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**DEPARTEMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

**Assessment of Early Grade Three Student's Reading Skill: In Some Selected Primary School in Yeka Subcity, Addis Ababa.**

**By:**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Wudie Nibret Tadesse entitled: Assessment of Early Grade Reading Skill: evidence from Addis Ababa city administration, Yeka sub city in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Master of Arts degree in special needs and inclusive education complies with regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **DECLARATION**

I the undersigned, declare that this thesis entitled (An Assessment of early grade reading skill and factors that hindered early grade reading skill acquisition in Yeka Sub City, Addis Ababa City Administration) is my original work and that all sources of materials used for this research have been accordingly acknowledged.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>EFA</b>	: Education for All
<b>EGRA</b>	: Early Grade Reading Assessment
<b>EGRS</b>	: early grade reading skill
<b>FWR</b>	: familiar word reading
<b>IQPEP</b>	: the Improving Quality in Primary Education Program
<b>LC</b>	: listening comprehension
<b>LI</b>	: letter identification
<b>MOE</b>	: Ethiopian Ministry of Education
<b>NFWR</b>	: non- familiar word reading
<b>ORF</b>	: oral reading fluency
<b>PAW</b>	: phonological awareness
<b>RC</b>	: reading comprehension
<b>USAID</b>	: United States Agency for International Development

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The aim of the study was to assess the reading skills of early grade students with special focus on Grade three students and factors that influence reading skill acquisition in selected primary school in Yeka Sub-City, Addis Ababa. In doing so, an explanatory sequential design with mixed approaches was used for the study. The total sample size of the study 176 which was, 171 grade three students, 3 teachers and 2 school principal. Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were employed to select the participants. To collect data, reading test, an interview guide, and an observation checklist were employed. Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26 was used to organize quantitative data for analysis and Descriptive statistical tools like frequency and percentage and inferential statistical tools like An independent sample T-test was used to analyze quantitative data, and qualitative data were analyzed thematically using narrative mode. The results revealed that the majority of grade three students in public primary schools were low in word reading, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. While most grade three students are good at letter identification and phonological awareness. There was a significant difference between availability of reading materials and grade three students reading skill acquisition. The finding of the study further showed that there were many factors that influenced early grade reading skill acquisitions, such as the availability of reading materials, instructional methods, and the accessibility of environments. The study also concluded that the majority of grade three students were at risk of reading difficulty.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Many low-income countries are committed to improving quality primary schools to ensure the goals of the United Nations Education for All (EFA) (Gove & Cvelich, 2011; RTI International, 2008; World Bank, 2011). Subsequently, some countries have made inspiring progress toward improving primary schools. Most of the improvements focused on the accessibility of the environment, human resources (for example, teachers), and material resources, including books. However, it is not enough to improve quality education. Hence Assessment of early-grade reading skills is an essential element of quality primary education. Nevertheless, most low-income countries, including Ethiopia, were not effective in early literacy, especially in early grade reading. According to the World Bank's independent assessment (2006), improvements in student reading lag significantly behind improvements in schooling. Thus, children are not successful in academic tasks, are disadvantageous in early schooling, and academically fail behind their peers in school subjects.

Since 2007, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has supported and administered an Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in developing countries around the world. EGRA is a very important tool to assess children with reading difficulties and how well they are acquiring important reading skills in primary school. In addition, EGRA oversees the fundamental reading skills that a child must acquire in order to read fluently and with understanding, the ultimate goal of reading.

In the Ethiopian context, as of 2010, Ethiopia lacks adapted instruments for assessing literacy, and it is difficult to assess children with reading difficulties and the prevalence of reading problems (Abdi & Therrien, 2016). Since 2010, RTI International (RTI), the Improving Quality in Primary Education Program (IQPEP), and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MOE) have been implementing EGRA in Ethiopia for the first time. It was conducted in eight regions. In Ethiopia, the EGRA tool contains seven subtasks such as letter name recognition, familiar word

reading, invented word reading, oral reading fluency, phoneme awareness, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension (Piper, 2010). This tool was prepared and administered in different languages, including Tigrigna, Afaan Oromo, Amharic, Somali, Sidamigna, Hararigna, etc. Among these languages, Amharic is one of the most widely spoken in Ethiopia. This is the language used in primary schools in Ethiopia as a medium of instruction. Many people in the country use it to communicate in church, educational, social, and business institutions. It is a Semitic language that uses the syllabic script alphabet, or Fidel, for writing (Yeshambel et al., 2021). In Amharic, there are five vernacular distinctions spoken in different areas, such as Addis Ababa, Gojjam, Gonder, Wollo, and Menz. Thus, the Addis Ababa dialect has emerged as the typical dialect and has wide distribution across all Amharic-speaking people (Abate, 2005). According to Bloor & Tamrat (1996), Amharic is taught in primary education and is a separate subject that began in grade one in Addis Ababa. It is one of the teaching and learning mediums alongside the English language in Addis Ababa. Therefore, students must distinguish Amharic letter (Fidel) name recognition, familiar word reading (FWR), nonsensical word reading (NFWR), oral reading fluency (ORF), phonemic awareness (PAW), listening comprehension (LC), and RC reading comprehension (Piper, 2010).

Thus, reading skills are one of the most important skills a student needs for academic success. (Abdi & Therrien, 2016). Additionally, their ability to acquire new knowledge and skills depends largely on their ability to read and extract meaning from text. For example, writing is an important skill, but demonstrating learning through writing requires basic reading and reading comprehension skills (Kalanje, 2011). Therefore, early reading problems must be assessed early in order to minimize the acceleration of reading difficulties later. And also, it is essential to regularly assess the reading skills of early grade students in order to allow schools, policymakers, teachers, parents, and other responsible bodies to provide early intervention (Piper, 2010). Children successfully learn to read in the early school years and are prepared for later learning, and children begin to discover new things in the world from an early age. Apparently, exploring new things in the world and acquiring knowledge through reading becomes obvious (Anteneh et al., 2016).

However, in Ethiopia, many students pass the first cycle of primary school without mastering basic Amharic language reading skills (Piper, 2010; Yirgashewa & Therrien, 2016). Children are unsuccessful at school, disadvantaged in early schooling, and academically fail behind their peers in school subjects (Gamu & Damole, 2021). Difficulties in learning to read words accurately arise from the earliest stages of reading instruction. First, children who are destined to be poor readers in fourth grade almost invariably have difficulty understanding and applying the alphabetic principle in deciphering unfamiliar words. Their difficulty in developing good analytical strategies for identifying unfamiliar words makes independent reading difficult and also leads to far too many word-reading errors (Torgesen, 2002). It is characterized by difficulty in accurate or fluent word recognition as well as poor spelling and decoding skills. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language, which is often unexpected when compared to other cognitive skills and the delivery of effective instruction. Secondary consequences can be reading comprehension problems and reduced reading experience, which can hamper vocabulary building (Mereba & Mekonnen, 2022).

Hence, it is necessary to regularly assess the effectiveness of literacy skills as early as possible to overcome different factors, estimate incidence, and provide appropriate intervention (Kalanje, 2011). Considering this fact, the study was intended to assess Amharic language reading skills of early grade students with particular emphasis on grade three students of the selected government schools situated in Yeka Sub City and factors affecting the reading skills of these students.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In line with the above studies, improving the quality of education is clear as the MOE engages in long-term quality education improvement to identify and focus on reading skills. In spite of this, many researchers show that the reading skill acquisitions of the students are not corresponding to the curriculum as expected (Gamu & Damole, 2021; Anteneh et al., 2016; Abdi & Therrien, 2016; Piper, 2010). The reading deficit has been neglected in many developing countries, including Ethiopia. Teachers may know that their students are deficient in reading through continuous assessments. Nevertheless, they do not see this as a problem (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). In some developing countries, statistics on EGRS show that 70%–90% of students at the end of grades two–three were unable to read a single word correctly within a simple paragraph (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). Similarly, Gove & Cvelich (2011) show that, in low-income countries, many students were not mastering the basic components of reading skills at the end of grade three.

In Ethiopia, a significant number of third-grade students could not read single words correctly. According to Piper's (2010) results, in Somali (21.4%), Amhara (17.0%), Sidama (54.0%), Oromiya (20.6), Addis Ababa (3.8%), Harari (8.8%), Benishangul-Gumuz (14.9%), and Tigray (12.7%) have percentages of zero scores or none readers. Some of these children were just beginning to learn to read at the end of the first cycle of primary school. These children are likely to drop out or repeat and will not be prepared for the end-of-primary examinations. In addition, Gamu and Damole (2021) noted that a large number of children have not understood the expected minimum level of competence. Further, Piper's (2010) result indicated that more than half of the 2nd grade children in the regions did not understand a story at all, and a quarter or more of the children in city administration could not understand it, even though in 3rd grade, a third of children scored zero in all regions. Furthermore, several factors contributed to these results, such as a lack of training and support for teachers, minimal instructional time, poorly resourced schools, the absence of books at home, and problematic language of instruction policies and practices. Socio-economic status, absenteeism from class, a shortage of textbooks and a lack of access to newspapers, challenges faced in reading, class repetition, home-based support, and pre-school attendance were the factors that affected students' reading scores. (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011; Gamu & Damole, 2021; Anteneh et al., 2016).

Therefore, in Ethiopia, there were some supportive documents in the area (Gamu & Damole, 2021; Anteneh et al., 2016; Abdi & Therrien, 2016; Piper, 2010). However, these studies do not show the current scenarios, even if they are important for current departures. And some of them were not collect data by using triangulation methods (Piper, 2010; Gove & Wetterberg, 2011; EGRA 2021,). In addition, some of the researchers also did not show the effect of instructional methods for reading skills acquisitions (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011; Gamu & Damole, 2021; Anteneh et al., 2016; Gove & Cvelich (2011).

Hence, this paper attempts to fill this gap by looking into these issues by assessing early grade three student's Amharic reading skills using seven components of reading skills such as letter name recognition, familiar word reading, non-familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, phonemic awareness, and reading and listening comprehension. Additionally, in light of the above discussion, this research investigate factors that might lead to low reading skill acquisition among early grade students such as availability of reading material, family literacy, family support during reading, instructional methods, and accessibility of the environment.

The purpose of this study was therefore to assess early grade three student's reading skills and to investigate different factors that influence reading skill acquisition through collecting primary data from participants regarding early grade reading skills being made to improve Amharic reading skills and drawing practical conclusions from primary data. And the study described current scenarios within the situation in Yeka sub city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to assess the reading skills of early grade students with special focus on Grade three students and factors that influence reading skill acquisition in some selected primary school in Yeka Sub-City, Addis Ababa.

### **1.4 Basic Research Questions**

1. What is the performance of student's reading skills in identifying Amharic Fidel?
2. What are the word reading skills of early grade three students in Amharic language?
3. What are the performances of the students in oral reading fluency within written language?
4. What are the performances of students' reading and listening comprehension skills in Amharic language?
5. What factors hinder the early reading skill acquisition of grade three students in Amharic language?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

A few attempts have been made to assess early grade reading in Ethiopia, and remarkable answers have been given in the past few years. However, it still needs further study. Therefore, it's crucial to assess early-grade reading skills in Ethiopia. Hence, the result of the study will add insight and can serve as an input for different stakeholders like parents, educators, and school administrators to reflect upon various determinant factors that influence early grade reading acquisition. Moreover, the study will also be significant because the findings will stimulate school principals, teachers, students, and society's awareness of the importance of early grade reading assessment. Also, the study will help all stakeholders give early intervention to students at risk for reading difficulty. Besides, the study may also serve as a point of reference for researchers who intend to study the area under investigation.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The scope of the study was limited to Yeka sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration, and government primary school students. The study focused on assessments of early grade reading skills and associated factors that hinder early grade reading skill acquisition. Likewise, this study is first interested in assessing early grade 3 students' reading skills. This is a critical period in terms of acquiring early-grade reading and writing skills. According to Hamilton & Glascoe (2006), grade three is the level where students are expected to acquire basic reading skills such as letter identification, familiar word reading, non-familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, phonological awareness, reading and listening comprehensions. Every student can read at grade level or above not later than the end of grade three. The researcher only focused on home and school factors, including family literacy, availability of reading material, instructional methods, and accessibility of the environment.

When this study was carried out, the researcher faced different limitations. Among all this, everything had to be condensed since time was limited. Because of this, the study takes place in a cross-sectional rather than longitudinal format. In addition, the study was merely focused on the Amharic language and administered only in Addis Ababa's Yeka sub-city. Hence, it is difficult to generalize to other parts of Ethiopia and other languages.

## 1.7 Operational Definitions of Terms

Literacy ability	: The ability of students to read and write.
Reading ability	: The ability of students to perform reading tasks such as letter recognition, fluency, decoding, and comprehension of written text.
Reading difficulty	: Struggle learning to reading that can be related to difficulty in letter identification, word reading and comprehensions.
Reading skills acquisition	: the process of acquiring the basic skill necessary for learning to Reading
Associated factors	: factors that are related to reading skill and influence early Grade reading skill acquisition
Instructional methods	: principles and methods used by teachers to enhance learners.
Early grade	: it is from grade one to grade three.
Early grade reading skill	: the ability of the students to perform basic reading skills that requires early grade one to grade three.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Literature

#### 2.1. Concept of Reading

Some of the concepts of reading have been reviewed over the years. However, the review is limited to only those definitions that form the basis for the current understanding of reading.

Reading is a complex process involving multiple skills, including word identification and comprehension of written texts. Students' use of the first language to recognize words, letters, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with written text, and comprehend written text. According to Gove & Cvelich (2011), reading is a blend of letter identification, word recognition, fluency, comprehension, and a vocabulary skill that lets students read independently and comprehend and use the information they read. It is the big difference between "reading it" and "receiving" it." Children must read fluently to comprehend what they are reading.

Reading has also been much more than just being able to recognize written words in a text (decoding information); rather, reading is the skill of recognizing written words in the text and understanding what they read (Pang et al., 2007). While many students may have the skill to recognize written texts, they are not able to understand what they have read because they lack comprehension skills (Bharuthram, 2012). Additionally, acquiring knowledge is a multiphase process. Reading skill acquisition is different in some languages than in others, with the length of time it takes to recognize the written text determined by the level of the written language, or orthography (letters and symbols), and the spoken language (sounds). Illustrating the differences in the amount of time it takes to acquire reading skills within the language based on the sound of the language (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011).

Reading involves contexts, language processes, and ongoing development practices (Frankel et al., 2016). When professionals assess reading skills such as phoneme awareness, letter identification, and word recognition, they examined the students' knowledge of the sound structure of words. For example, "What sounds do you hear in the word dog?" Hence, the development of phoneme awareness takes place in letter identification and word recognition. However, some children have difficulty identifying the sounds of letters in spoken words—for

example "if they can "listen" to the /ad/ sound in dad and bad, they will have difficulty decoding or sounding out new words". Reading skill acquisition is a gradual process when children learn to understand print language. Hence, children require early grade reading skills as early as the early years to prepare them for later life reading readiness skills (Rasheed et al., 2011). Hence Reading is important for students to engage in everyday activities, and students could improve their reading skills early for current success and later achievement in all subject areas (Nderitu, 2018).

## **2.2. Reading Skill**

Reading is one of the basic skills. Some researchers have found that effective letter naming, phonological awareness, familiar word reading, non-familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, listening, and reading comprehension are the most sensitive indicators of reading skills and reading development (Perfetti, 1986; Reading Rockets, 2012; Gamu & Damole, 2021; Gove & Wetterberg, 2011; Bojovic, 2010; Frankel et al., 2016). Reading skill acquisition is a gradual process when children learn to understand print language through letter-naming skills and listening comprehension. Children require early grade reading skills as early as the early years to prepare them for later life reading readiness skills (Rasheed et al., 2011). According to Perfetti (1986), letter identification is the initial point for the productivity of learning to read by producing letter sounds without meaning.

Reading skill is also the ability to attend to the sounds of language as separate from its meaning. Like that of letter identification, many studies have confirmed that phonological awareness is essential, particularly at the phoneme level (Lane et al., 2002; Davis et al., 2007; Melesse & Enyew, 2020; Pang et al., 2007). As students have a skill to decode, phonological awareness tasks have shown that this skill is a reading skill. Thus, children who perform well on tasks of phonemics will become good readers, but students who do not perform phonemics will become poor readers (Lane et al., 2002). Hence, if students are aware of how the letters of the alphabet map onto individual sound units (phonemes), they have reading ability (Pang et al., 2007). Like other languages, in Amharic, students acquire the ability to identify (Fidel) familiar and non-familiar (words), identify Fidel in words, read fluently, and develop listening and reading comprehension (Piper, 2010). Thus, in Amharic language orthography, letter-name association is explicit, the name of the letters is never ignored or changed when reading, they only represent a

single name no matter where they appear in words, and the nature of Amharic language is assumed to ease reading (Abdi, n.d).

According to the study conducted by Gove and Wetterberg (2011), reading is the ability of an individual to decode words and identify sight words. Similarly According to Personke (1972), reading skill is not only understanding, naming, and decoding familiar words; reading is a process of reading words that could be present in the language but do not give meaning. Pang et al. (2007) observed that readers have the skill to read words appropriately during reading and also know where to pause during reading the text. But vocabulary recognition is not necessary for children to read text; they must accurately read the word at the expected rate. Therefore, fluent students recognize vocabulary accurately and read the word at the expected rate, or fluency.

On the other hand, comprehension with fluency is a primary focus in our reading instruction, and it is important to keep in mind that fluency is an element of the reading process that leads to effective and efficient readers (Abadiano & Turner, n.d.). Reading skill is not the only practice of identification of letters, words, and eventually a sentence; rather, reading is a practice of identification of letters and words, leading to comprehension constructed from letter to word and to sentence (Bojovic, 2010; Oakhill et al., 2019). Most of the time, they read words and sentences, but they cannot comprehend what they are reading or listening to (Ahmadi, 2016).

### **2.3. Reading difficulty**

When children first start reading, the majority of them struggle in various ways with both reading and writing. The majority of them manage to solve the issues and succeed in becoming skilled, while some fall behind. Others struggle with the issues even after they graduate from high school and enter adulthood. These students struggle with reading and writing in some way for a number of reasons (Kalanje, 2011). There are many different causes of reading problems in children. According to Petersen et al. (2016), early reading difficulties are associated with deficits in certain spoken language skills. Children with reading difficulties tend to lack the perception of spoken words and the ability to understand specific spoken phrases, as well as their awareness of the phonological structures of spoken words.

