

Teacher's Current Practices of Teaching Reading and Grade Four Students' Reading Achievement in Dona Berber Primary School

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Abstract

This study examined the practices and challenges of teaching reading strategies and assessment in Dona Berber Primary School. Twelve grade 4 students were selected using simple random sampling technique and an English teacher and a school supervisor were selected by available sampling. Structured Classroom Observation checklist, reading skills test and unstructured interview were used as data collecting instruments. The quantitative data were analyzed using percentage whereas the qualitative ones were narrated. The quantitative data disclosed lower student scores, while the qualitative data showed that reading strategies were not infused in the reading lessons. The result also showed that the reading skills assessment was poorly addressed. Therefore, it is recommended that those who are in the decision line shall work to create a reasonable balance between reading strategies and assessment.

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INTRODUCTION

English has been utilized since the commencement of modern education in 1908 in Ethiopia (Abebe, 2012). It has been used in diplomacy, politics, economics, tourism, electronics, telecommunication, culture, commerce, research, education, medicine, science and technology. Therefore, it is necessary for many Ethiopians to have an acceptable capacity of English to satisfy the growing needs of the country (Amlaku, 2010; MOE, 2008). The language has a special place in Ethiopian education system in that it is taught as a subject beginning from grade 1 and is used as a medium of instruction in second Cycle primary and secondary schools as well as higher learning institutions. Over the past decades, major actions have been taken to improve the teaching of the English Language. The Ministry of Education has vividly articulated that improving children's reading skill plays pivotal roles in increasing children's learning of content area subjects and developing their English language competence (Amlaku, 2010; TGE, 1994).

In this era of globalization, reading in any language increasingly becomes the most essential skill to acquire knowledge in different areas of specialization. Particularly, in the Ethiopian context, having the necessary reading skill in EFL is indispensable (USAID/Ethiopia, 2011) because it helps students acquire effective reading skill (MoE, 2008). Research has shown that in a fast moving world giving the necessary attention to reading and the

teaching of reading strategies becomes important and is taken as the basic rights of children (USAID/GEQIP, 2009). Successful reading strategies help students know how to achieve at school and succeed in later life (USAID/GEQIP, 2009). Children who do not develop proficiency in reading during the first years of life highly experience reading problems in their schooling (Clay, 1990). This argument is also supported by Juel (1988) who examined children's reading and found out that children who are successful in reading by the end of grade one will have good reading skill throughout their schooling and later in life.

Early grade reading skill development in L₁ and EFL/ESL has become a national concern in Ethiopia. This is because good reading skill in L₁ or EFL/ESL leads to higher overall academic achievement (Chall, 1983). Students who gain early reading skills possess the instruments to steadily grow in their knowledge and skills while those who are unsuccessful to develop early reading skills fall behind (Stanovich, 1986). Students who had early grade reading difficulty mostly continue to experience failure in later grades (Stanovich, 1986). Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) argue that qualified teachers in reading have significant roles in helping children to get good reading skill. They noticed that lack of qualified teachers was identified to be a major challenge although there are various contributing factors to poor

reading, as shown by the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998).

A study by Gove and Cvelich (2010) shows that in less developed countries, failure in entire education systems are due to the primary grade L₁ or EFL reading skill which is given less attention. They recommend that the best opportunity to teach children the skills of reading is in the early grades (1–4) (Gove and Civelich, 2010). If this chance is missed, then students who have not begun to read and understand what they read will become less successful in learning (Gove and Civelich, 2010). There is estimation that among three students, one student experiences significant problems in learning to read because of not knowing the reading strategies (Adams, 1990). Richards and Rodgers (1992) argue that students need ample time and opportunities to practice the strategies they are learning with a variety of reading skills which focus on the notion of providing struggling EFL primary grade students with support as they learn how to read. Hence, teachers and parents should provide students with ample time and opportunities along with reading strategies to practice reading (Rodgers and Rodgers, 2004).

