

**THE ACTUAL AND EXPECTED READING COMPREHENSION  
ABILITY OF GRADE NINE STUDENTS: ENTOTO AMBA SECONDARY  
SCHOOL IN FOCUS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**

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**TESHOME FEKADU**

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APPROVED BY:

ADVISOR

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## **ACRONYMS**

CEFR- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

ESOL-English Test for Speakers of Other Languages

PET-Cambridge Preliminary English Test

## ABSTRACT

*The primary objective of this study was to indicate the gap between the actual and expected reading comprehension ability of grade nine students with reference to national and international reading competency expectations. In relation to this, an attempt was made to investigate what factor contributed to the actual reading performance of the students. To this end, the present study employed descriptive research design, where both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools and data analysis procedures were included. Accordingly, two PET reading tests, a questionnaire, document analysis, a classroom observation checklist and Fry's Readability Graph were used to collect relevant data. The tests were engaged to determine the reading ability level grade nine students fall into. The students' questionnaire was set to indicate the factors that contributed to the actual reading performance of the students. Reading competencies, reading texts, reading activities and reading tasks (given and suggested in Grade Nine English Textbook, Grade Nine English Syllabus, a document by the Ministry of Education and a document by CEFR) were inspected in an effort to identify the reading competencies expected and to determine the relevance of the chosen tests to the grade level. The classroom observation checklist, on its part, was set to identify the reading skills and strategies that were treated in the sample classes, to take the observation as input for the reading test selection and to consider the implementation of the three phases of reading with their tasks. Fry's Readability graph was used to determine the readability grade level of the reading passages in Grade Nine English Textbook and the reading tests set for this study. Regarding administration of the tools, the reading tests and students' questionnaire were administered to a sample of 373 students who were selected from 21 sections, using the lottery method. The classroom observation was made in the 3 classes, which were selected using the lottery method. Determining readability grade level was done by selecting 3 sample passages from Grade Nine English Textbook and other 3 from the reading tests. After the data was collected with all the mentioned tools, analysis and interpretations were made. The findings, based on the test results, indicated that all the sample students demonstrated reading ability that could identify them with a frustration ability level, where 22 (6.28%) were found to be at elementary reading ability level while the rest 328 (93.71%) were at beginner level. The reading passages were of 7<sup>th</sup> grade readability level, and the students were frustrated with the passages or found the passages too difficult to understand. A close investigation of the test results also revealed that the students' performance was poor across all the tested reading skills and strategies: understanding the message of short texts, reading for detailed information, scanning for specific information, understanding writer's purpose, attitude and opinion, and completing gaps with grammar and vocabulary words. The results from the students' questionnaire and the classroom observation substantiated the findings from the reading tests. Results from these tools authenticated the poor reading practice students had in school and at home, and the poor reading ability they demonstrated. Finally, on the basis of the results of the present study, some recommendations were forwarded. These recommendations call for revision of the English language course as an English Language Arts course, which will provide contents, ideas, themes, issues, problems and conflicts found in classical and contemporary literature and other texts such as technical manuals, periodicals, speeches and videos, on the part of the bodies concerned; use of additional literary reading materials and proper extensive reading guidance on the part of teachers; provision of reading materials in libraries and ICT rooms on the part of schools; provision of reading materials and support on the part of parents; and extensive reading practice on the part of students.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

In the present era, English language plays a substantial role as the language of science, technology, education and advanced research. Likewise, reading in English has proved itself to be a very essential skill to achieve success in learning, academics, and career development (Anderson, 2000:2; Krashen, 2004:35-36). Above all, reading is an indispensable skill for learners of English as a Second or Foreign Language especially when English serves as a medium of instruction. For countries like Ethiopia, where English is the language of every high school and university school subjects, reading in English is a gateway for one's academic success, and it paves the way for present and future career of learners.

The ability to read in English efficiently for academic purposes is widely recognized in EFL/ESL contexts as a critical skill in a wide range of secondary and university settings because reading has manifested itself as a tool that ensures students' academic success. In relation to this, studies have shown that students who read more score better in most subjects than those who do not (Krashen, 2004: 35). Stanovich (1986), in Treptow (2006:11) also notes that children who are reading well read more, develop larger vocabularies and broader knowledge bases, and hence read even better. Needless to say, reading boosts students' all rounded knowledge, wisdom, imagination, memory, concentration, personality and social interaction.

When reading is taken to language learning, in situations where there is no enough exposure to practice a language, it can serve as an important tool to learn and acquire the target language. In line with this, reading extensively is the second best way to improve an individual's knowledge of a foreign language next to living among the speakers of the target language (Nuttall 1996:128). Done intensively, extensively or both ways, there is no doubt that reading takes the students' exposure to the target language steps ahead. Thus, beyond assuring academic success or failure of students in EFL classrooms, reading can help in improving students' overall language skills and in accessing different information. Reading is also the basis for all aspects of

English language learning instruction which involves using textbooks for the course, writing, revising, developing vocabulary, acquiring grammar, editing, and using computer-assisted language learning programs.

When taken to Ethiopian case, as Atkins et al (1996) maintain, reading in English plays a significant role both in language and general education, especially in high school and tertiary college levels. At these levels students should read in English to succeed in their academic endeavours because English serves as a medium of instruction. Therefore, whether they learn English as a subject or use it as a medium to learn other subjects, reading in English is a very essential skill for Ethiopian students to achieve success in academics and later in their life.

It is obvious from the above note that reading instruction is an essential component of every foreign-language curriculum. However, learning to read in English as a foreign language is a very demanding task, especially when it takes place in school. As far as teachers are concerned, they should face the hard task of teaching new grammar rules and vocabulary. They also have to help students understand the meaning of what they read, depending on the purpose and the communicative context in which they are using the target language. Teachers are also expected to put effort to help learners employ different skills and strategies of reading. Students on their part are required to develop proper reading skills by bringing in their background knowledge and by exerting their interest, motivation and perseverance, because it is only those who practice continuously who can become better readers.

Different studies have been carried out to find out how reading is done, how it develops as a skill, how it is taught, how teaching reading should proceed, etc. In this regard, many researchers have attempted to identify problems and suggest solutions as to how teaching reading should be done to yield results.

One of the issues that was reported to be a researchable is finding proper reading materials for training language learners at a specific proficiency or grade level (Mendida,1988;Genene,1994; Gebiaw,2011; Bagheri and Tabatabaei,2013).The reading text or reading passage selection challenge can be attributed to the variables that affect the nature of reading, which material developers should consider while selecting reading texts. Anderson (2000:32) identifies those

variables in two major categories as reader variables (motivation, knowledge, age etc.) and text variables (text organization, sentence structure, lexis etc.); reading takes place when these reader and the text variables interact.

Despite the challenges in reading material selection, studies show that objective and subjective techniques are used in selecting reading materials to suit the reading proficiency or grade level, interest, background knowledge etc. of learners (Wray and Janan, 2014). Objective methods include the use of numerable measures like readability formulas and graphs, which use counts of words and sentences, to decide comprehensibility of a text to a certain level of students. Subjective tools of text selection include subjective document analysis and using experts like librarians and teachers (Stephens,2016).

Accordingly, reading text selection demands due consideration, and it is a wide research area for many researches .Studies have shown that different readability formulas and other tools are in use in the process of reading material selection to meet the reading ability level of learners. To this end, reading text selection should be targeted at boosting students' reading ability through exposing them to various text forms and kinds. In fact, the word and sentence complexity of the passages should be within the reach of the target learners.

The other issue that textbook developers and teachers need to have in mind while selecting reading texts and designing tasks is the existence of different reading ability levels. As indicated in a document by Cambridge University(2013:2) , for example, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages classifies language ability levels into basic user (A1 and A2),independent user (B1 and B2) and Proficient user (C1and C2).It further describes each sub level: A1(Breakthrough or Beginners), A2 (Waystage or Elementary ), B1(Threshold or Intermediate), B2 (Vantage or Upper intermediate),C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) and C2 (Mastery).

Relying on the aforementioned background, the present researcher set out to indicate the gap between the actual and expected reading comprehension ability of Grade Nine students based on national and international reading ability level standards.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Reading is an essential skill which serves as the major tool for learning in academic contexts. For secondary school students in grades seven through twelve, the personal, social and economic consequences of not reading well in English in the present era can be cumulative and profound: the failure to attain a high school diploma, a barrier to higher education, underemployment or unemployment, and difficulty in managing personal and family life.

For Ethiopian students grade nine is the learning year when students are expected to be ready either to join vocational institutions or preparatory schools. At this grade level, students are assumed to be above elementary level of reading and steps ahead to cope with intermediate reading ability level.

What makes the issue of reading more sensitive to the grade level is that English functions as the medium of instruction, where textbooks are written in English and students are, to the minimum, expected to read and understand textbooks and notes given by their teachers. Students should also read other texts, including reference materials, magazines, newspapers, internet documents, etc. to achieve better in their academic and life endeavours. This being the fact, however, students at the grade level seem to demonstrate poor reading ability, although how poor the ability has not been explicitly stated with the help of scientific procedures. In this context, the present study set out to indicate the gap between the actual reading ability of grade nine students and the reading ability expected of them.

In fact, a number of studies discovered that Ethiopian students at junior secondary, secondary, preparatory and college levels are poor at reading in English. For example, in his study to investigate the reading ability of Bahir Dar Teachers' college students and what was expected of them in their subject area textbooks, Mendida (1988) revealed that the students' reading ability, that was derived from his reading comprehension and Cloze test results, was below standard at frustration level, where the students could only read passages that were meant for grade four students. Based on his finding, Mendida (1988) recommended provision of separate reading lessons for English language at high schools to solve the problem at the grassroots level rather than further simplifying reading passages to lower grade levels, which will result in a low

standard of education. He also advised access to simplified fiction works in libraries, and timely training for teachers on how acute the problem was.

Haileyesus (2011) also conducted a study to find out whether there was a significant relationship between Holy Trinity College students' reading ability in English and their performance in subject areas. He employed reading proficiency test, subject performance analysis, focused group discussion and interview. The finding revealed students' poor performance in English, although their poor result did not affect their performance in their content subjects. This happened because most lessons were given in Amharic and Geez and the students were not motivated to use English as a medium of instruction. Hence, he recommended focus on the use of English as a medium of instruction, provision of a wide range of reading materials, launching of English for Academic Purpose as a course, and preparation of English entrance exam to the college.

Berhe (1989), on his part, conducted a study on the readability level of Grade Ten Textbooks and the comprehension ability of the students. The cloze test results of more than 94 percent of his sample students depicted that the students were at frustration level of reading comprehension. Based on his analysis of the texts using Fry's readability graph, he explored that History and Geography textbooks were above the students' grade level while English and Biology texts were below the students' reading level. Consequently, he concluded that the textbooks were not appropriate to instructional purpose for grade 10 unless the comprehension ability of the students was raised or the difficulty level of the textbooks was lowered. The second suggestion he gave was lowering the readability level of the texts, which Mendida (1988) rejected he believed it would affect the quality of education in general.

In a similar manner, Dubale (1990) carried out a research on the impact of reading ability in English and some content subjects (i.e. Biology, Physics, History and Amharic). The test results of the students in English and the four subjects indicated that the great majority of grade nine students in government schools did not have the basic reading skills. In fact, his finding revealed that although the students' English reading ability was very poor, their reading in English as a subject did not affect their performance in other subjects. However, considering the contribution of reading in English as a major aid in learning other subjects, he called up teachers to emphasize on teaching reading skills in English. He further suggested to students to expose themselves to

extensive reading, and he advocated the introduction of reading for academic purpose as a program in high schools.

Finally, Genene (1994) studied actual reading ability and the reading ability required of junior secondary students. His finding, based on students' close test result, affirmed that the comprehension level of the students was at a frustration level and many students could not read and understand their textbooks because of vocabulary and sentence complexity. As a means to alleviate the problem, he suggested the assessment of the readability of content texts. He further recommended to the students to develop their vocabulary and other reading skills through practicing further reading.

Most of the above local researches basically attempted to test the reading ability of students in relation to the readability (which was measured in terms of word and sentence complexity) of the reading passages presented in the students' English and other subjects textbooks, and students' performance in the given reading tests. Their findings indicated that the students' reading ability was at frustration level (i. e out of 100 scores 0-74 and 0-34 for comprehension and close test respectively), which means that the language of the reading materials was too difficult for students to cope with, even with the help of teachers, parents or any assistant ( Halladay,2012; Rye, 1983;cited in Mendida,1988:31).The studies further commented that the readability level of the reading texts was mostly above the students' reading ability because students have not cultivated adequate reading skills and strategies.

There have been a number of changes taken place since the time most of the above studies have been carried out. The changes include: introduction of CLT, change in English Textbooks, changes in training English teachers, and changes in schools structures, etc. Therefore, the present researcher saw the need of a study to find out whether the students are at the same reading ability level as indicate by the above studies, or they have changed with the changes in time. There is also a need to clearly indicate the reading comprehension ability level of the students based on nationally and internationally recognized minimum reading competencies for the grade level. To the best knowledge of the present researcher, no closely related recent studies have been done in the area, and none of the above studies investigated the reading ability of Grade Nine Students using internationally recognized tests like PET, which are based on both

national and international competencies expected of the grade level students. Therefore, the present research was designed to indicate the actual reading comprehension ability of Grade Nine Ethiopian students against set national and international minimum reading competency standards. What is more, it attempted to determine what factors contributed to the actual reading performance of the students.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General objective**

The general objective of this study was to indicate the gap between the actual and expected reading comprehension ability of Grade Nine students of Entoto Amba based on national and international minimum reading competency expectations.

#### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

Beyond the attempt of showing the actual reading ability of the students, the present study was designed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- ✓ to indicate the minimum reading competency the grade level students are expected to demonstrate
- ✓ to determine whether grade nine students at Entoto Amba Secondary School can comprehend reading passages of their level
- ✓ to find out the factors which contributed to the actual reading comprehension ability of grade nine students of Entoto Amba Secondary School

### **1.4. Research Questions**

#### **1.4.1. Basic Research Question**

A number of researches in the Ethiopian context have indicated the poor reading performance demonstrated by Ethiopian elementary, secondary, preparatory and tertiary educational levels, when students were tested based on national syllabus and textbooks. In a different approach from those studies, the present study attempted to answer the major research question: What is the gap

between the actual and expected reading comprehension ability of Grade nine students of Entoto Amba Secondary School ?

