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**Theories vis-a-vis Practices in English as a Foreign  
Language Writing Classes in the Ethiopian Context**

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**Abstract**

The main objective of this study was to investigate theories and practices of writing. To achieve this objective, qualitative data were collected using qualitative content (document) analysis, observation, and interview. The participants of the study were selected from North Shoa Zone Preparatory Schools. Five sections for observation and ten students for interview were selected purposefully. The document data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis technique. The observation and the interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis method. The document analysis revealed that the process and the genre-based approaches were predominantly reflected in the writing tasks of the Grade 11 English language teaching materials. The process-approach, informed by the cognitive learning theory, and the genre-based approach, based on the functional and the socio-cultural theories are meaning oriented. However, the observation and the interview data analysis results demonstrated that the product approach was mainly used in the writing classes. Informed by the behaviorist and the structural theories, the product approach is form-oriented. Thus, inconsistencies were observed between the theories involved in the teaching materials and the methods used in the practices of writing; the theories could promote learners' communicative

competence of writing though the practice still continued using the form-oriented approaches.

**Keywords:** Competence of writing, writing theory, process-approach, genre, writing practice

## **Introduction**

### **Writing in English classes in Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, EFL writing has a paramount significance. In brief, English is used for communication purposes in banks, airlines, and international organizations. Indeed, newspapers such as the Ethiopian Herald, the Reporter, the Fortune, and the Monitor are written and published in English. English is also used as a medium of instruction in secondary and preparatory schools. More specifically, preparatory school students are required to write reports, answers for examinations, short notes from lectures and reference materials, class work, homework and assignments which imply that they ought to have adequate writing competence in their repertoire. Emphasizing this, Geremew (1999) suggests that students need to display multitude writing skills in order to carry out the academic writing tasks.

For this purpose, English is taught as a subject starting from Grade one up to the preparatory school and writing lessons are included in the English teaching materials from elementary up to preparatory school levels. So, learners in these grade levels are assumed to learn and practice writing. Nevertheless, students who have completed preparatory schools and joined university, as this researcher has observed while teaching a writing skills course, are deficient in their writing abilities. Most students could not write grammatically correct and meaningful sentences let alone communicate in written English.

### **Theories of writing**

Theories of foreign language writing have gone through several changes starting from the audio-lingual method to the communicative approaches. For example, during the audio-lingual era, writing was considered as a supportive skill which could

reinforce the memorization of language structures (Reid, 1993). Moreover, the audio-lingual method viewed writing as a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences structured according to a system of rules, and considered learning to write in a foreign language as mastering the vocabulary, grammar and cohesive device of a model text. This orientation was drawn from the marriage of the structural and the behaviourist learning theories which considered writing as a product and learning to write as the process of imitating and manipulating models texts (Hyland, 2003).

Later on, Chomsky (1965) criticised the behaviourist view of imitation and manipulation of model texts, and claimed that children could produce novel structures of a language. But, as Hymes (1972) notes, Chomsky's theory focused on linguistic competence and ignored the socio-cultural aspects of a target language. This resulted in the emergence of the theory of communicative competence which includes linguistic competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (Cook, 2003; Hyland, 2003), and this again resulted in the communicative approach to language teaching that considers writing as a communicative act (Raimes, 1983). Following this, cognitivists developed a process approach to teaching writing, and socio-cultural theorists developed the genre approach to writing. In short, the theories of foreign language writing evolved from the linguistic theories to the cognitive and the social theories of writing (Grabe & Kaplan, 1997).

### **Functionalist theory**

Unlike the structural and the behaviorist theories which consider learning to write as the imitation of written products, the functional view sees learning writing as an interactive and meaningful act. In fact, the functional view regards language as a tool for expressing meaning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As mentioned above, Chomsky (1965) argued that language development was related to universal biological tendencies, and his theory disregarded the social context of language use;

consequently, Halliday's (1978) systemic functional theory, which claims that language use occurs in social contexts, emerged. Indeed, the functional theory argues that language operates within a social context, and it advises writers to choose linguistic items which can match particular social contexts (Grabe & Kaplan, 1997). Thus, the genre approach is drawn from the functional view which could be informed by the theory of systemic functional linguistics (Richards and Rodgers (2001).

### **Cognitive learning theory**

The cognitive learning theory focuses on the learning processes. In fact, it is concerned with the learners' cognitive involvement and views learning as a process in which students construct their own meaning and learners as individuals who actively process information (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Williams & Burden, 1997).

This implies that students can construct meaning about writing and writing processes. As Reid (1993) states, cognitivists believe in a creative, audience-oriented and context-focused approach to EFL writing in which authors can construct reality through the target language.

