

An Analysis of the Structure of Group Writing Activities in English Textbook

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to analyze how effectively pair/group work writing activities in the currently in-use Grade 11 English textbook were structured or organized to promote CLL. To this end, the pair/group work writing activities were identified and analyzed based on the six basic elements of the CLL. Findings of the study show that less weight is given to the activities compared to that of the non-group work writing activities in the textbook. The promotion of most of the basic elements of CLL in the designed cooperative writing activities is limited to only the pre-writing stage. It has been found that only a small number of the writing activities allow and encourage learners to work cooperatively at drafting and revising stages. It is also noted that there is no writing activity in the textbook that encourages students to process group interaction. It is, therefore, recommended that textbook developers should incorporate the six basic elements of CLL at each stage of writing to structure group writing activities while preparing teaching materials.

Key words: Cooperative Language Learning, Writing Skills, Group Writing Activities, Textbook

INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is amongst the recent communicative approaches of second/or foreign language teaching. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 193), CLL is an approach to teaching a language that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving groups of learners in the classroom. Thus, language learning is seen as a process that requires opportunities for learners to participate in communication where making meaning is primary (Ellis, 2003, p. 269).

CLL is greatly supported by recent research inspired by process oriented models of second language learning (Nunan, 1992). For example, the research findings by Slavin (1987) showed that learners working in cooperative groups significantly outperformed on standardized measures of reading comprehension. Learners also performed better on writing skills (Nunan, 1992:3). With regard to this, Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 194) also write that CLL has been extensively researched and duly evaluated, and the research findings stress that it is a very useful approach to enhance both learning and learners' interaction skills. That is why it has gained a lot of acceptance in foreign language instruction these days.

Based on the insights gained from CLL, new English textbooks have been designed and published for Ethiopian secondary schools. In the textbooks, group activities have been introduced widely to promote English language classroom learning because these activities can lead to students'

active participation in the target language learning process (Girma, 2003, p. 36). However, in an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of group activities in promoting CLL in Ethiopian context, only very few local studies focusing on speaking skills were conducted. As far as the present researcher's knowledge is concerned, barely any study has dealt with the effectiveness of group work writing activities. Therefore, this study is designed to fill such research gap.

Objective and Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to analyze how effectively pair/group work writing activities in the currently in-use Grade 11 English textbook are well structured or organized. Accordingly, the present study is conducted to answer the following specific research questions:

- What is the percentage of pair/group work writing activities in grade 11 English textbook?
- How are the pair/group work writing activities distributed in each unit of the textbook?
- In what manner do the pair/group work writing activities promote the six basic elements of CLL in each stage of writing?
- How far the nature of the pair/group work writing activities in the textbook is relevant to developing writing skills?
- What problems (if any) of the pair/group work writing activities in the textbook do not promote the basic elements of CLL?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper presents a review based on different scholars' ideas on issues such as basic elements of CLL, teaching writing skills through CLL and roles of a textbook in second language teaching and learning.

Elements of Cooperative Language Learning

As Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 196) explain, the success of CLL crucially depends on the nature and organization of group activities. They state that CLL requires a carefully designed and well-structured program of learning so that learners can interact with one another, and then they will be motivated to increase one another's learning (p.196). To make a lesson to be cooperative in the classroom, activities should include the following basic elements that lead to a long term success (Tan et al., 1999; Thousand et al., 1994, and Olsen and Kagan as cited in Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 196).

Positive interdependence

Positive Interdependence occurs when group members feel that what assists one helps all and what hurts one hurts all (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 196). Positive interdependence, which is one of the basic elements of CLL, can be successfully structured when all group members perceive that they are linked with one another in a way that one cannot succeed unless every one succeeds and/or that they must coordinate their efforts with the efforts of their group mates to complete a task (Johnson et al. as cited in Jacobs and Ball (1996, p. 100). Group goals and activities, therefore, must be designed and communicated to learners in ways that students believe that they sink or swim together (Dornyei, 2001; Thousand et al., 1994).

Individual accountability/personal responsibility

According to Johnson et al. (1991) as cited in Jacobs and Ball (1996, p. 101) individual accountability is brought about when the performance of each group member is assessed, the results are given back to the individual and the group, and students are held responsible for contributing their fair share to the groups' success. Ellis (2003, p. 271) writes that each student in the learning group shall be accountable for his/her own contribution to the completion of the activity. This can be achieved either by giving each group member a specific role to perform or by asking each student to make an explicit comment on each individual or personal contribution in the past task report. Therefore, a level of accountability or responsibility must be structured into cooperative activities so as to help learners subsequently gain greater individual competence (Tan et al., 1999; Thousand et al., 1994; Johnson et al., 1993).

Face-to-face promotive interaction

Learners need to do real work cooperatively in which they promote each other's success by sharing resources, and helping, encouraging and applauding each other's efforts. There

are significant cognitive activities and interpersonal dynamics that can only occur when learners promote each other's learning which include orally explaining how to solve problems, teaching one's knowledge to others, checking for understanding, discussing concepts being learned, and connecting present with past learning (Tan et al., 1999; Thousand et al., 1994). Each of these activities can be structured into group task directions and procedures. This ensures that CLL groups are both an academic support system and a personal support system. It is through promoting each other's learning face-to-face that members become personally committed to one another as well as to their mutual goals (Ames and Ames, 1985; Tan et al., 1999).

