

MEKELLE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

*AN ASSESSMENT ON EFL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL, THE
CASE OF MEKONI HIGH SCHOOL GRADE 11 STUDENTS ENGLISH CLASS*

IN FOCUS

By

Hayelom Fantay

SEPTEMBER, 2017
MEKELLE, ETHIOPIA

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN TEFL (TEACHING
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**SEPTEMBER, 2017
MEKELLE, ETHIOPIA**

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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by **Hayelom Fantay**, entitled “An assessment on EFL high school students’ writing skill, the case of Mokhoni high school grade 11 students’ English class in focus” and submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) compiles with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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I, **Hayelom Fantay** MA summer candidate in TEFL, agree that my supervisor has read all parts of my MA thesis submitted for defense and gave all the necessary comments which I have incorporated duly. Thus, I confirm that my MA thesis submitted for defense entitled “An assessment on EFL Preparatory school students’ writing skill, the case of Mokhoni high school grade 11 students’ English class in focus:” is ready for defense.

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I, _____ confirm that I have read all parts of the MA thesis submitted for defense of _____ and have given her comments which she has incorporated duly. Thus, I recommend that this MA thesis submitted for defense entitled “An assessment on EFL high school students’ writing skill, the case of Mekhoni High school grade 11 students’ English class in focus” is ready for defense.

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to assess students' skills in writing paragraphs. The study was conducted at Mokoni high School at Mehoni Town. Descriptive case design was employed by the researcher to assess their paragraph writing skill. The participants of the study were grade 11 sample students and English language teachers of Mokoni high School. The researcher used simple random sampling method to select sample students and comprehensive method for sample teachers. So as to attain the objectives of this study, the study employed three data gathering instruments: content analysis, questionnaire and interview. Content analysis was employed to assess students' paragraph writing skill. Thus, the researcher analyzed the paragraphs written by 35 students. The questionnaire was held with the students to crosscheck the data gained from content analysis and to collect further information on their paragraph writing skill. Furthermore, interview was made to triangulate the data gained from students and to gather information from teachers' feedback in paragraph writing lessons. All the data collected using different instruments were analyzed qualitatively. The study identified the major paragraph writing problems that the students' encountered. For example, organization, unity, punctuation, capitalization and spelling were the students' problem in paragraph writing. In addition, students' related factors like lack of knowledge of strategic use, lack of practice, and teachers' related factors such as teachers' ways of giving feedback factors were affecting students' paragraph writing. Therefore, since paragraph writing is a skill that could be improved through regular practicing, students should have been given chance of learning and practicing features of good paragraph to use them in paragraph writing effectively.

Key words: *challenges; paragraph writing; teachers' attempt;*

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter deals with the overall justification of the introduction part of the study. It articulates about background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study and operational definitions of key terms and expressions are clearly stated for the entire course of this study.

1.1. Background of the Study

English is an international language that is spoken in many countries as first, second or foreign language. Within the context of education, English language skills have a basic role in helping learners develop their thinking and creativity skills using several language processes like, relating, predicting, recalling, comprehending, applying, associating, analyzing, evaluating and solving problems. Among these skills, writing skill is taken into account a thinking tool for language, creativity development and, supplement for learning in all disciplines (Crystal, 2003).

Writing is one to find out among the four-language skill. It is not a natural skill because one could not acquire this ability automatically and easily. To acquire it, the students should get sufficient writing practices. These practices are imagined to stimulate the student's skill in writing and expressing thoughts in a good passage. Without practicing, it is impossible to write well and effectively

As Tangpermpoon (2008) points out that in comparison with other language skills of listening, speaking and reading, writing is the most difficult skill because it requires students to have a great deal of lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as principles of organization in L2 to produce a good written text. Additionally, Myles (2002) observes that the ability to write well is not naturally acquired from the environment through exposure to the language. He argues that writing is learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional setting. More over as Education and Training Policy (1994) indicates English is taught as a foreign language form and it should be a medium of instruction in primary, secondary and preparatory schools. So, learners learn to write paragraphs based on the activities and tasks, which are adapted in the text books. More of the writing tasks and activities presented in the syllabus and textbook require the students to practice writing skills under process-oriented approach; yet, the students' writing ability remains not satisfactory.

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the writing skills. It is achieved a good attention within the present EFL curriculum/ syllabus at both secondary and preparatory levels, as a crucial productive skill through which meaningful messages or ideas are transmitted. As students attain their secondary level education, they are required to come up with further written materials like paragraph, composition etc.

So, practicing writing skill will help students get acquainted with new types of writing as well as consolidated their writing skill. For example, students study writing skill from low to high, from basic to advance. At grade 11 level, students mainly study writing many or a large part in paragraph. It provided students with some background knowledge before studied in the process of writing tasks at this grade level. Similarity, writing tasks at this level would prepare students essential skill to help them write well. So practicing writing plays an important role because it prepares needed things for students such as: adequate vocabulary, good planning and, processing writing skills helped that organize sentences into a text cohesive and coherent as whole, which is as explicit as possible and complete in it, especially it is helping them know how to write a single paragraph when they planned to write.

The ability to write paragraph appropriately and effectively is a major part of written communicative competence among the students at all levels of the education system. However, learning to master writing a paragraph is a problem that students face in secondary schools (Nunan, 1989). He reported that students' achievement in English at high school level indicates that they faced various challenges in paragraph writing which can lower their performance in English over the years consistently.

In the context of Mokhoni high school, the researcher as the English teacher in the school observed the students are ineffective in writing. They are still not ready to write well developed and organized paragraph. This failure of students in composing paragraph can be revealed by their inability to develop short paragraph to express themselves. This may lead to loss of creativity. This study attempts to get some understanding about major problems that grade11 students encounter while writing a paragraph in English. Knowing about these challenges will help in "making principled decision in the classroom concerning the types of skills we wish to give and the method of giving them.

Therefore, to get comprehensive data on the problem to be studied at Fenkil preparatory school has been selected as the study area. So, students' paragraph writing skill would be assessed and enhanced the possible solutions.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Writing is intuitively appealing to teachers and learners. Therefore, the present was on assessing the EFL students' paragraph writing skill at *MEKONI HIGH SCHOOL*: grade 11 in focus. The researcher has been teaching in that high school since 2007 E.C. More importantly, he had taught for ten years in grade 9, 10,11. So he had been observing that almost all the students experienced lack of writing skill because they were challenging at writing. As a result, most of the students were not active participants in the classroom. Besides the researcher observed that there was no systematically collected pedagogical evidence in English department that indicated the writing skill there. In addition to that, the research problem was suited to the researcher's skill and could find resources to study on it.

Accordingly, the motivation for this researcher comes from the dissatisfaction expressed by the subject teachers and students who consider writing as a difficult skill. Other factors that initiated the researcher to conduct this study are: interest of the researcher, the actual practice of writing skill in grade 11, and the importance of writing skill for grade 11 Mokhoni High school students.

English is an international language which is widely spoken throughout the world. It is the most important language for students to master English in all skills. The skills are Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Of these skills writing is the most important skill and it has various significances:

Writing is an essential skill for learners through which they convey their ideas and thoughts clearly. Also, it is a very complex productive skill that requires thinking and cognitive processes in which it goes through different stages of pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing. Successful writing needs many overlapping aspects such as organization, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, coherence & cohesion and others.

As Education and Training Policy (1994) indicates English is taught as a foreign language form and a medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary levels. Learners have been learning to write paragraphs based on the activities and tasks which are adjusted in the text books. More of the writing tasks and activities presented in the syllabus and textbook require the students to practice writing skills under process-oriented approach; yet, the students' writing ability is still not satisfactory.

A paragraph as the key unit of any writing a string of related sentences that gives one main idea. A long or short paragraph in general starts with a topic sentence that introduces the controlling idea of the whole paragraph. Then supporting sentences come to explain the main idea of the topic sentence for

readers by giving ideas, details, and examples. To end the paragraph, a concluding sentence summarizes the whole idea of the paragraph. Thus, English language learners require high linguistic and cognitive competence to write a paragraph. This competence must be analyzed to establish a well understanding of writing. With that, the committed errors form the indirect path to study the learners' competence in writing due to its abstraction (Jayakaran, 2005).

Some local research studies have been conducted in relation to paragraph writing for instance Mohammed (2015) conducted a study on, assessing students' paragraph writing problem in Bedeno Secondary School with special reference to grade10 students in focus". The findings revealed that students encounter problem of organization, unity, punctuation, capitalization and spelling in writing. In addition, students' paragraph writing was affected by students related and teachers' related factors.

Moreover Teklemedhin, (2017) Conducted research on Investigating EFL students' paragraph writing problems: the case of two selected preparatory schools in Gode district, Shembelele zone, Somali regional state The researcher identified the major problems students have in paragraph writing. The first problem is related to the three parts of paragraph in which students have a problem of identifying these parts and cannot write according to it. The other problem is related to students' inability to write paragraphs that can fulfill the quality of good paragraph such as organization, and unity. Furthermore, spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalization are the other most serious problems students encounter.

Furthermore Birhane (2018) conducted study on assessing Factors Affecting Students' Paragraph Writing Problems: The Case of Kemissie Preparatory School. The researcher reported that the major paragraph writing problems students' encounter.

Therefore, the local researchers focused on at different aspect of writing. For example, Mohammed. (2015) conducted research on student's paragraph writing problems, Teklemedhin (2017) also conducted on investigate EFL students' paragraph writing problems and Birhane (2018) studied on factors that affecting students' paragraph writing problems.

However, the present research focused on an assessment on EFL students writing skill in general. It generally aimed at identifying the challenges of EFL students in writing skill. Therefore, this research differs from the earlier researches because of these points. After, the researcher identified his gap by comparing and contrasting with the previous research. Thus, the researcher designed three research

questions in line with their objectives and conducted the research through carefully developed methodologies so as to fill the gap observed.

Therefore, by taking that point as a research gap, this study will attempt to get some understanding about the paragraph writing skill abilities of the students while writing paragraph.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General objective

The general objective of this study was to assess paragraph writing skill of Grade 11 Students at Mekoni high school in Mekhoni town.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. Assessing the challenges that students face in writing paragraphs;
2. Identifying factors influencing students' paragraph writing.
3. Exploring how teachers try to assist the students to overcome their paragraph writing difficulties.

1.4. Research Questions

The study put answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the challenges that students face in paragraph writing?
2. What are the factors influencing students' problem in paragraph writing?
3. What do teachers do to help their students in overcoming the problems in paragraph writing?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Since this study focused on assessing students' paragraph writing skills, the finding of the study would have the following significances. First, it would help students to identify the challenges they experience when writing paragraphs and show them the techniques through which they could improve their writing skills. Besides, it could give English language teachers insight about how they might teach using appropriate feedback and approaches. Finally, it might serve as a reference for other researchers who conduct similar studies.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study was conducted to assess students' paragraph writing problems at Mekoni high School. The study did not touch all aspects of writing skills but the study tries to touch only on paragraph writing in a specific way. The study has been limited to paragraph development. It has been limited to problems which identify from paragraph writing by the students. More specifically, the study focuses on 35 grade eleven students (has been selected through random sampling method) and two English language teachers (has been selected through comprehensive sampling method) because in Mekoni high School there are only two grade eleven English language teachers. However, in order to clarify the issue under investigation, other related aspects of paragraph writing problems will be elaborated.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

The research was conducted in Mokhoni high school which is found in southern zone of Tigray region Mekhoni town. The research particularly focused on in grade 11 EFL students of paragraph writing skill. There, the researcher assessed students' paragraph writing skill. Therefore, the paragraph writing was the main target of the researcher. And the objectives of the study were delimited to the main variables, essay writing and to some extent respondents' perceptions on writing skill use nothing else.