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Reading strategies are understood almost similarly by different scholars. For instance, Palinscar (1986) views strategies as a support for collaborative dialogue during reciprocal teaching as a way of providing students with a chance to express their own opinions based on texts. In their questioning-the-author (QTA) framework, Beck and McKeown (2006) view strategies as a vehicle for think-aloud that support students and teachers in collaboratively constructing meaning and acquiring content knowledge from the text. Dole, Nokes, and Drits (2009) define cognitive strategies as “mental routines or procedures for accomplishing cognitive goals” (p. 348). A reading comprehension strategy has been delineated as a “cognitive or behavioural action that is enacted under particular conditions, with the goal of improving some aspect of comprehension” (Graesser, 2007: 6). As opposed to skills that are applied without conscious thought, comprehension strategies require a degree of intentionality that varies based on the reader’s goals, text genre, text difficulty, and level of prior knowledge (Afflerbach and Cho, 2009). Reading strategies play a critical role in improving comprehension and the ability to learn from texts (Pressley, 2006).

Concerning its importance, Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) argue that teaching strategies directly assist students in replicating the steps used by skilled readers and help improve their comprehension skills. However, Wilkinson and Son (2011) have noted that researchers are still unclear as to why strategy instruction improves comprehension skills. At present, two different perspectives exist concerning the positive effect that strategies have on students’ reading comprehension (Wilkinson and Son, 2011). The first perspective is the construction-integration (CI) model that suggests strategies support readers in actively constructing meaning during reading and integrating new information from the text with existing background knowledge and experience (Kintsch and Kintsch, 2005; Wilkinson and Son, 2011). The second perspective, on the other hand, assumes that strategies enhance comprehension skills by providing a way to support students’ discussions about text.

Reading Comprehension Instructional Practices in the Primary Grades

Researchers on primary grade reading strategies argue that the importance of comprehension instruction during the primary grades cannot be overlooked (Block and Lacinia, 2009; Shanahan *et al.*, 2010). It is primary grade teachers who are responsible for teaching students that reading comprises more than just memorizing words and reading fluently, but the final purpose of reading should be meaning-making using reading strategies (Duke and Martin, 2008). Moreover, comprehension skills instruction supported by reading strategies in the early grades can support and enhance students’ acquisition of decoding skills (Duke and Carlisle, 2011; Duke and Pearson, 2010). Stahl (2004) reported that four instructional practices which were widely used by primary grade teachers had been supported by research results. These include, for example, story map (Baumann and Bergeron, 1993), question and answer (Raphael and Wonnacott, 1985), reciprocal teaching (Palinscar and Brown, 1984), and teacher-generated questioning (Taylor *et al.*, 2000).

Shanahan *et al.* (2010) identified six reading strategies that have evidence of improving primary grade students’ reading skills from Kindergarten through 3rd Grade. Hence, these strategies were recommended for inclusion in primary grade classroom reading instruction: (a) activating prior knowledge and predicting based on prior knowledge, (b) questioning, (c) visualization, (d) monitoring, clarifying, or fix-up strategies, (e) inference training, and (f) retelling. Instruction should be delivered using the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983) with careful scaffolding regarding how much teacher modelling and guided practice are needed before students are able to use the strategies effectively and independently. So, teachers should provide direct explanations of how these strategies will help students in learning from texts and model how to use the strategies appropriately (Shanahan *et al.*, 2010).

During the pre-reading activities, a teacher should work on relating the title to students’ lives, motivating, activating prior knowledge, building text specific knowledge, pre-teaching concepts, pre-teaching vocabulary, predicting, and suggesting strategies (Fournier and Graves, 2002). During reading activities, a teacher should focus on silent reading, reading to students, guided reading, oral reading by students and modifying the text (Fournier and Graves, 2002). After reading activities, the teacher must pay attention to questioning, discussion, writing, drama, artistic activities, application activities and re-teaching (Fournier and Graves, 2002).

Rodgers and Rodgers (2004) note that reading instruction has been overlooked in the past few decades in favour of issues related to beginning reading, though it has been an important part of research on reading and teaching. So, students’ poor reading fluency and comprehension in English skill has to be a priority concern for English language teachers to improve the language teaching pedagogy.