### **Socio-cultural theory**

The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) is concerned with the collaborative construction of knowledge and the external social activities in which learners participate and which contribute to cognitive development; indeed, learning starts with object regulation and proceeds to others' regulation such as families, teachers and peers who mediate learning followed by self-regulation in which learners independently process and manipulate their learning. These phases can be applied to genre-based writing by means of a model proposed by Derewianka (1990) and Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks and Yallop (2001); this model involves four phases: context exploration, text exploration, joint construction and individual application.

In summary, the cognitive learning theory is concerned with the learners' cognitive involvement and the processes of writing though it ignores the social aspect of writing. The functional theory of writing focuses on the social function of writing although it ignores the cognitive aspect of writing. Similarly, the socio-cultural theory focuses on the collaborative writing, neglecting the learners' mental process. These imply that a theory may not be complete by itself, and it is advisable to use more than one theory for writing teaching materials and employing them in EFL writing classes.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Teaching materials**

Teaching materials play crucial roles in writing instructions. They can stimulate, model and support teaching writing; they may serve as the starting points for language teaching and learning. Specifically, in EFL writing contexts, they are the only tools for learning writing; they can provide students with opportunities to understand a particular genre (Hyland, 2003).

The EFL teaching materials mainly involve minimum learning competencies, a syllabus and a student textbook. Especially the student textbook may serve as a basis for the language learning and practice accomplished in the EFL classrooms (Hyland, 2003), and its main contributions are explained below.

### **Textbook**

A textbook is a teaching material which, for Ur (1996), each student should have his/her own, for it serves as a basis for the teaching learning process of the target language. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) state, it provides learners with linguistic inputs in the form of texts, activities, and explanations. Meaning, it serves as a source of classroom input and an initiator of communicative interactions.

English textbooks, especially, in the Ethiopian context, provide teachers and students with inputs for writing. Much of the

language teaching that occurs throughout the country could not take place without the extensive use of textbooks. Indeed, the English textbooks in the EFL classes, (1) provide structure and syllabus for a program, (2) standardize instructions, (3) provide a variety of learning sources, (4) serve as effective language models and inputs, and (4) provide readymade texts and tasks (Richards, 2001; Ur, 1996). Textbooks again involve model texts and stimulus materials as explained below.

### **Model texts**

Model texts can help students study the characteristics of a given text. According to Hyland (2003), learners can analyze model texts and manipulate samples of a target discourse; teachers can draw the learners' attention to the particular language structures and features of a given genre which is called a consciousness raising task (Swales & Feak, 2000).

According to Firkins, Forey and Sengupta (2007), (1) the teacher and the learners can use the model text as a basis for discussion, (2) the teacher can help students recognize the function and the communicative purpose of the text, and (3) the students can study the vocabulary usage and the structural pattern of the given genre.

### **Stimulus materials**

Stimulus materials include reading texts (poems, short stories, journalistic texts, autobiographies, etc.); audio materials (songs, music, lectures, recorded conversations, radio plays), visual materials (movies, TV programs, photographs, pictures and so on) (Hyland, 2003).

The main sources of stimulus materials for writing activities are texts. Hyland explains that reading texts can stimulate interest in a writing topic and activate students' prior knowledge and experiences which serve as a base for writing. Short stories, magazine articles, and letters can be used to introduce a topic for discussion on a similar theme.

### **Approaches to teaching writing**

The communicative approach appeared when situational language teaching and the audio-lingual method were found to be ineffective, and as there was a need for a paradigm shift from form oriented approaches to meaning focused ones (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). For example, Cook (2003) states, “The essence of CLT is a shift of attention from the language system as an end in itself to the successful use of that system in context” (p.36). Specifically, the approaches to teaching writing have shown progress beginning from the traditional form-oriented approach to the modern meaning focused approaches to teaching writing, and the main ones are discussed below.

### **Process approach**

Unlike the product approach which encourages students to imitate and copy models of written texts, the process approach focuses on helping learners to produce, reflect, discuss and rework on successive drafts of a text in a classroom writing practice (Nunan, 1991). A process-oriented approach considers writing as an organic, developmental process in which one’s thought grows, and it encourages students to brainstorm ideas, plan their writing, write a first draft, revise and edit it, and finally, proofread the final draft (Hyland, 2003).

Furthermore, a process approach allows collaborative writing that, as Reinking and Oslen (2007) states, gives students chances to learn from each other; for example, the pre-writing stage can help students to brainstorm for ideas and prepare outlines through group discussion.