Similarly (Speece et al., 2010), reading difficulties may be broader and may include those found in younger readers with reading disabilities (e.g., decoding, word recognition, fluency in reading words and spelling), as well as comprehension, vocabulary, and oral language. Difficulty in reading is a problem where students may not know how to read to understand it and may not actively focus on the meaning of what they are reading or know how to monitor their comprehension by asking themselves questions about what they have read or whether they understand what they have read (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004).

Difficulties in learning to read words accurately arise from the earliest stages of reading instruction. First, children who are destined to be poor readers in fourth grade almost invariably have difficulty understanding and applying the alphabetic principle in deciphering unfamiliar words. Their difficulty in developing good analytical strategies for identifying unfamiliar words makes independent reading difficult and also leads to far too many word-reading error (Torgesen, 2002). Imprecise and non-fluent word-reading skills exhibited by most poor readers are extremely important given the new information we have about how word-level processes work in skilled reading. Experienced readers do not skim the text while reading and check it for its meaning, but they directly fixate on and process a very high proportion of all words in the text. For students with reading difficulties, there are reasons to adopt a conceptualization of reading difficulty that goes beyond decoding. Decoding alone cannot explain all of the differences in the reading ability of typical readers, and in particular the individual differences in comprehension of written texts (Smart et al., 2005).

It is characterized by difficulty in accurate or fluent word recognition as well as poor spelling and decoding skills. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language, which is often unexpected when compared to other cognitive skills and the delivery of effective instruction. Secondary consequences can be reading comprehension problems and reduced reading experience, which can hamper vocabulary building (Mereba & Mekonnen, 2022). The primary purpose of assessment is to improve the educational decisions of children who have had difficulty learning to read (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). Early and accurate identification of children at risk for reading disabilities is critical to appropriate resource allocation and the prevention of reading disabilities. The stakes are high in accurately identifying students who are struggling to read as early as possible (Petersen et al., 2016).

## **2.4. Assessment of Early Grade Reading Skills**

Many low-income countries are committed to improving the quality of primary schools to ensure the goals of the United Nations Education for All (EFA) (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). However, according to the World Bank's independent assessment (2006), students reading skills lag significantly behind improvements in access to schooling. Thus, children are not successful in academic tasks, are disadvantageous in early schooling, and academically fail behind their peers in school subjects.

Unfortunately, it is also difficult to know whether children have limited knowledge and skills or are influenced by factors that hinder their reading skill acquisition (Piper, 2010). Since early grade reading assessments are crucial to determining areas of reading skill and reading difficulty, early intervention is needed for children with reading difficulties. Assessment is the process of collecting information regarding the student's strengths and weaknesses to know their needs and proficiencies (Madani et al., 2016). It is important to identify students who struggle learning to read and prepare instructional plans for all students based on the interests of individuals, such as curriculum and teaching methods (Genesee, 2012).

In the context of this emerging focus on assessment of basic reading skills, it is vital to find out the weaknesses and strengths of the students, and at the end of the assessment result, the responsible body is encouraged to minimize the weakness of the student by providing constructive intervention based on the individual's interests during the teaching-learning process and exploiting the strengths of the students (Madani et al., 2016).

Reading skills develop early because every student can learn and read at various levels, but teaching students at an early age is much more effective for later schooling and is important for reading skill development. Children successfully learn to read in the early school years and prepare for later learning. Children begin to discover new things in the world at an early age. Apparently, exploring new things in the world and acquiring knowledge through reading becomes obvious (Anteneh et al., 2016).

Therefore, early grade reading assessment is a vital instrument to measure the student's ability in the early years (Hairston, 2011). Additionally, early reading problems must be assessed early in order to minimize the acceleration of reading difficulties later. And also, it is essential to

regularly assess the reading skills of early grade students in order to allow schools, policymakers, teachers, parents, and other responsible bodies to provide early intervention (Piper, 2010; Gove & Cvelich, 2011). Unless they learn to read at an early age, children cannot absorb more advanced skills and content that relies on reading. Children who do not learn to read in the early grades risk falling further and further behind in later ones, as they cannot absorb printed information, follow written instructions, or communicate well in writing (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011).

### **2.4.1. Components of Early Grade Reading Assessment**

To assess early-grade reading skills, different components of reading skills were considered. These components of early grade reading skills could be used for measuring a variety of reading skill development based on the objectives of specific assessment tools. Developing each component of reading early is crucial to success in reading and other subject areas. Likewise Children who learn to read early benefit when they start school; these essential skills must be present in order for children to have equal opportunity to access the general curriculum (Hairston, 2011). There are seven components of early grade reading skills to assess, such as letter identification and naming, familiar word reading, non-familiar word reading, phonological awareness, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension (Piper, 2010).

#### **2.4.1.1. Letter Identification and Naming**

Letter identification is one of the components of early graded reading assessment, which measures the student's knowledge of the alphabet and identifies the shape and sounds of letters depending on the list of letters (Gamu & Damole, 2021). Letter identification is the initial point for the productivity of learning in reading by producing letter sounds without meaning (Perfetti, 1986). During letter identification, letter-sound knowledge is crucial for the improvement of the alphabetic principle. Hence, when students are competent to link phonemes to corresponding letters, they are competent to acquire letter sound knowledge beyond letter identification (Dodd & Carr, 2003). According to Perfetti (1986), the letter identification principle is part of what is learned, which means the learner comes to know that a letter is the smallest print unit allied with the minimal speech unit.

Within early grade reading assessment, letter identification was the most important element to measure the letter knowledge of the students, and it also determined the future reading skill achievements of the students in later grade. It is also a basis for or directly related to the students capacity to decode words, especially in clear orthographies (RTI International 2009). Like other languages, in Amharic, letter-naming (identification of Fidel) is one of the essential components of reading that is expected to improve early in the year, and early grade students acquired the ability to identify those letters (Fidel). Thus, in Amharic language orthography, letter-name association is explicit, the name of the letters is never ignored or changed when reading, they only represent a single name no matter where they appear in words, and the nature of Amharic language is assumed to ease reading (Abdi, n.d).

Nevertheless, many students were falling behind in identifying Amharic letters and naming letters in the early grades. For example, they may identify some letters that were present without being able to read them (Piper, 2010). In addition to this, Gamu & Damole (2021) show that the majority of students were below the expected proficiency level in letter-sound identification. The letter-sound knowledge of the pupils did not achieve the expected outcome forwarded by the Ministry of Education. Hence, many students are not identifying letters at an early grade level. When children fail to identify and name letters in the first few grades, they have difficulty learning to read in later grades because, in later grades, they must absorb increasing amounts of instructional content in print form (Gove & Cvelich, 2011).

#### **2.4.1.2. Phonemic Awareness**

Phonemic awareness is one element of reading skills. It is the ability to attend to the sounds of language as separate from its meaning. Phonological awareness is directly related to reading skills. Hence, if students are aware of how the letters of the alphabet map onto individual sound units (phonemes), they have reading ability (Pang et al., 2007). When we assess early-grade reading skills, phonological awareness is crucial next to letter identification. Moreover, it is important to assess children's ability to identify sounds in spoken words. For example, how children separated and combined the words within a specific sound, each separated word and combined word to say the word bag," (b/a/g/ (Reading Rockets, 2012)

According to Lock & Welsch (2006), being phonologically aware means having a general understanding of the various ways in which all of these languages are divided into smaller components, such as words into syllables and sentences into words. For example, in the word bad, /b, /a, /d, and operated sounds include adding, omitting, and substituting sounds. Students with good phonological awareness can detect, match, blend, segment, and manipulate speech sounds because phonological awareness is sensitivity to the sound structure of language. In early grades, the skills of the students to be aware of the sound structures of the language allow them to learn more readily how to apply these skills to decode print and to understand letter-sound relationships (Melesse & Enyew, 2020; Pang et al., 2007).

Many studies have confirmed that phonological awareness is essential, particularly at the phoneme level (Lane et al., 2002; Davis et al., 2007; Melesse & Enyew, 2020; Pang et al., 2007). As students have a skill to decode, phonological awareness tasks have shown that this skill is a reading skill. Thus, children who perform well on tasks of phonemics will become good readers, but students who do not perform phonemics will become poor readers (Lane et al., 2002). Therefore, assessment in phonological awareness serves as an important tool to identify students who appear to be at risk for difficulty in acquiring beginning reading skills and to regularly monitor the progress of students who are receiving instruction in phonological awareness. To identify at-risk pupils in early grade reading skills, assessment must be strongly predictive of higher grade reading skills (Lock & Welsch, 2006).

Phonological awareness has typically been assessed using different tasks such as "rhyming, alliteration, blending of syllables, blending of speech sounds, segmenting of syllables, segmenting of speech sounds, and finally manipulation of syllables and of speech sounds", When we assess the phonological awareness of the students, it is important to consider whether the task is age-appropriate or not (Davis et al., 2007). Children who have difficulty acquiring phonological awareness and learning to relate alphabetic symbols to sounds will also face difficulties in acquiring orthographic awareness. Awareness and the ability to manipulate sounds at the phonemic level are known as phonemic awareness (Kalanje, 2011). However, according to piper (2010) results, the majority of the students in Ethiopia struggled to identify the sound of a letter in the word or in phonological awareness.

### **2.4.1.3. Familiar Word Reading**

Familiar word reading is one of the subtasks to assess students' reading skills. A familiar word is that most of the students are heard through reading or listening (Gamau & Damole, 2021). The familiar word reading subtask is similar in format to the non-word reading subtask except that it presents a list of words that children are expected to be able to read at their grade level and will have likely encountered before. Again, according to the dual-route model, children are more likely to process familiar words if they are indeed familiar and especially if they have irregular spellings directly by the lexical route. That is, they might recognize the words instantly rather than attempting to decode them sound by sound (RTI International 2009).

According to Rasheed et al. (2011), familiar word reading allows early grade students to read a sentence with effortlessness. However, reading familiar words occurred after letter identification, and it is the end of the phase of letter identification. According to Gove & Wetterberg (2011), "familiar words" are high-frequency words selected from early grade reading materials and storybooks for grade level.

### **2.4.1.4. Non-Familiar Word Reading**

Non-familiar word reading is also known as invented word reading. Non-familiar word reading is one component of reading skills used to measure the decoding proficiency of children and identify their sight word recognition abilities (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). According to Personke (1972), "non-sense word readings are processes of word reading that could be present in the language but not give meaning. Hence, non-familiar word readings have been linked to the reading achievement of the children and have involved recognition of the tasks.

Non-familiar word reading subtasks have spelling and phonological rules of a given language, like familiar word reading, to follow students when they read a written list of pseudo words that do not have meaning in the language (RTI International 2009). During assessment of non-sense word reading, words were selected that most students were not familiar with or had not seen or read before in order to determine their ability to recognize words and remove the problem of word recognition (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). Furthermore, in early grade reading assessment, measuring familiar words is not enough. Hence, assessment of non-sense word reading is vital to knowing both the decoding and word recognition skills of children. However Many students

were unable to sound out and memorize non-sense words easily in the early grades, whereas some of the students were able to memorize and recognize words in the early grades (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011).

#### **2.4.1.5. Oral Reading Fluency**

As mentioned above, reading is a complex process involving various elements such as letter identification, phonological awareness, reading fluency, and reading and listening comprehension. The competency to read text easily, quickly, accurately, and with a sense of humor plays an important role in becoming a proficient reader (Perfetti, 1986; Frankel et al., 2016). Reading fluency is one of the basic factors of successful reading skills, and it is crucial to improving early grade reading skills. This means fluency readers are focused on reading text accurately, quickly, and with care.

(Pang et al., 2007) observed that fluent readers identify vocabulary quickly, which means fluent readers have the skill to read words appropriately during reading and also know where to pause during reading the text. But vocabulary recognition is not necessary for children to read text fluently. Children must accurately read the word at the expected rate. Therefore, fluent students recognize vocabulary accurately and read the word at the expected rate, or fluency. On the other hand, comprehension with fluency is a primary focus in our reading instruction, and it is important to keep in mind that fluency is an element of the reading process that leads to effective and efficient readers. (Abadiano & Turner, n.d.)

Children require early reading fluency, especially in early primary schools. However, most of the students have reading fluency below expectations (Piper, 2010). While we strongly agree that early grade reading assessment is crucial to identify students who struggle to read fluently and give effective early intervention for those students, it also has an important contribution for educators in developing, implementing, and evaluating effective instructional programs to support every student in becoming fluent readers (Hudson et al., 2005). At this component, students are willing to read words easily and accurately, and if children struggle with reading fluency, they also struggle with reading comprehension; hence, reading fluency and comprehension have a direct relationship, although reading fluency and reading comprehension are two interrelated components of reading skills, which means it is difficult to say that students were successful in reading fluency if there are no reading comprehensions (Farr & Carey 1986).

#### **2.4.1.6. Reading Comprehension**

Reading is not the only practice of identification of letters, words, and eventually sentences; rather, reading is a practice of identification of letters and words, leading to comprehension constructed from letter to word and sentence (Bojovic, 2010; Oakhill et al., 2019). Reading comprehension is one of the main reading skills that require early grade assessment, and it will be expected by children in primary school (Bulut, 2017). Reading comprehension is a vital issue in the assessment of early grade reading. Nevertheless, reading is not just a process of easily identifying letters, words, phrases, and eventually sentences; it is also a process of receiving meaning from and giving meaning to a text (Bojovic, 2010). Therefore, reading comprehension is the connection between the reader and the text to give a meaningful response, or it is the route from previous reading to active reading to give meaningful context (Hairston, 2011).

Moreover, reading comprehension relies on more than just accurate and fluent word recognition. Ultimately, the efficiency with which a person builds a mental representation of a text's meaning. Therefore, mother-tongue instruction is important to improve children's understanding of what they read, enable them to decode the words meanings, and improve their ability to understand the text (Piper, 2010). It is not merely a procedure of decoding texts and receiving messages; reading is a process that includes skills and responding equitably to what is read. In this process, the reader connects with the text in order to correctly understand the meaning and the concept entailed in the text (Madani et al., 2016).

There are strong associations between word reading knowledge and reading comprehension, and good reading comprehension depends on word reading knowledge in the text. However, good reading comprehension is also a vital source of word knowledge. Hence, it is important to know all words in the text or to see all unfamiliar vocabularies because some of the unfamiliar words are understood in the context, and gradually we learn new vocabularies and their definitions through reading (Oakhill et al., 2019). Nevertheless, some of the students having reading comprehension problems have difficulty expressing what they are reading and are lagging within their age and appropriate grade levels. These children comprehend simple reading sentences after expected grade levels; even some students with reading comprehension problems do not understand text later in grade level (Oakhill et al., 2019). According to Piper (2010), the results show that the large majority of students scored zero in reading comprehension. Half of the

region's students scored zero; even in city administration, one quarter or more students scored zero in reading comprehension, which means they did not comprehend what they were reading.

#### **2.4.1.7. Listening Comprehension**

Listening comprehension is one of the crucial elements of early grade reading assessment and should be given enough attention to acquire early grade reading skills because if students want to read, they should first comprehend what they say (Ahmadi, 2016). This is because reading without comprehension is just like talking about something without understanding. Reading without comprehension is difficult for any reader (Gamu & Damole, 2021). Listening comprehension is the process of comprehension of spoken language (Kim & Pilcher, 2016). It helps students become proficient in early-grade reading skills and improve their comprehension. In Addis Ababa, the scores are closest to the benchmark for letter naming but still far from it, especially for reading comprehension (Piper, 2010).

### **2.5. Factors Influencing the Early Grade Reading Skill**

Many students struggle with learning to read because of multiple and complex factors. Regarding this, many researchers found out many reasons why students struggle with reading (Abdi & Therrien, 2016; Gamu & Damole, 2021; Anteneh et al., 2016; Piper, 2010; Setiasih, 2014; Hairston, 2011) because all children learn and read at different levels. Children who learn to read at home and at an early age are generally much more successful in school and show a significant improvement in reading at school. The new national education policy argues that we must focus on different factors, such as family factors and school factors, to find out the cause of reading problems. Similarly, according to Kalanje (2011), early reading skills were influenced by different factors, which means early reading did not stem from single factors that "may apply to the risk perspective of learning to read and write." Therefore, researchers have suggested various possible factors that influence early-grade reading.

### **2.5.1. Home Factors**

Reading skill acquisition does not start in school for the first time; rather, it starts at home and continues in school (Coskun, 2021). Home is the real place where early-year children develop reading and writing skills through relationships with family, including adults and other children, and it is the source of experience that can enhance early-grade reading skill development in school or education (Lefebvre & Sénéchal, 1999). According to Setiasih (2014), family literacy, especially reading, is vital to improving the early grade reading ability of their child, including supporting the child with homework, checking the child's reading skills, and family and child interaction through socialization.

Moreover, Scheele et al. (2010) also pointed out that children are characterized by good letter identification skills, phonological awareness, reading and listening comprehension skills, and good reading fluency skills if they have good family reading literacy skills. Therefore, the family is the first teacher of the students and has some background regarding the essentials of reading acquisition for students, and they are responsible for the reading skill acquisition of children at home. Within the home, one of the fundamentals and prerequisites for the early grade reading achievements of the students is family support (Sun, 2021). This could be a good base for students to improve their abilities (Coskun, 2021). Children who are at risk of reading difficulty need good family relationships to mitigate some of the impacts of the problem that can cause reading difficulty, and family can deliver "love, acceptance, and an extra opportunity for academic success" (Wu et al., 2019).

However, some of the parents do not have reading skills, and because of this, they are less likely to interact with their children through reading at home, offering socialization, direct instruction, supporting children with their homework, monitoring their learning, and creating opportunities for delivering early grade reading. Because of this, many students do not attend school and drop out (Setiasih, 2014). Hence Family literacy has a significant influence on early grade reading, which means students who have a literacy family have better early grade reading abilities than students who do not have a literacy family (Anteneh et al., 2016; Gamu & Damole, 2021).

## **2.5.2. School Factors**

### **2.5.2.1. Availability of Reading Material and Early Grade Reading Skills**

Reading is truly vital, and it is essential for all academic areas. It is commanding to realize that children were engaged in education facilities with expectations of learning to provide a sufficient education (Hairston, 2011). To facilitate education, both human and material resources are important elements to improve early learning in reading at home and at school. (Nderitu, 2018) However, the unavailability of reading materials is one of the significant factors that influences the reading acquisition of early-grade students (Hairston, 2011). Even if a teacher is with the child, reading materials are preferable for children to read at school as well as at home when they want to look at them on their own. Many low-income country primary schools were not providing constructive language proficiency materials for independent use (Nderitu, 2018). Teachers addressed early grade reading skills by using different teaching methods based on the individual's interests and by teaching students by using different supplementary classroom reading material.

