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2nd Cycle Primary School EFL Teachers' Use of Reading Strategies to Develop Their Students' Reading Skills: The Case of Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora Zones of Oromiya National Regional State

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Abstract

The research was aimed at investigating the 2nd cycle primary school English teachers' use of reading strategies to develop their students reading skills. It focused on Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora Zones of Oromiya national regional state. The research embraced 90 English Language teacher informants who were selected from the second cycle primary schools of Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora Zones. The research employed purposive sampling to select the districts (locally called woredas) and to select the schools on the basis of their accessibility. Availability sampling was used to select the teachers who participated in the study. In order to collect data for the research, questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and document analysis were employed. The findings of the research revealed that the 2nd cycle primary school EFL teachers were unaware of the importance of using reading strategies in developing students' reading skills and the roles of reading strategies in developing reading competence. Besides, the teachers were not making efforts to raise their students' awareness about reading strategies and the uses of the strategies during the reading lesson. The findings from textbook analysis indicated that the English language teaching materials (textbooks) which are in use did not incorporate lessons or sections related to the explicit instruction of reading strategies. The research concludes that the EFL teachers lack awareness about reading strategies, the use of reading strategies and the advantages of the explicit instruction of the strategies.

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1. Introduction

Reading is the vital part of language instruction at every level because it supports students' learning in multiple ways [13]. It is essential to students' academic achievement. If students are good readers, they can be successful in their academic subjects as they can easily understand the materials they read. Understanding what is read in a good way requires the utilization of the appropriate reading strategies. Therefore, students are expected to be taught about the strategies which support them to develop their reading competence. Supporting this idea, [2] explains that "helping students to understand good language learning strategies and training them to develop and use such strategies can be considered to be the most appreciated characteristic of good language teacher". This reveals that teaching students to use reading strategies to develop their reading skills is of paramount importance. So, in order to help students succeed in their future academic journey, English language teachers are expected to provide their learners with exposure to a variety of reading strategies. In order to do so, the teachers themselves need to have awareness about the reading strategies and their contributions to reading skills development. Reading strategies are essential to enable students to read with ease and comprehension.

Awareness about reading strategies and the ability of utilizing them can help primary school students to become prepared for academic challenges which they will encounter in their way forward. Enabling students to become proficient readers at the primary school is quite indispensable as many things which are learnt at later stages are dependent on the students' reading competence which is built at the lower grades. Therefore, focusing on developing students' reading competence starting from the primary level has a positive impact on students' success across various disciplines.

More importantly, teaching reading skills at elementary level prevents problems related to reading which the students may face in their future learning. Regarding this thought, [8] explain that if students do not learn reading at the primary level, they lack the ability of reading well. Moreover, students without good literary skills may develop poor self-esteem and they may lack motivation. According to [5], such students encounter behavioral and academic problems which may lead them to be alienated from regular curriculum. Scholars strongly argue that students face a lifelong difficulty if they do not read well early. This thought is supported by [3] and [1] who indicated that 80% of children who have difficulty of reading in first grade will have difficulty of reading at the end of 4th grade and 75% of children who are poor readers at the end of grade 3 will remain poor readers in high School. This reveals how much the problems of reading which students face at elementary level can affect them continuously.

The problem may also extend to affect students' academic success at higher level. [21] also confirms that helping students attain early literacy skills is essential for later life reading success. In relation to the problems of reading at primary level, [20] state the following:

Approximately 20 to 30 percent of school-age children have difficulties learning to read. About 15 million youngsters do not have access to the wonders of books and other kinds of texts for learning and

enjoyment. Almost as many girls as boys experience difficulties learning to read. Boys seem to be identified as reading disabled more readily because they tend to be more active and boisterous than their female age-mates. While these estimates are alarming, they are on the conservative side.

Developing English reading skills among primary school students is highly emphasized by Ethiopia (MoE) currently. This can be witnessed by the survey conducted by USAID (i.e. in the Elementary Grade Reading Assessment [18]). According to this assessment, it has been found out that reading at the primary schools of Ethiopia is at its worst stage. However, one of the aspects of teaching reading, the need to teach students the appropriate reading strategies, has been overlooked. Explicit teaching of reading strategies to students has not been indicated in teaching materials which are in use. In the Ethiopian Primary school English syllabus, students are expected to be aware of the varieties of strategies such as identifying main ideas, guessing word meanings, etc, which may help them to develop their reading competency. This is evident from the Primary English Syllabus designed by MoE and implemented in the elementary schools currently. In such situation English Language teachers are responsible for teaching reading strategies to students and the ways the strategies can be used in learning to read.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Statement of the Problem

The fact that students' reading skills at primary level is deteriorating and becoming below the expected standard in Ethiopia [20] is the serious problem which needs to be investigated. If students are not taught about the reading strategies at primary level, they will lack motivation to read when they go to the higher level. Teachers are primarily responsible to support their students to read with ease. One of the ways of doing this may be providing the students with access and exposure to the varieties of reading strategies which seem to have been disregarded in the process of developing reading at primary schools.

