their friends write or they are under the influence of their teacher. Seventy-seven (32.6%) of the respondents were unable to decide on the item. In contrast, 47 (19.9%) and 16 (6.8%) of the respondents stated their disagreement and strong disagreement to the same item.

Accordingly, the researcher of this study believes that this perception of the students will in turn hamper the development of their writing ability. As can be understood from the responses given to item number 6 in the table above, 114 (48.3%) and 49 (20.8%) of the respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed to the item. Forty-six (19.5%) of the respondents could not decide whether their teachers made learning writing stimulating and enjoyable or not. Nonetheless, few number of the respondents, 6 (2.5%) 21 (8.9%), strongly agreed and agreed to the same item. The researcher of this study is of the view that students learn better when the teacher's method of teaching is intended to be triggering or stimulating. However, based

on the responses given in the table above, majority of the respondents, 163 (69.1%), were of the perception that the teaching and learning of writing skills in their respective schools is not stimulating and enjoyable. One hundred seventeen (49.6%) and 43 (8.2%) respondents respectively stated their disagreement and strong disagreement to item number 7 in the table above and were of the perception that their teachers do not motivate them to practice writing outside the classroom. Four (1.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 18 (7.6%) of them agreed to the item, whereas 54 (22.9%) of the respondents' perceptions were stated to be undecided.

The researcher of this study believes that the teaching and learning of language should not be confined only to the classroom practices but also to the realities outside the classroom where teachers are expected to motivate their students to use the language in the real world after the class. As shown in the table above under item number 8, 14 (5.9%) and 31 (13.1%) of the respondents stated that the way their teachers give feedback on their writing tasks motivates them. One hundred fourteen (48.3%) of the respondents stated undecided to the item; these respondents were of the view that they do not identify whether the way their teachers give feedback on their writing tasks motivates them or not. It implicitly reveals that the students are lacking the awareness on the motivating nature of feedback in general and their teachers' way of doing so in particular. In contrast, 65 (27.5%) and 12 (5.1%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the item and were of the view that their teachers way of giving feedback on their writing works does not motivate them. As can be seen from the table above under item number 9, majority of the students, 156 (66.1%) and 16 (6.8%), disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively and were of the perception that their teachers' method of teaching writing skills in their schools is not convenient to them. Fifty-two (22.0%) of the respondents' responses to the item was undecided. Few number of the respondents, 1 (0.4%), strongly agreed and 11 (4.7%) agreed to the item. Thus, it is possible to understand that the majority, 172 (72.9%), of the respondents were of the perception that the teaching method in their respective schools is not suitable to achieve success in their writing ability. As can be seen from the above table, 126 (53.4%) and 21 (8.9%) of the respondents stated their disagreement and strong disagreement to item number 10 and were of the perception that writing in English is something they do not like to do. Sixty-nine (29.2%) of them remained undecided. Few number, 18 (7.6%) agreed and 2 (0.8%) strongly agreed, of respondents stated that writing in English is something they like to do. As can be seen from the table above item number 11, majority of the respondents, 140 (59.3%) and 28 (11.9%), stated their disagreement and strong disagreement to the item and were of the perception that they are not motivated to learn writing. In conjunction with this, as can be seen under item number 12, 110 (46.6%) of the respondents stated that they do not feel relaxed when expressing their ideas through writing. On the other hand, 32.6% of them were of the view that they could not decide on whether they felt relaxed when expressing their ideas through writing or not. Byrne (1991, p. 10) states that "Some learners feel secure if they are allowed to write. For such students, writing is likely to be an aid to retention, if only because they feel more at ease and relaxed". Nevertheless, the responses of majority of the students show that they do not feel relaxed when expressing their ideas through writing. As shown in the table above item number 13, majority of the respondents, 179 (75.8%), disagreed and were of the perception that they are not motivated to write outside the classroom. In sum, based on the above results, the researcher of this study believes that learning writing at secondary schools is at stake for the students' motivation to learn and practice writing is very low. As shown in the table above under item number 14, majority of the respondents, 135 (57.2%) and 17 (7.2%), disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the item. Whereas, 59 (25.0%) of them remained undecided and 25 (10.6%) agreed to the item. It can be inferred that majority of the students have no habit of reading and they cannot see the benefits of reading on their writing ability. As shown in the table above item number 15, 74 (31.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 90 (38.1%) agreed to the item. Thirty-one (13.1%) stated their responses to the item as undecided. Nevertheless, 31 (13.1%) disagreed and 10 (4.2%) of them strongly disagreed to the item. As can be seen from the responses to item number 16, 49 (20.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 110 (46.6%) agreed and perceived high knowledge of grammar as more important than the ability to write. As can be seen from the responses to item number 17, 126 (53.4%) of the respondents disagreed and 39 (16.5%) strongly disagreed to the item and were of the perception that the ability to write is not more important than high knowledge of grammar. The researcher's experience, as well as the informal discussions he made with some secondary school teachers, confirms that in order to learn and improve writing skills, most secondary school students prefer good command of grammar to the ability to write. Regarding item number 18, 122 (51.7%) and 35 (14.8%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the item and were of the perception that the writing tasks in the textbook do not help them think more about their writing, for they are not related to things they do outside the classroom. Whereas, 76 (32.2%) of the respondents remained undecided, which might imply that these respondents did not go through the textbook.