Social (communicative) skills

According to (Tan et al.,1999), CLL is naturally more complex than competitive or individualistic learning since learners have to engage in both task work (learning academic subject matter) and team work (functioning effectively as a group) at the same time. Social (communicative) skills for effective cooperative work do not magically appear when cooperative lessons are employed. Instead, social skills must be taught as purposefully and precisely as academic skills. Leadership, decision making, trust building, communication and conflict management skills empower learners to manage both team work and task work successfully (Christison, 1994, p. 140). In relation to this, (Tan et al., 1999) states that social/communicative skills that learners need to cooperate successfully must often be explicitly taught because "Social skills determine the way learners interact with each other as teammates. Usually some explicit instruction in social skills is needed to ensure successful interaction." Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 198). Thus, social skills are strong keystones for building and maintaining a stable family for a successful career, and for a stable group of friends (Christison, 1994, p. 140).

Processing group interaction

Processing group interaction is one of the essential components of CLL. Effective group work activities are influenced by whether or not the group members reflect on how well they are functioning (Tan et al., 1999; Thousand et al., 1994). According to Thousand et al. (1994, p. 98), processing group interaction is defined as "...reflecting on a group session to describe what member actions were helpful and unhelpful, and make decisions about actions to continue or change." This processing of group interaction helps group mates learn how to collaborate more effectively to achieve the group's goal (Tan, et al., 1999). Therefore, learners should be given time to discuss how effectively members worked together in group work activities.

Group formation

Group formation is one of the basic elements of CLL, which is a significant factor in creating positive interdependence (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 196). They indicate the following procedures to be followed in setting up groups.

- a) Deciding on the size of the group: this will depend on the tasks they have to carry out, the age of the learners, and the time limits for the lesson. Typical group size is from two to four.
- b) Assigning students to groups: groups can be teacher-selected, random, or student-selected; although a “teacher selected” group is recommended as the usual mode in order to create groups that are heterogeneous on such variables as past achievement, ethnicity, or sex.
- c) Assigning students’ roles in groups: each group member has a specific role to play in a group, such as a noise monitor, turn-taker monitor, recorder, or summarizer.

Teaching Writing Skills through CLL

According to Leki (1994, p. 170), writing was the most ignored of the four language skills in the recent past. Gradually, changes in attitude, method and activities have been seen regarding teaching and learning writing skills in a second language classroom (Leki, 1994, p. 170). In traditional classrooms, the purpose of a writing activity is to reinforce grammar, or vocabulary items learnt. That means the focus of such type of writing activities is primarily on language structure. However, methodology for the teaching of writing in ELT classrooms made dramatic shifts from teacher centred and traditional approaches to student centered and interactive approaches in the 1990s (Hedge, 2000; 300).

Teaching writing has shifted from the product approach to the process oriented approach. The former gives emphasis on what learners can do at the end of a learning process focusing on imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language. The later views writing as a process that needs planning, writing, revising and editing (Hedge, 2000; Ramies, 1983). Ramies (1983) states,

Recently, the teaching of writing has begun to move away from a concentration on the written product to an emphasis on the process writing. Writers ask themselves not only the questions about purpose and audience but also the crucial questions: How do I write this? How do I get started? (Ramies, 1983, p. 10)

The process approach involves a number of writing activities such as setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making a draft, reading and reviewing it, revising and editing (Hedge, 2000:302). Such activities enhance cooperation, involvement and participation of learners in groups, so that the student writer feels less loneliness. Leki (1994) states,

The process approach encourages students to experiment with ideas through writing and then to share their writing with their classmates and to get the opinions of several people to help them figure out what to say and how to say it. The result is that the writing class is suddenly noisy, may be more noisy than even a conversation class, as students work in groups to write, read each other’s writing, and comment on it. (Leki, 1994, p. 174)

From the above quotation, we can conclude that CLL in teaching writing skills is based on a process approach that encourages learners to work in pairs/groups. Therefore,

writing materials help learners to organize their ideas in planning groups through guided note making, in strategic questioning, organizing points in a hierarchy of importance for presentation, in highlighting essential information, in sequencing the given information, and in sorting and matching ideas (Hedge, 2000, p. 311). This implies that students cooperate with one another in getting the writing activities done as expected as possible (Leki, 1994, p. 176). This type of cooperation on a writing task increases interest and motivation (Atkins, Hailom and Nuru, 1996, p. 111).

In using the process approach, there are three stages of writing and in which different activities are practiced as recommended by Proet and Gill as cited in Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 119-120). These are:

1. Pre-writing Stage – includes activities designed to generate ideas for writing or focusing the writers’ attention on a particular topic.
2. Drafting Stage – includes activities in which students produce a draft of their composition, considering audience and purpose.
3. Revising Stage – is a stage in which students focus on rereading, analyzing, revising and editing their writing.

Hence, in each stage of writing activities students cooperate with one another to complete the writing activities. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001:195), CLL is used in teaching language items such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and in teaching the four language skills e.g. writing. For instance, learners might be asked to write an essay, report, poem, and story or a review of something that they have read together. Thus, a cooperative writing and editing group arrangement might be used (p.196).