The problem of using English across the curriculum still continues to be acute in Ethiopian schools, notwithstanding the significant role it maintains in the country (Abiy, 2007; Michael, 2003). Abebe (2012) and

Seid (2012) argue that the problem of low capability of teachers in teaching reading in the English Language is not limited to primary school teachers only. Rather, most of the teachers teaching English to secondary school students are not competent enough in teaching the language (Abebe, 2012). In connection to this, Abiy (2007:30) argues that “the reading problem is part and parcel of the linguistic deficiency of our teachers and students at different levels. The reading problem may even be taken more serious than the other skills because students learn content area subjects and the English language itself through reading.”

Dereje (2012) contends that there is a discrepancy between the methods propounded in the policy contents as well as teachers’ guides, and teachers’ actual classroom practices to teaching the target language (English). He adds that First Cycle Primary School (Grades 1-4) teachers’ English language proficiency and English teaching skills are weak to implement the tasks and activities embedded in the English textbooks as intended because they do not receive sufficient preparation on how to teach reading skills as an actual set of discipline skills. Two-third of teachers report not having any in-service training in reading methods in pedagogical techniques and 61% report not having any in-service training at all. The inappropriate and inefficient teaching methodology used by the English language teachers also seems to have aggravated the problem (ibid.).

Yet, one of the greatest challenges of primary school teachers is equipping students with reading strategies that can be transferred to content areas (Abiy, 2007). Among those teachers who are teaching reading, most of them focus much on teaching of the alphabet or word which has resulted in delayed reading among children (Smith *et al.*, 2012).

Similarly, the English EGRA, which involved all nine regions and two city administrations in the assessment, tested students who had completed grades 2, 3, and 4 and showed students’ startling poor reading ability. The preliminary results disclose that about two-third of the students who were tested were not able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills expected of the curriculum’s minimum learning competencies for each grade (Grades 1-4) (MoE, 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2012). Besides, preliminary discussions (as baseline study) held with Amharic and English language teachers, personal experiences, interviews and preliminary observations conducted on Grade 4 EFL classes at Ewket Fana and Kulkual Meda primary schools, in Bahir Dar City by the researchers seem to reveal shortcomings, which, we assume, demand further investigation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate a teacher’s current practices of reading strategies, and students’ reading skills performance at grade 4. Based on the above general objective, the following research questions were formulated.

- 1) What reading strategies are employed by the EFL teacher at grade 4?
- 2) What do the grade 4 EFL students’ reading assessment results look like? and
- 3) How do the teacher and the school supervisor understand the teaching of reading and its assessment?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study attempted to investigate teacher’s application of English language reading strategies, and students’ reading assessment results in Primary Schools of Bahir Dar. Hence, a descriptive-survey design was used.

Participants of the study

One government primary school, Dona Berber Primary School, was purposefully selected among the thirty-two schools as a sample for the study. The participants of the study were Dona Berber Primary School grade 4 students, their English classroom teacher and the school supervisor. The school was selected because there are experienced teachers and a veteran supervisor from whom the researchers could select for the study. Besides, there are also adequate textbooks for each student (per-head), and this reduces the problem in the teacher’s implementation of reading strategies and students’ assessment of reading skills. Accordingly, three students were selected from each section, i.e., A, B, C, D (N=12), using simple random sampling. Here, only twelve (N=12) students were selected as participants in order to test each student in depth. If more sample size was taken, it could take a few days for testing; and this could not be manageable. So, we had to limit the number of participants to a manageable size.

As grade 4 students are taught by a single teacher, this teacher was taken as a sample by available sampling method. The school’s supervisor was also chosen by available sampling method. The students were given reading skills assessments and were interviewed about the reading strategy they employed and the reading assessment they had taken.

Before the research was begun, the researchers made contacts with the school principals, the supervisor, the students and the English teacher to get their consent. Having secured their consent, primarily classroom observations were made on different days for three rounds during reading periods by the researchers. Then, the researchers gave individual oral reading assessments and a dictation test to the students. The test had three sections which lasted twenty-five (25) minutes for each student. Eventually, the researchers carried out the interviews with the teacher, supervisor and the students about the reading strategies they apply during reading classes and the trends of testing reading.