Regarding the indispensability of language learning strategies on the whole,[16] states language learning strategies "...are especially important for learning because they are tools for active self -directed movement, which are essential for developing communicative competence." This implies that language learning strategies are helpful to develop students' communicative competences, among which reading is the one. However, the extent to which primary school teachers in the research setting were clear about the reading strategies and their contributions, the level at which the teachers were teaching the students to utilize the strategies remained questionable when the current situation of students reading achievement was carefully considered from a variety of perspectives.

In addition, the awareness which the 2nd cycle primary school English teachers had about the importance of teaching reading strategies to their students needed to be researched. If teachers who were the primary stakeholders were not aware of the reading strategies use in developing students' reading skills, the encouragement they had to explicitly teach the students about the strategies and how to utilize them would be less. In addition to the above points, despite the presence of studies conducted on reading as a whole, as far as

the knowledge of the researchers was concerned, the attention given by researchers to the use of reading strategies to develop students' reading skills in primary schools of the country was very less. This was a gap which was needed to be bridged. The research; therefore, tried to address the following questions.

2.2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research was to investigate second cycle primary school English teachers' practices of the use of reading strategies in developing their students' reading skills in Jimma and Ilu Abba zones of Oromiya National Regional State. Specifically, the research tried to:

- explore if the 2nd cycle primary school English teachers in Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora Zones were familiar with reading strategies which students should master and utilize in learning to read and if the teachers practice them in the classrooms.
- investigate the most preferred reading strategies which were often used by the English teachers while teaching reading (if they used the strategies)
- identify whether the teachers are aware the purposes of teaching reading skills to their students or not.

2.3 Research Questions

The research tried to seek answers to the following questions.

- Do the primary school English teachers in Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora zones of Oromiya National Regional state have awareness about reading strategies which help develop students' reading competence?
- Do the primary school English teachers teach reading strategies to their students explicitly? If so, what are the most favored strategies by the teachers?
- Are the primary school English teachers aware of the purposes of teaching reading skills to their students?

2.4. Significance of the Study

The research was intended to raise teachers' awareness and practices about reading strategies. The findings of the study would encourage elementary school teachers to teach their students to employ reading strategies in learning to read. It also could be used by those who are responsible for designing curriculum/syllabus for teacher training courses. In other words, the study would help the material writers/ curriculum designers to think of the vitality of incorporating lessons related to the uses of teaching various reading strategies which could develop students' reading skills. This would make English teachers capable of teaching the strategies and their uses to their students explicitly in their reading class. In this way students would be encouraged to use different reading strategies which could aid their comprehension of the materials which they read. Furthermore, the result of the study would give insight about designing reading materials to be utilized at primary schools with reading strategies to be taught to the students. Finally, the study would serve as a background for other researchers who want to conduct a study in a similar area.

2.5. Limitations of the Study

The two zones in which this research was conducted, Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora, are wider zones. In most cases the areas where the schools had been located were beyond accessibility because of their remoteness. There were schools which required a long walk of two to three days (on foot) as they were far from road transportation service. This had made the researchers unable to incorporate the whole second cycle primary schools in the zones. The other challenge met was that some of the students were unwilling to participate in filling questionnaires and the researchers had to spend their time to try to convince them about the goal of the research.

3. Literature Review

Reading is the active interaction between the reader and the text. It is the process of extracting and interpreting information from a printed material. Reading supports readers to learn and gain knowledge at any time and at any place. Regarding this thought, [21] expressed that reading paves the ways to the new worlds and to new opportunities. Reading also enables people to acquire new knowledge, enjoy literature and perform activities which are related to modern life, such as reading newspaper, job advertisements, magazines, story, instructional manuals, maps and etc. In a similar token, [15] pinpoints the fact that reading is indispensable in one's life, and that the ability to read is of great value and vital for one's personality, social status, and economical strength.

In order make students successful, teachers need to understand the process of reading and the process of teaching reading skills to their students.

Reading is a complex process which comprised of many interacting sub process and abilities [21] and [17]. EFL teachers can develop their students' capacity to succeed in this complex language skill by teaching them about the useful reading strategies. In relation to this, [4] states that it is impossible to make learners familiar with all types of reading materials or texts which they will ever want to read. What is easy to do is teaching them the strategies or techniques which can help the students for approaching different types of texts to be used for various purposes.

Emphasizing the importance of teaching reading strategies to students,[7] states the following:

Reading strategy instruction is important to develop students reading. Teachers should make the students aware of the name of the specific reading strategies to their students and should enable students to use them and identify them by themselves. Regarding this, one of the important things that the primary school English teachers have to consider when teaching reading strategies to their students is that they should not delay mentioning to the students the name of the strategy being applied.

According to [13], reading strategies are actions or series of actions employed in order to construct meaning. In a similar token, [16], [15] state that reading strategies are conscious and flexible plans or learning techniques, behaviours, problem solving or study skills which make learning more effective and efficient. Readers employ a variety of skills or mechanisms to make the extraction of meaning or comprehension of a text easier. Such mechanisms or techniques can be termed as reading strategies.