1.8. Acronyms and Definition of Terms

ELT: English language Teaching

L2: Second language

MOE: Ministry of education

ESL: English as second language

SS: students

TS: Teachers

Achievement: Successful accomplishment of task writing usually is reasons of skill hard work and interest.

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

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

2.1 Concept of Writing Skill

Writing seems to have taken on different definitions for different groups of people in order to suit their different needs and purposes for writing. Writing is a complex metacognitive activity that draws on an individual's knowledge, basic skill, strategies, and ability to coordinate multiple processes. Graham (1997) identified the following four vital areas in the writing process: (1) knowledge of writing and writing topics, (2) skill for producing and crafting text, (3) processes for energizing and motivating participants to write with enthusiasm, and (4) directing thought and actions through strategies to archive writing goals. Grape and Kaplan (1996), in their book "Theory and practice of writing", explore the meaning of writing in terms of the rhetorical triangle in writing. Such triangle consists of the reader, the recipient of the final product of the writing process, the writer, the originator of the message; and the subject matter and the text itself. Both the writer and the reader have to consider all these aspects when writing and reading, respectively for each one plays a significant role in the journey towards meaning. There is another definition for writing, "Writing is the creative process because it is a process of reaching out for one's thought and discovering them. Writing, as such a process of meaning making" (Third Year student, 1994, National University of Singapore).

2.2. Types of Writing

2.2.1. Exposition

Exposition is one of four rhetorical modes of discourse, along with argumentation, description and narration. It is also used for speeches. The purpose of exposition is to provide some background and inform the readers about the plot, character, setting and theme of the essay, story or motion picture.

3.2.2. Argumentation

Argumentation, also called persuasion, is the interdisciplinary study of how humans should, can, and do reach conclusions through logical reasoning that is claims based, soundly or not, on premises. It includes the arts and sciences of civil debate, dialogue, conversation, and persuasion. It studied rules of inference, logic and procedural rules in both artificial and real-world setting. Argumentation includes debate and negotiation, which are concerned with reaching mutually acceptable conclusion. It is used in law, for example in trial, in preparing an argument to be presented to court, and in testing the validity of certain kind of evidence.

2.2.3 Description

Description is one of four rhetorical modes (also known as modes of discourse). It is also the fiction – writing mode for transmitting a mental image or the particulars of a story.

2.2.3.1. Description as a rhetorical mode

The purposes of description are to re-create or visually present a person, place, event, or action so that the reader may picture that which is being described. Descriptive writing may be found in the other rhetorical modes.

2.2.3.2. Description as a fiction - writing mode

Fiction is a form of narrative, fiction – writing also has distinct forms of expression, or modes, each with its own purposes and conventions. Agent and author Even Marshall identifies five fiction – writing modes, action, summary, dialogues feeling/ thoughts and background (Marshall 1988, p.143-165). Author and writing instructor Jessica Page Morrell list six delivery modes for fiction – writing: action, exposition, description, dialogues, summary and transition (Morrell 2001, p.127). Author Peter Selgin refers to methods, including action, dialogue, thoughts, summary, scene and description (Selgin 2007, P.38). Together with dialogue, narration, and exposition, and summarization, description is one of the most widely recognized of the fiction –writing modes?

2.2.3. Narration

Narration is some kind of retelling, often in words (though it is possible to mime a story), of something that happened (a story). Narration recounts events, perhaps leaving some occurrences out because they are from some perspective insignificant, and perhaps emphasizing others. Narration thus shapes history (the scene of events, the story of what happened).

2.3. The Importance of Writing Skill to Students of High School

In the school setting, writing plays two distinct but complementary roles. First, it is a skill draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goal, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, writing is a mean of extending and deepening student’s knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Key, 2000; Shanahan, 2004; Sperling& Freedman, 2001). Because these roles are closely linked, Reading Next recommended that language arts teacher use content – area texts to teach reading and writing skills and that content – area teachers provide instruction and practice in discipline – specific reading and writing.

Writing is one of the ways to transmit thoughts or ideas to the other people. Writing is also the important skill in studying English, which need great investment from the students. Many students in high school do not know the important of writing, so they only spend a few times for it. It is not true because good at writing can help them study other skills in English more effectively. Besides that, practicing writing skill will help students get acquainted with new types of writing as well as consolidate their writing skill. For example, students study writing skill from low to high, from basic to advance. At grade11, students mainly study writing one paragraph or a small part in essay

Nowadays, writing is also the key to success in college and university. Most context of life (school, the workplace, and the community) call for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical, demands proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibly to the context in which it takes place. Otherwise, almost college or university required their students to get foreign language certificates for graduated qualification, and writing is indispensable in these exams. Good at writing can help students get a good job. At present, many foreign companies need people with high writing skill level to help them makes contracts or documents in English.

2.4. Nature of Writing

Writing skill is one of the four integrated skills. Its nature has been undermined in English language teaching. It has often been considered equal to teaching grammar and sentence structures. Different surveys proved that language composition is difficult and a complex process. Harmer pointed out that a number of reasons exist why students find language production difficult. Nunan (1989) agreed that learning speaking English is easier than writing skill. Other than complexity, writing is a very active process which allows writers to play upon words and ideas. This idea is advocated by Zamel (1992) who held writing as a “meaning making purposeful and exploratory process” (p. 473). It can be considered as a process of discovery of the way to compose a piece of writing. Grabe& Kaplan (1996) writing as a “technology” and this technology must be learnt after a continuous practice (p.6). Language transfer is another aspect through which nature of writing can be determined. According to a scholar, writers transfer writing abilities and strategies from their first language to their second language. In this regard Jones and Tetroe’s study as cited in (2001) reported that “weaker writers” failure to use writing strategies in English was based on their failure to use these strategies in their first language”. Contrary to this viewpoint is the opinion put forth by Blanchard & Root who argued that writing was like the art of driving a car. If one knows the art of driving, one may know the driving rules of that country, but if he is

to drive in another country one may not know all the rules. Same is the case with languages. The conventions of language may change from one to another.

2.5 Purposes of Writing

According to Coffin et al. (2003) students compose writing for a number of reasons such as to be assessed, to develop their critical thinking skills, to help their understanding and memory, to broaden their learning beyond the classroom, to enhance their communicative skills, and to be prepared as future professionals in different fields of knowledge. In Pakistani context BS honour students mostly write for summative assessment purposes. Although students have to take mid-term tests yet its weightage is limited to 25% which does not allow teachers to assess students' essay-writing ability comprehensively.

2.6. Approaches to Teach Writing Skills

Following are some of the approaches which are used by teachers to teach writing skills to the students:

2.6.1. Product Approach

In the history of pedagogic reforms one of the oldest approaches is the product approach which focuses on finished written products of the students. The distinguished feature of this approach is its attention on accuracy. As said by Nunan (1989) "the teacher who adopts this approach makes sure that the end product is grammatically correct". To add to this McDonough & Shaw (1993) argued that product approach can be considered as a traditional way to teach writing. Its main focus is on corrections and reinforcement of grammar. Moreover, this approach makes the teacher judge the finished products of the students. Error detection also falls in this approach. Teachers find out the errors committed by the students and try to eliminate them.

2.6.2. Process Approach

When the product approach could not provide fruitful results to composition writing more attention was given to the process of writing. Resultantly, this led to a shift towards what is called the process approach which considers writing as a complex, cognitive, recursive and evolving process. Six stages of writing process are: determining the topic, taking account of readers, editing, proof reading and revising. In the words of Zeng (2005), process sees writing as a complicated cognitive process and it has multiple stages like pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. But some drawbacks have also been attached to this approach. It does not focus on the variety and differentiation of the process of writing, specifically social context.

2.7. Definition of Paragraph

Paragraph has been defined by different writers since there is no universally accepted definition. Paragraph is combination of sentences, intended to explain, illustrate, prove, and apply some truth; or to give a history of events during any definite portion of time, relation to any one subject of thought (Dunca, 2007). Paragraph is the next division of discourse beyond the sentence and is “a collection of sentences with unity of purpose” (ibid) besides; Njoku (1997) defines a paragraph as “the largest single unit of an essay. It develops one single, main idea by means of supporting facts.

Furthermore, Omisha and Ann Hogue (2006) say that a “paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing a group of related sentences develops one main idea and consists of two kinds of sentences: a topic sentence and a number of supportive statements. Number of sentences within a single paragraph is an important but it should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly.” Though sometimes for emphasis, or in dialog or transition, paragraph may have only one or two sentences. A closer look at the various definitions reveals that they all speak to the fact that a paragraph is a group of sentences that deals to a single idea. Therefore, a working definition of the paragraph for this paper, derived from the various definitions is, paragraph is a group of related sentences that discuss one main idea, the first sentence of which begins on a new line.

2.8. Importance of Paragraph Writing

Paragraph writing has always been considered an important skill in teaching and learning. As commented by Rao (2007), EFL writing is useful in two respects: First, it motivates students’ thinking, organizing ideas, developing their ability to summaries, analyses and criticize. Second, it strengthens students’ learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language. Besides, writing process is a form of problem-solving which involves generating ideas, planning, goal setting, monitoring, and evaluating what has been composed (White & Arndt, 1991). In relation to the context of the current study, paragraph writing is significant to the learning of Ethiopian student of English because it facilitates student’ acquisition of the basic study skills needed for understanding what they study and expressing it in their own words. This will assist them to keep away from memorization, rote learning and plagiarism that are much discouraged in the recent theories of teaching and learning. In addition, competence in paragraph writing will help students pass all their academic courses successfully. Moreover, being proficient in paragraph writing in English will enable student of English to be successful and action researchers in the future.

2.10. Parts of well -Structured Paragraph

According to Mayers (2006) & Khoury (2007) a well-structured and written paragraph consists of three significant parts. These parts make the paragraph effective and logically flow of an idea in the paragraph writing.

2.10.1 Topic Sentence

In the process of paragraph writing, topic sentence typically describes the main idea of the paragraph and gives the brief description of the intended message. It holds the overall message of the paragraph and helps readers to have an idea about the following parts before they actually start reading it (Khoury 2007).

2.10.2. Supporting sentences

The supporting sentences consist of one or more sentences, ideas and arguments. The supporting sentences that follow the topic sentence should be more specific and give the details of the topic sentence. They can be made more specific using various details: by giving definition, comparing and contrasting, exemplification, Khoury (2007).

2.10.3. Concluding Sentence

Concluding sentence summarizes the paragraph and offers a solution to the problem, predicts a situation, makes a recommendation, or restates a conclusion. Mayers (2006) most important, the concluding sentence should ensure that the reader gets the paragraph's main point and takes away the intended message at the end of text.

2.11. Qualities of Effective Paragraph

According to Mayers (2006) well-structured paragraph consists of the qualities of paragraph such as unity, coherency and adequate idea development.