Instruments of Data Collection

The main tools of data collection for this study were closed-items observation check-list, reading skills tests, and open-ended interview. The observation and interview items partly addressed the issues of reading skill strategies and testing reading skills in the school.

Classroom Observation

The observation checklist was adapted from Donaldson’s (2011) and Harmer’s (2003) check-lists to see how reading strategies and reading phases are employed. Most importantly, it was conducted to see the students’ reading comprehension ability in terms of their decoding skills where predictive questions, interpretation and other strategies are employed. Thus, three-round observations were conducted for these purposes. The observation checklist was structured type that consists of

six points having a “Yes” or “No” response to be rated as the teacher teaches.

Interviews

Eventually, one of the researchers interviewed the teacher, the supervisor and the students about the reading strategies they apply during reading classes and the trends of testing reading. The interview questions were four, and mainly focused on the reading strategies they were introduced with by their teacher, and assessment. Each of them was interviewed for twenty minutes on average. The interview was taken in their school during their free time. Notes were taken by the interviewer while the participants responded to the questions.

Reading Comprehension Test

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in English, which was piloted and implemented on grade 2-4 students in 330 randomly selected schools drawn from the nine regions and two city administrations in Ethiopia (USAID/Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2011), was adapted and utilized for this study. The test focussed on familiar word identification, passage reading, passage reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. These reading tests were administered to a total of twelve randomly selected students from the four (4A-D) sections of Grade four of Dona Berber Primary School. The tests

were administered in the school on two different days. The tests constituted a total of 85 items (50 word identification; 15 reading passage; 15 comprehension questions; and 5 listening comprehension items). The items were closed-type except word identification. The number of items was determined to be as expressed above because the researchers have taken the experience in EGRA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table1 shows varied results for each student who took the test on each component of reading skills (word, passage, comprehension and listening). For example, “S₁” has a total score of 55%. That is, he scored 14% out of 20% in word recognition, 29% out of 30% in passage reading, 8% out of 40% in reading comprehension and 4% out of 10% in listening comprehension. When the result of each component skill was taken separately and analyzed, the following results were obtained. The achievement of the student on passage reading was very close to the maximum (29% out of 30%) and was moderate (14% out of 20%) in familiar word identification. However, his results in the reading comprehension (8% out of 40%) and the listening comprehension (4% out of 10%) were far below the average. This finding was in line with mother tongue and English EGRA results (Piper, 2010; Smith *et al.*, 2012).

Table 1: Students’ Reading Test Results (%)

Students	Familiar word word identification (20%)	Passage Reading (30)	Reading comp. (40%)	Listening Comprehension (10%)	Total 100%
S ₁	14	29	8	4	55
S ₂	4	28	0	2	34
S ₃	20	10	8	0	38
S ₄	16	11	8	5	40
S ₅	9	1	20	1	31
S ₆	7	28	0	0	35
S ₇	1	2	8	0	11
S ₈	3	1	0	0	4
S ₉	1	2	0	0	3
S ₁₀	2	26	0	0	28
S ₁₁	4	15	16	0	35
S ₁₂	6	10	16	4	36
Total	36.25%	45.28%	17.50%	13.33%	29.17%

“S₂” has totally scored thirty-four percent (34%). When the result of each component skill is taken separately, the following can be seen. He scored 4% out of 20% in word recognition 28% out of 30% in passage reading, and 2% out of 10% in listening comprehension. He did not give any correct answer to the reading comprehension items. The achievement of the student on passage reading was very close to the maximum (28% out of 30%), but he scored least (only 4% out of 20%) in familiar word identification. However, his results in the reading comprehension and listening comprehension were zero out of 40% and 2% out of 10%, respectively. This finding was also in line with mother tongue (Piper, 2010) and English EGRA results (Smith *et al.*, 2012).

