Factors Affecting Students' Effectiveness in Reading Skills with Reference to Gacheno High School of Grade 9A

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to investigate the factors affecting students' effectiveness in reading skills with particular reference to grade 9A' students of Gacheno high school. The population of the study was 32 students and 3English from grade9A. The participants of the study were chosen through simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The data collecting tools were questionnaire and interview. Thus, the study used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis method. The findings of this study are background of the students', motivations, and interests affected learners reading effectiveness.

Introduction

English is an international language that is widely used in different parts of the world for various purposes. In addition, English is used a medium of instruction in most of African countries, particularly in our country Ethiopia. English language paves the ways to be successful in academic career in other disciplines in the process of educating people. Moreover, academic reading should not be seen as a passive activity, but an active process that leads to the development of learning. Reading for learning requires a conscious effort to make links, understand opinions, research and apply what you learn to your studies. Therefore, reading is an interactive process in which readers construct a meaningful representation of a text using effective reading strategies. Effective reading strategies are considered as significant skills that have received the special focus on students' reading comprehension proficiency.

However, one of the most important goals for today's educators should be to train individuals with good literacy who can comprehend and question what they read, because there is a close relationship between literacy and academic achievement (Grove & Hauptfleisch, 1982; Moreillan, 2007). When students comprehend or understand written and combine their understanding with prior knowledge, they able to perform the reading comprehension skills. Consequently, any empirical research and evidence based studies have shown that there are certain prerequisites in teaching of reading and writing, which focus on these prerequisites; phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency and comprehension may succeed in teaching reading (Hamilton, 2012).

It is relevant to state that acquisition of reading skills is very important in the life of every child and in one's adult life. Mclntyre *et al.,* (2011) says that children will

be in adquate in life if they do not acquire reading skills. They further assert that children who read proficiently generally do better in school including mathematics and science. These children will have a positive self-image and are likely to excel into college with much knowledge about the world better than those who are not proficient readers.

Reading is a lifelong skill to be used both at school and throughout life. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and, indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost (1985).It is a process shaped partly by the text, partly by the reader's background and partly by the situation they reading occurs in (Hunt, 2004, p.137). Reading an academic text does not simply involve finding information on the text itself. Rather, it is a process of working with the text. In other words, readers negotiate the meaning with the author by applying their prior knowledge to it (Maleki and Heerman, 1992); cited in Mclntyre *et al.,* 2011).

However, this process is only possible if the reader uses a series of categories of analysis; some of which are specific to each academic discipline. Thus, working with a text and recreating its meaning entail both non discipline specific and specific strategies. Undertaking this study was worthwhile as it contributes to existing research on reading difficulty and literary development, the study sheds more light on how to help learners to overcome their reading difficulties and make them become effective in reading skills. Thus, this study was aimed at investigating the factors that affect students' effectiveness in reading skills with particular reference to grade 9A students of Gacheno High School.

Statement of the problem

As we develop our skills in reading, the process often becomes more challenging. Consequently, we are introduced to new vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. Early school textbooks offer us facts or 'truths' about the world which we are required to learn; we are not, at this stage encouraged to question the authority of the writers of these published materials.

However, reading can be developed in various ways and stages of reading tasks. It includes recognizing written words (written symbol) which enables as to get a message; getting or understanding the meaning, used to teach punctuation; grasping information from the text. On the other hand, it is thought that there is a positive

relationship between learners' reading strategies and their reading comprehension skill. Brookbank, Grover, Kullberg, and Strawser (1999) indicated that the application of various reading strategies increased learners' reading comprehension proficiency. Golinkoff (1975) showed that poor readers read different texts similarly and did not try to learn through reading strategies.

Moreover, each learner is an individual who is different from others; as result of this, every learner in classroom needs to be tracked in terms of his or her reading path. This realization on the part of the teacher is very cardinal because it helps the teacher of reading. Therefore, learners cannot learn how to read all at same time or in same way but teacher has to employ different techniques ranging from motivation up to technical skills such as use of the alphabet and phonics in identifying and pronouncing words (Ehri, 1997).