#### **1.4.2. Specific Research Questions**

Based on the objectives of the study, the following specific research questions were formulated:

- ✓ What minimum reading competencies are expected of Grade Nine students?
- ✓ Can grade nine students of Entoto Amba Secondary School comprehend reading passages of their level?
- ✓ Which factors had significant effect on the actual reading comprehension ability of grade nine students of Entoto Amba Secondary School ?

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

The findings of the present research may serve as input when there is a need to revise the English language syllabus for grade nine students ,where English will be taught as an English Language Arts. In this regard, the research is hoped to benefit grade level English teachers, material writers, syllabus designers, and policy makers by creating awareness for them on the existing actual reading comprehension ability level of the students, the gap created with their reading ability, and factors that contributed to the low reading ability. Similarly, the findings of this study are believed to help syllabus designers and teachers in identifying their students' reading weaknesses, thereby to make adjustments, improve teaching materials and prepare supplementary materials. Finally, the findings of this can be helpful to those who are interested in conducting studies in the area of reading comprehension abilities.

#### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

To achieve its goal in a manageable way, the study was delimited to grade nine students at Entoto Amba Secondary school. Grade Nine was the focus grade because it is at this grade level students start their senior secondary education, and it is the grade level where English language starts to serve as the medium of instruction in all content subjects.

## **1.7. Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation was its focus on a single school. It also could not test more reading skill and strategies than what the tests included in their five sections, because testing more skills needs provision of more reading texts in the tests, which in turn needs more time and money. Therefore, the present research could only give two tests. To this end, the study would have been more comprehensive and generalizable if more schools had been included and more reading skills and strategies had been tested.

## **1.8. Definition of Key Terms**

**Readability:** Comprehensibility of a reading passage which can be measured in terms of counts of words and sentences (DuBay,2004:3)

**Readability formulas:** Formulas that determine the grade level reading passages belong to

(DuBay,2004:2)

**Reading Comprehension Ability:** Students' reading ability that is classified into frustration, instructional or independent level (Rye, 1983, cited in Mendida, 1988; Heaton, 2010; Halladay, 2012 ); and students' reading ability level classified into A1 (Beginner), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Intermediate), B2 (Upper intermediate), C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) or C2 (Mastery) (Cambridge University, 2013)

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. Review of Related Literature

#### 2.1. The concept of Reading and Reading Comprehension

For years, reading in a foreign language was perceived as a passive decoding process where readers reconstruct the meaning the author intends. Such a reading process builds meaning starting from the smallest units at the bottom (i.e. Letters and words) and goes to the larger textual units at the top (i.e. Phrases, clauses and sentences) (Carrell, 1998). Of late, however, the view has changed and reading is conceived as a process in “which the reading activates a range of knowledge in the reader’s mind that he or she uses, and that, in turn, may be refined and extended by the new information supplied by the text” (Grabe, 1998:56). Thus, reading is taken as a process that helps students to be independent readers, select and prepare for an occupation, and discharge social responsibilities.

Alderson says “the process is likely to be dynamic, variable, and different for the same reader on the same text at a different time or with a different purpose in reading” (2000: 3). In this process, the reader applies many strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended. The reader does this by comparing the information in the text to his or her background knowledge and prior experience. In relation to this, Brown (2003:185) notes that English readers must be clear with two important requirements for efficient reading. In the first place, they should master bottom-up and top-down strategies of reading. The bottom-up strategies enable the learners separate letters, words, and phrases. The top-down strategies help the learners comprehend the text. In the second place, efficient readers must have appropriate background information and cultural experience to carry out those interpretations. On account of this, reading is not a sole process of just encountering the reading text, but bringing in one’s prior experience and prior knowledge of any kind to elicit understanding or comprehension.

Though important as a skill, fluent reading does not happen all of a sudden. It demands the integration of different knowledge and skills. Grabe (1991), as cited in Alderson (2000:13), considers six component elements in the fluent reading process: automatic recognition skills,

vocabulary and structural knowledge, formal discourse structure knowledge, content/world background knowledge, synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies, and metacognition knowledge and monitoring skills. Therefore, learners should be either explicitly or implicitly informed about the various domains involved in effective reading.

As Anderson (2000:116) underscores, the primary purpose for doing the reading is understanding or comprehending a text. The comprehension is the product aspect of the reading that the reader is expected to come up with. This comprehension can happen anytime during the process of doing a reading or after the reading is done. Then, what is reading comprehension?

Comprehension is more than a linguistic skill; it is also a general cognitive skill (Walter, 2007 Cited in McKee, 2012:46). This implies that comprehension is not only the use of the sub skills of reading, but also the engagement of a mental thinking process. In comprehensive terms, reading comprehension is “a thinking process by which a reader selects facts, information, or ideas from printed materials; determines the meanings the author intended to transmit; decides how they relate to previous knowledge; and judges their appropriateness and worth for meeting the learner’s own objectives”(Veeravagu, et al ,2010:206 cited in McKee ,2012).What is said is that reading comprehension is a continuous interactive process that involves recognition of words and sentences, creation of meaning out of them and reflection on the meaning.

In an attempt to consider how reading comprehension occurs, Adams (1993) listed three phases of comprehension: literal comprehension, critical comprehension and affective comprehension. Literal comprehension refers to an understanding of the straightforward meaning of the text, such as facts, vocabulary, dates, times, and locations. In other words, literal comprehension is the recognition of words and the structure of their occurrence. Critical comprehension, on the other hand, involves such skills as identifying facts from opinions, using inference, realizing the writer's attitude, etc. Affective comprehension is associated with the reader’s reflection on what he /she has read.

Day and Park (2005) also classified reading comprehension into six categories as: literal comprehension, reorganization, inference, prediction, evaluation and personal response. This

classification tends to be very specific and more reading task oriented as it listed the sub skills of reading than following a more general approach that was adapted by Adams (1990).

The above classification is similar to Berrett's in Finn (1990:209), classification schemes for reading comprehension abilities: literal comprehension, reorganization, inferential comprehension, evaluation and appreciation. Both classifications are reported by many researches to have similarity with Bloom's (1956) classification of intellectual activities into knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Finn, 1990:209).The similarity lies with identification of those abilities in their order of mental engagement, from simple to complex.

According to Robinson, Fraone, Hittleman and Unruh (1990), the practice of teaching reading comprehension has changed .Some of the changes include: from oral reading to silent reading; from using workbooks, worksheets, and reading kits to direct student comprehension; from asking "what" questions to asking "why" and "how " questions; from teaching sub skills to teaching comprehension strategies that include these sub skills; from providing little direct teaching to improving the amount of direct teaching that is followed by supervised independent practice (cited in Sweet,2000:4).

Since reading cannot happen only in the classroom, the objective of such a change in the teaching of reading comprehension practice appears to be meant to help learners do the reading comprehension independently with teachers' guide and provision of appropriate reading materials. Beyond sticking to a single question answering practice, on the part of the teachers, the goal of reading comprehension should be to help learners engage in the reading process and gain an overall understanding of what is given in the text rather than obtaining meaning from isolated words or sentences. Yet, the contribution of words and sentences in building up the whole reading text cannot be undermined, and recognition of words and sentences by itself is part and parcel of the reading process.

## **2.2. Intensive and Extensive Reading**

It is quite possible to classify reading engagement as intensive and extensive based on the length of the text to be read, the place where reading takes place, the objective the text is prepared for etc. Reading of shorter texts in classroom situation can be taken as an intensive reading. Such a reading needs an effort up to going between the lines and comprehending every detail of the text, for example, reading part of textbooks, notes, reading passages, etc. On the contrary, extensive reading is employed when the reader reads for pleasure, to get information or for any other purpose. Extensive reading involves reading newspapers, magazines, fiction and non-fiction books etc.(Nuttal, 1999; Hedge, 2000).

Students should practice both kinds of reading if they need to be competent and well informed citizens, and any reading instruction should expose the students to both reading ways as they are complementary (Nuttal, 1996).The reading commonly encouraged in the Ethiopian school situation is intensive; consequently, the students are devoid of chances that are rendered by extensive reading. But Krashen (1993) cited in (Haileyesus, 2011: 8-9) mentions the following as the advantages of extensive reading: to boost students' motivation and confidence, to increase students' reading fluency, to increase contact with foreign language etc.

## **2.3. Silent and Loud Reading**

Researches have shown controversies over the effectiveness of using silent or loud reading for effective comprehension. In most cases, silent reading is recommended for early grades of learning where teachers would like to check whether students are pronouncing each and every word correctly. In reality, rhymes, dialogues and poetry can be read loudly at any grade level. In later grades, however, it is advisable to use silent reading since many researches have proved that silent reading yielded better result than loud reading in spite of a controversy over the use the two modes of reading (Jafari, 2013).Silent reading is found to be advantageous because it allows learners to read at their own speed, and it boosts learner's confidence to work through and understand a text autonomously (Hopkins, 1997; cited in Jafari,2013:20).Those who read silently in reading comprehension assessment are more efficient than those who read loudly (Mc-Callum

et al.,2004,Ibid). Nonetheless, there is a possibility of using loud reading in cases when teachers need to observe the students' reading and give help accordingly.

## **2.4. The Reading Skills**

The complex process of reading involves a number of sub skills which relate to text recognition, meaning construction and interpretation. Many practitioners in the area of reading, including Mumbai (1978), Atkins et al (1996), Brown (2003) and Anderson (2000) have listed different macro and micro skills of reading. In an effort to come up with a very detailed list of those sub skills Mikulecky's (1990) as cited in Mikulecky (2008) has developed her list of sub skills of reading which included : automatic decoding; previewing and predicting; specifying purpose; identifying genre; questioning ; scanning; recognizing topics; classification of ideas into main topics and details; locating topic sentences; stating the main idea (or thesis) of a sentence, paragraph or passage; recognizing patterns of relationships; identifying and using words that signal the patterns of relationships between ideas; inferring the main idea, using patterns and other clues; recognizing and using pronouns, referents, and other lexical equivalents as clues to cohesion; guessing the meaning of unknown words from the context; skimming; paraphrasing; summarizing; drawing conclusions; drawing inferences and using evidence; visualizing; reading critically; reading faster and adjusting reading rate according to materials and purpose.

The above list has put together the micro and macro skills of reading which range from the discrimination of graphemes and orthographic patterns to the use of different reading strategies. Brown (2003:167-188), on his part, has listed the micro and macro skills of reading separately. The micro skills in his list include discriminating among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English language, retaining chunks of language of different lengths in short term memory, processing writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose, recognizing of words and their patterns, recognizing grammatical word classes, recognizing that a particular meaning can be expressed in different grammatical forms and recognizing cohesive devices and their roles. His list of macro skills of reading involves such skills as recognition of the rhetoric forms of written discourse; recognition of communication functions of written text; inferring using background knowledge; distinguishing between literal and implied meaning;

detecting culturally specific references; and using various reading strategies like scanning, skimming, guessing etc.

When it comes to language teaching, however, Munby's (1978) taxonomy of micro skills of reading as cited in Alderson (2000:10), has been influential in curriculum and syllabus design and preparation of language tests. His taxonomy of reading micro skills includes: recognizing the script of a language, deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items, understanding explicitly stated information, understanding information when not explicitly stated, understanding conceptual meaning, understanding the communicative value of sentences, understanding relation within sentences, understanding relation between parts of a text through lexical cohesive devices, understanding cohesion between parts of a text interpreting text by going outside it through grammatical cohesive devices, recognizing indicators in discourse, identifying the main point or important information in discourse, and distinguishing the main idea from supporting details

Munby's list clearly points out what to focus on while setting reading lessons and reading tests. At this point, it is very helpful especially for English as second or Foreign Language situations because the list provides insight into what really makes up reading as a set of building blocks that could easily set in lessons and in tests.

Finally, whatever is in the list, the issue is about the identification of various sub skills of reading which should be taught specifically and measured objectively. In one way or another, reading comprehension practice can enable learners use these sub skills of reading. These skills can provide possible objectives to expect from a reading process and what to include in our assessment of reading ability.

## **2.5. Reading Comprehension Strategies**

As the name strategy suggests, reading strategies are techniques or methods employed when the reader is actually reading a text or passage. Davies (1995) defines a reading strategy as “a physical or mental process used consciously or unconsciously with the intention of facilitating text comprehension and/or learning” (cited in Mckee, 2012:48). These strategies are the repairs

and adjustments the reader makes throughout the reading comprehension process. They are mechanisms that the reader employs to solve problem in his/her reading comprehension.

Students should master fundamental bottom-up strategies for processing separate letters, words, and phrases, and top-down conceptually driven strategies for comprehension. Students' inability to comprehend can be a result of lack of training on reading strategy. As Brown exemplifies this "an academic technical report may be comprehensible to a student at sentence level, but if the reader has not exercised certain strategies for noting the discourse convention of the genre, misunderstanding may occur." (2003:185)

The principal strategies for reading comprehension listed by Brown (2003:188-189) are: identifying a reader's purpose in reading a text; applying spelling rules and conventions for bottom-up decoding; using lexical analysis (prefixes, roots, suffixes etc.) determining meaning; guessing at meanings (of words, idioms etc.) when not certain; skimming the text for the gist or main ideas; scanning the text for specific information(names, dates, keywords .);using silent reading for rapid processing; using marginal notes, outlines, charts or semantic maps for understanding and retaining information; distinguishing between literal and implied meanings; and capitalizing on discourse markers to process relationships. Yang (2006) also listed general reading strategies such as predicting content, posing questions, recognizing text structure, integrating information, reflecting, monitoring comprehension, utilizing general knowledge, and reacting to the text (Cited in Mckee,2012:48).Very close to Brown's (2003) classification of reading strategies, Janzen and Stoller (1998) identified ten processes or strategies of reading comprehension : identifying a purpose for reading, previewing, predicting, asking questions, checking predictions or finding and answer to the questions, connecting the text to prior knowledge, summarizing, connecting one part of the text to another, and recognizing text structure (cited in Mckee,2012:46).

What matters is not how much is included in the list but the employment of possible number of these strategies by the students in the reading process. Besides, teachers are responsible to train learners to use these reading strategies. As Brown explains, in addition to the various sub skills of reading, reading strategies are crucial elements to include in the assessment of reading ability (2000:187).What is more , the different reading tasks that are performed at the pre-reading , post-

reading and while-reading stages demand learners to apply reading strategies and use different sub skills of reading. Based on the reading skills and strategies listed by the scholars above , it is possible to consider the list of reading tasks in the three phases of reading lesson (see Appendix H).

The pre-reading tasks are predicting content of text based on titles and visuals, predicting content based on knowledge of topic, predicting content based on knowledge of genre, reading or listening to background information, brainstorming vocabulary that might appear, discussing ideas that appear in the text, learning the meaning and use of discourse markers, pre-teaching vocabulary in text, skimming the text for gist comprehension, scanning the text for specific information, and reading comprehension questions to answer.