2.11.1. Unity

A paragraph has unity when its sentences stick to the topic sentence of the paragraph. The topic sentence might appear at the beginning, middle and at the end of the paragraph. It should foreshadow what's to come and suggest the order in which details will be discussed. A paragraph will have achieved its purpose when it reaches the closing sentence (Khoury 2007).

2.11.2. Coherence

Coherence refers to the connection between utterances with discourse structure, meaning, and action which is being combined. According to Sahla (2015) coherence can be achieved by the use of certain devices, among them transitional words and phrases, pronoun reference, and repeated. Primarily, coherence rests on clear logical progression of thought from one sentence to the next.

2.8.3. Idea development

Idea development in paragraph writing refers to the development of subordinate ideas within a paragraph sufficiently. Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be effectively explained and supported by evidences, examples and details and should explain the paragraph's controlling idea. A paragraph which lacks development is one that introduces a topic but fails to provide sufficient information to explain it to readers (Khoury, 2007). Thus, an assigned topic may need a certain method of development and this method of development will require the use of certain patterns. Certain methods of development require certain structures (Sahla, 2015). Students should be guided in using those patterns that to be practiced.

2.12. Paragraph Writing Problems and Difficulties

The practical and theoretical issues that are included in paragraph writing make it the most challenging skill of language. According to Ibrahim (2015) the writing process is a form of problem-solving which involves generating ideas, planning, goal setting, monitoring, and evaluating what has been composed. Problems are the real indicators of the errors encountered by the learners. According to Teklemedhin (2017), the major difficulties of students' faced paragraph writing are hand writing and punctuation, syntax, sentences skill errors, (i.e., problems in the inflection of regular verbs and nouns, subject verb agreement and the use of articles), spelling, vocabulary and poor organization of ideas such as problems related to development and summarization of the topic. Birhane (2018) found out that students faced problems like lack of appropriate vocabulary, punctuation errors, idea generating and organizing problems, spelling errors and appropriate grammar usage in writing activities. Brown (2007) has classified these problems in to three categories.

The first classification of the problems is psychological Problems which are related to the writers' internal behavior. Brown (2007) believes that the psychological problems of students can be identified from the affective factors of the students. Hence, Psychological problems are problems of motivation, interest, and self-confidence (Byrne, 1988).

The second type of problems according to Brown (2007) is related to cognitive problems which are about the knowledge of the topic. Being at a loss for ideas is a familiar experience to most of us when we are obliged to write. Therefore, the cognitive problems that students face in their second language writing include problems of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, organization, and content.

The third type of problems according to Brown (2007) is socio-cultural problems. As language and culture highly interrelated, so, it is important to scrutinize the difficulties in writing paragraphs through the perspective of the socio-cultural factors. Brown (2007) also claims that culture becomes strongly important in the learning of a second language. It means that when language learners are connected and actively use language outside the class room, they become an effective in English paragraph writing. Thus, in order to be an effective writer, students should avoid these problems by making consistent practice in the classroom and outside the classroom on it.

2.13. Causes for EFL Students' Problems in Paragraph Writing

Paragraph writing, which constitutes a problem for many EFL students in Ethiopian schools, is a major challenge for both students and teachers of English at Fenkil preparatory School. According to different authors paragraph writing is still one of the perennial challenges for students. The various problems that students face in paragraph writing are connected with various factors.

2.13.1. Inadequate Exposure to the Target Language

Lack of adequate practice and exposure to the target language is one among the major causes for the poor skill of students in paragraph writing. It is admitted that many students do not have a good access or conducive environment to practice their English outside the classroom, especially both in writing. When students have limited exposure to the language learnt, there will be a big possibility for them to commit errors in their language (Sahla, 20115).

2.13.2. Lack of Practice

Awol, (1999) states that the learners must take the responsibility for their learning if meaningful learning is to take place. We learn to write by writing (Ibrahim, 2018). In addition, using the most effective approach to teaching EFL writing is not enough if learners do not practice enough writing (Awol, 1999). Writing is a skill acquired only through practice. It is, like dance and sport, an activity that could be improved only through practice (Andrews, 1999). Teaching is directing students to practice the language skills. Learning is personal experience which requires the active and regular engagement of the learner.

In spite of the above facts, students in EFL classroom, especially in writing, are not well provided with sufficient writing activities and are not well practiced on regular based.

2.13.3. Problem of Writing Apprehension

Apprehension is the feeling of being worry about something. With regard to writing, it can be defined as the fear of writing process that out weights the projected gain from ability to write MacIntyre (1989). Learners could be affected with the understanding of the fact that writing anxiety clearly and negatively affects their writing performance Pajares and Johnson, (1994). This is to mean that when students are given a writing activity, they begin worrying about writing a paragraph as psychological rather than assuming it as logistical. This indicates that writing anxiety is distinctive to productive language particularly of writing Horwitz et al (1986). From the above context Scholars have become more sensitive to writing anxiety and target language relation has recently captured more attention.

2.13.4. Lack of Appropriate Feedback

Teachers' provision of corrective feedback in paragraph writing is very indispensable for students in writing an effective paragraph. Corrective feedback either from a teacher, peer, or self is very important for students to develop their paragraph writing skill (Sahla, 2015). Feedback that students receive from a source, or a combination of sources, provides them with information about what is good and what needs to be improved so that they can incorporate and use the feedback in their revisions and in the final product of their writing.

Feedback on student writing can make learning more effective, as noted by Cardelle and Corno (1981); the more feedback students receive of their performance the better they understand what they need to do to correct their mistakes. Accordingly, the method of feedback provision could also be other factor that affects their achievement in writing good paragraph. Feedback provided for students is not creative because it doesn't inform them what they are expected to improve and how to formulate these improvement William, (2007). Black and William (1998) elucidate that student can make gains in their learning when a given feedback is focused on the specific problems of the students' work and demonstrate at them the errors with its way of correction.

2.13.5. Carelessness

Because of a variety of reason, EFL learners may sometimes become careless in writing in target language (Awol, 1999). According to him carelessness may happen as a result of lack of motivation and interest. This lack of motivation and interest on paragraph writing may occur when the materials to be taught and teachers' method of teaching do not suit the learners.

2.13.6. Lack of Vocabulary

Lexical or vocabulary knowledge is very pivotal for students to write a unified, cohesive and complete paragraph. They need to be rich in words in order to communicate with their readers effectively. Lack of words usually creates a breakdown in communication. Based on the idea of Putra (2009), students' vocabulary knowledge and writing performance are interrelated to each other. Vocabulary knowledge alone, however, cannot end in accurate and effective writing. Communication demands the use of words in sentences; that is, the need for grammatical knowledge is also unquestionable

Chapter three: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. Concepts are included in this chapter, like: a research setting, participants of the study, sampling technique and sample size, a research design, data gathering instruments, procedures of data collection, method of data analysis, validity and reliability and ethical considerations respectively.

3.2 Research Design

The descriptive research design has been used for this study to observe, describe the existing phenomena in their natural environment so as to achieve the research objectives. This study adopts a descriptive research design. According to Orodho (2004) a descriptive research design enables the researcher to collect information about people's opinions, attitude or any of the variety of education or social issues that affect them. This research design has been considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gather information from the respondents on challenges students face in practicing writing skills in the researcher school.

The main purpose of this study was to assess paragraph writing skill of students at Mekoni high school Mekhoni town southern zone, Tigray regional state. Therefore, in order to achieve the intended objectives of the study and answer research questions, a descriptive research design was employed. According to Kumar (1996), descriptive methods attempt to describe and explain systematically a situation, problem or phenomenon. The researcher uses descriptive research design since it is important in gathering data of what people think, feel and do.

The design, therefore, would be suitable for the study because of its strengths as it enables the researcher to gather information from the sampled respondents.

3.3. Research setting

The study has been conducted at Mehoni High school (grade 11), which is found at Mehoni Town, southern zone ,Tigray Regional State. The school has been chosen for this study because

the researcher works as an English teacher near the targeted area (school) and the existing situation enables him to conduct research on the topic and will come up with reliable inquiry.

3.4. Participants of the Study

The primary sources of data in this study were grade eleven students and English language teachers compressive sampling procedure has been used to sample out English language teachers from the study areas as the respondents in the study. Because there were only two English language teachers in that grade level (grade 11). The respondents have been selected on the basis of what they can contribute to the researcher's understanding of the phenomena. As Long (2005) stated, using students as informants seems an obvious and imperative choice, and they are often the primary, sometimes the only respondents. With respect to the participants' similarity in the same grade level, they have been randomly selected.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Brown (2001) states that each individual in the population must have equal chance of being selected so as to reduce the effect of bias and enhance objectivity. In this study, the sample population was grade eleven students and English language teachers. To obtain reliable data from the given population, it is obvious that using the whole population will be better. But due to limited resources, a complete coverage of the population was not an easy task. Consequently, sampling was a preferable method that will enable the researcher study relatively small units in place of the whole population. So the sampling was taken as a representative from the whole population to make data more reliable two grade 11 language teachers have been selected using compressive sampling due to the fact that teacher respondents were only two in number. On the other hand; the total numbers of students who learn in grade 11 were 175 so, 20 % involved as participants of the study using simple random sampling method. As to Sharma's (2000) suggests that 10_20% of accessible population can be taken as a sample in simple random sampling method. This method has been chosen as it provides equal chance for students to be selected. The total numbers of sections were 3 then the researcher selected the respondents through alphabetical orders from each section. Finally, 12, 12, 11 students were taken from each section using simple random sampling method and totally 35 students have been taken as a sampled.

3.6. Sources of Data

To answer the three research questions, both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The primary data was collected using questionnaire and interview while the secondary data was collected using content analysis. Sample student writings which were marked by the EFL teachers in the school were also analyzed and interpreted.

3.7. Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments used in this study include: content analysis, open ended questionnaire and Interview. Content analysis was the major instrument, while questionnaire and interview were as supportive data gathering instruments.

Data instruments have been selected based on the research design. Therefore, to attain the general and specific objectives and to answers the research questions the above three types of data gathering instruments have been employed to generate valid data.

3.7.1. Content Analysis

The major data collecting instrument for this study was document analysis. This method was used to assess student's grammatical competence in writing paragraphs. Document analysis is a technique, which can generate valid and reliable data as Selinger and Shohamy (1989) state document analysis is one of the data gathering techniques in qualitative research.

Therefore, 35 students in grade eleven have been selected to write paragraphs. To write the paragraph, the researcher list down four topics. Then students choose a topic of their interest. After that, the students write their paragraphs in two consecutive days. When students finish their first day work, then it keeps with researcher. On the next day they complete the paragraph. This helps to control factors. The various writing activities are similar to the topics study in the class. All students have been given as much time as possible to complete their task. In addition, to encourage the students to produce well written paragraph, the researcher and sample teachers tell them that their works have been assessed and given sufficient advice not to copy from their classmates. Then their paragraph work has been evaluated and analyzed based on the framework of Mohammed Hussein (2015). Among checklists, some of them include paragraph development, punctuation, and spelling.

3.7.2. Questionnaire

Questionnaire was the other instrument used to collect data regarding the factors influencing EFL students' paragraph writing skill problems. As questionnaire is a self-report data collection instrument that each research participants fills out as a part of a research study, it helps to obtain accurate information from the participant.

