

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
AND LITERATURE  
(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)

Analysis of the Effectiveness of Contextual Guessing  
Activities: Grade 11 in Focus

By  
Ismael Ali

*August 2007*

# **Analysis of the Effectiveness of Contextual Guessing Activities: Grade 11 in Focus**

**By**

**Ismael Ali**

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*August 2007*

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**Approved by Examining Board**

Advisor

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study was an attempt to analyze the effectiveness of contextual guessing activities being conducted at grade 11. It is specifically targeted to identify whether the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities are appropriate for the case. It also investigated whether EFL teachers train their learners a contextual guessing strategy. And finally, it checked if contextual guessing strategy training reinforces students' ability to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context.*

*To achieve its purpose, the research targeted three data sources; grade 11 textbook English for Grade 11 (2006), teachers, and students of grade 11 in two preparatory schools in Addis Ababa. The schools (Menilik and Bole) were selected by lot. As far as sampling technique is concerned, availability sampling technique was employed to select the teachers, whereas multiple techniques were used to get the target student-subjects. First, quota sampling was used to select equal number of students from each section of each school. Then, to select the allotted number of students simple random sampling was used. Accordingly, 216 students were selected from each school. A pre-test was administered. Then, 100 relatively homogenous (ability) students who scored 5 to 8 inclusive were selected from each school. These students were grouped into four according to their score; then each group was divided between experimental and control group by lot. Those in experimental group attended training on contextual guessing strategy for which a material was prepared by the researcher. At the end of the training, a post-test was given for both groups.*

*The instruments used to collect data were analytical scale, two sets of questionnaires (for both teachers and students), classroom observation, and post-test.*

*Analysis of the data was made using quantitative (frequency count and percentage) and qualitative methods.*

*Results of the study showed that the ability to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words is important. Therefore, the inclusion of contextual guessing activities in the textbook is rewarding. However, the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities are not presented in a way to encourage intelligent guessing. Besides, the teachers' practices on the issue at hand were proved to be inadequate. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the students were not benefited from the contextual guessing activities conducted. In fact, it is found out that if necessary conditions, such as preparing contextual guessing activities with helpful guessing clues and allotting enough time for students to exercise looking for these clues in order to guess meanings of new words, are relatively fulfilled, the students may be able to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context.*

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the forthcoming sections of this thesis, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, applications of the results, the delimitation and limitation of the study are discussed.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Wilkins (1972:11) notes: “. . . without vocabularies nothing can be conveyed.” Similarly, many scholars like McCarthy (1990), and Oxford and Scarcella (1994) underscore that vocabulary teaching and learning is the biggest element of any language course. Allan (1983:1) also states that experienced teachers of English know very well how much important vocabularies are.

However, teaching and learning of vocabulary, for second/foreign language learners is not a simple task. For one thing, as Porte (1988) states, many students lack knowledge or skills on how to learn vocabulary. For another, students are required to learn a huge number of words (Van Parrern, 1989) which are unthinkable to introduce their meanings in class time. Twaddell (1972), as in Carter and McCarthy (1988), also underlines the impossibility of teaching all the vocabulary items that learners need. Therefore, in order to, at least, minimize these serious problems, focusing on strategies which could help students to learn vocabularies on their own has an advantage. Among these strategies contextual guessing strategy is one. This strategy is based on the idea that “...context dictates the meaning of a word” (Simpson, 1997). Yule (1996:118) also says, “We frequently give the meanings of words in terms of their relationships.”

Twaddell (1973) states the importance of teaching the learners guessing strategies rather than the meanings of particular new items. Walters (2004) notes: “Inferring from context . . . is a powerful contributor to vocabulary growth” (2004:243). Nuttal (1982:70) also points out the multifaceted value of training the learners in the contextual guess work in vocabulary development.

*Training students to infer meaning from context gives them a powerful aid to comprehension and will ultimately greatly speed up their reading. And one of the nice things about this training is that it can be enjoyable. It has the problem solving characteristics that appeal to most people and challenges the students to make use of their intelligence to an extent is not always common in language classes.*

(1982:70)

The important thing about contextual guess- work is the exploitation of different cues that lead the learners to the meanings of unknown lexical terms in the reading texts. Paribkht and Weshe (1999) put that the presence of sufficient and clear cues helps the students infer the meaning of unfamiliar word. This creates for the students to exercise informed guessing. Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) underline that unless cues are provided, inferencing may lead to misguessing. Nuttal (1996) underscores that unless reading materials give clear clues, inferencing is impossible. These scholars’ position boils down to the point that material for contextual guessing activities needs to be prepared carefully so that students will be benefited for exercising it.

Dubin (1989) strongly advises us that words’ guessability should be tested before encouraging students to guess from the context. For this reason, finding appropriate reading material that should encourage the students to use contextual guessing is a crucial issue which needs appropriate attention.

To the present researcher’s knowledge, two local researchers, Jeilan (1999) and Mulugeta (2006) have conducted researches on vocabulary learning strategies. Both have found out that their subjects use guessing strategy (which both researchers put under compensation strategy) to infer the

meanings of unfamiliar words. Another local research by Alemu (1994) has been conducted to investigate to what extent the teaching and learning of vocabulary by an awareness- raising approach would be considered feasible and acceptable. Alemu's (1994) work emphasizes the importance of training learners to exercise guessing of unknown words from context. As far as the present researcher's knowledge goes, none of these works were conducted to analyze the availability of contextual guess work clues in the newly revised grade 11 reading passages, and to explore teacher's practices in training the learners to employ these clues.

Therefore, this study is believed to add to the already accumulated knowledge in the area of vocabulary teaching and reading comprehension with prime target to fill the gap.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

### ***General Objective***

This thesis was primarily designed to analyze the effectiveness of contextual guessing activities being conducted at grade 11.

### ***Specific Objectives***

This study has intended to:

1. identify whether the passages of the newly revised Grade 11 *English* textbook provide identifiable clues for guess work.
2. investigate whether the EFL teachers use these clues to train the learners to infer meanings of unfamiliar words.
3. check whether training on contextual guessing clues reinforce the learners' inference of unfamiliar words.

In order to achieve the afore-mentioned objectives, the present thesis attempted to seek answers for the following basic research questions:

1. Do the passages of the newly revised grade 11 *English* textbook which are partially intended for guess work provide identifiable clues that could help learners exercise guessing meanings of unfamiliar words?
2. Do the EFL teachers train the EFL learners how to identify contextual clues?
3. Does training on contextual guessing clues reinforce the learners' inference of unfamiliar words?

### **1.3 Application of the Results**

The results obtained from this study may have certain beneficiaries.

#### ***Beneficiaries***

The results of this research may be used by curriculum designers in preparing appropriate passages and sentences that encourage EFL learners to practice guessing from context. The results may also give an insight for EFL teachers training colleges to devise a way in training the trainee-teachers on the area. Besides, the researcher hopes that the results of this study may be used by teachers as a reference material to train their students in identifying clues for contextual guess work. Moreover, EFL students, particularly of grade 11, may be benefited as guessing from context contributes for faster vocabulary development and better reading comprehension (Walters, 2004).

### **1.4 Delimitation of the Study**

When students come across new words while they are reading, there are three ways to approach them: ignoring, seeking external support, or guessing (Wallace, 1982). This study focused on contextual guessing because many

scholars like Walter (2004), Langan (2003), Ying (2001), and McCarthy (1990) assert that guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words is the most useful strategy. What is more, contextual guessing is part and parcel of the text book *English for grade 11*(2006). Therefore, the scope of the study is delimited to analyze the effectiveness of contextual guessing activities conducted in two preparatory (grade 11) schools in Addis Ababa namely Menilik Preparatory Schools and Bole Preparatory Schools.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this section of the paper relevant theoretical issues are discussed. First important concepts are defined ('guessing' and 'context'). Then, the rationale for using guessing strategy is explained. Next, it tries to show whether guessing strategy is trainable or not. The discussion of the common contextual clues follows. It, then, deals with factors that affect contextual guessing. Unless they are considered during designing guessing activity, contextual guessing may be difficult on the side of learner-readers. Next, it explains to what extent guessing is correct. It says guessing meaning is not exact meaning.

### **2.2 What is Guessing?**

Abebe G/Tsadik (1997) has enumerated three groups of researchers that have different views on the two terms, viz guessing and inferencing/ inferring. The first group labels the word-level 'guessing' and comprehension (text-level) 'inferencing'/ 'inferring'. The second group prefers to use both interchangeably for word-level processing of meaning in context. The third group uses 'guessing' for 'a blind attempt' or something that does not involve any sort of thought and uses 'inferencing' for 'intelligent guessing'. In the present study, we use the two terms 'guessing' and 'inferencing' interchangeably with the definition that the use of any available information whether it is linguistic or non-linguistic that may be drawn from the reading material, the reader or both. In short, guessing/ inferring is the process of exploiting the context.

## 2.3 What is Context?

Various scholars have defined 'context' differently according to their purpose. For instance, Kramersch (1993) divides 'context' into three types namely linguistic context, situational context and cultural context. Kramersch (ibid) explains that linguistic context is determined by the co-text – those linguistic elements that precede or follow and that answer the text's cohesion. Regarding situational context, Kramersch (Ibid) puts Firth's view that context of situation is "not only spoken words, but facial expression, gestures, bodily activities, the whole group of people present during an exchange of utterances, and the part of the environment in which these people are engaged" (1993: 37). According to Kramersch (ibid), context of culture refers to "the ideological background shared by participants in speech events" (Ibid). To define 'context' in real reading, Dycus (1997) says that it is information that reduces uncertainty about the elements of a text, such as their meanings, and the meaning of the text as a whole. Walter's (2004) definition of 'context' specifically focuses on how the context contributes to guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words. He says 'context' refers to anything within a written context or a reader that helps to shade light on the meanings of unfamiliar words.

## 2.4 Justification for the Guessing Strategy

Biolytstok (1990: 12), in McDonough (1995: 5) discusses three features of strategy use. These are:

*First strategies are effective: they are related to solutions in specific ways, and they are productive in solving the problem ... second, strategies are systematic: learners ... uncover the strategy from their knowledge of the problem and employ it systematically. Third, strategies are finite; a limited number of strategies can be identified.* 1995: 5

These three features of strategy: effectiveness, systematicity and finiteness magnify the motive behind learners' use of learning strategies to complete a

learning task. For example, learners adopt a number of strategies for coping with new vocabulary (McCarthy, 1990). Oxford and Scarcella (1994) assert that vocabulary learning strategies make learners more independent of the teacher and serve as useful tools that can be used both inside and outside classes. Guided practice with these strategies gives learners the skills to use them effectively and systematically. Schmitt (2000: 135) indicates that there are numerous different vocabulary learning strategies which can be categorized into two ways. These are:

- i) vocabulary learning strategies that are useful for the initial discovery of words meanings, and
- ii) those useful for remembering those words once they have been introduced.

Contextual guessing strategy belongs to the first type as it helps the learner to infer the meanings of unfamiliar word using the available information in the context. Oxford and Scarcella (1994) assert: "One of the most useful vocabulary learning strategies is guessing from context" (1994: 236). McCarthy (1990), on this issue, says that making guesses (inferences) about new words is among the most common vocabulary learning strategies the students employ. Therefore, learner-readers should be encouraged to make reasonable guesses based on available clues within the reading passage. For one thing, too much dictionary work can kill all interest in reading and even interfere with comprehension because readers become more concerned with individual words and less aware of the context which gives them meaning. For another, it results in very slow and inefficient reading (Wallace, 1982)

On the other hand, practicing contextual guessing strategy provides the students guidance on how to best approach unfamiliar words in their own. This is a way to empower students to be confident, to take control of and responsibility for their own learning (Mercer, 2005; Li and Huang, 2004).

In addition to the above positive outcomes of exercising contextual guessing strategy, researchers (Hedge, 2003; Gairns and Redman, 1986) agree that to

learn words in context is an effective vocabulary learning strategy. A word used in different contexts may have different meanings. Thus, simply learning the definitions of a word without examples of where and when the word occurs will not help learners to fully understand its meaning. Regarding the danger of teaching word meanings in isolation, Van Parreren, in Mondria and Boer (1991), has forwarded the following five points:

1. *Words that have been learned from a list are easily mixed up*
2. *Words that have been learned from a list are easily forgotten because of the lack of any cognitive foothold.*
3. *Words that are known within the list may not be known outside the list*
4. *The meaning(s) of a word as learned in a list is (are) often not appropriate in the contexts encountered by the pupils.*
5. *The learning motivation of the pupil will be light because he has not yet felt the need to find out the meaning of a particular word.*

*Mondria and Boer, 1991: 251*

Researchers (Van Parreren, in Mondria and Boer, 1991; Twaddell, 1973; Dycus, 1997; Ying 2001) base their view on the idea that words are best learnt through reading in which process guessing the meanings of new words thought to have a positive effect. "Studies of context effects have established, among other things, that words are recognized better in context than out of context, and that simple word association enhances word recognition" (Dycus, 1997). Dycus (Ibid) further states that the fact that guessing strategy is often encouraged is not surprising considering:

- a) the enormous number of words in the English language.
- b) the size of the average adult's vocabulary and
- c) the number of words one needs to know to recognize a reasonably high percentage of words on the average written page.

## **2.5 Is Contextual Guessing Strategy Trainable?**

Newton (2001) puts the inevitable challenge language learners encounter in the course of using the target language. He (2001: 30) says "such encounters present a common dilemma; how can a learner meet the dual demands of

attending to unfamiliar language during on line communication while also maintaining the flow of communication or comprehension?" He (Ibid) forwards that this dilemma could be addressed by providing learners classroom experiences. This practice enables learners to develop contextual guessing strategy, among others, in order to manage meanings of new vocabulary while also maintaining a communication focus (reading in our case). Oxford and Scarcella (1994) indicate that vocabulary learning can be enhanced when the learners' attention is directed consciously to vocabulary strategies. Mercer (2005) argues for the direct instruction of strategies supported by student reading. Mercer (Ibid) also underlines that:

*Clearly, given the mass of words potentially available to learners, there is no way they can learn them all. It would therefore be more useful to teach them strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words. Furthermore, since most vocabulary learning takes place out of classroom setting and tends to be done alone at home, it would be beneficial if students were given guidance or how best to approach this task on their own. If we wish students to continue learning efficiently after class and to be able to cope confidently without teacher support, then we should equip them with the skills to do so.*

*Mercer, 2005: 1*

Li and Huang (2004), Muto (2002), and Dycus (1997) share Mercer's position. Li and Huang (2004) say that there are many skills for guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words. Twaddell (1973) recommends the students to practice through guidance from the teacher. Twaddell (Ibid) and Newton (2001) underline that it is the teacher's task to organize the teaching activities and to show students how to draw context clues.

Therefore, in order to help students to take advantage of employing contextual guessing strategy, "there should be a so called "pregnant context" (Van Parreren, 1967 as in Mondria and Boer, 1991: 252). Van Parreren (1967), in (ibid), explains 'pregnant context'.

