

ADAMA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND LAW

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



AN INVESTIGATION OF CHALLENGES IN ESSAY WRITING: THE CASE
OF GRADE 12 (TWELVE) STUDENTS OF ENCHINI PREPARATORY
SCHOOL

BY: DIRIBA AMESSA AREDA

SEPTEMBER, 2017

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

E.C- Ethiopian Calendar

ELT - English Language Teaching

EFL - English as a Foreign Language.

ESL- English as a Second Language

I.e. - That is

L1- First Language

L2 - Second Language

Q - Questions

SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

The ability to attain communication in writing is a chief feature of language development and academic success among students at all levels of the education system. However, to master essay writing skills is a problem students' face in Preparatory Schools. This has been constantly shown by the result of essay writing activities of grade twelve (12) students at Enchini Preparatory school. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate challenges students face in essay writing skills in English Language (at Enchini Preparatory school.) The specific objectives of the study were: to identify the challenges that the students face in essay writing, to explain the challenges that make learners write ineffective essay, and to distinguish the most variables that affect students' essay writing. Two types of data gathering tools were employed in order to obtain the data required for the study. One was a questionnaire, which was designed and distributed to students of sampled population. The other was interview by which information was gathered from the English subject teachers. The data gathered from the teachers and their students were then analyzed using quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The results of the study tend to indicate that the students were actually less successful in essay writing activities in their English Language Class. The results also appear to show that even though students said that they were given different writing activities including essay writing, both students and teachers themselves witnessed they (students) had serious problems to produce effective essay. On the basis of the findings of the study, recommendations were made as to how to overcome the students' failure to write effective essay writing. It was recommended that ELT teachers in all disciplines should make writing an inevitable part of the teaching and learning process in their lessons. It was further recommended that the Principals of the school should provide necessary supplementary materials (like reference books) that help students to maximize their essay writing skills in English language.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language is the most common system of human communication either in spoken or written form. Wherever in life of human society, there is a language which serves as dominant system of communication. This means, human beings commonly use language for communication although the style of utterances and scriptures differ from one language to another or from one society to another (Carson 1994). According to Mario (1997) language is an instrument for carrying out social activities that have made possible the development of advanced technological civilizations.

These days' human beings can communicate and come to agreement or disagreement in different ways and on different things and from different parts of the world. Among the means of communications they use, one is by writing the message they want to convey clearly. In doing so, they can communicate with their relatives, friends and others who live far away from them. Similarly, by writing, they might express their agreement or disagreement towards others' suggestions; they give instructions, or tell a story. "When we write, unlike when we talk, we are engaged in an activity which is usually at the same time both private and public. It is private because the act of composition is by its nature solitary, but it is public in that most writing is intended for an audience, often one which is extremely difficult to define." Broughton, G, et al. (1980:116). According to the writers' suggestion the act of writing differs from that of talking in that someone reflects his/her feelings or beliefs in writing which people read it. Hence writing is less spontaneous and more permanent. Similarly another scholar suggested that unlike speaking, writing enables human beings to convey a message independent of time and space (Hughes, 1996) cited in Farooq (2012). The act of writing is independent of time and place; the writer has to depend upon formal features to convey the intended meanings. Failure to take advantage of these features correctly causes frustration for the writer (Leisak, 1989) cited in Farooq (2012). For this reason, the conventions of writing tend to be less flexible than those of conversation, and the language which is used tends to be standardized. Concerning this, unless students know how to write effective written

work by avoiding some challenges in their writing, they might get difficulty to express their ideas clearly.

Nunan (1989:36) pointed 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”. This means that, at the sentence level, the writer has to take into consideration many features such as content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling. Beyond this level, i.e., the sentence, he must be able to integrate information into coherent paragraphs and essays.

Birley (1987:8) also said, “someone who doesn't care whether he/she is using vague words in place of precise words is blurring valuable distractions in meaning.” According to the author’s suggestion, students should develop certain skills before they attempt to produce any written work. In short, when students have no enough knowledge of certain skills in writing, it is difficult to express their ideas as they want. Thus, this may make the students to develop negative attitude towards writing. Furthermore, lack of clarity in writing causes unexpected relationship between the writers and intended audiences.

As Jowitt (1985:1) said "inaccurate use of the language, fail to communicate effectively and if his otherwise, accurate writing is marred by the errors of novice, his image as a user of English may be adversely affected." According to the writer’s suggestion when writers or students are not able to use the language in writing correctly, they might communicate in wrong ways in writing. As to Yonas (1996), states writing involve various sub-skills till the production of the final copy. He also adds that the writers’ engagement in the whole of writing process would probably seek his/her vigorous beliefs among other variables.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The ability to write appropriately and effectively is considered a major part of communication in writing among students at all levels of the education system. However, learning to master effective essay writing skills is a problem that students face in preparatory school Nyasimi (2014:8). He conducted study on challenges students face in

learning essay writing skills in English language. The result of his study shows that the methods teacher used in teaching essay writing skills encourages rote learning which didn't encourage students' creativity. He also identified: content mastery, use of correct grammar and L1 interference were the greatest challenges students' face in learning essay writing skills.

Another scholar, David (1979) conducted a research on the essay writing skills. His findings indicate that students' adherence to specified essay writing procedures and attitudes. In addition (according to the result) male students rated their level of confidence associated with essay writing and their tendency to write in a smooth manner higher than did the females. On the other hand, David also stated that "students are faced with dilemma: realizing their essay writing performance could perhaps be improved by adopting better techniques, they may be unaware of the precise means available to them of effecting improvement" (Page 1). According to this idea, essay writing activity is not simple for students if they can't develop some skills. He also added that they may be unsure whether their essay writing practices are adequate and which, if any, need to be changed.

Likewise, at Enchini preparatory school grade 12 students have difficulties in communication by writing. The result of students' essay writing assignment in the year 2008 E.C noted that many students wrote irrelevant essays. They face great challenges in producing well organized paragraph and essay writing in English Language. The inability to do this often leads those students to failure in written communication effectively. The students don not even prefer to work on essay or paragraph writing tasks.

Therefore, since none of the above researchers made their investigation on challenges in essay writing, there is a gap which has not been touched yet. As a result, the researcher designed this study to fill the gap by investigating challenges in essay writing at Enchini Preparatory School especially in reference to grade 12 students. Most of the students have the problem of writing effective essay in their English Language class.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that guide this study include:

- What type of writing activities do students take part in?
- What challenges do students face during essay writing tasks in their English language learning situation?
- How students react to essay writing activities?
- What are the variables that mostly affect students' essay writing skills?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to deal with the problem stated under section 1.2, this study is aimed to achieve the following general and specific objectives. The details of the objectives are as follow.

1.4.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the study is:

- To investigate challenges that hinder students' essay writing in English at Enchini Preparatory School.

1.4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The following are the specific objectives of the study that will be expected:

- To identify challenges students face in essay writing tasks.
- To explain the challenges that make learners write ineffective essay.
- To distinguish the most variables that affect students' essay writing.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research is not carried out without any importance. Therefore, in this research, the researcher hoped that the result of the study would help the students to minimize the difficulties of essay writing in English. It was believed that it provides school teachers with some important information about the challenges students faced when they write essay in Enchini Preparatory school. The researcher also believed it helps another person

who wants to conduct research on the similar area. It might increase the awareness of challenges in writing effective essay in English.

Students who have such problems possibly get certain important information from the result of the study about the problems, and the recommendations were given by the researcher. They get the result of the study (hard copy) from the school's library, and from the presentation of the researcher i.e. presentation of the result of the study the researcher makes at school level.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In order to manage the research properly and effectively, deciding its scope is very important. Thus, this research was conducted in one school. That was Enchini Preparatory school and on limited grade (grade12). The reason the researcher had decided to limit the coverage of the study to this extent was, to make the study manageable and to carry it out effectively, and like wise to get intended result.