Open-ended question has been used. The questions have been prepared based on the research questions, objectives and literature review of the study. The questionnaire has been designed mainly to assess the causes that influence EFL students' paragraph writing skill problems, the questionnaire has been distributed to the randomly selected 35 students.

3.7.3. Interview

In addition to questionnaire, the required data were gathered through interview with EFL teachers who have been teaching grade 11 students. This technique helped the researcher to identify the challenges that students faced while the teachers taught paragraph writing. Interview is preferred to get direct information, free discussion, response and flexibility that could not be obtained through other data collection instruments (Salinger and Shohamy, 1989). The interview questions were intended to achieve the desired objectives of the study; and the items were designed in line with the literature review. To check the strength of the items in responding the objectives, the drafted items were given to one TEFL graduate, Girmay Kindaya, and one colleague, Yohanse G/hiwot. After receiving their comments and suggestions and after the advisor's serious comment on the items, the researcher is going to modify and change some items. Finally, the interview was carried out.

3.8. Data Collection Procedure

In this study, data was collected through content analysis, questionnaire and interview. This refers to the gathering of information to serve or prove some facts (Kombo and Tromp, (2006), and it involved the real process of going to the field to get the required information from the selected population. First the researcher visits the target school to seek permission from schools' administrators and make appointments for data collection with the respondents. The researcher explains to the respondents the purpose for the research emphasizing that the

information they give will be used for research purpose only and treat confidentially as their identity has not been revealed.

In this study qualitative data has been generated. According to Selinger and Shohamy (1989) once the specific design is selected for the study it is consistent with the objectives of the research. In this study, data has been collected through content analysis, open ended questionnaire and Interview. Before collecting data, sample grade 11 teachers and students have been identified. Then the researcher employs different data collection instruments at different times. Therefore, to conduct the study, first sample students' paragraph has been collected, after collecting the researcher reads their paragraphs again and again line by line. Then the data has been classified and analyzed properly to gain input to design open ended questions. Secondly, open ended questionnaires have been undertaken for the sampled English teachers. The data that obtains from open ended questionnaire helps the researcher to crosscheck with document analysis. Finally, Interview has been made. English language teachers have been interviewed. Moreover, the problems which have been presented using these tools have been identified and results have been collected.

3.9. Methods of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through qualitative methods. In the qualitative activities, the data were collected through content, questionnaire and interview, and analyzed using descriptive statement.

3.10. Validity and reliability of data collection

3.9.1 Validity of Instruments

The validity of the applied instruments of this study was tested before administration. Internal validity is a measure of accuracy and whether it matches reality; external validity, on the other hand, is a measure of generalizability (David and Marlene, 2006). To demonstrate content validity the instrument must show that it fairly and comprehensively covers the domain or items that it purports to cover (Louis C. and et al, 2007). Validity is an indication of whether the instrument measures what it claims to measure. Content validity is the scope to which a measuring instrument covers a representative sample of the domain of behaviours to be

measured. Face validity is the extent to which a measuring instrument appears valid on its surface (Sherri, L.J., 2010).

Thus, this study tried to check the face and content validities of the data collection instruments by administering them to some experts and staff members of the as well as the researcher's advisor and co-advisor. All these validity tests were carried out to enrich the contents of the instruments.

3.9.2 Reliability of Instruments

Reliability, on the other hand, is used as a measure of quality and the term means repeatability or consistency. A measure is reliable if it gives the same results on two or more separate occasions, when the assumption is made that the object being measured has not changed. Whether quantitative or qualitative measures are used, the key to successfully applying a notion of reliability is that the object being measured remains stable (David and Marlene, 2006). Reliability is an indication of the consistency or stability of measuring instrument (Sherri L., J, 2010). However total reliability, according to Elizabeth, S., M. (2011), is difficult to achieve since human beings are not static.

The instrument of this study was piloted by administering to 15 grade 11 students of Makoni high School for reliability check. This pilot selection was made because the researcher perceives that the pilot area and the subjects can display common learning and teaching characteristics on the issues of paragraph writing.

According to Mark B.& Peter C. (2001), pilot study is a primary test of a questionnaire or other instrument schedule that helps to identify problems and benefits associated with the design of the study. According to (Sherri, L. J, 2010), the Correlation Coefficients of reliability is categorized into three ranges: 0.70 -1.00 as strong; 0.30-0.69 as moderate; and 0.00-0.29 as weak. However, literatures commonly argue that a reliability coefficient of 0.5 and above is acceptable. In this study, the Guttman Split-Half reliability estimate on the internal consistency of the questionnaire filled by students was computed. The calculated Cronbach alpha co-efficient 0.72 revealed the reliability of the questionnaire was strong.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Social research acknowledges that, ethical issues are vital for doing any research project because “Research done on humans affairs all sorts of benefits and burdens to all sort of people” (Wilkinson 2001.13) wellington (2000.54) also argues that ethics is an important aspect in all forms of research but ethical consideration is «multiplied in education research, when people are studying people. “Bryman (2008) supports this point by arguing that” ethical issues cannot be ignored as they relate to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved.” He also states that the main focus of issues is to insure that people participating in the research are protected from any possible harm including physical, emotional, mental and financial harm during the research process (Brioches 2008).

According to several writers' suggestions, there are five common principles of ethics the researchers should take in to account while doing any research. These are:

- ✓ do not harm
- ✓ all participation needs to be voluntary
- ✓ Preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants.
- ✓ avoid deceitfulness
- ✓ analyze and report data authentically (Davidson and Tocich 1999) Check and shut 2012/ the aims of the research and their role involved in the research be explained to all participants they should be voluntary in order to keep confidential and the informed consent must be dingd by all of them (Davidson and Tocick 199,9 Bouma, 200, Me Name, 2002) some writers father argue that the privacy has been guaranteed by ensuring that all data are kept in a secure place and the access is limited to those who have been disclosed as having access (Bouma 200 Ryman 2008 Cochineal 2011)

In this research, the researcher expected that all participants should voluntary and they could withdraw at any time their names and the data that they report and their institutions were kept confidential. The researcher also attached the granted permission letters from the university /advisor/ in order to conduct this study; the information sheet that included the aims of this study was explained to all participants before conducting the interviews. Participant consent forms were obtained for this study. These consents also clearly informed that the data collect was stored securely, confidentially and only used for this study. No participant personal contact detail

was asked for in the final section of the consent forms, the interviewees were informed that if they have any concerns or queries regarding the nature of conducting research project, they free to contact the researcher's advisor directly.

This research was conducted in the researcher's school where there are several groups and different minority ethnic groups, so the researcher is aware of the ongoing effects of ethnic composition. As Bouma (2000) and wellington (2000) ethics plays a vital role in its design methods data analysis presentations and its conclusions as a researcher, he is aware of these issues and this research is not on any ethnic group involved. It only focused on the paragraph writing skill, investigate the barriers of adopting it and identifying the potential solutions to improve the challenges students face in paragraph writing skill. In addition, it may need further research in some areas that are related to paragraph writing skill.

Chapter Four: Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of data gathered through content analysis, open ended questionnaire and interview from students and teachers. The analysis of the data from the three instruments has been carried out based on objectives of the study. The analysis of the data from all instruments has been carried out based on the major themes and sub themes of the study. The presentation falls into three parts. The first part discusses about students 'paragraph writing skill. These includes capitalization, spelling problems (errors), unity, in addition to this, it deals with errors related to organization, and problem in paragraph structure. The second part discusses about the sources/causes of paragraph writing skill and the third and last part related to teachers' feedback to students writing skill errors in writing paragraphs.

4.2. Results of the document analysis

4.2.1. Students' Paragraph Writing Problems

In this section, Paragraphs written by 35 sample students were checked and evaluated critically to identify and analyze the problems students faced during paragraph writing.

Table 1: Features of Student' Paragraph Writing Problems

NO	Categories of the problems	Total Errors in 35 paragraphs
1	Topic sentences writing problem	33 paragraphs
2	Supporting sentences writing problems	All 35 paragraphs
3	weak organization	All 35 paragraphs
4	Spelling errors	110
5	Unity problem`	All 35 students
6	Concluding Sentences Writing Problems	All 35 paragraphs
7	Punctuation problems	85

Source: Students' Written Paragraph

The results presented in table (1) above show that the students have problem of writing a clear topic sentence, supporting sentences or good idea development, concluding sentences,

organization, correct spelling, and a well unified paragraph. This indicated that students have big problem in identifying the parts and features of good paragraph in their paragraph writing tasks. That is, as indicated in the table, unity, structures of paragraph are the most faced followed by organization problems. All 35 paragraphs written by sample students have disorganized sentences with lack of adequacy. In addition, students' paragraphs suffered from structure of paragraph writing. This indicated that students have major difficulties in identifying features of good paragraph in their paragraph writing tasks.

4.2.2. Topic sentences writing problem

Out of the 35 sample participants, 2 of them wrote good topic sentences. For example, look at the following paragraph written by S29:

In the evening, just after sun set, we see a bright object in the west/this which is our nearest planet Venus is our nearest_neighbor, However: no plants or animals could exist on Venus There is no oxygen in the air and the planet is with out water.

As it seen in the above paragraph written by S29, the student wrote good topic sentence to introduce the paragraph that he was writing. The topic sentence is shortly listed in one sentence. That is, „Just after sun set, we see a bright object in the west/this which is our nearest planet venus.“ This clearly tell the reader that regardless of Venus. Then, the topic sentence is strengthened in the next paragraphs using many major and minor supporting details and sentences in a good manner.

However, as indicated in table 1, most of the students have a big problem on writing clear topic sentences that specifies the text and carries the main idea of the paragraph. When they write, they simply begin by vague topic sentence that cannot tell what the whole paragraph is going to deal with. For example, here is one paragraph written by S12

Cellphone Is a type of technology which/ is/ used for transferring Information through sound and message and It is one of the special tools to get knowledge From a Internet and It saves time and force. In general Cellphone have so many advantages for instance but they have also many dis advantages for instance wasting of time and it Incorrect Information for people but the advantage is greater than disadvantage in the world.

As it is seen in the above paragraph, there is serious problem in writing the topic sentences. The topic sentence is not clearly stated. One of the given topics was Cellphone *Is a type of technology which is used for transferring* information through sound and message but the student wanted to conclude as seen in line 3 but he wrote another topic sentence and he tried to tell the advantage and disadvantages of cellphone and it is not complete. The topic sentence should begin by the definition of cell phone and followed by its explanation in detail. Thus, the paragraph does not have a clear and inclusive topic sentence that can open what the text is going to convey.

From this, we can conclude that EFL/ESL students in Mokhoni high school faced challenges in writing clear and complete topic sentences when they were asked to write paragraphs.

4.2.3. Supporting sentences writing problems

In this study, out of 35 students all of them do not have written good supporting sentences and support the paragraph in detail. For instance, S24 wrote the following paragraph.

Raya azebo is one of the woredas in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia. it located in the debubawi zone at the eastern edge of the Ethiopian highlands, Raya azebo is part of the southern Tigray Region. The administrator center of this woreda is mehoni and its population is about 135,890 with an area of 21132.83 square kilometers. There are also small towns in Raya azebo include kukufto mechare, Bala and Hadealga.

