

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

**An Exploration of Factors Affecting Preparatory I School
Students Reading Comprehension Skill**

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**An Exploration of Factors Affecting Preparatory I School
Students Reading Comprehension Skill**

**By
Edaso Mulu**

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore into factors affecting government school students' reading comprehension attainment. The study was carried out in one of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional Government Zones-Sidama.

From the three available preparatory schools in Sidama zone, two schools (Yirgalem senior secondary preparatory and Awasa Tabor senior secondary preparatory) were chosen by a lot method as a study area.

When this study was conducted, there were only one teacher in Yirgalem and two teachers in Awasa Tabor who were teaching English in preparatory I. Hence, the three available teachers were considered in the study and interview was held with them to gather data for the study.

With regard to the students, there were four sections (A,B,C and D) of students in Yirgalem Preparatory I class. Students in sections A and B were Natural Science Stream and students in sections C and D were Social Science Stream. From each stream, one section of students were chosen as a sample by a lot method. Likewise, there were five sections of students (sections A,B and C -Social Science Stream and Sections D and Natural Science Stream) in Awasa Tabor preparatory I. From each stream, one section of students were considered in the study.

In order to gather data for the study, the researcher held a semi-structured interview with the available teachers. Closed ended questionnaire was distributed among the sample students. The data gathered from the teachers and sample students were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Different definitions are given for the term "reading Comprehension." To Adams (1993:11) reading cooperation is "...the art of understanding or the capacity to understand." However, this definition is too general for it encompasses other sub-skills of reading. On the other hand, to Cornoldi and Oakhill (1996) reading comprehension is the process of dealing with the writer's message. This is regarded by many as a set of skills the reader has to process to understand the writer. However, this definition is criticized for it indicates that the writer's message is there on the print waiting for the reader to pick up and this definition is also criticized for it considers reading comprehension a set of skills the reader should come up to understand the writer. However, this does not guarantee the understanding of the reading text.

In the last decade, research has vividly shown that "...reading comprehension is a constructive process in which individuals construct meaning by interacting with the text - - -" (Cooper, 1997: 378). Amer (1992) also shares the same idea in that he has said that reading comprehension is an interactive process between the reader and the text.

Reading comprehension is by far the most important sub- skill that dominates the effective ways of learning a language. For this reason, our students' ability or competence to read and understand effectively the written materials play a significant role in the academic success. This ability or competence includes understanding main ideas, and specific information, meanings of unfamiliar words, or expressions, inferring basic references, understanding writer's intention, and evaluating the text (Grellet,1981) On the other hand, Conley (1992:5) states, "Reading researchers have defined

reading comprehension as the interaction of various kinds of prior knowledge with new textual information. From the above, one can see that many scholars have defined "reading comprehension" in almost similar ways.

For more understanding of the subject matter, it is worth elaborating some authors' ideas in the field further.

Harmer (2001) says that a given reading text has one central or dominating idea or message followed by some more supporting details. This means the writer formulates a particular main idea in his/her mind and then constructs supporting information. This is done in order to elaborate the main idea he/she has formulated. Gunning (1998) concludes to this effect saying that students are expected to give due attention to the main idea the writer wants to show, and understand the specific details.

Bearing particular purpose in their minds, student are expected to refer reading materials by paying special attention to a given section or part in order to draw out specific information. For example, according to Greenal and Swan (1986), understanding specific information is seen as extracting the reason why something has happened, the time when something has happened, the procedure it has followed and the person who has caused it.

Further, 'Reading comprehension' is understanding a reading material, that is to say extracting effectively the required information from the given text and this includes guessing or understanding unfamiliar words and /or phrases. According to Williams (1984) students are expected to understand the meaning of unfamiliar or new words and /or expressions contextually. This is done through the understanding of the message of the whole passage or words or phrases constructed with unfamiliar words or phrases. Greenal and Swan (1986:2) say that ". . . . it is often possible to guess its general sense by looking for cues, either in the context or in the form of the word itself"

As a whole, writers most of the time try to state the meaning of a piece of information indirectly; they do not discuss or mention something directly but leave the message to the students to infer from. Gunning (1998) shares the idea that writers are not advised to mention or state each and every point.

In addition, students are expected to judge about the text when they read to understand the given text effectively. The reason for this is that reading comprehension includes assessing or evaluating the text by understanding fully the author's intention or attitude he/she has formulated.

Hence, an effective reading and understanding of the meaning or message of the (reading) text includes the reason why the text is written, or the intention what its particular sections perform (Greenal and Swan, 1986). To this effect, students should have a very improved background of this ability (the ability mentioned above) or competence for their academic success. May (1990:44) supports this idea in saying "students reading comprehension ability . . . can help them to be successful in their studies."

Reading comprehension requires motivation, mental frameworks for holding ideas concentration and good study techniques. There are different ways of developing reading comprehension. It can be improved by developing a background (skimming for the gist, scanning for specific details.), identifying the type of reason (Does the author use cause and predict future ideas and questions?), paying attention to supportive clues, highlighting, summarizing, and reviewing (to develop a deeper understanding one has to highlight summarize and reviewing important ideas.), monitoring effectiveness (good readers monitor their attention, concentration and effectiveness), and so on. To draw attention to the theme of this paper, preparatory students who are the focus of this research need to comprehend their reading materials such as textbooks, reference materials, and exercise books. If students fail to do

so, they will not be successful in the institutions of higher education for this ability is in dire need in there. Hence, authentic preparation in developing reading comprehension in preparatory schools is highly indispensable for a successful academic journey in the institutions of learning.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In situations like that of Ethiopia where English is used as a medium of instruction starting from grade nine, reading is by far the most important of the four skills. Since all academic materials are written in English, students' success or failure depends highly on their ability to read and comprehend the texts of the different subjects they study.

This being the fact, however, many government high schools students have reading proficiency which clearly exhibits itself in their slow and difficult reading and poor comprehension when they study as well as when they do their examinations. Therefore in order to identify the current practices of teaching reading, the writer of this paper feels a descriptive study of various reading lessons needs to be done.

Researchers such as Gebremedhin, (1993); Mendida, (1988); Molla, (1987); Hailemichal (1984), have carried out researches with a view of assessing the reading problem of students in the university levels.

The studies point out that the students reading ability has always been below what is expected of them. In other words, there is a gap between the students' reading ability in English and the quality and level of reading that their courses and course books require. This problem is also confirmed by some local researchers of high school students. For instance, Dubale (1990:1) says that "The great majority of the students in government secondary schools in Ethiopia lack the basic reading skills in English."

From the experience of the researcher, as he has been teaching for a long period of time, government school students have low level of reading comprehension: Local researchers of high school English, Getachew (1996) and Fisseha (1995) have also confirmed that government schools have lower level of reading comprehension than private ones. But what factors behind the students of government schools that affect their reading comprehension skill are not explored. This research is different from those researchers for it explores into factors affecting government school students' reading comprehension ability of preparatory students. These schools are chosen one from Yirgalem and the other from Awassa.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction this sub-skill, reading comprehension, is so essential for students' education that it should be strict in preparatory schools. Reading, note taking, understanding of written material, and so on, are very important in the academic work of universities and colleges, Hence, students should develop this ability right in the preparatory level before they start their education in the higher learning institutions.

Hence, to minimize or do away with the problems that students encounter in preparatory schools, concerning reading comprehension skills, scientific investigation is needed to explore and identify factors affecting the government school students' reading comprehension attainment so that (potentially) it will be possible to improve the sub- skills.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore into the factors affecting school students' reading comprehension skills.

1.3. Research Questions

Research questions act as the forces behind the research to be conducted. They are divided into a broad question and specific questions that the research is supposed to answer

1.3.1. Broad Question

What are the factors that affect government school students' reading comprehension skills of preparatory I students?

1.3.2. Specific Questions

- What are the factors that affect the student's ability to understand main idea?
- What are the factors that affect the students' ability to understand specific information?
- What hinders students from guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases?
- What are the problems that students encounter in inferring meaning from reading comprehensions?
- Why do students not identify basic references?

1.4. Scope of the Study

Due to time constraints and inaccessibility of reaching all the preparatory I senior high schools of the Southern Nation and Nationalities Region Government, the scope of the study is bound to examine the factors that affect government preparatory I schools students reading comprehension skills of Yirgalem Senior High School, and Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory School.

1.5. Limitation

The small number of the English teachers that were found in both Senior Secondary Preparatory I Schools of Yirgalem and Awasa was a limitation

encountered by the researcher. Had there been some more English teachers, the researcher could have got ample information.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study is hoped to have particular significance in:

- Drawing the attention of teachers about the significance of students' reading ability when the students join higher institutions of learning.
- Directing other researchers to take more work on the problems of reading comprehension.
- Initiating the Ministry of Education to give due attention to English teachers in preparatory schools.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

Reading plays an essential role in schools. A special kind of functional reading, learner literacy, has always been important to students (The World Encyclopedia 1992: 157). In high schools and colleges, learner literacy becomes more vital. Students in here must read to gain understanding of the wide variety of topics to be covered in different courses/subjects. According to The World Book Encyclopedia Vol.16 (1992) there are many kinds of reading such as recreational, study- type, survey, and the like. However, study- type reading, which usually requires the reader to pay close attention to the text and look for significant ideas and details, is what is needed in the language classroom. In addition to this, we have survey reading, which involves covering a large amount of text to get a general idea of its content. In such cases, the student may first skim the material to understand the main point. The student may then look for details that reinforce or illustrate that point.