To sum up, the process approach of teaching writing is greatly linked with CLL because the writing activities in this approach need learners’ involvement in different groups to accomplish the activities. The approach recommends helping learners at different stages of writing, rather than focusing on what they write. It underlines the importance of developing writing skills individually as well cooperatively. Thus, individual as well as group activities have been suggested in doing writing activities in the textbook. Hence, the group work activities in teaching writing skills should be designed in line with the key elements of the CLL (see pp.2-3).

The nature of writing activities

The main purpose of language activities in CLL is to enhance the cooperation, involvement and participation of the group members in carrying out the activities (Tan et al., 1994). Therefore, writing activities which are designed to be used in CLL should be suitable to be carried out in groups. One example of cooperative structure would be in a writing activity in which the group works together on a report, with one member working on the introduction, one on the body, and one on the conclusion. The group will receive the same grade when the activity is completed.

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994) as cited in Grabe and Kaplan (1997), the writing course should engage students in the writing process at each stage of writing like pre writing, drafting and revising. They also write that

writing course should incorporate cooperative learning activities which are based on relevant and interesting topics to learners. In connection to this Leki (1999) also writes that a process approach to teaching writing emphasizes that a piece of writing does not have to be carried out/written alone or at one sitting. Therefore, learners should break up the process and often seek responses to their work.

Time to practice writing activities in CLL

In the process approach of teaching writing which encourages CLL, learners do not write on a given topic in a restricted time and hand in the written text for the teacher to be marked (Ramies, 1983, p. 10). Rather, learners are supposed to explore a topic through writing, showing the teacher and peers their drafts and read what they write again and again, think about them and move on to new ideas. This implies that pair/group work writing activities, which are aimed at enhancing learners writing skill through CLL, take a lot more time than the usual writing activities (p. 10).

The Roles of a Textbook

According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994), textbooks have vital and positive roles to play in the day-to-day teaching of languages, and their importance has become even greater from time to time. Textbooks can be seen as a framework that helps students to organize their learning both inside and outside the classroom-during discussions in lessons, while doing activities and exercises, studying on their own, doing homework, and preparing for tests. Moreover, they can save teachers' time, give direction to lessons, guide discussions, facilitate giving of homework, make teaching easier and more convenient and effective. Furthermore, Textbooks can introduce changes gradually with in a structured framework enabling teachers and learners to develop in harmony with the introduction of new ideas. They can support teachers by demonstrating new or untried methodologies and by introducing changes which teachers can build a more creative of their own. Textbook can be not only a learning programme for language content, but also a vehicle for teacher and learner training. Most importantly, a textbook is that it is visible and therefore can be freely negotiated. It satisfies a range of needs both within the classroom and beyond it. Principally, it provides a structure for the management of the lesson as a social interaction and basis for negotiation between all the relevant parties in the actual classroom (Hutchinson and Torres (1994, pp. 317-327).

Generally, textbook can serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. It, undoubtedly, provides the basis for the content of the lessons, the balance of skills taught and the kinds of language activities learners actively use. This is, therefore, viewed as a resource book for ideas and activities rather than as instructional materials (Allwright, 1999, p. 25). This perspective is also supported by Cunningsworth (1984, p. 65) as she explains that published materials provide the initial framework, which must be adapted by each individual teacher to match the needs of their learners.

Having taken all these significant roles of a textbook in mind, this paper focuses on examining how effectively the Grade 11 English for Ethiopia Textbook is playing its roles in introducing well structured group writing activities.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

Method

The main aim of this study was to analyze the extent to which the pair/group work writing activities suggested in the grade 11 English textbook were well structured or organized in a way that they could promote CLL. To this end, qualitative methods of data analysis were mainly found to be relevant and appropriate for the study.

Subjects and Sampling

The main subject of the study was the pair/group work writing activities in the currently in use grade 11 English for Ethiopia textbook. The allocated periods, i.e the time given to complete the writing activities in the textbook were also examined against the number of writing activities available in each unit. For the grade level, one period is 40/45 minutes according to the syllabus set by Ethiopian Ministry of Education.

The textbook

The textbook named "Grade 11 English for Ethiopia" is used for teaching English to grade 11 students all over the country, Ethiopia. The book has fourteen units in which each unit is divided in to six sections: reading, vocabulary, language pattern, speaking, listening and writing. The writing section is mostly placed at the end of each unit with different writing activities. All the available pair/group work writing activities in the writing sections of the textbook were gathered and analyzed. The pair/group work writing activities were analyzed based on their capacity to promote CLL. The grade 11 English textbook was selected for the study because it is the book used by learners who start preparing themselves for university education where they are expected to develop co-operation.

Method of analysis

Grade 11 English for Ethiopia textbook has fourteen units where each unit is divided into six sections: reading, vocabulary, language pattern (grammar), speaking, listening and writing. The writing section is mostly placed at the end of each unit with different writing activities. All the writing sections of the textbook were examined to analyze the GWA (pair/group work writing activities) and NGWA (non-group work writing activities). The pair/group work writing activities in the writing sections of each unit of the textbook were evaluated and analyzed based on the basic elements of CLL suggested by scholars. The basic elements of CLL included positive independence, individual accountability, social (communicative) skills, processing

group interaction, face-to-face promotive interaction and group formation (see Appendix A). These elements of CLL were used to analyze the nature of pair/group work writing activities at each stage of writing and to see the extent to which these activities promoted CLL at each stage of the writing practices.