Participants “S₃” and “S₄” scored high in word recognition, but they scored far from below average in all other reading components. The case of “S₅” is different from the above two participants because he scored half of the total in reading comprehension and less than average

in all other components. This reveals that these three participants scored below the Minimum Learning Competencies set for grade four reading MoE’s (2008) and USAID/MoE’s (2012). The Minimum reading competencies set include reading of words, phrases, and sentences, reading short paragraphs and stories to find information needed to answer questions, and put pictures in order and fill in tables. Grade four students are also required to read short paragraphs and sentences and retell the main details and understand and use a total of about 400 words on different topics such as everyday objects, food, weather, animals, occupations, buildings, places, parts of the house, health, safety tools, parts of the body, and other everyday activities. They are also required to read incomplete stories and guess their ends. A dialogue was given so that they could respond to comprehension questions. In all these reading activities, they are expected to perform at least 50% to reach the threshold (minimum) competency level (MLC). Worse of all, S₇, S₉ and S₁₂ scored below average in all the reading

components. Participants S₆, S₈, and S₁₁ scored above average in passage reading, while they scored below average in all other reading components. The total average score of all these participants was below expected; and this indicates that they have not met the threshold (minimum) competency level established by MoE (2008) and USAID/MoE (2012).

Ethiopia has assessed student English language abilities through four national learning assessments for Grades four and eight since 2000. The baseline national learning assessment (EBNLA) was conducted in 2000, the second (ESNLA) in 2004, the third, ETNLA, was undertaken in 2007. The fourth, EFNLA, was conducted in 2011. Most of the assessments and research studies have been made on reading, comprehension and arithmetic skills. The results of all these studies suggest a declining trend of student learning achievement in English over the years. The same result is also reflected in the present study.

On aggregate, only four students scored better in passage reading and three on word recognition. On the other hand, seven and five out of twelve students scored zero in listening comprehension and reading comprehension, respectively. The participants' results considered out of hundred showed that only S₁ was better off scoring 55%, while the rest were below average. The participants' overall reading result (29%) indicates that their reading performance is far below the threshold competency level, which is 50%.

The results of this study have been in consonance with different national studies conducted on Early Grade Reading in Ethiopia. For instance, studies such as Piper (2010) and American Institutes for Research (AIR) (2012) on Early Grade Reading Assessments on mother tongue and English EGRA disclosed low reading performance. Mother tongue EGRA showed that 80% of grade four students cannot read up to the competency standard

expected of them. The English EGRA, according to the MLCs, also indicated students' low reading performance, which is far below what is expected of them; that is 50% (MoE, 2008; AIR, 2012). The overall average percent score for Grade four in the entire nation was 42%. Students scored 6% in reading comprehension and 8% in listening comprehension. The low performance in passage reading had significant implications for the students' performance in responding to comprehension questions. Students who read slowly have more difficulty recalling the meaning of the words they have read and therefore cannot follow the key elements of a story (Piper, 2010; Smith *et al.*, 2012; AIR 2012). From the results, one could argue that there is a reading skills gap among grade four students. Tsehay's (2012) research results also showed that 4th graders read an average of 27 wpm with 7% of the study group missing all. Out of the seven comprehension questions asked, they scored a mean of 1.7, 38% scoring zero. The findings concluded that the reading fluency scores of the children were very low, far below the standards set by the curricula. The findings were found to be very similar with what have been reported by EGRA mother tongue and English EGRA (Piper, 2010; AIR, 2012).

Put in a nutshell, these different studies concluded that a large majority of the students at Grade four were unable to display proficiencies in rereading skills. Specifically seen, the word reading and paragraph reading fluencies were far below the minimum expectations; i.e. the students' reading ability was very low gauged against the expected reading competences. The students' deficiencies with reading passage comprehension and listening questions were severe. Besides, the application of reading strategies by the classroom teachers along with the students seems very low. The results of this study, therefore, seem to be similar with previous researches implying that the students' reading problem is strife which seeks great attention for improvement.