The while-reading tasks include taking brief notes, underlining/highlighting important information or key words and phrases, ignoring unknown words, determining meaning of unknown words from context, taking predictions while reading, paying attention to grammatical function of words, recognizing function of connectors (but, or, etc.) and referencers (it, this, etc.),re-reading to repair comprehension, identifying topic sentences that contain main ideas, recognizing key words, making conclusions and inferences, paraphrasing while reading, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying writer's opinion or attitude, timed reading, scanning or skimming sections of text, recognizing function of discourse markers (for example, in conclusion, etc.),and composing comprehension questions.

The post-reading tasks, on their part, are those like answering comprehension questions about content, students giving and discussing opinions about text, locating lexical and grammatical, items in the text, locating and categorizing cohesive devices ( connectors, referencers and discourse markers),summarizing the text in writing or speaking, paraphrasing the text or sections of the text in writing or speaking, and identifying features of genre.

All the reading tasks mentioned at the three phases of reading can be performed effectively when teachers train students on how to use the different reading skills and reading strategies. What has been shown through studies is that strategies that get the students to interact with the text greatly improved comprehension. As long as reading strategies are part of reading lessons, students'

reading comprehension tests can ask questions that demand students to apply different reading strategies like scanning, skimming, predicting, summarizing etc. A close investigation of many language tests, including international tests like IELTS, TOEFL, SAT, TOEIC, Cambridge ESOL etc., shows that in their reading part, they evaluate students' understanding of main ideas, stated details, unstated details, implied details etc. in form of tasks that are mentioned in the three stages of reading above.

## **2.6. Reading Ability Levels of Students**

Students demonstrate different reading performance based on their level of reading proficiency. But classifying the level of reading proficiency is a wide research area which varies across nations and institutions. Researches in the field of reading indicated that students' reading ability can generally fall into three levels: frustration, instructional and independent (Rye, 1983 cited in Mendida, 1988; Halladay, 2012). The three levels depend on students' reading achievement on comprehension and cloze tests. Accordingly, if a student scores 0-74 and 0-39 in reading comprehension and cloze tests respectively, he/she is at frustration level. At this level the language in the reading text is too difficult for the learner to understand the whole text even with the help of others.

A student who achieves 75-89 and 40-59 in reading and cloze tests respectively is said to be at instructional level because he/she can understand the reading text to a certain extent; however, he/she still should seek help from an adult or a teacher to understand the whole text.

Independent level is achieved by students who can score 90-100 and 60-100 by reading comprehension and cloze test respectively. A learner at the independent stage can read a text and understand it by himself/herself without any assistance from others.

As an extension to the above classification, identifies six reading ability levels which are widely accepted as the global standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. The CEFR ability levels are not exceptional to reading only, but they work for all the language Skills. CEFR language ability level classification are global, even acceptable for the Ethiopian situation because they are focused on Can Do statements and measure ability based on communicative

purpose which is advocated by Communicative Language Teaching, which the Ethiopian English Textbooks work with.

Those Six reading ability levels fall under: English Basic User or A Levels (A1, A2), English Independent User or B Levels (B1, B2) and Proficient English User or C Levels (C1,C2).

### **2.6.1. CEFR General Language Competencies across Levels**

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages presents a list of general language competencies based on the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. As given in a document by Cambridge University (2013:5), general language competencies give overall picture of what general language competencies are expected of students for the six ability levels. Those competencies are given in the form of can do statements.

#### **2.6.1.1. A1 (Breakthrough or Beginner)**

Learners at this level can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. They can introduce himself/ herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. They can also interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

#### **2.6.1.2. A2 (Waystage or Elementary)**

Students of elementary language ability level can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). They are able to communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. They can also describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

### **2.6.1.3. B1 (Threshold or Intermediate)**

Students at intermediate language ability level can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. They are capable of dealing with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. They can also produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. More than that, they can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

### **2.6.1.4. B2 (Vantage or Upper Intermediate )**

This is the level where language learners can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. They can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Besides, they can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

### **2.6.1.5. C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency or Advanced)**

Students at Advanced level can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. They can express themselves fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. They are also able to use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Moreover, they can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

### **2.6.1.6.C2 (Mastery or Proficiency)**

Mastery level is the language ability level where students can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. They can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent

presentation. Finally, they can express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

The above classification of language ability levels is with focus on the major four skills of language: reading, listening, speaking and writing. This classification can go to details of each skill.

### **2.6.2. CEFR Reading Competencies Across levels**

A document by Council of Europe presents clear description of students reading competencies in the six language ability levels. Although all reading competencies for the six levels are mentioned in Appendix A, it is important to look at the reading competencies that are expected of intermediate students at CEFR level and grade nine students in the Ethiopian case, because the tests for the present study are based on these competencies. These reading abilities at intermediate ability level include: understanding straightforward texts on subjects related to students' fields of interest, finding and understanding general information students need in everyday material (for example letters, brochures and short official documents etc.), searching one long or several short texts to locate specific information they need to help students complete a task, recognising significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar subjects, identifying the main conclusions in clearly written argumentative texts, recognising the general line of argument in a text but not necessarily in detail, understanding the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters well enough to correspond with a friend or acquaintance, and understanding clearly written straightforward instructions for a piece of equipment.

A close look at the above list of reading competencies shows that there exists different reading text types, and reading skills and strategies. Among the texts are letters, brochures, short official documents, newspaper articles, argumentative texts, instruction, etc. Some of the skills and strategies include skimming for gist, scanning for specific information, reading for detailed comprehension, follow instructions, understand short messages, etc. These are what the present study expects to be parallel with the reading text types, and reading skills and strategies in the Ethiopian Grade Nine English Textbook; they are what the two reading texts of the present study test students with.

## 2.7. Testing Reading Comprehension Ability

As mentioned in the previous subsection, reading comprehension tests assess whether the students can employ different reading skills and reading strategies to demonstrate their understanding of the reading texts. Although there are different tests to measure students' reading performance, Anderson (2000:203) concluded that there is no best method for testing reading. However, Anderson(Ibid) and Brown(2003) listed close- test and gap-filling tests, multiple-choice, matching, ordering task, true-false, editing test, c-test, the close-elide test, short answer, free recall, summary test etc. as techniques to test students' reading ability. Anderson (2000) further commented that it is unwise to conclude that one method is valid for it is being widely used. Therefore, assessing reading comprehension demands sound reason on choosing different formats rather than sticking test format.

Nonetheless, different researchers have developed concerns on test type and test format as factors that can affect students' reading comprehension performance. As presented in the studies by Zheng, Cheng, and Klinger (2007), different tests formats, including different types of questions in the same format, measured different aspects of reading comprehension (cited in Mckee,2012:51).So, it is unlikely that one test type and one test format measures every aspect of reading comprehension abilities unless different test formats and test types are used.

According to Mckee (2012) most standardized reading comprehension tests are designed to assess six essentials of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Then, the concern lies with using only more than one test type for the purpose of determining students' reading comprehension ability. Many researchers have suggested using a variety of different test formats and types to better assess students' reading comprehension effectively. Utilizing a variety of forms of tests can provide a better assessment of comprehension as suggested by Dennis (2009).

Close investigation on various local and international researches revealed that they have used some of the reading comprehension test types. Among the different test types that the current researcher observed commonly used by many local and international researchers in assessing

reading ability of students' are multiple choice, true-false, matching, and fill in the blank and cloze test.

Anderson (2000) mentioned that cloze-test is commonly perceived as a suitable test for any situation while multiple-choice comprehension questions are very commonly used testing technique. In the light of this, the present research adopted a standardized reading ability test which included multiple-choice, matching, true-false and fill in the blanks.

### **2.7.1. Multiple-choice Reading Comprehension Questions**

Reading comprehension involves the engagement of the readers' thought and prior knowledge to determine meaning and relationship transmitted by the text. Such a comprehension ability can be assessed systematically using different multiple choice comprehension questions.

Indeed, there are arguments on using multiple-choice comprehension questions as they have their own advantages and disadvantages. As to the advantages, they allow the tester to control possible answers (Anderson, 2000). They can also be easily scored with accuracy and objectivity (Mckee, 2012). Moreover, these tests do not disadvantage poorer readers as essays do because essays only demand students to write not to choose (Chan and Kennedy, 2002 cited in Mckee, 2012). Regarding the disadvantages, Anderson (2000) summarized three of them. In the first place, multiple-choice questions lead the readers to be manipulated by the tester's thought about the text than engaging their own thought. This kind of test can also trick the students and may not measure the real reading ability of the readers. The students may also practice choosing by eliminating possible distractors though the students do not understand the reading text. As multiple-choice reading comprehension may measure the ability of students to be able to recall the details of what they have read (Allington, 2001 cited in Mckee, 2012), such an assessment judges the student as a proficient reader because he/she has the ability to answer factual questions. However, we cannot ignore the fact that background knowledge is one variable that links reading comprehension and testing, and while testing reading comprehension we are also assessing background knowledge.

To use multiple-choice reading comprehension questions fruitfully, therefore, they should be constructed well by avoiding subjectivity of the testers. If multiple-choice tests are constructed

well, they can assess the student's level of knowledge and reading comprehension ability (Epstein, et al, 2002 cited in Mckee, 2012). What to bear in mind is that creating multiple-choice questions is a very demanding task and it should be done with care to maintain its validity and reliability. Ready-made standard multiple-choice reading comprehension items can ease such a challenge.

### **2.7.2. Matching Items**

As noted by Brown (2003) matching item gives advantage of offering alternative to the traditional multiple-choice. In this format test takers are given a list of items under column "A" with equivalent answer matches under column "B". One of such tests that is common in testing reading comprehension, which is also mentioned in Anderson(2000), is a matching type where the headings of paragraphs(A,B,C,D.... or 1,2,3,4....) under column "A" are matched to their main idea that will be given under column "B". No matter how effectively set, as multiple-choice items do, matching items are not free from criticism.

### **2.7.3. True-false Items**

One of the dichotomous test format in testing is true-false item .This item helps in testing factual information that can be identified as true or false based on a reading passage. According to Anderson (2000), to minimize the 50% guessing chance of such items, there is a possibility of adding a third category that says "not given" or "the text does not say".

### **2.7.4. Cloze Test and Gap-filling Tests**

According to Anderson (2000) cloze tests are constructed by deleting n-th word from a selected text (usually 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> word) and making the students fill in the gaps with identical missing words (sometimes a word that makes sense in the gap).Cloze-test can be presented just as fill in gaps (without alternatives) or in form of multiple choice where students are provided with three or four alternatives. Providing choices thus can increase objectivity of the cloze test, and it can make scoring quite easy.

Stephens (2016) maintains that cloze test is objective in scoring, and it is easy to use and analyze. Besides, she used the test itself for analysis and yielded high correlations to other readability formula. Despite all these advantages and popularity, Stephens (2016) insists that the cloze technique does not predict comprehensibility of the reading material, but it is try-out to judge whether a particular audience group can comprehend the writing well enough to complete the cloze test.

Gap-filling differs from cloze test since ,in the latter, the test writer does not use the pseudo-random selection of words to be omitted, he/she rather decides on which word to delete based on some reason of testing, for example, testing word appropriateness or grammar (Anderson,2000).

The present study dealt with multiple-choice, true/false, matching and gap-filling test types because they are included in the reading comprehension tests of the study.

## **2.8. Factors that Affect Reading Comprehension Ability**

Many factors affect students' comprehension ability. Those factors may be related to the reading text or the reader of the text. Anderson (2000:32) categorizes those factors under two categories: text variables and reader variables. The text variables include text content, text types or genres, text organization, sentence structure, lexis, text typography, layout, the relationship between verbal and non-verbal text and the medium in which the text is presented. The reader variables that affect reading comprehension are schemata and background knowledge, reader's skills and abilities, reader's purpose in reading, reader's motivation or interest, etc.

In a similar manner, Sadeghi (2007) looked at reading comprehension as related to two main factors, internal and external factors. Internal factors, related to the reader, were things such as cognitive abilities and strategies, background knowledge, and affective characteristics. External factors were identified as text modality, text characteristics, time and place of reading and others (cited in Mickee, 2012: 46).

Taking Sadeghi's (2007) classification of factors that affect reading comprehension (i.e internal and external factors),this study tried to consider the variables like family educational background, access to reading materials, frequency of reading, teaching approach etc. While

analyzing the responses for students' questionnaires; the study investigated how significant those factors were in determining students' reading ability.

## **2.9. Grade Levels of Reading Texts**

### **2.9.1. The concept of Readability**

Although it is a broad and controversial concept, most dictionaries define readability as a quality of a text that makes it easy and enjoyable to read. Such a general definition embarks on the view that readability is attained when a text is easy and interesting to read.

However, many readability researches have related the definition of readability largely to reading text or reading passage difficulty in the belief that reading comprehension or understanding largely depends on difficulty of the reading material. In this context, DuBay defines readability as "what makes some text easier to read than others" (2004:3). In a similar manner, for Begen and Greene "readability is an attribute of written text, commonly defined by factors that theoretically make text more or less difficult to read (e.g., vocabulary, sentence complexity)" (2014:198). As these two definitions assert, readability can refer to the surface features of a text in terms of structural complexity and lexis. For reading professionals like Fry (2002:285), readability, which results from writing style, is related to using readability formula and determining the difficulty or lexical complexity, which in fact affects readers' interest and responses to a text.

When those readability formulas are considered, they measure certain features of text which can be subjected to mathematical calculations. The features most of these formulas use are counts of words and sentences (Fry, 2002; Anderson, 2000). The idea is that "longer words may demand more decoding of inflections, and longer sentence provide space for more clauses and intricate causal and phrasal embedding, again demanding more of a reader" Miller (2011:36). This shows that word length (or number of syllables) and sentence length can affect readability of the text. In other words, single and double syllabic words are easier to understand than polysyllabic words which are more demanding. In contrast to this, simple and short sentences are far easier to understand than compound, complex and compound- complex sentences.

Said this way or that way, the issue of readability is about matching the content of the reading material with the reading level of the learners. The issue is about text variable, particularly text complexity, which has been argued to be one of the influential factors in reading performance (Anderson, 2000). In simpler terms and to this researcher's purpose, readability is concerned with the comprehensibility or understandability of a piece of written text related to ease of language.