However, according to Nunan (1991), a process approach limits learners to narrative forms of writing, and minimizes their capacity to control a variety of genres; focusing on students’ cognition, it neglects the social nature of writing. Indeed, as Hyland (2003) notes, it does not help students to have clear ideas on how to write different text types.

### **Genre-based approach**

A genre is drawn from the theory of systemic functional linguistics developed by Halliday (1994), and it is concerned with the social functions of language. Thus, for Lin (2006), a genre-oriented approach embodies the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) which considers learning as a social and assumes that learning can be successful when students engage in tasks that are within the Zone of Proximal Development (the area between what learners can perform independently and what they can do when they get support from others). In brief, a student's learning task can begin from the environment, and the student's potential development will be changed into actual development which is called self-regulation by means of mediation offered by teachers or peers (Lin, 2006). These can be applied in a genre-writing class through a model proposed by Derewianka (1990) and Butt et al (2000) which involves context exploration, text exploration, joint construction, and individual application.

Context exploration refers to the possible situations, in which a chosen genre might be employed, and it helps students to understand the social purposes and functions of the genre; it is the stage at which teachers establish for their students a starting point for the given writing task (Vygotsky, 1978). The text exploration stage uses model texts for helping students understand the organizational and linguistic features of the genre, and the joint-construction phase makes learners construct the target genre by getting teacher or peer support; lastly, the individual application stage requires students to independently write their own text, ((Lin, 2006).

However, the genre-based approach does not allow students to express their own feelings and it emphasizes the social nature of writing (Hyland, 2003).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Ethiopia, a preparatory school is the stage where students get ready to join university where they perform numerous EFL academic writing tasks. Students at this level need

to develop skills in EFL writing in order to cope with the multitude of EFL writings that will be required of them. However, according to the present researcher's observation, while teaching a basic writing skills course; many students who completed preparatory schools and joined university demonstrated serious writing problems. In fact, many first year university students could not write accurate sentences in English let alone express their ideas through writing (continuous) texts. Thus, there appear to be problems associated with the curriculum and/or pedagogy of writing in preparatory schools.

However, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, there have been only two evaluative studies conducted on writing tasks at general secondary and preparatory school levels. That is, Tariku (2013) evaluated the writing tasks and their implementations focusing on the Grade 11 English Student Textbook. It targeted the task-based approach and evaluated the writing tasks and their implementations against the components of a communicative task. Similarly, Tewodros (2014) analysed the writing tasks of Grade 9 English Student Textbook in relation to the task-based principles. The task-based approach is a communicative approach which uses a task as an instrument for language instructions. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), a task refers to an activity which is accomplished employing language, and according to Nunan (2004), communicative tasks imply pieces of classroom works which make learners get engaged in comprehending, manipulating, and interacting in the target language focusing on meaning instead of form; specifically, the task-based approach to writing refers to a writing instruction in which the activities of writing are organized around communicative tasks.

Both the aforementioned studies disregarded the process and the genre-based approaches. Also, they focused on the students' textbook overlooking the other teaching materials such as the Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs), the Syllabus and the Teacher's Guide which could serve as the significant data sources in order to examine the problem in depth and breadth. Thus, the current researcher focused on the two approaches,

namely the process-approach and the genre-based approach to teaching writing and used the Grade 11 MLCs, the Syllabus, the Teacher's Guide and the Students Textbook as data sources.

And the main objective of this study was to examine if these contemporary approaches and the theories underlying them were reflected in the teaching materials of Grade 11 writing tasks vis-à-vis the classroom writing practices. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), an approach refers to the theoretically consistent sets of teaching and learning procedures that describe practices, and practice, for Littlewood (1981), means an activity which learners accomplish in the classroom. Also, a theory is a belief system linked to an activity, and it considers the practical activity as something coherent and unified. In line with the above objective, the following basic research questions were posed:

- Which theories of writing are reflected in the writing tasks of grade 11 English language teaching materials?
- Are the theories reflected in the writing tasks properly employed in the EFL writing classes of Grade 11 English?
- Do the classroom practices go in line with the theories of writing underlying the writing tasks of the teaching materials of Grade 11 English?

### **Research Methodology**

This section describes the research paradigm, design, and participants of the study. Also, it involves sampling technique, data collection instruments, and data analysis techniques.

#### **Research paradigm**

Constructivism was used as a theoretical framework of this study as it could help to use qualitative methods to gather and analyze data. Constructivism is a paradigm which focuses on textual data, and it deals with a qualitative approach (Cresswell, 2009) that works with data collected using interview, document analysis, and interview (Dörnyei, 2007).