Therefore, the availability of reading materials with sufficient quantity and quality plays a significant role in the success of early grade literacy acquisition (Nderitu, 2018). However, an inadequate supply of teachers, supplementary books for teachers, teacher guides, and the availability of reading material at home and in school were significant influences on early reading development (Gamun & Damole, 2021; Gove & Cvelich, 2011). Likewise In a study conducted by Kalanje (2011), it was found that there were many factors that influence the reading skill acquisition of the pupil in the early grades at home as well as at school, such as a lack of classroom infrastructure, a lack of proper teaching and learning materials, a lack of class, and a lack of supplementary books in school. Hence, those factors influence and impact students' early grade reading skill acquisition, and they also lead to the students developing learning problems in general and reading and writing difficulties in particular.

Similarly, the major resources that influence early grade reading skills, including the absence of books in the school and teaching-learning materials in most public primary schools, are inadequate and not appropriate. This means store centers, including libraries, have insufficient quantity and quality of reading material (Gove & Cvelich, 2011; Nderitu, 2018). Thus, early investigation of those factors was important to address the problem in the early stages of learning

because reading is really essential and it is important to engage in all aspects of life (Hairston, 2011, Gamu & Damole, 2021). The majority of the students were lagging behind in their early grade reading because of a lack of text books written in their mother tongue and other books at home. In most cases, researchers focused on material resources, but besides material resources, there were human resources that influenced early grade reading, including sufficient subject teachers and different professionals like special needs professionals (Anteneh et al., 2016).

Moreover, based on the researchers' findings, it can be argued that children's school reading material and school reading materials were significant for early reading acquisition, and children learning to read in the early years at home and at school would directly correlate with children's reading acquisition in the early grades (Auerbach, 1989; Chansa-Kabali et al., 2014; Aram et al.; Hairston, 2011; Gove & Cvelich, 2011). The study conducted by Nderitu (2018) also found that the availability of reading material was a significant influence on early reading skill acquisition, and the result showed that the majority of schools had inadequate reading material such as supplementary books, story books, magazines, new papers, poetry books, drama materials, and puzzle books". Similarly, in Ethiopia, the availability of reading material in school and at home made a large difference in early grade reading achievements (Gamu & Damole, 2021; Anteneh et al., 2016; Piper, 2010).

### **2.5.2.2. Instructional Methods and Early Grade Reading Skills**

Teachers are one of the most important elements of the teaching and learning process. Teachers influence students positively and negatively by several factors, including instructional decisions such as selecting classroom materials, revising teaching techniques, and organizing student-learning groups (Begeny et al., 2008). Using different teaching methods could improve children's reading performance (Melesse & Enyew, 2020). However, teachers must first know the students behaviors or the characteristics of their personalities, the steps of development in which the students were developed throughout school life, including motor, social, emotional, and educational, and the way they learn to address instructional decisions, including classroom materials, teaching methodology, and organizing students in the classroom (Silva (2010).

Similarly, classroom teachers had the power to activate students and motivate individuals by facilitating different interventions, including teaching methods and using reading material in the classroom, for the improvement of reading skills including sound letter correspondence, speed,

pronunciation, reading familiar and non-familiar words, listening, and reading comprehension (Melesse & Enyew, 2020). Hence Identification of students with reading difficulties is important to teach children at home as well as at school and at an early age for much greater success in reading (Hairston, 2011).

The students' struggles with reading varied depending on the students themselves, but all children can learn and read at different levels. Teachers may realize whether their students are struggling to read or not. Nevertheless, many children were lagging behind in education because of a lack of awareness to identify struggling readers at an early age and in the early grades. Thus, teachers did not see this as a problem because they did not have the awareness to identify reading difficulties. Not only teachers, but their families also do not know if their children are learning to read or not, especially in the critical early grades (Gove & Cvelich, 2011). Furthermore, in almost all cases, neither the children with dyslexia nor their teachers seemed to know that the children were struggling in school because of this hidden learning disability. All the teachers did not even know that there is such a thing as reading difficulty. Due to a lack of awareness of the nature of reading difficulty, students, parents, and their teachers were labeled as lazy, stupid, retarded, and disruptive and had an unhappy time at school, when in fact they may be highly intelligent and trying incredibly hard. It is not uncommon in Ethiopia to hear stories of the neglect of students with reading difficulties in school.

### **2.5.2.3. Accessibility of the Environment and Early Grade Reading Skills**

It is expected that a number of risk factors will have a negative influence on the reading skills of students in preschool as well as in early grade levels, and these factors will influence them directly and indirectly (Cadima et al., 2010). In a study conducted by Kalanje (2011), it was found that, in the school environment, there were many factors that influenced the reading skill acquisition of the pupil in the early grades, including the inaccessibility of the school library for all students and the location of the library. Similarly, Chansa-Kabali et al. (2014) show that the home environment is one aspect of the environment that makes accessible conditions for reading, and it is an ecological setting that delivers literacy and supports reading development. These include local games, plays, and songs; reading rooms.

In addition to the in school, it is a fact that an accessible environment is important to improve early grade reading and prevent at-risk students from developing reading difficulties (Nderitu,

2018). It looks like most of the students are interested in literacy, especially reading and writing, when they have an accessible or quiet environment in school as well as at home. Hence, interest in reading increased when the environment supported literacy development (Cunningham, 2008).

Furthermore, the environment is a crucial setting for the acquisition of early literacy, especially in reading, because students grasp new things in the environment, such as observing the literacy activities of others and engaging in joint reading activities with other people, but if the environment is full of barriers, the students are not interested in or enjoying reading activities (Carroll, 2013). Similarly, according to Maxwell & Evans (2000), students have good reading skills in good condition. In this regard, students gave their attention when the environment was suitable, unless they were disturbed if the environment was destructive. However, in low-income countries, early childhood education centers tend to take a more destructive than playful approach to preparing their children for communicative competency (Nderitu, 2018).

### **2.5.3. Specific Learning difficulty**

Reading difficulties, reading disabilities and dyslexia are common concepts used in the LD field in referring to problems associated with reading. The terms are understood differently by different people. Often, the terms have been used interchangeably, although each of them has a distinctive meaning in the field of reading and writing. All the terms are identified under the larger LD term, which encompasses different kinds of specific learning problems. Reading difficulties, specifically, is a general term referring to various kinds of reading problems, including dyslexia (also referred to as reading disability) and its other forms. Reading difficulties and the associated problems of writing and spelling have been extensively researched as individual aspects, but also to a great extent as a subgroup “dyslexia,” within the much larger learning disability (LD) group (Kirk, et, al., 2000).

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. It manifested by the difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and social cultural opportunity. It is dependent upon fundamental cognitive disabilities which are frequently of constitutional origin (Hoiem & Lundberg, 2000). These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom

instruction and the consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge ((Kalanje, 2011).

Specific learning difficulty mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills. It is characterized by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory and processing speed but its effects can be mitigated by appropriately specific intervention, including the application of information technology and supportive counseling (Puolakanaho, 2007). There is a discrepancy between the child's ability and what the child actually achieves in terms of reading (Vellutino, et, al., 2004). Hence Difficulty in reading is a problem where students may not know how to read to understand it and may not actively focus on the meaning of what they are reading or know how to monitor their comprehension.

## 2.5. Conceptual framework

Having made a critical review of various related literatures, the conceptual framework of this study was presented on figure 1.

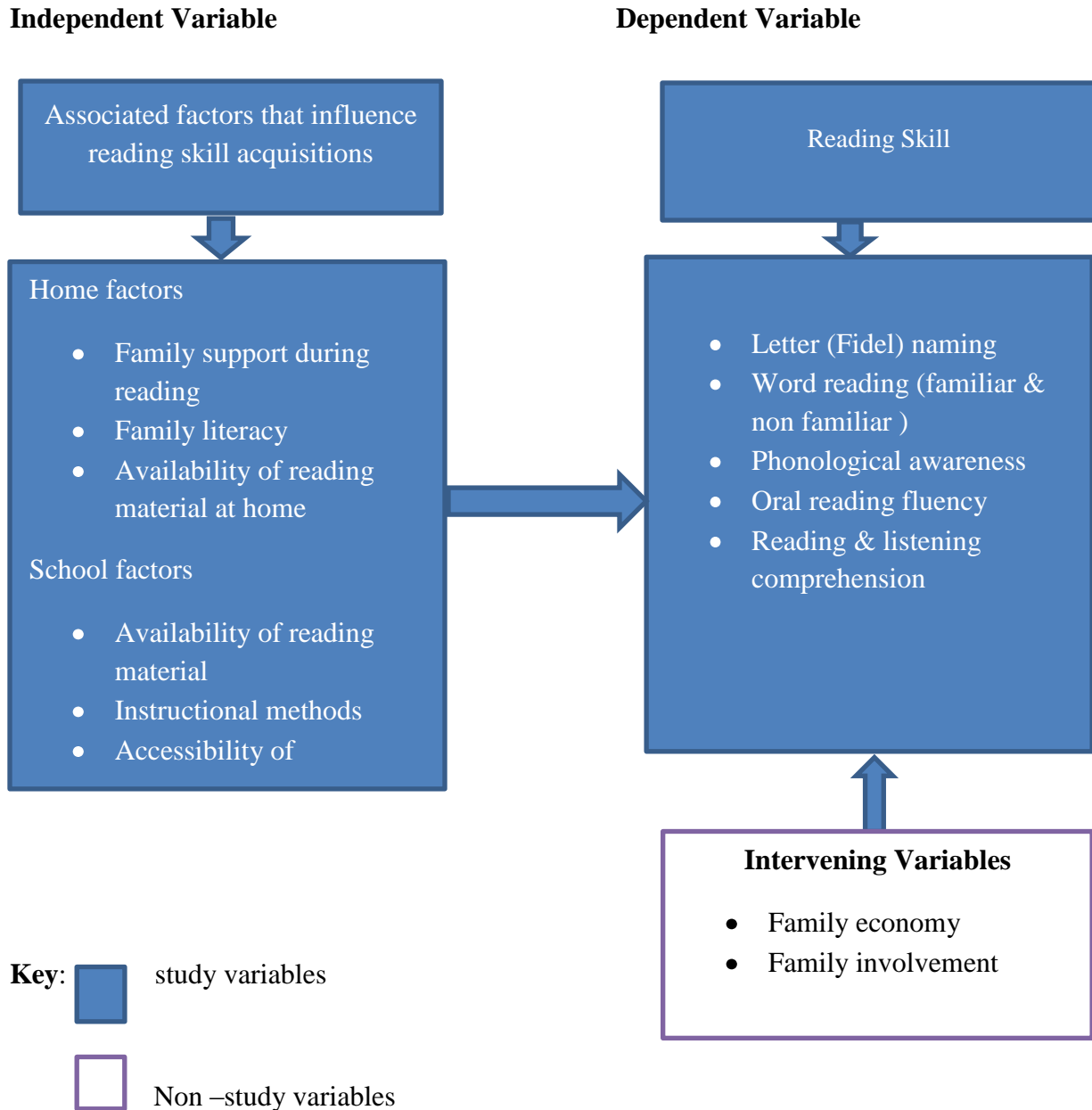


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study (source: researcher's own design)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

Explanatory sequential design and mixed data analysis approaches were employed for the conduct of the study through collecting relevant data. According to Plano Clark (2011), an explanatory sequential design delivers mixed approaches to collect quantitative data first and then qualitative data to explain or further develop the quantitative results.

The reason to use an explanatory sequential design was that the researcher used quantitative data complimented and supplemented by qualitative data collection to further analyze and expand the finding of the general picture of the study. Finally all data collected in quantitative and qualitative method were interpreted and an analyzed organically linked thematic issues.

In addition, mixed methods were used to combine the results. According to Creswell, J.W. (2003) stated that mixed approaches were very important in educational research to benefit from each method, offset different weaknesses, and take their strengths from each method. It also provided more wide-ranging answers to the research questions, rather than going beyond a single approach. It can increase confidence in the results and provide more evidence while addressing possible shortcomings in using a single approach (Nutter, 2009; Caruth, 2013; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). While conducting mixed-methods research can be time-consuming, it can help answer broader questions and uncover insights that might otherwise have been missed (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

#### **3.2. Description of the Study Area**

This study was conducted Yeka Sub-city in Addis Ababa city administration woreda 1 and woreda 2 government primary schools. The Yeka sub city is located in the northeastern suburbs of the Addis Ababa city. It borders the sub city of Gullele, Arada, Kirkos, and Bole. In Yeka sub-city, there are 12 woreda. From this woreda, the researcher selected two woreda, which are worda 1 and worda 2. The reason to select this these worda was because of available to me to do this research by using availability sampling. According to the Addis Ababa Education Bureau's Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2014 E.C., in woreda 1 and woreda 2, there were a total of

5 government primary schools. Three schools in Worda One and two schools in Worda Two. From this, two schools were selected for the current study (one school in Worda One and one school in Worda Two). These are Hezebawi Serawit Primary School and Tegle Lenasant Primary School. The schools were selected randomly by using simple random sampling.

### 3.3. Targeted Population

Target populations were groups of individuals from which samples were taken for measurements. Orodh (2008) said that it was the set of elements that the researcher focused upon and to which the results obtained by testing the sample were generalized, and it was also known as the "theoretical population. The targeted population in the study was all grade 3 students, all teachers who teach Amharic language, and school principals in Hizebawi Serawit and Tegle Lenasant primary schools. In Hizebawi Serawite and Tegle Lenasant primary schools, there were 300 grade three students, 4 grade three Amharic teachers, and 2 school principals. The total population of this study was 306.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Targeted Population

No	Name of school	Numbers of students			Numbers of teachers			Numbers of school principals		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Hizebawi Serawite	97	106	203	1	1	2	1	-	1
2	Tegele Lentsant	43	54	97	1	1	2	1	-	1
Total	2	140	160	300	2	2	4	2	0	2

### **3.4. Sampling and Sampling Techniques for the Study**

Sampling was a section of participants from the population to represent the population. In qualitative research, sample size was entirely a matter of judgment, whether the information was rich or not. Hence, in the qualitative approach, there were no set of rules. Similarly, the information collected from a small number of people could possibly be very available, especially if the cases were information-rich, whereas in quantitative research, the collection of information was very available from the sample variables (Etikan & Bala, 2017). According to Shi (2015), stratified random sampling is used for heterogeneous populations to narrow the difference between different types of individuals through classification.

Stratified simple random sampling used for heterogeneous groups of population and classifying them and then selecting representatives in each category. In this study the researcher classified the students as male and female and selected representatives from each category randomly to avoid the issue of misrepresentation or overrepresentation of respondents that might result. Mainly due to the fact that the total number of male and female students varies in each school. Stratified simple random sampling was used to select students in Tegle Lentsant and Hizebawi Serawit primary schools.

Purposive sampling used to select the participants based on the information. Therefore in this study all grade three Amharic teachers were selected based on the experience of teaching in these schools by using purposive sampling. Likewise, two woreda, namely woreda 1 and woreda 2, were selected from the 12 woreda found in Yeka sub-city through availability sampling. Which is available to the researcher? In addition to this, two schools were also selected randomly by using simple random sampling techniques or lottery methods through simple random sampling. But the researcher's used census school principals. Hence, the total size of the study consisted of 176 respondents. Among these respondents were 171 grade three students, 3 teachers based on the experience, and 2 school principals.

To be free from bias, for determining the sample size, of the students the following formula proposed by Yemane (1967) was used.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where N = total population

n = sample size

e = significant of error at 95% of confidence level in this case margin of error 5%

$$n = \frac{300}{1 + 300(0.05)^2} = 171$$

Based on the above calculation, the study was took true margin of error 5% with confidence level of 95%.

### **3.5. Data Collection Instruments**

The main tools used to collect data were reading assessment test, an interview guide, and an observation checklist.

#### **3.5.1. Reading assessment test**

The tests were prepared based on the ideas from basic reading assessments and administered to the students to obtain information regarding Amharic language.

Reading tests include the following subscales:

1. **Letter Name Recognition:** The researcher assessed grade three students' ability to identify Amharic fields and letters without substitution or hesitation. The task contains 100 letters distributed in 10 rows of 10. This list of 100 letters was selected randomly. The researcher was slash if the students were not identified and named the letter correctly, and the researcher put the letter if the students substituted the letter. This part of the test was designed to take place in 60 seconds or one minute. Likewise, the test also measures phonological awareness of letters within a single word. The purpose of the phonological awareness test was to assess students understanding of phonemes, the smallest detectable unit of sound in Amharic language, and their understanding of grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) relationships in Amharic syllables at different locations in a word, or recognizing all of the Amharic Fidel's or letters in a word. To

determine the phonological awareness of the students' ability to distinguish letters within a single word, the researcher conducted 10 items. This test was not timed.

**2. Familiar Word Reading:** In this subscale, the researcher assessed grade three students' competency to read words quickly. The task contains 50 words distributed in 5 rows of 10 words. The list of words was derived from a third-grade textbook in Amharic, and the words were familiar to students and were told a lot of times in the text book. Like in letter naming, if the students did not correctly read the familiar word, the researcher would slash that word. Similarly, if the students were to add, substitute, lose place, and omit the letter in the word, the researcher would slash and write those letters, which were omit, add, and substitute.

**3. Non-Familiar or Non-Sense Word Reading:** In this test, the researcher assessed the student's ability to read words that could exist in Amharic but do not give sense or meaning. In addition to this, the researcher was assessing the decoding ability of the students rather than just identifying words by observation or sighting. In addition to this, the researcher also assessed the students for omitted words, addition, substitution, and loss of place during reading. The procedure used by the researcher was similar to familiar word reading. In this test, the researcher administered 50 words or items distributed in 5 rows of 10 words to determine the student's ability to decode word fluency within 60 seconds or one minute.

**4. Oral Reading Fluency:** In this subscale, the researcher assessed the student's ability to read Amharic passages accurately and fluently in a given time. The passage was appropriate to the local area, which was Addis Ababa, and focused on grade three students. The word in the passage was selected according to grade three. If the students did not correctly read the word in the passage, the researcher was looking for a slash in that word. The passage had 60 words, and this subscale assesses the student's ability to read each word in the passage at a good rate and accurately within 60 seconds or one minute.

**5. Reading Comprehension:** In this test, the researcher assessed a third-grade student's competency to comprehend what he or she read. After the students read the story, the researcher was asked different questions based on the students' reading passage. The students are not going back to the story to refer to when answering the question. In this study, five items were

administered to grade three students to assess Amharic reading comprehension based on the student's reading passage, but the test was not timed.