*This is a context that offers ample clues for finding the meaning of the new word. The more pregnant the context is, the easier is to guess the word.*

*Mondria and Boer 1991: 252*

Beheydt (1987:16), in Mondria and Boer (Ibid), shares Van Parreren's position

*Pregnant context provides sufficient contextual clues to call up the target words... and make the meaning inferable.*

*Mondria and Boer 1991: 252*

Dubin (1989) says words guessability should be tested before suggesting to students so that they can easily grasp the meaning of words from clues in the context. Besides, Nation (1983), as in Zhihang (2000), gives a model on how to guess unknown words:

1. *Look at the unknown word and decide its part of speech. Is it a noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb?*
2. *Look at the clause or sentence containing the unknown word. If the unknown word is a noun, what does this noun do, or what is done to it? And what adjectives describe it? What verb is it near? If it is a verb, what nouns does it go with? Is it modified by an adverb? If it is an adjective, what noun does it go with? If it is an adverb, what verb is it modifying?*
3. *Look at the relationship between the clause or the sentence containing the unknown word and other sentences or paragraphs. Sometimes this relationship will be signaled by conjunctions like **but, because, if, when,** or by adverbs like **however, as a result.** The possible types of relationship include cause and effect, contrast, time, exemplification, and summary.*
4. *Use the knowledge you have gained 1 to 3 to guess the meaning of the word.*

*Zhihang, 2000:1*

Kelly (1990) encourages learners to use the above procedures for the same purpose. Kelly also advises FL learners be taught to proceed systematically. Nation and Coady (1988: 104), citing Halfner (1965, 1967) and Carnine et al (1984), say: "A few experiments on training learners to guess from context have shown some improvement in guessing." Based on this information, they (1988) have concluded that teaching a strategy is one way of providing training. Oxford and Scarcella (1994), on their part, say, "It is worth spending considerable class time teaching students to guess the meanings of unknown words until learners have mastered this strategy" (p. 236).

If learners are aware of language learning strategy, more particularly contextual guessing strategy, they will be more effective at taking on greater responsibility for their learning.

## **2.6 Common Contextual Guessing Clues**

Baumann et al (2002), as in Walter (2004), have used eight contextual clues in their research. The clues are definitions, appositives, antonyms, examples, summary, figurative language and mood, tone or setting. Engelbart and Theuerkauf (1991), in Walter (Ibid), on the other hand, have divided verbal context into two: grammatical context and semantic context. The former includes morphology, syntax and phonology, while the latter includes collocations, synonyms, antonyms, etc. Another researcher, Ying (2001) has employed twelve types of context clues: morphology, reference words (such as pronouns), collocational cohesion, synonyms and antonyms, hyponyms, definitions, alternative (using or), restatement, example, summary, comparison and contrast, punctuation. Still others, Alderson and Alvarez (1978), in Walter (2004), put context clues in three categories: semantic categories (hyponym, antonym, and synonymy), notional relations and pragmatic relations (the reader's knowledge of the world).

Other researchers like Clarke and Silberstain (1977), Wallace (1982) and Atkins et al (1996a) have enumerated some context clues.

All the above researchers used different categories of contextual clues. Cognizant of this fact and for a clear organization of the current paper, contextual guessing clues are grouped under the following categories:

- Linguistic context
- Notional context and
- Pragmatic context

### **2.6.1 Linguistic Context**

Paribkht and Wesche (1999) underscore the role of linguistic cues in enabling the reader to correctly infer the meaning of unfamiliar word. As Kramersch (1993) and Yule (1996) put it linguistic context is also known as co-text. Yule (Ibid) further explains the contribution of this co-text in identifying the meaning of a word.

*The co-text of a word is the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence. This surrounding co-text has a strong effect on what we think the word means.*

*1996: 129*

In order to decide the meaning of unfamiliar word, identifying its relationship with surrounding words (co-text) plays a significant role. Gairns and Redman (1986) express that words can only be understood and learnt in terms of their relationship with other words in the language. Yule (1996) has also said, "We frequently give the meanings of words in terms of their relationships" (1996:118). Hedge (2003), supporting this point, says that in the process of looking for the meanings of unfamiliar words, the relations that exist between the target word and the surrounding words worth to be studied. Hedge (Ibid) further states that these relations can be found in two dimensions: paradigmatic relations and syntagmatic relations.

#### **2.6.1.1 Paradigmatic Relations**

"Paradigmatic relations are determined by the association of units that are alike on the paradigmatic (vertical) axis of language" (Apresjan, 1973: 43). When units are related in the vertical axis, they share partial identity, as they, for example, belong to the same parts of speech (as they serve the same function) (Joseph, 1994). Hedge (2003) states that words exist in paradigmatic relations with other words. Even though making a list of these relationships brings a debate," some terms are frequently used by teachers and textbook designers. The most common ones are synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy" (Hedge, 2003: 115).

Now let's see how these relations could serve as contextual guessing clues.

### **A. Synonymy**

Yule (1996: 118) says: “synonyms are two or more forms with very closely related meanings, which are often, but not always, intersubstitutable in sentences.” Yule (Ibid) further explains that sameness of meaning is not necessarily ‘total sameness’. They are interchangeable in a limited number of contexts (Gairns and Redman, 1986). McCarthy (1990) argues that synonyms could be a useful organizing principle in learning vocabulary from contexts. Langan(2003) and Ling (2001)illustrates McCarthy’s (1990) point using examples that show how synonyms could serve as contextual guessing clues.

### **B. Antonymy**

Antonym refers to the relationship of oppositeness. There are different kinds of oppositeness. Atkins et al (1996a) and McCarthy (1990) have common types. They say some words are mutual opposites like right/wrong. Others are relative opposites on a continuum such as hot/warm/cold/etc. Still others are dependent opposites like father/son. In addition to this McCarthy (1990) expresses that a word may have different opposites in different contexts (light bag/heavy bag, light wind/strong wind, light colors/dark colors). Therefore, in order to teach the meanings of words in terms of their opposites, putting them in an appropriate context is advisable (commendable). As Yule (1996) puts it new words are sometimes introduced to learners with their opposites. In such situations antonyms could help learner-readers in identifying the meanings of unfamiliar words.

### **C. Hyponymy**

Hyponymy refers to the relationship of inclusion (Carter and McCarthy, 1988). Yule (1996) states “when we consider hyponymous relations, we are essentially looking at the meanings of words in some type of hierarchical relationship” (1996: 119). The meaning of unfamiliar word may be included in

another word, so hyponymy offers clear meaning (Carter and McCarthy, 1988).

Therefore, if hyponymy is considered as contextual clue and entertained in the reading passage in exploitable manner, it could shade light on the meanings of unfamiliar words.

### **2.6.1.2 Syntagmatic Relations**

Lyons (1973) states: "The syntagmatic relations which an element contracts are those which derive from its combination with preceding and following elements of the same level" (1973:12). On this issue, Hedge (2003) says that these relations occur when words enter into a sequential relationship. Hedge (Ibid) exemplifies that 'a long road', 'a ripe banana,' 'a savage dog' are kinds of syntagmatic relations. These are collocations (Ibid).

Hedge (2003) further explains that even though it is not [always] possible to predict from knowing the meaning of each word in the collocation what is and what is not acceptable, it would become easier for a learner over time to realize some words co-occur naturally. This natural co-occurrence could be one of the contextual clues in guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words.

#### **A. Collocation**

Deveci (2004) says, "[C]ollocation describes the relationship between words that often appear together" (p. 17). We know which words tend to occur with other words. Hill (2000) argues that the lexicon is not arbitrary. Thus, vocabulary choice is to some extent predictable. For instance, when a speaker thinks of drinking, he may use a common verb such as 'have'. The listener then expects words that are likely to follow the verb 'have'-such as 'tea', 'coffee', 'milk', 'mineral water', and 'orange juice' but the listener would not expect 'engine oil', 'shampoo' etc.

Ellis (1994) contend that the more often words are encountered in particular patterns, the more likely are those patterns to be stored in long-term memory.

Therefore, such cases could be organizing principles in creating 'pregnant context' (to use Van-Parreren's phrase) as "what a word occurs with is just as important as any other kind of statement about its meaning" (Carter and McCarthy, 1988:33). Deveci (2004) says that unless students are taught in context-based classes, collocations will not make sense to learners, and meaningful learning will probably not take place.

## ***B. Morphology***

Morphology is the formal structure of word and the study of word formation. Angling (1993), in Van Daalen et al (2001), says, "Morphological analysis of words is an activity that students engage in when they notice familiar elements in the form or features of unknown words" (2001: 152).

Paribakht and Wesche (1999) have explained that L2 learners' knowledge of word derivations and grammatical inflections are used in inferring the meanings of unknown words. Developing this idea, Gairns and Redman (1986) write:

*Focus on word building is likely to pay dividends for the learners... an understanding of ... word building is essential if the learner is to make informed guesses about the meaning of unknown items.*

1986: 48

Ying (2001) puts morphology in the list of contextual clues. Ying (Ibid) has said that the students can get the meanings of new words by analyzing (examining) morphological features like, prefixes, suffixes and root words. After advising the learners to rely on guessing from context to expand their vocabulary, Kelly (1990) states that breaking down words into their separate elements may lead learner-readers to arrive at the correct meaning of unfamiliar word.

## 2.6.2 Notional Context

In their need to communicate with their target readers, writers employ ways to clarify the notion (or the idea) words embody in the issue they want to write about. This intention of the writers could be organizing principle for contextual guessing activities. The case is discussed here under.

### 2.6.2.1 Definitions

In cases where writers think that the issue they want to write about is likely to be unfamiliar to their target-readers, they often define the unfamiliar term (Johns and Faulkner, 1961). In other words, they define the word so that it suits the context of the issue at hand. Belvedre (1994) also says: "The meaning of words is learned through their definitions, and this meaning can, of course, also be ascertained from the use of to which word is put in different contexts" (1994: 843).

The definition aims at throwing light on the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Therefore, definition could be exploited as one of the clues that could help the learners in identifying the meanings of unfamiliar words. Ying (2001) identifies 'definition' as one of contextual clues. Ying (Ibid) says:

*Sometimes the writer defines the meaning of the word right in the text. Example: many animals live only by killing other animals and eating them. They are called **predatory** animals.*

Ying, 2001: 20

From Ying's example learner-readers can contextually guess that predatory animals are animals which kill and eat other animals.

### 2.6.2.2 Examples

Writers may give examples that substantiate (illustrate) the use of a word in their written text. These examples could be one of the ways to determine the meanings of an unknown word (Ying 2001). Langan (2003) also says

examples may suggest the meaning of an unknown word. Therefore, examples could be one of the clues in contextual guessing activities.

### **2.6.3 Pragmatic Context**

Pragmatics focuses on how language is used so that it communicates the writer's purpose. Scholars like Nuttal (1982) and Kramersch (1993) state that in order for a reader to comprehend reading material, the text (passage) should reflect the reader's prior experience (schemata). Schemata (singular schema) can be seen as the organized background knowledge, which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse (Ajdeh, 2003). "Schemas vary according to cultural norms and individual experience" (Cook, 1997: 86). Scholars like Nuttal (1982) and Kramersch (1993) state that in order for a reader to comprehend reading material, the contents of the text (passage) should be in compatible with the reader's prior experience which is part and parcel of the reader's schema.

With regard to how the readers' background knowledge interacts with their linguistic knowledge, Gessesse Taddress (1999), citing Stanovich (1980), has explained in the following words: "[B]ackground knowledge can compensate for deficiency in linguistic knowledge... provided that there is not a big gap between the knowledge the reader has and the knowledge the text demands" (1999:45). From this one may conceptualize that if the contents of the reading passage is designed to match the prior (world) knowledge of the students, it probably create opportunity for the learner-readers to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words. Williams (1994), supporting this issues, says: "... the reader's prior non-linguistic knowledge is also regarded as an important element in understanding a text" (1994: 3767). Learner familiarity with the theme and the topic of the text is an important source of clues for inferring the meaning of an unknown word (Paribakht and Wesche, 1999: 208). Alderson and Urquhart (1983), in Unquhart (1994), have also forwarded the following example in order to substantiate the case:

*It seemed clear that students with a low level of proficiency in English but a background in engineering were about to read engineering texts at least as well as liberal students with a higher level of English proficiency.*  
1994:3785

Therefore, considering prior experiences of the learners could be an organizing principle in designing contextual guessing exercises.

## **2.7 Information Giving Conditions about Contextual Clues**

Under this section, the thesis targeted to 'pick-up' and explain conditions, if fulfilled, that may shade light on the availability of contextual clues. In other words, even though they are not contextual guessing clues, they would rather play a 'signposting' role in guiding the reader.

### **2.7.1 Discourse Markers**

Discourse markers show the complex network of relations among sentences and the ways the underlying ideas are organized within a text (Nuttal, 1982). If the passage clearly shows how the ideas are related and reflects the connections between information in the reading passage, students can exploit this clarity of connection to gain upper hand in guessing the meanings of new words reasonably (Dickson et al., 2003). To create this context, conjunctions and adverbials play vital roles. They help the reader follow the direction of the flow of idea in a reading passage. Muto (2002) says the conjunctions and adverbials can be signals to help the reader understand the lexical relationship among sentences in the text. Therefore, if the writer adopts clear patterns of organization, and signals his/her intentions using discourse markers, readers can get a clearer understanding of its over-all message (Nuttal, 1982). Muto (2002) further underlines that through these discourse markers, which Muto (Ibid) named 'Discourse Organizing Vocabulary', guessing unfamiliar word can be practiced so that they might complement L2 learner's lack of vocabulary and assist them in text interpretation (2002). Nuttal (1982) exemplifies the case in point:

*Rain had been forecast for the morning; however, by noon no **precipitation** had occurred.*

*Readers who do not know the meaning of 'precipitation' may reasonably guess that it is a synonym of 'rain', on the grounds that the second part of the sentence, being introduced by 'however', must counter in some way the expectation set up by the first part. We need to know how discourse markers work so that we can use them in this way.*

*(Ibid; 94)*

Therefore, from this example we can conceptualize that discourse markers aid learner-readers in judging the relationships exist among sentences in a reading passage. By extension, they shade light what kind of contextual clue is available to guess the meaning of unfamiliar word.

### **2.7.2 Punctuation**

Writers use punctuation marks for the purpose of providing clear information to their readers. Nuttal (1982) says, "Punctuation reflects meaning." That is, punctuation marks are there to clarify and to communicate meaning. Therefore, if proper attention is given, punctuation marks could aid in guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words. Paribakht and Weshe (1999) and Ying (2001) find out that learners use their knowledge of punctuation to infer the meaning of the target word from a written context. Langan (2003) shows how a 'dash' is used to signal the availability of one of the contextual guessing clues-definition. Flowerdew (1998) has explained how 'commas', 'dashes' and 'parentheses' could add clues to the unfamiliar word by going with the definition or synonym of the new word. Therefore, punctuation marks could shade light on the availability of contextual clues.

## **2.8 Factors Affecting Contextual Guessing**

For Haastrup (1991) and Hosenfeld (1984) (in Abebe G/Tsadik 1997) guessing failure is reading failure. Therefore, identifying the elements (conditions)

that contribute to guessing failure has positive value. Rott (1999) listed three major factors that can have a negative impact on the outcome of inferencing:

- a) Learners' knowledge about the linguistic properties of an unknown word (Linguistic proficiency)
- b) Context properties in which the unknown word appears.
- c) The approach taken by the language learner to infer meaning (Guessing strategy)

### **2.8.1 Linguistic Proficiency**

Scholars like Yori (1971) and Cziko (1978), in Abebe G/Tsadik (1997), state that L<sub>2</sub> learner-readers lack the threshold vocabulary to make use of contextual clues. Alderson (1984), citing Yori (1971), takes a similar position: "The reader's knowledge of the foreign language or predicting ability necessary to pick up the correct cues is hindered by the imperfect knowledge of the language" (1984: 108) on the side of the learners. Student-readers can guess the meanings of some unfamiliar words from a text, but they must also, know most words in the text to be able to understand it well enough to do this (Paribakht and Weshe, 1999). Therefore, prior to preparing guessing exercises, the learners' level of verbal ability is better to be taken into consideration. Oxford and Scarcella (1994) advise teachers to consider the words which students are expected to understand.