Scholars categorize reading strategies in various ways. According to [15], reading strategy as the mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text to make sense of what they read. Understanding a written text requires the integration of various strategies. [15], states that these strategies are categorized in to cognitive metacognitive and affective/social strategies. Cognitive strategies are strategies in which students work with and manipulate the task material themselves moving toward task completion. The use of metacognitive strategies and the knowledge which students have about these strategies can support students reading achievement. [19], [9] cluster metacognitive strategies in to planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies. Planning as part of metacognitive strategies is used before reading. It involves the activation of the students' background knowledge. According to [6] and [19], strategies like previewing a title picture, illustration, leading, or sub-leading help students to comprehend the overview of the text. In addition to this, setting one's own goal of reading can come under planning strategy. Planning also incorporates setting goals for studying, skimming a text before reading generating questions before reading a text and so forth.

Monitoring strategies are strategies which students are expected develop for the while reading stage as an aspect of self-resulted learning. Monitoring strategy includes understanding of vocabulary, self-questioning or reflecting on one's comprehension of a text read, summarizing and inferring the main idea of each paragraph [19] and [9]. This strategy helps students identify and focus on key information or words including cohesive devices. The other metacognitive strategy which is closely related to monitoring is regulatory strategy. Regulatory strategy includes asking questions to monitor students' comprehension of the passage, making students' reading speed slower when the reading text is difficult, reviewing examination materials, and postponing.

In the process of developing their students reading skills, effective English language teachers teach their students how to adjust their reading behaviour to cope up with different situations, types of input and the purposes of reading. They also teach about useful reading strategies. There are different reading strategies to support students to read more rapidly and effectively with good comprehension. These include: previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, guessing from Context, paraphrasing, modeling the strategies aloud, using fill in the blank exercises, and encouraging student to talk.

4. Methodology

In order to investigate 2nd cycle primary school English teachers' use of reading strategies in developing students reading skills, descriptive research design was employed.

4.1. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The informants of the study were primary school English teachers from Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora Zones of Oromiya national Regional state. In Jimma Zone, there were 19 Woredas. One of these, Jimma town, was a special administrative Woreda. In this zone, on the whole, there were 928 elementary schools. Among these, 561 were second cycle primary schools (Grades 5 to 8) ,and this was the focus of the study. The remaining 367 schools were first cycle primary schools (Grades 1-4). In Ilu Abba Bora Zone, on the other hand, there were 24

Woredas. This incorporated 2 special administrative towns and 22 Woredas. The zone, in general, had 689 Primary schools. From these schools, 352 were first cycle and 337 schools were second cycle primary schools. Since the woredas of the zones were not evenly distributed and were inaccessible in most cases, 25% of the woredas in each zone was involved in the study. In other words, Woredas from which the sample schools had been selected were 11, i.e. 5 woredas from Jimma Zone and 6 Woredas from Ilu Abba Bora zone.

The research totally embraced 45 2nd cycle elementary schools from the two zones. Among the English teachers in these schools, the researchers took 90 teachers as a sample and distributed questionnaires to them.

The investigators utilized purposive sampling technique to select Woredas /districts from the two zones. Similar sampling technique was employed to select schools from which teacher informants were taken. Since the schools had almost similar background, the researchers believed that the data from the sample schools can represent the 2nd cycle primary school population in the settings. Moreover, the profiles of the English teachers in the schools were almost similar as most of them were diploma holders and qualified to teach at 2nd cycle primary schools.

4.2. Data Collection Tools

The researchers employed questionnaire, interview, classroom observation and document (textbook) analysis to collect data for the study.

4.3. Data Analysis

Mixed approach was employed to analyze the data collected through the instruments stated. In other words, the researchers used both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the data. Quantitative analysis was employed for the data gathered by using questionnaire. The researchers used SPSS version 16.0 to analyze the data from the questionnaire. Then, the frequency and percentage of response to the items were calculated and recorded in the form of table.

Qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from the EFL teachers through interview, classroom observation and document analysis. Qualitative data from interview, observation and textbook analysis were analyzed, described and matched with the quantitative ones to draw findings.

4.4. Ethical Consideration

Below are our ethical and moral principles and procedures that we will follow in the process of research:

- Prior to beginning the data collection process, participants were made to read a statement of informed consent and were told that they could discontinue the process at any time.
- The informants were informed that all data would be stored in a secure location and all identifying information would be removed so that anonymity and confidentiality would be assured.

The informants were told that the data generated through, questionnaire, interview, and observation would be used only for the purpose of the research.