**6. Listening Comprehension:** in this subscale, the researcher assessed the students' ability to understand a simple oral story. This evaluated a child's ability to concentrate and to know a very simple Amharic story to read orally. Then the researcher asked different questions based on the researcher's reading passage. In this subscale, the researcher assesses the attention of the students and, at the same time, their comprehension. To know that this researcher was prepared to read five pertaining items based on the story orally

Note: The reading test will be adopted from the Ethiopian EGRA tool in 2010, with some modifications to make it contextual in Amharic language and grade level.

At the same time, the students also respond to questions regarding home and school environments related to reading skill acquisition. Therefore, in this research, there were nine questions adopted by researchers.

### **3.5.2. Interview Guide**

In this study, an interview guide was employed to obtain information on the qualitative aspect of the study. The study involved a newly developed interview guide in line with the objectives of the study. It was first adopted by the researcher and then evaluated early by different individuals (experienced Amharic teachers, PhD candidates, and university lecturers in the same field of study). The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide. A semi-structured interview allowed the participants a significant degree of latitude. When a certain question was asked, the participants were given freedom to talk about the questions and give their views in their own time, unlike in a structural interview (Bell, 1993).

In this study, interview guide questions were in person interview with three Amharic language teachers and two school principals. According to the seniority of the teachers at the schools, the informants were chosen via purposeful sampling. All interviews were conducted informally to record the participants' most intimate thoughts and opinions in the location chosen by the informants. The Data was only be collected with the informed consent of participants, and their personal information was kept private. With the informed participants' consent, every interview

was digitally recorded. The interview guideline was focused on the main objective of the research.

### **1. Teachers**

Amharic language Teachers are one of the most important elements of the teaching and learning process. Teachers are powerful because they can gather useful information that could be put into useful practice. Therefore, in this research, teachers were a major source of data. Hence, three Amharic subject teachers were involved. The major issues collected from the teachers' interviews were related to school factors that influence the reading skill acquisitions of grade three students. To collect data from teachers through interviews, the researcher adopted more than nine leading questions. Based on these leading questions, the researcher asked additional questions during the interview because the researcher's used semi-structured interview methods.

### **2. School Principals**

This very fact calls for a variety of data to furnish important information pertaining to the research objective. So in addition to the teacher, the school principal is one source of information to find out school-related factors for grade three students because, most of the time, the school principal manages the resources and addresses them to improve early grade reading skills. Therefore, in this research, useful information was obtained from two school principals through interviews related to school-related factors that hindered students' reading ability. There were six leading questions adopted by the researcher. But some of the questions were proven within this leading question because the questions were open-ended.

### **3.5.3. Observation Checklist**

Observation was used as a supporting method in the interview with the aim of clarifying or understanding the problem in detail. Observation is a research method that enables researcher's to systematically observe and record people's behavior, actions, and interactions. The method also allowed researcher's to obtain detailed descriptions of social settings or events in order to situate people's behavior in their own sociocultural context (Hennink et al., 2020). Observations also provide important additional sources of data for verifying and expanding the information obtained by other methods, such as interviews (Hennink et al., 2020).

The researcher organized observations checklist by focusing on inside the classroom and outside the classroom. Inside the classroom the researcher was observed, the classroom or learning space, Amharic reading material in the class (alphabet chart, bottle caps, flash cards, manipulative, local materials, etc.), the teaching methods, teacher management in the classroom, and providing equal opportunity to participate in the class (students seated in different parts of the classroom, students with reading difficulty, students having ability, etc.). And outside the classroom, Amharic reading material in the school library, the school environments comfortable for reading. To observe outside and inside the classroom the researcher's taken two month. All checklists were conducted to record factors that influence reading skill acquisitions inside and outside the classroom. Every observation were record by take note, video recorded and take photo. The observation checklist was focused on the main objective of the research.

### **3.6. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments**

The validity and reliability of the instruments were checked by conducting a pilot test before administering the final instrument. The pilot test was conducted on 30 grade three students in one primary school, which is Kedus Markos Primary School.

The validity of the tool to assess the reading ability of the students was primarily ensured by using school text books. Reading test items formed for students are used in common Amharic books and are familiar to grade three students. Additionally, the validity of the reading test was further evaluated early by different individuals (respondents or experienced Amharic teachers, PhD candidates, advisors, and university lecturers in the same field of study).

Reliability was measured using Cronbach alpha coefficients. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is vital to knowing the internal consistency of the items for the different dimensions of the reading test (Anteneh et al., 2016). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value ranges from 0 (not consistent) to 1 (highly reliable). This means that internal consistency is acceptable if Cronbach's alpha is high and the reliability (accuracy, stability, and robustness) of the instrument is high enough to use that higher value for the reliability test for the various dimensions of the reading test. The reliability of the EGRA, 2021 tests was greater than 0.90.

Table 2: Summary of the Reliability Test

No	Sub scale	Number of items	$\alpha$ -coefficients
1	Letter naming (Fidel naming)	100	.83
2	phonological awareness	10	.79
3	Familiar word reading	50	.81
4	non-familiar word reading	50	.86
5	Oral reading fluency	60	.79
6	Reading comprehension	5	.87
7	Listening comprehension	5	.88
	TOTAL	280	.86

### 3.7. Data Collection Procedures

First, all data collection tools were adopted, mainly focused on early grade three student's reading assessment and factors influencing early grade reading skill acquisition. Then, to solve ambiguity, a pilot survey was organized. Then, for the process of data gathering, the researcher gave orientation to the enumerators regarding the general procedure and rules of EGRA and ways of administering different sub-tasks of reading. To collect accurate data, the minimum requirement of an enumerator's qualification was a degree or above and skills in speaking, reading, listing, and writing Amharic. Similarly, the validity of qualitative parts of the data was also evaluated early by PhD candidates and advisors.

After that, the letter was secured from the department of special needs and inclusive education. Then the researcher wrote a letter to the school principal and explained the purpose of the study. Finally, the data collection began, obtained from researcher and enumerators through reading test for the quantitative part based on the rules of the reading test. And the qualitative part of the data was obtained from the researcher through an open-ended interview guide and observation checklist after securing the participants.

### **3.8. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The study was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. In this regard, the average performances of children in the various reading skill tasks were analyzed using mean scores. In addition to this, their performance in the reading subtask was also analyzed using percentages at different points and benchmarks. Likewise, the difference in oral reading fluency scores between the variables affecting Amharic language reading skill acquisition was analyzed using an independent sample t-test. To analyze the average performance of children in the various reading skill tasks and the difference in oral reading fluency scores by the variables affecting Amharic language reading skill acquisition, the researcher used Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26.

On the other hand, the data collected through an interview guide based on open-ended research questions and an observation checklist were analyzed qualitatively. The collected data was organized and analyzed in a sequential, interrelated process. The data collected from the participants were transcribed and translated from Amharic to English. By reading texts as well as listening to the audio recorded data frequently, the researcher collected, reviewed, and identified the data and put them into different themes through the preparation of the themes based on the leading question or research question. Some of the themes were supported by direct quotations from the participants.

### **3.9. Ethical Consideration**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), those ethical issues received serious attention in both qualitative and quantitative research. Taking this into account, the researchers informed the participants about the purpose of research, the expected duration and procedure, the right to participate, and the benefits of research.

The codes of ethics for this research included the following: "In this research, the participation of the participants was voluntary. In addition to this, participants were given an honorable chance to ask about the study either before or during their participation. Furthermore, the information that was given to the researchers was secured, and the researcher requested the participants' permission to record by mobile and gave them a chance to change their ideas. The researcher used a code or changed his name.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of information gathered from the participants of the study through reading test, an interview guide, and an observation checklist. Descriptive statistics for various reading skill tasks were analyzed by using mean scores and percentages at different points and benchmarks. And also, the difference in oral reading fluency scores caused by the variables affecting Amharic language reading skill acquisition was analyzed using an independent sample t-test. On the other hand, the data collected through interviews and an observation checklist were analyzed into different themes based on the leading question or research question. Some of the themes were supported by direct quotations from the participants.

#### **4.1. The Return Rate of Responses**

In this research, three data collection tools were used: reading test, interviews, and an observation checklist. The reading test was organized in Amharic to assess early grade reading skills and administered to 171 grade three students selected from two sample primary schools.

Out of those 171 students, 155 actively participated, but 14 students did not participate in the study because their mother tongue was different from Amharic and two of them had low vision. Hence, the return rate was 91%. Similarly, two school principals were selected for interviews prepared in Amharic. All of the school principals were involved. Thus, the return rate was about 100%. An interview was also conducted with three Amharic teachers, which means 100% of the teachers were involved. Therefore, the return rates of the participants were fruitful for the researcher to analyze the results.

## 4.2. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

In this section, the background characteristics or information of the sample participant were presented, including gender, age, and grade level; education level; and years of experience, which have been described using frequencies and percentages. Below this, the demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in a table. 3

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

No	Variable		Teachers		school principal		Students	
			Frequency	%	frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Gender	Male	1	33.3	2	100	73	47.1
		Female	2	66.7	-	-	82	52.9
		Total	3	100	2	100	155	100%
2	Age	8-10	-	-	-	-	131	84.6
		11-15	-	-	-	-	24	15.4
		16-20	-	-	-	-	-	-
		21-25	-	-	-	-	-	-
		26-30	1	33.3	1	50	-	-
		31-35	-	-	1	50	-	-
		Above 35	2	66.7	-	-	-	-
		Total	3	100	2	100	-	100
3	Grade	Grade2	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Grade 3	-	-	-	-	155	100
		Total	-	-	-	-	155	100
4	Years of experience	1-5 years	1	33.3	2	100	-	-
		6-10 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
		11-15 years	2	66.7	-	-	-	-
		Above 16 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Total	3	100	2	100	-	-
5	Education level	Certificate	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Diploma	2	66.7	-	-	-	-
		Degree	1	33.3	1	50	-	-
		MA	-	-	1	50	-	-
		Above	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Total	3	100	2	100	-	-

As presented in the above table, 82 (52.9%) of the participants were female students, and the other 73 (47.1%) were males. And also the large number of participants: 118 (76.1%) were 9-year-old students, followed by 10-year-olds (15.7%) and 8-year-olds (8.5%). The smallest participants were in the age groups of 11, 12, and 15 years old (3.9%), 13 years old (2.3%), and 15 years old (1.6%), respectively. Additionally, the above table shows that all of the participants were third-grade students. When we proceed to teachers, the table also shows that the numbers of female teachers are greater than male teachers in both of the schools. As to their age, only one of them is under 30. The other two are over 35 years old. On the other hand, of the total participants, the majority of the teachers are diploma holders, and the rest are degree holders. With regard to this, the qualifications of primary school teachers were suggested to be diploma holders and above. Accordingly, all of the teachers were diploma holders or above. When we saw their work experience, one of them had 3 years' of work experience, and the other 2 teachers had between 11 and 15 years of teaching experience.

Similarly, the table indicated that all of the school principals were male, and one of them was a degree holder, and the other is MA holders. This could be recommended for school principals. Concerning the experience of the school principals, one had 8 years of experience in teaching and three years of experience as school principal, and the other had 10 years of experience in teaching and 4 years of experience as principal. This could be engorged to improve the early grade reading ability of the students when the principal had both teaching and principal experience in order to manage instructional activity, especially in reading. Hence, in this school, there was no problem regarding the experience and qualifications of teachers and the school principal, as we saw in the above table 3.

### **4.3. Analysis of Findings Obtained From Early Grade Reading Assessment**

The results of the early grade reading assessment were analyzed into letter identification and naming, phonological awareness, familiar word reading, non-familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. Accordingly, all of these components of EGRA were analyzed by classifying the findings observed from the reading skill assessment into four groups based on the students reading skills (Piper, 2010). These were;-

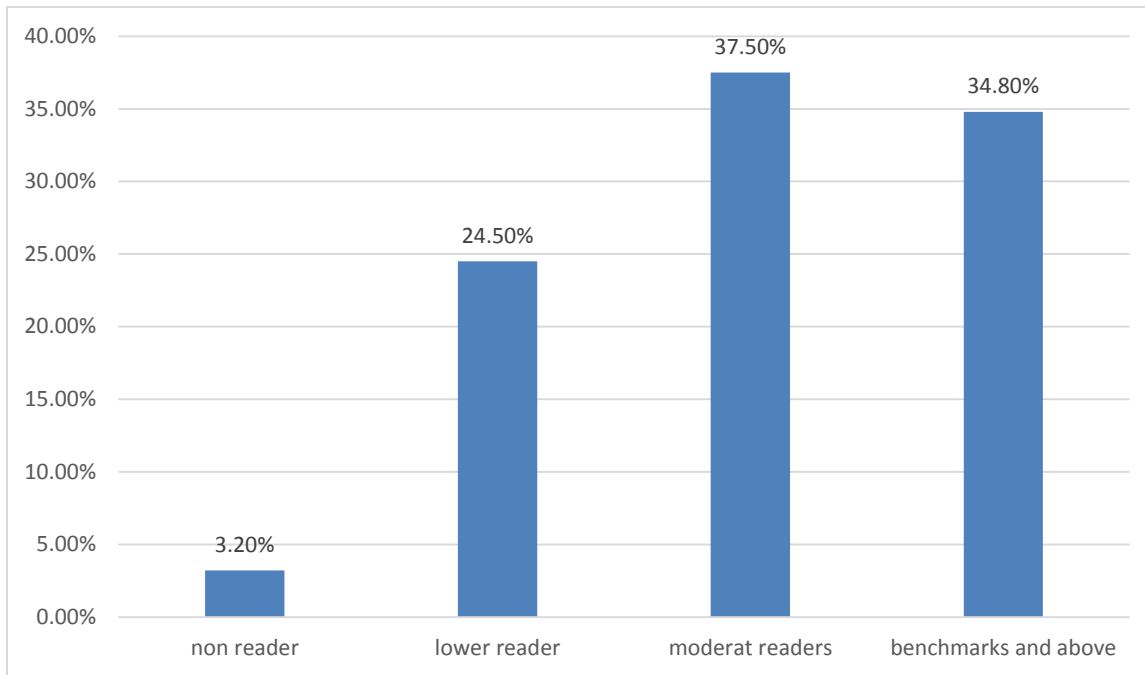
- **Non-readers:** these students did not read a single word or letter per minute and scored zero in all subscales of early grade reading skill assessments.
- **Lower reading skill:** these students read 1–34 words per minute, were weak readers, and had lower scores in all subscales of early grade reading skill assessments.
- **Moderate reading skill:** these students read 35–59 words per minute and moderately read in all EGRA tasks with increasing fluency and comprehension.
- **Benchmark and above:** these students read more than 60 words per minute and met the expected requirements. And also, these students had good reading skills at their grade level. In short, they were fluent readers and fully comprehended what they read and listened to.

Based on the above classification of students reading skills, the results were analyzed based on the variables of the study to assess the early grade reading skills of grade three students.

#### **4.3.1. Letter Identification and Naming Skill**

In the letter identification and naming skill assessment subscale, the researcher measured the ability of grade three students to identify letters, or Fidel, and name them in Amharic. The letters were randomly selected and presented to the students in order to examine the students' ability to identify the letters and name the letters according to the randomly selected letters.

Figure 2: Percentages of grade three students' letter identification skills at different benchmarks



As shown in the above figure 2, the letter identification and naming results indicated that 5 (3.2%) of the students were non- readers and 38 (24% of the students) were lower reader. According to this, 3% of the students were substituted from one letter to the other, like **ቁ ከ ን ቁ ጃ፣ ዠ ከ ን ቁ ዠ፣ ና ጠ ከ ን ቁ ጠ** and these students had difficulty recognizing and identifying the sounds of one letter to the other; 19% had limited reading fluency when they read the letters; and the remaining students were left out and had difficulty reading the letters in sequence; rather, they lost place when they were read. Furthermore, significant numbers of students were moderate readers 58 (37.5%), and these students read with increasing fluency and comprehension. Regarding moderate readers, students had no substitute letters and lost place when they were reading; rather, they had difficulty reading letters fluently and correctly in the expected time. The remaining 54 (34.8%) of the students met the minimum expected requirement and above reading skills in their grade level and read fluently and with full comprehension.

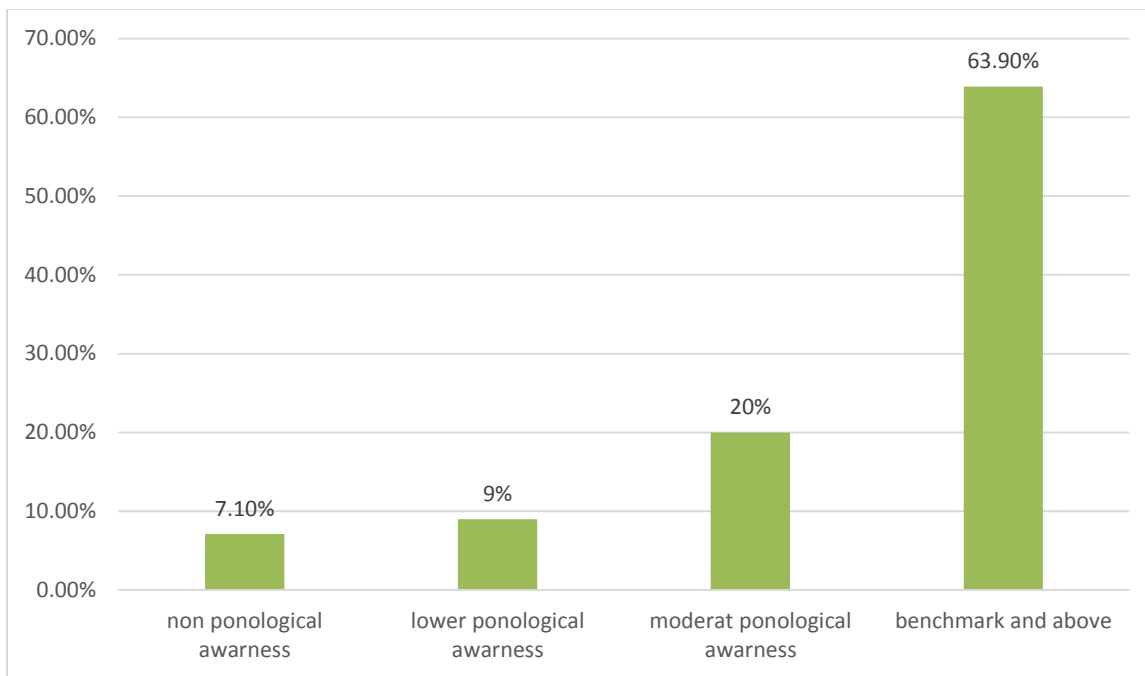
Therefore, for most of grade three, the students were below the expected minimum competence in letter identification and naming. Out of the total participants, 28% of the students had difficulty with letter identification, and 37.5% of the students were increasing their reading

fluency, but still, there was a limitation to recognizing and reading letters in the expected time. This indicated that those students were likely to influence later grades.