Williams (1984) has classified reading into getting general information from the text, getting special information from the text, and getting information for pleasure or interest. Rivers Temperley (1987) cited by Mc Donough and Shaw (1993:90) list the following examples of some of the reasons that the student may need or want to read:

- to obtain information for some purpose or become aware or curious about some topic,
- to obtain instructions and to perform some work,
- to keep in touch with friends by corresponding or to understand in business letters,

- to know how or where something will take place or what is available,
- to know what is happening or has happened (as reported in newspapers , magazines ,)
- For enjoyment or excitement.

For many students, reading is by far the most important of the four language skills in second (SL) or a foreign language (FL). This is the main reason why students learn the English language. SL or FL readers have to possess good reading proficiency. Research in reading comprehension has identified two major approaches to sources of reading problem (Kirby, 1988). The first is the traditional approach, which emphasizes that poor readers either lack specific recognition of words, encoding meaning of sentence, or making inferences. Hence the only correct way toward competent reading comprehension performance consists of improving skills. The second approach emphasizes the importance of reading strategies and styles. It suggests that poor readers either already possess the required skills to be good readers or could develop them relatively easily if they were taught to adopt the correct strategy for reading. This paper explores factors affecting reading comprehension.

2.2. Theoretical Background of Reading

Reading in the early works on EFL/ESL was viewed as merely a decoding activity. To this effect Carrell (1988:2) says that it involves "reconstructing the author's intended meaning via recognizing the printed letters and words, and building up meaning for a text from the smallest textual units at the 'bottom' (letters and words) to larger and longer units at the 'top' (phrases, clauses, inter-sentential linkage)"

Because of its emphasis on lower-level process such as *letter* and *word recognition* in order to extract meaning from text, the procedure is known as

bottom-up or **data-driven** processing (Nuttal, 1982; McDonough and Shaw, 1993) This model of reading to some researchers has limitation. Alderson (1984) says that some researchers feel that there might be linguistic threshold for effective reading. Word-to-word decoding of meaning from print results in a severe limit to the amount of information that the reader is able to receive and this results in poor comprehension (Smith, 1985; Nuttal, 1982).

This model of reading disregards the reader's contribution to negotiate meaning from within the text. Hence it is criticized for this reason. In other words, the reason for its criticism is that it fails to see that readers utilize their expectations about the text based on their prior knowledge of the content and the language .

The **bottom-up** process view was counter opposed by the other **top-down** process. This was initially proposed by Goodman (1967). This model takes reading as a " psycholinguistic guessing game in which the reader constructs as best as he can a message encoded by a writer as a graphic display" (Goodman in Carrel (1988:2)). Carrel and Eisterhold (1988), Wallace (1992) say that a text either written or spoken does not by itself carry meaning, rather, the text only provides directions for readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning based on their previously acquired knowledge or schema.

Though it appreciates the role of the readers' contribution in the reading process, the top down model of reading has its limitation: it undermines the role of the bottom-up (decoding) skill in beginner second language readers (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

Eskey (1988:93) argue against over- reliance of the prominent advocates on the top-down model on the following ground:

The top-down model tend to emphasize such high- level skills as the prediction of meaning by means of contextual clues or certain kinds of back-ground knowledge at the expense of such lower-level skills as the rapid and accurate identification of lexical and grammatical forms. The model they promote is an accurate model of the skillful, fluent reader, for whom perception and decoding have become automatic, but for the less proficient, developing reader- like most second language readers- this model does not provide a true picture of the problem such readers must surmount.

The top-down model of reading emphasizes on the readers use of her/ his back ground knowledge to pediment information. Following this model (approach), in order to make students effective readers, importance is given to teaching effective strategies of reading. According to Clarke and Silberstein (1977),in Gebremedhin (1993:67) , effective strategies of reading are "guessing from context, defining expectations, making inferences about the text, and skimming ahead to fill in the context." In effective ways of developing reading proficiency using pre-reading activities and teaching students word and text attack skills are also suggested.

Generally, these days, it seems that there is a consensus that reading both in L1 and L2 is an interactive process in which the reader employs both bottom-up recognition skills and top-down interpretative strategies. This means the idea of one complementing the other in order to be a proficient reader has gained wide recognition. It is assumed that a good reader uses prior knowledge, and prediction skills (top-down processing) to facilitate the recognition of words and at the same time uses his/her knowledge of the recognition of words (bottom-up processing) to facilitate higher level interpretation of texts (Eskey, 1988; Nunan, 1999)

2.3. Class Organization While -reading

According to Nuttal (1983) there are three kinds of class organization in reading. The first one is *individual mode*, which makes that each reader must

understand the text for himself; nobody else can do it for the student. Nuttal (1983:159) says, "The advantage is that every student can read material that sets him and can progress at his own pace, but naturally this demands careful organization and plentiful supply of materials.

The other class organization in reading is the opposite of the individual mode and it is a *teacher-centered* class. In this case, the class works with the one text only, and largely the teacher controls the way the text is tackled.

Nuttal (1983) , Nunan (1988) say that there are drawbacks in this methods for the whole class is obliged to work in roughly the same way and at roughly the same speed.

The third mode is the *Group work mode*. In this mode much of the guidance comes not from the teacher but from fellow students (Nuttal, 1983; Nunan, 1988)

The effort to understand the text is made jointly. However, Nuttal (1983: 16) says.

It should be clear that the three approaches do not have to be mutually exploring; they can readily be combined during the sequence of a reading lesson, which might for example begin with a teacher centre phase. This sort of combination is ruled out only when a fully individualized program is operating, with every students reading different material but even in this case, you do not have to operate the program every period, but on alternate periods of individualized reading with periods of group or teacher-centered work.

2.4. Students Reading Strategies and Styles on their Reading Comprehension Task

Researchers have identified reading strategies and styles to include *analytical*, and *synthetic*. The analytic and synthetic styles correspond to the surface and deep styles respectively in Biggs (1988), and Entwain (1988)

Kirby (1988) approaches reading performance from the perspective of information processing. He says that reading includes processing information through eight hierarchical levels: *features, letters, sounds, words, (chunk), ideas, main ideas, and themes* respectively. "Features", he says are the lines or curves of which letters are composed;; 'letters' are visual patterns composed of features; 'sounds' refer to sounding out letters or letter combinations (This level is optional); ' words' are stored in long-term memory and must be accessed by their visual or phonological (sound) features. The fifth level, "chunks", refers to grouping words into 'units of meaning', i.e. propositions. This basic unit of comprehension, a meaning-based representation, is retained in long-term memory, of the original sequence of words. Kirby (1988) calls this level "simple comprehension" which seems to be ' meaning memorization' level of reading performance. According to Kirby (1988) the sixth level in the hierarchy is the "ideas". Despite the previous levels, ideas are no longer exact replicas of what is on the page; instead, they are obstructions of meaning. The seventh level that is, "main idea", represents a distillation of what has been represented in the text. The main idea of the text provides "a summary" of what it says, that is, the gist of the text, and has to be constructed from the ideas presented in the text. Both the sixth and seventh levels are concerned, in Kirby's view, with "meaning generation".

Themes (the final level), he says, are interpretations of what the text is trying to say and often are not stated explicitly in the text. Kirby (1988) states that information processing can occur at all these eight levels simultaneously. In other words, it is noteworthy that Kirby (1988) emphasizes that strategies and styles are involved at all levels of information processing in reading. In order to work at a particular level smoothly, it is necessary for the lower levels to function automatically. For example, if the reader is having difficulty in identifying words (level 4), then grouping words in units of meaning (level 5) can become very difficult.

2.5. Some Causes of Reading Difficulties in High Schools

According to the World Book Encyclopedia (1992), reading problems can be due to literacy. "Literacy is lack of desire to read" (The World Book Encyclopedia 1992: 155) . Aliterate students can read, but they tend to avoid the actions. Literacy reinforces itself that is: students who do not read much do not develop their reading skills. So aliterate students tend to read less and less. Nuttal (1982:127) describes the frustration resulting from slower reading in her description of the "Vicious cycle of the weak reader." Readers who do not understand often slow down their reading rate and then do not enjoy reading because it takes so much time. The solution to literacy lies in capturing the student's interest with attractive, meaningful reading materials. The student who learns reading may become a frequent reader if interesting materials are provided. To get meaning from reading comprehension, a student must focus his/ her mind on the text. However, this is not the case with students who have illiteracy problem: they occasionally fail to understand the text their eye movements perceive.

Thomas and Moorman (1983:137) point out the crisis of literacy well in their saying "The student who can read but chooses not to is probably the most crucial concern confronting our educational institution today." In a study

done by Kush and Watkins (1996) it was found that the reading attitudes of the students involved consistently declined throughout the elementary years. In the work it was found that during a fourteen- week- period of study, fourth graders read four books and fifth and sixth graders each had three books. Even more alarming, forty - eight percent of high school students involved in the study read no books at all during the fourteen- week period. Forty- seven percent averaged fewer than two books during the study period.

2.6. Some Techniques Used to Comprehend a Text

To comprehend a text quickly and easily good readers use techniques called *word recognition strategies*. According to the (World Book Encyclopedia, 1992; Langan, 2003), readers can use several general types of word recognition strategies. For example, a reader who does not know the meaning of a particular word may look for context clues in the surrounding text. These clues may be either *semantic* or *syntactic* (Nuttal, 1982) When using semantic clues, the reader tries to relate the word to other information or illustration in the material. Semantic clues include *comparisons* and *contrasts, definitions, descriptions, and the placement of new words near familiar words* that help explain their meaning. A reader may also rely on syntactic clues- that is, the words position and grammatical clue in the text (e.g. verb, noun, and so on).