1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Some of the challenges that encountered during the study were lack of cooperation among the subjects of the study, and lack of enough time to work on the study properly, lack of internet access because of the announcement of state emergency in Ethiopia, and absence reference materials (hard copy) nearby. Despite such challenges that confronted, the researcher has tried his best to collect the right information that helped to conduct relevant study by going to where helpful resources are available. The researcher solved the problem of time by discussing the issues with the unit leaders and the principals of the school.

1.8 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

Challenges: Difficulties students face in the process of essay writing skills

Communicative competence: The ability that students need to develop in order to express themselves appropriately and effectively in essay writing.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Under this unit what other scholars said concerning the importance of writing and some variables which affect that skill in general and particularly essay writing skill would be discussed. For the organization of this paper the researcher would like to state some views as follows.

2.1. WHAT IS WRITING?

Writing is a process of printing symbols and signs that people use to communicate with each other. It is one of productive skills. As we can communicate orally with our friends, relatives, and also with others, we can also communicate in written way too. It is a system of human visual communication which has been used since early days. Different scholars define writing as follows: Byrne (1988) for example

The use of graphic symbolic that is letters or combination of letters which are related to sounds we make when we speak the act of forming this symbols, making marks on a flat surface of some kind. But writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols..... the symbols have to arranged according to educations to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences...(p. 1)

In addition to the above definition given by that scholar, Pincas (1982:28) also said,” writing is an integral part of everyday life.” This is to mean that writing can be said to be a channel or an instrument which serves writer to carry out a successful communication with his/her readers by organizing every language element into a complete or communicable text. Atkins, Hailmon and Nuru (1995) explained as “writing cannot be isolated as a skill.” as they said writing is inevitably integrated with the other skills; thus, in English it often comes after exercises using the other skill.

If we define the main aims of the writing course as developing appropriate ranges of style coherently and easily used, teachers may well feel that the traditional concerns of spelling and basic grammatical errors are being neglected. In fact, while these are of some significance, and should be corrected by students as they learn to write good English,

correction of these alone will not ensure that satisfactory English writing results. We would expect a good writing course to help students to correct their mistakes, but natural writing does not result primarily from exercises in avoiding mistakes, so we need to fit help with correction into a framework of more positive development of writing skills

2.2 PURPOSE OF WRITING

The purpose of writing, in principle, is the expression of ideas, the conveying of a message to the reader. So, the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important of the writing: neat hand writing, correct spelling and punctuation, as well as accepted grammar and careful selection of vocabulary. Ur P (1991:163), states that much higher standard of language are normally demanded in writing than in speech; more careful considerations, more precise and varied vocabulary, more correctness of expression in general. Also, the slow and reflective nature of the process of writing in itself enables the writer to devote time and attention to formal aspect during the process of production

In real life we write for a purpose. Similarly, in the classroom as with the other skills, any written task needs some purpose behind it. This is more difficult with writing because many learners are never going to write in a foreign language outside the exams and the classroom Atkins, Hailom and Nuru (1996). In fact, people other than profession also or students seldom write in any language. We therefore, need to try to create writing exercises that are as close to real life tasks as possible, and imitate the sort of purpose students might have for writing outside the English classroom.

In short, the nature of writing requires that we write for an audience (reader) whose task is to decode what the writer has encoded previously. It is worth mentioning that, in contrast to speaker-listener relationship situation, in writing there is no interchanging participant and it is impossible to measure the effect of the message on the reader, but it is possible to determine the reasons that push us to write. These reasons are different from one writer to another.

2.3 APPROACHES TO WRITING

There are a number of different approaches to the practice of writing skills both in and outside the classroom. Most scholars divide approaches to writing in to about four sub-classifications. Harmer (1991:257) states the four classifications as product oriented approach process oriented approach, creating writing and writing genre.

A/ Product oriented approach: A product oriented approach as the title indicates, focuses on the end result of the learning process. John,A. Hailom B. and Nuru M.(1996) states that when concentrating on the product we are only interested in the aim of a task and in the end product. In this case the learner is expected to be able to do as a fluent and competent user of the language, similarly Nunan (1991) states that product oriented approaches to the development of writing favors activities in which the learner is engaged in imitating , copying, and transferring models of correct language. This usually occurs at the level of sentence.

B/ Process Oriented approach: process approach on the other hand focuses more on the various class activities which are believed to promote the development of skilled language use. John,A. Hailom B. and Nuru M.(1996) state that, those who advocate a process approach to writing pay attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through.

In this approach the focus in the first instance is on quantity rather than quality and beginning writers are encouraged to get their ideas on paper in any shape or form without worrying too much about formal correctness.

This approach also encourages collaborative group work between learners as a way of enhancing motivation and positive attitudes towards writing. It also employs activities of pre-writing phase, editing, redrafting and finally publishing.

In its simplest form, a process approach asks students to consider the procedure of putting together a good piece of work.

C/ Genre approach: In a genre approach to writing students study texts in the genre they are going to be writing before they embark on their own writing. If we want them to write business letters of various kinds, we let them look at typical models of such letters before starting to compose their own. If we want them to write newspaper articles, we have them study real examples to discover facts about construction and specific language use which is common in that genre. Harmer (1991:258)

Dean,(2008) states that students who are writing with a certain genre need to consider a numbers of different factors. This indicates that, they need to have knowledge of the topic, the conventions and style of the genre, and the context in which their writing will be read, and by whom. (Retrieved 25 August, 2016)

D/ Creative Writing: The term creative writing suggests imaginative tasks as writing poetry, stories and plays. Creative writing is a journey of self-discovery, and self-discoveries promote effective learning. When teacher set up imaginative writing tasks so that their students are thoroughly engaged, those students frequently strive harder than usual to produce language than they might for more routine assignments. Harmer (1991:259)

2.4 THE WRITING PROCESS

Different writers use different processes. Thus, one can try out different strategies and figure out what works best for him/her. For some written works, it is best to start by figuring out what you need to end up with, make a plan or outline, and stick to it. Other writing assignments may be more successful if you start by writing everything you know about the topic, allow things to get confused, and then reshape and revise the writing, so it fits the assignment Littell (2003). According to this scholar planning to write on the topic that you know in advance results to get effective written work.

The writing process consist a series of steps that most writers follow in composing and producing texts. Thus different writers stated their ideas about writing process. For example, Harmer (1991) described as, “process writing as classroom activity that incorporates the four basic stages: planning, drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and

editing (Page 317). Based on this, the major stages of writing process can be described as follows.

A. Planning (pre writing)

Planning (pre writing) is the initial step of the writing process, and it includes a lot of activities. For instance, Strong (1996: 42) stated, “pre writing includes activities such as clustering, brain storming, and free writing to collect many concrete details about the topic,” As a result, from this quote we can understand that planning is the starting point of the writing process. Moreover, Snow (2007:159) describes pre writing as, “The pre writing of the composition can be broken down in to three basic parts. These are generating ideas selecting and organizing ideas and writing down ideas.”

Generating ideas means finding or collecting something to say about the topic. Moreover, selecting and organizing ideas related to adding, subtracting and choosing ideas. Besides, writing ideas refers to writing the important points about the topic. Therefore, in classroom context, pre- writing is any activity in EFL class that encourages students to write, and it inspires thoughts to start writing. Thus, it moves students from having to force a blank towards generating temporary ideas and gathering information for writing.

B. Drafting

Drafting refers to writing the first draft about the topic. In other words, after adequate ideas are collected in the planning stage, drafting (the first attempt of writing) can be processed immediately. According to Harmer (1991: 317), “At the drafting state, the writers are focused on the fluency of writing and they are not preoccupied by grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft.” Thus, one dimension of good writing is the writer’s ability to form a mental picture of an audience. In other words, writers should begin by giving enough information to their readers to pull them directly in to the situation. In classroom context, students should be motivated to write for different audiences, among who are peers, other classmates, pen friends and family members. In short, drafting in writing process refers to the process of jotting down points that are related to the topic of the text.