### **2.9.2 How to check Readability**

To assess the difficulty of texts, some scholars have designed quantitative formulas called readability formulas which assess complexity on a lexical level, syntactic levels or even content level from cohesiveness shown in the texts. Readability tests, which are mathematical formulas, were designed to assess the suitability of texts or books for students at particular grade levels or ages (Stephen, 2016).

Different local and international researches indicated that a grade level of reading material is commonly estimated using one or more readability formulas. Those formulas measure text difficulty based on specified text characteristics like length of words and sentences. Readability formulas literature explains that most readability formulas are typically based on characteristics of text such as sentence length and word difficulty that can be measured objectively and dependably. The results of readability analysis are reported using a numerical scale that corresponds to comparable scale of an individual's reading achievement level. The scale is most frequently used to report readability is a grade-level estimate of the difficulty of text (Fry, 2012).

Readability tests can be performed manually by counting and doing a mathematical calculation, or be referring to a chart or graph. The tests can also be performed by computer; most grammar or editing software today can perform several readability tests.

Although the literature provides different proofs of the readability formulas, Fry (2006) and Stephen (2006) equally suggested the use of comprehension test, cloze test and oral reading errors as some of the proofs for success of readability formulas. As Fry (2006) commented, the most frequently used proof of success is a correlation with a comprehension test where the student understands less as the readability score increases. To get the proof of students'

comprehension, a multiple-choice comprehension test and sometimes a written or oral response are used. The second tool of proof for readability that can also prove comprehension is a cloze test. In a cloze test the students are asked to fill in blanks where words are omitted. This cloze score is advantageous because it eliminates subjectivity of selecting or writing comprehension test items as cloze score is objective measure where, for example, every 5th word can be omitted and only exact word replacement is counted. The third proof of readability formulas is the correlation with oral reading errors. Here, as readability score increases so do oral reading errors.

### **2.9.3. Readability Formulas which Analyze Sample Passages**

Religious leaders were the first to attempt to examine readability (Klare, 1963 cited in Janan, 2011) .They used words and ideas and estimated the frequency of occurrence in order to distinguish usual from unusual sense (meanings).Later, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, several new formulas have been developed and used for many purposes, ranging from determining the readability of government documents, newspaper articles, schoolbooks, and medical documents (Bailin & Grafstein, 2001; Harrison, 1980 Cited in DuBay, 2004)).

Based on various bodies of literature in the field of readability, the readability formulas can do calculation either using sample texts from a reading material or the whole reading material. This section presents those formula which calculate readability grade level by taking sample passages or texts from a reading material.

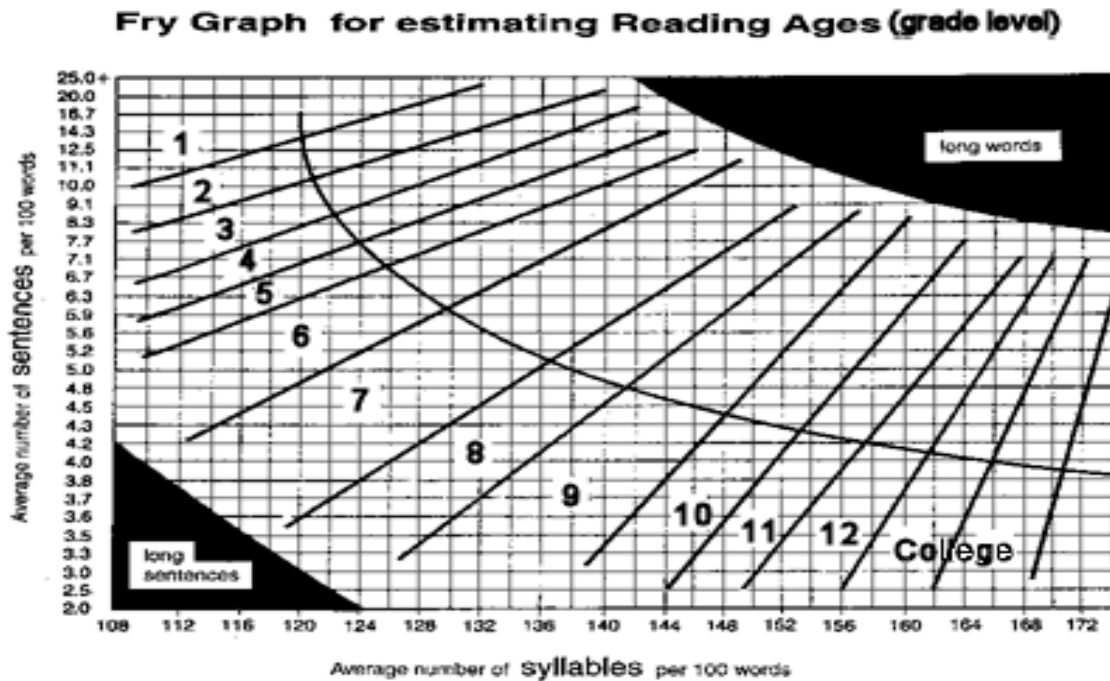
Flesch Reading Ease Formula (1948), The Dale-Chall Formula (1948),The Fog Index (1952) and McLaughlin SMOG Index (1969) were among the popular formulas which were developed to determine the readability grade level of a reading text by taking sample passages. Among such formulas which take sample passages to determine readability grade level of a whole texts, for its convenience, the present study discusses three of them.

#### **2.9.3.1. The Fry Graph (1969)**

This formula by Edward Fry developed readability tests based on the graph. This graph-based test determines readability from elementary through college years (Fry, 2002).To apply this formula, first samples of 100-word passages are selected randomly (eliminate the numbers from

word count) .Second, the number of sentences in all three 100-word passages are counted, estimating the fraction of the last sentence to the nearest 1/10th.Then, the number of syllables in all three 100-word passages are counted. After that, we enter the graph with Average Sentence Length and Number of Syllables. Finally, a dot is plotted in the graph where the two lines intersect. Area where dot is plotted signifies the approximate reading grade level of the content.

**Graph 1: Fry’s Readability Graph**



### 2.9.3.2. Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (1975)

According to Larrison (2006) this formula was the result of efforts made to create a tool which could measure the difficulty of technical manuals used by US Navy personnel in training. It was developed because there was a challenge in using the Flesch Reading Ease measure as its test results were not immediately meaningful .Besides, making sense of their score required the aid of a conversion table. So, the Flesch Reading Ease test was revisited and, along with other readability tests, the formula was amended to be more suitable for use in the navy. The new calculation was the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (1975).It has been shown by many studies that this formula is the oldest and the most accurate to be best used on school textbooks. As to its

accuracy, it follows a simple approach to assess the grade level of the reader either manually or on computer; even it can easily be accessed on Microsoft word.

For the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test, grade level classifications are based on the attainment of participants in the norming group on which the test was trialed. The grade represents norming group participants' typical score. So, if a piece of text has a grade level readability score of 6, this is equivalent in difficulty to the average reading level of the norming group who were at grade 6 when they took the test. The formula is presented as follows:

$$\text{Grade} = .39sl + 11.8wl - 15.59$$

**sl** = Average number of word per sentence.

**wl** = Average number of syllables per word.

The score that is generated by the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level is equivalent to the US grade level of education that the reader would require to be able to understand that piece of text. So, a piece of text with a Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score of 8 should be readable by those who have reached the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of schooling (aged 13-14).

### **2.9.3.3. The New Dale –Chall Readability Formula (1995)**

DuBay (2004) commented that the new formula took sentence length and word familiarity into account as the old one did. The new differs from the old one since it expands and updates their corpus of familiar words. It also validates the scales using cloze scores from the 32 passages used in Bromuth's (1971) extensive study of readability ( cited DuBay,2004). The old formula was only recommended for reading levels at grade four and above, but the new one can serve grades 1 through college level.

The new formula provides two readability measures of a text: a cloze score and a grade level. The authors recommend using the cloze score for research purpose. This formula is praised as the most valid of all the traditional formulas because it correlates .92 with the Bormuth Mean Cloze Scores ,making it the most valid of the popular formulas (Dubay,2004).It also received criticism for its failure to account for more structural relations within a text(e.g. lexical overlap,

coherence, etc.). Young (2014) recognized this formula as an accurate measure because it was based on use of familiar words rather than syllable or letter counts.

The new Dale-Chall readability formula that is used to find a reading grade of a reader who can comprehend is as follows:

$$\text{Raw Score} = 0.1579 * (\text{PDW}) + 0.0496 * \text{ASL Raw Score}$$

Where:

**PDW** = Percentage of Difficult Words

**ASL** = Average Sentence Length in words

After the calculation is made the following conversion table is considered for further interpretation of the scores:

**Table 1: New Dale-Chall Conversion Table**

Level: Adjusted score grade level 4.9 and below	Grade four and below
5.0 to 5.9	Grades 5 -6
6.0 to 6.9	Grades 7-8
7.0 to 7.9	Grades 9-10
8.0 to 8.9	Grades 11-12
9.0 to 9.9	Grades 13-15(college)
10.0-10.9	Grades 16 and above(college graduate)

#### **2.9.4. Readability Measures Which Analyze the Whole Reading Material**

Fry (2006) noted the change in the use of readability formulas from focus on sample passages to analysis of the whole text. Accordingly, since 2000, complex readability formulas of large scale use emerged. Those formulas that are largely done by publishers and large companies often use formulas which require their computers. The formulas tell the readability grade level of a whole text using the whole text as a sample unlike those traditional formulas which use sample passages to predict the readability grade level of a whole reading material. Unlike other readability formulas, the large scale formulas like Lexiles, DRP and ATOS are not available for individual computers. Some of those large scale formulae are presented in the following sections.

#### **2.9.4.1. Lexile Framework (1980s)**

As Benjamin (2012) remarked, Meta Metrics is a company that is doing computerized readability on large amounts of materials (26,000 trade books) .This program output is in units called Lexiles. Lexiles can be translated into grade levels. A student can take their achievement test that yields Lexiles, or any well-known standardized test like the Stanford 9 Achievement Test.

This method is more complex in design. It measures text difficulty based on a scale that measures reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is determined by the familiarity of semantic units and the complexity of the syntactic structures used in constructing sentences (Smith et al.1989 cited in Benjamin 2012).The creators of the method created a scale that could enable them measure word frequency and sentence length. The Lexile word frequency measure is the mean log word frequency from a 5 million word corpus and their sentence length measure is the log of mean sentence length in the text. The Lexile measure cannot be computed easily and it is carried out on books for commercial purpose.

#### **2.9.4.2. Advantage TASA Open Standard (ATOS)(2000)**

Advantage Learning Systems has a graded list of 25,000 books which contain most of the trade books used in schools Benjamin (2012). They use their own formula known as ATOS (Advantage TASA Open Standard) that uses the inputs of sentence length, average grade level of words and length of book. This formula uses a computer and the entire content of the book, not just samples of text. The formula yields grade level scores that are coordinated with their own STAR reading achievement test (Standardized Test for Achievement of Reading).

Benjamin (2012) further explained that an ATOS formula is a combination of two formulas: ATOS for text and ATOS for books. The formulas are produced based on a massive book and reading assessment database. Both formulas are based on the same traditional text variables- word length, sentence length, and grade level of words. The formula for books also takes book length into account. The final ATOS for text readability formula incorporated three variables: average characters per word, average word per complete sentence, and the average grade level of the words which could be found in the ATOS graded vocabulary list (excluding 100 most frequent words in the corpora).As Benjamin (2012:68) commented, the validity of the ATOS is

not well established and more research is recommended in the area to determine predictive validity of the research.

Another company that has analyzed 15,000 books is TASA (Touchstone Applied Science Associates) using their own computerized readability formula that yields DRP units (Degrees of Reading Power). Their inputs are sentence length, word length and proportion of common words. These readability levels coordinate with their own reading test which yields DRP units.

#### **2.9.4.3. Read-X (2007, 2008)**

Another large scale formula discussed by Benjamin (2012) is Read-x formula, which is based on some traditional readability variables: number of words, number of sentences, number of “long words”, and number of letters in the text. The software for the method uses those readability variables to the readability of texts on the Web in real time so that a person can perform a web search and filter results by reading levels. The method categorizes search results by theme (e.g. science, music, history etc.).

#### **2.9.5. Why Readability Formulas?**

In comparison to other language skills, much education is expected to take place by reading the textbook in many subjects at every level from elementary school through college. Based on this, readability formulas are, in one way or another, meant to help students learn reading better to succeed in their learning. According to Fry (2006) the major purpose of readability is, then, to help comprehensibility, or the transfer of information. To achieve such a purpose, readability formulas attempt to predict the readers understanding of the written passage that is certainly important in selecting reading materials or textbooks.

#### **2.9.6. Limitations of Readability Formulas**

Readability formulas have contributed their share in determining difficulty grade level of reading texts. On the contrary, based on studies on various readability formulas, it quite possible to point out the problems of those formulas. For example, Zakaluk and Samuels (1988) (as cited in Zakalku and Samuels 1996:45) have criticized the readability formulas for interformulas

reliability, criterion validity, disregard for higher level of text organization and prescription for writing. In this regard, studies indicated that different readability formulas produced different difficulty grade level estimates for the same text (Janan and Wray,2012).Readability formulas also ignored the value of text organization and cohesiveness as they tend to focus on word frequency and sentence length. Regarding prescriptive nature of the formulas, they will force writers to develop concern on words and sentences than the idea they should render to the readers.

Taking how the reading text is written into account, Stephens (2016) also commented on readability formulas failures to show: how complex the ideas are; whether or not the content is in a logical order; whether the vocabulary is appropriate for the audience; whether there is a gender, class or cultural bias; whether the design is attractive and helps or hinders the reader; whether the material appears in a form and type style that is easy or hard to read. The formulas were also complained about for their inability to consider factors that make text difficult like the degree of discourse cohesion, number of inferences required, number of items to remember, complexity of ideas, rhetorical structure, dialect and required background knowledge (Bruce, Rubin & Starr 1981,cited in Janan, 2011:82). Stephens (2016) further criticized the readability formulas for their ignorance to take different reader variables or resources like word recognition skills, interest in the subject, and prior knowledge of the topic into account. Equally, readability formulas are disgraced for isolating text difficulty from other essential elements like the context of its use, reader's motivation, interest, competitiveness, value and reading purpose (Bruce, Rubin & Starr, 1981; cited in Janan, 2011:82).

All in all, the readability formulas are vulnerable to criticism because they fail to consider the cognitive, affective and social factors that interplay in the reading process. Consequently, the formulas are superficial measures of the text difficult grade level. On the contrary, they have still been contributing their part in measuring the difficulty level of reading texts.