### **2.8.2 Context Properties**

The nature of the context may also hinder reasonable guessing (Kelly, 1990). For example, if the proportion of unknown to known words is higher, guessing may be affected (Dycus, 1997; Wallace, 1982; Nuttal, 1982). Besides, if the context provides no supportive cues for the new word, guessing may be difficult (Oxford and Scarcella, 1994; Dubin, 1989). Moreover, if the content of the reading material, in which the new word appears, does not reflect the learner readers' prior experience, guessing may be a challenge (Dycus, 1997 and Kelly, 1990).

### **2.8.3 Guessing Strategy**

Coady (1979), as quoted by Abebe G/Tsadik (1997:102), says: "Alarming number of students has a great deal of proficiency in English and yet read very slowly and with poor comprehension .... In other words we have a reading problem and not a language problem." This reading problem, therefore, stems from lack of using appropriate strategies among which guessing is one. If students do not know contextual guessing strategy, neither to exploit it, they may arrive at poor guessing.

To sum up, while designing activities for guessing, efforts should be exerted to minimize the negative impacts of the aforementioned factors. Otherwise, as Kelly (1990) warns, the wrong meaning acquired by deduction from the context has proved difficult to dislodge.

### **2.9 How much Correct is Guessing?**

As it is previously (under section 2.2) defined, guessing is the process of using the available information to arrive at a reasonably correct meaning of the new word in a reading passage. But how much correct is correct?

It has never been easy to attach detailed, self-contained meaning to a word which will account sufficiently for its use in all contexts. Simpson (1997) says that the meaning of a word shifts over time; this is why dictionary makers often have difficulty in keeping up with the meaning of a word in its current usage. Simpson (Ibid) further explains that context dictates the meaning of a word. Thus, researchers (Kelly, 1990; Li and Huang, 2004, Dycus 1997; Zhihang, 2000; Muto 2002; Bairns and Redman, 1986; Wallace, 1982; Nuttal 1982; Nation, in Carter and McCarthy, 1988 and many others) encourage learner-readers to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words using the available information in a reading material. Since there are no two words exactly the same in meaning, even for dictionary makers let alone learner-readers, student-readers should not be imposed in producing correct meaning. Twaddell (1973) takes the case so seriously that he time and again says

vagueness about the meaning of a new word is inevitable. To mention two of Twaddell's exact words:

*But as readers... we have learned to tolerate some vagueness; it seems to be a price we are willing to pay for the advantage of successful sensible guessing*

*Ibid: 72*

Twaddell further says:

*The learner must be allowed, must be encouraged, to accept temporary vagueness in the early stages of familiarization with a given word.*

*Ibid: 73*

Nuttal (1982), supporting Twaddell's position, asserts that conscious use of inferencing from the side of the learner –readers is invaluable to get meaning –not necessarily completely accurate.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODS OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 Study Design**

The current study is both descriptive and experimental in its nature. It is descriptive for two reasons. For one thing, it intends to analyze whether the passages of the newly revised textbook of *English* for grade 11 (2006) provides helpful clues for the words intended to be inferred; and for another it explores if EFL teachers practice in training the learners the clues for contextual guessing.

#### **3.2 Data Source**

This research has used the newly revised textbook, *English* for grade 11 (2006), as a source of data for the study intended to analyze the passages whether the target words to be inferred are presented with supportive clues for contextual guessing.

The researcher has chosen grade 11 for the following reasons. The first is that the passages of the textbook are partly designed for guesswork exercise. The teachers were also part of this study because they are the ones who are required to introduce the clues to the learners (see section 2.5). By doing so, they facilitate interaction between the learners and the guesswork activities. The students are the target group of both textbook designers who include guesswork activities, and EFL teachers who present the activities to the students. Therefore, according to the researcher, they are relevant target sources of data.

### **3.3 Sampling Techniques**

#### **Schools**

The subjects for this study were drawn from two government preparatory schools located in Addis Ababa: Menilik and Bole preparatory schools. The researcher used lottery method to select the specific schools from among 10 preparatory schools in the same region.

#### **Teachers**

To select the teacher subjects, the researcher employed universal sampling technique. All grade 11 teachers (except two teachers who were included in the pilot study) of the selected schools participated in the study. The researcher did this for two reasons. For one thing, the total number of teachers (in both selected schools) of the level was manageable; and for another collecting data from the entire population of the selected schools helps very much to come up with sound results and there by increased the validity of the conclusion.

#### **Students**

To draw the target student-subjects the researcher went through two procedures.

#### ***Procedure I***

The researcher employed two techniques under the first procedure: quota sampling technique and simple random sampling.

Quota sampling technique was used because listing or putting all members (more than 1,500 and 1,250 students in Menilik and Bole Preparatory Schools, respectively) would have been time-consuming if not impossible. Therefore, quota sampling technique was employed because giving equal chance for all existing sections of grade 11 was important in order not to create imbalance effect in the students' background. Therefore, for 24 sections of grade 11 in Menilik preparatory School, 9 (nine) students were allotted for each section, while for 18 sections of the same grade level in Bole Preparatory School, 12 students were allotted for each section.

Simple random sampling technique was used to choose the allotted number of students from each section. This technique gives every members of the total population in each section the same chance (probability) of being selected and selection of one individual in no way affects the selection of another individual.

In order to select the subjects, the researcher invited the students of each section to draw lots between 1 and 0. For each section there were 9 ones and 12 ones in Menilik and Bole respectively; the rest are zeros. Those who drew 'one' were selected. Totally, 216 students were selected from each school.

### ***Procedure II***

The present researcher gave the chosen students appointment to meet in four classes (54 in each) with in the school premises. When the students came, four invigilators were assigned to administer a pre-test (see Appendix F and section 3.4.4) on which code numbers ranging from 001-216 were written. Then, the researcher told the testees that he would identify them by their code numbers but not by their names nor by their sections.

Next, the students' papers were collected and corrected by the researcher. On the bases of their results, relatively homogenous students were selected. These students scored 5 to 8 inclusive (see Appendix K) out of 15 questions (for more information see section 3.4.4).

By the next day, the present researcher announced code numbers of 100 students (in each school) with in the range (5-8) to meet him in the arranged class.

Then, the researcher put the students into four groups according to their score: 5, 6, 7, and 8. Next, he asked these homogeneous students to draw lots between one (1) and zero (0) so that students with in each score-based groups could be divided into two groups: experimental and control. The researcher believes that this had reduced the imbalance effect that would have been caused by the difference in ability between experimental and

control groups. Those who drew zero were put in the control group, and those who did the other were put in the experimental group.

The following table shows the distribution of student-subjects between experimental and control groups.

Score	Menilik		Bole		Total
	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	
5	12	12	15	15	54
6	19	18	10	11	58
7	13	13	16	15	57
8	6	7	9	9	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>200</b>

The control group was told to wait for an announcement to come back for a post-test. On the other hand, the experimental group was told to come back the next day to start participating in contextual guessing strategy training which took fifteen (15) hours.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

The data used in this study was collected using four kinds of instruments. These were analytical scale, questionnaire, classroom observation and test. As Moser and Kalton (1972) suggest, the use of different instruments for a study provides a powerful research strategy.

#### **3.4.1 Analytical Scale**

The analytical scale was designed to analyze the appropriateness of the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities. The analysis was primarily targeted to check the availability of contextual guessing clues in the passages and sentences designed for such activities. In

other words, it helped to answer whether the exercises encourage informed guessing or blind one.

The scale has the commonest contextual guessing clues listed across the table, and the target words (words intended to be inferred) listed vertically down at the left hand side of the table (See Appendix C). It is designed on the bases of the literature review.

### **3.4.2 Questionnaire**

In order to explore the effectiveness of contextual guesswork activities being conducted in the sample schools, two sets of questionnaires (see Appendices A and B), one for the teachers, and the other for the students were administered.

The teachers' questionnaire had two parts. The first part of the questionnaire aimed at gathering general information on contextual guessing. The second section presented items which were designed to come up with the description of contextual guessing activities in the classroom i.e. teachers' practices, the students' experience, and the appropriateness of the activities for the discussion at hand. All the items in the second part were presented using frequency scales.

Besides the teachers, a total number of 200 students filled questionnaire prepared for them. The students' questionnaire also had two parts. Both parts were designed for the same purposes as the teachers'. And again, the items in the second part were presented using frequency scales.

Both questionnaires contained closed and open-ended questions. In fact, in order to illicit relevant data, students were allowed to reply the open-ended questions in Amharic.

Even though the students' questionnaire was piloted and proper adjustments were made, for fear of contamination of data due to lack of clarity of questions on the side of student-respondents, the questionnaire was administered and filled with the presence of the researcher.

### **3.4.3 Observation**

Classroom observation provides a clear picture of what the actual teaching-learning process looks like. It allows the study of phenomena at a close range where different variables present (Seliger and Shohmy, 1989). So, it is considered as one of the supplementary data collecting devices.

Cognizant of this fact, in addition to the questionnaire, the researcher observed the actual classroom activities with prime purpose to triangulate the responses reported by both groups of respondents-teachers and students. Observation checklist (see Appendix D) was designed to come up with the relevant data for the study. The classroom observations (See Appendix E) are described and summarized in depth.

### **3.4.4 Tests**

#### **Pre-test**

As is discussed under sampling technique- procedure II (see section 3.1.3), target subjects were selected on the bases of their performance as reflected on the results of the pre-test (see Appendix K).

As far as the researcher's knowledge goes, there is no test locally available that suits this study. Therefore, in order to administer the pre-test, the researcher adapted the test from foreign sources-*Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills* by Langan (2003).

The pre-test contains 15 multiple choice questions each of which has three distracters and one possible answer. Each question has equal value, so it is corrected out of 15 (see Appendix G). In each question the target word is

written in bold. Target words guessability was checked so that students could guess the meanings of the target words using the available contextual guessing clues (see section 2.5).

### **Post-test**

As has been discussed under section 3.1.3, student-subjects were divided into two groups: experimental and control. The former, which was composed of 50 student-participants in each school, got training on what contextual guessing clues are and on how to use these clues in order for inferring unfamiliar words from context. This contextual guessing strategy training took fifteen (15) contact hours each of which lasted sixty minutes. Wenden (1986; 1987) as in McDonough (1995) also did the same amount of hours in his plan to conduct strategy training.

At the end of the training, the test was administered, the main objective of this test was to measure the gain or otherwise of the students guessing ability as a result of the contextual guessing strategy training. It was administered for both the experimental and the control groups in their own school premises. Invigilators were also assigned.

Similar to the pre-test items, the items in this test are adapted ones. The post-test is composed of three parts (see Appendix H). The first one demanded the test-takers to guess the meanings of the words written in bold and choose their meanings from the list given. It consists of five items. The second part contains six (6) sentences that demand the testees to guess the meanings of the target words (written in bold) by looking for guessing clues in the sentences themselves. The third part is a passage in which the target words are written in bold. The students were required to guess the meanings of the target words using the contextual guessing clues available in the reading passage.

The first two parts are taken from *Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills* by Langan (2003), while the third one is taken and adapted to suit the case from local news paper *The Sun* (See Appendix H).

Totally, the post-test has 20 target words to be guessed. Each word was allotted the same weight, so it was marked by the researcher out of twenty (20) (see Appendix I). The examinees' results are presented in a bar graph. (see Appendix L)

### **3.5 Pilot Study of the Instruments**

To insure the reliability of the instruments, pilot study was carried out. On the teachers' side two were arbitrarily selected from both sides. 'Two' because the total number of the teacher-subjects was limited. On the students side five students were arbitrarily selected from each school. The researcher believed that 'ten' is enough for this stage.

In both cases, the selection of study subjects at this stage is arbitrary because the purpose is to confirm the applicability of the instruments and to know the existing state of potential respondents with respect to the problem under study.

The questionnaires were collected and adjustments (improvements) were made on the following areas (points):

- Changing the language of the item into a better and appropriate one  
Example: I ask my teacher the meanings of new words from the passage.  
The word *ask* may connote that the student personally goes to the teacher to ask for the meanings of new words from the passage. With this connotation it doesn't bring the intended data.
- Arranging order of questions
- Avoiding questions unrelated to the issue under-study.

### **3.6 The Material: Contextual Guessing Strategy Training**

This material is prepared to give contextual guessing strategy training for grade 11 students (see Appendix J). The students were selected from Menilik and Bole Preparatory Schools. Fifty (50) students participated from each school.

The objective of this material is to train the participants on:

- a) What contextual guessing clues are and
- b) how to use these clues for guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words while they are reading passages.

In order to achieve this target, the material is divided into four broad parts.

The first part is an introductory exercise. It is intended to show how the meanings of words differ from context to context. There are four words: *spring*, *plot*, *round* and *crop*. These words are used in different contexts and they have different meanings.

The second part presents short notes on the common contextual guessing clues. Under each contextual guessing clue examples are given for illustration.

The next two parts of the material provide practices on guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words using contextual guessing clues. The third part is at sentence level, while the fourth is at reading passage level.

### **3.7 Methods of Data Analysis**

As stated earlier in this chapter, analytical scale, questionnaire, classroom observation and test were the four instruments to secure relevant data for the study. The data obtained through the analytical scale, the teachers' and students' questionnaires were tallied and the frequencies were converted to percentage, and categorized and analyzed using tables. In fact, in order to show the relative occurrence of contextual guessing clues in the textbook, the data gained through analytical scale is presented in a table and a bar graph (pages 39 and 40 respectively).

Information from open-ended questions and observations were also analyzed together with the questionnaire and used as supplementary data to triangulate the responses gathered through close-ended questions.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The main objective of this paper has been to analyze the effectiveness of contextual guessing activities conducted at grade 11 using the textbook. In this chapter, the data obtained from sources: analytical scale, questionnaire, classroom observation, and post-test are presented and discussed under the following headings:

- 4.1 Teachers' and students' responses on the importance of ability to guess meanings from the context
- 4.2 Appropriateness of the passages for contextual guess work
- 4.3 Teachers' practices on contextual guessing activities
- 4.4 Post-test results

### 4.1 Teachers' and Students' Response on the Importance of Ability to Guess on the Side of the Learner

In order to make a certain strategy practical, the teachers' and students' attitude towards the case is very much essential. The following table show teachers' and students' responses on the importance of ability to guess on the side of the learners.

**Table 1: Importance of Contextual Guessing for Students**

Part	No	Item	Responses																			
			v. important				Important				Less important				Not important				Total			
			Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	1	Importance of being able to guess for students	7	87.5	128	64	1	12.5	64	32	-	-	8	4	-	-	-	-	8	100	200	100

According to table 1, almost all of both teacher- and student-respondents gathered together at one side. This shows the importance of ability to

guess unfamiliar words from the context. This implies that making guess – work activities parts and parcel of the text book is a must be-encouraged thing because it may provide opportunity for teachers to use their maximum effort to train learners how to explore contextual clues when they come across unfamiliar words while they are reading passages. In other words, students will get training to use contextual guessing strategy when necessary.

For the application of contextual guessing strategy being important is not enough, the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities need to be appropriate. The next section of the paper discovers whether the passages and the sentences for contextual guessing are appropriate.

## **4.2 Appropriateness of the Passages and the Sentences Meant for Contextual Guess-work**

In order to conduct contextual guessing activities, necessary conditions need to be created. Here under, three conditions are presented to see whether the activities satisfy them or not. The discussion is presented in the following three consecutive sub-sections.

### **4.2.1 Applicability of Guess Work Activity using the Reading passages of the Textbook and the Activities in it**

In order to conduct contextual guessing activities, appropriate material needs to be selected so that it may contribute a lot to the achievement of the set objectives (a lot to bring about the intended outcomes). On the case in point teachers were asked and their responses are demonstrated in the following table.