### **Research design**

The main objective of this study was to examine the theories of writing reflected in the teaching materials of Grade 11 English and their applications in the classroom writing practices. And the research design used in this study was predominantly qualitative descriptive which aimed to collect and analyze data on the naturally occurring events. Descriptive research is concerned with events which have already occurred, and the researcher simply selects the relevant variables for investigation (Best & Kahn, 2003).

### **Participants of the study**

Participants of this study were teachers and students at grade 11 from preparatory schools in North Shoa Zone, Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia. North Shoa Zone was selected as a research site, for the present the researcher, during data collection, was working in Debre Berhan University which is located in the same zone. Accordingly, firstly, five schools were selected from 20 schools found in the Zone and next, one teacher from each selected school was taken and a total of five teachers participated in the study. Furthermore, two students from each of the five schools, and a total of ten students were selected as participants of the study.

### **Sampling technique**

Out of the 20 schools of the Zone, five of them were selected using purposive sampling method. Next, using the same sampling technique, one section was taken for observation from each of the five selected schools; after that, two students from each of the observed sections, and a total of ten students were selected for interview. A purposive sampling technique was employed, for it helped the researcher to take equal participants from schools which were found in rural and urban areas. Also, it enabled him to proportionally select interviewees from high, average and low achievers. In fact, of the ten participants, four of them were low achievers, three participants were average achievers, and the

remaining three students represented high achievers. They were chosen based on their test scores offered by their classroom teachers. Choosing participants from the low, average and high achievers helped the researcher to get representative sample of all ability groups.

### **Data collection instruments**

Three data gathering tools, namely qualitative content analysis, observation, and interview were used to gather data for the current study. Qualitative content (document) analysis as a data gathering tool is used to collect data by skimming, critically reading and interpreting a document (Bowen, 2009). Thus, qualitative content analysis was employed to collect data from Grade 11 English language teaching materials including the Minimum Learning Competences (MLCs), the Syllabus, the Teacher's Guide, and the Student Textbook.

Secondly, classroom observation was employed to collect data on what teachers actually did in the writing classes. Thirdly, interview was employed to supplement the observation data which focused on the practices of EFL writing. Interview also enables a researcher to search for more detailed information as it helps an interviewer to ask a respondent to clarify what the latter says (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Gray, 2004).

### **Data analysis**

Qualitative content analysis technique was employed to analyze the writing tasks. According to Dörnyei (2007), a qualitative content analysis helps to interpret text data by systematically classifying the data into themes, and it goes beyond counting words, and examines themes.

The observation and the interview data were analyzed using a thematic analysis method. A thematic analysis method helps to connect different conceptions of participants and draw meaning from the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Indeed, thematic analysis aims at identifying patterns in a given data and employs them to address research questions; it helps to interpret data and

create meaning from it. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are two levels of themes, namely semantic and latent where the former implies explicit meanings of text data, and the latter refers to the underlying meanings of the same data. The current study involved both levels.

In brief, both the explicit and implicit meanings of the data were extracted by using a model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994); this model consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display and data conclusion. Using this model, this researcher, firstly, selected the information which could help him to address the research questions. Next, he organized and categorized the data followed by checking for differences, similarities and relationships among the categories and putting them under some subthemes. Finally, he used subthemes to support or reject arguments and answer the research questions. This is followed by checking the consistency of the current study findings with the theoretical frameworks of the study.

## **Results**

Data coding tasks were made. Data coding can be performed before or after data gathering (Dörnei, 2004). Accordingly, the current investigator assigned codes to the participants after data collection. The code used was 'I' which means a student who participated in the interview. Next, the results were presented as follows.

One of the purposes of the study was to investigate the predominantly used writing theories in the writing tasks of Grade 11 English teaching materials. For this purpose, the writing tasks incorporated in the grade 11 English Minimum Learning Competencies, Syllabus, Student Textbook and Teacher's Guide were analyzed. The Minimum Learning Competence contains 9 different competences which are listed as follows:

Students should be able to:

- independently follow the six stages of writing: think, brainstorm, plan, draft, check, rewrite, proof read,

- write a short formal letter (including a reply) using correct conventions,
- write informal letters (including replies) using correct conventions,
- write narratives essays independently in five paragraphs (including an introduction and a conclusion where appropriate),
- interpret simple statistics and write a report,
- in pairs write and present a report of 350 to 400 words including suggestions/recommendations,
- with support summarize a text in various forms including bullet points, charts, notes and paragraphs,
- write suggestions/advice in response to a written request,
- write two or three paragraphs to persuade (building on grade 10), explain and inform using language that communicates the intended message as well as being reasonably accurate and complex (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education [FDRE, MOE], 2016).