Table 2: Classroom Observation Results

No	Item	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	The teacher:						
1	Introduced topic and key vocabulary briefly before reading	X		X			X
2	Gave clear instruction to the students before reading		X		X		X
3	Encouraged students for silent /oral reading during reading	X			X		X
4	Read passage to students		X		X		X
5	Asked students to retell what they read when reading was finished		X		X		X
6	Motivated students to answer and discuss questions after reading		X		X		X

The teacher's actual practice in the reading classroom was observed three times using observation checklist, and the findings are summarized in Table 2 above. As the findings indicate, on the first observation day, the teacher started her class by greeting the students and asking about the previous lesson. She, then, wrote the page number where the students could find the passage and read the instruction that says, "Read and Do" and ordered one of the students to read aloud although this activity was actually a while-reading activity. It was observed that the pre-reading phase was skipped altogether. She then let the majority of the students read aloud turn by turn.

The teacher used *item 1* of the checklist as a pre-reading activity meant to attract students' attention towards the text they were going to read, and to activate

their prior knowledge which might be helpful in gaining new information about the passage. She used one-third of the days observed to teach pre-reading activities. She also tried to encourage the students for silent reading (item3) i.e., silent and loud reading during the while reading stage for only 1 observed day (1/3=33.33), and this shows low application of the reading strategies. Donaldson (2011) emphasizes that the pre-reading strategies are significant for the actual reading practices. Harmer (2001:70) also stresses that, "Teachers should give students hints so that they can predict what is coming soon". However, the teacher failed to give brief introduction and instruction. During the while reading activities, students were made to read and they were corrected by the teacher immediately for wrong pronunciation, mistakes they had committed. The teacher

made half of the students read a similar text turn by turn and read the questions aloud and asked them in the same manner repeatedly. She gave corrections and asked questions while the students were reading aloud. She also praised students on all occasions even when they did not read correctly. Not less than half of the students were asked to read one by one the same paragraph over and over. After half of the period was gone, the teacher had given chances to the students to answer questions by reading. When a student made an error, the whole class was asked to give corrections in chorus.

During the second and third observation days, the teacher used the same procedure as in the first day. She started her class by greeting students and asking the date, and then wrote the topic of the reading skill to be taught that day on the chalk board, i.e., 'Read and Do'. Then she let students read turn by turn. Several of the students read aloud. Here, the students read very carefully to correctly pronounce each word in the passage and the teacher seemed to give more emphasis to the appropriate way of the students' pronunciation of words. From the practices observed in all the three days, reading for this teacher was mainly pronouncing words correctly and was to be done aloud at a reasonable speed and appropriate tone.

Dereje (2012) found that there was a discrepancy between the strategies propounded in the policy contents and teacher's guides and teachers' actual classroom practices. Even though teachers see themselves positively in terms of their English proficiency and English teaching skills, the multi-sources of data evidenced that teachers' English language proficiency and English teaching skills are weak to implement the tasks and activities embodied in the English textbooks as intended. The study then concluded that the inadequate and inappropriate implementation of language skills is clearly observed in Ethiopian primary school English classes (grades 1-4).

The teaching methodology of the teacher observed in this study also reflects the problem investigated by Dereje (2012). Although the teacher in this study attempted to give correct pronunciations of words, and encouraged them to participate in the reading class, the result showed low capacity in reading (Please vide supra the reading assessment results). Therefore, this might be partially attributed to the teacher's way of teaching reading.

Interview Results

As indicated above, one of the instruments used to gather data was interview. The student, the teacher and the supervisor interview results are reported below as translated (*word-by-word translation*).

An interview with a grade four male student (S₁) about his ability in reading, the way he learns reading and the assessment method of reading revealed that he copied words from the blackboard written by the English teacher. He reflected that:

Although I have grade 4 English textbook personally, I can't read or understand the passage. I usually score below average, so I participate in tutorial classes which are given to students with reading problems. However, I am still in problem even to understand a single word like "cat". I write the words difficult for me without understanding them and do not read or practice after

words. I am not told how the tables, diagrams, charts in the book are used and I don't try to know their use in the book. I have a big problem in reading.

S₄ (a male student) responded to the same questions saying that:

..... Our teacher usually makes us practice loud reading in front of the class turn-by-turn. If clever students ask her to teach us difficult words, she will teach us the meanings of difficult words from the reading passage. We are assessed by reading the passage from the textbook in front of the class through reading aloud. The teacher rarely asks students who never answer questions. Very rarely she gives clarifications on what we do not understand.