**Table 2: Applicability of Contextual Guess-work Activity using the Textbook**

Part	Number	Item	Responses									
			V. much		To some extent		v. little		Not at all		total	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	4	Applicability of contextual guess-work using the textbook	3	37.5	5	62.5	-	-	-	-	8	100

As is reflected in the table, all teachers assert the applicability of contextual guess work activities using the textbook. On the contrary, when they were asked to what extent they could be sure that the students did not look up the target words from a dictionary their responses questions the applicability. No teachers were sure whether the students' guesses were 'real' guesses.

The researcher believes that the teachers' uncertainty may stem from the fact that the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities are with the students prior to going through the activities in the classroom so that students may get the meanings of the unknown words (target words) from a dictionary, may also ask for the meanings from some body else, and may translate the words into their first language (see Table 5).

The information gathered from the analysis of contextual guessing exercises at sentence level and at the passage level goes against teachers' position on the applicability of contextual guesswork activity using the textbook. Wider context is the most dominant contextual clue available in the contextual guessing activities (see Appendix C and Table 4).

### 4.2.2 Appropriateness of the Reading Passages

The following table contains three items that were designed to check the appropriateness or otherwise of the passages for contextual guess work.

**Table 3: Appropriateness of the Reading Passages**

Part	Number		Item	Responses																							
				Always				Frequently				Sometimes				Rarely				Never				Total			
	Ts			Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss			
	f	%		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
2	8	8	Familiarity of the contents of the reading passages to the students	-	-	24	12	2	25	32	16	1	12.5	24	12	4	50	72	36	1	12.5	48	24	8	100	200	100
2	10	9	Familiarity of words appearing around the new word	-	-	8	4	2	25	40	20	4	50	44	22	2	25	82	41	-	-	26	13	8	100	200	100
2	9	10	Availability of contextual clues in the reading passages	1	12.5	14	7	3	37.5	16	8	3	37.5	33	16.5	1	12.5	81	40.5	-	-	56	28	8	100	200	100

Ts = Teachers

Ss = Students

f = frequency

Table 3 illustrates that majority of the teacher- and student-respondents 5 (62.5%) and 120 (60%) respectively said that the familiarity of the contents of the passages meant for contextual guessing activities are questionable (see section 2.6.3).

On the second item, as is shown in the table, half of the teacher-subjects responded that the target words are sometimes surrounded by words which are familiar to their students. Of course, the other half (50%) is equally divided between 'frequently' and 'rarely'. The case in point is slightly different on the students' part. 108 (54%) of them expressed their position against the students familiarity with words appearing around the target-word. Since the item is designed to illicit information on the students' familiarity with the words around the target word, the researcher believes that the students' response on the case gets more importance than the teachers' does.

The third item was intended to collect information on the availability of contextual clues in the reading passages meant for guessing exercises. As is shown in the table, 4 (50%) of the teachers said that contextual clues are available in the reading passages. On the other hand, students took the other extreme. 137 (68%) of the student- respondents reflected that contextual clues are not or rarely available in the reading passages. In the same way the data gathered through the analytical scale showed the same as the students (see table 4 and bar graph 1).

From the afore-gone discussion, one may understand that the passages do not provide learners helpful contextual clues that could equip learners to exercise informed guessing. This implies that the appropriacy of the passages for contextual guessing activities fall before question mark (see section 2.5).

### 4.2.3 Distribution of Contextual Guessing Clues Available in the Guessing Exercises

Analytical scale has been used to check the availability of contextual clues in the guess work activities (see Appendix C) and the information gathered is organized in the following table.

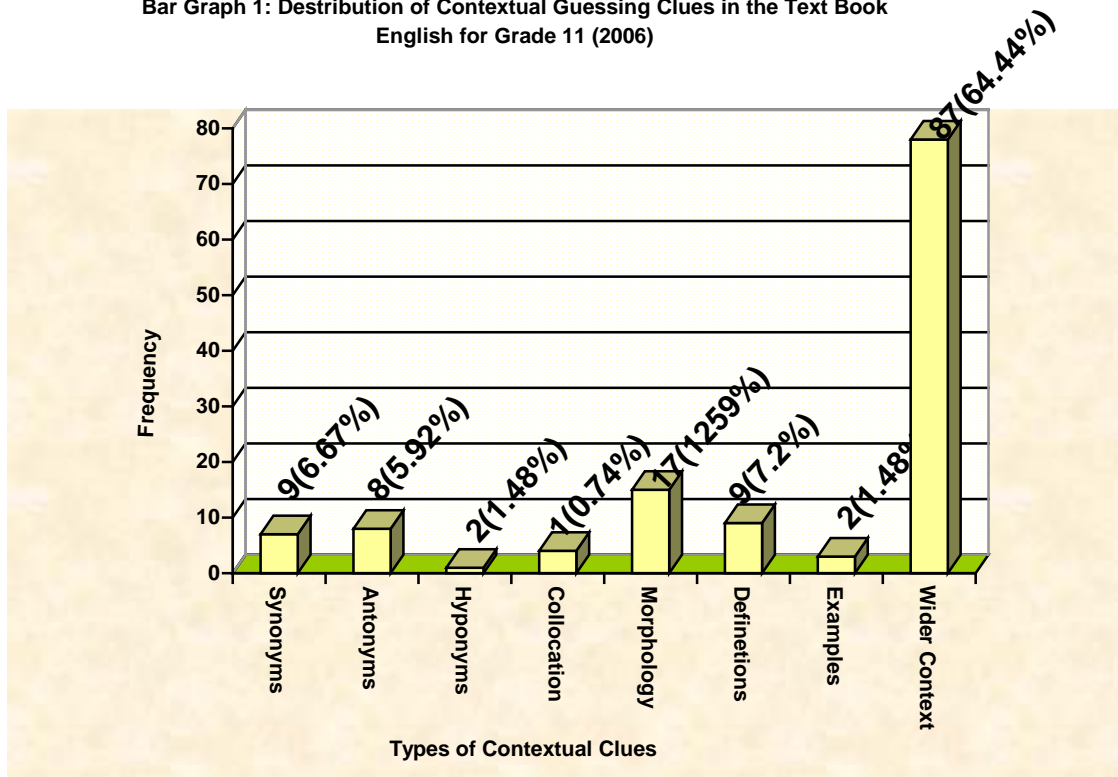
**Table 4: Distribution of Contextual Guessing Clues**

Contextual clue	Sentence level		Passage level		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Synonyms	4	2.97	5	3.70	9	6.67
Antonyms	3	2.22	5	3.70	8	5.92
Hyponyms	1	0.74	1	0.74	2	1.48
Collocations	-	-	1	0.74	1	0.74
Morphology	3	2.22	14	10.37	17	12.59
Definitions	4	2.97	5	3.70	9	6.67
Examples	-	-	2	1.48	2	1.48
Wider context	27	20	60	44.44	87	64.44
				<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100</b>

The data gathered through the analytical scale showed that among the total target words (to be guessed), 87 (64.44%) of them demands the students to be familiar with both the contents of the passage and the words appearing around these target words. The students' familiarity with the contents and the surrounding words is found doubtful (See the discussion on the two previous items under table 3). The rest 48 (35.56%) are distributed to the other contextual clues ranging from 1 (0.74%) collocations to 17 (12.59%) morphological clues (see table 4). Huckin and Bluch (1993), in Huckin and Coady (1999) found out that students very strongly prefer other contextual clues rather than wider contextual (global) clues. This is contrary to our practice.

Bar graph 1, on the next page, shows the distribution of contextual guessing clues in a clearer way.

Bar Graph 1: Distribution of Contextual Guessing Clues in the Text Book  
English for Grade 11 (2006)



### 4.3 Teachers' Practices on Contextual Guessing Exercises

This section assesses the teachers' practices when they conduct the actual contextual guessing classes. The information gathered for this purpose is presented and discussed here under three inter-related sub-sections.

#### 4.3.1 Teachers' help for Students and the Students' Practice on Getting Meanings of Unfamiliar Words in the Reading Passages

Items under this heading are designed to find out how teachers helped their students to get meanings of unfamiliar words during contextual guessing activities. They are also targeted to explore the students' experience of getting meanings of new words while they are reading passages or sentences meant for guess-work.

**Table 5: Teachers' help for students to get the meanings of unfamiliar words**

Part	Number	Item	Responses											
			Always		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
2	3	Teachers' translation in to Amharic	-	-	-	-	2	25	5	62.5	1	12.5	8	100
2	4	Explaining the meanings explicitly	4	50	2	25	1	12.5	1	12.5	-	-	8	100
2	5	Encouraging students to use dictionary	2	25	2	25	1	12.5	2	25	1	12.5	8	100

**Table 6: Students' practice to get the meanings of unfamiliar words**

Part	Number	Item	Responses											
			Always		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
2	1	Translating to first language	52	26	77	38.5	26	13	32	16	13	6.5	200	100
2	2	From the teacher	41	20.5	67	33.5	45	22.5	37	18.5	10	5	200	100
2	3	Using dictionary	56	28	95	47.5	33	16.5	8	4	8	4	200	100

For the first item, it is noticed in the table that teachers reported that majority of them rarely used translation in presenting the meanings of words to be guessed in the guessing exercises. Therefore, one may conceptualize that teachers do not encourage translation into vernacular language during contextual guessing activities. On the other hand, the students' responses demonstrated a different figure. 52 (26%) and 77 (38.5%) of the student-respondents used translation into their first language (probably Amharic in our case) 'always' and 'frequently' respectively. In other words, 64.5% of the total subjects used translation when they faced unfamiliar words while they

were reading the passages. Therefore, the researcher believes that students were unlikely to benefit from the 'guess-work activities'.

For the second item, 6 (75%) of the teacher-respondents said that they explicitly explain the meanings of new words in the reading passages to their students. Similarly, 108 (54%) of the student – respondents reported that they want their teacher to explain the meanings of new words in the reading passages. One may understand that the teacher may dominate the class and may not give sufficient time to train the learners on how to use contextual clues in order to get the meanings of the target words. However, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) say, "It is worth spending considerable class time teaching students to guess the meanings of unknown words" (p. 236).

For the third item, the collected data revealed that 4 (50%) of the teachers said that they encouraged their learners to consult a dictionary while they (students) are going through the reading passages. Students also reported the same. Among 200 student-subjects, 151 (75.5%) ticked on the questionnaire that they used a dictionary while they are reading the passages.

From the afore-gone discussion it is perhaps easy to conceptualize that while students are reading passages they tend to use the three ways (translating to first language, waiting for teachers' explanation, and using dictionary) to get meanings of unknown words in the reading passages. The data gathered through observation justifies why the students tended to these three ways. For example, majority of the teachers of the observed classes did not teach their students on how to look for contextual clues to encourage informed guessing (see Appendix E). Besides the observation, the summary of the students' responses (see page 44) for the open ended question showed that contextual guessing classes began and ended with more time for teachers to talk (explain).

### 4.3.2 Contextual Guessing Strategy Training

The following two tables show teachers' and students' responses on the teachers' role during conducting contextual guessing activities.

**Table 7: Teachers' Role during Guessing Activities (Teachers' Responses)**

Part	Number	Item	Responses											
			Always		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
2	1	Giving students time for silent reading before guessing exercise	4	50	3	37.5	1	12.5	-	-	-	-	8	100
2	6	Showing students contextual clues from the reading passage	4	50	1	12.5	2	25	-	-	1	12.5	8	100

**Table 8: Teachers Role during Guessing Activities (Students' Responses)**

Part	Number	Item	Responses											
			Always		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
2	5	Giving students time for silent reading before guessing exercise	16	8	37	18.5	40	20	69	34.5	38	19	200	100
2	6	Encouraging students to look for guessing clues form the context	18	9	32	16	34	17	68	34	48	24	200	100

The first item for both groups of respondents was designed to find out the teachers' practices on giving their students time for silent reading. As reflected in Table 7, all teacher-respondents reported that they gave time for their students for silent reading before conducting guessing activities though

the frequency of occurrence differs from teachers to teachers. This is encouraging; however, the students' responses narrated a different story. It is revealed in table 8 that majority of the student-respondents 107 (53%) said that their teachers almost did not give them time for silent reading in the classroom before conducting contextual guessing exercises. The information gathered through observation strengthened the students' report. Except two observed teachers (Appendix E: observations two and five), who gave students perhaps a very short time, others did not practice the case. The researcher believes that unless students are given enough time for silent reading in the classroom before conducting the activities, it is hard to say the students were benefited from the guessing activities. In other words, the students need to read the passages/ sentences and search for the clues which could help them to infer meanings of target words by themselves. This will give students to apply the guessing strategy (see section 2.8.3).

On the second item, teachers were asked to express the frequency of occurrence to show contextual clues for their students using the reading passage. As table 7 depicts the case, 4 (50%), 1 (12.5%) and 2 (25%) of the teacher-respondents stated that they always, frequently and sometimes respectively showed the contextual clues to their students. As a result, one may say that 87.5% of the teacher-respondents introduced contextual clues to their students from the reading passages. On the contrary, the students' responses demonstrated a different figure. Table 8 shows that 68 (34%) and 48 (24%) reported against teachers' responses. The former stated that their teachers rarely encouraged them to look for contextual clues from the passage. The later, more to the widening of their responses from the teachers', reported that their teachers never showed them contextual clues. Therefore, having seen this interpretation if one says contextual guessing is being conducted, it may not be acceptable. The reason is that the target students were not benefited.

In the first part of the questionnaire students were asked if their teachers introduce them contextual guessing clues. Their responses strengthen their own position discussed above. It is presented and analyzed here under.

**Table 9: Teachers' Practices on Training of Contextual Guessing Clues to their students**

Part	Number	Item	Responses				Total	
			Yes		No		f	%
			f	%	f	%		
1	2	Do teachers train you how to use contextual guessing clues	58	29	142	71	200	100

As the above table shows, 142 (71%) of the total population said that the teachers didn't teach them how to use contextual guessing clues. In fact, 58 (29%) said 'yes'. Those who said 'yes' were asked to list some of the clues they are acquainted with during the training; however, only 8 (4%) of the total 58 (29%) could list 'synonyms', 'antonyms', 'prefixes' and 'suffixes' not others.

Those who said 'no' were asked to express how their teachers conduct contextual guessing exercises. Their responses are summarized as follows:

The teacher:

- Orders us to do it as a homework
- Ignores the exercises
- Tells us the meanings of the words when we ask for
- Tells us to do it by ourselves
- Explains the meanings of the words without telling us the contextual guessing clues
- Orders us to guess the meanings of the words without introducing the clues.
- Gives us as homework and then we do it in the classroom orally.

The information gathered through observation strengthens the students' position. It is observed that no teacher showed the students the contextual clues; neither showed how to look for contextual clues (see Appendix E). What's more, the information gathered through the analytical scale depicts that the passages do not give contextual clues except demanding the students to understand the contents of the passages and other surrounding words before and after the target word. This is reported unhelpful (see Table 3).

Based on the afore-said discussion it is possible to argue that the students were not getting proper training on contextual guessing clues. Even those students who positively assert the teachers' practice in training contextual guessing clues could only list some three (four) common contextual clues. The present researcher believes that the students are able to list these clues because the textbook under discussion gives some theoretical notes on the case.

Table 10, on the next page, presents the practices of teachers in teaching and students in learning (using) the identified contextual guessing clues.

### 4.3.3 Teachers' and Students' Experience in Teaching and Using Contextual Clues Respectively from the Passages

The following table is designed to gather information on teachers' experience of using guessing clues in their actual contextual guessing classes. It also shows students' practice on these clues.