C. Revising

Revising is the third phase of writing, and it refers to reading over the first draft to make sure that your writing fits with your purpose and audience. This stage is very important to produce a good writing text.

Snow (2007:161) stated, “One of the best way to produce a good writing activity is that revising what you have written, and this can be done either by the writer himself/herself or his/her peers.” Therefore, in this stage, writers review, modify and reorganize their work by rearranging, adding or deleting points and by making the style and content appropriate for the intended audiences. For this reason, the main purpose of this phase of the writing process is to improve the first draft. In classroom context, students should be reinforced to revise writing activity. As a result, when students revise their written work, they review their texts on the bases of the feedback provided in the responding stage. That means, they reexamine what was written to see how effectively they have communicated their meaning to the reader. In general, revising is not only to verify language errors, but also done to improve global context and the organization of ideas to make clear to the reader.

D. Editing (proofreading)

Editing refers to the process of proofreading to correct errors in grammar, mechanics, style and clarity of the writing activity. It is relevant to polish our writing in different contexts. Snow (2007:162) stated “It is more realistic and helpful to review proofreading as a process of looking through a text to find things that students are not sure about, which they can then check in a reference book if they have the time and inclination.” This indicates that in writing lessons, students are tidying up their texts as they prepare the final draft for evaluation by their teacher. As a result, students should be motivated to edit their work or their peers’ work for grammar spelling, punctuation, dictation, sentence structure, and accuracy of supportive textual materials such as quotations, examples and the like. Formal editing is deferred till this phase in order that its application not disrupts the free flow of ideas during the drafting and revising phases. In general a good writing

activity incorporates the above listed stages of writing. In addition to the above phases, some writers add another stage, that is, publishing (presenting) the final process of writing, or sharing the completed written material. Thus, teachers should plan appropriate classroom activities that support the learning of specific writing skill at every stage.

2.5 CHALLENGES IN WRITING

Writing in a second language seems to be the most difficult skill for language learners to acquire in the academic context (Nyasimi 2014). Myles (2002) cited in Nyasimi(2014) suggests that various social and cognitive factors help in assessing the underlying reasons why L2 learners exhibit particular writing errors. According to Myles (2002), social factors that influence second language writing include motivation and attitudes.

Myles (2002) suggests that for teachers to motivate students in writing for academic purposes, they should encourage students to read academic texts and work with other students who are more acquainted with the discourse. However, if they do not engage in the text or actively contribute during the study sessions, these activities will have little effect on students' progress. Thus, if students are motivated to write in L2, they will develop a higher level of proficiency and positive attitudes, which can have a positive effect on their writing.

According to Myles (2002), cited in Nyasimi(2014) cognitive processes involved in second language writing are learning strategies and language transfer. Because of the complex process of writing in a second language, learners often find it difficult to develop all aspects of the writing stages simultaneously.

Nunan (1999) considers it an enormous challenge to produce a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing in one's L2. He points out that this is magnified by the fact that rhetorical conventions of English language, that is, structure, style and organization often differ from those in other languages. According to the scholar's suggestion for students to write appropriately in L2, they need to understand the differences between L1 and L2, if the structures of the two languages are distinctly different.

The other writing challenge Nyasimi (2014) discussed in his study, is the English language itself has a lot of irregularities and idiosyncrasies which create a myriad of difficulties in writing especially for second language learners. An example is the English spellings in which a word that is incorrectly spelled is not only a deviation from the standard but adversely affects the intended meaning. Spelling and the decoding skills are closely linked and students who commit spelling errors need to memorize the spellings of commonly used irregular words. In addition, students usually commit mistakes in using comas, full stops, semi colons and colons which affect their written competence. Capitalization problems are part of the punctuation difficulties which may be the result of inadequate learning or inefficient teaching.

Farooq (2012) cited in Nyaimi(2014) suggests that grammar is the most difficult area for L2 writers. Students face challenges in the use of correct sentence structure and paragraph development, and in creating coherent text. Grammar skills include run-on sentences, use of different types of sentences, subject verb agreement, placement of modifiers, tense agreement and parallel construction. Grammar is more than just a set of rules; it is an ever evolving structure of language. For instance, the students may know how to build sentences, but when applying them in written expression they face difficulties.

2.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF CORRECTNESS IN WRITING

It is plausible that writing as a means of communication it should be precise for the readers as it is in no way consult the writer in understanding the message. Unlike other means of communication, like speaking, the readers have no chance to ask for clarification to communicate with the writer that affects their understanding. Hence, correctness in writing should be a crucial issue to the writer's success. Stanley (1992:30) discussed:

Correctness depends largely on contact on the extent to which a write fulfils or frustrates the expectations of his/her reader. Effective writing from this perspective does not involve universal wrongs and rights; rather it involves perceptions, choices effects on readers.... Inappropriate

stylistic or grammatical choices will damage students' ability to appear credible to their readers, partly because error ridden writing brings the attention back to the writer, distracting reader from content.

From this idea it is easy to understand that our students should write their pieces of writing to convey their intended messages clearly. When they fail to address their views adequately, it is essential to help them by giving appropriate corrections.

2. 7 ESSAY WRITING

The definition of essay and possible challenges of essay writing are discussed in the following from way from some scholars' points of view.

2.7.1 WHAT IS AN ESSAY?

Some writers define an essay in different ways. Although they define it differently, the meaning of the definition they gave is nearly the same. "An essay is an extended writing on a particular topic/subject. At this level of writing a writer has ample opportunity to develop his/her ideas in detail when compared with paragraph writing which limits a writer to develop only one major idea" Alamirew (2008). According to the writer's suggestion someone who takes part in essay writing may get a chance to communicate with his/her audiences as he/she intended based on the given title than when he /she planned to write on one main idea in case of paragraph.

2.7.2 POSSIBLE CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS' ESSAY WRITING

Even though it is difficult to mention the whole challenges within this piece of writing, some of the challenges discussed below from different scholars points of view.

A/Reading Practice

Demi (2013:23) discussed about language practice as "how are you reading relevant texts? Many problems you'll face during writing may stem from poor reading practices. Make sure you're reading enough, and reading it efficiently, so you're familiar with the literature surrounding your topic. That way, you'll support your points with the best references and you'll have a better idea of where your idea stands in the field". From this

discussion one can understand that reading different written materials critically helps learners to produce effective essay.

B/Language

The other point that Demi (2013:23) discussed in the earlier mentioned article is shown as follows:

“How effectively do you articulate your thoughts? Phrasing your ideas with the right words is often glossed-over when compared to actually developing a logical argument and finding appropriate references. Yet, an impressive argument backed up with stellar references can be easily overlooked if you are not good with your words. Also, it can be difficult for you to notice subtle errors in your paper, so finding someone reliable to review everything is a good idea.” According to the above stated idea, knowing the language well helps someone in writing any pieces of writing. On the other hand, if someone has no idea how to use the language well, he or she doesn’t communicate effectively in writing.

C/ Over-generalization

Over-generalization is one possible cause that leads to make some challenge when students begin writing essay or compositions in English. Over-generalization is the way in which students over generalize a rule they partly know. Concerning this the mentalist theory claims that “the learner processes new language data in his/her mind and produces rules for its production based on the evidence.” Hubbard (1983:141) From the claim one can understand that if a structural syllabus has placed a rule for a pattern on one tense, say forming past tense of regular verbs, there is a danger that the learners will over-use it when moving on new patterns.

D/ The Influence of L1

Hubbard, (1983:140) explained regarding this as “the sound system (phonology) and the grammar of the first language impose themselves on the new language and this leads to a foreign pronunciation, faulty grammatical pattern.” This is to say that although it is

appeared to be able to learn a foreign language quite easy; there is considerable experience difficulty when writing in English because of mother tongue interference. On the other hand, some students are so much more familiar with spoken forms of English language that when they sit down to write, they are simply translating the spoken cadences of their L1 and hence, make grammar errors in their written work.