Grade 11 students are expected to have these minimum learning competencies after the completion of the course. The minimum learning competencies are the threshold levels at which every student should achieve in order to be promoted to the next grade. So, they were stated as objectives in the student textbook.

The syllabus which was designed based on the learning competencies set was found to be aligned with both the Student Textbook and the Teacher's Guide except that there was a very minor problem in the syllabus. That is, in one of the sections of the syllabus entitled as learning activities, both teaching and learning activities were presented in combination. Some of them are indicated as follows:

*Unit 2: Teacher elicits from students the text features of a magazine article with a model. They write an*

*article for a young people's magazine arguing that Ethiopia needs more educated women to help run the country. As a conclusion to their article they offer advice to girls who are struggling at school. Teacher revises informal letter conventions. Students write a letter to a pen pal describing their school and education in Ethiopia Teacher presents topics for essay writing. The topics can be factors that contribute to development. Students select a topic and write a 5 paragraph essay using the seven stages of writing.*

*Unit 10: Students work with 2 or 3 other people who are working on the same topic in order to generate ideas. After writing the first draft of the essay, they exchange their work with someone else in order to give comment and suggestions for improvement. Selected students can be asked to read out their essays to the class.*

Here, both the teacher's and the students' activities were put together. That is, the heading does not reflect the contents indicated in it. So there is a need to present all of the writing activities in terms of what students could do' or there must be separate sections for the teacher's activities and the learners' activities.

The Student Textbook incorporated about 19 writing sections which were drawn from the syllabus and 8 other writing tasks were supposed to be employed for assessment purposes. The 19 writing tasks were employed as data for the document analysis part. The writing tasks in the revision parts of the textbook were not selected for analysis in order to avoid repetition because most of the revision writing tasks were taken directly from the 19 writing activities and they were not new. Thus, using the 19 writing tasks as data, the predominantly used theories in the writing tasks of the teaching materials were examined, as follows.

### The process approach

As the above list shows, the writing section Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs) included the writing processes such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, checking, rewriting and proofreading, and drawing from the MLCs, the syllabus also incorporated these same writing stages. Specifically, the writing tasks in Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit3 and Unit 4 of the syllabus incorporated the commonly used writing steps. Similarly, the Student Textbook involved the same writing phases (See Table 1).

**Table 1:** Summary of the phases of writing in the writing tasks

Unit	Headings and writing activities
1	<i>Write a report about the African Union</i> -Steps: planning, researching information, writing a first draft and checking it, writing the final version of the report.
2	<b>A) Write a letter to a friend:</b> Think about the information in your letter and how to organize your letter; then write your first draft, check it , then show it to your partner, and write the final version of your letter <b>B) Write a magazine article-</b> steps: brainstorming, selecting points, making a plan, writing, checking and editing , proofreading and writing.
3	<i>Write an essay-modern versus traditional medicine</i> -Steps: brainstorming, selecting points, making a plan, writing, checking and editing, asking for proofreading and writing.
6	<i>Write a narrative:</i> Choose a topic for writing, planning a story, writing a first draft, checking it, asking a partner for proofreading, writing a final draft.
7	<i>Write an information leaflet:</i> Research, write an information leaflet (make a plan, start writing your leaflet, check it and finally write the final version of your information leaflet).
8	<i>Write paragraphs on saving water in Ethiopia:</i> drawing on information in text and other sources, planning writing, writing a first draft and checking it and writing it.
9	<i>Write a survey report:</i> studying and discussing writing a survey report, discussing how to organize a report, writing a first draft, making changes based on a checklist, and writing.
10	<i>Write essay-</i> Steps: brainstorming for ideas, selecting 3-5 main points, and thinking of supporting details for each one, thinking about the organization of the ideas, writing a first draft and then checking it for ideas and use of language, writing a final version.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Headings and writing activities</b>
11	<b>A) Write a report on some data:</b> discussing data with a partner or in a small group. Looking at a mind map and completing it with relevant data from the table, writing a report focusing on the information in the mind map. <b>B) Write a brochure about your NGO:</b> Brainstorming, writing a brochure and checking it.
12	<i>Write opinion essay- Steps:</i> brainstorming ideas, selecting points, making a plan, writing an essay, checking and editing it, asking a partner for proofreading and writing the final draft.

Of the 19 writing tasks, 12 of them involved 7 writing stages (See Table 1). They were named as thinking, brainstorming, planning, drafting, checking, rewriting, and proofreading, and most of the writing activities promote cooperative writing. Similarly, the writing tasks which might involve the genre approach were investigated as follows.