### **2.9.7. Local Researches on Reading and Readability**

Based on many local researches at elementary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, the reading problem in Ethiopian situation is deep rooted and needs thorough investigation and

immediate intervention. Many local researches have been carried out to figure out the problems related to teaching reading. The reasons which most local researches mention to contribute to students' lack of reading ability include readability of reading materials (Mendida,1988; Berhe,1989;Genene, 1994),the design of reading exercises and reading materials (Gebeyaw, 2011; Fikru, 2009) qualification of language teachers'(Gebeyaw,2011),teaching methods employed by teachers (Nardos,2016) and students' reading practice and reading preference (Abdu,1993) etc.

Ethiopian government secondary school students' failure in reading comprehension being the case, for Nardos (2016) the weakness with the students' reading in English is the result of the methods of teaching reading. Studies also blamed teachers for using traditional approach than the recently advocated Communicative Language Teaching. Even those teachers who are claimed to use CLT, teach the students how to answer questions than helping them attain the desired skills and strategies (Yenus, 2007). Teachers were also reported to use only scanning and skimming as reading strategies, and do not provide adequate model reading passage for English reading lessons. Besides, students in Ethiopian government secondary schools do not have adequate intensive and extensive reading practice (Nardos,2016;Samuel,2011),learn in large classes where the teacher cannot adequately follow students' reading skills (Edaso,2007),do not get additional books in their libraries (Edaso ,2007;Samuel,2011) and come from poor family which cannot provide them with adequate additional reading materials (Edaso,2007).Due to these factors, students practice less reading and fail in their academic performance which demands reading and comprehending in English. As they do not have access to different English reading materials, these students tend to stick to their textbooks and fail to practice further intensive and extensive reading. The textbooks are then the only means for these students to cultivate their reading skills. Thus, are the reading passages in their English textbooks of appropriate difficulty level to the reading ability of the students?

The current research found the reading ability of the students and the readability of reading materials or passages worth a case to investigate as they can either foster or hinder reading comprehension ability of the students. Of favor for this cause, in his study to assess the significance of literature in language teaching for grade 9 students, Fikru (2009) pointed out that lack of suitable teaching materials as a factor that affects students' language performance.

Similarly, the study on the design and implementation of reading exercises in Grade Nine English Textbook by Gebeyaw (2011) indicated that the while-reading and post-reading exercises do not allow learners to apply different strategies, and he suggested the redesigning of those exercises. He also recommended the redesigning of reading passages which are not exploitable and suitable for different reading strategies and the cultivation of different reading skills.

As mentioned in the statement of the problem, some Ethiopians have carried out researches to determine the readability level of course books (textbooks) (as expected reading ability level of learners) and the actual reading level of the learners. As an example, in his study to investigate the reading ability of Bahir Dar Teachers' college students' and what was expected of them, Mendida (1988) revealed that the students' reading ability was below standard at frustration level where they could read grade 4 texts. He used Fry's readability formula graph, reading comprehension test, cloze test scores, error analysis and questionnaire as tools for his study. Mendida's research focused on tertiary level students and different subject areas. The present researcher's primary focus was on grade nine students and included the internationally recognized CEFR levels to test and categorize the students into those levels which Mendida didn't.

Berhe (1989) conducted a study on the readability level of grade ten textbooks and the comprehension ability of the students. He found out that more than 94 percent of his sample students to be at frustration level of reading comprehension. Berhe used Fry's readability formula graph and cloze procedure to produce such a result. The difference between Berhe and the present research is that the former focused on all subjects and grade ten students while the latter will study about English textbook only with grade nine students as his subjects. In addition, the latter has included CEFR reading ability levels.

Gene (1994) was another researcher to study on readability while investigating on the reading ability of junior secondary school students and the reading ability required of them in their content area. His finding was all the same as the other two researches which confirmed the reading comprehension ability of the respective students to be at frustration level. Again, he found out that vocabularies and the sentence structures in their reading materials presented for

the contents were difficult. To come up with such a finding, Genene (1994) employed readability formula called Fog Index, cloze test, student's questionnaire and teacher's readability checklist. The present research differs from Genene's (1994) because it focused only on English subject Textbook and grade nine students. The other difference is that this research was done 15 years after Genene's (1994).

In brief, the present research was different from the above researches for some basic reasons. In the first place, it was very specific in content because it studied focusing only on reading passages in English Textbook of grade nine students unlike the above researchers which used different subject textbooks in addition to English subject textbooks. Second of all, in this research, along with readability measures, an attempt was made to categorize students into different reading ability levels of CEFR. More than that, the above researches were conducted more than ten and more years ago, and there have been changes in the Ethiopian English Language Textbook and syllabus. Finally, there have been various developments in the area of the study. Therefore, the present research can show what has happened in the field of the research locally and internationally in those fourteen years or so.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Research Design and Methodology

While attempting to find out the gap between the reading comprehension ability of grade nine students and the reading comprehension ability expected of them, the present research followed the pragmatic paradigm as its theoretical guideline. Creswell (2009) states that pragmatism is a theoretical base that permits the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study. In this context, the present study followed mixed- methods approach because it was impossible to answer the research questions with either qualitative or quantitative method alone. “Mixed method research involves the mixing of qualitative and quantitative research methods or paradigm characteristic.”(Johnson and Christenson, 2004; cited in Dorneyi, 2007:148)

Accordingly, the present study employed tests, which are quantitative data collection tools. While analysing the test results, the research used descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, percentage, etc. It also employed close-ended questionnaire to investigate what factors affected students’ reading ability and caused differences in their reading ability. Besides, the research applied quantitative data analysis tool called Fry’s Readability Graph to indicate what grade level the reading passages in grade 9 English Textbook and in the reading tests fall into.

To find out the expected reading comprehension ability of the students, this study evaluated the minimum reading competencies, reading text types, reading skills and strategies presented and prescribed in Grade Nine English Language Syllabus, Teacher’s guide and Textbook, and documents by the Ethiopian ministry of education (2008) and CEFR (2013). This helped the researcher to qualitatively identify the expected learning competencies for reading at a grade nine level. It also used other qualitative data collection tool-observation checklist- to check what reading skills and strategies are taught in the classrooms to determine what should be included in the reading tests.

#### 3.1. Research Design

Research demands a blueprint to easily answer what, where, when, how much, by what means concerning the problem under investigation. This blueprint is a research design. Claire Selltiz et

al (1962) define research design as “the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure” (Cited in Kothari, 2004:31). It facilitates smooth performance of the study so that it could yield an efficient outcome with minimal expenditure of effort, money and time.

To this end, this descriptive study employed mixed methods research design. It was designed in such a way that it could incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. This section presents practicalities of conducting this research, including issues of study subjects, sampling size, tools of data collection and data analysis procedures.

### **3.1.1. Subjects of the study**

The major objective in qualitative sampling technique is finding “individuals who can provide rich and varied insight into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn” (Dornyei, 2007:113). Therefore, the present study took Grade nine students at Entoto Amba Secondary School as the major source of data in the belief that they can provide the necessary data. The school and the grade level were chosen using purposive sampling. It was done, in the first place, because the major concern of the study was not to generalize the case to other situations, but just to explore the problem under investigation as a case in that particular school. In the second place, the school under investigation is in the researcher’s vicinity and the researcher has close contact with the school. Regarding grade level, grade nine was chosen because it is at this grade level English starts to serve as a medium of instruction in all content subjects.

### **3.1.2. Sample Size**

There were 992 students, as population, who were distributed into 21 sections, average of 47 students in each section. To determine the sample size for random sampling, the researcher used Yamane’s (1967) formula :

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

where  $n$  is the sample size,  $N$  is the population size, and  $e$  is the level of precision (0.05) (Israel,199: 4).

Based on this, the sample size was calculated to be 285 students, and 6.5% of the population (i.e. 65) students were added to compensate for non-responses and error. To select this sample size sample in a practical way, lottery method was used. Thus, 8 sections were chosen out of 21 sections. The 373 students in those 8 sections were taken as samples, but only 350 of them took the two tests and filled in the questionnaire. Therefore, the results of the 23 students were discarded because they only took one of the two tests. The number of students who were taken as samples in the study is summarized as follows:

**Table 2: Sample Students across Sections**

<b>Sections</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
Section 9 <sup>3</sup>	43
Section 9 <sup>4</sup>	46
Section 9 <sup>7</sup>	44
Section 9 <sup>12</sup>	43
Section 9 <sup>15</sup>	43
Section 9 <sup>16</sup>	42
Section 9 <sup>19</sup>	45
Section 9 <sup>20</sup>	44
Total	350

As to the sample size for the classroom observation, 3 sections out of the 8 sections were chosen using the lottery method.

### **3.1.3. Instruments of Data collection**

#### **3.1.3.1. Reading Tests**

Two B1 (Intermediate Level) reading tests, which were adopted from ESOL Cambridge PET (Preliminary English Test) for schools (2009) and PET handbook for teachers (2016) were used as major tools to measure the students' actual reading ability. Each test has 35 items with five sections: understanding the message of short texts; reading for detailed information; scanning for specific information; understanding writer's purpose, attitude and opinion; and filling gaps with grammar and vocabulary words. The first section tests students' ability of reading authentic notices, messages and

other short texts for the main message. The second section requires matching five descriptions of people to eight short texts on a particular topic. This part tests students' detailed comprehension. In the third section, students scan a longer factual text for specific information. Section four tests students' ability of reading a longer text for detailed comprehension, gist, inference and global meaning; as well as writer's attitude, opinion and purpose. The fifth section was meant to assess students' ability of reading a factual or narrative text and choosing the correct vocabulary and grammar items to complete the gaps. This part evaluates the grammar and vocabulary ability of the students in relation to their attempt to read and comprehend a text.

#### **3.1.3.1.1. Validity and Reliability of the Reading Comprehension Tests**

The first step taken to maintain validity and reliability of the test was taking Standardized tests which were already set by Cambridge University. As to the content and face validity, three grade 9 colleague teachers evaluated the tests to check whether they were set with appropriate content and face validity-whether the reading skills, strategies, texts, and questions are within the minimum reading competency mentioned in the national textbook. The teachers evaluated the 5 sections of the tests with a rating scale (3 highly- suitable, averagely-suitable and low-suitable) to assess the suitability and familiarity of the items. All the sections were found to be highly-suitable and averagely-suitable respectively. Teachers' evaluation was taken as a feedback to change names in texts in an effort to contextualize the test. Besides, similar test paper of different content was distributed to the sample students and students had chance to practice on. This was done to familiarize the students with the test type based on teachers' suggestion. At the final stage, the tests were evaluated by the advisor for their content and face validity.

Regarding reliability of the test, the tests were tried on 60 randomly selected students, a test on 30 students, before the final test was administered. Then, effort was made to evaluate the Facility Value. The Facility Value was also calculated after the final administration of the tests. Thus, average F.V of 0.3 and 0.31 was calculated for the pilot and final tests respectively. These values are acceptable for a test of reasonable purpose (Brown, 2003), that is identifying the reading ability level of the sample students in the case of the present study.

Above all, the reliability for internal consistency for the test results for the pilot and the final tests were also computed using formula for Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ):

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^K p_i(1-p_i)}{Q_x^2} \right)$$

where  $K$  is the number of items on the exam;  $p_i$  is referred to as Item Difficulty (Facility Value), is the proportion of examinees who answered item  $i$  correctly; and  $Q_x^2$  is the sample variance for the total score.

The Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for both the pilot and final tests was 0.91. The reliability index ( $\alpha$ ) for professionally developed high-stakes standardized tests should be at least 0.90 (Wells and Wollack, 2003:5). As a result, the tests can be taken as internally consistent and reliable for the purpose of the present study, that is identifying students into reading ability levels.

### **3.1.3.2. Questionnaire for Students**

The students' questionnaire was administered to discover whether factors like family educational background, reading practice, teaching approach etc. affected the sample students' actual reading comprehension ability. This questionnaire was close-ended where students chose their response from the given alternatives. Adapted from Mendida (1988), Genene (1994), Sileshi (2007) and Hailu (1997), the questionnaire has two parts: background information and reading practice. It was first prepared in English and then translated into Amharic.

The questionnaire was evaluated by the research advisor to check whether it could elicit the responses that the study desired. Thus, the feedback by the advisor was used in producing the final version of the students' questionnaire.

More than that, Selinger and Shohamy as quoted in Alamirew (2005: 129) stated "trying out the instrument before the administration of the real study is as important as the use of adopted and revised procedures as it is with ready-made procedures." Accordingly, the questionnaire was piloted on 40 randomly selected students before the final distribution was made. Based on students' responses and feedback from the advisor, the questionnaire was modified; few questions were discarded, and few of them were corrected.

### **3.1.3.3. Classroom Observation Checklist**

The classroom observation Checklist was prepared to identify the reading skills and strategies that are practiced in grade nine English classes. The result from the classroom observation was intended to be used to determine the reading skills that should be included in the reading tests. It also served to cross check the responses of the students about teachers' teaching approach. The checklist was adapted from Ken Lackman & Associates Educational Consultants ([www.kenlackman.com](http://www.kenlackman.com)). The content and face validity of the checklist was checked against the Grade Nine English language syllabus reading competencies. The advisor checked the content and face validity of the classroom observation checklist before the classroom observation started.

### **3.1.4. Procedures**

#### **3.1.4.1. Determining Minimum Reading Competencies**

To determine the minimum reading competencies expected at grade nine level, an investigation of a list of minimum reading competencies in five documents were made. The first documents were Ethiopian Grade Nine English Language Syllabus, Grade Nine English Textbook, Grade Nine English Teacher's Guide, which included a list of reading competencies across each of the twelve units in the text book. The second was a document by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education which presents details of competencies across different skills of English language. The last was the CEFR document which clearly identified the competencies across six language ability levels. Those documents were inspected accordingly using table and descriptive language. The document analysis helped the researcher in identifying the competencies and selecting test items which are within the expected reading competency level.

#### **3.1.4.2. Determining Reading Passage Difficulty Level**

Among a number of readability formulas described in the literature section, the present study chose Fry's readability graph because it is applicable for all grade levels and situations of EFL and ESL. This study used the graph to determine the readability grade level of the three passages taken from Grade Nine English textbook. To use Fry's readability graph, first 3 samples of 100-word passages-one from around the first pages, one from around the middle pages and one from

around the last pages of the textbook- are randomly selected. Then, the number of sentences in all three 100-word passages is counted estimating the fraction of the last sentence to the nearest 1/10th. Next, the number of syllables in all three 100- word passages is counted. After that, each average sentence length is added and divided by three to get the average. The same is done for the syllable. Finally, the graph with average sentence length and number of syllables is entered and a dot is plotted in the graph to indicate where the two lines intersect. Area where dot is plotted signifies the approximate reading grade level of the content.