In a word- recognition strategy we have what is called *structural analysis*: this means that reader uses clues within the word itself to guess what the word means (Durkin, 1974). The reader relies on knowledge of meaning prefixes, suffixes, roots (word bases), compound words, and inflectional endings such as -ed, -ing, and so forth, and how they are combined.

2.7. The Three Phases of Classroom Approach to Reading

2.7.1. Pre-reading

According to Williams (1984) the pre-phase of reading tries to introduce and arouse interest in the topic, motivate learners by giving a reason for reading, and provide some language preparation for the text.

In order to help prepare for pre- reading work, useful questions that the teacher can ask herself/himself are:

- a) What knowledge, ideas or opinions might the learners already have on the text topic, and how can this knowledge be drawn out and used?
- b) Why should anyone want to read this text, and can the same, or similar, reasons be generated in the learners? (Williams 1984: 37)

Williams, (1984); Celce- Murcia, (1991) point out that answers to these questions will give clues to ways of introducing the text, motivating the learners, and at the same time will incorporate language preparation. Visuals and drawing up of lists play a role here. Generally, pre-reading or before reading familiarizes a reader with the basic content and organization of the text and helps to activate prior knowledge.

Students of English as a Foreign Language experience problem in comprehending English text when they come across with unfamiliar words. Traditionally, attempts to improve the comprehension of texts for EFL students have focused on familiarizing the students with the vocabulary needed to comprehend the passage (Bernhart, 1984). Nevertheless, such instruction is unlikely to raise the students' interest in reading the text. It is generally believed that pre-reading activity improves reading comprehension. Schema theory (Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977) may explain why pre-reading activities improve reading comprehension. The major

contribution to our knowledge of reading is provided by schemata theory. This explains how the knowledge we have about the world is organized into interrelated pattern based on prior knowledge and experience (Nuttal, 1983; McDonough and Shaw 1993, and Caffel et. al 1988).

Mc Donough and Shaw (1992:96) say "This theory takes our idea of the interactive reading process a state further by proposing that efficient readers are able to relate text to their background knowledge of the world" Brown and Yule (1983b); McCarthy and Carter (1994); Cook (1997); Nunan (1999) all provide accounts of how this background can influence the comprehension process. According to the theory, meaning is constructed through interaction between the reader's schemata (i.e., knowledge structures in memory) and the text.

Bernhardt (1983) says that schemata are activated during reading and meaningfully related to the knowledge to be learned from the text. It is believed that if the reader lacks appropriate schemata or fails to activate them, comprehension may be impaired: pre-reading activities are intended to activate appropriate knowledge structures or provide knowledge that the reader lacks.

Hence EFL readers' comprehension depends on their schemata (Carrel and Eisterhold 1983). If the readers are faced with highly unfamiliar content, particularly materials with many culturally loaded concepts, comprehension will be difficult, if not impossible, because the readers lack appropriate background knowledge.

Some studies have dealt with the effect of pictures on L2 readers' comprehension of texts. Hudson (1991) found that the technique of displaying, discussing, and writing predictions about pictures was

significantly more effective for reading comprehension than presenting a vocabulary/ written prediction activity before students read.

The value of pre- teaching vocabulary as a method to improve comprehension is the other method of L2 instruction. In L2 instruction, what are taught are not usually the vocabulary important to the story, but rather relevant to the lesson. Some studies have dealt with pre- teaching to nonnative speakers of English (Hudson, 1991; P. Johnson, 1982), and neither demonstrated an effect on comprehension of subsequent reading passages.

The third pre-reading activity highlights pre -questioning. Pre- questioning is taught by having the instructor ask questions about a passage and the students answer with new questions.

These three pre-reading methods are intended to help EFL students overcome three major problems that interfere with their comprehension:

- a) Lack of vocabulary knowledge;
- b) Lack of using language clues to meaning, and
- c) Lack of conceptual knowledge (Steffensen et al., 1978).

2.7.2. While -reading

This phase draws on the text, rather than learner's ideas of previous reading. According to Williams (1984: 38) the aims of this phase are:

- a) To help understanding of the writers purpose,
- b) To help understanding of the text structure, and
- c) To clarify text content.

Parkin and Sidnell (1992:52) suggest the use of a variety of pre -reading activities like:

- introducing the subject by discussing what the students already know,

- making a glossary of key terms on the glossary
- compiling a binder of difficult vocabulary as an ongoing project in the class.

While-reading or during-reading knowledge of the organization of a particular text and of common textual signals can help a reader identify important information as well as relationships between ideas in the text.

As a rule, while -reading work should begin with a general or global understanding of the text, and then move to similar units such as *paragraphs, sentences and words*. Williams (1984) says the reason for this is that the larger units provide a context for understanding the smaller units - a paragraph or sentence, for example, may help the reader to understand a word.

2.7.3. Post Reading

The aims of post -reading work are:

- a) To consolidate or reflect upon what has been said,
- b) To relate the text to the learners' own knowledge, interest or views (Williams 1984:38) and
- c) To integrate other skills (Atkins et al. 1996)

Setting- up and organizing post-reading work depends very much on all the objectives of the programmer as a whole. That is to say post-reading work should thus contribute, in a coherent manner, to the writing, speaking, and listening skills that the programme aims to develop. To conclude, the three-phase approach is assumed to:

- 1) Increase reading speed and develop scanning ability,
- 2) sensitize students to text structure, and
- 3) develop strategies for dealing with unknown vocabulary,

2.8. Research Finding on the Value of Rapid Reading

Very little has been reported on the effects of rapid- reading instruction for Second Language learners (Anderson, 1983; Coady and Anderson 1993; Weigle and Jensen 1996).

Research by Coady and Anderson (1993) emphasized the importance of including a rapid- reading component in reading programmes and concluded that it is possible to increase Heading rate in L₂ without a concomitant decrease in comprehension. There are certain activities, which can increase the reading rate of language class. These activities are based on reading rate development theories and practice in first and second language reading (Anderson, 1983; Fry 1975; Harris, 1966; Samuels 1979) Students find these activities worthwhile and see measurable programmes in their reading rates as a result of these activities (Coady and Anderson 1983; Fry 1975; Harris 1966) The following are the four reading rate suggested by Coady and Anderson (1993) as cited in English Forum

Rate building reading: in this activity students have 60 seconds to read as much material as they can. They are then given an additional 60 seconds to read again from the beginning of the text. They must read more materials during the 60 seconds period than the first. The drill is repeated a third and fourth time.

Repeated reading: the repeated reading activity develops reading rates as students read a short passage over and over again until they achieve criterion levels of reading speed and comprehension. The number of readings required to reach the criterion reading speed decreases as the student continues the technique (Samuels, 1979: 404).

Class-paced reading: the class-paced reading activity allows the class to set a goal for a minimal reading rate. Involving the learners in determining

this minimal reading rate goal incorporates principles of student- centred learning.

Self-paced reading: self-paced reading allows student to determine their own reading-rate goals and the amount of material they need to read in 60 seconds to meet their set reading rates.

2.9. Increasing Reading Speed and Comprehension

2.9.1. Speed and Comprehension

According to the English language teaching experience of the researcher, speed and comprehension are closely linked. A very slow reader is likely to read with poor understanding and is unlikely to grasp the main idea: at the end of the paragraph or the essay he/she generally forgets the main idea.

2.9.2. Chunking a Text into Sense Units

“Good readers do not read word by word” Nuttal (1982:65). It is believed that a good reader makes fewer eye movements than poor ones; his/her eyes take in several words at a time. On the other hand, one characteristic of an efficient reader is his ability to chunk a text in to sense units, each consisting of several words, and each taken in by one fixation of eyes. e.g the good old man /raised his hand / in blessing.

The FL student’s difficult is that he/she does not know the language well enough to chunk effectively. So in order to encourage good reading habit, it is necessary to give a lot of practice with easy text. Since the amount of practice needed is too great in the classroom, there should be an extensive reading programme for the students.

2.10. Successful Reading Comprehension Strategies

The background knowledge of a reader helps him to comprehend a text. Bernhart (1984:291) says “Skilled readers comprehend text actively constructing meaning, integrating information from the text with relevant

information from their background knowledge.” He also says that conceptual knowledge (content schemata), text structure knowledge (formal schemata), and knowledge about text processing strategies are basic for successful construction of meaning.

Text- structure knowledge helps a reader to see relations between ideas, including relationships between main ideas and details as stated in the following:

Expository texts... take predictable forms, such as the comparison and contrast mode... Authors flag important statements by such devices as headings, subsections, topic sentences, summaries; redundancies...Expert learners know about such devices and use them as clues to help them concentrate on essential information. (Cited in TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 26. No.2, 1992:292)

Researches have witnessed that in both L1 and ESL studies, students who have been taught how to identify text structure and use this knowledge to guide their reading process have exhibited better comprehension and recall of information than readers lacking such knowledge (eg., for high school and college students) (TESOL Quarterly, Vol .26 No.2 , 1992:292).

Students who are reading expository text need to work actively at finding and using organizational signals and at constructing a mental out line map of the net work of ideas in the text to enhance understanding (Ibid).