E/ Time Constraints

The relationship between time and the level of performance of students in writing is an issue of discussion by several scholars. Collins and Getner (1980) observed that much of the difficulty of writing stems from a number of constraints that must be satisfied and coordinated at various “structural levels”, that is, overall text structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure and word structure. They argue that the attempt to coordinate all these requirements is a staggering job, thus the amount of time allotted to producing a writing might affect the level of mastery exhibited on any or all of the levels mentioned above.

Time may also be a key factor in producing a text with full control over such discourse features as organization and coherence. In addition, many students and teachers feel that writing under time pressure is a very unnatural situation and perhaps cannot lead them to produce papers that are truly representative of their capabilities

F/ Lack of Grammar Knowledge

Inappropriate uses of grammar affect students’ essay writing. According to Farooq (2012) in Nyasimi (2014), grammar is the most difficult area for L2 writers. Students face challenges in the use of correct sentence structure and paragraph development, and in creating coherent text. Grammar skills include run-on sentences, use of different types of sentences, subject verb agreement, correct use of conjunctions, placement of modifiers, tense agreement, and parallel construction. Grammar is more than just a set of rules; it is an ever evolving structure of language. For instance, the students may know how to build sentences, but when applying them in written expression they face difficulties.

G/ Organization of ideas

Producing a coherent and well organized piece of writing is a challenging task. Coherence is an implicit feature of a text which describes the logical relationship between the ideas and information embodied in discourse and that coherence is helped by cohesion which is the process of connecting one sentence to the next. As Grab and Kaplan, (1996) in Nyasimi (2014) states the information which is well organized is easier to remember and understand. This is magnified by the fact that the rhetorical conventions of English texts such as the structure, organization, lexis and grammar differ from those of other languages.

2.8 GIVING FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITTEN ESSAYS

As Kroll (2003) cited in Nyasimi (2014) points out that feedback on ESL students' written assignments is a vital aspect of improving learner's ability in any L2 writing course. Hence, the objective of feedback is to teach skills that will help students to improve their writing proficiency to the point where they recognize what is expected of them as writers. He further observes that learners should be encouraged to analyze and evaluate feedback themselves in order for it to be more effective. Similarly, Myles (2002) notes that feedback is of utmost importance to the writing process without which individual attention and sufficient feedback on errors, improvement will not take place. In addition, it is the teacher's responsibility to help students to develop strategies for self-correction and regulation.

Williams (2005) cited in Nyasimi (2014) identifies two common categories of feedback that teachers give on students' written essays that is: feedback on form and content. He observes that the most common methods of feedback on form include outright teacher correction of surface errors, teacher markings that indicates the place and type of error but without correction, and underlining to indicate the presence of errors. On the other hand, feedback on content consists mainly of comments written by teachers on drafts that usually point out problems and offer suggestions for correction. Therefore, students are expected to incorporate information from the comments when doing their corrections.

Gathumbi and Masembe (2005) cited in Nyasimi (2014) point out that it is important for teachers to provide regular and quick feedback to the learners. The feedback which may be either formative or summative is very important for further learning as well as contributing to written fluency. They further suggest that in order to pre-occupy the learner in doing self-correction, teachers can use a certain correction code with symbols for the different types of mistakes such as poor sentence and paragraph organization, omitting needed information, misuse of sentence linkers and idea connectors, tense and ambiguity. However, teachers need to train the students on how to effectively use the feedback in order to make gains in their proficiency and competence as L2 writers

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 STUDY DESIGN

As it had already been mentioned in chapter one, the main purpose of the study is to identify challenges that obstructed students in written communication; particularly in essay writing. In this study, a mixed methods design involving both qualitative and quantitative techniques was employed. The researcher favors this design because the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than one approach alone. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher employed descriptive type of research designed by using questionnaire, and interview instruments for data collection.

3.2 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted at Enchini Preparatory School which is found in West Shoa Zone, at Adea Berga Woreda, Enchini Town. The reason the researcher has selected the site is to manage the study effectively. Moreover, since the place is where the researcher was doing his regular job, he had selected to conduct the research there.

3.3 SOURCES OF DATA

As it was explained in statement of the problem, students of grade 12 who enrolled in 2009 Ec. at Enchini Preparatory School were the targets of the study. Thus, the researcher believed that the sampled students and the two subject teachers offered important information which helps the researcher to investigate the challenges.

3. 4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The total number of grade 12 students was 226 (two hundred twenty six). They were distributed to five sections. Among these, according to Morgan's table for determining sample size from a given population, the researcher has taken 143 (one hundred forty three) students as a sampled population, which is 63.3%. The researcher used random sampling techniques. The total numbers of male students were 96 (ninety six) among these, the total number of female students who had been taken as a sampled group was 47

(forty seven). Moreover, there were also two subject teacher who took part in offering necessary information which helped the researcher for his study.

3.5 DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

Two research tools were engaged to collect relevant information for the study. These were questionnaires and an interview.

3.5.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

From a total number of 226 students who were enrolled in the year 2009 E.C. a sample of 143 students were randomly selected from the five sections, and completed the questionnaire according to the instruction which was given by the researcher. The data were collected using a pre-tested, structured questionnaire. It was prepared by the researcher and distributed to respondents. The questions the researcher included closed ended and open ended questions. In open ended questions the respondents used their own words, and answered the question whereas, in closed questions prewritten response categories were provided.

3.5.2 INTERVIEW

The other instrument the researcher planned to use for data gathering was by conducting interview. As (Kombo and Tromp, 2006) cited in Nyasimi (2014) suggested interview was preferred because it helps the interviewer to cover all the dimensions of an investigation through probing of the respondents and hence it provides in depth information about particular cases of interest to the researcher. Based on the scholars' discussion, the researcher prepared interview questions and interviewed the two teachers who teach English Language at preparatory school. The researcher obtained very important information from the interviewees on challenges students faced in essay writing. Thus, the researcher recorded the response of the interviewees using audio recorder.

3.6 PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

As it has been stated under 3.5, the data for this study were gathered through questionnaire and interview. The researcher gave brief orientation for the students how to complete the questionnaire. First, data from the students' questionnaire were collected. In this line, questionnaire was distributed for 143 students at the same time in the school. Then the interview with teachers was conducted on different days that were convenient to them.

3.7 THE PILOT STUDY

The pilot study was conducted to see whether the intended tool would work as planned or not. Thus, the researcher prepared the questionnaires, and gave for his colleagues who teach English at Ench ini Secondary School to edit the questions to be answered by the sampled students. Then, as they suggested some inconsistencies among the questions were avoided, and the ambiguous questions were corrected accordingly. He also gave the interview questions to the teachers. They read and suggested some points needed to be improved. Based on their suggestion the researcher amended some points within the interview questions for the actual interview.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

After the collection of data, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data in order to give recommendation to the identified problems. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used. Thus, the mass of data collected through the administration of various tools could be analyzed and interpreted for drawing conclusions in the end. The responses obtained from the students' questionnaires would be tallied and the frequencies would be converted to percentage (quantitatively) using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Percentage values would favor as it is easier to compare taking into account that a different number of students participated in the study. The questionnaires sorted out and summarized using tables. The response that the researcher obtained from the sampled teachers was explained using descriptive prose. That is to mean the data collected through questionnaire and interviews were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Eventually, conclusion and recommendation was made based up on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings, interpretation and discussion according to the objectives of the study. The aim of the study was to investigate challenges students face essay writing in English language by Enchini Preparatory School: in the case of grade twelve students. The chapter was organized into two sections. The first section of the chapter presents demographic information of the respondents. The second section of the chapter presents different challenges in terms of the stated objectives. Data was presented based on Greasley's (2008) data analyzing methods that are using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, tables and graphs.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Table 1. Total number of students participated in the study.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	95	66.9	66.9	66.9
Valid Female	47	33.1	33.1	100.0
Total	142	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that the total participants of the study were 143 students in general which were 96 male students and 47 female students. The questionnaire was distributed to 96 male students and 47 female students. However, as it is shown above 95 male students which was 66.9% gave the response to the questionnaire. One student didn't give back the paper. On the other hand, 47 female students, which were 33.1% taken the questionnaires and completed the necessary information.