### **The genre-based approach**

The genres such as letters, reports, stories and essays were drawn from the MLCs incorporated in the Grade 11 English Student Textbook, and they are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** The incorporation of genre approach to teaching writing

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Headings of the writing sections and the corresponding activities</b>
2	<i>B) A magazine article:</i> (1) Reading a magazine article and answering questions provided. (2) Completing an outline plan with notes about the article. (3) Picking out expressions used in the article. (4) Using the ideas obtained via discussion, writing an article following the steps: brainstorming, selecting points, making a plan, writing an article, checking and editing the article, asking someone to proofread it.
3	<i>A) An Essay-modern versus traditional medicine:</i> (1) Reading an essay and answering questions given. (2) Completing notes about the article in an outline plan. (3) Using the ideas obtained through discussion, writing an essay in response to this thesis statement “We should not ignore traditional medicine because of modern developments”, following the steps such as brainstorming ideas, selecting points, making a plan, writing an essay, checking and editing it, asking someone to read it and writing the final version of it.

Unit	Headings of the writing sections and the corresponding activities
4	<i>A) A reply to a formal letter:</i> (1) Reading a letter and answering questions given. (2) Explaining the main purpose of the letter (3) Looking at the layout of the letter and identifying its features and structures listed. (4) Putting the parts of the letter in the order in which they appear. (5) Studying the information (about how to write a formal letter) in a box. (6) Write a reply letter. (7) Using expression for greeting, body, ending.
6	<i>Narrative:</i> writing a story of 250 to 300 words. (1) Choosing a short story (2) Drawing a pot and writing some ingredients of a story of on it.(3) Planning a story using a diagram (4) Writing a first draft of a story (5) Checking it using a checklist.(6) Asking a partner to read the story. (7) Writing a final neat version of the story.
9	<i>A survey report:</i> (1) Studying and discussing about writing and organizing a survey report. (2) Writing a draft and revising it using a checklist and writing the final, corrected version.
12	<i>An opinion essay:</i> looking at a for-and-against essay. Making an outline plan/planning, writing following the steps of writing.

Table 2 indicates that 6 out of the 19 writing tasks incorporated the genre-based approach. These tasks involved model texts which help to study features of different genres. A model proposed by Butt et al (2000) and Derewianka (1990) which involved the phases such as context exploration, text exploration, joint-construction, and individual application was used to analyze the 6 writing tasks. The analysis revealed the existence of activities which could show possible situations in which a target genre might be used; these activities were found integrated with the listening, speaking and reading sections of the teaching materials. Furthermore, the tasks involved model texts such as a magazine article, an essay, a formal letter, a story, and a survey report followed by questions and outline plans. This could be termed as text exploration which involved questions regarding the layout, structure, expressions and features of the target genres. However, the joint-construction stage which could promote cooperative writing did not appear in any of the 6 tasks. But

activities which could encourage independent writing were incorporated in the tasks.

Generally, the document analysis result revealed that the process and the genre-based approaches were the main approaches used in the writing tasks of Grade 11 teaching materials.

### **The observation and the interview data**

It was also aimed to investigate the classroom practices of writing. For this purpose, the present researcher used observation as the main data collection method, and he selected five sections with the intention of observing each four times though he could not do that, for most of the teachers skipped the writing sections. Due to this, he conducted a total of ten observations in a semester.

The observation data indicated that the product approach followed by home take writing assignments was predominantly employed. Eight out of the ten observation showed that teachers gave lectures on different writing lesson followed by homework and assignments. It is necessary to note that teachers skipped most of the writing sections of the Student Textbook, and relegated the remaining ones to home take writing activities. Thus, of the 10 total observations, only 2 revealed that teachers employed the process approach while none of the teachers used the genre-based approach.

Also, since the observations conducted were not adequate, interviews were held with 10 students who were selected purposefully by their classroom teachers. Teachers selected students for interview, for they knew high, average and low achievers and selected participants from all the three groups; indeed, participants of the interview involved four low achievers, three average achievers, and three high achievers who were selected based on their test results offered by their classroom teachers. Next explanations for the purpose of the interview were given to them. Below are presented the questions for the interview.

- (1) How did your English language teacher teach you writing?
- (2) Out of the different genres, which one(s) do you think have got more focus? Did your teacher make you read and analyze model texts and make you write cooperatively and independently following recommended steps?
- (3) To what extent did your teacher help you analyze a model text followed by writing through phases such as brainstorming ideas, planning, writing a first draft, revising and editing?

In response to the first question of the interview, many respondents (I1, I2, I4, I5, and I6) said that their English teachers either skipped the writing lessons or used a lecture method. For example, I2's response can be read as "We have never made writing practices in class let alone do writing tasks using different phases of writing..." I4 also said, "...*the* teacher did not help us practice the writing processes, for he might worry about shortage of time." Similarly, I5 reported that their teacher sometimes taught them letter writing using lecture method. Furthermore, the same interviewee noted that their teacher never made them write longer texts in class.