As observed from extract 24, although there is a problem of organization and unity, the student tried to support the idea using many supporting sentences. In this paragraph, he discussed on the location of Mekhoni Woreda. For instance, in this paragraph, line3 &4, the sentence “*its population is about 135,890 with an area of 21132.83 square kilometers.*”, is used as a supporting sentence that deal with the population and area Mekhoni Woreda. Besides, in line four, the student provided specific illustrations about the small towns located in this Woreda. But the sentences are not clear which they support to. The reader may be confused with those supportive sentences.

Regardless, EFL students exposed a serious problem on writing an appropriate supporting sentence to expand their paragraph. The learners in Fenkil preparatory school did not develop

their paragraphs with sufficient information. They wrote few ideas which cannot strengthen the topic with enough details. Here is one example written by S20.

Here are some useful suggestions to improve your study skill. When you study, you often need to make short notes. To do this efficiently, you need to omit all unimportant words such words are called Form words. Form words do not always have meaning in themselves.

As indicated in this paragraph, the student wrote very small article which cannot completely convey the intended message about study skill. It has no inclusive topic sentence that carries the main idea of the text. Even though he tried to explain some useful suggestions to improve study skill, what he wrote is very partial with little ideas. For example, in line one, the student began by introducing on the idea „ *some useful suggestions* “, but the student should list some useful suggestions to explain or support the topic sentence but he lists only one suggestion this is ... *you often need to make short notes*. In general, speaking this paragraph does not have enough supporting sentences.

4.2.4. Poor Organization

In this study, all of the students did not write a well-organized and coherent paragraph. The paragraphs they wrote did not flow smoothly from one point to the other. When writing paragraphs, learners should use transitional markers that connect sentences and ideas together. The students wrote simply run on and fragmented sentences. Here is one example written by S35

When I was in my high school, I have interesting teachers and very clever students in my class and I was scored good mark and I have a good knowledge my knowledge is already gain from interesting teachers. In grade 9th the education is very difficult because all subjects are in English language. therefore, I was scored less mark when I was gain grade 10th I was scored a great result in matric exam because I was adapted English language. and another life is I have a sweet girlfriend in general my high school life is a beautiful life,

As indicated in the above paragraph, the student wrote dis organized text with several problems. To say a paragraph is well organized, the idea must flow smoothly from one sentence to the next and should include an appropriate punctuation, correct capitalization, correct spelling and grammar. But, the learner did not write such kind of text. For example, in line one and two; he tried to talk about his classmates and result that scored a good result expressed with run-on sentences in which one sentence runs over the other without period and lack of coherency. Then after, in line three he tried to talk about difficulty of the education. This means that the student was discussing on his classmates and the result that scored a good result first. But he should begin with the difficulty of the education because this level was new for him, he might have many challenges. Then after he might continue with his classmates and the result that scored after adapting the environment. Finally, the above paragraph written by s 1 was weakly organized paragraph because the sentences did not flow smoothly, he did not use correct punctuation and correct spelling so, the paragraph might be boring, fragmented and difficult to understand.

4.2.5 Problems related to spelling

Using wrong spelling is problem noted in this study. It ranks fourth in hierarchy. This indicates that most of the students have a lot of difficulties when arranging with writing letters within words which have negative impact on their performance in writing paragraph.

Analyzing the sample paragraphs, the researcher identified that spelling errors were the problem of the entire sample most of them each sample paragraph had at least one or two spelling errors.

Table 2: Spelling Problems Observed in Students' Paragraphs

No	Categories of the Problems	Total Errors in 42Paragraphs
1.	adding letter/s	25
2.	missed letter/s	20

Source: Sample student's written paragraph

As indicated in table 2, the analysis of students 'paragraphs show most of students were spelt wrongly. This implies students add letter/s unnecessarily in their writing activities. Students commit errors by breaking the convention of English rules. Furthermore, 25 paragraphs have problems of spelling. Students did not write the correct forms of words correctly. Therefore, the analysis of the sampled paragraph shows students have problems in using correct spelling.

For example, the results of the student's paragraph analysis, especially, in the paragraph written by S1, one can observe many spelling errors.

Here are some useful suggestions to improve your study skill. When you study, you often need to make short notes. To do this efficiently, you need to omit all unimportant words such words are called Form words. Form words do not always have meaning in themselves.

As it observed the above paragraph has spelling problems. For example, the following words are spelt wrongly as noted in the paragraph.

No	written as	Correct words
1	Usesfull	Useful
2	effcently	efficiently

As can be seen above, words are written missing one or two letters. The sources of these problems seem students' carelessness and practice as one respondent suggested the following:

4.2.6. Problems Related to Writing Concluding Sentence

Concluding sentence is the last part of the paragraph that summaries the main idea of the text. Students are expected to write a sound concluding sentence by restating the central idea of the text. In doing so, the students should conclude what was discussed in paragraph without directly

stating the words used in the topic sentence and the supporting details. In this study, 14 (16.67%) of the students have written an appropriate concluding sentence and summed up the paragraphs they wrote. All of them have a problem of writing a smooth and clear conclusion. For instance, here is a paragraph written by S18.

When I was in a secondary school there were some obstacles in my life. Although I was learnt in a town my parents in a village. This means cooking and some other activities was covered by myself. So, it was conflict with my objective. On the other hand, as we know secondary school is a school that we begin a new life. There was one thing that scored me which is the matric exam. But the exam was not as I afraid it. I passed to the next grade.

As indicated in the above paragraph 18, there are a lot of problems committed by the learner, one serious problem inability to write an appropriate concluding sentence. When writing concluding sentence, EFL students should summarize and conclude the ideas discussed in the topic sentence and in the supporting sentences. However, the extract paragraph written by S18 did not have any concluding sentence to sum up what was discussing in the whole paragraph. The student wrote some information about his high school life but he didn't tell us brief information how was his life in secondary school as well. In general speaking, he did not close it appropriately and did not have any concluding sentence.

Many students have written very weak concluding sentence which cannot sum up what the whole paragraph talk about but rather it directly repeats the topic sentence. From this we can conclude that most of the students have a problem of writing a clear concluding sentence and they do not identify the topic sentence and the concluding parts of the paragraphs.

4.2.7. Punctuation Problems

Punctuation is the most important aspects of language. It deals with the use of punctuation marks such as full stop (.), commas (,), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), hyphen (-), and apostrophe (') in a paragraph. Writing paragraphs with an appropriate punctuation mark helps the writer to convey a smooth and complete meaning to the reader. However, the students faced problems in writing paragraph with correct punctuation mark. Due to this, their written text

became run-on, fragmented and difficult to understand. For example, S63 wrote the following paragraph

Living in the country side has a number of dis advantages primary. it is often not easy to find a Job that suits you Further, there aren't as such any places for recreation. You also to walk to get somewhere even long distance This means you will have to endure physical hardship

As indicated in the above paragraph written by S6, there is a serious problem of punctuation. The student does not put full stop at the end of complete sentences. For example, in line one, he said, “ *Living in the country side has a number of dis advantages primarily.*” This is difficult to understand by the readers with punctuation problems. So, this paragraph is written with a lot of misuse of punctuation marks.

4.3. Results of the open-ended questionnaire

The open ended questionnaire was prepared for the sake of gathering data which were relevant for the findings of the study as they let learners express what they feel about paragraph writing and it let the students forward their opinions freely on the relevance and sufficiency of the writing activities provided in the grade12 students text books and the method the English teachers are using when teaching writing a paragraph and longer texts: such as letter writing, report writing and curriculum vita etc. accordingly, the analysis of the responses of the participants on the questions of the open ended questionnaire is provided below. 1. Do you have problems in writing paragraph? What sort of difficulties do you have?

4.3.1. Students' response on their' problems in writing paragraph and sort of difficulties they have.

When asked do you have problems in writing paragraph? What sort of difficulties do you have? Most of the students responded: punctuation marks, organization, using cohesive device, unity and organization of ideas were the problems in writing paragraphs. In addition, they responded the sort of difficulties they have when asked what sort of difficulties do you have? Most of them responded: lack of knowledge how to write a paragraph, following steps of writing, writing unified and well-organized paragraph were the sort of difficulties they have.

4.3.2. Major challenges students have in terms of writing a well-developed paragraph

Being taken, the major challenge students' writing paragraph which gain from the questionnaire was: lack of unity, problem of organizing into a paragraph, inappropriate use of cohesive devices, writing more than one topic sentence, writing topic sentence, supporting and conclusion.

4.3.3. Organizing ability in paragraph writing activities

As the students answered how did they organized the paragraph? According to the responses of the respondent students when asked how about you're organizing ability in paragraph writing activities?

Most of the students responded: they do not have good organizing ability in paragraph writing activities they have difficulties in organizing their ideas and using appropriate cohesive devices at their appropriate place. But few of them responded they have some organizing abilities in paragraph writing activities but they cannot organize their ideas using appropriate cohesive devices at their appropriate place.

4.3.4. Organizing their ideas using appropriate cohesive devices at their appropriate place

According to the responses of the respondent students when asked can you organize your ideas using appropriate cohesive devices at their appropriate place? All of the respondent students responded they have difficulties in organizing our ideas and using appropriate cohesive devices at their appropriate place.

4.3.5. Writing unified and well developed paragraph

When asked how about writing unified and well-developed paragraph? All of the respondent students responded they have low performance in writing unified and well-developed paragraph because they do not know how they use the cohesive devices in their appropriate places and how they relate the parts or structures of paragraph introductory, body and conclusion (topic sentence, supporting and conclusion sentence).

According to the responses of the respondents when asked: Are grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization the problem areas in your paragraph writing? Discuss how serious they are? All of the respondent students responded grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization are the

backbone of one paragraph and these are their problem areas in paragraph writing and they are very serious problems in their paragraph writing activities they have problems of using them.

4.3.6. Writing Strategies Employed by the Teachers and Students to solve the Problems

According to interview and open-ended questionnaire results, it became clear that both teachers and students acknowledged the use of few strategies to help them improve students' paragraph writing. All the teachers responded to interview question no. 8 that giving most writing activities as homework or individual assignment gives students' more time and encourage students to practice writing outside the classroom. One example is given by T1 as follow;

I usually use an individual assignment on paragraph writing as a strategy to overcome the problem they have with writing paragraph. However, I sometimes use control writing to teach for my students to overcome their problem because it helps me to teach all about a paragraph. As can be seen in the above data, classroom is the only place that students practice writing.

However, the strategy is used by students to produce ideas to their paragraph takes much time. Therefore, the teacher did not have enough time to use different strategies. So, he gave writing task as individual assignment.

When asked what do you think of the Causes for your paragraph writing problems through English? Most of the respondents responded they have many causes for their paragraph writing problems through English fore stance they have difficulty expressing their ideas in English and organizing their ideas, knowing meaning of English words. Few of them responded they have lack of confidence, carelessness and lack of performance.

When asked what does your teacher focus on while correcting/assessing your paragraph? How does he/she give you feedback? Most of the respondents responded their teachers focused on punctuations while correcting/assessing our paragraph. But few of them responded their teachers focused on the structures of paragraph and unity while correcting/assessing their paragraph. In addition they responded how their teachers gave feedback; most of the respondents responded most of the time their teachers gave feedback orally.

4.3.7. Strategies learners use to overcome their paragraph writing problems

When asked what strategies do you use to overcome paragraph writing problems through English language. Most of the respondents responded that they don't have their own strategies to overcome their paragraph writing problems. But few of them have their own strategies to overcome their paragraph writing problems that is practicing writing paragraphs regularly.