5. Findings

In the following subsection, the results of the data gathered by using questionnaire was indicated

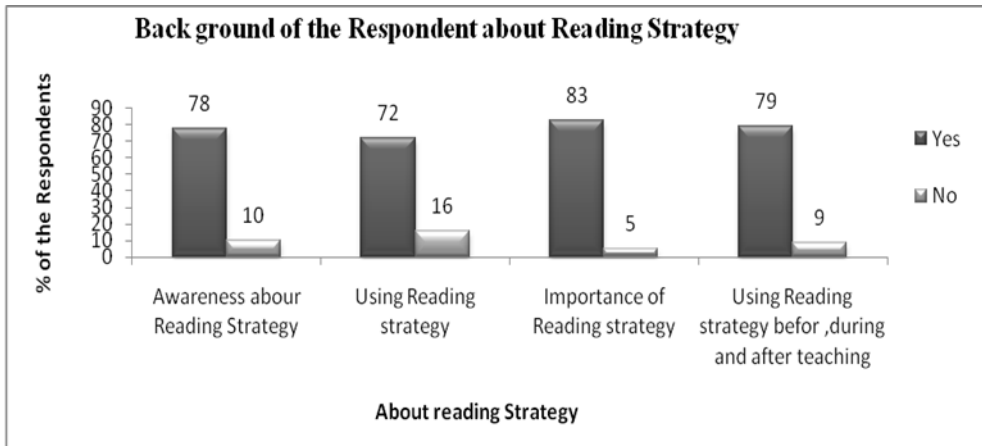


Fig. 1 Teachers’ Awareness about reading strategies and their Uses

This data indicated that the teachers had no much problem related to the awareness of reading strategies and its use. Among the respondents, 78% revealed that they were aware of the reading strategies. Similarly, most of the respondents stated that they use reading strategies in their reading lessons in the classroom.

The data revealed that 72% of them used reading strategies in their classrooms to teach reading skills to their students. The result also indicated that the teachers believed in the importance of reading strategies for reading skills development. Among the respondents, 83% pointed out that reading strategies are important to develop reading skills. In addition, most of the teacher respondents indicated that they used reading strategies before, during and after teaching reading skills. As can be understood from the figure, 79% of the respondents indicated that they used the strategies at the various stages of teaching reading skills .

The result in table 1 indicated that the most important purposes of teaching reading to grades 5-8 were to help students to get information from the reading passage, to support students develop the skills of reading silently, to teach the skills of reading, to teach how to do comprehension questions, to teach how to pronounce words, and to enable students do grammar exercises. The percentage of the respondents who indicated this was respectively 74%, 69%, 61%, 60%, 59%, and 53%.

Table 1 Purposes of Teaching Reading Lesson to Students

Response	Purpose of teaching a reading lesson to grade 5-8 is to help student to:									
	do grammar exercises	read passage loud in class	Teach how to pronounce	Teach the skill of reading	Teach vocabulary	Teach how to do comprehension questions	teach them to read different text for	help student to get the information of the	teach grammar	support the student to developed skill of reading
not important	3 (3%)	7 (8%)	1 (1%)	8 (9%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)
less important	9 (10%)	18 (20%)	8 (9%)	6 (7%)	5 (6%)	11 (13%)	14 (16%)	7 (8%)	15 (17%)	7 (8%)
important	29 (33%)	33 (38%)	27 (31%)	20 (23%)	35 (40%)	24 (27%)	39 (44%)	15 (17%)	31 (35%)	22 (25%)
most important	47 (53%)	30 (34%)	52 (59%)	54 (61%)	48 (54%)	52 (60%)	34 (39%)	65 (74%)	41 (47%)	57 (69%)
Total	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)	88 (100%)

According to the data in table 2, predicting the message of a text, explaining the reading purpose, giving pre-reading tasks, Guessing from context by looking at pictures and asking student to activate their background knowledge were respectively stated as the most important pre-reading activities employed by the English teachers. The average of the respondents who stated that the listed pre-reading activities are most important in the teaching of reading skills to students is 53.

The result in table 3 indicated that among the reading strategies, most of the second cycle primary school English teachers always used while reading strategies like ‘asking the students to find out the meaning of new words and encouraging the students to underline key words /phrases. Among the respondents, 43% and 39% respectively indicated that they always did this. On average, most of the teachers (average 36) used the stated reading strategies in their actual reading class sometimes only. Totally, the average number of teachers who stated that they never used the strategies used them rarely, very rarely and sometimes was 60. Those who used the strategies always were very small in number and they were only 26 on average.

Table 2. How important the pre-reading strategies are in the teachers' reading class

No	How important are the following "before reading strategies" when you teach reading skill to your Students?	Frequency of the level of importance as indicated by the respondents				
		Not important	Less important	important	Most important	
1	Making the purpose of Reading Clear	0	3	21	64	
2	Encouraging students to predict message of the text	0	3	20	65	
3	Asking students to guess the relation of picture and their context	0	5	27	56	
4	Teaching new and important words before student read the reading text	5	10	34	39	
5	Asking the student to activate their knowledge	1	9	26	52	
6	Giving some pre-reading questions to the students	2	3	26	63	
7	Setting a context by using realia, picture etc...	1	11	45	33	
	Mean	1.3	6.8	28.4	53	