Table 2. Students' response whether they have been given writing assignments/ tasks in their English class or not

Gender		Q.Have you been given writing assignments/ tasks in your English class?		Total
		yes	No	
Male	Count	80	15	95
	% within gender	84.2%	15.8%	100.0%
Female	Count	36	11	47
	% within gender	76.6%	23.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	116	26	142
	% within gender	81.7%	18.3%	100.0%

This table shows most of the respondents said that they have been given writing tasks or assignments in their English Language Classes. Among 142 respondents in general, 116 (81.7%) students answered that their teachers gave them writing assignments or tasks in their English Language Classes; whereas, 26 (18.3%) students responded that they were not given writing assignments in their English Language Learning situation.

From the above description the researcher understood that most of sampled population responded as they were given writing assignments or tasks by their English Language teachers.

Q. Do you practice essay writing in English?

Table 3. Students' response to practice of essay writing in Englis.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	105	73.9	73.9	73.9
No	37	26.1	26.1	100.0
Total	142	100.0	100.0	

From the table 3 we can see that most of the respondents, about 105 (73.9%) students responded that their English teachers offered them to practice essay writing in English. However, 37 (26.1%) students said they were not given to practice essay writing activities in their English Language learning. Thus, as most respondents responded, their teacher offered them to practice essay writing in their English classes.

Q. If your response is "yes" for questions 1 & 2 do you face challenges in your essay writing?

Table 4.Students' response whether they face challenges when they write an essay or not.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	105	73.9	73.9	73.9
	No	37	26.1	26.1	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

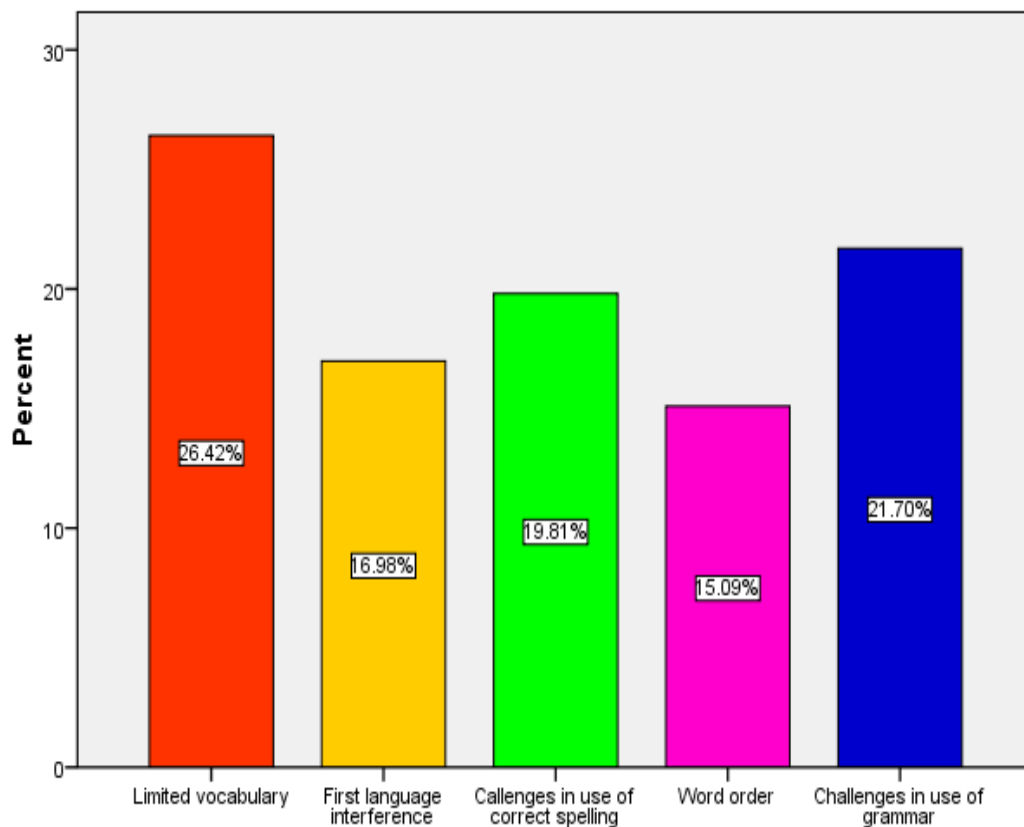
Table 4 indicates or shows that the response of the sampled populations (students) as they have challenges when they began essay writing. Among the total respondents, 105

(73.9%) responded that they had challenges when they write an essay in English. On the contrary, only 37 (26.1%) said that they had no challenge in their essay writing work.

From the two group respondents those who had difficulties and had no difficulties the researcher understand as most percent responded, students of grade 12 at Enchini Preparatory School have challenges in their essay writing activities in English.

Q. If your response for question 3 is “yes” what kind of challenge(s) do you face in Essay writing?

Figure 1. Students’ response on kinds of challenges they faced in essay writing.



This bar chart indicates that students’ response in terms of different challenges. According to the information given in the chart most respondents, about 26.42% answered that they had the problem of limited vocabulary when they began essay writing. This means, during essay writing they couldn’t use much words to express their views

properly in the relation to the given essay writing activities. The other challenge that the students pointed out is challenges in use of grammar. Concerning this from the total number of respondents about 21.70% of them responded as they faced the difficulty of grammar and usage in their essay writing. There is still another challenge which is using correct spelling when they began essay writing. About 19.81% of the respondents had the problem of using correct spelling in their written work especially in essay writing activities.

The remaining percent of the respondents, 16.98% and 15.08%, said their essay writing work was affected by first language interference and in appropriate word order respectively. As it is clearly seen in the bar chart most sampled population responded that they have the difficulties of using sufficient vocabularies, grammar and correct spelling than others when they write an essay in English.

Table 5. Students' response whether they have difficulty in developing thesis statement or no

Gender		Q. When you are managed to write an essay can you easily develop thesis statement?		Total
		Yes	No	
Male	Count	29	66	95
	% within gender	30.5%	69.5%	100.0%
Female	Count	19	28	47
	% within gender	40.4%	59.6%	100.0%
Total	Count	48	94	142
	% within gender	33.8%	66.2%	100.0%

This table shows that the extent to which students faced challenges in developing thesis statements when they began essay writing. From the total number of 142 respondents, 48 (33.8%) students responded that they were able to develop thesis statement before they begin writing (essay writing). On the contrary, 94 (66.2%) of the students responded that they had the problem of preparing thesis statements before essay writing. This means they were not able to set the basic part of an essay that is thesis statement.

From the description one can see that most of the sampled population had the difficulty to prepare thesis statement when they are given to write essay in English.

Q. If your response for question number 5 is "No" why do you think so?

Table 6. Students' response on why they were not able to produce thesis statements.

Options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Lack of base at high school	35	24.6	37.2	37.2
Lack of knowledge about thesis	26	18.3	27.7	64.9
Challenges due to absence of reference materials on how to write thesis.	33	23.2	35.1	100.0
Total	94	66.2	100.0	
Missing Missing values	48	33.8		
Total	142	100.0		

This table indicates that students' response on why they were not develop thesis statement before they began essay writing in English. As it is stated in the table, most of the respondents which are 24.6% explained that they were unable to create thesis statement because they had no background knowledge about it; chiefly at high school. According to the students' response the other challenge caused due to absence of reference materials on how to write thesis. About 23.2% of them faced challenges due to absence of reference on how to write thesis statement. The rest 18.31% respondents explained that they didn't have sufficient information about thesis statement.