This response implicitly indicates that the writing tasks in the textbook are not feasible to think more about life outside the classroom and happen to be lacking authenticity. This result further suggests that the writing tasks in the textbook need a sort of modification in order to make the students benefit and acquaint their learning with the real life. As shown in the table above item number 19, 7 (3.0%) and 49 (20.8%) of the

respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the item. One hundred twelve (47.5%) of the respondents could not decide on their perception and responded undecided. In contrast, 56 (23.7%) disagreed and the remaining 12 (5.1%) strongly disagreed to the item and were of the view that they do not believe that writing skills help them a lot on their success. According to the responses to item number 20 in the table above, 5 (2.1%) of the respondents stated their strong agreement and 41 (17.4%) stated their agreement to the item. They believe that learning writing adds value on their knowledge and skill. Eighty-seven (36.9%) of the respondents responded 'undecided' to the item. However, 101 (42.8%) stated their disagreement and were of the perception that writing classes do not add value on their knowledge and skill. The remaining 2 (0.8%) of the respondents also forwarded their strong disagreement. In responding to item number 21 in the table above, 21 (8.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 73 (30.9%) of them agreed to the item and were of the view that their writing ability develops due to the classroom practice they have in their secondary schools. Nevertheless, 41 (17.4%) and 2 (0.8%) of the respondents stated their disagreement and strong disagreement to the item respectively. The remaining 99 (41.9%) respondents stated undecided. Item number 22 asked the students whether writing makes them communicate with other students in the class or not. Majority of the respondents, 132 (55.9%) and 27 (11.4%), stated their disagreement and strong disagreement to the item. In contrast, 6 (2.5%) and 16 (6.8%) of the respondents respectively stated their strong agreement and agreement to the item and were of the perception that writing makes them communicate with other students in their classes.

Regarding item number 23 in the table above, 2 (0.8%) and 16 (6.8%) of the respondents stated their strong agreement and agreement respectively. However, 104 (44.1%) of the respondents disagreed and 4 (1.7%) of them strongly disagreed to the item. The remaining respondents, 110 (46.6%), were of the perception that they could not decide on whether having good knowledge on writing skills helped them do other subjects more successfully or not. As shown in the table above item number 24, large number of the respondents, 104 (44.1%), could not decide on whether writing helped them improve the development of the other language skills or not. Thirty-four (14.4%) of the respondents stated their strong agreement and 64 (27.1%) of them stated their agreement to the same item. In contrast, 29 (12.3%) and 5 (2.1%) of the respondents were of the perception that writing do not help them improve the development of the other language skills. In responding to their perception on the nature of tests related to writing as stated in item number 25 in the table above, 116 (49.2%) and 59 (25.0%) of the respondents were of the perception that the testing system in their schools do not encourage them to learn writing.