The present study did not follow all the manual procedures mentioned above, but fed the three reading passages into an application website ([www.readabilityformulas.com](http://www.readabilityformulas.com)) which determined the reading grade level of each passage. Using Fry's final procedure manually, the reading grade levels of the reading passages in Grade Nine English Textbook and the reading tests were calculated.

#### **3.1.4.3. The Reading Tests**

The tests were chosen in accordance with the minimum reading competencies for grade nine. Then they were piloted on 60 randomly selected students. After necessary modification was made, the tests were administered to 373 students a test for a week, within fifteen days difference. In every test, effort was made to create a conducive environment for the test including keeping the classroom clean and well lighted, avoiding noise, managing sitting arrangement etc. The students were also given enough time to complete the test, and the test was supervised by the researcher while it was administered by teachers. Above all, students were told that each test will be weighted, and accordingly, mark of 5% was given for each test.

After the proper administration of the tests, only 350 test papers were coded, corrected and scored. The coded test papers were scored out of 70, 35 for test 1 and Test 2 each. This result was then converted into 100. The Mean, Standard Deviation, Standard Error, Range, Minimum; Maximum etc. of the results were calculated using Excel. After that, the numerical data was analysed and interpreted, and then was described in words to show the reading comprehension ability of the students individually and in their group.

Effort was also made to make item analysis especially to determine the Facility Value (F.V) of the test. The results for each reading section was done separately to indicate how much was the average score of each section of the test and how much was the students' reading ability across each separate skill identified for each section.

Finally, the test results were used to categorize the sample students into frustration, instructional or independent levels. In the same way, students were identified to which CEFR level-beginner (A1), elementary (A2), intermediate (B1), upper intermediate (B2), advanced (C1) or Mastery (C2)-they belong to.

#### **3.1.4.4. The Students' Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was first piloted on 40 randomly selected students. After the first version of the questionnaire was corrected and modified based on feedback from the pilot study, the final Amharic version was distributed to the 373 students who took the reading tests. The response papers of the 350 students were coded and responses were fed into Excel T-Test tool pack. The responses to the students' questionnaire were analysed using T-test toolpack of Excel for window 2010, where Mean, Standard Deviation, Standard Error, t Stat and Critical value etc. were calculated to determine whether the factors mentioned in the questionnaire had effect on students' reading ability. The calculated raw data was presented in Appendix G. The calculated values were analysed in descriptive terms to find out whether the variables mentioned in the questionnaire affected students' actual reading ability.

#### **3.1.4.5. The Classroom Observation**

The classroom observation was made using classroom observation checklist which had a list of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading tasks. The final version of the observation checklist was used and observation was made in three classes, three days for each class.

After observation was made, the observation checklist result was analysed using descriptive terms just to indicate whether teachers presented reading lessons following the three phases of reading lessons, and which of those reading tasks of each stage were practiced in those reading classes.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the gap between the actual and expected reading comprehension ability of grade nine students. In an effort to measure the actual reading comprehension ability, two standardized reading tests of 35 items each were administered. To determine the expected reading ability or competency of grade nine students, the given and prescribed reading competencies, reading text types, reading skills and strategies in Grade Nine English Textbook, Grade Nine English syllabus, in a document from the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and in a document by the CEFR were inspected. Students' questionnaire was also used to gather data on students' reading experience. Apart from this, classroom observation was made to closely investigate which reading skills and strategies were treated in the observed grade nine reading classes. In the light of this, this chapter presents and discusses the results from those tools which were employed for this study.

#### **4.1. Reading Competencies Expected of Grade Nine Students**

To determine the reading competencies expected of Grade Nine Ethiopian students, five documents were considered: a document by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, the current Grade Nine English Language Syllabus, the current Grade Nine English Textbook, the current Grade Nine Teachers' Guide and a document by CEFR.

The document by the Ministry of Education, which was published in 2008, presents a list of text types and minimum reading competencies expected from Grade Nine students. According to this, students at the grade level should be able to read a variety of text types (instructions, labels, magazine articles, leaflets, stories, descriptions, directions, newspaper articles, letters etc.) on familiar topics including some authentic materials. On account of this, they are expected to predict the content of a text from pre-reading activities, infer meanings of new words using contextual clues, scan to obtain specific information, skim to get the general idea, express their views, retell in outline (mainly stories), make basic notes of the main points, relate what they

have read to their own experience, distinguish between fact and opinion, and follow instructions and direction (2008:22).

Equivalently, the English language syllabus , the English Textbook for Grade Nine and the English Teachers’ Guide for Grade Nine list a number of reading competencies across each unit , present a number of reading passages and tasks, and how the classroom practice should proceed. For example, the reading competencies listed in the syllabus are summarized as follows:

**Table 3: Reading Competencies across Each Unit of Grade Nine English Textbook**

<b>Units</b>	<b>Reading Competency</b>
<b>Unit One</b> Learning to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read an article and predict the content of a text from pre-reading activities</li> <li>• read an article and make basic notes of main points</li> <li>• read a letter and skim to get the general idea</li> <li>• read a letter and relate what they have read to their own experience</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Two</b> Places to visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read directions and follow instructions and directions</li> <li>• read authentic materials and scan to obtain specific information</li> <li>• read magazine articles and skim to get the general idea</li> <li>• read magazine articles and make basic notes of main points</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Three</b> Hobbies and Crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a letter and infer meanings of new words using contextual clues</li> </ul>
<b>Unit four</b> Food and Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read labels and scan to obtain specific information</li> <li>• predict the content of the text from pre-reading activities</li> <li>• read a leaflet and scan to obtain specific information</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Five</b> HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a leaflet and get the general idea</li> <li>• read a leaflet and scan in order to obtain specific information</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Six</b> Media, TV and Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read descriptions and express their views</li> <li>• read authentic materials scan to obtain specific information</li> <li>• read an article and relate what they have read to their own experience</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Seven</b> Cities of the Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a description and predict the content of a text</li> <li>• read a text and retell in outline</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Eight</b> Money and Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read an article and identify specific information</li> <li>• read an article on entrepreneurship and infer meanings of new words using contextual clues</li> <li>• read descriptions and make basic notes of main points</li> <li>• read an article and distinguish between fact and opinion</li> </ul>

<b>Unit Nine</b> People and Traditional Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a description and relate what they have read to their own experience</li> <li>• read an extract from an encyclopedia and make basic notes of main points</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Ten</b> Newspapers and Magazines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a newspaper/magazine article and distinguish between fact and opinion</li> <li>• read authentic materials and be able to scan to obtain specific information</li> <li>• read a newspaper/magazine article and be able to express their views</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Eleven</b> Endangered Animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a description and scan to obtain specific information</li> <li>• read and retell in outline</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Twelve</b> Stigma and Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a newspaper article and infer meanings of new words using contextual clues</li> <li>• read a leaflet and make basic notes of main points through ranking information</li> </ul>

When the data in the above table and the English Textbook reading sections' contents are considered, the students are presented with 12 units. There are about 52 reading texts within those 12 units of various topics. The texts include articles, posters, leaflets, poems, dialogues, passages, itinerary, letters, notes, interviews, instructions and stories. Among these texts there are 22 articles, 3 leaflets, 2 dialogues, 14 passages, 1 itinerary, 4 letters, 1 interview, 1 instruction, 2 notes and 1 poster. Out of these 52 reading texts 14 or 26.92% are contrived texts while 38 or 73.08% are authentic texts which are taken directly from magazines, media, newspapers, books etc.

The tasks and activities in Grade Nine English Textbook provide chances to use reading strategies like scanning, skimming, predicting and summarizing. Along with this, the reading tasks engage students in different activities which demand such reading skills as guessing meanings of words, reading for specific information, reading for detailed information, reading for the main idea, comparing and contrasting ideas in texts, reading for global meaning, reflecting on the reading text, reading and acting out, competing texts, inferring meaning, following directions and instruction, making notes, identifying facts from opinion etc.

From the above test types messages, instructions, articles, brochures, passages etc. are included in the reading tests of the study. Likewise, skills and strategies like skimming for gist comprehension, scanning for specific information, following directions and instruction, reading for detailed information, competing texts, etc. are made parts of the reading comprehension tests for the present study.

In relation to this, the CEFR competencies presented in Appendix A, under Level B2 (Intermediate) ability level mention reading text types like letters, brochures, short official documents, newspaper articles, argumentative texts, instruction, etc. Some of the skills and strategies given there include skimming for gist, scanning for specific information, reading for detailed comprehension, follow instructions, understand short messages, etc.

On the basis of this, when the above mentioned texts, tasks, activities and competencies in Grade Nine English Textbook, Syllabus, Teacher's Guide and a document by The Ministry of Education are projected to international standards by CEFR in Appendix A, which identified six reading ability levels, there is much a similarity of those texts, tasks, activities and competencies with what is listed out in Level B2 (Intermediate) ability level.

Consequently, the present study chose B1(Intermediate Level) reading ability tests to be administered to test the actual reading comprehension ability of grade nine students of Entoto Amba Secondary School, because the tests have some of the reading text types, reading skills and strategies that constituted Grade Nine English Textbook and the other related documents mentioned above.

#### **4.2. Readability Grade Level of the Reading Passages in Grade Nine English Textbook**

As mentioned in the literature, Fry's Graph follows procedures to calculate the readability Grade level of a Textbook by picking three passages-one from around the front, one around the middle and one around the last pages. The current study used internet online application than manual calculation. As given in the Appendix J, the online calculation result of Fry's readability formula shows that the three reading passages belong to seventh, eighth and seventh grades respectively. For convenience of finding the average grade level of the three passages and the reading

passages in grade Nine English Textbook as a whole, the last step of Fry’s readability graph was followed as given below:

**Table 4: Grade level of Grade Nine English textbook based on Fry’s Readability Graph**

<b>Sample Passage Topics</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Number of syllables per 100 words</b>	<b>Sentence length per 100 words</b>
Family letter	15	5.1	127
Does money make you happy?	148	4.8	135
Endangered Animals	198	6.9	141
Sum divided by 3		5.6	134.3

When the average number of syllables per 100 words and average sentence length per 100 words from the three passages is located on the Fry’s graph, it indicates that the reading passages in Grade Nine English Textbook are of seventh grade. Similarly, the calculated readability value for three reading passages from the tests shows that they are of seventh grade difficulty level. Then, it can be said that the reading passages in the tests are of appropriate difficulty level to test sample students’ reading comprehension ability.

### **4.3. Students’ Reading Test Results and Their Ability Levels**

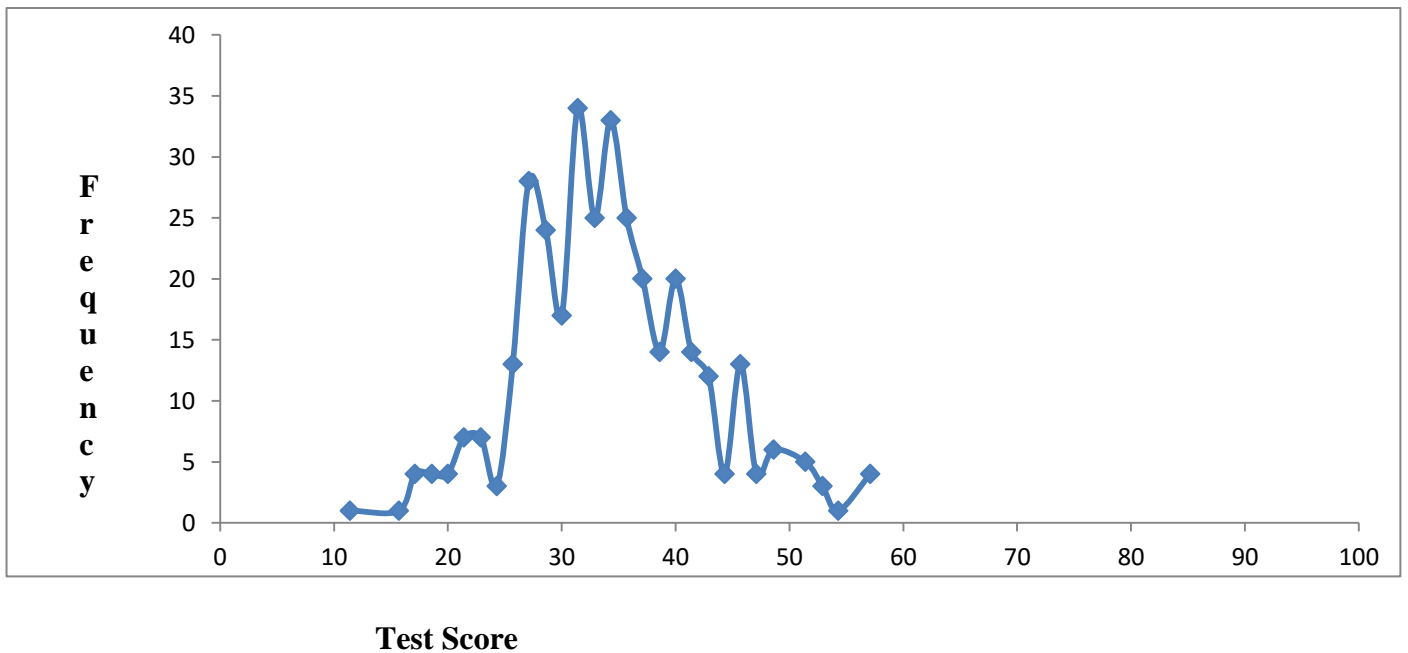
#### **4.3.1. General Descriptive Statistics of Test Results**

Reading test results of 350 grade nine students were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, standard deviation and range to determine the actual reading ability. As shown in Appendix B, the highest result of the students in the two tests was 57.1 and the lowest was 11.4. The range of these results is 45.7. The mean result of the test was also 34.2, which is 22.9 marks less than the highest result and 22.8 greater than the minimum result. This shows a very significant difference between the low and high achievers. The mean result is 15.8 marks less than the common average score of 50 out of 100, which could be taken as low average score. There are only 13 students who scored above 50%. This result is very low and encompasses only 3.7 % of the total students. The frequency distribution of the test result was also considered in a table and graph as follows:

**Table 5: Frequency of Students' Test Result**

Test score	Frequency	Test Score	Frequency
11.4	1	34.3	33
15.7	1	35.7	25
17.1	4	37.1	20
18.6	4	38.6	14
20	4	40	20
21.4	7	41.4	14
22.9	7	42.9	12
24.3	3	44.3	4
25.7	13	45.7	13
27.1	28	47.1	4
28.6	24	48.6	6
30	17	51.4	5
31.4	34	52.9	3
32.9	25	54.3	1
		57.1	4

**Graph 2: Frequency Distribution of Students' Test Result**



As shown in the table and in the chart, although the results are distributed only in scores between 11 and 58, they are distributed across 28 different marks. This can be taken as fair distribution within its limited range because 178 of the results are to the right side and 172 of the results are on the left side of the mean. Out of those score 34.3 occurred 33 times, and this result is very close to the average test score of 34.2. High frequency of scores was observed for scores from

27.1 to 45.7. The two lowest scores, 11.4 and 15.7, and one of the highest score 54.3 occurred only once.