These are the challenges which affected students' thesis development skills. On the other hand, some respondents (33.80%) explained as they had no problem in developing thesis statement. Thus, they are considered as missing values in the analysis.

Table 7. Students' response about their attitude towards essay writing.

Gender:		Q. When you are given to write an essay, what is your attitude?		Total
		Positive	Negative	
Male	Count	29	66	95
	% within gender	30.5%	69.5%	100.0%
Female	Count	19	28	47
	% within gender	40.4%	59.6%	100.0%
Total	Count	48	94	142
	% within gender	33.8%	66.2%	100.0%

This table shows that the answer of sampled population on their attitude concerning essay writing in English Language. From the total sampled populations, 48 (33.8%) students stated that they have positive feelings towards essay writing. However 94 (66.2%) of the

respondents said they have negative attitude towards essay writing. Here from the response of the sampled population, we can see that most students had no positive attitude towards essay writing in English. Moreover, the respondents responded their reasons why they said so which was discussed in the following table.

Q. If your response for question 7 is “negative” state the reason.

Table 8. Students response why they develop negative attitude towards essay writing

Options		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Essay writing is difficult	24	16.9
	It is difficult to develop thesis statement	20	14.1
	Challenges in use of grammar	18	12.7
	Challenges in use of correct spelling	12	8.5
	No enough time to write an Essay	23	16.2
	Total	97	68.3
Missing	Missing values	45	31.7
Total		142	100.0

The table indicates that the respondents’ response why they feel negatively when they are given to write an essay. As it is shown in the table, about 16.9% said essay writing is difficult. Thus, they were not interested in writing it. Another 14.1% of the respondents responded since it was difficult for them to develop thesis statement easily, they were not encouraged to write essay in English. The next 12.7% sampled population stated their reason not to develop positive attitude was because of challenges in use of appropriate grammar. The remaining percents which are 8.5% and 16.2% mentioned challenges in use of correct spelling and lack of enough time respectively as the reason of having negative feelings in essay writing in English. About 45 (31.7%) respondents indicate the missing values. In fact, attitude plays an important role to perform certain activities. If

someone has negative attitude towards his/her specific work, it is difficult to get quality result of that work. In the same way, some students stated that they had negative attitude to write an essay and they also explained the reason why they say so. According to Wolcott and Buhr (1987: 6) the attitudes of students toward writing relate to their actual writing performance at once reflecting and affecting their growth as a writer. They also added that “students with very positive writing attitudes received significantly higher post-test essay scores than did those with low writing attitude scores.” From this discussion we can realize that students’ attitudes affect their essay writing activities.

Table 9. Students’ response whether they write essay using steps or not.

Gender	Q. Can you clearly write down steps in essay writing before you begin writing the final draft?		Total
	Yes	No	
Male	Count 32 % within gender 33.7%	63 66.3%	95 100.0%
Female	Count 18 % within gender 38.3%	29 61.7%	47 100.0%
Total	Count 50 % within gender 35.2%	92 64.8%	142 100.0%

We can see from table 9 the respondents’ response to the given questionnaire in terms of using steps in essay writing before they write the final draft. It is clearly seen that only 50 (35.2%) of the respondents said that they couldn’t face difficulty to use steps when they were given to write an essay. However, most of the students 92 (64.8%) answered that they didn’t use steps in essay writing. Thus, from the students’ response one can

understand most of the sampled students had the challenges to use steps in writing essay in English.

Q. If your response for question 9 is “no” list down the reasons.

Table 10. Students’ response on why they couldn’t write steps in essay writing clearly.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Having no knowledge about steps in essay writing.	23	16.2
	Absence of enough time.	31	21.8
	Lack of practice in essay writing using steps.	37	26.1
	Total	91	64.1
Missing	Missing values	51	35.9
	Total	142	100.0

According to the result of the study shown in the above table (in table 10), the respondents listed their own reasons why they didn’t practice using steps in the essay writing. Of the total respondents who said they couldn’t follow steps in essay writing, 23 (16.2%) stated that they had no enough knowledge about essay writing steps. About 31 (21.8%) of them explained that they had no enough time to write an essay using steps. The other 37 (26.1%) said that they had lack of practice writing essay using steps. These are some possible challenges that affect students’ essay writing skills in L2. The remaining 51(35.9%) were those who said that they use possible steps in essay writing and considered as the missing values. As some scholars suggested it is very important to use or follow certain steps in essay writing. On the contrary of these view, most of the sampled population didn’t use steps in essay writing because of the factors they mentioned above.

Table 11. Students’ response if they were given frequent feedback on their essay writing assignments or not.

Gender:		Q. When you are given to write an essay as assignments or home tasks, is your teacher gives you frequent feedback?		Total
		yes	No	
Male	Count	45	50	95
	% within gender	47.4%	52.6%	100.0%
Female	Count	24	23	47
	% within gender	51.1%	48.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	69	73	142
	% within gender	48.6%	51.4%	100.0%

Table 11 displays that the response of the sampled population on getting frequent feedback after they were given essay writing tasks by their teacher. According to the information within table 11, 69 (48.6) students said that their teachers gave them frequent feedback after essay writing. Nevertheless, 73 (51.4%) students, replied that their as teacher didn’t give them frequent feedback.

As it is seen from the description given above, most respondents responded that their teachers didn’t give them necessary feedback on their essay writing activities.

Q. If your answer for question 11 is “No” why?

Table 12. Students’ response on why their teachers didn’t give them frequent feedback.

	Frequency	Percent
Valid It is difficult for teacher to give feedback for many students in one class.	16	11.3
Sometimes teachers are not interested to read students’ bad hand writing.	15	10.6
May be lack of time to read the essay	30	21.1
Lack of experience to give frequent feedback	14	9.9
Total	75	52.8
Missing Missing values	67	47.2
Total	142	100.0

Table 12 demonstrates that the answer of sampled population who said their teacher didn’t give them frequent feedback after essay writing assignments in their English class. Some respondents, 30 (21.1%) explained that teachers may not get sufficient time to read the essay which was written by students. Actually getting time/enough time is very important to do something. Thus absence of enough time is the possible challenge to affect the outcome of certain work. The other reasons students, 16 (11.3%) of the total respondents declared: as it was difficult for the teacher to give feedback for large class. Still some respondents, 15 (10.6%) responded that sometimes teachers are not interested in reading unreadable writing of some students. This is sometimes happened when teachers mark the written work of students. In the end, the other respondents, 14 (9.9%) answered that possibly lack of experience to give frequent feedback is also encountered as a reason. The last point displayed in the chart which is 67 (47.2%) represents the respondents who have said their teacher gave them frequent feedback. According to Gathumbi and Masembe (2005) cited in Nyasimi (2014) Students value the feedback comments that teachers write on their assignments, especially when these comments help

explain gaps in understanding, are supportive in tone and suggest ways of improving their future work.

Table 13. Students’ response to check whether they understand the given instruction easily or not

Gender:		Q. When you are given an essay writing tasks, can you interpreter the given instruction easily? (for essay writing)		Total
		Yes	No	
Male	Count	27	68	95
	% within gender	28.4%	71.6%	100.0%
Female	Count	23	24	47
	% within gender	48.9%	51.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	50	92	142
	% within gender	35.2%	64.8%	100.0%

Table 13 demonstrates that the number and percent of the sampled population, who participated in giving responses for the study. The reaction they expected to offer included “Yes” or “no” type. Less number of the respondents 50 (35.2%) of them responded that they were able to understand clearly the given instruction in essay writing. On the other hand, most of the respondents, about 92 (64.8%) stated that they didn’t clearly understand the instruction they were given to write an essay.