In line with this, I9 and I10 noted that most English language teachers might not be familiar with the process and genre-based approaches; some teachers who were not qualified for the grade level were teaching English language because there was a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in the schools which were found in the rural areas.

In response to the second question of the interview, participants reported that the different writing genres were not given equal focus. Some interviewees said that letter writing was given little attention compared to report writing, essay writing, leaflet, etc. For example, I2 reported, "Teachers sometimes taught us letter writing, but they had never taught us about how to write essays, brochures, leaflets and reports." Hence, students did not

practice the different genres. Also, these same respondents reported that they had not been asked to read and analyze model texts including magazines articles, essays, and letters. A genre-based approach allows students to accomplish writing activities phase by phase starting with exploring the situations in which a chosen genre might be employed to studying the target genre's layout, structure, expressions and features, constructing a similar genre collaboratively, and finally, writing independently a similar genre. However, the interview data analysis result revealed that, the aforementioned steps of the genre-based approach were disregarded in the classroom practices of writing.

Finally, in response to the third question, IS1 reported that even if most of the writing tasks involved model texts followed by questions and structured writing activities, teachers did not use them; for example, some of the informants said the following:

- *Most of the writing lessons have different phases: reading texts (models) followed by questions to be answered based on the texts and the different stages of writing. However, teachers did not follow the steps indicated in the task (IS1).*
- *Many writing tasks of the Student Textbook involved model texts, but the teacher did not use them (IS2).*
- *Due to shortage of time, the teacher did not use the model texts and the stages of writing indicated in the writing tasks (IS7).*

This means that teachers did not employ the model texts for familiarizing students with the purpose, audience, linguistic features, etc. of target genres.

## **Discussion**

Theory is an assumption which guides practice. According to Stern (1983, p. 23),

*Theory is implicit in the practice of language teaching. It reveals itself in the assumptions underlying practice, in the planning of the course of a study, in*

*the routines of the classroom, in value judgments about language teaching and in the decisions that the language teacher has to make day by day.*

Based on this conception, the study aimed to investigate the predominantly reflected writing theories and the classroom practice of writing focusing on the Grade 11 EFL writing tasks. The teaching materials including the Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs), the Syllabus, the Student Textbook, and the Teacher's Guide were analyzed. The classroom writing practice was also the focus of the investigation.

The document analysis revealed that the process and the genre-oriented approaches were predominantly reflected in the writing tasks. Underlying the process approach is the cognitive learning theory which, according to Wenden (1991), gives emphasis to learners' mental processes and regards writing as a cognitive process. Next to the process of approach, the genre-based approach was predominantly reflected in the writing tasks. That is, of the 19 writing tasks used for the analysis of this study, 6 tasks involved the genre-based approach. The genre-based approach is based on the belief that a student's cognitive development can occur through social interaction (Lin, 2006). So, for Vygotsky (1978) learning is both social and psychological which occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); students can pass through the learning stages of Vygotsky, namely object regulation, others' regulation, and self regulation which could be realized in a genre-based approach of writing by means of a model proposed by Butt et al (2000) and Derewianka (1990).

This model, which involved context exploration, text exploration, joint construction and individual application phases, was used to analyze the writing tasks which were used as the data sources. The data analysis result revealed that the tasks involved the context exploration stage which could demonstrate the possible situations in which a target genre might be employed. According to Hairston and Keene (2004), at the prewriting stage, a

writer is required to analyze the situation in which he/she writes; in fact, it is crucial for him/her to think about his purpose of writing and the potential readers of his/her pieces of writing.

The current study also revealed that many Grade 11 English writing tasks incorporated model texts such as a magazine article, an essay, a formal letter, a story, and a survey report with subsequent questions and outlines. These tasks could help to study the layouts, structures, expressions and features of target genres. According to Harmer (2004), a model text helps to recognize a genre's structural pattern, vocabulary usage, and layouts. However, the last stage of the model, namely the joint-construction phase, which promotes collaborative writing, was disregarded in all of the six tasks which reflected the genre-based approach. This stage is the most important phase of the model where students' potential of learning writing could be transferred into the actual development through scaffolding (Lin, 2006). However, the last phase of the model termed as the independent writing stage was observed in the writing tasks.

To come to the point, underlying the genre-based approach are the systemic functional theory and the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) where the former believes that language interacts with a social context and advises learners to explore the context, for example, the purpose and audience of a target genre, and the latter is concerned with cooperative writing in which students get teacher/peer support (Hyland, 2003).