Results of Students' Interview

The results of interview held with selected students are discussed as follows. To begin with, majority of the interviewees stated that they learn writing when their teachers write sample passages on the blackboard and translate them into their mother tongue. They also added that they learn writing most of the time when their teachers give them titles to write on. However, the respondents remarked that the titles their teachers give in the classroom to develop writing tasks, either lack authenticity or become monotonous to write on. In contrast, three of the interviewees replied that they did not get any opportunity in learning the skill. They added that their teachers do not teach them writing at all; instead, they spend much of the class time in teaching the language items which are familiar to both the class examinations and the University Entrance Examination. Four of the interviewees stated that the writing activities in the textbook are very easy and not challenging at all. On account of this, they not only deviate from the textbook but also their teachers do too. These respondents further suggested that it could have been of greater significance had there been a possibility of incorporating activities which were meant for their academic level. Along with this, one of the interviewees stated that he could not see much difference in the activities in his current textbook with that of his previous grades. He added that he finds most of the activities in the textbook being redundant. Nonetheless, three of the interviewees stated that they do not use the textbook at all and their teachers totally deviate from the textbook in teaching writing. Most of the interviewees stated that they prefer writing outside the schools to writing at the schools. They claimed that the classroom setting is not convenient to practice writing. Nonetheless, three of the respondents stated that they have the experience of writing neither at school nor outside the school. Surprisingly, one of these students, whom the researcher of this study thought to be having the best experience, records a diary in English.

Results of Classroom Observation

The purpose of conducting observations in writing classes was to examine the teachers' practices of teaching writing. Accordingly, observations of twenty-seven periods of grades 11 and 12 were conducted prior to the interview; that is, the writing classes of nine teachers, each three times, were observed. The results are presented in the following table and discussions and interpretations are made accordingly:

Table 2: Results of Classroom Observation

No	Items	Cumulative of three observations			
		Yes		No	
		Fre	%	Fre	%
1	Are the students made to brainstorm on the topic of the day before doing the writing task?	3	11.1	24	88.9
2	Is the topic for the writing task familiar to the students?	13	48.1	14	51.9
3	Does the teacher give preliminary introduction about the topic?	11	40.7	16	59.3
4	Are the students made to plan for the task they are going to do?	-	-	27	100.0
5	Does the teacher teach the students writing strategies?	9	33.3	18	66.7
6	Does the teacher use sample writing tasks to demonstrate a wide range of writing styles?	-	-	27	100.0
7	Does the teacher implement learner-centered approach?	7	25.9	20	74.1
8	Does the activity prompt genuine interaction among the majority of the students?	8	29.6	19	70.4
9	Are the majority of the students engaged in the writing?	13	48.1	14	51.9
10	Do the majority of the students look interested or motivated while doing the tasks?	8	29.6	19	70.4
11	Does the teacher go round the class and assist the students in their writing?	9	33.3	18	66.7
12	Are the students recommended to assist each other?	-	-	27	100.0
13	Does the teacher encourage the students to write independently?	7	25.9	20	74.1
14	Does the teacher encourage some students to read their work for the class as a sample?	-	-	27	100.0
15	Does the teacher give general comments to the students as a whole?	-	-	27	100.0
16	Does the teacher give guidelines to help learners evaluate the standard of their writing?	-	-	27	100.0
17	Are the students made to comment on each other's work?	-	-	27	100.0
18	Are the students made to rewrite using the corrections and comments they get from the teacher?	-	-	27	100.0
19	Does the teacher inform the students about the contents of the forthcoming writing class?	-	-	27	100.0