Procedure

First, the grade 11 English syllabus, the textbook and the teacher's guide were examined. Next, the writing activities designed in each unit of the textbook were selected and numbered. Then, the selected writing activities were grouped into non-group work writing activities (NGWA) and pair/group work writing activities (GWA). After that, the writing activities and time allocated (periods) in each unit in the syllabus were correlated (Pearson) using SPSS. Then, the pair/group work writing activities (GWA) were analyzed and evaluated based on the six basic elements of CLL to see the extent to which these activities were well structured or organized to promote CLL in writing lessons.

RESULTS

As mentioned earlier under the main objective of the study, the following are the research questions in which the study has focused on.

- What is the percentage of pair/group work writing activities in grade 11 English for Ethiopia Textbook?
- How are the pair/group work writing activities distributed in each unit of the textbook?
- In what manner do the pair/group work writing activities promote the six basic elements of CLL in each stage of writing?
- How far the nature of the pair/group work writing activities in the textbook is relevant to developing writing skills?

- What problems (if any) of the pair/group work writing activities in the textbook do not promote the basic elements of CLL?

Thus, results of the study are presented in line with the research questions raised above as follows.

Writing Activities

Table 1 below presents the total number of writing activities in the textbook with their mode of presentations and the amount of time allocated (periods) to complete these activities in each unit.

As it is indicated in Table 1 above, there are 48 writing activities in the 14 units of the Grade 11 English textbook. Approximately, 33(68.75%) activities are non-group work writing activities in which students are asked to do them individually without interaction with their classmates. However, 15(31.25%) of the activities are those that students do in groups helping each other. This shows that the majority of the writing activities require that learners work independently.

Relations between the writing activities and total time allowed

The relations between the writing activities and total time allocated in each unit of the grade 11 English for Ethiopia textbook are presented in Table 2 below.

As Table 2 above shows, the results reveal that non-group work writing activities correlate significantly with periods allocated ($r=0.493$, $p<0.05$) which is in the expected direction. This implies that the number of non-group work writing activities matches the allocated time to carry out the suggested writing activities in each unit of the textbook. On the other hand, the number of pair/group work writing activities and periods in each unit of the textbook correlate negatively and insignificantly ($r=-0.195$, $p>0.05$). This shows that the

Table 1. Writing activities in grade 11 english textbook

Units	No of activities	No of NGWA	No of GWA	Total time allowed
Unit One	6	3	3	3
Unit Two	2	2	0	2
Unit Three	5	2	3	2
Unit Four	4	3	1	3
Unit Five	3	0	3	2
Unit Six	3	1	2	2
Unit Seven	7	7	0	3
Unit Eight	6	5	1	3
Unit Nine	2	2	0	3
Unit Ten	2	2	0	2
Unit Eleven	3	2	1	3
Unit Twelve	1	1	0	2
Unit Thirteen	3	3	0	3
Unit Fourteen	1	0	1	3
Total	48 (100%)	33 (68.75%)	15 (31.25%)	36

number of pair/group work writing activities do not match the time allocated to carry out the activities.

The following part shows us how the pair/group work writing activities are distributed in each unit of the textbook,

Distribution of pair/group work writing activities

As we can see in Table 3, there are 3 pair/group work writing activities in each of units 1, 3 and 5, and there are two pair/group work writing activities in unit 6. Units 4,8,11 and 14 have one pair/group work writing activity each. The remaining 6 units (units 2, 7, 9, 10, 12 and 13) do not have any pair/group work writing activity that requires learners’ interaction (cooperation). The distribution of the activities is uneven and inconsistent.

Evaluation of the Pair/Group Work Writing Activities against the Basic Elements of CLL

The pair/group work writing activities in the textbook were assessed and analyzed to see to what extent the activities promote or foster each of the basic elements of Cooperative language learning in each stage of writing like prewriting, drafting, editing and all the three stages of writing simultaneously. In Table 4 below, we can see how the writing activities promote each CLL element in each stage of writing against the parameter set.

Positive interdependence

Table 4 above shows that all of the 15 pair/group work writing activities fully encourage positive interdependence although this function is not distributed equally at the three stages of writing at the same time. This implies that the pair/group work writing activities encourage learners to interact with one another in completing the activities. But, as shown in Table 4, the majority of the pair/group work writing activities (9) are those carried out at the pre-writing stage only. In other words, most of the pair/group work writing activities are those activities that help learners to generate ideas and to plan together about what/how they write. Only, three pair/group work writing activities are devoted to revising stage, and the remain-

ing three activities are devoted to the three writing stages simultaneously. This implies that only a small number of pair/group work writing activities require that learners work together in practicing writing and in revising what they have written.

Individual accountability

The pair/group work writing activities in the textbook were analyzed to see whether they promote individual accountability or not. Table 4 above presents the result.