### 4.3.2. Phonological Awareness

This section attempted to assess the phonological awareness of the students in recognizing all of the Amharic Fidel's, or letters, in a word. The result was analyzed into four categories based on the skills of the students.

Figure 3: Percentages of grade three students' phonological awareness skills at different benchmarks



As presented in the above figure 3, the result of the phonological awareness of the students indicated that 11 (7.1%) of the students in grade three could not read Amharic Fidel letters in a single word. 14 (9%) of the students read Amharic Fidel or letters in a word with limited reading fluency and comprehension. According to this, some of the students had difficulty distinguishing the sounds of letters in the word, for example: - ሙላበሮ they listen to the sound of a letter in the word like ሙላበሮ rather than ሙላጎበሮ and ሞላት they listen to the sound of litter in the word like ሞላት rather than ሞላጎት. On the other hand, 31 (20%) of the students were moderately phonologically aware of the letters in the word, but they did not meet the expected requirement

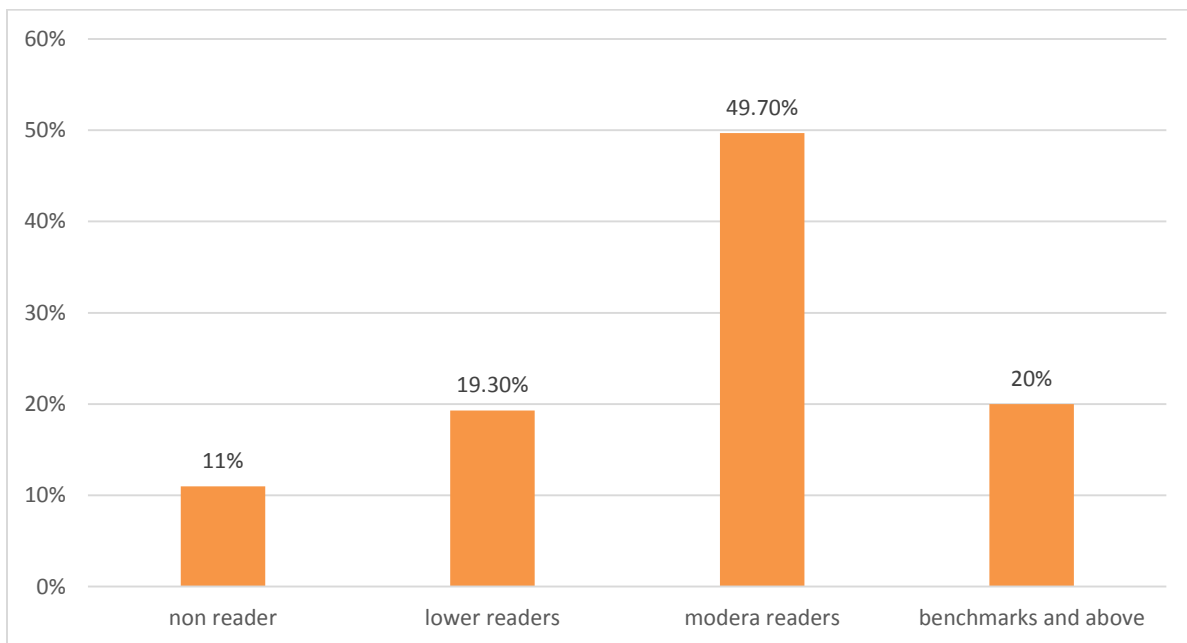
of knowing the sounds of the letters in the word. Furthermore, significant numbers of third grade students read a letter in a word, 99 (63.9%). Regarding this, those students had full comprehension, and they listened to the word and distinguished the sound of each letter in the word.

However, even if the majority of students were reading benchmarks and above, significant numbers of the students struggled to distinguish the sound of the letter in the word, and these students were prepared to drop out and repeat in the next grade.

### 4.3.3. Familiar Word Reading

This section attempted to assess the student's Amharic-familiar word-reading skills within a given time frame. Like that of letter identification, the result was analyzed into four categories based on the students reading skills.

Figure 4: Percentages of grade three students' familiar word reading skills at different benchmarks



As indicated in Figure 4, out of a total of 155 participants, 17 (11%) did not read a single word, and they were non- readers. Concerning these students, they had not read a single word independently or were avoiding reading. And some of them were able to read, but they could not read correctly. Moreover, 30 (19.3%) of students read familiar words with limited fluency.

Regarding this, some of the students left out words during reading, like letter identification, and the remaining other students' added letters to the words, avoiding prefix and suffix letters in the words like, ቀጥቶ ፤ ምን ዋና ፤ ማለት ፤ ግ ፤ ተ፤ ሸሰ ፤ ሙ፤ ች, etc. And those students had difficulty sounding out words correctly or blending sounds into words. Additionally, 77 (49.7%) of students moderately read familiar words per minute. They were not reading correctly at the expected rate prepared by the minister of education. The remaining 31 (20%) of the students were benchmarks and above, and they read fluently and with full comprehension.

Therefore, 30% of grade three students had at risk for reading difficulty in familiar words in Amharic. These students were probably hidden in other subjects because reading is very important and the basis for other subjects. The other 49.7% of the students had read familiar words, but they did not read them at the expected rate. In short, the majority of third grade students struggled with familiar word reading.

### 4.3.4. Non-Familiar Word Reading

In this section, the Amharic language non-familiar word reading ability of the grade three students was assessed. Based on the findings, the data were analyzed by percentage. And also, the results were categorized into four groups based on the ability of the students.

Figure 5: Percentages of grade three students' non-familiar word reading skills at different benchmarks

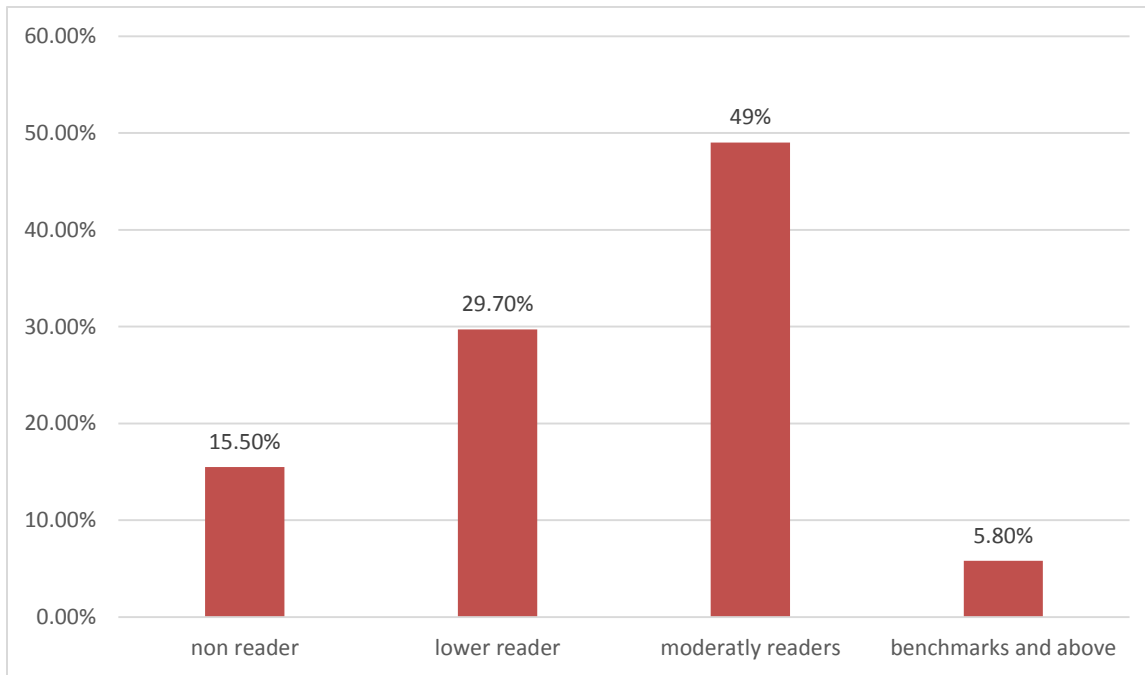


Figure 5 indicated that the results of the non-familiar word reading ability of the students were analyzed into four categories based on their skills. According to the first category, out of 155 participants, 24 (15.5%) were nonreaders or scored zero. In this regard, the majority of the students were reading tall letters rather than words. And also, some of them tried to read, but they could not read correctly. As with most of the participants, 46 (29.7%) of the students were lower readers in non-familiar word reading within a given time. To claim that those students were weak readers and had difficulty decoding nonsense words. Like in familiar word reading, the majority of lower-level readers in non-familiar word reading had difficulty keeping place in reading or left out places, and they disliked reading independently when they were reading.

76 (49%) of the participants were moderate readers. These students were becoming fluent readers and improving their reading comprehension with unfamiliar words. Nevertheless,

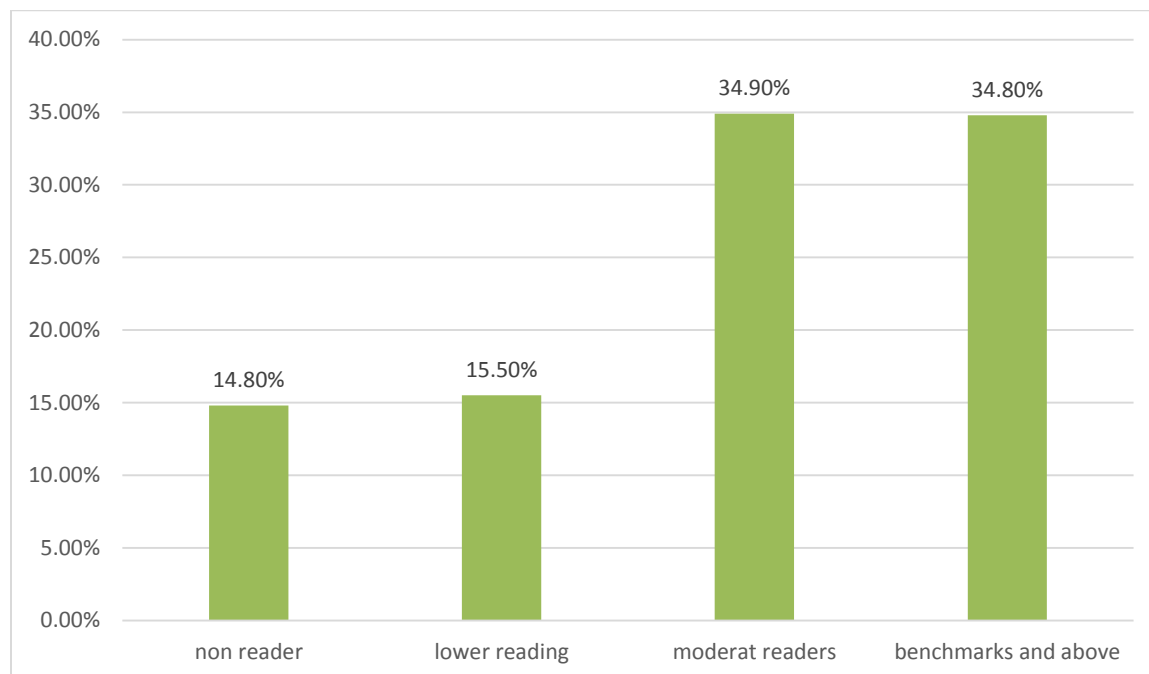
significant numbers of moderate readers did not meet the expected benchmarks forwarded by the minister of education in non-familiar word reading per minute. The remaining 9 (5.8%) of the participants met the benchmarks and above, and the students had non-familiar word reading skills within the expected requirements forwarded by the minister of education. These students were fluent readers with full comprehension skills.

Hence, the results of the study, as shown in the above figure, indicated that more than 90% of grade three students scored below the expected requirements to read non-familiar words in Amharic. With regard to this, out of the 90% of the participants who scored less than the expected minimum requirements, 45% of grade three students struggled with non-familiar word reading.

#### 4.3.5. Oral Reading Fluency

In this sub-section, the researcher measures the ability of students to achieve oral reading fluency in Amharic. Which means the researcher assessed the students ability to read the Amharic passage at the expected rate and accurately. Accordingly, the results of oral reading fluency were analyzed into four categories, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 6: Percentages of grade three students' oral reading fluency skills at different benchmarks



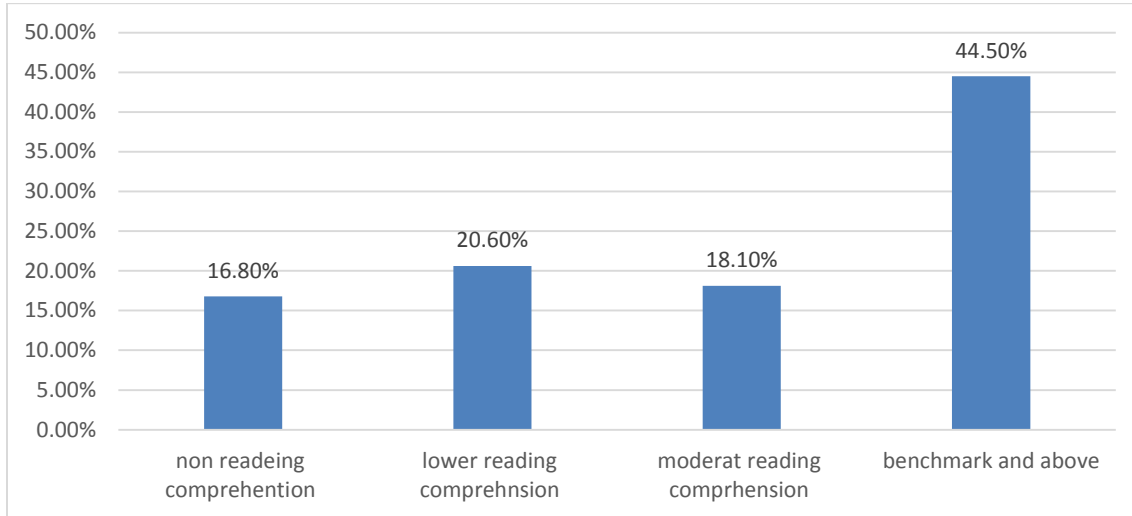
As seen from Figure 6, 23 (14.8%) of respondents scored zero in Amharic language oral reading fluency within a given time. This means that students did not read a single word orally and fluently in a given passage in the given time. Additionally, this result indicated that these students who scored zero had difficulty reading passages accurately and fluently. Whereas out of 155 participants, 24 (15.5%) of the students were lower readers. These students were weak readers in terms of oral reading fluency, but they were transcending into non-readers. However, these students were at risk of having reading difficulties later in academic life. 54 (34.9%) of the respondents were moderate readers, which means that students were increasing fluency in oral reading but were not reading the passage with the expected rate and accuracy within the given time. The remaining 54 (34.8%) of the participants read the passage fluently and accurately within a given time.

Thus, the majority of grade three students scored below benchmarks in Amharic language oral reading fluency. From this, it is possible to deduce that 65.2% of the participants did not read the passage with the expected rate and accuracy within the given time.

#### **4.3.6. Reading Comprehension**

In the reading comprehension assessment, the researcher measured the ability of the student's reading comprehension within a given passage. In this section, the assessment was not timed; rather, the researcher measured the student's ability to read a given passage and give responses to questions within the passage as they read. Like other components of reading skill, the results of reading comprehension were analyzed in four groups based on the ability of the students to comprehend what they were reading, as shown in figure 6.

Figure 7: Percentages of grade three students' reading comprehension skills at different benchmarks



As illustrated in the above figure 7, of the total of 155 participants, 26 (16.8%) understood or comprehended what they read. From this, some of the students read the passage fluently, but they did not comprehend what they read. The other student did not read the passage fluently, and they did not understand what they read. In short, students did not answer a single question from a given question based on the passage as they read. 32 (20.6%) of the participants were lower readers. When we see these students, they understand some points of what they read and answer some questions, but they are weak in reading and comprehending what they read, whereas 28 (18.1%) of the students moderately comprehend what they read. Moreover, those students increased their reading rate and comprehended what they read as the researchers asked some questions based on the passage they read. They gave answers to some of the questions, but they were below the expected requirement to comprehend what they read. The remaining 69 (44.5%) of the students read the given passage and comprehended what they read. This implies that they read the passage at the expected rate and fully comprehended or understood the passage. And also, the students answered the given question as expected.

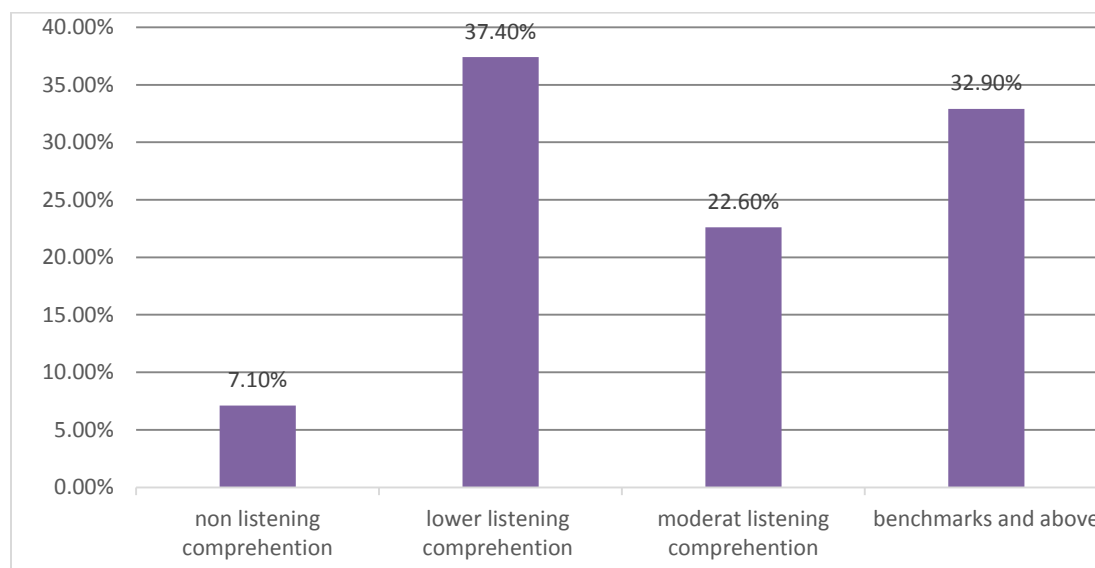
Based on this finding in the above figures, one can deduce that the majority of grade three students were below expectations in reading comprehension. Hence, they failed to demonstrate word comprehension and failed to correctly answer a given question from a reading passage in

Amharic. Hence, more than 55% of the students either had difficulty reading the passage and comprehending it, or they read the passage but found it difficult to comprehend what they read.