2.11. Factors Affecting Ability in Comprehension

A child is ready to comprehend in written language only what he/she can comprehend in spoken language (Durkin, 1974). To state the implication negatively and within the context of a classroom, many reading comprehension problems are symptoms of deficiencies in the ability to comprehend spoken language. Durkin (1974:394) says “Help a child

comprehend oral language and you will be helping him with reading comprehension". The other factor that plays a role in the successful comprehension is the ability to retain and recall what was read: memory plays a role. This means that as more is learned about memory and other intellectual processes such as analyzing, reasoning, comparing, generalizing, and inferring more will inevitably be learned about reading comprehension and, hopefully, ways to teach and improve it. Durkin(1974) further states that the complexity and density of ideas, the rate at which they are presented, the vocabulary chosen to express them enter into every situation of successful or unsuccessful comprehension.

2.12. Some Steps to Improving Reading Skills

Langan (2003); Grellet, 1981 point out that there are sequences of reading skills that are widely recognized as essential for basic and advanced comprehension. The first six are concerned more on literal levels of comprehension: understanding vocabulary in context, recognizing main idea, identifying supporting details, recognizing main idea and central idea, understanding relationship that involve addition and time, understanding, relationships that involve examples, comparison and/or contrast, and cause.

The remaining skills cover the more advanced, critical levels of comprehension: distinguishing between facts and opinions, making inferences, identifying author's purpose and tone, and evaluating arguments.

2.12.1. Vocabulary in context.

When we come across with new words, it is unessential to use a dictionary; instead we try to understand the word from the context---usually from words surrounding the unfamiliar word. For this there are context clues such as *examples, synonyms, antonyms, and* the general sense of the sentence or the passage (Greenal and Swan,1986).

2.12.2. Recognizing a Main Idea

According to Langan (2003:35) the following three strategies will help find the main idea of a passage:

- looking for general versus specific ideas,
- using the topic to lead you to the main idea, and
- Using clues to lead you to the main idea.

A general idea is usually supported by specific ideas and the main idea often appears at the beginning of a paragraph, though it may appear else where in a paragraph.

2.12.3. Supporting Details

Langan (2003:95) says that “Supporting details are reasons, examples, facts, steps, or other kinds of evidence that explain a main idea”. He further says that there are often two levels of supporting details-major and minor. The major details explain and develop the main idea. In turn, the minor details help fill out and make clear the major details.

2.12.4. Understanding Relationships

There are transitions, words or phrases that show the relationship between ideas, in a passage. The two major types of transitions are words that show addition and word that show time (Langan, 2003; Grellet, 1981). Addition words signal added ideas. These words tell us a writer is presenting one or more ideas that continue along the same line of thought as a previous idea (eg. of time addition words are *first of all, also, next, furthermore,* and so on). On the other hand, time tells us when something happened in relation to when something else happened. (eg. of time words are *before, during, when, as, last, and the like*).

2.12.5. Relationship Involving Illustration, Comparison and Contrast, Cause and Effect

Illustrations are words that show that an author will provide one or more examples to develop and clarify a given idea (eg. of illustration words are *(for) example, including, (for) instance, such as*).

On the other hand, comparison words signal similarities. Langan (2003) says that authors use a comparison transition to show that a second idea is like the first one in some way. (eg. of comparison words are *alike, likewise, in like manner, in the same way*) Contrast words show that things differ in one or more ways. (eg. of contrast words are *but, yet, however, in contrast, still, etc*). Finally cause and effect signal that the author is explaining the reason why something happened or the result of something happening (eg. of cause and effect words are *therefore, thus, as a consequence, leads to, (Durkin, 1974) etc.*

2.12.6. Distinguishing Between Facts and Opinion

Langan (2003:260) says, "An opinion is a belief, judgment, or conclusion that cannot be objectively proved true. As a result, it is open to question." A fact is information that can be proved true objectively. The evidence may be physical proof or the spoken or written testimony of witness (Langan, 2003; Grellet, 1981).

2.12.7. Making Inferences in Reading

When we say "reading between the lines" we mean picking up ideas that are not directly stated in what we are reading. Discovering the ideas that are not stated directly in the writing is called *inferences, or drawing conclusion* (Nuttal, 1982; Durkin, 1982; Grellet, 1981).

When we read we make logical leap from the information given in a single forward way to ideas that are not stated directly. In order to draw inferences, we make use of all the clues provided by the writer, our own experiences, and logic. Langan (2003:300) has given the following guidelines for making inferences in reading:

- Never lose sights of the available information. As far as possible, base your inferences on facts,
- Use your background information and experience to help you to making inferences. The more you know a subject, the better your inferences are likely to be,
- Consider the alternatives: Don't simply accept the first inference that comes to mind. Instead, consider all the facts of a case and all the possible explanations

2.12.8. Identifying Authors' Purpose and Tone

An author has reason for writing. Hence in a passage comprehension, the reader should extract the purpose of the writer. Langan (2003:339) has put three common purposes as follow:

- **To inform:** to give information about a subject. Authors with this purpose wish to provide facts that will explain or teach something to reader;
- **To persuade:** to convince the reader to agree with the authors' point of view on a subject. Authors with this purpose may give facts, but their main goal is to argue or prove a point to readers;
- **To entertain:** to amuse and delight, to appeal to the reader's sense and imagination. Authors with this purpose entertain in various ways, though fiction and nonfiction.

Concerning tone, Langan (2003:344) says:

A writer's tone reveals the attitude that he or she has toward a subject. Tone is expressed through words and details the writer selects. Just as a speaker's voice can project a range of feelings, a writer's voice can project one or more tones, or feelings: anger, sympathy, hopefulness, sadness, respect, dislike, and so on. Understanding tone is, then, an important part of understanding what an author has written works that describe tone are admiring, angry, ashamed, and excited.

2.12.9. Evaluating Argument

Argument is an important part of much of what we read. Authors often try to convince their readers about their opinions and interpretations. Very often, there are three important things we must do as critical readers:

- Recognizing the point the author is making;
- Deciding the author's support is relevant;
- Deciding if the author's support is adequate (Langan, 2003:380)

A good argument is one in which is made a point and then provide persuasive and logical evidences to back it up.

2.13. Classroom Reading Approaches: Process vs. Product.

2.13.1. Approaches that Focus on Product

The English Teaching Forum October issue (1994:16) gives a classroom procedure that pays some attention to the product of reading, but fails to give the learners any useful training in the process as follow:

1. The teacher presents new vocabulary;
2. The teacher reads the text aloud to the class;
3. S/he reads it aloud again while the students follow it in their books.
Then S/he may ask them one or two more questions;
4. Individual students read the text aloud and the teacher interrupts to correct pronunciation;
5. The students read the text silently and try to remember as much as they can for the questions the teacher may ask afterwards;

6. The teacher asks oral questions on the text (among which literal, direct reference, wh-questions predominate) and students answer orally.

In many high school EFL classrooms where reading is practiced such activities are very common.

2.13.2. Approaches that Focus on Process

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of classroom procedure that gives practice in useful sub-skills of the reading - and - comprehending process (Forum 1994)) to this end Harmer (1983: 151) has set out guidelines focusing on process in the form of a five- stage model as follow:

1. The teacher introduces the topic and explores the students' previous knowledge of it.
2. S/he sets the tasks that the students will have to perform during or after reading. (The nature of the task determines which specific sub- skills of reading are practiced).
3. The students read silently and perform the task, eg. Answer the questions set beforehand.
4. The teacher gives feedback on the students' performance of the task. (Stages 2 to 4 can be repeated).
5. The teacher gives follow-up tasks

Stage 2 ensures that the learners have a reason for reading-that they know what they will have to get out of the text.

The teacher (or materials writer) chooses tasks for the students to perform while they read, in light of the type of text, its organizations, its content-most importantly-the reading styles that are appropriate for the act of comprehending (Williams 1984:38). This means classroom reading activities are designed to teach students the reading comprehension process, not just to test their ability to come up with the right product.

2.14. The Importance of Plasma TV in Language Classroom

Plasma TV is important for English language because it offers visual and audio clues to meaning. As Brinton (2001) argues, students get motivated because Plasma TV can provide real-life in their classrooms and presents language in its more communication situation. Television can help students to comprehend better as it presents language context, such as the speaker, the place, the action, and the like. The visual clues are highly significant for better understanding and allows to see facial expressions and broadly language, as well as hear the stress, information and rhythm of the language. This means the spoken or writer words are transmitted as soon as they take place. In other words, the more the involvement of the senses, the more the understanding will be (Behera, 1995) Moreover, according to Tomalin (1989), television has a powerful motivational value in language learning. Since it offers both sound and colorful pictures, it can catch the learners attention easily.

The idea here is that television can employ the aural and visual material and combines their effectiveness. As to Tomalin, Plasma TV can introduce the culture of the target language into the classroom, as a result of which students can see how language is used by native or competent speakers.

According to Wheelers and Winders (2001:6), the application of plasma TV technology is important for the following reasons.

5. Satellite technology provides up to date information;
6. It can overcome many of the problems to remote students;
7. It helps minimize the differences that exist between students with limited materials and those with well- equipped ones.
8. It equalizes educational opportunities;
9. It brings the world of reality to the classroom;

10. It creates sustained attention.

2.15. Teachers and Students Roles in Reading Comprehension During the Plasma TV Lessons of English and After

In the English reading comprehension lesson which is given on the plasma, there are three phases: pre-reading (lasting for two minutes), while-reading (lasting seven minutes) and post-reading (lasting for the rest of the English period) Thus teachers and students are active through viewing the programme. The teacher supervises his students and the students follow the broadcast.

However, the teacher should be with some relevant topics before the students who may lack the knowledge on the topics of the reading comprehension. Finally, besides the plasma lesson on reading comprehension, it is advisable that the teacher should encourage students to read more and more in their spare time at home as well as in the library. In order to pave the way for their skill development in reading, he/she should give some of the techniques and strategies for understanding main ideas, and/or specific information, for guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases, for inferring meaning from the reading comprehension, and identifying basic references.