**Table 10: Teachers' and Students' Reponses**

Contextual clues	Responses																							
	Always				Frequently				Sometimes				Rarely				Never				Total			
	Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss		Ts		Ss	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Synonyms	-	-	52	26	5	62.5	27	13.5	-	-	32	16	3	37.5	67	33.5	-	-	22	11	8	100	200	100
Antonyms	1	12.5	44	22	3	37.5	28	14	2	25	36	18	2	25	60	30	1	12.5	32	16	8	100	200	100
Hyponyms	-	-	2	1	2	25	16	8	1	12.5	23	11.5	3	37.5	70	35	2	25	89	44.5	8	100	200	100
Collocation	1	12.5	9	45	3	37.5	13	6.5	3	37.5	12	6	-	-	92	46	1	12.5	74	37	8	100	200	100
Morphology	2	25	16	8	3	37.5	28	14	2	25	36	18	-	-	68	34	1	12.5	52	26	8	100	200	100
Definition	1	12.5	16	8	4	50	27	13.5	-	-	41	20.5	3	37.5	71	35.5	-	-	45	22.5	8	100	200	100
Example	2	25	36	18	3	37.5	37	18.5	2	25	19	9.5	-	-	69	34.5	1	12.5	39	19.5	8	100	200	100
Wider context	2	25	25	12.5	1	12.5	37	18.5	2	25	35	17.5	2	25	66	33	1	12.5	37	18.5	8	100	200	100

Ts = Teachers

Ss = Students

f= frequency

Table 10 shows, majority of the teacher-respondents have some sort of experience of teaching the contextual clues for their students. According to table 10, even though the degree of occurrence scatters between always (12.5%), frequently (37.5%) and sometimes (37.5%) for 'collocation'; and always (25%) frequently (37.5%) and sometimes (25%) for 'example', subject teachers reported that they mostly trained 'collocations' and 'examples' as contextual clues to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words in the reading passages. However, 4 (3.2%) and 3 (2.4%) target words could be guessed employing collocations and examples as contextual guessing clues (see table 4 and bar graph 1).

The table also demonstrates that 4 (50%) of the respondents stated that they show their students 'antonyms' as contextual clues. Still others 2 (25%) said that they sometimes teach the same thing to their students.

It is noted that 5 (62.5%) of the respondents frequently teach 'synonyms' as contextual clue during guessing exercises on the bases of the reading passages. Similarly, even though the degree of occurrence varies among teachers, 62.5% of teacher-subjects also have some kind of experience of teaching 'morphology', 'definition' and 'wider-context' as clues for guessing unfamiliar words.

Among the contextual clues listed in the table, 'hyponyms' received the least figure. 2 (25%) teacher-subjects frequently used 'hyponyms' as contextual guessing clue. In fact, one more teacher exercised the case sometimes.

Going through the figures in table 10, one can see how the students' responses ran different from the teachers'. 89 (44.5%) of them said they are unlikely to use 'synonyms' as contextual guessing clue while they are reading the passages. Almost the same number of students 92 (46%) said that they rarely or never use 'antonyms' as clues for contextual guessing. Student – subjects 159 (79.5%) said that they rarely (35%) and never (44.5%) have experience in using 'hyponyms' as contextual clue while they are reading

passages meant for contextual guessing activities. Almost similarly 92 (46%) of the students ticked on rarely, and 74 (37%) of them did on never, to state the frequency of using 'collocation' as contextual clue on the side of the students. Table 10 also shows that 120 (60%) of the student-respondents have no or little experience in using morphological clues. Almost the same number of students 116 (58%) neither used 'definition' as contextual clue during reading the passages. The figure goes down to the contextual clues in the table in the same manner. 108 (54%) and 103 (51.5%) of the respondents reported that they are not on the beneficiaries side of using 'example' and 'wider context' respectively as contextual clues.

To sum up, the teachers' and students' responses are contradicting each other. However, the information gathered through classroom observation (see Appendix E) demonstrated that it is hard to believe what the teachers reported is genuine. Moreover, the available contextual clues are noted to concentrate on one type of clue – 'wider context' (which is proved unhelpful).

Therefore, it is difficult to say that teachers were introducing their students the contextual guessing clues and training them how to use these clues to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words.

#### 4.4 Post-test Results

Post-test was administered in order to see whether the contextual guessing strategy training has brought a difference on the students (of experimental group) or not. The following results are found (registered).

**Table 11: Post-test Results of the Subjects**

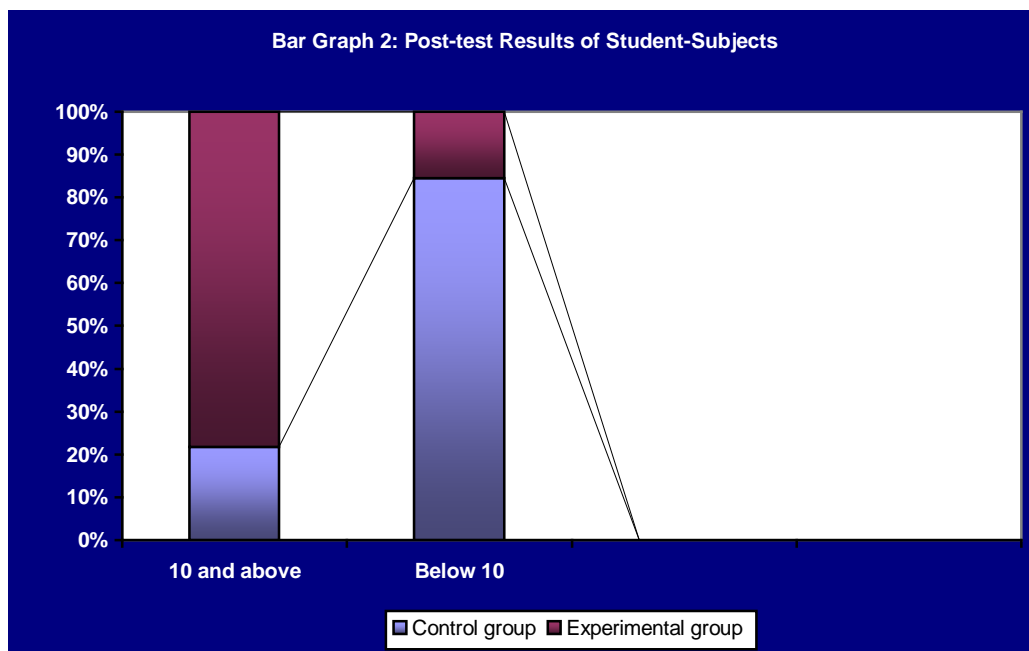
Groups	Marks				Total	
	Passing and above		Below passing		Number of examinees	%
	Number of examinees	%	Number of examinees	%		
Control	24	24	76	76	100	100
Experimental	86	86	14	14	100	100
<b>Total</b>					<b>200</b>	

As is shown in the table, among 100 students only 24 (24%) of the control group scored the passing and above mark, while 76 (76%) did not. On the other hand, among 100 students who participated in the training and took the post-test, 86 (86%) scored the passing and above marks. When we look at these results from the angle of the scores of the control group, it could be possible to argue that the students' experience on contextual guessing activities is deficient on the following two areas:

- a) the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities are not properly designed;
- b) the teacher did not train them about contextual clues and how to use them to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words

When we look the case from the angle of the scores of the experimental group, one may conceptualize that if appropriate material is prepared for the issue at hand, if the teachers get training on contextual guessing clues, and if the teachers also train the strategy to their students, students may be able to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context.

Bar graph 2 shows the differences of the results between control group and experimental group more clearly.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Summary

The current study contains five chapters. The first chapter deals with the nature of the problem under study. It also entertains the basic questions that the study has attempted to answer. In addition, it includes the application, the scope of the study and the limitation of the study.

In the second chapter of this paper, relevant theoretical issues were discussed. First important concepts were defined ('guessing' and 'context'). Then, the rationale for using guessing strategy was explained. Next, it tries to show whether guessing strategy is trainable or not. The discussion of the common contextual clues followed. It, then, dealt with factors that affect contextual guessing. Next, it explained to what extent guessing is correct.

The third chapter discusses the methods of the study. The study is both descriptive and experimental in its nature because these two designs are helpful in seeking response for the three basic research questions stated under section 1.2. Once again to answer these questions, the research targets three data sources: the textbook *English for Grade 11 (2006)*, teachers, and students of grade 11. As far as sampling size and techniques are concerned, the availability sampling technique was employed to select sample teachers, whereas to select sample student-subjects, the researcher went through two procedures. During the first procedure two techniques (quota sampling and then simple random sampling) were employed. Quota sampling technique was used to select equal number of students from every sections of grade 11 in

the two selected schools: Menilik and Bole Preparatory Schools. Simple random sampling technique was employed to choose the allotted number of students from each section. This technique gives the same chance to every members of the total population in each section. The first procedure ended after the researcher selected 216 students from each school.

The second procedure aimed at 'picking up' the target student – subjects among the 216 students selected from each school. To achieve this purpose, a pre-test which is composed of fifteen (15) multiple choice questions each of which has three distracters and one possible answer was administered. Then, 100 relatively homogenous (ability group) students who scored 5 to 8 inclusive were selected from each school. These students were divided between experimental and control group by drawing lots which comprised ones (1) and zeroes (0). Those who drew ones were assigned in the former, while the others were assigned in the later.

The experimental group members attended contextual guessing strategy training for fifteen hours. For the training, sample material is prepared. This material is designed to acquaint the learners with contextual guessing clues and to train them how to use these clues for guessing meanings of unfamiliar words. At the end of the training, a post-test which contains twenty (20) questions was given for both the experimental and control groups. The researcher himself corrected and marked the test out of twenty.

The data collecting tools used were analytical scale, questionnaires (for both teachers and students), classroom observation, and post-test. The analytical scale helps to answer whether the contextual guessing exercises encourage informed guessing or blind one. It has the commonest contextual guessing clues listed across the table, and the target words listed vertically down the table. To come to the questionnaires, both questionnaires have two parts. The first part is intended to collect general information on contextual guessing, while the second is designed to come up with the description of the actual

classroom contextual guessing activities. Both questionnaires contain closed and open-ended questions. Before using the questionnaires for the actual study, the teachers' and the students' questionnaires were administered for two teachers and 10 students respectively for pilot test. Accordingly, necessary improvements were made.

Coming to observation, the researcher himself observed actual classroom activities with prime purpose to triangulate the responses reported by both groups of respondents. The classroom observations are described and summarized in depth.

The post-test was administered at the end of contextual guessing strategy training; and it was targeted to see the effects of the training. Both the experimental and the control groups took the test within their own school premises. The researcher himself corrected and marked the students' responses (see Appendix L). From both groups, the number of students who scored 10 and/or above is presented side by side (see Table 11).

The data collected using the afore-mentioned instruments were tabularized. In fact, in order to clearly show the relative occurrence of contextual guessing clues in the textbook (Grade 11), the data gained through analytical scale is presented using a bar graph. The post-test results of the experimental and control groups who scored 10 and/or above are presented in bar graph for the same purpose. The organized data are analyzed through frequency counts and percentage. Information from open-ended questions and classroom observations are analyzed together with the questionnaire and used as supplementary data.

The fourth chapter includes the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered. Accordingly, the data were tabulated in eleven tables and in two bar graphs, analyzed and interpreted.

The fifth chapter contains the summary, conclusion and recommendation.

The major findings of the study are presented as follows:

- Almost all of both teacher- and student – respondents asserted the importance of ability to guess, on the side of the students, the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context. This implies that teachers are positive to exert effort to help their students develop this ability; similarly students are ready to learn and use this ability.
- The applicability of contextual guessing activities using the textbook is doubtful for three reasons:
  - a) The teachers cannot be sure whether the students' guesses were 'real' guesses because the exercises are with the students prior to discussing the activities in the classroom.
  - b) In the textbook contextual guessing activity has appeared as an appendage to reading comprehension. This means, in the course of attempting to answer comprehension questions, students may solve the problem of unfamiliarity with the target words.
  - c) From the data collected it is noted that the passages prepared for contextual guessing activities do not give contextual guessing clues to encourage intelligent guessing.
- Majority of the respondents said that the contents of the passages meant for contextual guessing are unfamiliar to the students – i.e., the contents do not reflect the students' prior experience. In such cases, conducting guessing activities may be difficult (see section 2.8.2).
- In order to successfully guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word, the new word should be surrounded by familiar words (see section 2.8.1). On the contrary, 108 (54%) of the students reported that the words surrounding the target words are unfamiliar to them. As Dycus (1997) and Wallace (1982) said if the proportion of unknown to know words is higher, guessing may be affected.
- Even though 4 (50%) of the teachers reported the availability of contextual clues to help students guess the meanings of the target words, information gathered from students' questionnaire and the analytical scale proved it the reverse. From this, one may conceptualize

that the target words in the passages are presented without helpful clues to encourage informed guessing.

- According to the data collected through the analytical scale, 62.4% of the target words demand the students to be familiar with the surrounding words and the contents of the passage i.e. wider context as clue. However, the students' familiarity with the surrounding words and the contents of the passage found doubtful. Besides, other contextual guessing clues are given less attention.
- 64.5% of the student-subjects said that when they come across unfamiliar words while they are reading the passages, they translate the words into their first language (Amharic). This experience of the students may throw shadow of doubts on the practices of contextual guessing activities.
- 6 (75%) of teacher- respondents and 108 (54%) of student-respondents agree that teachers explain the meanings of new words in the reading passages. This may imply that the teachers take more time to explain the meanings of the target words than to introduce the contextual guessing clues to their students.
- 4 (50%) of the teachers reported that they encourage their learners to consult a dictionary while they (students) are going through the reading passages. 151 (75.5%) of the students also said that they use dictionary while they are reading the passages. Therefore, it is difficult to say that the students were exercising contextual guessing.
- It is found out that the sample teachers hardly gave their students time for silent reading during which the students search for clues to infer the meanings of the target words by themselves.
- Data gathered through students' questionnaire and classroom observations revealed that teachers' practices in training contextual guessing clues to their students fall short. What is more, according to the information collected from the analytical scale, the passages and the sentences meant for guessing exercises found deficient in providing

helpful contextual clues. This itself questions the teachers' practice in training contextual clues to their students.

- Among 100 students in the control group 24 (24%) scored the passing and above marks, while the rest 76 (76%) did not. On the other hand, among the same number of students in the experimental group 86 (86%) scored the passing and above marks.

Looking the marks from the angle of the control group, one could argue that the students' experience on contextual guessing is deficient due to the following reasons:

- a) the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities are not properly designed
- b) the teachers did not train them on contextual guessing clues and how to use them to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Looking the scores of the experimental group, one may say that if necessary conditions are relatively fulfilled, the students may be able to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

On the basis of the afore-stated findings, the following conclusions were made.

1. In order to make contextual guess work activities effective in language classroom, the students and the teachers should believe in its importance. Accordingly, the study revealed that both teachers and students agreed on the importance of the ability to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words during reading passages. Their positive attitude towards contextual guessing plays a significant role for achieving the intended objective by practicing contextual guessing.

2. It is unquestionable that for any language classroom activities, appropriate material is needed. As has been noted from the data, the passages and the sentences meant for contextual guessing activities are found to be deficient for the following reasons.

2.1 The contents of the passages are reported to be more of unfamiliar to the students so that they do not activate the schema of the learners. This means the passages and the students do not mostly have shared experiences. This makes guessing challenging (see section 2.6.3).

2.2 Though the target words to be guessed are written in boldfaced and could be easily identified, they are mostly surrounded by other unfamiliar words, as the data showed. However, "... in order to guess the meanings of unknown words in context, the learner must be able to recognize most of the surrounding words" Huckin and Coady (1999: 184). Thus, since it does not consider the linguistic competence of the learners, still guessing may be difficult.(see section 2.8.1)

If the above cases (2.1 and 2.2) are considered during the preparation of material for contextual guessing activities, it may be possible for learner-readers to use 'wider context' to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words.

2.3 Most of the target words in the passages are presented without identifiable and helpful contextual clues. Therefore, guessing will be discouraging/ boring to the students. In fact, 62.4% of the target words could be guessed using 'wider context' as contextual guessing clue. However, it is noted to be unhelpful due to the afore-mentioned deficiencies of the contextual guessing activities.