### 4.3.7. Listening Comprehension

In this subsection, the results obtained from questioners were analyzed based on the reading ability of the students to listen to and comprehend Amharic passages and give responses to questions based on the passage. In this regard, the researcher measured the ability of students to comprehend the passage based on the leading question within the passage. Besides comprehension, the researcher also measures the attention of the student to the passage. The results are analyzed in the following figure 7.

Figure 8: Percentages of grade three students' listening comprehension skills at different benchmarks

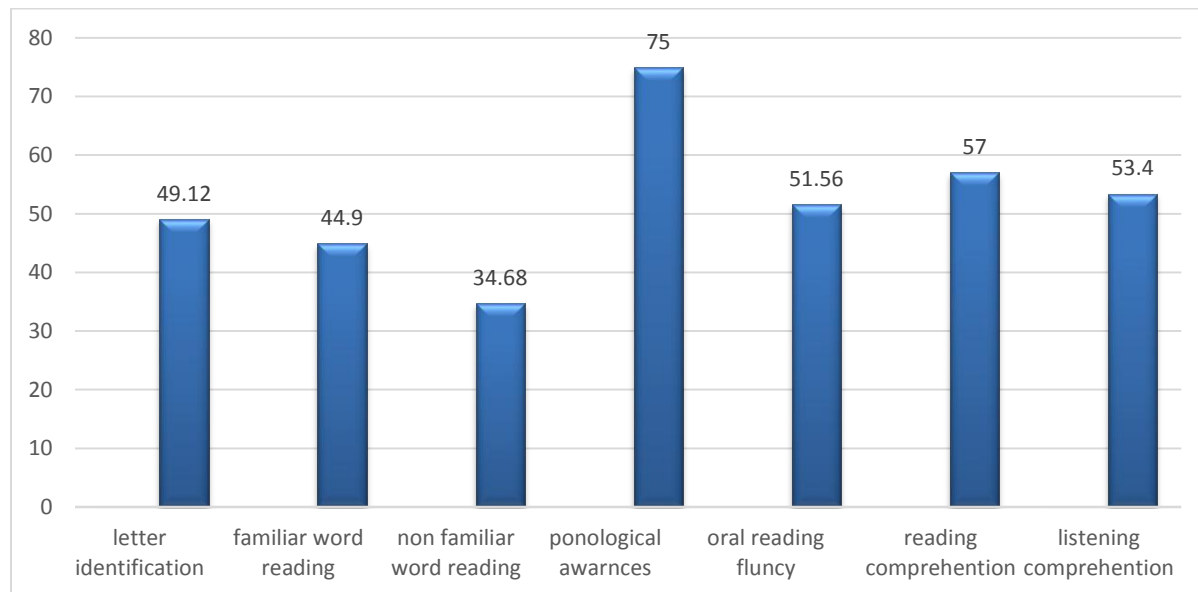


As indicated above on figure 8, of the total of 155 participants, 11 (7.1%) did not comprehend what the researchers read in the passage. This means that the students listened to the passage but did not understand it. On the other hand, some of the students did not listen to and understand the passage. In short, these students did not give an answer to a given question, whereas 58 (37.4%) of the students had lower listening comprehension. This implies that the majority of the students were weak in listing comprehension. Like in reading comprehension, some of the students listened, but they did not understand what they were reading. The other students did not listen,

but at the same time, they did not comprehend the passage. Due to this, the majority of the students did not give an answer to a given question. The other 35 (22.6%) of the students moderately comprehended what they were hearing from the passage. With regard to moderate listening comprehension, the students were listening to the passage and answering some questions with increasing comprehension. However, these students were not listening to the passage and comprehending it as expected. The lingering 51 (32.9%) listened to the passage and comprehended what they heard in it. And also, these students were responding to most of the questions prepared based on the passage when the researchers asked them. In short, these students listened to the passage and comprehended the expected requirements forwarded by the minister of education.

Therefore, the majority of grade three students were below average in listening comprehension in Amharic. Hence, more than 67.1% of the students had either difficulty listening to the passage and comprehending it, or they listened to the passage but found it difficult to comprehend what they heard in the passage.

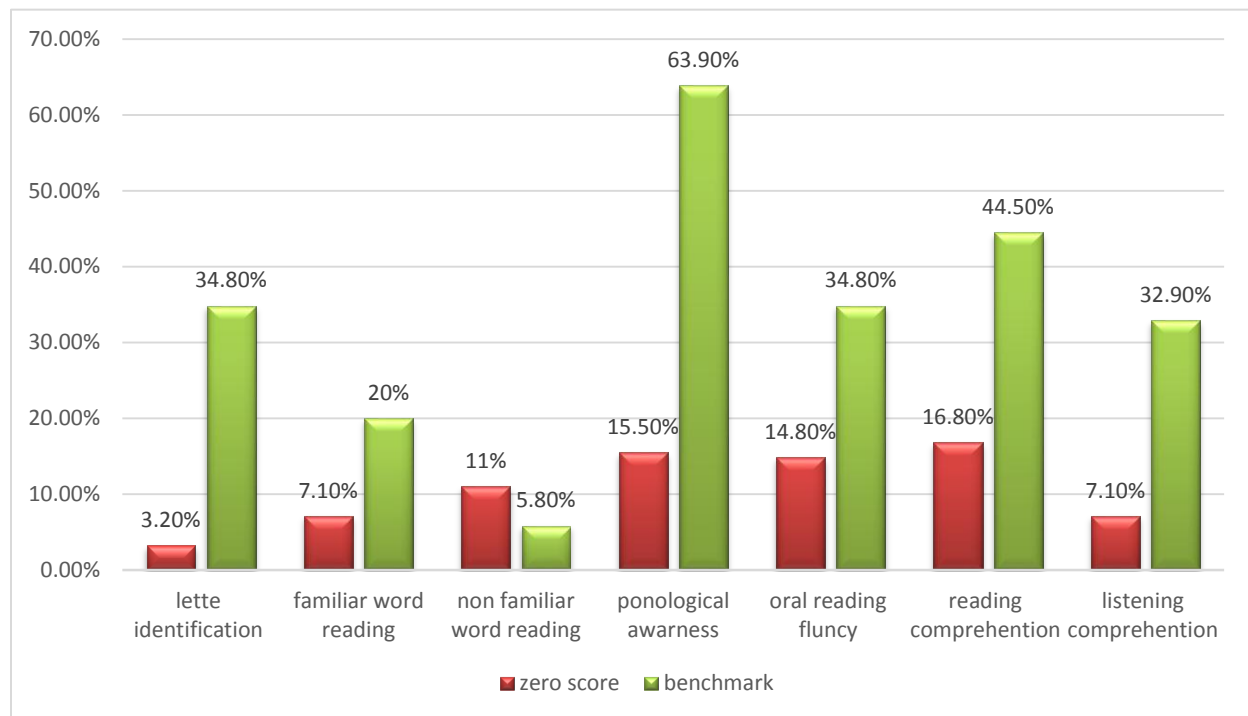
**Figure 9: The average performances of children in the various reading skill tasks per- minute using mean scores.**



As indicated above on figure 9, the average performances of children in the various reading skill tasks were less than 60 except for phonological awareness. Especially in familiar word reading

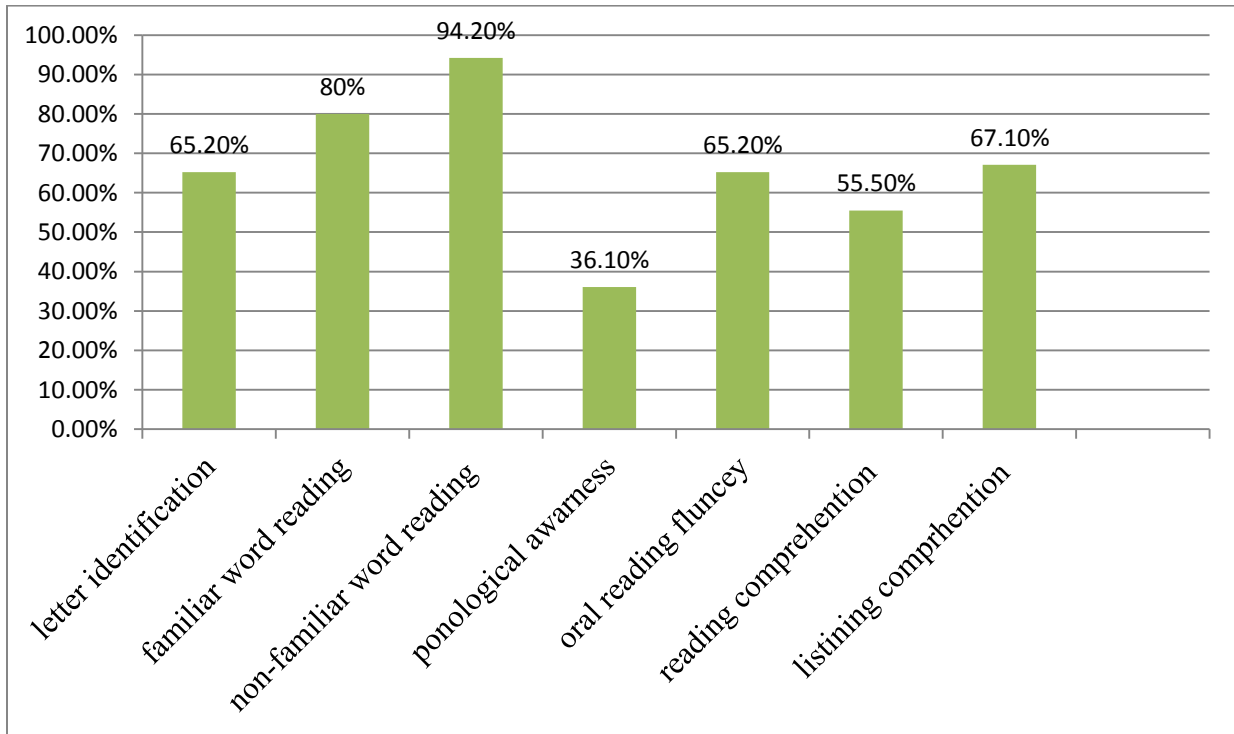
skills and non-familiar word reading skills per minute, the average performance or mean score of the students was less than 50. While most grade three students are relatively good in their average performance at reading comprehension (57) and phonological awareness,

**Figure 10: Grade three students who score zero and above expected minimum requirements in all sub-tasks**



As indicated in the above figure 10, a number of students scored zero in various subtasks of reading skill in Amharic. Hence, one in five students scored zero in reading comprehension, and one in six students scored zero in non-familiar word reading and oral reading fluency. Even in letter identification, phonological awareness, familiar word reading, and listening comprehension, a number of students scored zero in Amharic. In addition, as the figure indicated, from the total participants, more than 50% of the students scored below expected competence in all tasks except phonological awareness. In familiar word reading, the majority of the students read below the expected minimum requirement. Similarly, in non-familiar word reading, only 5.8% were read above the benchmark. Hence, students who scored above the benchmark were below 40% in letter identification, familiar word reading, non-familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, and listening. While, 64.9% of the students scored benchmark or above benchmark in phonological awareness.

**Figure 11: Percentage of students who score below bench marks**



As illustrated in the above figure 11, of the total of 155 participants, 94.2% of the students read non-familiar words below benchmarks. And also, a large number of participants (80%) did not read familiar words in the expected minimum requirements, followed by listening comprehension (67.1%), letter identification (65.2%), oral reading fluency (65.2%), and reading comprehension (55.5%). Relatively small numbers of the participants were below the expected requirement in phonological awareness (36.1%). In short, the majority of the students read below benchmarks in six reading tasks, but relatively most of the students performed above benchmark in phonological awareness.

## 4.4. Analysis of Factors Influencing Students' Reading Ability

### 4.4.1. Analysis of Contextual Factors Obtained from Students through Questionnaires'

Different factors were selected as variables that influence early grade reading skill acquisitions in Amharic. This variable includes learning in kindergarten, the presence of the students in the class, the availability of text books in the school, the availability of Amharic reading material at home, a father reading in Amharic, a mother reading in Amharic, and having any person support the students during reading. Hence, the results of the study obtained from students through questionnaires were analyzed using an independent sample t test. The following table indicates the factors that influence early-grade reading skill acquisition in Amharic.

Table 5. Independence sample t-test on oral reading fluency scores by variables affecting early grade reading skill in Amharic language

No	Variable	N	%	Mean	T test	Df	Sig	Md	
2	Learn in kindergarten	Yes	115	74.2	35.57	5.463	153	0.000	17.940
		No	40	25.8	17.63				
3	Attend in the class	Yes	97	62.6	34.55	-2.852	153	0.005	8.943
		No	58	37.4	25.60				
	Availability of Amharic text book in the school	Yes	90	59.1	33.89	2.058	153	.040	6.470
		No	65	49.9	27				
4	Availability of Amharic reading material at home	Yes	90	58.1	33.64	2.057	153	.041	6.460
		No	65	49.9	27.18				
5	Father reading in Amharic language	Yes	118	76.1	35.79	6.168	153	.000	20.329
		No	37	23.9	15.46				
6	Mother reading in Amharic language	Yes	104	67.1	34.66	3.524	153	.001	11.330
		No	51	32.9	23.33				
7	Any person to support you during reading	Yes	104	67.1	36.52	5.176	153	.000	15.990
		No	51	32.9	20.53				

Regarding the above table, the independence sample t test was conducted to see the difference in oral reading fluency scores of students with different predicted factors that influence their early grade reading ability. Accordingly, the results of the study found that students who were learn in kindergarten and who were not learn in kindergarten had a significant difference on the score of oral reading fluency with ( $t(153) = 5.463$ ,  $Sig = 0.000$ ) in the score, with the mean score for students who were learn in kindergarten ( $M = 35.57$ ) being higher than for students who were not learn in kindergarten ( $M = 17.63$ ), and the magnitude of the difference in the mean was (mean difference =  $MD = 17.940$ ). Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference in the oral reading scores of students who learned in kindergarten and those who did not learn in kindergarten. Similarly, the results of the independence sample t test were conducted on the oral reading fluency scores of students who were present in class regularly and who were not present in class regularly. There was a significant difference ( $t = -2.852$ ,  $sig = 0.005$ ), with the mean score for students who attend regularly ( $M = 34.55$ ) being higher than the students who do not attend class regularly ( $M = 25.60$ ) with a degree of mean difference ( $MD = 8.943$ ).

Whereas the students who had access to an Amharic reading text book and the students who had not access to an Amharic reading text book had statistically significant deference in oral reading fluency ( $t = 2.057$ ,  $sig = 0.40$ ), with the mean score of the students who had a text book ( $M = 33.89$ ) and the mean score of the students who had no text book ( $M = 27$ ) with a degree of mean difference ( $MD = 6.89$ ). In short, the result indicated some of the students had an Amharic text book in either of the schools, which means that of the total participants, only 58.1% had a text book in soft copy rather than hard copy, and the remaining students did not have a text book in either school. Even if there was a soft copy text book, there was a statistically significant difference in the oral reading fluency score between students who had a text book and those who did not.

According to the other predicted factor, which is literacy of family, particularly on reading skills, the results showed that students who were from a family with a father reading in Amharic had a better oral reading fluency score than students who were not from a family with a father reading in Amharic ( $t = 6.168$ ,  $sig = 0.000$ ), and the mean score of students who were from a family with a father reading in Amharic ( $M = 35.79$ ) was higher than the students who were not from a father reading in Amharic language ( $M = 15.46$ ) with a magnitude of the mean score of students who

were from father reading in Amharic language( $M=35.79$ ) was higher than the students who were not from father reading in Amharic language( $M=15.46$ ) with magnitudes of mean difference( $MD=20.329$ ). The same is true for students who were from mother reading in Amharic language and had a better oral reading fluency score than students who were not from mother reading in Amharic language ( $t = 3.524$ ,  $sig = 0.001$ ), with the mean score of students who were from mother reading in Amharic language ( $M = 34.66$ ) being higher than the students who were not from mother reading in Amharic language ( $M = 23.33$ ) with magnitudes of mean difference ( $MD = 11.330$ ). Therefore, family literacy in Amharic had a significant influence on the early-grade reading abilities of the students.

Likewise, the result found that students who were supported during reading scored more points on oral reading fluency than students who were not supported during reading ( $t = 5.176$ ,  $sig = 0.000$ ), with a mean score of students who were supported in reading ( $M = 36.52$ ) and a mean score of students who were not supported in reading ( $M = 20.53$ ) with a magnitude of mean difference ( $MD = 15.990$ ). Therefore, any support for reading made a statistically significant difference between students who had support for reading and students who did not.

#### **4.4.2. Analysis of Factors Influencing Students' Reading Skill Obtained from Participants through Interview Guide and Observation Checklist**

This, in fact, necessitates a wide range of data from a wide range of participants in order to achieve the research goal. Hence, the school principal and teachers were the sources of data, in addition to students, to know or find out school-related factors that hinder early grade reading skill acquisition. Therefore, the researcher gathered information from Amharic teachers and school principals through an interview guide. In addition to this, the researchers also observe information through an observation checklist to support ideas gathered from interviews, with the aim of clarifying or understanding the problem in detail. Therefore, the results of the study were analyzed in terms of three themes, including the availability of reading materials in the school, instructional methods, and accessibility of the environment.

#### **4.4.2.1. Availability of Reading Material in the School**

According to Availability of Reading Material, the theme is focused on the availability of Amharic text books in the school and reading material in the class. Availability of Amharic reading material in the school library, such as story books, magazines, newspapers, poetry materials, and drama and puzzle books; Availability of Amharic supplementary materials and teacher guides in the school;

According to the availability of text books in the school, all of the teachers (T1, T2, and T3) said that there was no Amharic text book in the school, In this regard, they said that teaching students without text books was very challenging to enable reading skills. The students read only short notes when we write on the blackboard. In addition to this, they said that the inaccessibility of the Amharic text book influences teachers to use their time appropriately because they lose time and energy to write all of the points on the board. Even though they write all the points on the board, some of the students do not. Hence, teaching the learning process requires a text book to make the process easier. On the other hand, they said that when they taught students without a text book, their students could not easily visualize the concepts and took time to visualize them.