It can be concluded that English language teachers should better pay a special attention to know the ability of their students of following the pace of the plasma TV. If they know the ability of their students, teachers can offer assistance to their learners properly.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The objective of this study is to explore into factors that affect government school students' reading comprehension ability of preparatory I students. In order to address this objective the researcher has used qualitative and quantitative research methods. Besides, subjects and selection procedure, and method of data collection are included in the methodology of the study

3.2. Subject and Selection Procedure

Subjects for the study comprised preparatory teachers of Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary School, and Yirgalem Senior Secondary School, and their students of two classes from each school.

In Yirgalem Comprehensive Senior Secondary School Preparatory I, there was only one English teacher teaching all the four sections (A,B, C and D}, sections A and B being Natural Science stream students where as sections C and D being social science stream students. In all these four sections there were 217 students. Out of the four sections, the researcher chose one section students from each stream by lot method. Accordingly, section B from the Natural I Science Stream and Section C from the Social Science Stream were chosen. In those chosen sections, 107 students were attending their education when this research was carried out.

As far as the sampling technique in Awassa Tabor Senior Secondary and Preparatory School is concerned, there were only two English teachers teaching all the five sections (A, B, C, D and E} in preparatory I. Hence, both teachers were taken as source of information for this study. With regard to the students, there were three sections of Social Science Stream (Sections A,

B, and C) and two sections of Natural Science Stream (Sections D and E) students. In all the five sections, there were 275 students out of which section A from Social Science stream and section E from the Natural Science stream were selected by a lot method. The number of the selected sample students in the two sections was 130.

On this basis, the total number of teachers interviewed was three, and the total number of students who responded to the questionnaire was 237. In order to go through this work the names of the teachers, who were teaching English with a degree qualification from recognized higher institution of learning, currently teaching English in the preparatory programme were obtained from each school's office. Then the teachers were approached by the researcher and told that they were needed for the purpose of an interview to be used for a research entitled "An Exploration of Factors Affecting Government School Students' Reading Comprehension Attainment with Reference to Preparatory Students of Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary School, and Yirgalem Senior Secondary School"

They were then informed that the research did not have any impact upon their career but that it was meant merely to pave the way for the long-term improvement of English Classroom in the government schools.

Finally, the teachers were interviewed during their free periods, and upon the permission of their teachers, the students were gathered in a large hall of each school where questionnaire was distributed among them.

3.3. Method of the Study

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods. These methods were chosen because they were discovery oriented and descriptive .Simple descriptions with supportive elaborations are made for

behaviors not convenient to quantify .Responses obtained from the study were interpreted both in numerical and descriptive approach.

3.4. Source of the Data

The data were obtained from two sources, namely from teachers and students. For students questionnaire was prepared and circulated to extract data that could be used for the research. Besides, interview was made held teachers.

3.5. Instruments of Data Collection.

3.5.1. Questionnaire

The students were provided with very carefully designed closed ended questionnaire in English which enabled the researcher to gather as many factors as possible that affect the students' ability to understand main idea, specific information, the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases contextually, infer from, identify basic references, understand writers' intention, and evaluate the text.

3.5.2. Interview

The interview was conducted with the English teachers of preparatory 1 of all sections of the two schools. This instrument was needed because, according to the researcher, some more factors might be described by the teachers from their teaching experience. For this purpose the researcher used semi structured interview questions in one session.

3.5.3. Method of Analyzing Data and Arriving at Conclusions

The data obtained by employing the two instruments were tabulated, described and analyzed using percentage. Then on the basis of its category, it was summed up and finally conclusions and recommendations were offered as per the information obtained from the instruments.

Chapter Four

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.1. Introduction

In this section of the paper, the data obtained from the teachers' interview of Yirgalem Senior Secondary School and Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary School as well as students' responses to the questionnaire were presented and interpreted. As mentioned earlier in chapter three, there were three teacher interviewees (one teacher from Yirgalem Comprehensive Senior Secondary School and two teachers from Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary and Preparatory School) and 237 sample students who responded to the questionnaire(107 from Yirgalem and 130 from Awasa Tabor).

4.2. Responses Obtained from the Interviewees

4.2.1. Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory School Teacher's Responses to the Interview

Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory I School had four sections (A, B, C and D) of students who were taught by one teacher. Since the target population of the study was preparatory I students, the researcher had to conduct the interview with the only one teacher found teaching English in the above sections of the school.

On this basis, the following responses were obtained and analyzed from the interview held with the teacher of Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory I School.

Teacher One

When asked to describe the teaching techniques or strategies that are more effective to promote reading comprehension, he said to promote the skill he

usually selected a particular passage for his learners so that they could practice reading comprehension.

He also believed in integrating the four skills and involving his students to share ideas together and come up with ideas to justify their understanding about the reading passage. In line with what the teacher said, scholars such as Atkins et al (1996) also remark that activities that involve all the skills should be set while teaching reading. The teacher said that he gave reading comprehension to his students as often as the new unit began.

When students come across unfamiliar words, he said that he made his students understand the meaning from the context. He also said that students should develop the habit of finding the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context.

When the teacher was asked if his students could understand the central idea of a reading comprehension, he said that his students did not succeed in finding the central idea easily because they lack the reading interests and experience. The teacher also said that his students need a long time to understand the central idea of a reading passage. The reason for this was the lack of reading techniques and strategies.

The teacher also said that he made his students skim and scan a reading comprehension as long as it was there in the text but he admitted that he was not successful with the performance of his students. The teacher felt that the three techniques or phases of reading, that is to say pre- reading, while – reading and post- reading are very important for they develop the overall reading ability of his students. When he was asked the means he used when his students could not provide him with supportive details of the reading passage, he said that he used scanning. According to this teacher, the failure of the students to give supportive details is their lack of practice. He said

that students did not practice the reading techniques as often as they were expected. He also hinted in his interview that the lower grade teachers were to be blamed for the students' failure of reading comprehension. The teacher said that the failure of language teaching process as a whole started from the lower grade.

When the teacher was asked the reasons for his students' low skill in reading comprehension, he said that students only read for exams. The teacher agreed that the skill develops when students read much but this is not developed among his students. He blamed other teachers for lacking the interest of encouraging their students to read much. He admitted that this had also contributed to the failure of reading comprehension.

From his experience point of view, the teacher said that private school students read and understand reading passage better than government schools. When asked the reason for this, he said that students are admitted to these schools on the basis of selecting the best students through entrance examination. Besides, he said that the number of the students in a classroom is very small and there is always good provision of materials.

Finally, he said that the task of giving intensive exercises, which is related to reading comprehension, should be implemented. Though the suggestion was positive, the teacher himself did not practice the task. This, he admitted himself. Hence, this shows that there still exists low skill of reading comprehension in government schools.

When the teacher was asked if his students encountered any problem in inferring meaning from reading comprehension he said that they frequently encountered because teachers themselves did not encourage and teach their students how to infer. He also said that they do not give due attention to this sub-skill and he admitted besides the teachers themselves lacking

The teacher said that his students could not identify the basic references and guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in a reading passage because they usually did not understand the idea very easily. This, he said, is because students lack good knowledge of the reading skill. Clarke and Silberstein (1977), as cited in Gebremedhin (1993), argue that effective strategies of reading include guessing meanings from the context.

When the teacher was asked if he involved his students in selecting texts for their lessons, he said that students should do so but he did not do the work for there was shortage of time, due to large classroom, and lack of support and motivation from the schools' administration. Hence, he admitted that he did not involve his students in the selection of texts for their English lessons. Despite the large class size this teacher had, it might have been possible to teach reading. According to Nuttal (1983), as discussed in the review literature, classes can be organized in three ways, namely individual mode, teacher centered, and group work mode.

Finally, he admitted that students lack the desire to read comprehension and as a result read less and less. Writers also believe that lack of desire to read is one of the causes of reading difficulties. With regard to this, Thomas and Moorman (1983:137) indicate that "the students who can read but choose not to are probably the most crucial concern confronting our educational institution today." The students under discussion lacked the interest to read because, according to the interviewee, teachers, including him, do not motivate their students to read through the choice of interesting, enjoyable, and thought provoking passages.

4.2.2. Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory I School Teachers' Responses to the Interview.

Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory I School had five sections (A, B,C, D,E) of students who were taught by two teachers. The following

responses are obtained and analyzed on the basis of the interview conducted to them.

Teacher one

When he was asked to describe the teaching techniques and strategies that he thinks are more effective to promote reading comprehension, he said he uses the most important techniques like scanning and skimming. He also said he uses these techniques for silent reading because he has a large classroom. However, he said what discourages him is the lack of interest of the students and shortage of textbooks.

This teacher also testified that he does not often give reading comprehension to his students because they are all interested in learning grammar and vocabulary rather than reading comprehension. He said that this is so because they lack reading comprehension background. He also said that students lack this background because they are short of additional reference materials for most of the students are from poor family.

When he was asked what strategy he applied when students came across unfamiliar words while reading, he said he translates this into the vernacular of the students' language. However, to the researcher, this may not suit students at the level of preparatory school for this will condition students and hampers English reading skill. It is good to make them understand the meaning through context. The teacher also said that students could not understand the central idea of reading passage due to their poor background. The teacher further made clear that he only sometimes made his students skim and scan a reading comprehension. This he said that their background does not encourage him. However, skimming and scanning are the most essential reading techniques to be applied regardless of the reader's background knowledge (Langan, 2003).