4.3.8. What do you want your teacher to do for you to help you develop paragraph writing skills?

Based on the students' responses to the open-ended question what do you want your teacher to do for you to help you develop paragraph writing skills? The most commonly stated suggestions are: the EFL teacher must motivates students to practice paragraph writing regularly, provide a variety of topics to arose interest the interest of the students, follow up students' writing activities during writing sessions, create awareness on the different paragraph development patterns, improve their way of assessment and feedback on students' paragraphs and they should not give paragraph writing tasks as home take assignment due to the fact that learners are exposed to copying as it is likely for learners to copy from modules , books, newspapers and magazines etc. and to let other individuals better than their academic performance write paragraph to them.

4.3.9. Cause for students' paragraph writing problems through English

When asked what do you think of the Causes for your paragraph writing problems through English? Can you list out the possible factors that may impede you to use appropriate English language features to write paragraph?

The main aim of this study was to assess EFL students' paragraph writing problems. The researcher found that EFL students at Mokhoni High school faced several problems in paragraph writing. The students' paragraph writing difficulties could be come out from various factors. Hence, this section is intended to obtain data whether there were causes which could affect students' paragraph writing. Therefore, based on response of the students the major factors of the difficulties for paragraph writing were seen from two angels: students' related factors, and teachers' related factors. To this effect, 35 EFL students were asked open ended questions to

reflect their ideas regarding the students' paragraph writing problems. Accordingly, nine questions in the questionnaire were asked to the student to identify the causes for their paragraph writing problem. Out of the 35 students, 27 of them responded the questions appropriately but the rest 8 did not put answers and brought it back freely. Besides, to triangulate the students' idea, 10 interview questions were asked to the EFL teachers who teach in the selected classes. (See appendix IV). All the questions are related to students' and teachers' factors affecting students' paragraph writing problems. Thus, their responses were discussed and analyzed in as follows.

4.3.9.1. Students Related Factors

Based on students' responses the findings of the current research portrayed that there were some factors related to students' problems in EFL paragraph writing. This was to mean that there were problems which were basically related to students themselves. Some of these factors include; lack of interest to write, lack of interest to accept errors and mistakes given from peers and teachers. Knowledge at the English subject such as: punctuation, grammar, spelling, capitalization, discourse markers and so on. Knowledge with structure of a paragraph (introduction, body, and conclusion). Knowledge about a quality of a good paragraph such as: unity completeness, organization, lack of knowledge of strategic use, students', shortage of vocabulary and lack of practice, carelessness, and lack of confidence. Having difficulties in knowing meaning of words, using punctuation marks properly and capitalization

4.3.9.2. Lack of Practice

Making practice is an important skill that an English language learner in general and paragraph writers in particular should apply it. As practice makes perfect, EFL learners must practice in paragraph writing. Out of the total of 35 participants, most of them indicated that lack of practice accounts the first cause for students' poor paragraph writing. Almost most of the students mentioned that they never write outside the classroom even for homework with regard to this factor, one student explained that:

In my opinion there are many causes for my paragraph writing problems through English fore stance I have difficulty expressing my idea in English and organizing my ideas. Another cause may be most of the time our teachers focused on grammar they did

not emphasis to the writing practice due to these reasons we bother to write well developed paragraph.

The above data indicated that the student have difficulty of expressing and organizing his idea, because their teacher focuses on grammar. For this reason, he does not practice writing because he does not take long time over writing to practice and he feels that he cannot do it in the right way. As a result, he stops writing. Similarly, both teacher participants suggested in interview question that the process of learning a foreign language implied a series of autonomous work and practice. However, they acknowledged that they did not give students much time to practice

The major problem that hinders my students is lack of practice outside the ends with a main idea and there are supportive sentences in between. Classroom attention when they learn about paragraph. This is what I believe T₁

The above data indicated that the students do not make practice on paragraph writing. They are not initiated and interested in writing lesson. This implies that students especially those who learn in grade 12 are interested on the structural grammar. Therefore, the nature of the entrance exam, content coverage, its difficulties on time management on learning, students do not need to make practice both in and outside the class room settings.

4.3.9.3. Lack of knowledge of strategic use

Strategic use can be viewed as the most difficulty EFL learners could not achieve in paragraph writing due to lack the necessary knowledge. This is due to the fact that writing a successful paragraph demands knowledge of different stages of development of a paragraph. These seven stages of paragraph development comprise thinking, brainstorming, plan draft, check, rewrite, and proofread through which EFL learners practice the writing process. But, when it was observed, students could not use strategies of writing which composing a paragraph due to lack of knowledge. Regarding this, the teachers were asked about causes of students' difficulties in writing paragraph. According to the respondents,

As to me the difficulties of the students with writing unified and well-developed paragraph is that they do not know well about the stages of writing and they do not follow through their practice of writing paragraph.

Difficulties that my students have with writing unified and well-developed paragraph are: lack of sufficient vocabulary, lack of sentence construction, lack of awareness in organizing a paragraph and spelling, grammar and punctuation problems. (T₂)

As mentioned by (T₁) above, even though writing down every idea they think of is not bad, students have to find the most important points to address during, for example, brainstorming stage. However, as both teachers responded to interview questions and open-ended questions, students have lack knowledge of how to put stages/ strategies in paragraph writing.

4.3.9.4. Lack of Confidence

Lack of confidence is found to be the fifth factor for the learners' paragraph writing problems. Most of the respondents revealed that lack of confidence could be another factor that hinders EFL students in paragraph writing. The result indicated that students encountered a big problem in paragraph writing due to lose of confidence during writing. Regarding this S₄ said:

In my opinion there are many causes or factors for my paragraph writing problems through English fore stance I have difficulty of expressing my idea in English and organizing my ideas. Another serious cause or factor may be most of the I have lack of confidence in writing paragraph, due to these reasons I bother to write well developed paragraph.

This indicates that some EFL learners lose their confidence in paragraph writing in. Even those who might be good at their mother tongue could face challenges to write another second language. In addition, learners of foreign language are often subjected to threats to the self-perception in that they give less value to themselves in the foreign language class room settings. They feel inferiority complex and believe that they cannot write well in a foreign language.

4.3.9.5. Lack of vocabulary

Another observed cause of students' problem in paragraph writing was lack of vocabulary. According to both teachers and students informants to interview question and open ended question, students found themselves using a limited number of words again and again. One reason for the limited variety of words could be a difference between English and students'

mother tongue language. This is because as one informant responded, the students think in their mother tongue language whenever they want to write a paragraph in English. Student 1 said that

In my opinion there are many causes for my writing problems through English for instance I have difficulty expressing my idea in English and organizing my ideas. Another serious cause may be most of the time our teachers focused on grammar they did not emphasis to the writing practice due to these reasons we bother to write well developed paragraph.

Similarly, both teachers responded to interview question that one factor for students weak in paragraph writing is lack of vocabulary. They are not rich in vocabulary.

...the types of problems that my students have development of topic sentence, punctuation mark, spelling, discourse markers, wordiness, organization, introduction and conclusion problems and lack of vocabulary.

This result indicates that students have a lack of vocabulary to put their ideas in a paragraph form. In addition, they like to use their mother tongue language during writing activities.

In relation to this, as literature has shown that lack of words usually creates a breakdown in communication. Based on the idea of Putra (2009), students' vocabulary knowledge and writing performance are interrelated to each other. Vocabulary knowledge alone, however, cannot end in accurate and effective writing. Communication demands the use of words in sentences; that is, the need for grammatical knowledge is also unquestionable

4.3.10. Teachers Related Factors

4.3.10.1. Teachers' ways of giving feedback

Writing is a crucial skill which might be improved through regular practice. It is always helpful to possess different feedback methods in commenting errors occurred in students' paragraph writing.

Good feedback should be a part of a classroom assessment during which students see constructive criticism as a good thing and understand that learning cannot occur without practice.

Writing needs an individual effort and skill; therefore, the teachers' role is to share within the process by offering constructive feedback likewise as correcting errors. It is always helpful to have different strategies when responding to errors found in students' writing. However, the results achieved from both teachers and students indicated that inadequate correction was being given for the students' error. Their teacher also focused on the grammatical problem of the paragraph during correction and did not want to give written feedback for the correction. This is because of shortage of time, fed up of the teacher and challenging of the task itself. The teachers were asked interview questions and one responded stated that;

When I give feedback to my students' paragraph writing, I usually use symbols for the type of correction throughout their paragraph for example, (T1)

- ✓ S
- ✓ WO
- ✓ G
- ✓ F
- ✓ Mp
- ✓ Ms

As stated in the above quotes, the teacher seems to prefer to correct grammar and paragraph convention. This is because of class time and students did not finish writing on time. Thus, he did not assess all features of good paragraph. He focused on selective mistakes that were grammar problems. In similar way, T2 also stated that he usually makes his students give feedback to one another (peer feedback). However, he does not give feedback using symbols, he believed written errors should be treated in a way which provokes students' self-reaction or encourages peer correction.

4.4. Results of the interview of teachers

Following to the data collected through questionnaire from students, the researcher conducted interview with the EFL teachers at Mekoni high School. This section presents the data obtained through interview and analysis has been done side-by-side to the presentation.

Q1. What is your overall assessment about your students' paragraph writing problems?

Teacher 1: *ok when I see the overall assessment of my students on their paragraph writing problems, they do have many problems. For example, they have problem developing topic sentences using appropriate cohesive device and keeping the structure of paragraph correctly in a paragraph.*

Teacher 2: *When I assess my students, they have several problems while paragraph writing.*

Sample teachers were asked in the interview question about the overall assessment about their students' paragraph writing problems. Regarding this, both respondents suggested that the students have many problems.

Q2. What types of problems do they have in writing paragraph? Would you specify the nature their problems categorically?

Teacher 1: *Well I said earlier, the types of problems that my students have development of topic sentence, punctuation mark, spelling, discourse markers, wordiness, organization, introduction and conclusion problems and lack of vocabulary.*

Teacher 2: *As I mentioned earlier my students have different type of problems. To be specify the nature of their problems*

- *They are not interested to write a paragraph: As writing can be improved through practice of writing.*
- *They have a problem of organizing a paragraph. A good paragraph begins with a topic sentence and ends with a main idea and there are supportive sentences in between.*

The teachers' response to the second question in the interview can be summarized as follows: According to the interviewee teachers. Students have different types of problems such as: problem of organization, spelling, punctuation marks, etc.

Q3. What do you think are the major problems hindering your students' paragraph writing?

Teacher 1: *Well the major problem that hinders my students is lack of practice outside the ends with a main idea and there are supportive sentences in between. Classroom attention when they learn about paragraph. This is what I believe.*

Teacher 2: *The major problems that my students have are:*

- *Lack of interest to write*
- *Organizational problem*
- *Lack of interest to accept errors and mistakes given from peers and teachers*

According to the interviewee teachers the major problems hindering their students' paragraph writing are: lack of practice outside the classroom, lack of interest to write and accept errors given from peers and teachers.

Q.4. How about the students 'organizing ability in their paragraph writing activities?