3. The passages are prepared not only for guessing activities, but also for reading comprehension. As a result, when students work for answering

the comprehension questions, they may also solve the problems of new words by using dictionary or asking another person. Similarly, the teachers themselves may explain the meanings of the target words when they want to discuss comprehension questions with their students. Therefore, the guessing exercise needs to be singled out for its unique demands and behaviors.

4. The data revealed that while teachers were conducting guessing activities, they could not be sure whether the students' guesses were real guesses. The reason is that prior to conducting the activity in the classroom, the material (the book) is in the students' hands, so if they want to do the activity at home there is no way to stop them.
5. The study found out that teachers were not training their students what the contextual clues and how to use them to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words.
6. The research came up with a conclusion that if appropriate material is prepared for contextual guessing activities, the students may improve in their ability to infer meanings of words from context.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

On the bases of the conclusions made, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. This study showed that contextual guess work is not given due attention that it should deserve in English language classes. Therefore, it is important to put contextual guess work at the center of language teaching-learning process if we want learners to be on the beneficiary end. Depending on dictionary can kill interest in reading, interfere with comprehension, and result in slow and inefficient reading (see section 2.4).
2. It is imperative that materials prepared should fit the activities they are designed for so that the intended objective can be attained. On the contrary, the material set for guessing activities proved questionable.

As a result, to help learners to grapple with the meanings of unknown words by themselves rather than to expect everything from their teacher or to consult a dictionary, efforts better be exerted on the following areas.

- In most of the cases, unfamiliarity of the contents of the passages for guessing is noted on the side of the learners. One could easily conceptualize that if an unknown word appears in an unfamiliar issue (content), let alone guessing, going through the reading passage is unthinkable. Therefore, it is important if curriculum designers consider the students' prior experience before designing the activities for contextual guessing.
- In addition to the familiarity of the contents, the words appearing around the target word should be familiar to the student-readers; otherwise, it lessens the guessability of the target word. Consequently, once again, it is advisable for curriculum designers if they check the familiarity of the words surrounding the target word so that the new word will be in a guessable context (see section 2.8.1).
- Besides the above cases on familiarity, the availability of other contextual guessing clues is proved doubtful. Therefore, the concerned body should think of including a variety of guessing clues in the passages and sentences meant for contextual guessing activities. The availability and richness of contextual clues provides students guidance on how to best approach unfamiliar words in their own. This is a way to empower students to be confident, to take control of and responsibility for their own learning (see section 2.4). This will also acquaint the students with a variety of contextual guessing clues to be chosen when they are on-line communication-reading in our case.

3. As reflected in the findings, one of the short-comings that question the applicability of contextual guessing is its being an appendage of reading for comprehension exercise. As the objective of contextual guessing exercise is to equip student-readers with the guessing strategy to meet the dual demands of attending unfamiliar words during on line communication-reading in our case (Newton, 2001), it is advisable to have properly designed material that suits contextual guessing activities. Therefore, the students may have no opportunity to use dictionary or to ask for the meanings of the new words from someone. Under this situation, the students may look for contextual guessing clues for informed guessing. Thus, their guesses will be real guesses. Since they are not forced to give exact meanings of the target words (see section 2.9) they will be encouraged to involve in the guessing practices because it may build their confidence and it may show them that they can use the context for the meanings of new words. And at the same time the material should not be in the hands of students prior to conducting the activity in the classroom.
4. In order to effectively implement contextual guessing activity, equipping teachers with the necessary training may play a key role in conducting the activities in a proper manner. Therefore, English language teachers' trainings should consider a way to meet these demands because it is the responsibility of the teacher to show students how to use contextual clues to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words (see section 2.5).

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## **APPENDIX – A**

***Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies  
Department of Foreign Language and Literature  
Students' Questionnaire***

**Dear Student,**

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude for the co-operation you have shown to fill out this questionnaire. The aim of this questionnaire is to study the effectiveness of practicing contextual guessing strategy at grade 11.

This questionnaire has two parts. The first part is intended to illicit your general information on contextual guessing activities, whereas the second part is targeted to illicit information on contextual guessing activities at grade 11.

The responses you give by completing the questionnaire have much importance for the success of my study.

***Thank you very much!***

## ***Part I: General Information***

Please read the following carefully and answer the questions. (Underline the appropriate answer.)

1. How important is it for you to be able to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words?

A. Very important      B. Important      C. Not important at all

2. Did your English teachers train you contextual guessing clues?

A. Yes      B. No

3. If your answer for question No 2 is 'yes', can you mention some of them?

1. \_\_\_\_\_      3. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_      4. \_\_\_\_\_

(If you have any other(s), you can use additional paper)

4. If your answer for question No2 is 'No',

a) How did your English language teachers conduct the guessing exercises?

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**Part II: On Actual Classroom Activities for Guessing**

The following questions are designed to illicit information on your experience of contextual guessing activities at grade 11.

Study the statements given below and put a ✓ mark in the appropriate box according to the frequency of their occurrence in the actual classroom.

№	Classroom Activities during Guessing	always	frequently	sometimes	rarely	never
1	I translate new words in the reading passages into my first language					
2	I want my teacher to explain the meanings of new words in the reading passage					
3	I use a dictionary when I come across new words in a reading passage					
4	I guess the meanings of new words in the reading passage using:					
	a) synonyms (i.e. words that have approximately the same meaning as the new words)					
	b) antonym (i.e. words that have approximately the opposite meaning)					
	c) hyponymy (e.g. the meanings of 'car', 'lorry' and 'bus' are included in the word 'vehicle')					
	d) collocation (i.e. words that frequently go together)					
	e) morphology (i.e. prefixes and suffixes )					
	f) definition (explanation)					
	g) example					
	h) wider context (understanding the passage)					
5	The teacher gives us time to read the passages in the classroom (silent reading)					
6	The teacher encourages us to look for contextual clues from the reading passages					
7	We discuss the contextual guessing exercises with the teacher					
8	The contents of the passages reflects my background knowledge (prior experience)					
9	The unfamiliar words to be guessed in the reading passages come with other familiar words					
10	The passages give contextual guessing clues for the unfamiliar words in the text					
11	I read the passages in my home					

## **APPENDIX – B**

***Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies  
Department of Foreign Language and Literature  
Teachers' Questionnaire***

**Dear Teacher,**

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude for the co-operation you have shown to fill out this questionnaire. The aim of this questionnaire is to study the effectiveness of practicing contextual guessing strategy at grade 11.

This questionnaire has two parts. The first part is intended to illicit your general information on contextual guessing activities, whereas the second part is targeted to illicit information on contextual guessing activities at grade 11.

The responses you give by completing the questionnaire have much importance for the success of my study.

**Thank you very much!**

## **Part I: General Information**

Please read the following carefully and answer the questions. (Underline the appropriate answer.)

1. How important is it for students to be able to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words?

A. Very important    B. Important                      C. Not important at all

2. How much are your classes helpful for students to be able to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context?

A. Very much            B. Some                      C. Very little            D. Nothing

3. If you say 'Very little' or 'Nothing' for question No 2, can you state the reasons?

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4. How much do you think contextual guess work is applicable using grade 11 textbook?

A. Very much            B. To some extent  
C. Very little            D. Not at all

5. If you say 'Very much' or 'To some extent' for question No 4, how could you be sure that the students did not look up the new words from a dictionary? (N.B. passages and exercises are with the students before the actual activity.)

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6. If your answer for question No 4 is 'Very little' or 'Not at all', please mention the reasons you think.

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## **Part II: On Actual Classroom Activities for Guessing**

The following questions are designed to illicit information on your experience of conducting contextual guessing activities at grade eleven.

Study the statements given below and put a ✓ mark in the appropriate box according to the frequency of their occurrence in the actual classroom.

<b>Nº</b>	<b>Classroom Activities during Guessing</b>	<b>always</b>	<b>frequently</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>rarely</b>	<b>never</b>
1	I give time for the students to read the passage in the classroom					
2	I use the reading text to show the meanings of unfamiliar (new) words					
3	I translate the meaning of a new word into Amharic					
4	I explain the meaning of a new word explicitly					
5	I encourage the students to use a dictionary while they are reading a passage					
6	I show students contextual clues from the reading passage					
7	Students expect me to tell them the meaning of a new word in the reading text					
8	The contents of the passages are familiar to the students					
9	The passages provide helpful clues for guessing unfamiliar words					
10	The passages present the unfamiliar words among other familiar words					
11	The passages present the new word with various contextual clues:					
	a) synonyms (i.e. words that have approximately the same meaning as the new words)					
	b) antonym (i.e. words that have approximately the opposite meaning)					
	c) hyponymy (e.g. the meanings of 'car', 'lorry' and 'bus' are included in the word 'vehicle')					
	d) collocation (i.e. words that frequently go together)					
	e) morphology (i.e. prefixes and suffixes )					
	f) definition (explanation)					
	g) example					
	h) wider context (understanding the passage)					

## APPENDIX - C

### *Analytical Scale*

### *Distributions of Contextual Guessing Clues in the Passages and Sentences Meant for Guessing Activities*

#### A. At Passage Level

Target word	Unit	Page	Contextual Guessing Clues									Information Giving Conditions		
			Paragraph	Synonyms	Antonyms	Hyponyms	Collocation	Morphology	Definition	Examples	Wider context	Punctuation	Conjunctions	Adverbial
autobiography	1	2	Background Information						✓		✓			
banaban families	1	2	1								✓			
as it turned out	1	2	1					✓			✓			
questionnaire	1	2	1					✓						
wreath	1	2	2								✓			
glossy	1	2	2								✓			
charged her	1	2	2								✓			
entertaining	1	2	2								✓			
should I arrive	1	2	2								✓			
coconut	1	2	2								✓			
murmured	1	3	3								✓			
sip of courtesy	1	3	3								✓			
swig	1	3	3								✓			
whisper	1	3	4								✓			
keep track of	1	4	11								✓			
hiccup	1	4	12							✓				
hosts	1	4	12								✓			
gabbling	1	4	12								✓			
nomadic existence	3	41	1						✓		✓			
sinews	3	41	2								✓			
headbands	3	42	4							✓	✓	✓		
tattooed	3	42	4						✓		✓			
preceded	3	42	4								✓			
fabric	3	42	5								✓			
scarce	3	42	7								✓			
coarse	3	42	7		✓						✓			

Target word	Unit	Page	Contextual Guessing Clues									Information Giving Conditions			
			Paragraph	Synonyms	Antonyms	Hyponyms	Collocation	Morphology	Definition	Examples	Wider context	Punctuation	Conjunctions	Adverbial	
improved their appearance	3	42	7									✓			
develop	5	87	1									✓			
behaviour	5	87	1									✓			
custom	5	87	2									✓			
worry about	5	87	2									✓			
immorality	5	87	2					✓							
learning from	5	87	3									✓			
acceptable	5	87	3					✓							
anger	5	87	4									✓			
stressed out	5	88	5									✓			
intimacy	5	88	7									✓			

Target word	Unit	Page	Paragraph	Contextual Guessing Clues								Information Giving Conditions			
				Synonyms	Antonyms	Hyponyms	Collocation	Morphology	Definition	Examples	Wider context	Punctuation	Conjunctions	Adverbial	
profit	6	98	1									✓			
withstand	6	99	6									✓			
undergoing	6	99	7									✓			
decade	6	99	7									✓			
plants	6	99	8									✓			
enhancement	6	99	8	✓											
idle capacity	6	99	9									✓			
complied	6	100	11									✓			
prohibited	6	100	12									✓			
fast clip	6	100	13							✓					
monotony	7	116	1					✓							
apprentice	7	117	3									✓			
with crossed legs	7	117	3									✓			
merciless spirit	7	117	3					✓				✓			
less noble	7	117	4									✓			
swiftly	7	118	6									✓			
covetousness	7	118	10									✓			
shortcomings	9	166	1	✓											
vulnerability	9	166	2									✓			
meaningful	9	166	2					✓							
liveliness	9	166	3					✓							
irresponsibility	9	166	3		✓			✓	✓						
free will	9	166	3	✓											
interrogation	9	166	4					✓							
self-pity	9	166	4									✓			
rebuff	9	166	4	✓											
careless	9	167	5					✓							
fulfillment	10	178	*		✓										
authority	10	178	*									✓			
discourse	10	179	*									✓			
sovereign	10	179	*									✓			
constitutional	10	180	*									✓			
malnutrition	12	202	1	✓				✓							
indication	12	202	1									✓			
century	12	202	2				✓								
education	12	202	1									✓			
sustained	14	226	1		✓										
decline	14	226	1		✓										
small holder	14	226	2									✓			
agrarian	14	226	2					✓							
per annum	14	227	2					✓							
foreign exchange	14	227	3									✓			
memorandum	14	227	4									✓			
composition	14	227	4									✓			
diversity	14	227	5			✓							✓		
virtuous	14	227	5									✓			

\* **not paragraph (presented in the form of a debate)**

## B. At Sentence Level

Target word	Unit	Page	Contextual Guessing Clues								Information Giving Conditions				
			Synonyms	Antonyms	Hyponyms	Collocation	Morphology	Definition	Examples	Wider context	Punctuation	Conjunctions	Adverbial	Remark	
locksmith	1	7									✓				
intoxicated	1	7									✓				
quake	1	8									✓				
overjoyed	1	8						✓			✓				
convert	1	8									✓				
crust	1	8							✓		✓				
outermost	1	8						✓							
abundance	1	8									✓				
dejected	1	8									✓				
constitute	1	8									✓				
handicap	1	8									✓				
repair/fix	2	31	✓												
fast/slow	2	31		✓											
laugh/cry	2	31		✓									✓		
destroy	2	31		✓											
penalty/punishment	2	31	✓												
tattooed	3	43									✓				
headband	3	43									✓				
headgear	3	43			✓										
fabrics	3	43									✓				
coarse	3	43									✓				
fabric of society	3	43									✓				
accord with	4	58									✓				
accorded	4	58									✓				
intervened	4	58						✓							
catastrophes	4	58							✓						
pacify	4	58									✓				
epitome	4	59									✓				
ominous	4	59									✓				
chaos	4	59	✓												
drew up	4	65									✓				
set up	4	65									✓				
carries out	4	65									✓				
dealt with	4	65									✓	✓			
set up	4	65									✓				
refrain from	4	65	✓								✓				
monotony	7	116						✓				✓			
apprentice	7	116							✓			✓			
merciless	7	116						✓							
swiftly	7	116									✓				
covetous	7	116							✓						

## **APPENDIX – D**

***Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies  
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature***

### ***Observation Checklist***

1. Did the teacher let the students to read the passage individually?
2. If so, for how many minutes?
3. Did he/she let the students say their guess for the target word?
4. Did he/she ask the students the clues that help them to arrive at that meaning?
5. Did he/she show the students contextual clues for guessing from the passage?

## **APPENDIX - E**

### ***Summary of Classroom –Observation***

#### **Observation -1**

The teacher said that the students should study the surrounding words in order to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words. Then he asked the students to tell him the contextual meanings of the words. Three to five the same students were (participating) giving their 'guesses'. For each word, the teacher gave the appropriate meanings and explanation. The teacher summarized the activity by reminding the learners that they could rely on the surrounding words to guess the meanings of the new words in a reading material.

#### **Observation 2**

The teacher introduced the day's lesson: guessing exercise. Then she ordered the students to open the book on page 226. The teacher gave them about ten minutes to focus on the target words and guess their meanings form the context. Then the teacher invited them to tell her their guesses. Some students participated. The teacher gave the contextual meanings of the words after each student's guesses. Finally, she finished the lesson by reminding the students that synonyms, antonyms, general understanding of the passage, and prefixes and suffixes are ways of guessing the meanings of new words in a reading passage even though she did not use these contextual clues during the activity.