When he was asked if he felt that the technique of pre- reading, while-reading, and post- reading activities are of a great help to his students in reading comprehension, he said that they are very important for they develop his students' reading ability. From his point of view, he uses additional information about the reading passage to make his students understand and give supporting details of the reading passage. He does this when his students cannot provide him with supportive details of the reading passage. Again he insisted that students lack a profound background of the English knowledge and hence need continuous assessment.

The teacher said that the students' low skill in reading comprehension is due to poor background, lack of interest, lack of content area textbooks in the library.

He suggested that schools should establish English language clubs, and English language speak day, the day on which only English is spoken. He added that experience should be shared among all the teachers of English.

He admitted that private school students read and understand reading comprehension better than that of government ones. He gave the following reasons:

- Admission of selected students on the basis of entrance examination.
- Parents provision of additional materials for the students

To ease the problems, he said, NGOs as well as stakeholders should participate in contributing reading materials and establishing English language laboratories. He added that since all subjects are interrelated, all the teachers of other subjects should insist on improving the English language reading skill. Of course, the improvement of reading skill or the English language, in general, is not to be left to the English teacher not, other subject teachers have also a lot to contribute. Other subject teachers

such as geography, history and the like should also give more assignments to be done after reading.

When the teacher was asked if students encounter problems in inferring meaning from the reading passage, he said, "yes." He said this was due to lack of practice and background. He said that the students have this problem because teachers have not given them adequate techniques and assistance. Giving comments about what others do may be good, but it is also worth exerting efforts on what one does oneself – giving adequate techniques and assistance for students in this context.

Finally, when he was asked if he thought that his students had lack of desire to read comprehension and as a result read less and less, he said they lack the desire because the National Examination questions require grammar and vocabulary in a form of multiple choices and as a result students concentrate on these items rather than reading comprehension. He said that his students gave much more attention to grammar than to reading comprehension questions. Even teachers, according to Gessesse (1999), tend to use reading as a means to teach grammar rather than to teach reading itself.

Teacher Two

The second teacher who is teaching in Awassa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory I School said that he advises his students to read newspapers, magazines, fictions and other written materials in order to promote their reading comprehension ability. This idea of motivation is good in order to promote reading.

When he was asked how often he gives reading comprehension to his students, the teacher said that the large number of the class size is cumbersome for the work. Hence, he said as a result he did not try to give them enough instructions as to how to develop their reading comprehension

ability. Further, he said that the only lessons that his students follow are the plasma. Shortage of time is also a factor that hinders his work on the development of his students' reading ability. If there is a will and interest, the researcher believes that this teacher can spare a little time of his own in order to improve his students' skill.

The techniques and strategies that he applied when students came across unfamiliar words in the reading passage is writing these words on the blackboard and asking the students to answer. He said that if students fail to guess the meanings of the words, he usually gives them examples by which they try to answer. He said he avoids translating into Amaharic even if they fail to give the meaning of the words. However, there are ways by which students can guess the meanings of words such as using context clues like synonym, antonym and the general sense of the sentences of the passage. From his saying it is obvious that he does not make his students infer meaning from the context and for this practice he does not use techniques and strategies of language teaching. When this teacher was asked if his students could understand the central idea of a reading comprehension, he said that they could not understand. The reason he gave to this is that his students lack the chance of practicing when they were in lower grades. Gessesse (1999) also confirms that students are not encouraged to read materials right from lower grades and as a result they continue having reading comprehension problems even in higher institutions. From the interviewee's response, one may deduce that the teacher does not pay much attention to develop the reading skill of his students, taking this as his share in the course of teaching the English language.

The teacher also admitted that he does not often make his students skim and scan a reading compression, which to the understanding of the researcher, are important to practice reading. Further, the teacher feels that

the techniques of pre- reading, while- reading, and post-reading activities are of great help to his students in reading comprehension but he admits that he failed to meet this goal due to the obvious reasons of time constraints, large number of students, due to the inadequacy of text books distributed among the students. Well, to the understanding of the researcher, the teacher can make his students practice these techniques dividing the students in groups and making them use a few books since this technique does not need to be done as assignment in class.

When he was asked what means he uses when his students cannot provide him with supportive details of the reading passage, he said that he gives them hints sometimes but this effort of him is not a success due to the poor English language back ground of his students. He also said that the reason for his students' low skill in reading comprehension is his students' lack of experience and interest. He added that his students' lack of abundant English language vocabulary plays a role in their reading comprehension ability.

Concerning the students' reading comprehension ability, the interviewee indicated that private school students read and understand reading passages better than the government ones for the reasons that the number of students in a classroom does not exceed forty. He further said that they have all the necessary teaching materials in their libraries and they are also advised to go to the library very often on the basis of the time schedule set for them by the schools. Atkins et al (1996) also share the teacher's idea that students' reading comprehension ability is affected by inadequate textbooks. In order to alleviate this problem, the teacher (the interviewee) suggested that the number of students in the classroom of government schools should be reduced and libraries should be equipped with appropriate and adequate reading materials. The teacher expressed his apprehension

that due to the prevailing condition of the government school class size, which is over one hundred, a teacher cannot upgrade the reading skills of students.

When he was asked if his students could identify the basic references of reading comprehension, he said that they could not do so because of their poor English background. Generally, he said that his students did not like reading comprehension. The researcher does not like the conclusion that the teacher has forwarded because the teacher merely concluded that his students abhor the skill without the students being provided with adequate reading materials.

The teacher further remarked that he did not often involve his students to take part in selecting texts for their lessons since he was not acquainted with this tradition of teaching English in the past and regretted for the share he contributed towards the failure of government school students ' reading comprehension attainment. He also indicated that he could not motivate the students to read reading texts, according to him. He knew that there were no adequate materials appropriate to the students. He revealed that the English teachers had only twenty textbooks that they carry from class to class during their English teaching. One can be very much astonished to hear such an extreme shortage of English text books in a preparatory school such as Awasa Tabor.

4.3. Responses of the Students Questionnaire

The following data were obtained both from Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory I School, and Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory I School. The tables indicate the multiple choices presented for each question, the number of students that responded to it, its percentage as well as the name of the school of the students who responded to the questions.

**Table 4.1 Frequency of Reading Passage Comprehension in the Classroom
(NB. Awasa N = 130; Yirgalem N = 107 for all tables that follow)**

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a.very often	-		Yirgalem	-		Awasa Tabor	-	
b.sometimes	21	19.6		37	28.4		58	24.4
c. rarely	76	71.02		90	69.2		166	70
d. never	10	9.3		3	2.3		13	5.4

One can easily notice from Table 4.1 that students in both Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory I school, and Awassa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory I School rarely exercise reading comprehension. Seventy six students (71.02%) out of 107 students and 90 students (69.2%) out of 130 students respectively indicated that they rarely exercised reading comprehension. Hence, the students' responses here imply that the students need to be motivated to read reading materials to enhance their comprehension attainment. When we come to placing the rank on the basis of reading frequency: students in both schools (1) read passage comprehension rarely (2) sometimes which counts 19.6% and 28.4% in both Yirgalem and Awasa Tabor schools (3) (5.4%) students admit that they never read passage in class. This implies that the students did not have the habit of reading materials.

Table 4. 2 Students' Difficulties in Finding the Meaning of Unfamiliar Word from Context

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	-		Yirgalem	112	86.1	Awasa Tabor	112	47.2
b. sometimes	89	83.17		11	8.4		100	42.19
c. rarely	18	16.82		7	5.3		25	10.54
d. never	-			-	-		-	

Table 4.2 shows that Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory School students, 89 (83.17%) responded that they sometimes have difficulty in finding the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context. When we see the case of Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory School, the case is different, 112 (86%) students who responded to the questionnaire indicate that they very often find difficulties in finding the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context. Hence, due attention should be given to the problem. Greenal and Swan(1986) argue that it is possible to guess the general meaning of unknown words by looking for clues either in the context or in the form of the word itself. It would be therefore advisable for teachers to inform students that there are clues that indicate the meaning of unknown words.

Table4.3 Difficulty in Finding the Central Idea of a Passage

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	93	86.9	Yirgalem	110	84.6	Awasa Tabor	203	85.6
b. sometimes	13	12.1		10	7.6		23	9.7
c. rarely	-	-		9	6.9		9	3.7
d. never	1	0.9		1	0.7		2	0.8

Concerning the difficulty of finding the central idea of a passage, the students from both schools indicated that they have the difficulty of finding the central idea of a passage. Ninety three from Yirgalem and 110 students from Awasa Tabor responded that they very often had difficulties in finding the central idea of a passage.

Table 4.4 Frequency of Skimming and Scanning Passage Comprehension

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	2	1.8	Yirgalem	5	3.8	Awasa Tabor	7	2.9
b. sometimes	4	3.7		10	7.6		14	5.9
c. rarely	25	23.3		39	30		64	27.0
d. never	76	71.0		76	58.4		152	64.1

The above Table 4.4 shows the frequency of using skimming and scanning to comprehend a given passage. From the data 76 (71.0%) from Yirgalem and (58.4%) students from Awasa Tabor indicated that they never skim and scan a passage for the sake of comprehension. However, both schools' respondents have admitted that they rarely do the practice. Since the data obtained shows a high percentage of response showing the lack of skimming and scanning, teachers teaching in these schools need to prepare tasks that involve these reading techniques and motivate students to do so.