In addition to teachers, principals (P1 and P2) also raised the same ideal. They said that there are no textbooks in the school. The reason the students did not have an Amharic text book was due to the new curriculum revision. Thus, the inaccessibility of Amharic text books is one of the major challenges in the school, especially for "weak students to go with other peers". Because most of the "weak students'" need a text book in addition to a short note from the classroom, they are able to read on their own in more detail. From my observation in the class, I found out that in both schools, there were no text books and no reading material in the classroom, either in the form of an alphabet strip, a pocket chart, flash cards, a word wall, or local materials on the class wall. But in Hezebawi Serawit primary school, I observed that there was sample reading material in their office, but the teachers were not using it in the class.

According to the availability of Amharic reading material in the school library, P1 said that in this school there was not enough Amharic reading material in the school library. He mentioned different reasons; one of the reasons behind this was the area of the school, which is a very narrow school area, and the school library is also very narrow. Hence, there is not enough space to put enough Amharic reading material in the school library. On the other hand, he also said that

there is not enough sitting space for students to read some of the available reading material in the library. Moreover, he also stated the second reason, which was a lack of reading material. Despite the school library's presence, there was not enough Amharic reading material compared to higher grade level subject areas.

P2 from Tegel Lenetsant Primary School said that there were some Amharic reading materials in the school library, but it was not enough for all students. "The students enter the library conditionally". This means that at the time of the "final exam and mid-exam," the numbers of books and students who entered the library were not related. In short, there was not enough reading material in the library at this school. But there was no problem related to the area, even though there was reading space in the school. Nevertheless, the students were not willing to read some of the available reading material in the school. The reason behind this was a lack of family involvement to control their children because most of the time the students came from low-income families and their families focused on how to survive or fulfill basic needs. From the researcher's observation at Hezebawi Serawit primary school, the area of the school is very narrow.

Regarding the availability of Amharic supplementary materials and teacher guides in the school, T1 and T2 stated that there was a soft copy teacher's guide for each teacher in the school but not a hard copy teacher's guide. P1 raised a similar idea to T1 and T2, which was that teachers had a soft copy teacher guide because of the curriculum revision this year. When we saw the Amharic supplementary book in the school, he said that there was a supplementary book in the school. However, it was not enough to enable all areas of reading skill. Likewise, T3 also gave a similar answer regarding the teacher guide, but she gave a different answer regarding the Amharic supplementary book in the school; she said that there was enough supplementary material in the school.

P2 also stated that there was enough Amharic supplementary reading material in the school. However, the teachers and students were not interested in reading supplementary reading material. Regarding this, the school records the numbers of teachers and students who enter the library and reports them once they are weak, but a small number of teachers and students enter the school library and read supplementary books. Because of this, most of the time the teachers taught students merely from the text book, but they could not teach students by referencing

supplementary books. When proceeding to the teacher guide in the school, the second principal mentioned the same answer as that of the first principal, which means there was a soft copy teacher guide for each teacher in the school but no hard copy teacher guide because of curriculum revision this year.

Therefore, the information gathered through teachers and principals' interviews and observation checklists. Concerning the availability of reading materials shows that there was no text book in either school. This could be challenging for teachers as well as students in the school to allow early grade reading skills. The teachers and principals had suggested some challenges related to the inaccessibility of text books and other reading materials in the classroom that impeded their students reading skills. In the school, there were reading materials available but not sufficient enough for all learners in the library. Even if the reading materials were not sufficient, the majority of students were not interested in reading in the school library except during midterm and final exams. In addition to this, the result indicated that some teachers had not read supplementary books in both schools. Regarding this, in Hezebawi Serawit primary school, there were not enough supplementary books in the school, and in the other school, the teachers were not interested in reading supplementary books. So reading supplementary books was one of the factors that influenced early grade reading in both schools. On the other hand, in both schools, there was a soft copy teacher guide but not a hard copy teacher guide. Hence, this was also another factor in early-grade reading.

#### **4.4.2.2. Instructional Method**

Concerning instructional methods, the theme is focused on teaching and learning methods, the teachers' management of their students, equal opportunity to participate in the classroom, and the awareness of the teachers to identify students with reading difficulties.

According to instructional method, all three Amharic teachers (T1, T2, and T3) mentioned the same teaching methods as they teach their students' ability in reading. However, these Amharic language teachers vary in their answers regarding teaching methods. T3 mentioned that she had not been trained about the method of teaching them. Accordingly, she said that most of the time they use the lecturing method to improve the reading ability of the student and sometimes use group work unless they cannot use other methods. The remaining T2 and T1 said that they knew the method and got training on how to use different teaching methods based on individual needs,

but they did not implement it practically because the students and teacher ratio in the school was influenced to use different teaching methods with a given amount of time, which means there was not enough time to teach students by using different teaching methods based on the interests of individuals. In addition to this, there was a lack of instructional materials to teach them. Hence, the information obtained from the teacher was that there was no special instructional method for students to improve their early reading skills in this school.

Likewise, P1 and P2 said that the school did provide training for teachers. Most of the time, the school planned to give training to teachers, but we canceled because of the current condition. They also said that the shortage of Amharic subject teachers was a serious issue in the school as teachers used different teaching methods. The teachers were trained to cover the contents rather than teaching based on the individual's interests. To support the result of the interview, the researcher also observed the instructional strategy. Regarding this, the teacher used the lecturing method, and the teacher focused on covering the content rather than focusing, as the students understood the content in detail. To some extent, the teacher gives groups work, but the teacher goes out of the classroom. At this time, some of the students were working in their group, but some of the students were playing and disturbing other students. Therefore, the teachers did not use different instructional methods to address individual needs.

Concerning the awareness of the teachers to identify early grade reading difficulty, T3 from Tegle Lenetsanet School said that there was no awareness to identify students with reading difficulty, and she also said that I identify students as clear, medium, and weak by using continued assessment methods like tests, group work, and exams. With this regard, she said that there was no one to give training. There was a special needs professional in the school, but his graduate psychology degree, we could not get training. But once up on time, the school prepared training by inviting professionals outside the school, but because of topical conditions, the training was cancelled. These topical conditions were also canceling the parents' meeting. Hence, she said that there was not any training to identify students with reading difficulties; in this regard, she said that we could not know students with reading difficulties.

The other teacher (T1) also said that we have some clues regarding the identification of students with reading difficulties, but we cannot get full training to identify early grade reading difficulties. And also, they said that we can try to identify students as clever, medium, and weak

by using tests, exams, and individual assignments, but we cannot identify students as having reading difficulty or not. The remaining (T2) also said that there is no awareness of having standard identification methods to identify early grade reading difficulty; rather, she measures her students based on the schedule of the school like that of other subjects.

The researcher also observed that the teachers manage their students and provide equal opportunities to participate in the classroom. In all of the schools, the teachers provide equal opportunity to participate in the classroom, but they are not managed as all students participate. Most of the time, the teachers were not focused on students seated in different parts of the classroom or students with reading difficulties; rather, they focused on active participants, and most of the time, the eye contact of the teachers was with clever students rather than struggling readers. When I saw the seating arrangements of the students in the classroom, most struggling readers were seated in the corner in order to hide themselves, and clever students were seated in front of the teachers.

Therefore, according to the information gathered through interviews and observations concerning instructional methods, all of the teachers used similar teaching methods. The reason behind this was the impact of the student-teacher ratio; they cannot be trained on how to teach students based on the interests of individuals, and the majority of the participants were not aware of early reading difficulties. On the other hand, some of the participants were aware of the need to identify early reading difficulties, but they could not implement it practically because of this. All of them measured their students as clever, medium, and weak by using tests, group work, home work, and the final exam; they could not use standard identification methods to know if the students had reading difficulty or not. In addition, all teachers manage their students and provide equal opportunity to participate in the class (students seated in different parts of the classroom, students with reading difficulties, students with abilities, etc.), which was one of the factors influencing early grade reading skill acquisitions.

#### **4.4.2.3. Accessibility of the Environment**

Concerning the accessibility of the environment, T1 and T2 mentioned similar ideas. They said that the school environment is inaccessible for students to develop their academic achievement, especially in early grade reading. Regarding this, in the back of the school library there was a road, and students who read in the library were disturbed by journeyers. And also, they said that in front of the school library there was also a classroom, and the staff members in the school also went and came back near the school library. Thus, the school library was interrupted by sounds coming from different directions.

Similarly, P1 mentioned that the school environment is not convenient, including the toilet, water, and playground, and that the school environment is also very narrow because of this very thing. The remaining other teacher (T3) said that in Tegel Lenetsant primary school, as much as possible, the school is accessible but not sufficient. She said that in the school there was a study area in addition to the school library. In addition to this, the second principal (P2) mentioned that in the school there are no problems related to the library and study area, but there are some obstacles in the school environment, such as the water and playground.

Furthermore, throughout the observation, the researcher observed that the classroom was not safe for students at all, especially in Hezebawi Serawite primary school, where the sound outside the classroom interrupted the students in the class and caused them to lose attention for the teaching and learning process. The reason behind this was that there was a football field near the classroom. Hence, every sound was interrupted in the class.

Therefore, according to the information gathered through interviews and observations concerning accessibility in Hezebawi Serawit primary school, the environment is inaccessible. But in Tegle Lenetsanet primary school, in some instances, accessibility was not sufficient. Regarding this, the participant raised some points, like the fact that the school library was interrupted by sound in different directions, the inconvenient toilet, the water, and the playground.

## **4.5. DISCUSSION**

In this section, the numbers of findings were discussed based on information obtained from the participants through reading test , an interview guide, and an observation checklist based on the objective of the research.

### **4.5.1. Assessments of Early Grade Reading Skills**

In this regard, findings confirmed that most grade three students were below the expected minimum competence in letter identification and naming. Out of the total participants, 28% of the students were at risk for reading difficulty in letter identification, and 37.5% of the students were increasing their reading fluency, but still there was a limitation to recognizing and reading letters in the expected time. This indicated that those students were likely to influence later grades. These findings corroborate the assertions of Gamu and Damole (2021) and show that the majority of students were below the expected proficiency level in letter-sound identification. The letter-sound knowledge of the pupils did not achieve the expected outcome forwarded by the Ministry of Education. Additionally, many students were falling behind in identifying Amharic letters and naming letters in the early grades. For example, they may identify some letters that were present without being able to read (Abdi, 2011, Piper, 2010). The results of the study also demonstrated that the mean score for phonological awareness was the majority of students reading benchmarks and above; however, 16.10% of the students struggled to distinguish the sound of the letter in the word, and these students were prepared to drop out and repeat in the next grade. The finding is also supported by Anteneh et al. (2016), who found that small numbers of the students performed below expected in phonological awareness, but this did not "imply that the students' average performance in phonetic level awareness was not very frustrating".

According to familiar word reading, 30% of grade three students had difficulty reading familiar words in Amharic. The other 49.7% of the students had read familiar words, but they did not read them at the expected rate. This indicated the task was more challenging than letter naming and phonological awareness. These findings are in agreement with those of Gove & Wetterberg (2011), who found that "familiar words" are high-frequency words selected from early grade reading. And also in Ethiopia, Piper (2010), Gamu & Damole (2021), and Anteneh et al. (2016) confirm that the majority of the students did not read familiar words within the given time.

Similarly, in non-familiar word reading, the results of the study indicated that 45% of the students were at risk of reading difficulty. This indicated that the majority of the students had no decoding skills. The findings of the current study also concur with those of Gove & Wetterberg (2011) many students were unable to sound out and memorize non-sense words easily in the early grades, whereas some of the students were memorizing and recognizing words in the early grades. Further, Piper (2010) and Anteneh et al. (2016) confirm that the majority of the students lacked decoding and word recognition skills.

Furthermore, the findings of the study indicated that several students were not able to read the passage with the expected rate and accuracy. Regarding this, it is possible to deduce that 65.2% of the participants did not read the passage with the expected rate and accuracy. These results were consistent with the findings of Pang et al. (2007), who observed that fluent readers identify vocabulary quickly, which means fluent readers have the skill to read words appropriately during reading and also know where to pause during reading the text. On the other hand, Frankel et al. (2016) support the idea that oral reading fluency is a significant influence on becoming a proficient reader.

According to reading comprehension, it can be deduced that the majority of grade three students were below expectations in reading comprehension. This is attributed to the fact that the students failed to demonstrate word comprehension and failed to correctly answer a given question from a reading passage. More than 55% of the students had either difficulty reading the passage and comprehending it, or they read the passage but found it difficult to comprehend what they read. These findings are consistent with the assertions of Oakhill et al. (2019) that children comprehend simple reading sentences after expected grade levels; even some students with reading comprehension problems do not understand text later in grade level. Hairston (2011) also affirms that reading comprehension is the connection between the reader and the text to give a meaningful response, or it is the route from previous reading to active reading to give meaningful context. Likewise, more than 67.1% of grade three students did not listen to or comprehend the passage. This is attributed to the fact that the students recorded poor story listening skills, with the majority registering a performance below average; this could have affected the acquisition of listening comprehension skills. Gamu & Damole (2021) support the idea that reading without comprehension is just like talking something without understanding. Reading without

comprehension is difficult for any reader. The other Ahmadi (2016) confirms that if students want to read, they should first comprehend what they have spoken.

## **4.5.2. Factors That Influence Early Grade Reading Skill Acquisitions**

### **4.5.2.1. Home Factors**

From the study findings, it is evident that home environment factors such as support for their children, reading material at home, family literacy, or educational level are significant influences on early reading skill performance. This indicated that the home environment is one aspect of the environment that hinders reading skill acquisition. The findings of the current study also agree with those of Anteneh et al. (2016) and Gamu & Damole (2021), who found that students were hindered in early grade reading development by different factors such as , lack of support at home, and family literacy.

Additionally, these findings imply that family literacy, especially reading in Amharic, has a significant influence on early grade three students reading skill acquisitions. These are indicators that students who have literate families have better reading skills than students who do not have literate families. Setiasih (2014) confirms that some of the parents have poor reading skills, and because of this, they are less likely to interact with their children through reading at home, offer socialization, direct instruction, support children with their homework, monitor their learning, and create opportunities for delivering early grade reading. Because of this, many students do not attend school and drop out. Further, Wu (2019) indicated that families can also motivate their children to read early and develop a love for reading. Also, some families are role models for their children to read continuously throughout school.

The findings of this study also show that students who have access to reading materials at home have a statistically significant advantage over students who do not have access to reading materials. These data further affirm that a literacy-rich environment at home is important for promoting reading and preventing reading difficulties. Scheele et al. (2010) also pointed out that children are characterized by good letter identification skills, phonological awareness, reading and listening comprehension skills, and good reading fluency skills if they have a good home environment, including family reading literacy skills and support for their child.

## **4.5.2.2. School Factors**

### **4.5.2.2.1. Availability of Reading Materials**

Reading materials such as text books, supplementary books, story books, magazines, newspapers, poetry, and teacher guides and displaying reading materials in the class were vital to improving early grade reading. According to this, the findings of the study indicated that there was not enough reading material in the school. Gamu & Damole (2021) have also conducted a similar study in the area and found that the majority of the students were lagging behind in acquiring early grade reading because of the unavailability of reading materials. Such materials improve students' learning of essential reading skills and also provide meaningful use of reading throughout the student's life, which was similar to the conclusions obtained in previous studies that school reading materials had statistical significance for early reading acquisition and that children's learning to read in the early years of school would directly correlate with their reading acquisition in the early grades (Auerbach, 1989; Chansa-Kabali et al., 2014; Aram et al., 2011; Hairston, 2011; Gove & Cvelich, 2011).

Unfortunately, the findings of the study found that almost all of the students did not have an Amharic text book in hard copy in either of the schools, which means that of the total participants, some had a text book in soft copy and the remaining students did not have a text book. This implies that the inaccessibility of text books or other constraints impede their students reading skills. These findings are thus inconsistent with the assertions of Nderitu (2018) about the absence of books in the school, the major resource that influences early grade reading skills.

In addition to this, these findings show that in both schools, there was not enough reading material in the school library. Nderitu (2018) further found out that store centers, including libraries, had insufficient quantities of quality reading material, which significantly influenced early reading. The school library, with reading materials of sufficient quantity and quality, serves a considerable role in successful early-grade literacy acquisition. Likewise, these findings indicated that supplementary books were available in schools but not sufficient for all learners and teachers, which was similar to the conclusions obtained in previous studies. Gamu & Damole (2021) agree that inadequate supplies of supplementary books for teachers and teacher guides were significant influences on early reading development. The factor is not only the

availability of reading material; some of the teachers as well as the students are not interested in reading different reading material. These results were consistent with the findings of Nderitu (2018), who observed that interest in reading plays a very crucial role in improving reading and that reading material is a medium through which reading is delivered. Thus, motivating students to improve the reading culture in schools is important to encourage learners to become engaged readers.

#### **4.5.2.2.2. Instructional Methods**

Teachers influence students positively and negatively through several factors, including instructional methods. According to Melesse & Enyew (2020), using different teaching methods could improve children's reading performance. The findings of the study indicated that teachers did not use different instructional methods to improve students reading performance. This can influence early reading. The findings also agree with those of Torgesen (2002), who noted that one of the biggest challenges for schools is to provide a range of instructional opportunities in reading that match the huge diversity in children's talent and preparation for learning to read.

Additionally, the findings imply that some of the teachers were trained on how to use different instructional methods, but they cannot implement them practically because the student-teacher ratio in the school was influenced to use different teaching methods with a given amount of time, which means there is not enough time to teach students by using different teaching methods based on the interests of individuals. Piper (2010) confirms that the teacher-student ratio is important when using different instructional methods. These affirm that classroom instruction in nursery school through grade 3 is competently delivered with a balanced emphasis on word-level and reading comprehension skills, and students are placed in a position to accurately identify who falls behind in early reading growth (Torgesen, 2002).

This result is indicative that teachers did not have the awareness to identify students with reading difficulties. These findings were consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Gove and Cvelich (2011), which found that many children were lagging behind in education because of a lack of awareness to identify struggling readers at an early age and in the early grades. On the other hand, some of the participants were aware of the identification of early reading difficulty, but they could not implement it practically to know whether the students had reading difficulty or not.

#### **4.5.2.2.3. Accessibility of the Environment**

Like other factors, environment is one of the major factors and constraints on early grade reading skills. According to Chansa-Kabali et al. (2014), the environment is one of the enhancing or hindering factors in delivering literacy and supporting reading development. The findings of the study indicated that in both schools, the environment was not accessible for students. This implies that the area of the school is very narrow, especially at Hezebawi Serawit School. It influences almost all processes of learning and the acquisition of basic literacy skills to become a means of engaging with diverse forms of knowledge, understanding, and communication.