It is also interesting to note that some children struggle to read due to lack of motivation in learning to read (Spear-Swerling and Sternberg, 1994). Quirk and Sehwanenflugel (2004) cited three motivational aspects for reading by learners; developing self-confidence to words reading; realizing both their strengths and weakness; and appreciating the benefits or rewards of reading. Usually, children with reading difficulties lack self-confidence and esteem because they feel in adequate when they compare themselves to their classmates (Lyon, 2003). As the researchers' own experiences of teaching reading skills and actual classroom observations, the students in Gacheno high school have inability to read and comprehend reading texts appropriately. Besides, students lack of interest, teachers motivation, shortage of appropriate resource materials to teach reading skills and inappropriate settings were the contributing factors for students' ineffectiveness of students' reading skills regardless of the gap which perceived in other related studies.

Therefore, this study was intended to assess the factors affecting students' effectiveness of reading skills with reference to Gacheno High School of grade 9A.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to examine factors affecting students' effectiveness in reading skills with reference to Gacheno High School of grade 9A. More specifically, this study was intended to attain the following specific objectives;

- To identify factors affecting students' effectiveness in reading skills.
- To propose some practical recommendations that can improve students' effectiveness in reading skills.

This study also aimed at answering the following research questions;

What are the factors affecting learners' effectiveness in reading skills?

What are of the possible solutions to improve students' effectiveness in reading skills?

Materials and Methods

Research design

This study employed descriptive survey research design in order to investigate factors that affecting students' effectiveness in reading skill with reference to Gacheno High School of grade 9A.Moreover, the nature of the study needs wider description and investigation of facts and views related to the study focus. The study also employed mixed research method since the data was gathered through questionnaire and interview.

Sample size and sampling techniques

For this study, the sample respondents were selected through simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. To select teacher participants, the researcher employed purposive sampling. On the other hand, students were chosen through simple random sampling since they were relatively larger in number compared to teachers. Then, the adequate proportion of sample size was taken from the sample school. The total numbers of students in grade 9A were 64.From the total population, 32 participants were randomly selected to the current study.

Data collection tools

This particular study used two sets of data gathering tools: questionnaire and interview. Therefore, researcher employed open-ended and close-ended questionnaire besides structured interview.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used as it is essential to collect data from large number of respondents. It consists of both closed ended and open-ended items. Closed-ended items were offered for respondents as set of alternative to choose one of them to reflect their views. The open-ended items require the respondents to write their options and feelings. The questionnaire was translated into Wolaita languageso as to reduce language ambiguity student respondents. The contents of the questionnaire were composed of statements related to the factors affecting students' effectiveness in reading skills.

Interview

An interview tends to be the most favored by language researchers as it allowed respondents to express their opinions. Thus, it enabled the researcher to get detailed information about factors that affect reading skills of students in English class rooms. Similarly, it helped to obtain relevant data which cannot be handled by questionnaire. To this end, an interview was made with 3 purposively selected English language teachers who were teaching in grade 9A. This helped the researcher to get in-depth responses and more significant information about the issue under consideration. The process of interview was conducted in English language.

Data collection procedure

The data for this study was gathered by the following procedure: the purpose of the study and the specific as well as general directions in the questionnaire was explained for the respondents. The prepared questionnaire was administrated to students, and interview was held for teachers. The collected data was properly interpreted, analyzed and tabulated.

Methods of data analysis

Both the quantitative as well as qualitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. The data collected through different instruments will be coded and tabulated. Percentage and Frequency were used to show the numbers of respondents who responded for each item. Data collection through interview was analyzed through narration.

Data analysis and interpretation

This part of the study dealt with presentation, analysis and interpretation of data collected from selected population (teachers, and students) through questionnaire and interview. The entire questionnaire administered to the respondents were filled and returned back to the

researcher properly. The data collected from different respondents through various means were analyzed and interpreted as follows.

Factors that affecting students' effectiveness in reading skills

There are various considerable factors that affect students' effectiveness in reading skills. Some of them are student related factors with regard to interest, attitude and others related issues. Still the others are school or teachers related factors, such as teachers' failure to encourage students to do reading tasks, and also approaches and methods they employ to teach reading skills. The following tables present the considerable factors affect the achievement of learners reading skills.

As indicated in the table 1, majority of the respondents, 56.3% were assured that their teachers did not give brain storming questions before they read the passage. Whereas the others, 43.7% were indicated their teachers give brain storming questions before they read the passage. In item 2, 65.6% were revealed that they were not interested in reading lesson, in contrary, the remaining, 34.4% were indicated that they had interest to learn reading lesson. Thus, the above information indicates that majority of teachers were failed to give brain storming questions before they read the passage.