It is obvious that brainstorming a lesson plays a prominent role in arousing students' interest and making a bridge between the lesson and the learners. Regarding this, majority of the classes, 24 (88.9%), observed went on without brainstorming. However, only 3 (11.1%) of the teachers had brainstormed on the topic of the day before they moved to the actual lesson. Though students' were required to brainstorm and discuss between and among each other so as to arrive at successful teaching and learning, the results boldly show the contrary. Hence, it is believed that the students' are not made to be the major actors of their learning and it happens to be against the essence of communicative language teaching. As item number 2 in the above table shows, 13 (48.1%) of the observed teachers' topics for writing were found to be familiar to the students. However, 14 (51.9%) of the classroom lessons observed were lacking topics of familiarity. According to the results of the observation under item number 3, 11 (40.7%) of the teachers gave preliminary introduction about the day's topic. Whereas, 16 (59.3%) of the teachers' classes were found to be lacking preliminary introduction on the topics. According to the results of the observation under item number 4, all of the teachers, 27 (100.0%), did not let their students plan for the task they were going to do. In this part of the lesson, majority of the teachers were observed warning the students not to disturb the class. "Keep silent!" was the expression which was repeatedly uttered. According to the results of the observation under item number 5, 9 (33.3%) of the teachers were observed teaching their students the strategies of writing. Nonetheless, 18 (66.7%) of them were not observed teaching any writing strategy to their students during the observation sessions. As shown in the table above item number 6, the teachers did not use sample written tasks to demonstrate wide range of writing styles. As can be seen from the above table item number 7, 7 (25.9%) of the teachers' were seen implementing learner-centered approach. However, 20 (74.1%) of the teachers dominated the classes and did not give a room

for the students to be self-engaged. Based on item number 8, 8 (29.6%) of the observed lessons had activities which prompted genuine interaction among majority of the students. Nevertheless, majority of the classes observed, 19 (70.4%), lacked activities prompting genuine interaction among majority of the students. In the classes observed, few students were genuinely interacting and looking interested in the whole activity. In majority of the sections, as shown under question number 9 in the table above, most of the students were observed chatting and discussing their own issues in their mother tongues. As item number 9 in the above table shows, 13 (48.1%) of the writing classes were observed having the students' engaged in the writing. Whereas, 14 (51.9%) of the writing classes were observed lacking the students' engagement in the writing. It is quite obvious that interest towards learning brings a number of benefits to the learner. According to the results of the observation under item number 10, 8 (29.6%) of the classes were found to have majority of the students looking interested or motivated while doing the tasks given by their teachers. However, in large number of the observation sessions, 19 (70.4%) of the students were observed being less interested in doing the tasks and less motivated in interacting with each other on the topics. Moving round the classroom and supervising each student's activity is one of the roles expected from a teacher. Accordingly, the results of the observation under item number 11 show that 9 (33.3%) of the teachers were going round the class and assisting the students in their writing. Here, these teachers were observed going round the classes and approaching the students so as to give insights on their works. Nevertheless, 18 (66.7%) of the teachers were standing in one side of the classroom and were not moving at all to help their students and check what and how they were doing. Moreover, some of the teachers were observed being busy with their cell-phones. As shown in the table above under item number 12, there was no lesson observed in which the students were recommended to assist each other. No teacher was observed advising students to assist each other. Instead, the teachers were observed reminding the students not to disturb the class. As shown in the table above under item number 13, 7 (25.9%) of the observed teachers encouraged their students to write independently. In contrast, 20 (74.1%) of the teachers were not seen encouraging their students to write independently. Item number 14 in the above table shows that none of the teachers was observed encouraging the students to read their works for the class as a sample. It is believed that letting the students read and present their works in the class would enhance their motivation towards learning writing. As shown in the table above under item number 15, no teacher was seen giving general comments to the students' written works as a whole. In two of the observed classes, the teachers began the period going round the class and checking whether the home works were done or not, but did not give any comment and feedback. Item number 16 in the above table reveals that none of the teachers observed gave guidelines to help learners evaluate the standard of their writing. As item number 17 in the table above depicts, there was no occasion in which the students were made to comment on each other's written works. The learning of writing in secondary schools will be enhanced if the teachers let the students correct and comment on each other's written works. As shown in the table above item number 18, the students did not get any opportunity to rewrite their written works by incorporating corrections and comments given. As shown in the table above item number 19, there was no single occasion in which the students were informed about the contents of the forthcoming writing classes. If the students were informed of what, when, and how they would do in the forthcoming classes, they would get the opportunity to be ready for the upcoming classes and later get their learning of writing better and effective.