These findings are supported by Cunningham (2008), who found that interest in reading was engaged when the environment supported literacy development. Additionally, the finds also show that the library by itself is very narrow. This can make it challenging to put enough reading material in the library and to seat students in the library. These findings are supported by Kalanje (2011), who found that, in the school environment, there were many factors that influenced the reading skill acquisition of the pupil in the early grades, such as the inaccessibility of the school library for all students and the location of the library.

Furthermore, the findings of the study indicated that the environment was not quite accessible enough, like water, a playground, a reading area, the distance from classroom to classroom, etc. Nderitu (2018) confirms that in low-income countries, early childhood education centers tend to take a more destructive than playful approach to preparing their children for communicative competency. Further, Maxwell & Evans (2000) show that students have good reading skills in good condition. In this regard, students gave their attention when the environment was suitable, unless they were disturbed if the environment was destructive.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### **5.1. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

The study recognized that most of the Grade 3 students manifested relatively good abilities in letter identification and phonological awareness. However, the majority of them were at risk of developing reading difficulties in non-familiar word reading and reading comprehension. Similarly, the students performed below average in familiar word reading, listening comprehension, and oral reading fluency skills. Among the sampled students, the majority fell under the category of competence with non-readers and lower readers. With regard to non-familiar word reading, familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, more than 11% of the students were nonreaders, and more than 20% of the students were lower readers. Therefore, the majority of grade three students struggled with reading skills in these schools.

The study also concluded that there were many associated factors that influence early grade reading skill acquisitions, such as family literacy, family support, the availability of reading materials, instructional methods, and the accessibility of environments. According to this family, literacy had statistical significance for early-grade reading skills. Children who have reading materials at home have better reading skills than students who do not have reading materials at home. And also, students who had literate families had better reading skills than students who had no literate families. According to the study's findings, there were not adequate reading materials in schools. Hence, the availability of reading material has a statistically significant influence on grade three students reading skill acquisition. In addition to this, instructional methods and accessibility of the environments are also factors that influence early grade reading skill acquisition.

## 5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results obtained, summary, and conclusions made, the researcher would like to recommend the following:

- Addis Ababa educational bureau officials, school administrators, and Amharic teachers should pay attention to students' early grade reading competence.
- Professionals in the fields of special needs should assess early grade reading skills to identify students at risk for reading difficulty and provide support for such schools as part of their community service engagement.
- It is possible to recommend that schools and Addis Ababa educational bureau officials be equipped with adequate reading material to address early-grade reading.
- The schools and other stakeholders should provide reading materials and create an interesting school environment, including a library and classroom,
- Addis Ababa education bureau should pay appropriate and intensive attention to preprimary school programs including effort needed to enrich the quality of the curriculum. Because more than 79.7 % and 90% of grade three students scored below the expected requirements in non-familiar and familiar words reading in Amharic language.
- It was evident that most of grade three students are still not motivated to read and low interest in reading. Therefore, this study recommends that the school teachers and school principals should encourage students to participate effectively in reading.
- Furthermore it is recommended that the schools should work collaboratively with the families of students and raise awareness within families with an objective to enabling them to give support for their children, and monitor their overall academic performance as early as possible.

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የፊደል ስዎሜስ ውስጥ ትኩረት የሚጠይቁትን ስምዎች የተሰደዩ የስሜን ፊደሎች ማስቀመጥ ያስፈልጋል፡፡ ከዚህ በታች ያሰጠውን ስምዎች የሰደዱ ስዎሜስ ውስጥ ትኩረት የሚጠይቁትን ስምዎች የተቀመጡ ፊደላት ናቸው፡፡

ከ	ዘ	ሰ	ባ	ቱ	ቡ	ነ	ገ	ደ	ጠ
ስ	የ	ስ	ቂ	ዛ	ጠ	ሰ	ሳ	ቡ	ጠ
ጸ	ፈ	ቸ	ፍ	ከ	ሐ	ሐ	ሁ	ሸ	ሙ
ካ	ቻ	ሱ	ጅ	ዘ	ዎ	ገ	ዎ	ፎ	ን
ቸ	ቀ	ና	ሰ	ሚ	ሴ	ደ	ማ	ተ	ሣ
በ	በ	ኘ	ሲ	ሶ	ዋ	ጉ	ሻ	ክ	ፍ
ቦ	ሐ	ኬ	ህ	ሃ	ዮ	ቡ	ጫ	ጠ	ዓ
ፀ	ኘ	ሳ	ሣ	ታ	ሱ	ገ	ሰ	በ	ጠ
ከ	ስ	ሙ	ሹ	ን	ብ	ፎ	ዎ	ድ	ጸ
ዘ	ዞ	ኩ	ሱ	ቸ	ሱ	ፍ	ቃ	ቂ	የ

**ክፍል 2: የቃላትን ፊደል መብደት**

በቃላትን ውስጥ ያሉ ፊደሎች የመብደት ትኩረት የሚጠይቁትን ስምዎች የተሰደዱ የስሜን ፊደሎች ማስቀመጥ ያስፈልጋል፡፡ ቃላቱን የሚጠይቁትን ፊደሎች ለማስቀመጥ ስምዎችን ማጠቃለያ ይጠቀሙ፡፡ ከዚያም ተጨማሪ የቃላትን ፊደሎች ስንደገፍ/ስንደታገፍ ማድረግ፡፡

ከዚህ በታች ያሰጠውን ጠረጴዛ የሶስተኛ ክፍል ተመድዎች በቃላት ለውጥ ያሉ ፊደሎች የመሰየት ችሎታቸውን ስሜዎቻቸው የተቀመጡ ቃላት ናቸው፡፡

		ትክክል	ስህተት
ወባ			
መከባበር			
አጠባበቅ			
ሸማገሌ			
ተረት			
ግንት			
ህዳናት			
ወንበር			
መዘናኛ			
ጠየቃ			

**ክፍል 3: - የተዘወተረ ቃላት ንባብ**

በመጽሐፍ ለውጥ የተዘወተረ ቃላትን በመጻፍ ላይ ቃላትን የማንበብ ችሎታቸውን ስሜዎቻቸው የተሰደዱ የአመጽ ቃላትን ማስቀመጥ ያስፈልጋል፡፡ ከዚያም ተመድወው የሚገኙትን/የሚገኙትን ያህል ቃላት ማስነበብ (የቃላቱን ፊደል መጥራት ሳይሆን ፊደሎቹን ስያዘዘው ቃላቱን ስንዳያንቡ ማድረግ)፡፡

ከዚህ በታች ያሰጠውን ጠረጴዛ የሶስተኛ ክፍል ተመድዎች - የተዘወተረ ቃላትን የማንበብ ችሎታቸውን ስሜዎቻቸው የተቀመጡ - የተዘወተረ ቃላት ናቸው፡፡

ቅረጠ	መስረት	መስሎ	ባዶ	ቅጥዖዎች
ቀመጠ	በስግባቡ	በቡድን	ሶስት	ቀጥሎ
ታታሪ	ደገባሰ	በትክክል	ዳፍ	ስሞ
መኪና	ዋናው	የሚከተሉትን	መስፍቱ	መክከል
ክንፍ	ቅጥዖ	ዋናውን	በቃሳችሁ	መደዎት
ተሸሰመኛ	ሰበረ	በታች	መደናት	ቃሳትን
መክታወት	ሰበሰብኝ	ወሃኔ	ወይም	ስዳሞ
ምሳሌ	መስፍራሰ	በድቡብ	መርገሳችሁ	ሰበሰብ
ነበረ	ስንጠቀም	ከዚህ	ተናገረ	ከሚከተሉት
ሄደ	ቃሰ	በቀረቡት	መጠጠር	ነው

**ክፍል 4. የፈጠራ ቃላትን ማግባብ**

የፈጠራ ቃላትን የማግባብ ችሎታቸውን ለማወቅ በመጠጠር ወስኖ ስራ ለሚያደርጉት ሰበሰብ የተሰጠው የፈጠራ ቃላትን መመስረት ያስፈልጋል፡፡ ከዚያም ተሳታፊው/ዎች/ዎችን ያሳያል ቃላት ማግባብ (የቃላቱን ፊደል መጥፎት ሳይሆን ፊደሎችን ስያደዘው ቃላቱን ስንደያንቡ ማድረግ)፡፡

ከዚህ በታች ያሰጠው ስንጠረዥ የሶስተኛ ክፍል ተሳታፊዎች -የፈጠራ ቃላትን የማግባብ ችሎታቸውን ለመለየት የተቀመጠው የፈጠራ ቃላት ናቸው፡፡

ነክባ	ረገጥ	በጠጠር	ቀበሰ	ሰጠጠ
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ጥስ ወ	ደንገ	ንደቡ	ታወጠ	ታረበ
ስ ወገ	ዘደረ	ስገነፎ	ረወፎ	ነ ወገ
ስገሰ	ታረበ	ደፎሰ	ረመጠ	ስቀደ
መካገበ	በዘነ	ጠገተ	ነተበ	ተርም
ስገመመ	ረተመ	ጠጠሰ	ዲጋነ	ዳቆ
ደመሳ	በረጠ	ጋዘነ	ሰመገ	ወፎሰ
ሰረደፎ	ጠረበ	ጣቀ	ገሰመጠ	ፎረገ
ስገመጠ	ሸራዘ	ራጣ	ጫሰብ	ደረወ
መካደ	ደበክ	ፍንክ	ስክበ	ጋወ

**ክፍል 5: ሀ. የቃሰ ንባብ**

የቃሰ ንባብ ችሎታቸውን ሰማወቀ ስንድ ስግግር ታሪክ ማዘጋጀት ስና በፍጥነት ና በትክክል ስንደምነብ ማድረግ ያስፈልጋል፡፡

ከዚህ በታች የተዘረዘረው 60 ቃላትን የያዘ ስግግር ታሪክ የሶስተኛ ክፍል ተማሪዎች የቃሰ ንባብ ችሎታቸውን ሰማሰየት የተዘረዘረው ስግግር ታሪክ ነው፡፡

**ስግግር ታሪክ**

ወደዘር ስሰማቱ ስንድ ወሻ ነበራት፡፡ ስንድ ቀን የዘሰቀን ሰጅ ነክሰው፡፡ በዚህ ምክንያት ተጣሰ፡፡ ዘሰቀም ወደ ገሰሰ ጣቢያ ሄዶ ጉዳዩን ሰገሰሰ ስቀረበ፡፡ መርማሩ ገሰሰ በሰጠ፤ ወደዘር ስሰማቱ ተናካሽ ወሻችሁን ስምን ስታስረምሱ ጠየቃቸው፤ ወደዘር ስሰማቱም ታስሮ ነበር ደንገተ ፎቶ ነው ስሱ፡፡ ጉዳዩ ወደ

ሸምግሰና ተመራ፡፡ የሰፊፊ ሸማገሴዎችም እና ችግር እና ስባቸው ተሰባስበው ወደዘር ስለሚሉን እና ስቶ ዘሰቀን በማጋገር እንዲሰማሙሉ ደረገ፡፡

**ክፍል 5: ስ.ሰ.ሰ.ሰ. መረዳት**

ስ.ሰ.ሰ. የመረዳት ችሎታቸውን ስለሚመለከት ስንድ ስኬት ታሪክ ማዘጋጀት እና እንዲያንቡ ማድረግ ያስፈልጋል፡፡ ካንበቡ በኋላ ካንበቡት ስኬት ታሪክ የተረዳትን እንዲያገሩ በታሪኩ መሰረት ስለሚጠበቅ ማድረግ ማዘጋጀት ያስፈልጋል፡፡

ከዚህ በታች የተዘረዘሩ 60 ቃላትን የያዘ ስኬት ታሪክ የሶስተኛ ክፍል ተማሪዎች ስ.ሰ.ሰ. መረዳት ችሎታቸውን ስለሚመለከት የተዘረዘሩ ስኬት ታሪክ እና በታሪኩ መሰረት የሚጠበቅ ማድረግ ማድረግ ያስፈልጋል፡፡

**ስኬት ታሪክ**

ስለቴር እና መሳሪያ የሰንድ ስፈር ስሜት ያቀጥሉ፡፡ ስለቴር ብዙ ጊዜ ስርዓት ወይንም ክፍል ትገባላችሁ፡፡ መሳሪያ ግን በሰንድ ወይንም ክፍል ይገባል፡፡ ሰንድ ቀን መቆየት ስለቴርን ማስጠንቀቂያ ስለሚያደርግ፡፡ መሳሪያም ስለቴርን ስምን ታሪካዊነት ስለሚያሰጥ፡፡ ስለቴርም ስራ ስለሚሰጥ ስለሚታወቅ፡፡ መሳሪያም ስለቴር ቤት ላይ የሰንድን እናት ማድረግ እንዲሰጥ ስንጋገራቸው፡፡ ችግሩም በወይንም ተፈታ፡፡ ስለቴርም ሳይታወቅ ወይንም ክፍል መገባት ማለት፡፡ ስለቴር እና መሳሪያ በመረዳት ትምህርታቸውን ቀጠሉ፡፡

ተ.ቁ	ጥያቄዎች	ትክክል	ስህተት
1	ስለቴር ስምን ወይንም ክፍል ዘግደታ ትገባላችሁ፡፡		
2	ባለ ታሪኮች እንደሚሆን ያቀጥሉ		
3	መቆየት ስለቴርን ስምን ማስጠንቀቂያ ስለሚያደርግ		



በተሰጠው ባዶ ቦታ ሳይጠቀም ወይም ከሰጡት ምሳሌዎች ጋር የሚመዘኑትን አመለካከቶች ኮድ

ሚዘገቡበት ፡-

ተ.ቁ	ጥያቄዎች	ምሳሌ	
1	ቤት ውስጥ የሥራ ገረገሪ/ገረገሪ ውስጥ ቋንቋ ምን ድንገት?	አላለም...1 አይደለም...2 ትንግሥት...3 አንገሥት...7	ሲጋራ...4 ሀረግ...5 ሱላን...6 ሲሳ...8
3	አንድ ወይን ከሌለው ከሚገኝ ትህ/ሽ በፊት ለሚገኝ ስድስት ወይም ቀደም ለሚገኝ ትህ/ሽ ትህ/ሽ /ቁስ ትህ/ሽ ትህ/ሽ፣ ቁርጫፍ.../ገብተህ/ሽ ነበር	የሰው 0	አዎ 1
4	በዚህ ዓመት ከአንድ ሳምንት በሳይ ከትህ/ሽ ትህ/ሽ ነበር ክ/ሽ?	አስቀድሞ 0	አዎ 1
5	የአላለም ቋንቋ ለሚያደግ ወይም የግብር ለሚገኝ አስቀድሞ?	የሰው 0	አስ 1
6	በቤት ውስጥ የሚገኝ ጠገን/ሽ አስ	0	1
7	አስ ትህ/ሽ ማንበብና ለሚገኝ ደብዳቤ	አስ ትህ/ሽ 0	ትህ/ሽ 1
8	አስ ትህ/ሽ ማንበብና ለሚገኝ ደብዳቤ	አስ ትህ/ሽ 0	ደብዳቤ 1
9	ከትህ/ሽ ትህ/ሽ ውስጥ ትህ/ሽ ውስጥ የሚገኝ ለሚገኝ ፣ ጋዜጦች ወይም ሲሳቶች አስ?	የሰው 0	አዎ 1

10	ጥያቄ ምሳሌ ለሁሉም ክፍሎች ስለሚሰጡት ጥያቄዎች ለተዘጋጅተው የሚገኙትን ጥያቄዎች ይጠቅሙ	አመጪዎ...1 አድራሻዎ...2 ትምህርትዎ...3 ሲታይም...4	ዘመንዎ...5 ሰዓትዎ...6 ስምዎ...7 ስልክ...8
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## Appendix B:

### Interview question for Amharic teachers

Dear teachers

The purpose of the interview guide is to gather information about the contextual factors that hinder reading skill acquisitions of the students in the school. Therefore the study highly depending on the information that collected from you. Therefor you are requested to give reliable information please. The following were Interview question for Amharic teachers.

Personal information for Amharic teachers

- Sex            male-----female-----
  - Age                    21-25                    26-30                    31-35                    Above 35
  - Your Educational qualification  
A. MA/MSC      B. bachelor degree      C. Diploma      D. Certificate      E. others
  - Area of specialization\_\_\_\_\_
  - Total year of teaching Experience\_\_\_\_\_
1. What do you think about your students Amharic reading skills in your class?
  2. What factors do you think to influence your students ‘reading skill acquisitions in your classroom?
  3. Are there enough Amharic text books for your student?
  4. Do you have sufficient Amharic learning material in your class?
  5. Do you think your school environment is accessibility?

6. Do you think your class students are interested to read Amharic? Why?
7. What are your mechanisms to evaluate your students reading progress?
8. Do you think your teaching method benefits for all students to improve reading skill?
9. Do you have any awareness to identify early grade reading difficulty?

## **Appendix C:**

### **Interview question for School principal**

Dear School principal

The aim of the interview guide for school principal is to gather information about the factors that hinder reading skill acquisitions of the students in the school. Hence the study highly depending on the information that collected from you. Therefor you are requested to give reliable information please. The following were Interview question for School principal.

Personal information for Amharic teachers

- Sex      male-----female-----
- Age            21-25            26-30            31-35            Above 35
- Your Educational qualification  
     A. MA/MSC B. bachelor degree    C. Diploma    D. Certificate    E. others
- Area of specialization\_\_\_\_\_
- Total year of teaching Experience\_\_\_\_\_

1. What factors do you think to hinder the students ‘reading skill acquisitions in your school?

2. Do you think your school environment is accessibility?
3. What do you say about the availability of different Amharic reading material in the school library?
4. Do you have adequate Amharic text book in school?
5. Do you have enough Amharic teachers guide in the school
6. Do you have ample supplementary Amharic material at school?

## Appendix D:

### Observation check list

The purpose of this check list is to provide about the about factors that hinder reading skill acquisitions of the students in the school. Therefor the check list should be filled purposely. The following were observation check list.

No	Item	Yes	In some extent	No
1	Is the classroom or learning space is safe for all students			
2	Is there Amharic reading material in the class (alphabet chart, bottle caps, flash cards, manipulates, local materials etc.)			
3	Is there enough Amharic reading material in the school library			
4	Is the school environment comfortable for reading			
5	Is the teaching methods were consider the individual need			

6	Is teachers manage their students and provides equal opportunity to participate in the class (student seated in different parts of the classroom, students with reading difficulty, students having ability etc.)			
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