Moreover, the respondents exclaimed the extent to which their English teachers encourage them to infer the meaning of new words from the given context. Accordingly, 81.3% expressed that their teachers encouraged them rarely, whereas 18.7% respondents exclaimed that their teachers encouraged them guess new words contextually.

As shown in table 2, the respondents were asked to indicate the preferable way that they think is more helpful to develop their reading skills. Consequently, most of the respondents, 59.4% expressed that they think silent way is more helpful,40.6% of the respondents pointed out that reading aloud is helpful for developing reading skills. Also in item 2, the respondents indicated about teachers teaching key words. Specifically 75% stated that their teachers never teach key words, but 25% explained that their teachers teach key words. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that most of students prefer to learn loudly; and most of teachers did not teach key words which in turn affect students' effectiveness in reading skills.

In item 3, the respondents indicated whether the teachers provide skimming and scanning exercise. For that reason, 71.9% respondents explained they were not provided skimming and scanning exercises. Therefore, teachers' failure to provide skimming and scanning exercise can be considered as factors affecting students' achievement in reading skill.

As described in table 3, above of items 1, the respondents indicated whether sentence structures and vocabulary intensity are hindrances to achieve reading skills. Accordingly, 81.3% participants responded that sentence structures and vocabulary intensity are hindrances to students' achievement in reading skills. On the other hand, 18.7% pointed out that sentence structures and vocabulary intensity did not hinder student achievement in reading skills. In item2, the question was addressed regarding teachers' effort to enable students' prior knowledge with the current reading a text.

In particular, 93.7% explained that the teachers did not enable students' prior knowledge with the current reading text; and the other 6.3% indicated the teachers' enabled students' prior knowledge with the current reading text. This reveals that sentence structures and vocabulary intensity and most teachers' failure to enable students connect with the prior knowledge reading a text can be regarded among the factors affecting students' achievement in reading skills. In addition, in item 3, the respondents indicated whether the absence of necessary instructional materials also affect students effectiveness in reading skills. Likewise, 68.7% responded that lack of necessary instructional materials affects students' effectiveness in reading skills. On the others hand, 31.3% pointed out that lack of instructional materials as such relevant to develop reading skills since there are appropriate text books.

As revealed in table 4, majority of the respondents, 100% participants indicated that teachers give them reading tasks to be done inside and outside classroom, whereas 0%respondents expressed that were rarely, o% of respondents said that always given reading tasks, and also 0% exclaimed they were given reading tasks.

Results and Discussions

Interview results

The current researcher made an interview with three purposively selected teachers. For this reason, the researcher raised five basic questions which were

intended for gathering data to substantiate numerical data which were gathered through questionnaire**.**

1. Are you interested in teaching reading skills?
2. How often do you teach reading skills in English language classrooms?
3. What do you think are the factors hindering students' effectiveness in academic reading skills?
4. What do you think will be the solutions to minimize the contributing factors for students' ineffectiveness in reading skills?

As the data indicated, the whole interviewees responded that teachers they themselves are very interested in teaching reading skills though they have shortages of resource materials so as to make their students effective in academic reading skills in English classrooms.

Moreover, for the second question, two respondents replied that they sometimes they teach reading skills, but one of the respondents' exclaimed that he teaches reading skills always in English classrooms. On the other hand, the whole respondents raised that students' interest in learning reading skills, teachers' motivation to teach reading skills, teachers' methods of teaching reading skills, and shortages of appropriate resource materials for teaching reading skills effectively. They replied to the last question: arousing learners' interest in reading skills, supplying with the appropriate resource materials; and giving workshops and training on methods of teaching reading skills were raised by the respondents as the solutions to minimize the factors hindering effectiveness in reading skills.

Table.1 Students' responses on purpose and interest in reading skills

No	Items	Alternatives	Response	
			No	**%**
1	Does your teacher raise brain storming questions before you read the passage?	Yes	14	43.7
		No	18	56.3
		Total	**32**	**100**
2	How often your English teachers encourage you to infer/guess the meaning of word from the given passage contextually?	Always	-	-
		Rarely	26	81.3
		Not at all	6	18.7
		Total	**32**	**100**

Table.2 Students' responses concerning ways of developing reading skills

No	Items	Alternatives	Response	
			No	**%**
1	Which way of reading do you think is more helpful to develop your reading skills?	Silent	19	59.4
		Aloud	13	40.6
		Both	-	-
		Total	**32**	**100**
2	Does your teacher teach key words?	Yes	8	25.0
		No	24	75.0
		Total	**32**	**100**
3	Does your teacher provide skimming and scanning exercise?	Yes	9	28.1
		No	23	71.9
		Total	**32**	**100**