Another student (S₇) who is a girl gave her responses as..

...Our teacher writes few selected words from the unit passage on the white board and gives explanation about them. Then, our group leader in one-to-five group formation created by the school first reads the passage aloud to the group members. We, the group members listen to our group leader while reading aloud. When we have difficulty in understanding difficult words and the passage as a whole, the leader tries to explain to us. But, if the leader cannot answer, he/she will ask the teacher and the teacher will answer the questions. Next, our teacher invites students to read and ask students by calling student's classroom role number out to read the passage. Every week the teacher makes /gives an assessment by ordering us to read orally in front of the class. She also reads aloud and tells us to answer matching and multiple choice questions from previous lessons.

From the above explanations, it seems that there is passage reading, where silent reading strategy is mostly not applied. With regard to reading skills assessment, reading comprehension (reading for meaning), letter identification, phonemic awareness, and word identification are not included in reading skills assessment for grade four English reading learners. This neglect of teaching the required elements in reading as suggested in the curriculum might have contributed to the students' failure in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and word naming. Thus, it might be possible to conclude that students' low achievement in the assessment has resulted from teacher's approach and focus of teaching reading.

The teacher interviewee was asked about her lesson plan, how she taught and assessed reading at Grade four. She responded that although she had been trained in in-service program to upgrade to diploma level for teaching mother-tongue and English in the form of cluster (to teach grades 1-4), she boldly told us that she does not apply the reading strategies she studied in the program since she has forgotten them. She teaches reading through writing few selected pre-reading words on the chalkboard. She always does this when she begins new reading lessons. She reads aloud and makes students use silent reading. Then, she asks students both oral and written questions from the passage. If students cannot answer the questions, she asks them again to try using silent reading. She orders students to come to the front of the classroom and reread short sentences from the passage and new words from the reading passage by writing them on the chalkboard. Then after, she gives individual and

group reading tasks to the students, and makes rounds and monitor while students are engaged in the activities. She assesses student's reading by checking students' exercise books and inviting them to write their answers on the chalkboard. However, she never assesses oral, reading and listening comprehension skills.

The cluster supervisor of Dona Berber, who also supervises Addis Amba Government primary school and other six private primary schools, was asked if there were standard format for reading lesson plan. He was also asked about his observation of the teaching and assessment of English reading at grade four level. He assured that there exists a standardised or uniform reading lesson plan.

He reported that all teachers were found to apply lecture method, despite their training in active learning methods, while teaching reading. The teachers have never improved although they were given repeated feedback from the supervisor and the English department heads; they always use lecturing. The teachers do not help students practice reading strategies and hardly give them chance to read and understand a text by themselves. He even complained that after repeated suggestions and comments, teachers give written tests on previously discussed passages. Actually, reading assessments are not given as per the requirements in the syllabus and the teaching materials.

To put it in a nutshell, the student, the teacher and the supervisor interviews have revealed that the English language teacher does not practice appropriate reading strategies. So, it may be possible to assume that the teacher's style of teaching reading has contributed to the students' poor reading performance; and hence they have not achieved the MLC.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings from the reading assessments, the interview and classroom observation, it is possible to conclude that, the grade four students have not achieved the MLC indicated in the English language syllabus and the textbook, the English language teacher did not apply the standardized lesson plan, and relinquished many of the reading activities students should master at grade four level; and teachers teaching methodology has contributed to the students' poor reading performance in the four components of reading: word identification, oral reading, reading and listening comprehension.

The study has disclosed what actually exists in the teaching of reading at grade four level. The causes are already identified that the teacher's style of teaching has affected students' reading performance. The teacher has not applied the teaching of reading the way it should have been. Why didn't the teacher employ the strategies? Probably, there is still lack of knowledge, which should be remedied through training. This study seems to imply that training be given to teachers and tested with some kind of follow-up strategy. Therefore, reading strategy training for teachers which they apply to scaffold their students' reading development to achieve the MLC determined for different grade levels including grade four seems necessary.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of Interest none declared.

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