Table 4 above reveals that all of the 15 pair/group work writing activities in the textbook fully promote individual accountability although they do not serve this function at the three stages of the writing activities. As shown in the above table, nine of the pair/group work writing activities require that learners contribute their own part to complete the tasks at the pre-writing stage. This implies that most of the activities encourage learners’ personal contribution to the pair/group work writing activities at the pre-writing stage. As shown in the above table, three activities require learners’ contribution of their individual part to the pair/group at the revising stage, and the rest three activities at all three stages of writing (pre-writing, drafting and revising). This implies that only a small number of activities involve learners in contributing their own efforts to practice writing skills at drafting and revising stages. The following sub parts discuss the nature of the pair/group work writing activities in each unit in accordance with the positive interdependence.

Processing group interaction

Processing group interaction is one of the essential components of the CLL. Accordingly, the pair/group work writing activities in the textbook were analyzed to see if they promote this component of CLL.

As it is shown in Table 4 above, none of the 15 pair/group work writing activities promotes processing group interaction at the three writing stages. This means, the pair/group work writing activities suggested in the textbook do not encourage learners to evaluate their work. This shows that the entire pair/group work writing activities do not give the learners the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of their groups’ success to achieve their common goal.

Face-to-face promotive interaction

The pair/group work writing activities in the textbook were assessed and analyzed to see whether they promote face-to-face interaction or not.

As it is shown in Table 4 above, nine pair/group work writing activities enhance face-to-face promotive interaction though this is mostly limited to the pre-writing stage. Three activities promote face-to-face interaction at revising stage.

Table 2: Correlations between the Writing Activities and Periods

	Total time allowed	Writing Activities	NGWA
Writing Activities	0.358		
NGWA	0.493*	0.796**	
GWA	-0.195	0.353	-0.286

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05,
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01

Table 3: Distribution of Pair/Group Work Writing Activities

Units	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
No of GWA	3	0	3	1	3	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	15

Table 4: The number of Pair/Group Work Writing Activities against the Basic Elements of CLL

No.	Elements of CLL	No. of Pair/Group Work Writing Activities	Occurrences of Pair/Group Work Writing Activities against each element of CLL	Stages of writing				Total
				Pre writing	Drafting	Revising	Pre-writing, Drafting and Revising	
				No.	No.	No.	No.	
1	Positive Interdependence	15	Fully occur	9	0	3	3	15
			Partially occur	0	0	0	0	0
			Absent	0	0	0	0	0
			Total	9	0	3	3	15
2	Individual Accountability	15	Fully occur	9	0	3	3	15
			Partially occur	0	0	0	0	0
			Absent	0	0	0	0	0
			Total	9	0	3	3	15
3	Processing Group Interaction	15	Fully occur	0	0	0	0	0
			Partially occur	0	0	0	0	0
			Absent	0	0	0	15	15
			Total	0	0	0	15	15
4	Face-to-Face promotive Interaction	15	Fully occur	9	0	3	3	15
			Partially occur	0	0	0	0	0
			Absent	0	0	0	0	0
			Total	9	0	3	3	15
5	Social Skills	15	Fully occur	0	0	0	1	1
			Partially occur	7	0	3	0	10
			Absent	0	0	0	4	4
			Total	7	0	3	5	15
6	Group formation	15	Fully occur	0	0	0	0	0
			Partially occur	5	0	3	3	11
			Absent	0	0	0	4	4
			Total	5	0	3	7	15

Other three activities require that learners interact face-to-face at the three stages of practicing writing. Therefore, all the pair/group work writing activities (15) in one way or the other promote face-to-face interaction since they require learners to work together helping each other. The following issues, for example, were raised in the pair/group work writing activities.

- Define descriptive writing and then share what you think about descriptive writing.
- In what ways does descriptive writing differ from other types of writing? Discuss and jot down all possible differences the group suggests.
- Edit your essay and discuss it with your classmate.
- Work in pairs or groups and then compile your work. Write a minimum of 2 pages, etc.

The above statements reveal that face-to-face promotive interaction is vital to carry out the pair/group work writing activities. The learners are expected to interact with one another in answering and dealing with the activities. In other words, the statements indicate that the writing activities re-

quire the pair/group members to explain, argue, elaborate, and then link the issues with what they have learned previously. Thus, learners can get both academic and personal support by working together for mutual benefit.

Social (communicative) skills

The pair/group work writing activities in the Grade 11 English textbook were assessed and analyzed to see whether they promote social or communicative skills of the learners.

As seen in Table 4 above, ten of the 15 pair/group work writing activities in the textbook partially promote social or communicative skills at the pre-writing and revising stages, while four of them do not serve these functions. There is only one pair/group work writing activity that promotes social or communicative skills at the three stages of writing.

Group formation

Group formation is one of the basic elements of group based learning in CLL. The pair/group work writing activities in

the Grade 11 English textbook were assessed and analyzed in line with this basic component of the CLL.

Table 4 reveals that none of the 15 pair/group work writing activities provided in the textbook all in all fulfils this requirement as both the size of the group and the group members' role are not indicated precisely in conducting the activities in groups. However, 11 of the group writing activities suggest the group size to be engaged in performing the activities. For example, in units 5, 6, 8, 11 and 14, learners are asked to work in pairs.