Table.3 Students' response concerning Hindrances for the effective teaching reading skills

No	Items	Alternatives	Response	
			No	**%**
1	Do you think that sentence structures and vocabulary intensity are hindrances to become effectiveness in reading skills?	Yes	26	81.3
		No	6	18.7
		Total	**32**	**100**
2	Does your teacher enable you to connect your prior knowledge with current reading a text?	Yes	2	6.3
		No	30	93.7
		Total	**32**	**100**
3	Do you think that the absence of appropriate instructional materials affect reading skills?	Yes	22	68.7
		No	10	31.3
		Total	**32**	**100**

Table.4 Teachers' response concerning ways of teaching reading skills

No	Items	Alternatives	Response	
			No	**%**
1	How often do you give reading tasks to be done in the class and outside the class?	Always	-	-
		Sometimes	3	100
		Rarely	-	-
		Not at all	-	-
		Total	**3**	**100**

Summary, conclusions and recommendations

Summary

The main aim of this study was to investigate the factors that affecting students' effectiveness in reading skill with reference to Gacheno High School of grade 9A. In order to attain the desired objectives, the following procedures were undertaken: the problem area and the study site was identified, relevant documents were examined from various prevalent sources; questions were prepared and distributed to the sample populations, sample population were determined and selected, the study area was delimited, tools for data collection (interview and questionnaire) were developed and administered to the sample groups and finally the data was analyzed and interpreted.

The participants in this study were English teachers and grade 9A students of Gacheno high School. Student participants were chosen through simple random sampling techniques; and teachers were taken via purposive sampling technique. To necessary information from the respondents, questionnaire was provided to students while interview was held with three English teachers. Then, the questionnaire was filled and returned back properly and then after the data collected from 32 students'. The obtained data was analyzed using percentage and narration.

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made.

The finding revealed majority of teachers were failed to give brainstorming questions in order to arouse learners' for reading lessons.

Most of teachers rarely encourage their students to infer meaning from context and most of them did not have purpose for subsequent reading.

The majority students prefer to read loudly to silent reading; and most of teachers did not teach key words which in turn affect students' achievement in reading skill.

Most of English language teachers failed to enable to connect students' prior knowledge with the current reading text.

The obtained data revealed that absence of necessary instructional materials affect students' reading effectiveness, and absence of effective, skilled, and experienced English teachers to teach reading skills.

The English language teachers rarely provide reading activities and teaching reading skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions, the following recommendations were made.

➢ In order to improve students' achievement in reading skills, the English teachers should encourage their students to develop interring meanings from context and provide purposes for reading.
➢ Teachers should enable leaners read silently; and teach key words in order to improve students' achievement in reading skill.
➢ English language teachers should check the overall students' comprehension of the passage, encourage the students to evaluate the passage and provides feedback for the students.
➢ It is recommendable that the teachers should also develop students' ability about sentences construction and vocabulary skills as well as activate of students' prior knowledge before reading
➢ It is also relevant that stake holders should play significant roles so as to capacitate teachers' skills on teaching English in general.

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APPENDIX-A

Questionnaire

1. Does your teacher raise brain storming questions before you read the passage?

   Yes------- No-------

2. How often do you give reading tasks to be done in the class and outside the class?

   Always ----   Rarely --- Not at all------   undecided------

3. How often your English teachers encourage you to inter the meaning of words from the given context?

   Always___ Rarely___Not at all__   undecided____

4. Does your teacher provide purpose for your reading?

   Yes____No____

5. Which ways of reading do you think is more helpful to develop your reading skill?

   Silent___Aloud___Both_____

6. Does your teacher teach key words?

   Yes __No__

7. Does your teacher provide skimming and scanning exercises?

   Yes ___No___

8. Do you think that the absence of necessary instructional materials affect your reading skills?

   Yes ___No____

9. What will be the possible strategies to minimize the factors affecting students' effective reading skills?_____

_____

Appendix B

Interview for English teacher

5. Are you interested in teaching reading skills?

_____

_____

6. How often do you teach reading skills in English language classrooms?

_____

_____

_____

7. How much time do your students spend reading materials to their schoolwork**?**

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8. What do you think are the factors hindering students' effectiveness in academic reading skills?

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9. What do you think will be the solutions to minimize the contributing factors for students' ineffectiveness in reading skills?

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