Teacher 1: *About organizing, they are poor. Most of the students can't write on organized paragraph. Besides, I only take a sample from the students' paragraphs and show them how to organize a paragraph but for individual students work I can't, I do not have enough time.*

Teacher 2: *My students have poor paragraph organizing ability.*

Both teachers agreed that the students of Fenkil preparatory school grade 12 students have poor organization ability in their paragraph writing activity.

Q5. What sort of difficulties your students have with writing unified and well-developed paragraph?

Teacher 1: *ok. As to me the difficulties of the students with writing unified and well-developed paragraph is that they do not know well about the stages of writing and they do not follow through their practice of writing paragraph.*

Teacher 2: *Difficulties that my students have with writing unified and well-developed paragraph are:*

- *Lack of sufficient vocabulary*
- *Lack of sentence construction*
- *Lack of awareness in organizing a paragraph*
- *Spelling, grammar and punctuation problems*

The teachers' response to the second question in the interview can be summarized as follows:

According to the interviewee teachers the students' difficulties with writing unified and well-developed paragraph such as: lack of sufficient vocabulary, lack of awareness in organizing paragraph and punctuation problems.

Q6. Are organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization the problem areas in your students' paragraph writing? Please would you discuss how serious they are?

Teacher 1: Yes. These problems that you mentioned are problem areas of my students when they write a paragraph. These problems are serious problems of the majority of the students.

Teacher 2: *Yes. They are problem areas of my students*

Both teachers suggested that organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization are the problem areas in their students' paragraph writing.

Q7. What do you think are causes for the students' paragraph writing problems through English? Can you list out the possible factors that may impede them to use appropriate English language features to write paragraph?

Teacher 1: *Well. I think the cause of paragraph writing problems of most of the students in my class are; problems with steps of writing a paragraph, cohesive device, organization of unified sentences and ideas. Therefore, the possible factors to write an effective paragraph are*

- *Knowledge at the English subject such as: punctuation, grammar, spelling, capitalization, discourse markers and so on.*
- *Knowledge with structure of a paragraph (introduction, body, conclusion).*

Knowledge about a quality of a good paragraph such as: unity completeness, organization

Teacher 2: *The possible factors are:*

- *Lack of interest*
- *Errors and mistakes have been taught at the lower grades*
- *They try to neglect the writing skill.*

The teachers' response to the seventh question in the interview can be summarized as follows:

According to the interviewee teachers the causes for the students' paragraph writing problems through English are: neglecting the writing skill, lack knowledge about a quality of a good paragraph such as: unity completeness, organization

Q8. How do you give feedback to your student's paragraph? Please identify and explain briefly the method?

Teacher 1: *Ok. When I give feedback to my students' paragraph writing, I usually use symbols for the type of correction throughout their paragraph for example,*

- ✓ S
- ✓ WO
- ✓ G
- ✓ F
- ✓ Mp
- ✓ Ms

Teacher 2: *I usually make my students give feedback to one another (peer feedback).*

As can be seen in the above both teachers used different way of giving feedback T1 used symbols for the type of correction throughout their paragraph but T2 used peer feedback.

Q9. What strategies do you use to overcome the students' paragraph writing problems in English language?

Teacher 1: *Well. I usually use an individual assignment on paragraph writing as a strategy to overcome the problem they have with writing paragraph. However, I sometimes use control writing to teach for my students to overcome their problem because it helps me to teach all about a paragraph.*

Teacher 2: *Most of the time I used guided writing strategy.*

According to interviewee teachers they used control and guided writing strategies to overcome the students' paragraph writing problems in English language.

Q10. What about your students? Have you experienced any efforts students are making to improve their paragraph writing skill?

Teacher 1: Ok. *I can say I have not yet experienced that student make an effort on paragraph writing, unless I give them an activity on paragraph writing. I have not observed students writing a paragraph.*

According to the interviewee teachers response they did have any experienced efforts making to improve their students' paragraph writing skill, unless they gave them activities on paragraph writing.

4.5. Discussion

In this part, the data that had been gathered and analyzed were discussed under three major themes, in response to the three basic research questions. The major themes of the discussion are:

- Major problems experienced by grade eleven students in writing paragraph
- Major causes for students' problems in writing paragraph
- Teachers attempt improve the poor paragraph writing of students

4.5.1. Major Problems Experienced by Grade eleven Students' in Paragraph Writing

As it was found out through the data gathered using content analysis, questionnaire and interview the major types of problems that students at Mekoni high School encountered were incorrect use of organization, incorrect punctuations, and capitalization, and spelling errors.

Referring to this, the study Tekilemedhin (2017) confirmed that students had problems in spelling, punctuation, organizing ideas, developing and summarizing the topic sentence, connecting ideas, and using the correct grammar.

The results also revealed that students' knowledge of applying and using paragraph outline, paragraph writing techniques and using the correct cohesive devices was poor. Students were unable to start with a topic sentence and develop it with supporting sentences and finally summarize the paragraph.

4.5.2. Major causes for students' problems in writing paragraph

The second research question was about the major causes for students' problems in paragraph writing. The results have been treated in two ways; causes that emanated from students themselves, and causes that emanated from teachers. The findings revealed that almost all of the students thought paragraph writing as the most difficult skill of language. Students had also lack of interest and motivation towards paragraph writing. Most of the students had lack of adequate practice in paragraph writing. Moreover, this study revealed that students lack vocabulary when they write paragraphs. The findings of this study match with the findings of Tekilemedhin (2017) who found out that students' poor paragraph writing skill is caused by lack of practice, students' lack of confidence, and their negative attitude.

The findings of this study regarding teacher related factors confirmed that teachers were not efficient enough in teaching paragraph writing for their students. They were also ineffective in providing corrective feedback when students write paragraphs because they didn't use different ways of giving feedback. The study also revealed that teachers were not unable to motivate their students to write paragraphs. Teachers' didn't teach their students about the techniques of paragraph writing and the ways of developing paragraphs. The results of this study match with the findings of Mohammed (2015) lack of appropriate feedback and ineffective teaching methods were some of the teacher related factors that contribute for the poor paragraph writing skill of students because most of the time they taught their students grammar and they were grammar oriented.

4.5.3. Teachers attempt improve the poor paragraph writing of students

The findings of this research revealed that teachers' attempt to improve students' poor skill of paragraph writing was low. Teachers' feedback on providing corrective feedback to students was not found appropriate. They tried to correct all the errors by themselves. Similarly, teachers lacked attention in teaching paragraph writing to their students. They simply focused on grammar. Paragraph writing was not included in tests and examinations. Furthermore, the teachers didn't assess and give feedback on the students' the whole paragraphs unless it is a home take assignment. The findings of this research go with the findings of Berhane (2017) who

dealt the practice of teaching writing skills the case of grade 11 Students at Motta Preparatory School.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This section includes, brief accounts of the overall activities accomplished in this study, the conclusions drawn from the findings and the possible recommendation suggested.

5.2. Summary

The main purpose of this study was to assess EFL students' paragraph writing problems. The study was conducted at Mekoni high Schools in Mekhoni town, Southern Zone Tigray Regional State with the special reference grade 11 students. The research attempted to address three basic questions; related to challenges that students face in paragraph writing, the factors influencing students' problem in paragraph writing, and teachers do to help their students in overcoming the problems in paragraph writing.

In order to address this study, qualitative method of data analysis was employed. In order to achieve the first objective of this study, document analysis was used. Document analysis was used to assess EFL students' paragraph writing problems. The researcher analyzed the paragraphs written by the 27 students carefully.

To attain the second and third objectives about the factors influencing students' paragraph writing, the researcher used questionnaire for the students and interview for the two English language teachers. The questionnaire was used mainly to collect data about the factors affecting students' paragraph writing skills from the 35 respondents of Mekoni high school. The interview was employed to triangulate the information gained from the students about the causes for EFL students' paragraph writing problems. It is also used to get data about students' paragraph writing problems. That is, it was used to identify the factors influencing students' paragraph writing problems and the kind of problems students have in paragraph writing and to analyze how English language teachers attempt to help students in overcoming the problems.

The data collected from the three instruments were analyzed qualitatively. The researcher identified the major problems students had in paragraph writing. The first problems were related to the three parts of paragraph (topic sentence, supportive and concluding sentence) in which

students had a problem of identifying these parts and could not write according to it. The other problems were spelling, punctuation, word choice and capitalization. Furthermore, related to students' difficulty to write paragraphs that can fulfill the quality of good paragraph such as organization, unity and adequacy were the other most serious problems students encountered.

In addition, factors that affect students' paragraph writing were divided into two subheadings. These are students' related factors, and teacher related factors. Student related factors include lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, carelessness and Lack of knowledge of strategic use. Teacher related factors include lack of motivation from EFL teachers and teachers' feedback.

The findings revealed that there were certain problems in students' paragraph writing. Students faced spelling errors, punctuation errors, capitalization errors, lack of organization of ideas, poor paragraph development, and summarization, and lack of cohesion devices. The study revealed that the problems came from students themselves and from teachers. Students didn't have adequate practice in paragraph writing. Their interest towards paragraph writing was also found low. Furthermore, they had lack of vocabulary to write effective, organized and unified paragraphs. Moreover, teachers' teaching methodology and provision of feedback was found low.

5.3. Conclusion

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

1. There are many problems that EFL students encountered at Mekoni high school. These include the problem of identifying the three parts of paragraph such as topic sentence, supporting sentences and the concluding sentence. From these, writing supporting details is the first serious problem students faced in paragraph writing. Concluding sentence and topic sentence writing problems are found to be the second and the third problems in paragraph writing. Hence, the students are incapable of opening, developing and summarizing their paragraphs appropriately and they simply write without recognizing these parts.
2. Writing disorganized, weakly unified, and insufficiently developed paragraphs are another serious problems EFL students faced during writing. Besides, spelling errors, capitalization and punctuation problems are the most common problems the students faced while writing.
3. The above-mentioned paragraph writing problems are caused by various factors. These factors are related to the students themselves, and their English teachers. Of these, teacher related, and students" related, factors are the first, and second for students" poor paragraph writing respectively. Student related factors include lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, carelessness and their attitude towards writing. Lack of appropriate feedback and lack of motivation are confined to teacher related factors.
4. English language teachers do not often teach their students different writing activities and learners are not encouraged to write. Instead, the teachers simply focus on the structural grammar teaching than active involvement of the students. That is based on the information gained from the students through questionnaire and the teachers themselves, the English teachers emphasized on the product approach of language teaching than the process approach.
5. Based the on the Ideas gained from the English teachers through the interview, the bulky nature of the content to be covered, the exam types given specially to grade 11 and the large number of students learning in one class are the most common and indirect serious causes that forces English teachers not to focus on paragraph writing and lead them to focus on grammar parts.

6. Grade 11 Mekoni high School students have challenges in paragraph writing. These challenges of the students mostly caused by lack of practice, lack of knowledge how to write paragraph. Therefore, teachers of grade 11 are not focusing or giving correct feedback for writing paragraph. Therefore grade 11 students of Mekoni High School may face challenges in writing course when they join to university.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are provided.