Table 3. The Use of while Reading Strategies (RS) in the actual Reading Class

No	How often do you use the following during reading strategy in your actual class?	Frequency of RS use by the respondents				
		Never	Rarely	Very rarely	Sometimes	Always
1	Asking the students to find out specific information	3	1	8	51	25
2	Encouraging them to confirm if the prediction they made before reading was right	0	4	13	42	29
3	Asking the students to find out the meaning of new words while reading	3	6	7	29	43
4	Encouraging them to underline key words /phrases during reading	4	6	7	32	39
5	Asking them to do gap filling questions	7	2	10	45	24
6	Telling the students to make notes from the passage while reading	8	6	21	39	14
7	Asking the student to jump difficult words which do not affect the message in the text	31	20	14	15	8
	Mean	8	4.2	11.4	36	26

Table 4. Using the Post Reading Strategies in the Reading class

No	How often do you perform the following after (post) reading strategies in your reading class?	Frequency of performance by the respondents				
		Never	Rarely	Very rarely	Sometimes	Always
1	Encouraging the student to draw pictures which can represent the message of the text read	10	20	21	23	14
2	Asking students comprehension question on the passage	1	2	3	23	59
3	Telling the students to discuss the passage after reading	1	1	7	33	46
4	Encouraging the students to give comments on the passage	9	13	10	33	23
5	Informing the students to summarize the text in their own English	7	15	13	22	31
6	Giving test on the passage	10	15	12	36	15
7	Encouraging the students to prepare similar story and to discus in group	10	12	15	36	15
Mean		6.9	11	11.6	29	29

According to the result in table 4, the post reading strategies which were most focused on by the English teachers were asking the students to do comprehension questions after reading a passage and telling them to discuss the passage after they have finished reading. On average, 59 and 46 respondents respectively pointed out that these were the most important post reading strategies which the students were encouraged to perform at the end of reading a passage in the reading class.

The upper hand of the respondents indicated that the frequency of using the post reading strategies stated were never, rarely, and very rarely. The average number of respondents who indicated this fact was 29.5 and this number is more than the number of those who used the strategies always. It can also be understood from the result in the table that those who sometimes used the strategies were 29 on average. The number of respondents who did not use the strategies was larger on average. The mean of those who never used, rarely used, and very rarely used the strategies was 58.5.

As can be understood from the result in table 5, the strategies which were used to great extent were skimming, scanning and guessing meaning from context. When the overall utilization of the strategies is considered, 28.8 teachers on average used the stated strategies to a very great extent, whereas 28.5 used them to a great extent. Those who never used the strategies and those who used them to some extent and to a very less extent were, on average, 1.5, 20.2 and 5.7 respectively.

Table 5. Utilization of Strategies for Reading more quickly and effectively

No	To what extent do you use the following strategies in your class when you teach reading lesson?	Frequency of the use of the strategies in reading class				
		To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a Very less extent	Not at all
1	Previewing	25	14	22	4	3
2	Predicting	28	40	16	4	0
3	Skimming	32	29	19	6	2
4	Scanning	36	25	20	5	2
5	Guessing from context	30	34	18	6	0
6	Paraphrasing	22	29	26	9	2
	Mean	28.8	28.5	20.2	5.7	1.5

Table 6. Encouraging students to use metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies

No	Frequency of Response of the respondents on the given strategies	How often do you encourage your student to utilize the following strategies while you present your reading lesson																				
		Meta-Cognitive					Cognitive Strategies										Social/Affective					
		Planning					Monitoring & Evaluation		Resourcing	Repetition & Grouping		Imagery	Key word methods		Elaboration	Transfer	Inference	Note making & Summarizing	Recombination & Translation	Question for clarification	Cooperation	Self talk
		AO	DA	FP	SA	SM																
1	Never	0 (0)	1 (1)	3 (3)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1)	0 (0)	2 (2)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	5 (5)	5 (6)	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1)			
2	Rarely	3 (3)	9 (10)	5 (6)	3 (3)	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (5)	9 (10)	6 (7)	5 (6)	5 (6)	3 (3)	6 (7)	10 (7)	12 (14)	4 (5)	1 (1)	6 (7)			
3	Very rarely	15 (17)	13 (15)	16 (18)	13 (15)	13 (15)	19 (21)	5 (6)	26 (30)	16 (18)	20 (23)	10 (11)	6 (7)	13 (15)	30 (35)	21 (24)	4 (5)	6 (7)	8 (9)			

No	How often do you encourage your student to utilize the following strategies while you present your reading lesson																	
	Meta-Cognitive					Cognitive Strategies										Social/Affective		
Frequency of Response of the respondents on the given strategies	Planning					Monitoring & Evaluation	Resourcing	Repetition & Grouping	Imagery	Key word methods	Elaboration	Transfer	Inference	Note making & Summarizing	Recombination & Translation	Question for clarification	Cooperation	Self talk
	AO	DA	FP	SA	SM													
4 Sometimes	47 (53)	33 (37)	40 (45)	36 (41)	35 (40)	61 (69)	29 (33)	44 (95)	44 (50)	42 (48)	33 (38)	37 (42)	33 (38)	64 (73)	91 (104)	44 (50)	33 (38)	41 (47)
5 Always	23 (26)	32 (36)	24 (27)	35 (40)	38 (43)	93 (105)	48 (55)	56 (64)	22 (25)	22 (25)	19 (22)	39 (44)	42 (48)	35 (40)	67 (77)	18 (21)	29 (33)	35 (40)