Table 4.5 Students' view of Problem of Techniques and Strategies for Understanding a Reading Passage

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	91	85.0	Yirgalem	119	91.5	Awasa Tabor	210	88.6
b. sometimes	16	14.9		7	5.3		23	9.7
c. rarely	-	-		3	2.3		3	1.2
d. never	-	-		1	0.7		1	0.4

The above Table 4.5 shows the problem of finding supportive details to the central idea of a passage by students. From the data obtained through the questionnaire, the response shows that in both schools' students find it **very often** problematic to find supportive details to the central idea of a passage, 119 (91.5%) students from Awasa Senior Secondary Preparatory School and 91(85%) students from Yirgalem Senior Secondary School.

Table 4.6 Provision of Techniques and Strategies for Understanding a Reading Passage

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	-		Yirgalem	3	2.3	Awasa Tabor	3	1.2
b. sometimes	3	2.8		3	2.3		6	2.53
c. rarely	5	4.6		9	6.9		14	5.9
d. never	99	92.5		115	88.4		214	90.2

From Table 4.6, one can see that both schools fail to provide techniques and strategies for understanding a reading passage. Imagine ninety nine (92.5%) students out of 107 from Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory I School and 115 (88.4%) from Awasa Tabor responded that they had never been provided with the techniques and strategies for understanding a reading passage. Hence great effort should be put on rectifying this problem.

Table 4.7 Frequency of Identifying the Basic References in a Reading Comprehension

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	4	3.7	Yirgalem	7	5.3	Awasa Tabor	11	4.6
b. sometimes	12	11.2		9	6.9		21	8.8
c. rarely	75	70.0		111	85.3		186	78.4
d. never	-16	14.9		3	2.3		19	8.0

Table4.7 shows the frequency of identifying the basic references in a reading comprehension. Concerning this area, students of both schools i.e. to say 75 (70.0%), students from Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory School and 111(85.3%) students from Awassa Tabor Senior Secondary School responded that they rarely could try to identify the basic reference in a reading comprehension. This might imply that their teachers did not encourage or help them to do so.

Table4. 8 Facing Problems in Inferring Meaning from a Reading Passage

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	95	88.7	Yirgalem	116	89.2	Awassa Tabor	211	89.0
b. sometimes	12	11.2		11	8.4		23	9.7
c. rarely	-	-		3	2.3		3	1.2
d. never	-	-		-	-		-	-

Table 4.8 shows the data obtained from both school students on their facing problem in inferring meaning form reading passage. Accordingly, ninety five(88.7%) students out of the total 107 from Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory I School, and 116 (89.2%) out of the 130 students of Awassa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory I School indicated to have very often faced the problem of inferring meaning from reading passage. The fact that the majority of the students said this might indicate that they have low reading comprehension ability. This problem can be attributed to lack of practice in reading passages.

Table 4.9 Involving Students in Selecting Texts for their Lesson

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. very often	-	-	Yirgalem	3	2.3	Awasa Tabor	3	1.2
b. sometimes	1	0.9		5	3.8		6	2.5
c. rarely	3	2.8		2	1.5		5	2.1
d. never	103	96.2		120	92.3		223	94.0

The data of involving students to select texts for their lessons is given in Table 4.9 above. From this table, it is observed that both schools teachers **never** involve their students to select texts for their lessons. 103 (96.2%) students out of 107 from Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory School, and 120 (92.3%) students out of 130 of the Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary Preparatory I School indicate that they have never been involved to select texts for their lessons. The teachers during the interview also indicated that they did not give the chance for the students to select texts that suited their interest.

Table 4.10 Government Schools Reading and Understanding of a Passage Compared with Private Schools .

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. Strongly disagree	46	42.9	Yirgalem	46	35	Awasa Tabor	92	38.8
b. disagree	55	51.4		77	59.2		132	55.6
c. neutral	6	5.6		4	3.0		10	4.2
d. agree	-	-		3	2.3.		3	1.2
e. Strongly agree	-	-		-	-		-	-

From the above data 55 (51.4%) students from Yirgalem Senior Secondary Preparatory I School, and 77(59.3%) students from Awasa Tabor Secondary Students **disagree** that government school students read and understand a passage better than private school students. During the interview, the teachers also indicated that private school students have better understanding in reading. This is the case, according to the teachers, mainly because the students in private schools are provided with sufficient and appropriate reading materials.

Table 4.11 Reading Speed of a Passage Comprehension

Multiple choice Items	No of Respondent	%	School	No of Respondent	%	School	Total No of Respondents	Total percentage of respondents
a. at a good speed	4	3.7	Yirgalem	11	8.4	Awasa Tabor	15	6.3
b. at a poor speed	42	39.2		59	45.3		101	42.6
c. at an average	61	57.0		60	46.1		121	51.0

The information in the above table is about the students' reading speed. As can be seen from the Table, 61 (57.0%),students from Yirgalem and 60 (46.1%) students from Awasa Tabor responded that they read a passage at **an average speed**. 42 (39.2%) students from Yirgalem, and 59 (45.3%) students from Awasa Tabor Senior Secondary School said that they read a passage at **a poor speed**(in a very slow speed at their level of grade)

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The objective of this study is to explore into factors affecting government school students' reading comprehension of preparatory I. In order to find the factors that affect the reading ability of government schools, the researcher devised questionnaire and interviews that should be addressed to students and teachers. Accordingly, both the questionnaire of the students and the interviews of the teachers included ideas that need answer to the problems of understanding of main ideas, specific information, tackling unfamiliar words, inferring meaning from reading comprehension, and identifying basic references. Hence, in the Review of Related Literature many authors in the field of reading comprehension that deal with these ideas were cited and in connection with their findings discussions were also presented. However, generally, the gist of the matter is that reading for information in English is one of the most important purposes that the learners may have in learning English and it is therefore essential to give them practice so that they are prepared for life beyond the preparatory school, that is to say in the institutions of higher learning.

The following factors affecting government school students' reading comprehension skills when compared with private schools were obtained from the the teachers interview and the students questionnaire:

- Private schools conduct entrance examinations and admit the best ones.
- There is small number of students per class in private schools (less than fifty) than the government ones (over hundred in a class). This has created a problem in following up students reading skill.

- The number of English textbooks as well as other books related to English available in the libraries of government schools is insufficient.
- Students who learn in private schools are from the middle class families, who can afford to buy additional learning materials to their children whereas children who learn in government schools are children of the poor families who cannot afford to provide their children with the necessary materials.

The following factors play a great role for the low reading comprehension in government schools:

The students in government schools have low reading comprehension because of lack of:

- Practice to read comprehension passage as often as possible in order to understand specific information.
- Techniques of finding the central idea of a passage.
- The techniques of finding supportive details.
- Techniques of inferring meaning from the passage.
- interest among the student to practice reading and guessing unfamiliar words.

In addition, the fact that the teachers who teach in the lower grades lack the skill to teach English has been identified as a factor attributed to the students' low reading comprehension ability.

Generally from the findings of the interview of the teachers and the students questionnaire the factors that affect government school students' reading comprehension attainment are the size of the class, lack of interest (of both teachers and students), lack of availability of materials in the library, family background in terms of finance as well as education, lack of the techniques and strategies of reading comprehension.

5.2. Recommendations

The following are recommendations based upon the research conducted:

- Government schools should reduce the number of students per class for this will ease the assessment of students' reading ability and for the promotion of this sub-skill.
- Teachers of all subjects besides English are expected to encourage students to read more and more
- The schools had better get books that help their students improve their reading comprehension attainment (such as fictions, novels, interesting stories) These books can be obtained through the donation of NGOs and to this end the administration of the school needs to play a great role
- The schools need to include reading and discussion programs for these senior students of the preparatory level.

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Appendix A

Teachers' interview

First of all I would like to thank you for your cooperation to come to this interview to respond to the questions that I forward to you your genuine responses is of great help to the research that I am conducting (Interview with the teachers of English from Yirgalem senior secondary and preparatory school).

1. Q: Would you please, describe the teaching techniques or strategies that you think are more effective to promote reading comprehension?
A: The techniques and strategies that I use to promote students particular passage and presenting them to my learners so that they can practice reading comprehension.
2. Q: How often do you give reading comprehension to your students?
A: as often as the new unit begins.
3. Q: What technique and strategy do you apply when students come across unfamiliar words in the reading passage?
A: students have to find out the meanings of the unfamiliar words from the context I only try to hint them whenever they find it very difficult. Finding the unfamiliar words from the context is the skill that students should develop as a habit. Though this is the case students do not like to read a passage comprehension
4. Q: do you think your students can understand the central idea of a reading comprehension if not, please, give reason.
A: they can not succeed in finding the central idea easily because they lack the reading interest and experience, They need a very long time to understand the central idea. The reasons are lack of the reading techniques and strategies.

5. Q: Do you make your students skim and scan a reading comprehension?
If "yes" why so?
- A: Yes, as long as it is there in the text but I am not successful with their performance.
6. Q: Do you feel that the techniques of pre-reading while-reading and post-reading activities are of great help to your students in a reading comprehension? If "yes", why so?
- A: All the three techniques or phases of reading are very important because they develop the students overall reading ability. They help them understand better contents, vocabularies, etc from the given text and familiarize them with their own experiences.
7. Q: From your knowledge point of view what means do you use when students can not provide you with supportive details of the reading passage? Why do you think is the reason for their failure to do so?
- A: I help them to use reading method. The students' failure to provide with supportive details of a reading passage is because they don't practice the techniques as often as they are expected.
8. Q: please give reason for your students' low skill in reading comprehension? describe the methods you apply to overcome this problem?
- A: They read only for exams. They don't practice reading frequently because reading comprehension requires habitual activities. Reading skill should be nurtured all the time but most teachers of English do not like to do so this is one of the main factors which contribute to students' failure.
9. Q: From your experience point of view do you think private school students read and understand reading passage better than government school? If "yes", please, give reasons? Please suggest the measures you take to overcome the problem?
- A: this is obvious because of the following reasons.