1. Teachers are the most important manpower that can help learners to write well. Thus, they should tell their students what to write, how to write, when to write and even where to write. They should use active learning methods that can improve students' writing abilities and encourage them to write.
2. Writing is a skill that can be improved through continues practice. Taking this in to account, the students should be interested and eager to write. They should have intrinsic motivation and should practice writing a lot in the class room and outside the class.
3. The student should know the parts of the paragraph and write accordingly. That is, they should know how to open their paragraphs, how to develop it through illustrations and sum up the main points discussed in the whole paragraphs. Furthermore, they should be eager to know and write well-organized, unified and complete paragraphs. While writing, they have to take in to consideration that the paragraph they write should contain correctly punctuated, capitalized, spelt with correct use of grammar.
4. If students do not make practice, they develop writing anxiety in which learners are afraid of writing and lose self-confidence. Hence, the students should read a lot to write well, to have sufficient vocabularies so that their confidence increases but their anxiety decreases.
5. While teaching, English teachers should focus more on writing tasks. This means that even though writing is challenging task to teach especially in large classes, teachers should try their best to use not only the product-oriented approach but also the process approach of teaching. They should make students actively involve with the language.
6. When English teachers give their students paragraph writing tasks, they should also provide them appropriate feedback and comments in written form. They have to lead, encourage, control, and finally give them feedback. This is because unless students are given feedback to what they write, they may not understand their positional and their problems. Therefore, English language teachers should give their students appropriate feedback and motivation in need.

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APPENDIECS

Appendix I: Document Analysis

The document analysis is carried out by analyzing students' paragraph. The paragraph is written by the sample students making them to choose one from some alternative topics presented. Then the problems in the paragraphs are analyzed. Some of the following questions are focused for the analysis.

1. Are the sentences, ideas or information in their paragraphs appropriately and logically arranged?
2. Are the sentences in the paragraph talk about one idea and developed well?
3. Is every sentence complete, not a fragment?
4. Do the subject and predicate agree in number in each sentence?
5. Is every word spelled correctly?
6. Are sentences punctuated correctly?
7. Are words capitalized properly?
8. Are all words used correct?

Appendix II: Open-ended Questionnaire for Students

Dear Student,

First, thank you so much for your willingness to fill these open-ended questions which are intended exclusively for research purpose, as part of my MA study at Mekelle University.

The success of the study depends on your genuine responses to these questions. For each of the questions below, write your response on the space provided.

1. Do you have problems in writing paragraph? What sort of difficulties do you have?
2. What are the major challenges you have in terms of writing well organized paragraph?
3. How about you're organizing ability in paragraph writing activities? Can you organize your ideas using appropriate cohesive devices at their appropriate place?
4. How about writing unified and well-developed paragraph?
5. Are grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization the problem areas in your paragraph writing? Discuss how serious they are?
6. What do you think of the Causes for your paragraph writing problems through English? Can you list out the possible factors that may impede you to use appropriate English language features to write paragraph?
7. What does your teacher focus on while correcting/assessing your paragraph? How does he/she give you feedback?
8. What strategies do you use to overcome paragraph writing problems through English language?
9. What do you want your teacher to do for you to help you develop paragraph writing skills

Thank you for your Collaboration!

Appendix IV: Interview Protocol for Teachers

Time started: Time ended: Teacher's Code:

Interviewer: Good morning. First of all, let me introduce you my thesis study. I have been conducting a thesis on an assessment on EFL Mokoni high school students writing skill in this school particularly in grade 11. And this thesis is hoped to generate teachers' and students' awareness on using writing skill. The purpose of this study is to assess writing skill used by EFL teachers and students in Mehoni High School interview, which will last approximately 15-20 minutes. I strongly want you to assure you that all information obtained from you will be used for research purposes only and no part of your identity will be revealed in any report of the completed study.

1. What is your overall assessment about your students' paragraph writing problems?
2. What types of problems do they have in writing paragraph? Would you specify the nature there?

problems categorically.

3. What do you think are the major problems hindering your students' paragraph writing?
4. How about the students 'organizing ability in their paragraph writing activities?

Can they organize their ideas using appropriate cohesive devices at their appropriate place?

4. What sort of difficulties your students have with writing unified and well developed paragraph?
5. Are organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization the problem areas in your students' paragraph writing? Please would you discuss how serious they are?

6. What do you think are causes for the students' paragraph writing problems through English?

Can you list out the possible factors that may impede them to use appropriate English language features to write paragraph?

7. How do you give feedback to your student's paragraph? Please identify and explain briefly the method?

8. What strategies do you use to overcome the students' paragraph writing problems through English language?

9. What about your students? Have you experienced any efforts students are making to improve their paragraph writing skill

Thank you for your Collaboration!

Appendix III: Interview Protocol for Teachers

Time started: Time ended: Teacher's Code:

Interviewer: Good morning. First of all let me introduce you my thesis study. I have been conducting a thesis on an assessment on EFL high school students' paragraph writing skill in this school particularly in grade 11. And this thesis is hoped to generate teachers and students' awareness on using writing skill. The purpose of this study is to assess writing skill used by EFL teachers and students in Mokhoni High school. Thus, to assist me with this research, you are kindly invited to participate in an interview, which will last approximately 15-20 minutes. I strongly want you to assure you that all information obtained from you will be used for research purposes only and no part of your identity will be revealed in any report of the completed study.

Teacher one

A = interviewer (the researcher) B = interviewees (sample teachers)

A: Good morning. First of all, let me introduce you my thesis study. I have been conducting a thesis on an assessment on EFL Mokhoni high school students writing skill in this school particularly in grade 11. And this thesis is hoped to generate teachers and students' awareness on using writing skill. The purpose of this study is to assess writing skill used by EFL teachers and students in Mekhoni High school. Thus, to assist me with this research, you are kindly invited to participate in an interview, which will last approximately 15-20 minutes. I strongly want you to assure you that all information obtained from you will be used for research purposes only and no part of your identity will be revealed in any report of the completed study.

A: What is your overall assessment about your students' paragraph writing problems?

B: *ok when I see the overall assessment of my students on their paragraph writing problems, they do have many problems. For example, they have problem developing topic sentences using appropriate cohesive device and keeping the structure of paragraph correctly in a paragraph.*

A: What types of problems do they have in writing paragraph? Would you specify the nature their problems categorically.

B: *Well, I said earlier, the types of problems that my students have development of topic sentence, punctuation mark, spelling, discourse markers, wordiness, organization, introduction and conclusion problems and lack of vocabulary.*

A: What do you think are the major problems hindering your students' paragraph writing?

B: *Well the major problem that hinders my students is lack of practice outside the ends with a main idea and there are supportive sentences in between class-room and attention when they learn about paragraph. This is what I believe.*

A: How about the students 'organizing ability in their paragraph writing activities?

B: *about organizing, they are poor. Most of the students can't write on organized paragraph. Besides, I only take a sample from the students' paragraphs and show them how to organize a paragraph but for individual students work I can't, I do not have enough time.*

A: What sort of difficulties your students have with writing unified and well-developed paragraph?

B: *ok. As to me the difficulties of the students with writing unified and well-developed paragraph is that they do not know well about the stages of writing and they do not follow through their practice of writing paragraph.*

A: Are organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization the problem areas in your students' paragraph writing? Please would you discuss how serious they are?

B: *Yes. These problems that you mentioned are problem areas of my students when they write a paragraph. These problems are serious problems of the majority of the students.*

A: What do you think are causes for the students' paragraph writing problems through English? Can you list out the possible factors that may impede them to use appropriate English language features to write paragraph?

B: *Well. I think the cause of paragraph writing problems of most of the students in my class are; problems with steps of writing a paragraph, cohesive device, organization of unified sentences and ideas. Therefore, the possible factors to write an effective paragraph are*

- *Knowledge at the English subject such as: punctuation, grammar, spelling, capitalization, discourse markers and so on.*
- *Knowledge with structure of a paragraph (introduction, body, conclusion).*

Knowledge about a quality of a good paragraph such as: unity completeness, organization

A: How do you give feedback to your student's paragraph? Please identify and explain briefly the method?

B: *Ok. When I give feedback to my students' paragraph writing, I usually use symbols for the type of correction throughout their paragraph for example,*

- ✓ *S*
- ✓ *WO*
- ✓ *G*
- ✓ *F*
- ✓ *Mp*
- ✓ *Ms*

A: What strategies do you use to overcome the students' paragraph writing problems through English language?

B: *Well. I usually use an individual assignment on paragraph writing as a strategy to overcome the problem they have with writing paragraph. However, I sometimes use control writing to teach for my students to overcome their problem because it helps me to teach all about a paragraph.*

A: What about your students? Have you experienced any efforts students are making to improve their paragraph writing skill?

B. *Ok. I can say I have not yet experienced that student make an effort on paragraph writing, unless I give them an activity on paragraph writing. I have not observed students writing a paragraph.*

A: Thank you so much for your time and participation. Thanks for your ideas and suggestions as well. I'd like to promise you that what you have shared to me will be kept confidential. Thanks.

Thank you for your Collaboration!

Teacher Two

A = interviewer (the researcher) B = interviewees (sample teachers)

A: Good morning. First of all let me introduce you my thesis study. I have been conducting a thesis on an assessment on EFL high school students writing skill in this school particularly in grade 11. And this thesis is hoped to generate teachers and students' awareness on using writing skill. The purpose of this study is to assess writing skill used by EFL teachers and students in Mekhoni High school. Thus, to assist me with this research, you are kindly invited to participate in an interview, which will last approximately 15-20 minutes. I strongly want you to assure you that all information obtained from you will be used for research purposes only and no part of your identity will be revealed in any report of the completed study.

A: What is your overall assessment about your students' paragraph writing problems?

B: *When I assess my students, they have several problems while writing a paragraph.*

A: What types of problems do they have in writing paragraph? Would you specify the nature of their problems categorically.

B: *As I mentioned earlier my students have different types of problems. To specify the nature of their problems, they are not interested to write a paragraph as writing can be improved through practice of writing. Besides, they have a problem of organizing a paragraph. A good paragraph begins with a topic sentence and ends with a main idea and there are supportive sentences in between.*

A: What do you think are the major problems hindering your students' paragraph writing?

B: *The major problems that my students have are:*

- *Lack of interest to write*
- *Organizational problem*
- *Lack of interest to accept errors and mistakes given from peers and teachers*

A: How about the students ‘organizing ability in their paragraph writing activities?

B: *My students have poor paragraph organizing ability*

A: What sort of difficulties your students have with writing unified and well developed paragraph?

B: *Difficulties that my students have with writing unified and well developed paragraph are:*

- *Lack of sufficient vocabulary*
- *Lack of sentence construction*
- *Lack of awareness in organizing a paragraph*
- *Spelling, grammar and punctuation problems*

A. Are organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization the problem areas in your students’ paragraph writing? Please would you discuss how serious they are?

B. *Yes. They are problem areas of my students.*

A: What do you think are causes for the students’ paragraph writing problems through English? Can you list out the possible factors that may impede them to use appropriate English language features to write paragraph?

B: *The possible factors are:*

- *Lack of interest*
- *Errors and mistakes have been taught at the lower grades*
- *They try to neglect the writing skill.*

A. How do you give feedback to your student’s paragraph? Please identify and explain briefly the method?

B. *I usually make my students give feedback to one another (peer feedback).*

A. What strategies do you use to overcome the students’ paragraph writing problems through English language?

B: *Most of the time I used guided writing strategy.*

A: What about your students? Have you experienced any efforts students are making to improve their paragraph writing skill?

Thank you for your Collaboration!