5.1. Teachers' Interview Result

The interview was aimed at finding out how the teachers taught reading skills, the teachers' perceptions about reading strategies, their awareness about the benefits of reading strategies, whether they taught reading strategies and their uses to students or not, if the teachers attended any reading strategies training, and the tasks/activities used by the teachers to teach reading skills.

The findings from the interview indicated that the methods employed by the 2nd cycle primary school English teachers to reach reading skills to their students were relatively closer. It had been found out that the English teachers often read the reading passage aloud, and then asked the students to read it aloud in turns paragraph by paragraph. After reading the text aloud in turns, the students were asked to do reading comprehension and vocabulary exercises which were prepared from the reading text.

An interviewee stated the following:

'Students want to read aloud. If they are made to read individually at the very outset, most of them do another thing and they are usually taken off the lesson'. Keeping them active to wait for the turn of reading made students active during the whole lesson. Because of this, I usually prefer loud reading in class.' (Teacher 3)

Regarding the teachers' perceptions of reading strategies, the research indicated they understood reading strategies as methods of teaching reading. The informants explained in a similar manner that strategies are techniques used in the teaching of reading skills. One of the interviewees explained his understanding of reading strategies as follows:

I use different techniques to teach language skills. Reading as skill has its own methods of teaching. So, using reading strategies is one of the methods of teaching reading skills. I think when I ask my students to read the passage one by one and tell them to do the give questions I am using reading strategies. This is how I understand reading strategies. (Teacher 8)

The results of the study also indicated that the English teachers believe in the importance of reading strategies in developing their students' reading skills. It had been found out that the strategies help students to read texts and to do the given comprehension questions. According to the interviewees' perceptions, loud reading as a strategy helps the learners to practice reading and it fosters confidence in them.

One of the interviewees stated:

I usually give group discussion session to my students when they finish reading the given text aloud. When they do the reading questions in group, they develop their skills of sharing ideas. The students benefit from this at large. This is reading strategy and how it is helpful to the students.(Teacher 2)

This respondent believed that giving group work and encouraging students to share ideas is a way of using reading strategies.

The findings from the interview also revealed that the teachers do not teach about reading strategies and their uses explicitly. It had been found out that teachers taught the reading passages provided in the textbooks.

One of the respondents expressed his ideas as follows:

I have never taught about reading strategies to the students. I cannot go out of the lessons provided in the students' textbook. Teaching reading strategies is not given as a topic in the book I teach. I teach reading passage. I usually ask the students to read the passage one by one and ask them to do the questions which are provided after the passage. I often face short of time even to complete the reading passage within the 40 minutes time allotted for one period. Trying to teach a lesson which is not part of the book in use may result in failure to complete the whole portion on time. Because of this, I do not plan to go out of the book. (Teacher 9)

The results of the interview depicted that there is no specific lesson topic about teaching reading strategies in the material which they are using for teaching reading skills. The finding is that the teachers do not often teach about reading strategies and their use explicitly.

It had also been found out that the English teachers in the 2nd cycle primary schools in the setting have never attended a training or workshop related to the teaching of reading strategies use. Regarding this, an interviewee stated the following:

When I was learning at teachers training college, I learnt about reading skills and how to teach reading to some extent. Since then, I have not been given any training on reading strategies. Therefore, training has not been given to me on this particular area. (Teacher 5)

Regarding tasks they used to teach reading skills, the informants explained that they ordered their students to do the reading questions given in the textbook. They pointed out that they taught the reading part of the text books to their students in order to enable the students answer the comprehension questions provided after the reading passage.

5.2. Classroom Observation Result

The findings of the classroom observation revealed that the English teachers did not practice what they expressed during the interview and in the questionnaires. During the teaching of reading skills the observed teachers focused only on a few of the reading strategies which were expected to develop the students' reading skills. The English teachers were not at all encouraging their students to use the metacognitive reading strategies.

Among the cognitive strategies, the teachers used grouping and note making alone. The students in the observed classrooms were seen discussing in pairs and in group, reading the passage aloud to the class and doing the given while reading questions. The reading strategies which were practiced by the English teachers during the classroom observation were pre, while and post reading strategies alone. In addition, the observed teachers were not explicitly teaching about the reading strategies.