Results of Teachers' Interview

The results of teachers' interview are discussed and interpreted below. To begin with, almost all of the interviewees stated that their practice of teaching writing is not good and the effort they made in teaching the skill is not good too. Some of them stated that they totally devote their time in preparing the students for the National Examination. Moreover, majority of the respondents stated that their teaching did not meet the objectives at all and their major objective was to prepare students for the University Entrance Examination. In relation to this, one of the interviewees stated that she never used the textbook to teach writing and the other major skills except for some parts of the grammar for which she even made modification. An other interviewee stated that the nature of his students' knowledge on writing impeded him to meet the objectives and the textbook also lacks feasible contents for teaching writing. Scholars like Cunningsworth (1995) are of the belief that objectives are blue prints which guide teachers how to go about their teaching performance and where their destination is. He briefly remarks that a teacher without valid and tangible objective is like a pilot without a compass. Based on the responses of majority of the respondents, the teaching of writing in secondary schools is found to be insufficient and thus hampers the enhancement of the students' writing ability. The results of the students' interview also confirm that the practice of teaching in secondary schools as insufficient to improve their writing ability. Furthermore, all but one of the interviewees reported that the writing activities in the textbook are not made to effectively teach and learn writing. Accordingly, they stated that the activities are not interesting to teach and learn writing; the activities do not let the students practice the skill. They also noted that the activities need to be treated seriously if the intention is to help the students improve their writing.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

The results of the students' questionnaire on their perceptions of learning writing show that majority of the students, 109 (46.2%) and 66 (28.0%), perceive writing as a more challenging language skill. Furthermore, majority of the students, 163 (69.1%), perceive the teaching and learning of writing in their schools not stimulating and enjoyable. Majority of the respondents, 116 (49.2%), do not regard the testing system in their schools helping them promote their writing ability. Even though writing is one of the indispensable things in studying English, the result of the students' questionnaire shows that many secondary school students are not aware of the importance of learning writing. The results of the questionnaire match with the results of the interview. Moreover, the results of the classroom observation depict that majority of the writing lessons are not appropriately handled. Almost all the teachers' time management was at a stake and their classroom management needs a careful attention. No teacher was observed encouraging the students to read their works for the class as a sample, and 20 (74.1%) of the teachers dominated the classes. On the basis of the responses obtained from the teachers' interview, almost all of the teachers' practice of teaching writing and the effort they made in teaching the skill is not good. Majority of the teachers' teaching of writing did not meet the objectives of writing skill both in the syllabus and the textbook.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. The secondary schools students' perception on learning writing is found to be low; they are not aware of the importance of learning writing and perceive the learning of this skill challenging.
2. The teachers do not have a good practice on teaching writing; they do not give attention for teaching the skill by effectively applying the principles suggested.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers of secondary schools should let the students feel secured and comfortable when learning writing and encourage them to write even if their English is not that good, seriously inform the benefits of learning writing to their students, and make tasks and activities meaningful for the students by referring to the intrinsic value of the task and to potential applications in other subject areas and outside school.
2. The students' interest and habit of reading should be given greater attention.
3. Textbook writers should design writing activities in the textbooks in such a way the writing activities permit secondary school students collaborate and communicate effectively in writing both in the classroom and outside the classroom.
4. Policy makers should consider the effective teaching and learning of writing in lower grades.
5. National Agency for Examination should think of the nature of the University Entrance English Examination.

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Zelege Arficho, "Students' Perceptions And Teachers' Practices of Teaching And Learning Writing Skills: The Case of Four Selected Secondary Schools In Hawassa City Administration, South Nations, Nationalities And Peoples' Regional State of Ethiopia." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 23 no. 1, 2018, pp. 44-54.