#### **Observation 3**

The teacher asked the students if they had done the homework. Then he invited them to tell him the contextual meanings of the words written in bold in the reading passage. Next, he explained the meanings of the target words one by one.

#### **Observation 4**

First, the teacher ordered the students to open their book on page 226. Then, he wrote the target words on the blackboard. Next, he invited the students to tell him their guesses. Probably because the number of students participating was few, he wrote their guesses on the blackboard in front of the corresponding each target word. Then, he explained the meanings of all the target words. He also improved the parts of speech of some of the students' guesses.

#### **Observation 5**

Prior to guessing exercise, the teacher discussed the reading comprehension questions. Finishing this, the teacher gave the students some 10 minutes to re-read the passage. Then, he told the students to guess the meanings of the words written in bold while they were reading the passages. Next, he invited them to tell him their guesses. However, neither the teacher nor the observer was sure whether the participants did not look up the words from a dictionary. Listening to their guesses for each word, the teacher explained their meanings.

#### **Observation 6**

First, the teacher invited the students to open their book on page 226. Then, she ordered them to look at the target words in the reading passage. The teacher reminded the students to look for clues that could help them in guessing the meanings of those words. Next, she asked the students to tell her their guesses. She also asked them how they could know though the students did not exactly indicate the correct contextual clues. The students said only 'from the context'. Finally the teacher reinforced the students' response. She ended the class by advising her students to use the context to guess the meanings of the target words.

## APPENDIX – F

### *Pre-Test*

Code No \_\_\_\_\_

**Read the following sentences and underline the correct meaning that suits the word written in bold.**

1. Many of us have **ambivalent** feelings about our committee members, admiring but also distrusting them.  
A. mixed                      B. critical                      C. approving                      D. alternative
2. **Nocturnal** creatures: bats and owls, have highly developed senses that enable them to function in the dark.  
A. feathery                      B. living                      C. big eyed                      D. active at night
3. Computer manuals are often very hard to understand, so I was surprised to discover how **lucid**, this one is.  
A. long                      B. expensive                      C. clear                      D. new
4. When my sister first got her job at the recording studio, she was happy to go to work each day. Now after ten years, she's **blasé** about her work and wants to change her job.  
A. curious                      B. blassed                      C. bored                      D. thrilled
5. A person can be very intelligent and yet be **deficient** in common sense.  
A. lacking                      B. well supplied                      C. over qualified                      D. lucky
6. It's a good idea for married couples to discuss their plans in case of each other's **demise**. For example, do they wish to be buried or burned (cremated)?  
A. death                      B. concern                      C. desire to divorce                      D. separation
7. After the Civil War, trolleys and streetcars greatly expanded workers' **mobility**, permitting them to move beyond walking distance from factories.  
A. pay                      B. skills                      C. ability to move                      D. interests

8. Individual political organizations often join together to form **coalitions** to increase the support for their issues.  
A. partnership      B. lines      C. contents      D. questions
9. Everyone at the party was shocked by how **blatantly** the woman insulted her former boss. She refused to shake his hand, saying, "I don't want to get my hand dirty."  
A. secretly      B. accidentally      C. barely      D. obviously
10. Surveys about people's sexual habits are often inaccurate because people may lie, and there is no way to **corroborate** what they say.  
A. forget      B. prove the truth of      C. change      D. recall
11. To fully **assess** patients in order to place them in appropriate programs, mental health professionals need information on emotional adjustment and physical health.  
A. find      B. recognize      C. hide      D. evaluate
12. Adults who have both children of their own and elderly parents need to balance their commitments. They must look after their children and also **allocate** time and energy to care for their parents.  
A. recall      B. pay for      C. set aside      D. view
13. Using sign language, chimpanzees can **convey** such ideas as "Candy sweet" and "give me hug."  
A. reject      B. accept      C. think of      D. communicate
14. The death of a spouse can cause **profound** depression that, in some cases, can even lead to the death of the partner.  
A. deep      B. accidental      C. occasional      D. mild
15. The healthiest types of parents are those who guide and instruct their children, but also permit them a degree of **autonomy**, encouraging the children to make their own decisions and form their own opinions.  
A. financing      B. knowledge      C. independence      D. guidance

## **APPENDIX - G**

### ***Answer Key for the Pre-test***

1. A
2. D
3. C
4. C
5. A
6. A
7. C
8. A
9. D
10. B
11. D
12. C
13. D
14. A
15. C

## APPENDIX – H

### *Post- Test*

Code No \_\_\_\_\_

I. **Guess the meanings of the words written in bold and choose their meanings from the list given below. Then, write the contextual guessing clue that supports you to guess the meaning.**

rotate	prior necessary course
wealthy	middle income
assassinated	make
attacked	increased
next necessary course	drained

1. Spiders **spin** their webs in the corner of the rooms.  
Meaning \_\_\_\_\_
2. One thing the researchers discovered was that both **affluent** families and poor families tended to waste less than those whose incomes were in between.  
Meaning \_\_\_\_\_
3. You cannot take courses unless you have taken a **prerequisite**. For instance, you cannot take College English 102 unless you have taken College English 101.  
Meaning \_\_\_\_\_
4. The press media **assailed** the mayor of the city for giving large city construction jobs to his brother's firm.  
Meaning \_\_\_\_\_
5. This virus has really **sapped** my energy. I get tired just walking across the room. I hope to get better soon because I need to return soon.  
Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Use the context to guess the meanings of the words (phrases) written in bold. Then write their meanings and the contexts clue that has helped you to guess the meanings.**

1. Because the teacher's explanation was **nebulous**, many students asked him to make himself clear.

Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

2. Girma was not the first writer to use **pseudonym** 'Forefinger.' Newspapers writers usually use false names.

Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Sudanese people prefer **austere** styles- their clothing and homes are plain.

Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

4. A **franchise** is a business arrangement in which an individual obtains rights from a larger company to sell a product or service.

Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

5. Because **hyperactive** children are easily distracted, teachers should provide a calm atmosphere.

Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Celestial bodies**: the sun, moon, and stars are governed by predictable laws.

Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

**III. In the following passage, the target words are written in bold. Guess the meanings of the target words and writer what kind of contextual clues have helped you to arrive at the meaning.**

***Peace of Mind***

Peace seems to be a very elusive quality of life. I say elusive, because so many people, organizations and governments are searching for or **striving for** peace yet their efforts have not yielded much. Individuals try various methods to achieve peace, nations hold conferences and seminars, interested groups hold rallies and peace marches and yet when we look around the world, with each day, we see more and more **unrest** such as peacelessness and tension. More people are stressed and troubled.

In my opinion, the experience of peace or state of peace is very **attainable** – practically achievable. The only reason that seems to be so elusive is because

we have not understood what true or real peace is. And to understand true or real peace, we first have to get rid of certain **misconceptions** that we have about peace. For instance, there are some people who think that a peaceful life is without any dynamics, something deadly and dull and therefore, unattractive. But peace is not boring, it is **invigorating**.

Others believe peace to be unpredictable because it is a matter of luck or destiny. But really we are the master, the creators of our destiny and thus we can create peace. It is all up to us.

And last but not least, there are people who do not believe in peace at all. To them it is just non-sense. But it is not non-sense. Peace is a very important part of life. It is in fact good sense. Where there is peace, there is happiness and where there is happiness, there is contentment and fulfillment.

These are some of the misconceptions that we have to get rid of, if we want to achieve real peace.

Peace is like a **multifaceted** diamond. It is a **multilayered** phenomenon. Just look at the diamond. On the surface, it is made of many faces of facets. These facets add to the diamond's uniqueness and beauty. It is the same with peace. When talking about peace, I mean that it is **harmony** with the environment; peace is cooperation and concord between states or between nations. Peace is all these things. And like the layers or faces in a diamond, peace in these areas brings beauty and happiness into life.

Peace of mind implies an inner state of **tranquility** which means a rich silence or stillness which is the seed of happiness and personal fulfillment. The achievement of peace becomes difficult, and the search may be forever if you look for peace outside. But the search starts within. Peace within results in peace outside.

Adapted from  
The Sun: Peace of Mind  
Shah 1997: 8

<b>Target word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1. striving for	_____
2. unrest	_____
3. attainable	_____
4. misconceptions	_____
5. invigorating	_____
6. multifaceted	_____
7. multilayered	_____
8. harmony	_____
9. tranquility	_____

## **APPENDIX - I**

### ***Answer Key for the Post-test***

#### **Part I**

1. Meaning: make
2. Meaning: wealthy
3. Meaning: prior necessary course
4. Meaning: attacked
5. Meaning: drained

#### **Part II**

1. Meaning: not clear/ obscure
2. Meaning: false names
3. Meaning: plain
4. Meaning: It is a business arrangement in which an individual obtains rights from a larger company to sell a product or service
5. Meaning: over active/ restless
6. Meaning: the sun, the moon and the stars

#### **Part III**

1. Meaning: searching for
2. Meaning: peacelessness and tension
3. Meaning: practically achievable
4. Meaning: wrong conception/ misunderstanding
5. Meaning: not bring; refreshing
6. Meaning: many faced
7. Meaning: many layered
8. Meaning: agreement/ concord
9. Meaning: rich silence/ stillness

## **APPENDIX – J**

***Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies  
Department of Foreign Language and Literature***

***Sample Material for Strategy Training on  
Contextual Guessing Clues***

This material is prepared to give contextual guessing strategy training for grade 11 students. The students were selected from Menilik and Bole Preparatory Schools. Fifty (50) students participated from each school.

The objective of this material is to train the participants on:

- c) what the contextual guessing clues are and
- d) how to use these clues for guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words while they are reading passages.

In order to achieve this target, the material is divided into four broad parts.

The first part is an introductory exercise. It is intended to show how the meanings of words differ from context to context. There are four words: spring, plot, round and crop. These words are used in different contexts and they have different meanings.

The second part gives short notes on the common contextual guessing clues.

The next two parts provide exemplary practices on guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words using contextual guessing clues. The third part is at sentence level, while the fourth is at reading passage level.

## ***I. Context dictates the meaning of a word***

Each sentence below has a different meaning for the words spring, plot, round, or crop. Find the meaning in the list that fits each sentence. Then write the letter of that meaning on the line in front of the sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. *Spring* came early this year with its rains and its flowers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The detective discovered a *plot* to steal the crown jewels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. There was a good wheat *crop* last year in the Midwest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. To end the program, the children sang a *round*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. We got some water from a near by *spring* to wash the dishes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The *plot* of the movie was silly, to say the least.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The angry rider lashed her horse with the small *crop* she carried.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. He asked the butcher for a *round* of beef.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The dog made a *spring* at the low branch where the cat crouched and hissed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. There was a small *plot* behind the house where they grew a few vegetables.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. He wore a hat to hide his convict's *crop*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. There was only a single *round* left in the gun.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The builder unrolled a *plot* of the housing development.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. In the afternoon they played a *round* of golf.

- |           |            |                    |
|-----------|------------|--------------------|
| a. stream | f. harvest | k. whip            |
| b. story  | g. scheme  | l. season          |
| c. cut    | h. song    | m. game            |
| d. leap   | i. shot    | n. piece of ground |
| e. map    | j. haircut |                    |

## **II. Contextual Guessing Clues**

### **1. Synonyms**

A context clue is often available in the form of a synonym; a word that means the same or almost the same as the unknown word. For example: *The presidential candidate viewed to discuss **pragmatic** solutions. He said the people want practical answers, not empty theory.*

### **2. Antonyms**

An antonym – a word that means the opposite of another word – is also a useful context clue. Antonyms are often signaled by words and phrases such as *however, but, yet, on the other hand, and in contrast* among others. For example,

While houses often increase in value, most things, such as cars and TV's, **depreciate**.

The word 'depreciate' is the antonym of 'increasing in value'.

### **3. Hyponyms**

A hyponym – a word that includes all other terms is another useful context clue. For example,

*The museum contained almost every type of **vehicle**: cars, buses, and trams.*

The word 'vehicle' is a hyponym (head word) which includes the other words cars, buses and trams.

### **4. Collocation**

Collocation describes the relationship between words that often go together. That is to say, we know which words tend to occur with other words. Therefore, this relationship can be a crucial context clue. For example, we say:

*<sup>6</sup>A person catches HIV/AIDS.  
A person is caught by HIV/AIDS. (Wrong)*

## 5. Morphology

Morphology is the structure of a word and the study of word formation. We can get the meanings of new words by examining (analyzing) the morphological features like prefixes, suffixes and root words. For example:

*The Russian government decided to increase **antimissile** production.*

The word **antimissile** is a combination of the prefix **anti-** and the word **missile**. Therefore, one can infer the meaning of the given word: **a device that acts against a missile**

## 6. Definition

In cases where writers think that the issue they want to write about is likely to be unfamiliar to their target reader, they often define the unfamiliar term. The meaning of words is learned through their context-based definitions. For Example:

**Optimism** is a quality enabling people to take the most hopeful or cheerful view of matters possible.

## 7. Example

Writers may give examples that illustrate the use of a word in their text. Therefore, an example may suggest the meaning of an unknown word. Note that examples are introduced with signal words like *for example, for instance, including* and *such as*. For example:

**White-collar crime** – *for example, accepting a bribe from a customer or stealing from an employer-is more costly than 'common' crime.*

## 8. Wider Context

The meanings of some new words may demand the general understanding of the sentence/ the passage. In such cases the reader's background knowledge (prior experience) is vital. The reader's prior non-linguistic experience is regarded as an important element in understanding a text. For example:

*There was a small **plot** behind the house where they grew a few vegetables.*

### **III. Contextual Guessing at Sentence Level**

#### **21. Synonyms**

In each of the following sentences, the word to be defined (the target word) is written in bold. Underline the synonym for the target word in each sentence.

- A. As soon as I made a **flippant** remark to my boss, I regretted appearing so disrespectful.
- B. I asked the instructor to explain a confusing passage in the textbook. She said, "I wish I could, but it's **obscure** to me, too."
- C. Teachers may tolerate when a student is two minutes late. But they are not going to **condone** someone's walking into class a half-hour late.
- D. When people face shortage of money, they find that many things which seem **indispensable** are not so necessary after all.
- E. Many corporations like to be seen as **benevolent** and will actively seek publicity for their charitable donations.
- F. In most parts of history, the commonest authority pattern in families has been **patriarchy**, in which males are in control.

#### **22. Antonyms**

In each of the following sentences, the word to be defined (the target word) is written in bold. Underline the antonym for the target word in each sentence.

- A. Trying to control everything your teenagers do can **impede** their growth. To advance their development, allow them to make some decisions on their own.
- B. During their training, police officers must respond to **simulated** emergencies in preparation for dealing with real ones.
- C. Many politicians do not give **succinct** answers. They prefer long ones.
- D. Being raised with conflicting values can be a **detriment** to boys' and girls' relationships with each other. In contrast, shared values can be a benefit.
- E. While houses often increase in value, most things, such as cars and TV's, **depreciate**.

- F. Reliable scientific theories are based not upon careless work, but rather upon **meticulous** research and experimentation.
- G. Although investments can be **lucrative**, they can also result in great financial loss.

### \*3. Hyponyms

In each of the following sentences the word to be defined (the target word) is written in bold. Underline the words that can be included in the hyponym.

- A. **Nocturnal** creatures: bats and owls have highly developed senses that enable them to function in the dark.'
- B. The **adverse** effect of this drug-dizziness and headaches – have caused it to be withdrawn from the market.
- C. The Nile basin area is estimated at 3,349 mln Km<sup>2</sup> and includes varied **ecosystem**: highland, forest, lakes, wetlands and desert.