From the above analysis the researcher understood that many students were not know exactly what they were going to do when they were given essay writing home tasks/assignments

Table 14 Students' response on the time given to them to write an essay..

Gender:		Q, Are you given sufficient time for essay writing (by your teacher?)		Total
		Yes	No	
Male	Count	22	73	95
	% within gender	23.2%	76.8%	100.0%
Female	Count	16	31	47
	% within gender	34.0%	66.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	38	104	142
	% within gender	26.8%	73.2%	100.0%

Table 14 shows that the response of sampled population on the questions given in the relation to time. Among 142 sampled populations some respondents about 38 (26.8%) responded that their teacher gave them sufficient time to write an essay. However, 104 (73.2%) students responded that they were not offered enough time to write an essay. Here the researcher wanted to check whether the teachers gave students enough time following essay writing activities or not. Of course respondents' gave their response in earlier question as they had not been given enough time to write essay properly. As it is clearly indicated in the table, most of the respondents answered they were not given enough time following essay writing activities.

Table 15 Students’ response on whether their teacher gave them essay writing activities in pair or small group or not at all.

Gender	Q. Is your teacher gives you essay writing activities or assignments in pair or small group?		Total
	Yes	No	
Male Count	62	33	95
% within gender	65.3%	34.7%	100.0%
Female Count	26	21	47
% within gender	55.3%	44.7%	100.0%
Total Count	88	54	142
% within gender	62.0%	38.0%	100.0%

Table 15 indicates that the response of respondents to the question they asked regarding essay writing activities given to students in pair or small group. According to the result in the above table, most sampled population, which is about 88 (62.0%) students, said that they were given essay writing assignments in pair or small groups. In the contrast to this, 54 (38.0%) of respondents said their teachers didn’t give them essay writing assignments in pair or small group.

From the two groups of respondents the researcher pointed out that the teachers offered group work activities (essay writing) for students. In the recently edited curriculum of English Language books, most of the lessons learned in pair or groups (small groups). Likewise, teachers give many activities/assignments in pair or small groups which is called 1 to 5 grouping system (“Raya tokko shanee”) in the case of the school the researcher is working in, that is Enchini Preparatory School.

Q. If your answer for question 15 is "yes" what challenges do you face in writing an essay in pair or small group?

Table 16. Students' response on Challenges in working (essay writing) in pair or small group

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Lack of interest to work together.	28	19.7	31.8	31.8
Bad behavior of a few students.	27	19.0	30.7	62.5
Absence of enough time to work together.	33	23.2	37.5	100.0
Total	88	62.0	100.0	
Missing Missing values	54	38.0		
Total	142	100.0		

This table 16 shows that the findings of the study concerning challenges in writing essay in pair or small group. As we saw in the above table majority of the respondents assured that they had been given essay writing in pair or small groups. Those respondents declared different challenges that hindered sampled population to write an essay in pair or small group. From the total 88 (62.0%) respondents, 28 (19.7%) explained that lack of interest to work together was an identified challenge. The other 27 (19.0%) of the respondents declared bad behaviors of their classmates or co-workers prohibit to write an essay as intended to be written. The rest 33 (23.2%) respondents pointed out that they had no enough time to write an essay as they were assigned to work together.

The last point displayed in the table, 54(38.0%), numbers of the entire sampled population represents those respondents who said our teacher didn't give us essay writing assignments in pair or small groups.

From the sampled populations' response the researcher understand that even though the teachers gave them essay writing activities in pair or small group, students weren't able to implement it accordingly. They reacted to different responses to challenges that obstruct them to work together as they expected to do.

Table 17. Students' response on whether they get additional reference materials which give them guidance how to write an essay or not.

Gender:		Q. Can you get additional reference materials which give you guidance on how to write an essay?		Total
		Yes	No	
Male	Count	30	65	95
	% within gender	31.6%	68.4%	100.0%
Female	Count	23	24	47
	% within gender	48.9%	51.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	53	89	142
	% within gender	37.3%	62.7%	100.0%

As indicated in the above table, most of the respondents, 62.7% responded that they couldn't get additional reference materials that give guidance how to write effective essay. The other group of respondents, who are about 37.3%, said they could get the materials which help them as additional reference and uphold their essay writing tasks

effectively. To facilitate teaching and learning process, someone necessarily needs to get sufficient supportive material so as to achieve the intended objectives. Thus, based on this idea, the researcher identified the absence of accessibility of additional reference materials which help learners to endorse their essay writing skills effectively.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' INTERVIEW

The teachers' responses to the interview questions are presented and analyzed as follows:

There were two (male and female) English Language teachers at Enchini Preparatory School who participated in the Study. The male teacher has 4(four) years teaching experience and the female teacher has about 13 (thirteen) years teaching experience. Both of them interviewed the same questions and gave relatively the same answers. The researcher recorded their voice and interpreted in the following ways.

Q1.How do you help your students to practice writing?

The two teachers gave their response concerning this question nearly in the same ways. According their response they helped learners in different ways: they said that they gave them different writing activities and encouraged them to work on it actively. They also said they offered their students a model of written texts and advised them to work according to that model. The other way they used to help their student was organizing students in groups and assisting them to share information on the given tasks. The last response of the teachers regarding the given question is, by encouraging students to practice writing on their own titles and read it in front of their class mates.

Q2. What kind of writing activities could you give for your students?

The two interviewees' response regarding to this question is almost similar. They mentioned the following points which the teachers offered writing activities or tasks for learners:

- Sentence writing activities
- Paragraph writing (different types of paragraphs)
- Letter writing(formal, informal and business letter writing) and
- Essay writing(descriptive ,expository, narrative and argumentative essays)

Q3.Could you give essay writing assignments for your students?

For this question the two teachers' response was "yes". Here the researcher wanted to crosscheck whether the response of students is convincing or not. Moreover, it helps to open favorable atmosphere for the next questions which assist researcher to achieve his objectives.

Q4.How often do you give essay writing assignments for your students?

The responses of the teachers are different for this question. The male teacher responded he gave essay writing assignment for his students twice within the given academy year. On the other hand, the female teacher said that she had given essay writing assignments for her students, twice within the first semester and once in the second semester. The researcher possibly gets information that created challenges for students to write effective essay in their English Language. That is the frequency of the subject teachers gave essay writing activities for their students was not enough to practice essay writing and develop essential skills.

Q5. If it so (if you give essay writing assignments for your students), what kind of challenges they face in their writing?

This question directly addresses the researchers' objectives. Concerning this, the teachers (respondents) mentioned some challenges they came across in their students' written work. These are:

- Appropriate use of grammar (like punctuation marks, tenses...etc.)
- Challenges in writing coherent paragraphs within essays.
- Challenge to identify and set clearly thesis statement.

- Challenge in identifying main points from supportive details.
- Challenges in using appropriate conjunctions.
- The use of varieties of vocabularies/limited vocabulary
- Challenges in writing correct word order.
- Attitudes (negative attitudes) towards essay writing in English.
- Mother tongue language (L1) interference.
- Challenge in use of correct spelling.
- Inability to understand what they are ordered to do by reading the given instructions.

The above mentioned points are what the respondents encountered as the challenges which prohibited learners from writing effective essay. The teachers stressed on some challenges such as identify and set clearly thesis statement, limited vocabulary, appropriate use of grammar (like punctuation marks, tenses...etc.) and challenge in use of correct spelling as the most challenging variables that affect students' essay writing skills.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study were gathered from the responses of the sampled populations; that means sampled students and the sampled teachers. The sampled students were given structured questionnaire which consisted both closed ended and open ended. The sampled teachers (both of the subject teachers) were interviewed some basic questions in the relation to the stated problem and desired objectives. The researcher provided some points within the questionnaire to check how the teachers help their students, and what kinds of challenges students faced in their essay writing activities. Based on the responses of the sampled students and the subject teachers, the researcher made analysis. The findings were summarized in the next section.