5.3. Textbook Analysis Result

Document analysis (textbook evaluation) was concerned with identifying how much the uses of reading strategies and their instructions had been emphasized in English for Ethiopia, grade 5 to 8 textbooks. In order to evaluate the textbooks for the incorporation of the reading strategies, the researchers prepared criteria or checklists which focused on:

- identifying whether there were specific lessons which are directly related the explicit instruction of Reading strategy (RS) in the student text or the teacher's guide or not,
- identifying whether there were questions seeking for different levels comprehension or not,
- checking whether the vital strategies which aid the development of students' reading skills were incorporated in the books or not,
- identifying whether activities which encourage the use of metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies were incorporated or not .

The finding from the textbooks analyzed indicated that most of the important reading strategies which support the development of students' reading skills were overlooked by the grades 5 to 8 English textbook writers. The result in general revealed that there is no room for the explicit teaching of reading strategies in the books.

5. Discussions

The English teachers' classroom performance during the reading lesson indicated that they do not have awareness about reading strategies. During the interview, the respondents could not properly define the reading

strategies. Their response implied that reading strategies are the same to teaching methodology. However, reading strategies are not completely the same to language teaching methodology. Rather, reading strategies are methods used during reading to understand or comprehend the text.

According to [16], reading strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning to read easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations. This implies that reading strategies are techniques used or actions taken by students to make their understanding of the text they read easier. According to the research, the teachers perceived that giving group work and encouraging students to share ideas during group work is a way of using reading strategies. However, literature indicates that language learning strategies, in general and reading strategies in particular help to foster the development of independent learning [7]. Thus the respondents perception makes reading strategy a way of promoting collaborative learning, which is not the intension of reading strategies development. Since the response given by the informants makes reading strategies similar to language learning methodology, it is possible to understand that they are not aware of reading strategies and their uses.

The respondents also stated that they used the three stages of teaching reading: pre- reading, while reading and post reading phases. From the total respondents, 79% indicated that they used these strategies when they taught reading skills to their students. However, classroom observation did not confirm this; the interviewees were not seen using these strategies. Only a few of the respondents were observed giving some pre reading questions. The teachers confined themselves to the questions provided in the textbooks as the while reading tasks when they taught reading skills.

When the pre-reading activities indicated in the data are considered separately, pre-teaching the new vocabularies which are thought to be helpful for the comprehension of the texts had been given less value as compared to the others. Even though this is one of the vital activities at the pre-reading stage, the finding indicated that the teachers did not give it high emphasis. On average, only 39 of the respondents revealed that pre-teaching new vocabularies is important.

In addition, it had been found out that the second cycle primary school English language teachers did not often implement most of the post reading strategies in their actual reading classroom. According to the findings, those who always utilized the post reading strategies in their reading class to develop their students reading skills were only 29 on average.

The result of the research indicated that the practices of English language teachers in their actual reading classroom regarding the utilization of reading strategies were very limited. Since only 26 on average indicated that they always used the strategies, the awareness which they have about the values which using reading strategies have in developing the students reading skills was not much.

The research revealed that in the English classes, loud reading dominated the reading lesson in the reading class. The teachers read the reading passages aloud and then asked the students to read it aloud alternately after which they were required to do questions given in the book.

Researches indicate that loud reading slows down the reading speed and comprehension of the text being read. It is mostly recommended when the goal of reading is to teach pronunciation [15]. In addition, scholars indicate that loud reading is preferable for beginners who are at the phonic stage of learning to read. In the process of reading a text for comprehending meaning or message, loud reading may not help. Concerning the fact that loud reading is helpful for beginning readers who learn to read language alphabets, researchers pinpoint that loud reading is widely used in first-language teaching at the initial stages of reading programmes in order to help children match sounds with the symbols of written language; either by combining the sounds of single letters or letter clusters, or decoding the whole word [10], [11], [14].

This research revealed that the English teachers in the schools under investigation did not teach reading strategies explicitly to their students. In addition, strategies which aid rapid reading such as previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, guessing from context, paraphrasing, etc, were not totally used by the teachers.

Regarding the purposes of teaching reading skills, the results of the research revealed that the teachers had different views. The most important purposes for which the teachers taught reading to their students were to help them to get the information of the passage, to enable students to read texts aloud, to support the students to developed skill of reading silently, to teach the skills of reading, to teach how to do comprehension questions, teach how to pronounce words, and enable students do grammar exercises. Even though the teaching of reading can address these issues, they are not the most important purposes of teaching reading to students. These purposes are not directly connected to the primary goal of teaching reading skills to students. This shows that the teachers did not have awareness about the primary goal of teaching reading skills. Scholars in language teaching explain that reading is a purposeful activity and students are expected to know their purpose when they read [4]. Teaching reading skills is aimed at enabling students to develop the strategies which they can employ during independent or personal reading.

Furthermore, it is quite clear from the findings that the strategy which students use to decide in advance to attend to general tasks and to ignore irrelevant distracters, direct attention, was not given much attention.