### \*4. Collocation

In each of the following sentences the target word is written in bold. Guess the meanings of this word by looking at what comes (collocates) with it.

- A. He had variety of **options** to choose before shooting the man.
- B. The woman of yesterday had a more difficult time cooking a good **meal** than does her granddaughter of today.
- C. Angrily, she **slapped** his face.
- D. One of the many responsibilities of nursing students is to try to keep new theories in the **treatment** of patients.
- E. Spiders naturally **spun** their webs in the corners of the rooms.
- F. She will do these difficult things because she is willing to **pursue** her goals and to become successful.
- G. Severe punishment is really child **abuse**, and a child will normally feel that he/she is not safe in such a home.

## **\*5. Morphology**

Many large English words are composed of smaller units, called word parts. Each word part carries its own specific meaning. If you combine the meanings of the individual parts, you can often determine the meaning of the entire word.

### **Example**

Distrust	trustful
Mistrust	distrustful

The word, of course, is *trust*. The beginnings 'dis-' and 'mis'-were added to it. The ending '-ful' was also added. You can see that adding these parts resulted in new words, each with its own distinct meaning. You can complete the process if you understand the meaning of the other words parts: prefixes and suffixes.

### **<sup>3</sup>Prefixes**

A prefix is a word part that is placed at the beginning of a base word to change the meaning of the base word. Many new words can be made simply by adding a prefix to a base word. For example

<b>PREFIX + BASE WORD = NEW WORD</b>
--------------------------------------

in + correct = incorrect
extra + ordinary = extraordinary
mis + manage = mismanage

---

*\*collected from various sources*

**Prefixes that mean “Not” or “the opposite of”**

<b>PREFIX</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>	<b>WORD MEANING</b>
in-	inconsiderate	not considerate
ir-	irregular	not regular
im-	immobile	not mobile
il-	illegible	not legible
dis-	disclaim	opposite of claim
un-	unknown	not known
non-	nonpoisonous	not poisonous

**Prefixes that show relationships in Time or Space**

<b>PREFIX</b>	<b>MEANING</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>	<b>WORD MEANING</b>
sub-	beneath, under,	subcommittee	a committee under the control of another committee
pre-	before	prepaid	paid ahead of time
post	after	postdate	date after a certain date
super	over, above,	superstructure	structure built above
	beyond		another
hyper-	over, beyond	hypertension	tension beyond the normal
extra-	outside, beyond	extralegal	outside the law

The following prefixes show judgment. For example, mal-practice means “improper practice”.

## Prefixes that Show Judgment

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE	WORD MEANING
pro-	in favor of	probusiness	in favor of business
anti-	against	antimissile	a device that acts against a missile
mis-	wrong	misplace	put in the wrong place
mal-	bad or badly	malnourished	not properly nourished

## Others

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE	MEANING
auto-	self	automobile	moving by itself
bio-	life	bio-graphy	the story of one's life written by somebody else
bi-	two	bilateral	having two sides
multi-	many	multi-lateral	having many sides
pseudo-	false	pseudo-intellectual	false intellectual

## <sup>3</sup>suffix

A suffix is a word part that is placed at the end of a word to change its meaning. Each suffix has its own meaning or meanings. Often you can guess the meaning of unfamiliar word if you can recognize suffixes and attach meanings to them. See how suffixes have been added to the following base words to form new words.

## Suffixes That Mean "One Who Does Something" or "That Which Does Something"

SUFFIX	EXAMPLE	WORD MEANING
-eer	puppeteer	one who operates puppets
-er, -or	computer conductor	that which computes one who conducts
-ist	physicist	one who studies or is experienced in physics
-ian	electrician	one who works with electric devices

### Suffixes That Mean "Full of"

SUFFIX	EXAMPLE	WORD MEANING
-ous	glorious	full of glory
-ful	graceful	full of grace

### Suffixes That Mean "Relating to" or "Pertaining to"

SUFFIX	EXAMPLE	WORD MEANING
-al	regional	relating to a region
-ic	angelic	like an angel
-ical	historical	pertaining to history
-ish	stylish	relating to style

### Suffixes That Mean What They Say

SUFFIX	EXAMPLE	WORD MEANING
-able, -ible	imaginable digestible	something that one is able to imagine something that is able to be digested
-most	foremost	being at the very fore (front)
-less	blameless	without blame
-like	catlike	like a cat

### Others

SUFFIX	EXAMPLE	WORD MEANING
-cide	patricide	killer of one's father
-logy	sociology	a subject which studies about a society
-phone	francophone	a person who speaks French

In each of the following sentences, the target word is written in bold. Guess the meaning of this word by analyzing its internal structure.

- A. We have a **bimonthly** meeting.
- B. Finally, severe punishment by a child's parent's which does not suit the child's **misconduct** may cause a child to leave home.
- C. Her work has been found to be **extraordinary**.

## 6. Definition

To understand how *examples* can be clues, read the sentences below. The target word is written in boldfaced type. Can you guess the meaning of the target word?

- A. In medicine, a **placebo** is a substance that contains no preventative or curative abilities for a specific ailment.
- B. **Optimism** is a quality enabling people to take the most hopeful or cheerful view of matters possible.
- C. **Coer**, which is Old French, meant "heart, that which contains emotions."

## 7. Examples

To understand how examples can be clues, read the sentences below. The target word is written in boldfaced type. Can you guess the meaning of the target word?

- A. Today was a day of **turmoil** at work. The phones were constantly ringing, people were running back and forth.
- B. Some animals have remarkable **longevity**. For example, the giant land tortoise can live hundred years.
- C. Since my grandfather retired, he has developed several new **avocations**. For instance, he now enjoys gardening and long distance bike riding.
- D. Changes in such abilities as learning, reasoning, thinking, and language are aspects of **cognitive** development.

## 8. Wider Context

In each of the following sentences, the word to be defined (the target word) is written in bold. Can you guess the meanings of these words?

- A. Despite the **proximity** of Maru's house to his sister's house, he rarely visits her.

- B. The car wash we organized to raise funds was **fiasco** because it rained all day.
- C. Dereje didn't want to tell Hanna the entire plot of the movie, so he just gave her the **gist** of the story.
- D. Despite complaints from parents, educators, and government officials, violence and sex on television seem to go on **unabated**.

#### ***IV. Contextual Guessing at Reading Passage Level***

Now you are going to read three passages one after the other. The target words are written in boldfaced type. Guess the meanings of the target words and write what kind of contextual clues have helped you to arrive at the meaning

## PRACTICE PASSAGE ONE

### *<sup>4</sup>The Noun Base*

To military personnel, the word **base** signifies a center of operations for military units. The base usually covers a large area which contains office buildings, a hospital, a commissary, housing units, and recreational facilities for personnel and their dependents. To a chemist, however, a **base** is a compound which combines with an acid to form a salt. Sodium bicarbonate, present in the blood, is an important base that interacts with acids to maintain the normal pH balance of the blood. Casey Stengel would consider the word **base** as a denotation of one of the four corners of a baseball diamond. To a carpenter, a **base** would be the foundation on which the rest of the house is built. As one can see, the noun base can have many meanings, depending on the context in which it is used.

*Taken from: the Sampler: patterns for Composition  
Elaine Leiser, 1979: 67*

	Meaning	Contextual Clue
1. Base	_____	_____
2. Base	_____	_____
3. Base	_____	_____
4. Base	_____	_____

## ***2PRACTICE PASSAGE TWO***

Men, we are reminded over and over, are the stronger sex. Yet men are more likely than women to have a number of health problems at every age. More males than females are **miscarried**, are **stillborn**, or die in their first year of life. In all societies, men die ear, earlier than women do. American men, for example, are more likely than women to die from heart and lung diseases such as **hypertension**, clears, and asthma.

	Meaning	Contextual Clue
1. miscarried	_____	_____
2. stillborn	_____	_____
3. hypertension	_____	_____

## ***2PRACTICE PASSAGE THREE***

Adult children who move back home can avoid family conflicts by following some helpful advices. First, children should **attribute** or do what they can and it doesn't necessarily have to be **in terms** of i.e. in the form of money. Being productive family members will help them earn their **keep**. This target can be achieved by **tutoring** or coaching younger sisters or brothers, or helping parents with household **chores**.

Second, grown children at home should not expect their parents to **rescue** them from difficulties. As adults, they are responsible for getting out of **scrapes** and for trying to avoid such difficulties.

Last, they must respect their parents' life styles and own needs for independence. It is unrealistic to expect parents' lines to **revolve** around the needs of a grown child, as they may have when the child was younger.

	Meaning	Contextual Clue
1. attribute	_____	_____
2. in terms of	_____	_____
3. keep	_____	_____
4. tutoring	_____	_____
5. chores	_____	_____
6. rescue	_____	_____
7. scrapes	_____	_____
8. revolve	_____	_____

## **PRACTICE PASSAGE FOUR**

### **<sup>5</sup>How to Develop Agriculture**

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, scientists have helped to increase the **productive capacity** of the soil and farm animals. Farmers are now required to produce more food than ever before to feed the rapidly increasing population of the world. Scientific and technical discoveries and inventions made since the last century have made a significant contribution towards increasing agricultural productivity. In Africa, farmers have benefited from the advanced scientific and technical knowledge of the developed countries, and some improved techniques have also resulted from the work of local scientists in the universities and government research institutes.

In recent years there have been significant improvements in the design of farm tools. Several types of machinery are now **replacing** hand tools such as hoes and cutlasses and it is now not unusual for the more advanced farmers to use modern machinery.

There are many diseases and insect pests which affect both plants and animals. Scientists have produced many types of chemical which can be used to prevent and control these, and this is an important area in which the science of chemistry has been used to increase production. Many insects which damage plants can now be controlled with the aid of poisons which are referred to as **insecticides**. Fungus diseases can be prevented and controlled by another class of chemicals known as **fungicides**. Other important chemicals used in agriculture include selective weed killers, often referred to as **herbicides**. Many drugs have also been produced by scientists to cure farm animals of diseases such as tuberculosis in cows, internal worms in pigs and bacterial infections of poultry.

Agricultural development has been made possible due to intensive studies and research in agricultural science. Soil chemistry is a branch of

agricultural science which is essentially concerned with soil reactions and plant growth. From early studies on the elements in the soil which are needed for plant growth, it was discovered that soil minerals, which have been removed as a result of excessive cropping, can be **replenished** by the addition of inorganic chemical compounds known as artificial manures or fertilizers. These chemical manures increase the **yield** of crops and help to maintain the fertility of the soil.

Cross breeding or **hybridization** can be used in the production of improved offspring of both plants and animals. It is common practice on modern farms for farmers to cultivate new varieties of crops which have been produced from different parents. Improved stocks of farm animals have also been produced from selection and cross breeding programs. For example, in West Africa, the milk-producing White Fulani cow has been crossed with the European Jersey or Friesian breeds. This has produced an animal which can produce more milk than the White Fulani and is more heat tolerant than either the Jersey or Friesian.

Closely associated with animal scientists are the **veterinarians** or animal doctors. They immunize animals against diseases by the use of vaccines. They also treat them for **ailments**: colds, fevers and tuberculosis.

*Adapted from: Freshman English for Colleges: Book I  
 Hunt, 1990: 56-57*

	Meaning	Contextual Clue
1. productive capacity	_____	_____
2. replacing	_____	_____
3. insecticides	_____	_____
4. fungicides	_____	_____
5. herbicides	_____	_____
6. replenished	_____	_____
7. yield	_____	_____

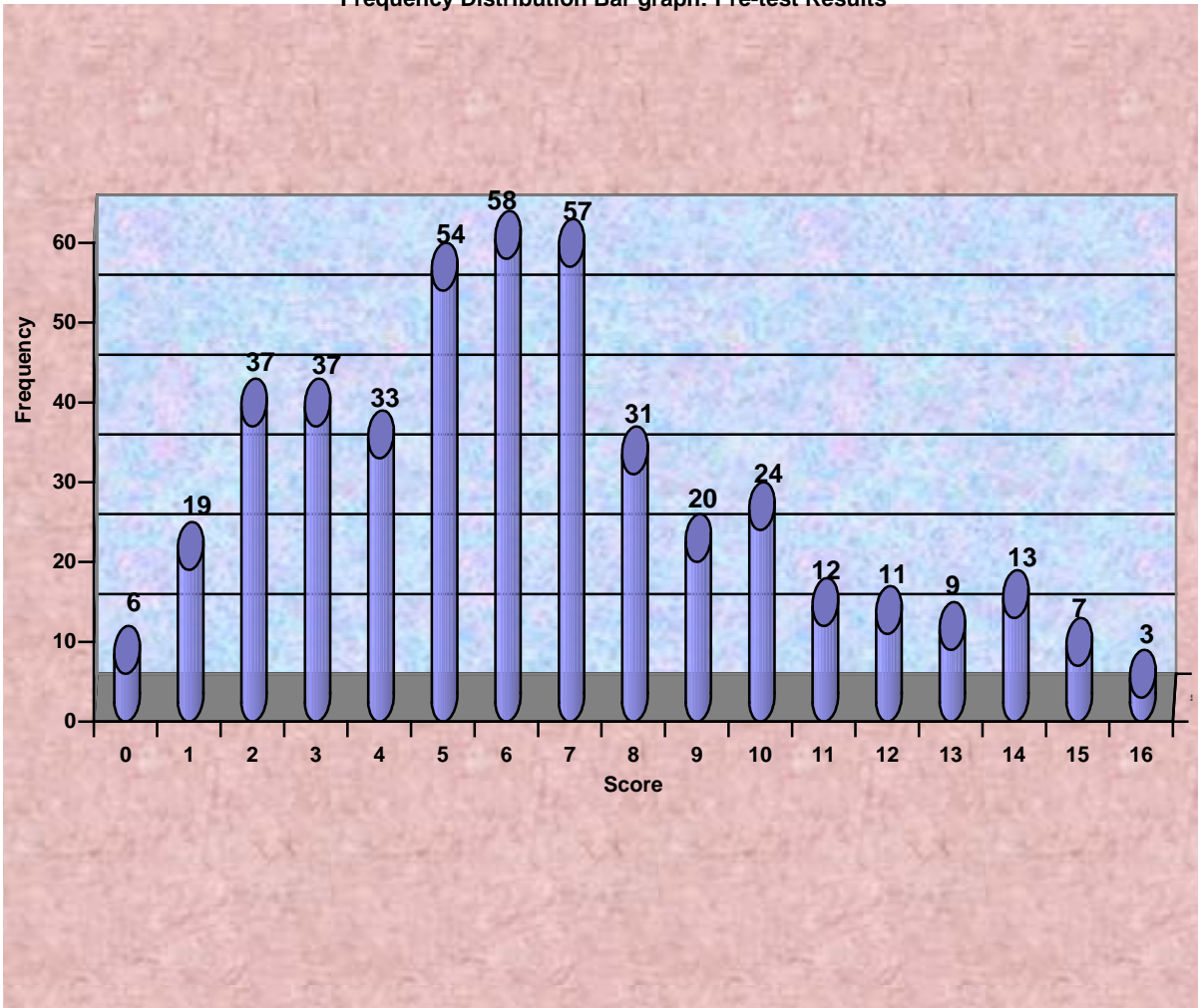
8. hybridization \_\_\_\_\_
9. veterinarians \_\_\_\_\_
10. ailments \_\_\_\_\_

### **Further Readings**

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4. Baker, G. Rance and Phillips, R. Billie (1979). **The Sampler: Patterns for Composition**. Toronto: D.C. Health and Company.
5. Hunt, O. (1990). **Freshman English for Colleges**. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education: Higher Education Department.
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APPENDIX - K

Frequency Distribution Bar graph: Pre-test Results



## Appendix L

**Post-test Results of Experimental and Control Group  
Menilik and Bole Preparatory Schools**