In the writing section of unit 6, learners are asked to form groups of five in writing a reply letter to the letter sent to them. It is said that the activities in the mentioned units partially fulfill the requirement since the role of each student in the pair/group work is not identified. Four of the activities do not mention number of the group participants. That means neither the group size nor the student's role in the pair/group is suggested in doing the activities. For instance, in the writing sections of units 1, 5, 8, 13, learners are simply asked to work in pairs/groups without indicating their roles in the group and the group size. The teacher's guide also does not give any guidance regarding the group size and the role of individuals in the pair/group works.

The Nature of the Pair/Group Work Writing Activities

The following section discusses the nature of some selected pair/group work writing activities in each unit of the textbook.

In the writing section of unit one of the textbook, under the title 'Writing Description of People', learners are asked to define descriptive writing and its general characteristics and to explain ways in which it differs from other types of writing first individually and then compare their answers with their partners. They are also asked and encouraged to compare and contrast the key possible qualities of descriptive writing when they discuss with their friends. In this activity, each learner's contribution to the group activity is vital to carry out the task properly.

However, although the activity promotes positive interdependence, the purpose of learner's interaction is not directly related to the objective of teaching writing. In this pair/group work writing activity, learners focus on talking or sharing ideas about descriptive writing rather than practicing the writing skill itself.

Learners are also asked to write a short paragraph about the poem titled "TO SEE A WORLD" and what they have understood about the poet's idea, feelings and about his world outlook. Here, learners are also encouraged to discuss and share ideas with each other. Group activity is limited to the pre-writing stage which is hoped to help learners to generate ideas for developing details for the paragraph.

In the writing section of the third unit, students are asked to discuss the way the writer has described his character-Uncle Kwok after reading the passage titled "Uncle Kwok by Jade Snow Wong". In this writing section, learners are also asked to read the paragraph that uses specific details to create a distance impression of a particular boy, and to discuss the writer's writing style and the modifiers used in the paragraph.

In unit five, there are two pair/group work writing activities: identifying the main points and discovering supporting opinions. In the first activity, learners are asked to read the text 'Cultural Perspectives on Child Rearing' followed by writing down the main points of the text first individually, and then comparing their answers with their classmates. The aim of pair/group interaction is to enable learners solve their differences (if any).

In the writing section of unit six, there is a group writing project work in which learners write a reply letter in a group of five. In this activity, learners are first asked and encouraged to answer different questions in the letter sent to them by asking either their parents or people from their local "kebele". Then, they are asked to decide on the common answers in groups before they write the final reply. Therefore, to write a reply letter, learners interact greatly on deciding the common issues or details to be included in the letter to be written as a reply. So they work towards a single team product together as the activity requires their interaction (Thousand et al., 1994).

Similarly, in the writing section of unit eleven, there is a writing project work where students are supposed to complete in pairs or groups. The activity requires that learners go to a nearby health center and gather statistics on some issues related to HIV patients. After that, they are asked and encouraged to compile the information they have gathered and produce a minimum of two-page report in pairs/groups. This activity requires learners' interaction starting in planning, collecting and compiling data and producing the final written work although there is no clear specific role assigned to each team member.

Despite the fact that there are pair/group work writing activities that promote positive interdependence, there are writing activities that might have little role in helping learners develop writing skills by helping each other. For instance, in unit six of the writing section, there is a pair work where students are asked to discuss the characteristics of an essay and report writing, and then to list down their characteristics under each column in a given table. This activity requires learners' interaction. However, it is not a suitable writing activity that helps learners' practice the writing skill through cooperation, involvement and participation in pairs/groups. It might help learners to make theoretical differences between an essay and a report writing.

In the writing section of the first unit of the textbook, learners are required to read the given poem personally, and then discuss the difference between poetry and prose. They are also asked to discuss the issues raised in the text with their friends. Finally, the learners are required to write a short paragraph independently about the poem using the ideas they have discussed with their partners.

In the writing section of unit three, the learners are asked to read the passage titled "Uncle Kwok by Jade snow Wong" individually, and then discuss the way the writer has described his character - Uncle Kwok. The learners are also asked to read the given paragraph and list down some of the descriptive words that have implied boy's unusualness. Finally, the learners are asked to produce a composition of

some of its paragraphs describing a national character so that the composition can impress foreigners. In this writing activity, the learners contribute their own ideas by reading the given descriptive texts and identifying the descriptive adjectives that the writer used to help readers feel the unusualness of the story character. Having done this individually, the students interact with their classmates in groups. After the discussion, learners are also asked and encouraged to write some paragraphs describing their own national character.

In unit five, there are two writing activities that encourage learners to work in pairs/groups. In the first activity- Identifying the main points - learners are asked to read the passage titled “Cultural Perspectives on Child Rearing” and write down the main ideas of each paragraph. Then, they are asked to check out their answers with friends and solve differences (if any). The same thing is true of the second activity-Discovering supporting opinions. There are two activities designed to encourage learners to contribute their own share for the final work from the ideas that they get from the passage before they interact with their friends. This implies that the activities promote individual accountability though it is not at the three stages of writing.

In the group work writing activity of the same unit, learners first do individual work: they collect information individually by asking either their parents or other people from their local “kebele” in order to write a reply to the letter sent to them. This implies that the learners are given personal responsibility in writing the intended reply letter in groups.

In the writing section of unit eight, students first read the given model paragraph individually and do the exercises before they discuss with their friends. However, the activity invites learners only to take part in the oral discussion. That means, they are not asked to write something in pairs/groups after oral discussion. Instead, the learners are asked to write their own paragraphs about a favorite object of their own. In other words, the activity does not allow learners practice writing in pairs/groups.