It is also possible to project the test results to the normal distribution curve. In the first place, for the results by 350 students, the standard deviation is 7.9. Thus, the  $\pm 1$  S.D distribution of the students around the mean constitutes 77.1% of the scores. Also scores of 94.6% are distributed within  $\pm 2$  S. D. In the same manner, 100% of the scores are within  $\pm 3$ S.D. These results are very close to the normal distribution curve expectation of 68%, 95% and 99 % in each standard deviation category.

There is still a possibility to classify the existing scores of the students into categories of high, average and low scores.

**Table 6: Classification of Students' as Low, Average and High Scorers**

<b>Category of Students</b>	<b>Scores</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lowest Scorers	<26.3	28	8%
Average scorers	26.3<A.S<42.1	270	77.1%
High scorers	>42.1	52	14.9 %

The above table categorizes students' results as Higher Scorers (H. S), Average Scorers (A. S) and Low Score (L.S) groups. For such a purpose, the test's mean (X) and Standard Deviation (S.D) were taken into account. The Low Scorers (L.S) is within the range ( $<X-S. D$ ), Average Scorers (A. S) within the range ( $X-S. D \leq A. S \leq X+S. D$ ), and Higher Scorers (H. S) are within ( $>X+S. D$ ). On the basis of this, Low Scorers are with marks less than 26.3 marks (i.e.  $<26.3$ ); Average Scorers are those with results between 26.3 and 42.1 ( i.e.  $26.3 < A.S < 42.1$ ), and High Scorers are those with marks greater than 42.1 (i.e.  $H.S > 42.1$ ).

Based on the data in the table, most results are distributed between 26.3 and 42.1 marks. When the students' result is considered in relation to a normal density distribution curve, the test results are almost fairly distributed across the lowest, average and highest results. Most results are concentrated around the center, while only 8% and 14.9% of the results go to the highest and lowest ability portions respectively. Regardless of all this, the results could not go beyond 57.1.

### 4.3.2. Facility Value (F.V) of the Tests

Although the tests for the current research were adapted from internationally recognized TOSL Cambridge B1 PET, as given in Appendixes B and C, an attempt was made to examine their Facility value (F.V). Average facility value of 0.29 and 0.34 were calculated for the five test sections of test 1 and test 2, as given in table 7 below:

**Table 7: Facility Value (F.V) of the Tests**

Test section	No of Items		Facility Value (F.V)	
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2
I	5	5	0.34	0.41
II	5	5	0.21	0.26
III	10	10	0.42	0.47
IV	5	5	0.21	0.26
V	10	5	0.29	0.33
	Average F.V		0.29	0.34

The major criteria for categorizing F.V classifies F.V>0.7 as too easy, F.V between 0.3-0.7 as average, F.V between 0.5-0.6 as good and F.V less than 0.3 as too difficult. Contrary to this, Ebel (1979) in Zenebe (2000) stated that items with facility value of 0.2% and above are reasonably acceptable. Zenebe (2000) further commented that those values of 0.2% are accepted for many achievement tests which are designed to categorize students into high, average and low achiever groups. Brown (2003) also argued that appropriate test items have Facility Value that ranges from 1.5 to 0.85. Therefore, the average Facility Values of the tests for the present study (i.e 2.99 and 0.34) are acceptable, despite the lowest mean score of the students.

### 4.3.3. Description of Test Results for Each Part

Each of the two tests has five sections and each section assessed different sub skills and strategies of reading. The first parts assessed students' understanding of the main message of short texts. The second part measured students' skill of reading for detailed information. Students' ability to scan for specific information was tested in the third section of the tests. In the same manner, reading for detailed comprehension, gist, inference and global meaning; understanding writer's purpose, attitude and opinion was tested together in the fourth part of the exam. The last part evaluated students' ability to use grammar and vocabulary in their reading. The following table summarizes the test parts and the total score by 350 students who took the tests:

**Table 8: Total Test Scores across the Different Test Sections**

	Part One		Part Two		Part Three		Part Four		Part Five	
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2
Total Responses	1750	1750	1750	1750	3500	3500	1750	1750	3500	3500
Correct Responses	603	733	372	462	1485	1645	378	471	1047	1179
Incorrect Responses	1147	1017	1378	1288	2015	1855	1372	1279	2453	2321
Percentage of total Responses	14.28%	14.28%	14.28%	14.28%	28.57%	28.57%	14.28%	14.28%	28.57%	28.57%
Percentage of correct Responses	4.92%	5.98%	3.03%	3.76%	12.12%	13.42%	3.08%	3.84%	8.54%	9.62%
Percentage of Incorrect Responses	9.36%	8.29%	11.25%	10.51%	16.45%	15.14%	11.2%	10.43%	20.03%	18.94%

As presented in the above table, students scored less than the average of what was expected of them in each part. For example, in the first part of the test, they produce 603 and 733 correct responses out of 1750 responses for each, while they were expected to get an average of 875 and above in each test part to be in the pass group. Similarly, students gave only 1485 and 1657 correct responses out of 3500 correct responses for each test, but they were expected to score average marks of 1750 and above correct response for the most part. When the percentage of each test in each part is considered, students could demonstrate achievement of less than half of the average score set for each part. For instance, in the last part of the test, they succeed in answering only 8.54% and 9.62% each out of the total 28.57%. For this part they should have answered at least 14.28% and above.

In spite of the low result students scored, there is a difference between the result in test 1 and test 2 of each part. As shown in the table, in every part of Test 2, students have answered more questions than they did in Test 1. This could be because students were exposed to the test of the same format and item type for the second time, and closely related text types, and it gave them experience on how to attempt the test based on their first experience.

If the average score for each test part is considered, it can be observed that the students have scored below the average mark as given in the table below:

**Table 9: Average Score of Each Part of the Reading Test**

Parts	Number of Items		Correct Responses			Average Score of Correct responses			Average Score out of 100		
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Total	Test 1	Test 2	Total	Test 1	Test 2	Total
<b>Part One</b>	5	5	603	733	1336	1.72	2.09	3.81	34.4	41.88	38.17
<b>Part Two</b>	5	5	372	462	834	1.07	1.32	2.39	21.4	26.4	23.82
<b>Part Three</b>	10	10	1485	1645	3130	4.24	4.7	8.94	42.4	47	44.71
<b>Part Four</b>	5	5	378	471	849	1.08	1.34	2.42	21.6	26.91	24.25
<b>Part Five</b>	10	10	1047	1179	2226	2.99	3.36	6.35	29.9	33.68	31.8
Total	35	35	3885/12250	4490/12250	8375/24500	11.1	12.81	23.88	31.71	36.65	44.11

It can be seen from the above table that students have scored below the average marks in every part of reading tests. For instance, students' average score for understanding short texts is 1.72 out of 5 and 34.4% out of 100 % in Test 1. The parallel result for Test 2 is 2.09 out of 5 and 41.88 out of 100. Both scores are less than the average score of 2.5 out of 5 and 50% out of 100%. However, when the average scores of the students across the five parts are compared, students have performed better in Part Three (i. e scanning for specific information). In this part students average score was 4.24 and 4.7 out of 10 in Test 1 and Test 2 respectively, and the average score of this part for the two tests was 4.47 out of 10 or 44.71 out of 100.

#### 4.3.4. Students' Ability across Different Reading Comprehension Abilities

As presented in the previous section, the five sections in the two tests assessed different reading comprehension abilities. In fact, only some reading comprehension abilities that could be measured using silent reading are considered in the tests of the current study. In this context, the abilities tested include reading for the main message of short texts; reading for detailed information of long texts; scanning for specific information of long texts; reading for detailed comprehension; reading for gist; reading for global meaning; understanding writer's attitude, opinion or purpose and inference, and gap-filling with vocabulary and grammatical words.

##### 4.3.4.1. Understanding the Main Message of Short Texts

As mentioned in the literature, one of the skills in reading is finding or understanding the main idea of a reading text. This skill demands the students to read each and every word and consider pictures, tables or any other prompt that helps to understand the text. In relation to this, in real life situation and in academic contexts learners are encountered with various kinds of short texts: authentic notices and signs, packaging information (for example, instruction on a food package or a label on a medicine bottle), and communicative messages (notes, emails, cards and postcards, etc.). Hence, students should have the ability to read and understand such information.

To test this ability, the first section of the reading tests included short text message, phone call note, e-mail message, notice (memo) and home-note message. The students answered five multiple-choice questions to demonstrate their understanding of what those texts conveyed.

**Table 10: Students' Understanding of the Main Messages of Short Texts**

Test	Item No	Text Type	Correct responses	Incorrect responses	Percentage of correct responses	Percentage of incorrect responses
Test 1	1	Mobile Text Message	123	227	20.39%	77.71%
	2	Phone call note	98	252	16.25%	83.75%
	3	E-mail Message	141	209	23.38%	76.62%
	4	Notice (memo)	110	240	18.24%	81.76%
	5	Home-note message	131	219	21.72%	78.28%

<b>Test 2</b>	<b>1</b>	Phone call note	125	225	35.71%	64.29%
	<b>2</b>	Mobile Text Message	162	189	46.28%	53.72%
	<b>3</b>	E-mail Message	173	177	49.42%	50.58%
	<b>4</b>	Notice (memo)	161	189	46%	54%
	<b>5</b>	Home-note message	112	238	32%	68%

As shown in the above table, although the skill tested in this part of the test was the students' ability to read and understand short texts, the texts are of different contents. Students were expected to read mobile tests, phone call notes, E-mail messages, notices and home- note messages. Despite change in order, the two tests presented five similar kinds of texts, and students had a chance to attempt two questions of each text type.

Based on table 10, students scored below half of the average score expected of them in each question. Nevertheless, there is a variation of correct responses for same text kind in Test 1 and Test 2. For example, in Test 1, 123 students gave correct responses for understanding short text message while 162 students got the correct response for Test 2. Understanding E-mail message in Test 2 had the highest correct responses of 177, which constituted 49.42% of total responses. On the contrary, the item for understanding phone call message in Test 1 generated only 98 responses that made 16.25% of the total responses for the item. This could be related to the sentence structure and word choice in the two phone messages.

In short, in spite of the difference in performance on the same skill for Test 1 and Test 2, the students' result shows that their ability to understand the main message of short texts is at a very low stage since in none of the 10 items could students' result demonstrate average or above average performance. It can be seen from the table that the higher percentage for each item goes to the incorrect responses than the correct ones.

#### **4.3.4.2. Reading for Detailed Comprehension**

Also called close reading, reading for detailed comprehension demands understanding each and every detail given in the reading text. Such a skill is very important for students because it allows them to practice intensive reading which helps them to grasping ideas in other subject areas.

With its five items, the second section of the tests was designed to test students' skills of reading texts for detailed information. In Test 1, students were expected to match a list of individuals with different professions under column A with their demands of different websites under column B. Likewise, in Test 2, the students were expected to match a list of short descriptions which refer to students' and their magazine preference under column A with another list of short descriptions of the magazines under column B.

**Table 11: Results of Students' Ability of Reading for Detailed Comprehension**

Test	Item No	Web site/magazine needed	Correct responses	Incorrect responses	Percentage of correct responses	Percentage of incorrect responses
Test 1	6	a website about current dance and music	68	282	19.42%	80.58%
	7	a website to learners of Spanish language	75	275	21.42%	78.58%
	8	a website for learners of Latin and Roman history	78	272	22.28%	77.72%
	9	a website about information and history	91	259	26%	74%
	10	a website to the young with guide to play musical instruments	60	290	17.14%	82.86%
Test 2	6	a magazine of creative writing by teenagers	85	265	24.28%	75.72%
	7	a magazine about stars of cinema, music and sport	104	246	29.71%	70.29%
	8	a magazine on pop music and fashion	67	283	19.14%	80.86%
	9	a magazine on nature and wildlife	110	240	31.42%	65.58%
	10	a magazine about concerts and bands	96	254	24.24%	75.76%

The students were given texts which described different website and magazine kinds. They were expected to read those descriptions and match them with individuals who have preferences to those websites and magazines. However, students' test results indicate that they could not understand the detailed description of the websites and magazines. Consequently, they could only give a maximum of 110 out of 350 responses and a minimum of 60 out of the same 350 responses. When the percentage of correct and incorrect responses for each item is compared, students lost a maximum of 82.86% and a minimum of 65.58%. The data shows that students could only give almost 1.19/5 of the correct responses on average. This could be an indication of the students' inability to go through texts and get the details of information from reading texts that are meant for the grade level.

#### 4.3.4.3. Scanning for Specific Information

The technique, scanning or looking for specific information, is very useful when students know exactly what they are looking for in a text. Since they have a very specific goal in mind, when they read, they only read the relevant part(s) and ignore the irrelevant. When scanning for specific information is given in a test in the form of true/false, students are determining whether the information is maintained as stated in the true /false question statement. As Anderson (2000) notes, the students could be given a third option ‘Not stated’ beyond answering items as true or false.

In the third section of the test students were provided with relatively longer texts, brochure for a visit in Test 1 and an article in Test 2. Students were expected to read those descriptions and demonstrate their ability of scanning for specific information by answering 10 true/false items in each test.