5.3 CHALLENGES STUDENTS FACED IN ESSAY WRITING SKILLS

The objective of the study was to investigate challenges students face in essay writing skills in their English language. The study results show that the use to identify and set clearly thesis statement, use of correct grammar and L1 (mother tongue language) interference, limited vocabulary which affects the intended meaning an essay is expected to convey are the greatest challenges students face in essay writing activities. Other common challenges revealed include: in adequate time given for essay writing, lack of adequate practice in essay writing especially by using steps in essay writing and negative attitude towards essay writing in English. These findings partially harmonize with those of a study by Nyasimi (2014) on students' difficulties in L2 writing which established that students face challenges in L2 writing due to a number of factors involved in the learning process such as lack of vocabulary, L1 interference, poor grasp of grammatical structures, incorrect spelling and illogical sequence of ideas.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the conclusions that the researcher reached in the light of the results of this study. The students were given different writing activities such as sentence writing, paragraph writing and letter writing to practice writing. They were also given essay writing assignments by their English teachers. In spite of the fact that they had got the opportunities to practice essay writing, they were not able to write effective essay because of some identified challenges stated under 5.3 above.

Furthermore, the students could not develop basic skills which help them to write effective essay in English. The other point the researcher concluded was that the subject teachers didn't give focus on students' written work, particularly on essay writing. This means teachers couldn't check students' essay writing work, and they couldn't give them appropriate feedback on their writing. The teachers also didn't give students regular essay writing activities. In their response teachers gave twice or three times essay writing activities for students within a given academic year. This is not sufficient to help learners to develop their essay writing skill in English.

Moreover, the other point the researcher bring to the conclusion is that the English department, the students themselves, and the subject teachers didn't work cooperatively to improve students' effective essay writing skills. Even at high school the teachers didn't work on maximizing students' essay writing skills properly. In this line students assured as they had no base or background knowledge how to develop thesis statement in essay writing. The other difficulty the researcher encountered was absence of supplementary materials within the school which assist learners on how they write effective essay.

As a result, students' essay writing skills was affected, and they became less effective in written communication at Enchini preparatory school, in the case of grade 12 students.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher suggested the following recommendations. These are:

- The teachers (subject teachers) should give emphasis on improving students' essay writing. He/she expected to do this by: encouraging students to study and practice in advance the points that should be included in essay writing like thesis statement, steps in essay writing, the organization and unity of the paragraph within an essay.
- The teachers should also guide learners on the way they are able to maximize their vocabulary knowledge, and how to use grammar appropriately in their writing to be effective at written communication.
- The other role teachers ought to play is when they give essay writing assignments for students, they should give them sufficient time and frequent written feedback. Giving written feedback helps students to identify challenges they faced, and the students try to improve in the next essay writing tasks.
- Teachers should also give continuous essay writing activities for students, and encourage them to develop positive attitude towards writing it.
- The students have also some important roles to play in order to increase their essay writing skills in English. They should practice different writing activities to enhance their skill of essay writing.
- They should also develop their reading skills; that means, they expected to study how to use tenses, punctuation marks, prepositions, verbs, adverbs adjectives and other grammatical terminologies which helps them to write neat and effective essay in English. Students should also develop positive attitude towards essay writing, and the habit of working together.
- The management of Enchini preparatory School and the English department should discuss how to provide trainings for the subject teachers on maximizing students' productive skills particularly writing skills.
- The school should also provide necessary reference materials which assist students on how to write an essay in English effectively.

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APPENDIX A

ADAMA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND LAW

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

1. MIXED (OPEN ENDED & CLOSED ENDED) QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE FILLED BY STUDENTS

Dear students,

This questionnaire is intended to gather information on an investigation of challenges in Essay Writing by grade 12 students: in the case of Echini preparatory School. Therefore, you are kindly requested to give genuine responses that have great contribution to the study (I appreciate your being volunteer in giving correct responses)

1. Personal information: Put a tick (✓) in the box next to male or female based on your gender, and write your age in the box.

1. Male ☐

2 Age

3 Age

Instruction: Write down your option put a tick (✓) in the box to indicate your selection & fill in the blank space where necessary

1. Have you been given writing assignments/ tasks in your English class?

A) Yes ☐

B) No ☐

2. Do you practice essay writing in English?

A) Yes ☐

B) No ☐

3. If your response is “yes” for questions 1 & 2 do you face challenges in your essay writing?

A) Yes ☐

B) No ☐

4. If your response for question 3 is “yes” what kind of challenge(s) do you face in essay writing?

A) Limited Vocabulary ☐

C) Challenges in use correct of Spelling ☐

B) First language interference ☐

D) Word order ☐

E) Challenges in use of grammar (tenses, agreement...etc) ☐

If other explain it here

5. When you are managed to write an essay can you easily` develop thesis statement?

A/ Yes ☐

B/ No ☐

6. If your response for question number 5 is “No” why do you think so?

A/Lack of base at high school ☐

B/Lack of knowledge about thesis ☐

C/ Challenges due to absence of reference materials on how to write thesis. ☐

If other states it here: _____

7. When you are given to write an essay, what is your attitude?

A. Positive

☐

B. Negative

☐

8. If your response for question 7 is “negative ” explain the reasons?

9. Can you clearly write down steps in essay writing before you begin writing the final draft?

A. Yes

☐

B. No

☐

10. If your response for question 9 is “no” what are the reasons?

A / having no knowledge about steps in essay writing

☐

B / Absence of enough time

☐

C / Lack of practice in essay writing using steps

☐

If you want to add some points write it here:

11. When you are given to write an essay as assignment or home tasks is your teacher gives you frequent feedback?

A. Yes

☐

B. No

☐

12. If your answer for question 11 is “No” why?

A/ It is difficult for teacher to give feedback for many students in one class. ☐

B/ Sometimes teachers are not interested to read students’ bad hand writing. ☐

C/ Lack of time to read the essay ☐

D/ Lack of experience to give frequent feedback ☐

If other list down here:

When you are given an essay writing tasks, can you interpreter the given instruction easily? (for essay writing)

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

13. Are you given sufficient time for essay writing (by your teacher?)

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

14. Is your teacher gives you essay writing activities or assignments in pair or small group?

A. Yes ☐ B. No ☐

15. If your answer for question 15 is “yes” What challenges do you face in writing an essay in pair or small group? List down.

A/ Lack of interest to work together ☐

B / Bad behavior of a few students ☐

C/ Absence of enough time to work together ☐

If you want to add some more points write it here:

Can you get additional reference materials or resources which give you guidance how to write an essay?

A. Yes ☐

B. No

THANK YOU

APPENDIX B

ADAMA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND LAW

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Dear Teacher(s)

This interview is conducted to gather information on an investigation of challenge sin essay writing by grade 12 students: in the case of Enchini Preparatory School. Thus you are kindly requested to give the correct answer that has great importance to the study

1. Personal information: Put a tick (✓) in the box next to male or female based on your gender and tell me your age

1. Male ☐

2 Female ☐

3 Age ☐

Directions: Give your response for the following interview questions

1. Professional Qualifications:

Diploma ☐

Bachelor's degree ☐

Masters' degree ☐

2. Your Experience as a Teacher of English Language:

1-5 years ☐

11-15 years ☐

21—25 years ☐

6-10 years ☐

16 -20 years ☐

above 25 years ☐

3. How do you help your students to practice writing?

4. What kind of writing activities could you give for your students?

5. Could you give essay writing assignments for your students?

6. How often do you give essay writing assignment for your students?

7. If it so (if you give them) what kinds of challenges students face in their writing?

Challenges students face in their writing/essay writing?

6.1. _____

6.2 _____

6.3 _____

8. Which areas of essay writing do your students find most challenging?