In the writing section of unit 11, there is a writing project that is designed for pair/group work activity. In this activity, the learners are asked to go to a nearby health center and gather statistics on:

- Patients who have had a blood test for HIV
- Patients who come regularly for counseling
- Patients who disappeared after the test.

Then, they are asked to compile the data they have gathered and then write a minimum of a two-page report in pairs/groups. This activity encourages learners to contribute personally something to the final pair/group writing work which is the product of the contribution of the pair/group members. Therefore, we can say that this activity fully promotes individual accountability.

In general, all of the pair/group work writing activities used in the textbook encourage individual accountability as they require that each pair/group member contributes his/her own fair share/part to the pair/group work writing activities. However, the activities do not encourage learners to play their own personal roles at each stage of the writing activities. The learners are mostly asked to do activities in pairs/groups at the pre-writing stage. There are few activities

designed that encourage pair/group work writing activities at the three stages of writing.

In the writing section of unit six, learners are asked and encouraged to write a reply in groups of five to the letter sent to them from students overseas. To write the letter, the learners have to gather information by asking people. Then, they discuss and decide details of the letter in groups to write the reply letter. To decide the contents of the letter they write, learners should make decisions about the relevant details of the letter at the pre-writing or drafting stage. In this instance, learners practice one of the social skills: decision-making. They also develop problem-solving skill as they try to find solutions to the problems that abroad students have faced.

In contrast, the majority of the pair/group work writing activities (10) in the textbook partially promote social skills. For instance, in the writing section of unit one, learners are encouraged to practice the decision-making skill when they compare and contrast the key qualities of descriptive writing given in the textbook in groups.

In the writing section of the third unit, learners are asked to express their agreements and disagreements in small groups about their own national character that they describe to foreigners. In this activity, learners practice expressing agreements and disagreements which they use both inside and outside the classroom whenever they need.

In the writing section of unit five, the activities require learners to discuss differences of opinions (if any) with their partners after they have written the main points of the passage they read. Therefore, learners practice expressing and accepting opinions. They also get the opportunity of practicing listening to others who have different opinions.

In the writing section of unit eleven, learners are asked to compile the data they have gathered in order to write a report based on the gathered data about HIV patients. This activity encourages learners to sort out relevant and irrelevant information to produce a report that helps the learners practice decision-making skill and respecting others’ view also.

However, four of the pair/group work writing activities don’t help learners promote social skills since they do not allow and encourage learners to cultivate social skills, except allowing learners to work in pairs/groups. For example, in the writing section of unit one, there are two pair/group work writing activities which do not help learners practice social skills. Learners are simply asked to discuss the definition of descriptive writing, and the idea provided in the given poem in the textbook in order to write a paragraph.

In the writing section of unit five, learners talk about the essay that they write individually which does not cultivate any social skill. The same is also true in the pair/group work writing activities of unit eight. There is only one pair/group work writing activity that encourages learners to develop social skills. Therefore, there are no as such pair/group work writing activities that encourage learners to develop social skills that they need in their daily life.

DISCUSSIONS

As indicated in Table 1 above, among 48 (100%) writing activities in the 14 units of the Grade 11 English textbook,

only 15(31.25%) of the activities are group work writing activities. This implies that the majority of the writing activities 33 (74.755%) require that learners work independently. This means that textbook writers give more weight to the non-group work writing activities than the group work writing activities. This contradicts to what is set in the English language syllabus that says more emphasis should be given to cooperative learning to all skills and aspects of the target language (MoE, 2006).

It is also seen in Table 2 that the numbers of pair/group work writing activities do not match the time allocated to carry out the activities in the actual teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus, it can be inferred that the time given may inhibit learners to practice the writing activities in pairs/groups and with the help of the teacher in the classroom.

Based on the results on Table 3, the distribution of the number of pair/group work writing activities in the writing sections of each unit of the textbook varies from unit to unit. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the practice of pair/group work writing activities is not frequently and consistently presented in each unit of the textbook. This implies that learners may not get enough opportunities to practice cooperative writing frequently and consistently throughout the writing lessons.

As the results of the data on Table 4 indicate, all of the pair/group work writing activities used in the textbook encourage individual accountability as they require that each pair/group member contributes his/her own fair share/part to the pair/group work writing activities. However, the activities do not encourage learners to play their own personal roles at each stage of the writing activities. The learners are mostly asked to do activities in pairs/groups at the pre-writing stage. There are few activities designed that encourage pair/group work writing activities at the three stages of writing. This means students are not adequately engaged to the actual writing task in cooperation.

As it is shown in Table 4, none of the 15 pair/group work writing activities promotes processing group interaction at the three writing stages once a time. This means, the pair/group work writing activities suggested in the textbook do not encourage learners to evaluate their work. This shows that the entire pair/group work writing activities do not give the learners the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of their groups' success to achieve their common goal.

The above statements reveal that face-to-face promotive interaction is vital to carry out the pair/group work writing activities. The learners are expected to interact with one another in answering and dealing with the activities. In other words, the statements indicate that the writing activities require the pair/group members to explain, argue, elaborate, and then link the issues with what they have learned previously. Thus, learners can get both academic and personal support by working together for mutual benefit. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the designed pair/group work writing activities in the textbook enhance face-to-face interactions among the group members though most of the interactions occur at the pre-writing stage.