As a metacognitive strategy, functional planning enables the students to plan and to rehearse linguistic components which help them to do the upcoming tasks in the reading text. In addition, by encouraging their students to use selective attention, English teachers could make their students aware of the vitality of deciding in advance to focus on specific information often by scanning for key words, concepts and/or linguistic markers. If teachers encourage their students to utilize self- management as a metacognitive strategy, the students will be initiated to identify conditions that help them to learn. Besides, this strategy helps the students to create suitable conditions for the presence of these situations since reading strategies use as a whole is a way of developing learner autonomy where by students will become independent learners. The strategy helps students to check the result/change which the learning of reading has brought in them.

However, according to the finding, the focus which had been given by the English teachers to these helpful strategies is very less. The result depicted that the teachers did not encourage their students to use most of the metacognitive strategies by making them aware of the values of the strategies most often.

The finding from the textbooks analyzed also indicated that most of the important reading strategies which support the development of students' reading skills were overlooked by the grades 5 to 8 English textbook writers. The result in general revealed that there is no room for the explicit teaching of reading strategies in the books.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusion

The study investigated the 2nd cycle primary school EFL teachers' use of reading strategies to develop their students' reading skills in Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora Zones of Oromiya National Regional State. The investigators used questionnaires, interview, classroom observation and document analysis as the instruments of the study. The informants of the study were 2nd cycle primary school EFL teachers in Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora Zones. On the basis of the findings of the research, the following conclusions have been drawn:

According to the finding, the teachers wrongly perceived reading strategies as a method of teaching reading and this is not exactly right.

It was also evident from the result of the research that the use of reading strategies (by the English teachers) to develop students' reading skills in English classes was overlooked. This has made the teachers' perception of teaching reading strategies and the values of encouraging students to use strategies limited. It had been found out that pre-reading, while reading and post reading were the only prioritized strategies by most of the English teachers.

It was also found out that the teachers have never been given the opportunity of attending a training or workshop which could raise their awareness about reading strategies and their use in the development of students' reading skills.

The findings indicated that the teachers used reading lesson/class to teach the students to read text aloud, to enable them to do grammar exercises or to identify structures incorporated in the text, to teach how to pronounce words, to teach vocabulary and to enable them to do reading exercises provided at the end of the reading passages in the English textbooks.

It has been found out that there was knowledge and awareness gap among the English teachers on the use of reading strategies and their contributions to students' reading skills development.

The document analysis which had been made revealed that the reading lessons of English for Ethiopia grades 5 to 8 textbooks and their respective teachers' guide did not have specific topics related to the explicit teaching of

reading strategies. Strategies which could help students to read and comprehend texts independently (cognitive, metacognitive, affective/social strategies) were not given any emphasis in the teaching materials. It had also been found out that that the teachers did not encourage their students to utilize various reading strategies during their lessons.

The finding indicated that the teachers asked the students to do group work, especially in the pre reading stage. It has also been found out that reading strategies which could help students' comprehension during reading and those which could motivate the students to activate their background knowledge were not given emphasis.

On the whole, it can be concluded that, the use of reading strategies to develop the students' reading skills and the explicit teaching of the strategies during the reading class did not get the emphasis which they deserve. Besides, the awareness which the English language teachers had about reading strategies and their uses was not adequate.

7.2. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the research, the researchers forward the following recommendations.

- The level of awareness which the second cycle primary school English teachers in Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora zones have about reading strategies and their uses in developing the students' reading skills was very less. Since lack of awareness can affect the teachers' actual classroom performance and the support they can offer to their students, it is advisable for the Oromiya Education Bureau and the Zonal education offices (Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora) to create conducive situations through which the teachers can get awareness raising training and workshop.
- Reading skills in general, and reading strategies use in particular are a lifelong skills which students are expected to develop for the journey ahead of them. Equipping the students with these skills is the responsibility which the EFL teachers are entrusted to. This research indicated that the teachers' awareness about the purposes of teaching reading skills to their students was meager. Thus, it is recommended that the English teachers should be made aware of the purposes of teaching reading to their students. To solve the teachers' knowledge gap in this regard, the schools, in collaboration with the zonal education office, should give trainings and workshops which help the teachers to update their skills and knowledge of language teaching (LT) and language teaching Methodology (LTM) which incorporated issues related to reading strategies instruction.
- Since the English teachers in the 2nd cycle primary schools of Jimma and Ilu Abba Bora zones were not encouraging their students to utilize different kinds of reading strategies which could help the students' comprehension of what they read, they should be made aware of (by the school, English department in the school, the Woreda education office etc.) the vitality of encouraging their students to utilize reading strategies which can help the development of their reading skills in the reading class.
- Since the teachers' awareness about the strategies can influence their classroom practice, the schools, the zonal education office, the Regional Education Bureau (REB), and the woreda education offices should arrange trainings in which the teachers can obtain awareness on the various reading strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, affective, etc) and their uses in developing students' reading skills.

- The researchers recommend that the concerned body which prepared the English textbooks should reconsider the reading sections for the incorporation of more reading strategies and for the explicit instruction of the strategies. The researchers also recommend that the RBE or the MoE should be aware of the advantages of involving the local teachers who are the primary stakeholders in the preparation of the English language textbooks as they know their students needs and the gaps they have in reading skills.

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