A: They admit best students by conducting entrance exams.

B: Students are provided with good learning materials

C: The number of students is very small.

The skill of reading and understanding a passage can be improved through collaborative work. Students should also be given intensive tasks related to the reading comprehension.

10. Q: Do your students encounter any problem in inferring meaning from reading comprehensions?

If "no", why so? give Reasons.

A: They frequently encounter the problem of inferring meaning teachers don't encourage and teach their students how to infer due attention is not given to this sub-skill some teachers, surprisingly, lack this knowledge it self.

11. Q: can your students identify the basic references of a reading comprehension? If not, why so give reason?

A: they can not identify the basic references in a given passage because they usually do not understand the idea very easily. This is mainly because of the fact that students lack good knowledge of the reading skill.

12. Q: Please describe how often you make your student evaluate a text?

A: I don't do because of the size of the class and shortage of time.

13. Q: Do you think your students have lack of desire to read comprehension and as a result read and less?

A: Students do not have the desire to read a reading comprehension because the passages from the texts are not interesting and enjoyable. Due to this, students lack the desire to read and this leads them to read very less and less.

(Interviewer thank) you so much.

Teacher (respondent) you are welcome. I really have enjoyed your interview which raised all relevant points)

(Interview with the teachers of English form Awassa Tabor senior secondary and preparatory I school)

Interviewer; thank you for your coming to my interview your genuine response is of great help to the research that I am conducting.

Teacher one: you are welcome.

1. Q: Would you please, describe the teaching techniques or strategies that you think are more effective to promote reading comprehension?

A: I use the most important techniques like scanning and skimming to promote students' reading comprehension ability. However, there are certain factors such as the students' lack of interest and shortage of text books that do not make them successful.

2. Q: How often do you give reading comprehension to your students?

A: Only sometime. This is because all students' are interested in learning grammar and vocabulary rather than reading comprehension. However, students' do not have enough reference materials in the school and the parents of the students do not buy these materials for their children because they are poor.

3. Q: What technique and strategy do you apply when students come across unfamiliar words in the reading passage?

A: I ask them to make their own sentences and if they fail to do so I use their vernacular language.

4. Q: Do you think your students can understand the central idea of a reading comprehension? If not, please, give reasons?

A: I am afraid, they can't do so. This is due to their poor background of knowledge.

5. Q: Do you make your students skim and scan a reading comprehension? If "yes" why so?

A: I sometimes use students' responses do not encourage we is do it often.

6. Q: Do you feel that the techniques of pre-reading activities are of grate help to your students in a reading, while-riding post-reading comprehension? If "yes", why so?

A: Pre-reading while reading and post-reading activities are very import because they developing students reading ability.

7. Q: From your knowledge point of view what means do you use when your students can not provide you with supportive details of the reading passage? what do you think is the reason for their failure to do so?

A: I give them additional information about the passage in order to make the details clear. However, still they fail to give supportive details and information because of their poor background of English.

Thus it requires a continuous effort to improve the situation.

8. Q: Please give reasons for your students low skill in reading comprehension. Describe the method you apply to overcome this problem.

A: The first one is their poor background knowledge of the skill, the second is lack of interest, and the third is students lack of supplementary materials in the library also they not read at home because they have not developed the habit of reading. To improve this situation I suggest that schools should form English language clubs and there should also be English day so that all students attspeak only English on this day.

9. Q From your experience point of view, do you think private school students read and understand reading passage better than government school ones? If "yes", Please, give reasons.

Please suggest the measures you take is overcome the problem?

- A: I know that private school students read and understand reading comprehension passage better than government ones for the following reasons.
- A: They admit only selected students on the basis of entrance examination
- B: Students of private schools can afford to buy additional materials for they are relatively from well-to-do families.
Teachers of other subjects should also collaborate in improving the skills of English in their classes.
The school should be able to get reading materials through donation and I also suggest the establishment of language laboratory.
10. Q: Do your students encounter any problems in inferring meaning from reading comprehension?
if " no", why so? Give reasons.
- A: Yes. This is due to lack of practice and poor English background.
11. Q: Can your students identify the basic references of a reading comprehension? If not, why so? Give reasons.
- A: They can not identify because they have not been given adequate techniques and assistance.
12. Q: Please describe how often you make your students evaluate a text.
- A: This practice or activity has not been tried at all in our school.
13. Q: Do you think your students have lack of desire to read passage comprehension and as a result read less and less?
- A: The students do not have the desire of reading comprehension, and as a result, they read very less and less. The reason for this is that students most of the time prefer grammar and vocabulary for they think that they are important for the national examination preparation.
- Interviewer thank you very much. Teachers' one thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you for coming. Your genuine response is of great help to the research that I am conducting

Teacher two: Welcome

1. Q: Would you, please, describe the teaching techniques or strategies that you think are more effective to promote reading comprehension?.

A: I tele them to read newspapers, magazines, fictions.

2. Q: How often do you give reading comprehension to your students?

A. Since the number of students in the class room is very large, I do not try to give them. Time is the other factor for my not doing so.

3. Q: What technique and strategy do you apply when students come across unfamiliar words in the reading passage?

A I usually write the words on the blackboard and ask them to tell me the meaning of the words. If they fail to guess the meaning, I usually give them certain examples by which they will be helped I avoid translating the word into Amharic.

4. Q: Do you think your students can understand the center idea of a reading comprehension? It not, please, give reasons.

A: No, they can not understand the central idea of passage because they did not get the chance of practicing reading comprehension for a long time in the previous grade levels.

5. Q: Do you make your students skim and scan a reading comprehension? It "yes", why so?

A: I do not do so because of time constraints in the class.

6. Q: Do you tell that the techniques of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities are of great help to your students in a reading comprehension?

If "yes", why so?

- A: The pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities are of great help because learners need to be acquainted with the topic and get ready for reading the section.
7. Q: From your knowledge point of view what means do you use when your students can not provide you with supportive details of the reading passage? What do you think is the reason for their failure to do so?
- A: I sometimes give them some hints but I do not usually succeed in my attempt because of the students' poor background in practicing the reading comprehension very satisfactorily.
8. Q: Please give reasons for your students' low skill in reading comprehensions. Describe the methods you apply to overcome this problem.
- A: Lack of experience and interest, may be shortage of vocabulary knowledge. I usually motivate and encourage my students to practice reading comprehension activities. I also encourage them to speak out because speaking also can contribute a lot to develop their ability of reading comprehension.
9. Q: From your experience point of view, do you think private school students read and understand reading passage better than government school students? If "yes", please, give reasons. Please suggest the measures you take to overcome the problem.
- A: Yes, because of their limited number in the classroom. They also have well-equipped and furnished libraries that have good reference materials. They also have time table for their students to practice reading. Teachers should collaborate to improve the condition.
10. Q: Do your students encounter any problems in inferring meaning from the reading comprehension? If "No", why so? Give reasons.

A: Yes, they do encounter the problem because of their back ground knowledge and lack of experience.

11. Q: Can your students identify the basic references of a reading comprehension? If "not", why so? Give reasons.

A: Most of the students can not identify the basic references of a reading comprehension passage because of their poor background and ability. As a result they hate the skill.

12. Q: Please describe how often you make your students evaluate a text?

A: Frankly I speaking do not involve my students to take part in the preparation of their lessons. This practice has never been done as a tradition in our school.

13. Q: Do you think your students have lack of desire to read comprehension passages and as a result read less and less?

A: Students do not have the desire of reading and as a result, of course, read less and less. Even if a few have the desire to read, they lack enough text books. I tell you two of us, who are teaching English at the preparatory I level, have only twenty text books each that we carry from class to class when we teach English.

Once again I thank you very much indeed for sparing me your precious time! So long, bye

APPENDIX B

Students' Questionnaire (Prep, I)

Dear Student

This questionnaire is designed to get some information concerning reading comprehension. The information you provide will be used for the improvement of your English in the future. Hence be honest and feel free to provide genuine information for its success. Please do not leave any question unanswered. If you have any question that you do not understand while answering, please ask me.

I thank you for your co-operation.

Don't write your name!!

Instruction: Circle the answer of your choice (a, b, c, d, e) for the following questions.

1. How often do you read a passage comprehension in the English Language Classroom?
a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
2. How often do you have difficulty in finding the meaning of unfamiliar word from the context?
a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
3. Do you have difficulty in finding the central idea of a passage?
a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
4. How often do you skim and scan your passage comprehension when you read?
a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
5. Do you have a problem in finding supportive details to the central idea of a passage comprehension?

- a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
6. Does your teacher provide you with techniques and strategies for understanding a reading passage?
- a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
7. Students in government schools read and understand a passage comprehension better than private schools.
- a. strongly disagree b. disagree c. neutral d. agree e. strongly agree
8. How fast do you read a passage?
- a. at a good speed b. at a poor speed c. at an average speed
9. How often do you identify the basic references in a reading comprehension?
- a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
10. Do you face any problem in inferring meaning from the reading passage?
- a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never
11. Has your teacher involve you in selecting texts for your lessons?
- a. very often b. sometimes c. rarely d. never

Declaration

I declare that this is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Place: Institute of Language Studies

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Submission: August 2007