The data about the nature of pair or group work writing activities in the textbook reveal that there are significant

number of writing activities which are not relevant to developing students' actual writing skills performance. For example, in the writing section of unit six, there are activities designed to be carried out in pairs/groups. The first activity is designed to be completed in pairs although it does not seem to be important in helping learners develop writing skills since it simply invites learners to discuss some theoretical issues about essay writing and report writing. Since the learners are asked to answer the question "What is the difference between essay-writing and report-writing?" individually, it is possible to say that this activity encourages individual accountability. But it seems that it is a speaking activity.

SUMMARY

From data presentations, results and discussions, the following summaries are made.

- In the currently in use grade 11 English for Ethiopia textbook, less emphasis (weight) is given to the pair/group work writing activities compared to that of the non-group work writing activities. Out of the 48 writing activities presented in the textbook, only 15 activities (31.25%) require and encourage learners to work in groups. However, majority of the activities 33 (68.75%) require learners to work independently.
- Pair/group work writing activities are not frequently presented in each unit of the textbook. The distribution varies from unit to unit in the textbook. Therefore, the unequal distribution of the activities might inhibit the practice of frequent cooperative writing.
- The time allocated to practicing the pair/group work writing activities do not match the number of writing activities provided in the textbook. Thus, learners do not get adequate time to carry out these activities.
- The promotion of most of the basic elements of CLL in the designed pair/group work writing activities is limited to only the pre-writing stage. Therefore, the pair/group work writing activities do not adequately promote these basic elements of CLL at drafting and revising stages of writing which are vital in practicing writing skills.
- In most of the designed pair/group work writing activities, the role of each group member is not clearly stated in both the textbook and the teachers' guide.
- There are some pair/group work writing activities which are focusing on theoretical discussion rather than practicing writing skills. These might play little in helping learners practice writing skills.
- There are no any pair/group work writing activities in the grade 11 English textbook that promote processing group interaction which is very significant in encouraging learners to identify their weaknesses and strengths in CLL. This might suggest that learners do not experience evaluating pair/group working relations in the actual classroom teaching.
- The textbook and the teacher's guide do not have clear and specific procedures which encourage and guide the learners to work cooperatively in the pair/group work writing activities in relation to the three stages of

writing. For example, most of the activities simply order learners only to work in pairs or in groups without clearly showing what/how the learners should perform in each stage of writing with specific guidelines.

CONCLUSIONS

Textbook developers should consider incorporating the six basic elements of CLL in each stage of writing to structure or organize pair/group work writing activities in preparing materials. Due emphasis should also be given for encouraging and guiding learners on how to work together at drafting and revising stages.

Syllabus designers should allocate adequate time for the pair/group work writing activities. This would help both teachers and learners to practice the pair/group work writing activities in the classroom, instead of treating them as a home take assignment. Thus, teachers might see the contribution of each group member in the actual classroom writing practices.

Textbook developers should include pair/group work writing activities that are interesting, and can motivate learners to easily generate ideas for practicing cooperative writing.

Support for teachers can play a significant role in facilitating the implementation of CLL in teaching writing at the classroom level. Such supports can be provided through teacher's guide and textbooks. Thus, textbook writers should also take this into account.

Teachers should try to modify the pair/group work writing activities in such a way that their learners can easily interact cooperatively to produce a written text in pairs/groups. They should also provide their own writing activities appropriate to CLL in consultation with their students.

Further research should be conducted on the effectiveness of pair/group work writing activities in promoting CLL in teaching writing skills in Ethiopian context.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Guideline for Textbook Analysis

Element of CLL	Stages of writing Activities	Rating (Occurrences of Pair/Group Work Writing Activities against each Element of CLL)			
		Fully occur	Partially occur	Absent	Remark
1. Positive interdependence (If the activity requires each group members efforts for the success of the group/or if it develops the feeling among a group of learners that they succeed or fail together.)	Pre-writing Drafting Revising				
2. Individual accountability (If the activity requires that each member of the group is responsible for their own learning as well as that of their group-mates.)	Pre- writing Drafting Revising				
3. Social skills (If collaborative skills like leadership, decision making, conflict management, etc., are cultivated and explicitly taught.)	Pre- writing Drafting Revising				
4. Processing group interaction (If the activity provides the learners with opportunities to evaluate how the group is working, to think about how well they have cooperated and how to enhance their future cooperation.)	Pre- writing Drafting Revising				
5. Face-to-face promptive interaction (If each group member works together with in the group or if the activity requires learners explain, argue, elaborate, and link current material with what they have learned previously.)	Pre- writing Drafting Revising				
6. Group formation (If the size of the group and the students' role in group activities are indicated.)	Pre- writing Drafting Revising				

Fully occur - When the instructions and the contents of the pair/group work writing activities in the textbook witness the writing activities are fully in line with the elements of CLL.

Partially occur - When the instruction and the contents of the pair/group work writing activities in the textbook are not strongly in line with the elements of CLL, (or show some aspects of the elements).

Absent- When the elements of CLL mentioned in the table are totally missing.