Regarding the practice of writing, for Stern (1983), there is no problem of theorizing, but the limitation is with the application of language learning and teaching theories. Stern argues that there have been ineffective applications of theories of writing to the classroom composing practices. The present study revealed the same experience. That is, the classroom observation and interview were used to identify the predominantly used writing theories in the Grade 11 writing classes. In addition, it was attempted to check if the theories reflected in the writing tasks were applied properly in the EFL writing classes. The results from the analysis of the observation data revealed that the product approach was

predominantly employed in the EFL writing classes; teachers gave lectures followed by writing assignments. While most teachers skipped, especially, the writing sections of the teaching materials, a few of them used the product approach. Furthermore, the process approach to teaching writing was used rarely whereas the genre-based approach was completely neglected.

Also, to support the observation data, interviews were held with 10 students, and the results of the analysis of the interview data discovered that students did not get opportunities to practice the writing processes. For example, I4 said, "...teachers did not help us practice the writing processes, for they might worry about shortage of time." Similarly, I9 and I10 explained that most English language teachers seemed to have lack of knowledge of the process approach to teaching writing.

Furthermore, based on the analysis of the interview data, the genre approach to writing was not in use in the classroom writing practices. For example, S2 reported, "Teachers sometimes taught us letter writing, but they had never taught us how to write essays, brochures, leaflets and reports." The respondents witnessed that there were writing tasks which involved model texts; for example, a magazine article, an argumentative essay, a formal letter, a story, and an opinion essay. That means, the teaching materials incorporated writing tasks which could encourage students to analyze model texts and help them understand the texts' organizational patterns, expressions used in them, their vocabulary usages and so on.

In other words, the writing tasks would help learners to recognize the type of context, language expression, purpose, and reader that each genre could involve. They would help learners to study the layouts, organizational patterns, linguistic expressions and features of the genres, and they can be termed as awareness raising tasks. These tasks should have been followed by collaborative writing which could encourage scaffolding. Finally, these same tasks were found to involve activities that would encourage independent writing. However, the results of the analysis of the interview data revealed a reality contrary to the

document analysis results. That means though independent writing tasks were incorporated in the teaching materials, they were not implemented accordingly.

To summarize, according to the results of the document analysis, most of the writing tasks in the English teaching materials incorporated model texts followed by the 7 stages of writing. And some of them involved the stages of writing though they did not incorporate model texts. That is, most of the writing tasks (12 out of 19) of the teaching materials involved the process approach whereas some of them (6 out of 19) incorporated the genre-based approach to teaching writing. The former approach could be informed by the cognitive learning theory while the latter could get insights from the functional and the socio-cultural theories. These theories promote creativity and social interaction in the process of learning writing, and they are meaning-oriented.

However, the classroom practices of writing showed a different experience; the product approach to teaching writing was mainly used in the classroom. Underlying this approach are the behaviorist learning theory and the structural view which are form oriented and they promote imitation and manipulation of written texts. This implies that the writing theories presupposed in the writing tasks of the teaching materials were communication-oriented while the writing approaches used in the classroom were form-focused. Thus, the classroom EFL writing practices and the theories used in the writing tasks of Grade 11 English were found to be inconsistent.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the data analysis and discussions made, the following conclusions are given.

The document analysis revealed that the writing tasks involved in the Grade 11 English for Ethiopia Minimum Learning Competencies, syllabus and the student textbook were found to be aligned. Also, the contemporary communicative approaches to teaching writing including the process and the genre-based approaches were reflected in the writing tasks of the teaching

materials. Underlying the process approach is the cognitive learning theory and underpinning the genre-oriented approach are the functional view and the socio-cultural theory. So an eclectic approach which involved the cognitive learning theory, the functional view and the socio-cultural theory are predominantly reflected in the Grade 11 English writing tasks.

Furthermore, the genre-based approach was examined in the light of an instructional model having the context exploration, text exploration, joint construction and individual application phases, and while 6 out of the 19 writing tasks involved the three phases, they did not include the joint construction stage which could help learners get teacher/peer support.

Thirdly, the results of the analysis of the observation and the interview data revealed that the product approach with writing assignments was predominantly used by teachers. This implies that though the process and genre-based approaches were predominantly reflected in the teaching materials, they were not implemented in the EFL writing classrooms. Thus, inconsistencies were observed between the approaches reflected in the teaching materials and the methods used in the EFL writing classrooms. This implies that the theories reflected in the writing tasks are not implemented in the practice of teaching writing. Thus, there is a gap between the theories of writing which promote communicative competence of writing and the classroom practices that encourage accuracy of writing.

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