**Table 12: Students’ Ability of Scanning for Specific Information**

Test	Text Type	Item No	Correct responses	Incorrect responses	Percentage of correct responses	Percentage of incorrect responses
<b>Test 1</b>	Brochure for visitors	11	134	216	38.28%	61.72%
		12	145	205	41.42%	58.58%
		13	123	227	35.14%	64.86%
		14	156	194	44.57%	55.43%
		15	126	224	36%	74%
		16	172	178	49.14%	50.86%
		17	159	191	45.42%	54.58%
		18	176	174	50.28%	49.72%
		19	149	201	42.57%	57.43%
		20	145	205	41.42%	58.58%
<b>Test 2</b>	Article about comedy	11	173	177	49.42%	50.57%
		12	157	193	44.85%	55.14%
		13	164	186	46.85%	53.14%
		14	149	201	42.57%	57.42%
		15	171	179	48.85%	51.14%
		16	182	186	52%	53.14%
		17	144	206	41.14%	58.85%
		18	169	181	48.28%	51.71%
		19	161	189	46%	54%
		20	175	175	50%	50%

As given in the table, for the 20 items in the two tests, students produced average correct responses of 175 and above for 3 items, two items in Test 2 and one item in Test 1. For the rest of the 17 items, students correct responses was not equal to or exceeded 50%. The minimum score was registered for item No 13 in Test 1, which is 123 correct responses or 35.14%. All the 20 questions tested students' ability of scanning for specific information. Thus, like the other reading abilities, students are found to be less effective in scanning for specific information. They gave 1485 correct responses (i. e 42.2%) in Test 1 and 1645 correct responses ( i.e. 47%).

#### **4.3.4.4. Reading for Detailed comprehension, Gist, Inference, and Global meaning; Understanding Writer's Purpose, Attitude and Opinion**

Learners are not always expected to read and recall factual information. They need other reading skills which enable them to demonstrate whether they have understood the writer's purpose, the writer's attitude or opinion, or an opinion quoted by the writer, which involves both detailed and global meaning. In the light of this, the fourth section of the reading tests has five items, but it was meant to assess students' general understanding and evaluation of the given text. For such a purpose students are expected to read for the gist, global meaning, writer's purpose, and inference.

**Table 13: Students' Ability of Reading for Detailed Comprehension, Gist, Inference; Understanding Writers' Purpose, Attitude and Opinion**

Test	Test Type	Item No	Skills tested	Correct responses	Incorrect responses	Percentage of correct responses	Percentage of incorrect responses
<b>Test 1</b>	descriptive article	21	identifying writer's purpose	62	288	17.71%	82.29%
		22	reading for detailed comprehension	78	272	22.28%	77.72%
		23	inference	74	276	21.14%	78.86%
		24	reading for detailed comprehension	80	270	22.85%	77.15%
		25	reading for global meaning	84	266	24%	76%
<b>Test 2</b>	descriptive article	21	identifying writer's purpose	82	268	23.42%	76.58%
		22	inference	97	253	27.71%	72.29%
		23	identifying writer's attitude	103	247	29.42%	70.58%
		24	reading for gist	91	259	26%	74%
		25	reading for global meaning	98	252	28%	72%

As shown in the above table, in this section of the two tests students were given descriptive texts that tell the experience of the writer with nature, experience of jungle in Test1 and experience of underwater in Test 2. The students were tested across five skills that are all related to general comprehension of the texts, and what purpose is set and what attitude is held by the writer. As an example, identifying the writer's purpose , or attitude has three items, one in Test 1 and 2 in Test 2. Inference also has two items, while reading for gist has only one in the two tests. However, the skills mentioned in this section do not necessarily have clear distinction, but overlap as Anderson (2000) explained.

As far as students' results are considered, the maximum response obtained for the 10 items was 103 out of 350 correct responses which make up 29.42%. At the same time, the minimum score was 62 out of 350 correct responses that is equivalent to 17.17%. Generally, the results for this section of the test is very low and far below the average score of 175 marks.

For each of these micro skills of reading, students scored average of less than 1/3 (i. e 116.7 out of 350) Numerically, they scored 82.2 for identifying writer's purpose,79 for reading for detailed comprehension,85.5 for inference,91 for reading for global meaning,92.2 for identifying writer's purpose and 91 for reading for gist.

Therefore, the students' ability for inference, identifying the writer's purpose or attitude, reading for gist, reading for detailed information and reading for global meaning is very low.

#### **4.3.4.5. Vocabulary and Grammar Orientation in Reading**

Understanding the idea of reading texts relies on understanding meanings of words and the sentence structure. One of the micro skills of reading Brown (2003) identified is recognition of words and their patterns. On the basis of this, readers should understand meanings and functions of words, and their relationship within and with other sentences if they have to understand what the whole text means. To this end, part five of the tests was designed to test mainly vocabulary but also grammatical points such as pronouns, prepositions, adverbs, adjectives etc.

**Table 14: Grammar and Vocabulary in Gap Filling Questions**

Item No	Ability/Skill tested		Correct Responses		Percentage correct responses	
	Test One	Test Two	Test One	Test Two	Test One	Test Two
26	Use of time adverbs (e. g once, first, just, already etc.)	Use of adverbs of time (e. g. until, since, from, before etc.)	158	165	45%	47.14%
27	Appropriate use of words that show decision (e. g imagined, supposed, dream, decided etc.)	Appropriate use of words that show the emergence of something (e. g shown, entered, came, appeared etc.)	49	64	14%	18.28%
28	Appropriate use of words that express awareness (e. g realize, remembered, persuaded, wondered etc.)	Appropriate use of words that are used to express the current status of something (e. g became, returned, changed, grown etc.)	97	111	27.72%	31.42%
29	Use of conjunctions (e. g. since, so, if, although etc.)	Use of conjunctions (e. g. because, so, if, although etc.)	93	106	26.57%	30.28%%
30	Use of prepositions (e. g in, from, of, with etc.)	Use of quantifiers (e.g. each, some, another, both etc.)	94	114	26.85%	32.57%
31	Appropriate use of adjectives to modify the word 'idea' ( e. g main, open, clear ,deep etc.)	Appropriate use of verbs to express progress or change (e. g made, increased, prepared, developed etc.)	115	131	32.85%	37.42%

32	Use of adjectives that modify adverbs of time (e. g more, over, greater, longer etc.)	Collocation of word ( e. g. keep a secret)	96	99	27.42%	28.28%
33	Appropriate use of words to express keeping something for a period of time (e. g stay, remain, reserve, keep etc.)	Proper use of pronouns (e. g this, these, that, those, there etc.)	111	136	31.71%	38.85%
34	Appropriate use of articles	Appropriate use of words that show inclusion (e.g. consist, involve, include, contain etc.)	119	117	34%	33.42%
35	Appropriate use of words to express job (e.g. industry, job, work, factory etc.)	Using contextually meaningful word to show hope	115	136	32.85%	38.85%

As presented in the above table, the students were mostly tested for their use of words with appropriate meaning and collocation .They were also given questions which tested their grammatical orientation regarding the proper use of articles, pronouns, adverbs etc.

As can be seen in the table, the students’ correct responses are less than half of the total responses expected of them. For example, out of the 350 correct responses expected from 350 students, for item No.2 in Tests 1 and Test 2 only 49 and 53 correct responses were given respectively. When the total responses are projected to all students, one student scored 2.99/10 on average. That result is much less than the average marks of 5. The result shows students’ poor grammar and vocabulary ability as it applies to reading and understanding a text.

In spite of the poor grammar and vocabulary ability demonstrated by the students, the results can show which of the two skills the students are relatively better at, as given in the table below:

**Table 15: Comparison Between Students’ Grammar and Vocabulary Ability**

<b>Test</b>	<b>Item No</b>	<b>Skills/Abilities Tested</b>	<b>Correct Responses</b>	<b>Average score of correct responses</b>	
Test 1	#26,#29,#30,#32,#34	Grammar	560	1.6/5	3.2/10
	#27,#28,#31,#33,#35	Vocabulary	487	1.39/5	2.7/10
Test 2	#26,#29,#30,#33	Grammar	521	1.48/4	3.7/10
	#27,#28,#31,#33,#34,#35	Vocabulary	658	1.88/6	3.13/10

The comparison of the two skills, in table 20 shows that students are better at understanding the grammatical structure of sentences than word meanings in doing their reading. In both test 1 and Test 2 students, scored 3.2 and 3.7 out of 10 in grammar respectively, which is greater than the 2.7 and 3.13 results recorded for vocabulary in Test 1 and Test 2 respectively.

#### **4.3.5. Grade Nine Students’ Reading Ability Level**

Students reading ability level can be determined in different ways. The present research used two methods of classifying students into different reading ability levels. The first is the classification

that is acknowledged by CEFR, which puts students into Levels A1 (Breakthrough or Beginner), A2 (Waystage or elementary), B1 (Threshold or Intermediate), B2 (Vantage or Upper intermediate), C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency or Advanced) and C2 (Mastery or Proficiency).

The second is the levels identified by Rye (1983), in Mendida (1988), which is used by various national and international researchers to categorize students into frustration, instructional and independent levels.

#### 4.3.5.1. Grade Nine students' Reading Ability Level based on CEFR

On the way, though not only meant for reading as a skill, is CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). This labeling of students based on their test performance is used among all European nations, and their schools and institutions give the tests to determine whether students are at the required level or not to be enrolled in those institutions. For example, the EOSL PET (Preliminary English Test) for Schools by Cambridge University is in the state of the art to measure whether student speakers of other languages are at an intermediate level of English language. The current study adopted the reading parts of 2 PET tests. The following table summarizes PET reading test results of 350 Ethiopian grade nine students at Entoto Amba Secondary School:

**Table 16: Students' Reading Ability Level Based on CEFR**

Test Score out of 100	CEFR level	Description	No of Students	Percentage
90-100	B2	Upper Intermediate (Pass with Distinction)	0	0%
85-89	B1	Intermediate (Pass with Merit)	0	0%
70-84	B1	Intermediate (Pass)	0	0%
45-69	A2	Elementary	22	6.28%
<45	A1	Beginner	328	93.72%

The classification of scores and levels was the one used for the four language skills in the years before 2015. The present researcher used the same scale only for reading as a skill. As shown in the table, none of the students fell into an intermediate reading level. Only 22 students (i.e. 6.28%) were found to be at the elementary level. Most of the students (i.e. 93.76%) were below

elementary level and can be called beginners. As given in the Appendix B, the minimum result for the current test was 11.7 which is 33.3 marks less than the minimum score that could take the students into Elementary level. Even with a distinction of 93.72% the sample students into Elementary level, research should be conducted to find out how far the problem is to the elementary reading skills: recognition of sounds, decoding of sounds and words, recognition of word meaning, recognition of sentence structure etc.

#### 4.3.5.2. Frustration, Instructional or Independent Levels

As mentioned in the literature, the other way of classifying students' into frustration, instructional and independent reading ability levels is by considering their result for reading comprehension test and close test (Rye, 1983 cited in Mendida, 1988; Halladay, 2012). The current PET tests were general and they were predominantly reading comprehension, and the students' ability level was assigned based on only the reading comprehension tests. Though not prepared as close tests, the reading comprehension tests have 10 gap-filling questions each, and the analysis of that part was treated just like the other reading abilities.

**Table 17: Classifying Students into Frustration, Instructional and Independent Levels**

Reading Test Score out of 100	Reading Ability Level	Description	No of Students	Percentage
90-100	Independent	Can read the text independently	0	0%
75-89	Instructional	Can read and understand the text with the help from others	0	0%
0-75	frustration	Can't read and understand the text, even with help from others	350	100%

As given in the above table, none of the students can read and understand the reading texts in Grade Nine English Textbook and the given reading tests, which are both of 7<sup>th</sup> grade difficulty level. All of them are then at frustration level for the mentioned reading texts. As discussed in the previous sections, students' achievement across the tested abilities shows less percentage than is expected of them. This may be related to students' lack of knowledge of the language that could take them to the degree that they could not properly identify English sounds and words (although such assumption needs further study); they could not recognize the meanings of words; they could not recognize sentence structure to understand the reading text.

#### **4.4. Responses to the Students' Questionnaire**

This study was basically intended to find out the gap that exists between the actual and expected reading ability of Grade Nine students at Entoto Amba School. However, the researcher believes it is worth identifying some of the factors that significantly contributed to the high, average or low actual reading ability of the students as demonstrated by the reading test results. Based on this, the students' questionnaire was mainly set to find out some of those factors that impacted students' reading comprehension ability.

To analyse the given responses to the questionnaire, one independent sample T-test was calculated using Excel 2010. Excel performed this with T-test: Two Samples Assuming Unequal Variances. In fact, the study did not take two samples but compared the reading test scores of each group of students in one column against the mean of the whole test in another column, one at a time. The analysis employed two-tailed T-test, at confidence level of 95% and significance level of  $P < 0.05$ , in order to consider three hypotheses for the variables listed in the questionnaire, where:

- (a) a single group mean is equal to the whole sample mean, as a null hypothesis
- (b) a single group mean is significantly greater than the whole sample mean, as alternative hypothesis 1
- (c) a single group mean is significantly less than the whole group mean, as alternative hypothesis 2

When the excel Data analysis Tool pack was employed, it yielded the Mean, Standard Deviation, t Stat Value for T-Test and t critical values among others. As presented in Appendix G, all the other variables in the questionnaire were tested for T-test with the exception of students' sex and age.

##### **4.4.1. Students' School Background**

Regarding students' eighth grade school type, the data shows that most of them were from government schools while only 21.14% were enrolled from private schools. As given in Appendix G, the t Stat value is greater than the t Critical value for two-tail value for both groups

of students who were in either private or governmental school, when they were in eighth grade. There is also a significant difference between the students' mean for each group and the whole sample mean. For example, the mean for government school students, private school students and the whole sample are 32.82, 39.40 and 34.2 respectively. Based on the data, it can be inferred that students' previous school type has significantly affected students' reading ability that was demonstrated in the given reading tests. Accordingly, those students from private school background performed better on average than students from government school background (i.e.  $39.40 > 32.82$ ).

#### **4.4.2. Students' Previous Grade English Language Performance**

When the student's Regional Eight grade English Language Exam result is considered as evidence for their previous English language performance, the statistical values in Appendix G indicated that the students' prior grade English language performance significantly contributed to their current performance in the reading test. However, for students who scored 21-30, their actual performance was not significantly affected by their previous grade performance. The statistical insignificance for this group of students occurred because of the unknown sampling error of 0.3168 that may be attributed to response that are not genuine.

#### **4.4.3. Parents' or Guardians' Educational Status**

Item number 5 in the questionnaire elicited response for whether Parents' educational status had impact on students' reading ability. Stressing on the importance of family educational background on students' reading ability, Hailu (1997) found out that father's educational level contributed to attainment in reading. In this regard, as shown in Appendix G, most of the sample students in the present study are devoid of getting reading help from their parents. Similarly, the statistical results show that parents' educational background significantly affected students' current reading ability for the groups of students with parents or guardian having uneducated, secondary, college, and degree background, not for those with parents of elementary level educational status. In general, students from educated parents performed better in the reading tests than those from uneducated parents.

#### **4.4.4. Parents' or Guardians' Help in Students Reading**

Item 6 relates the impact of parents' reading help to students' actual reading comprehension ability. As a matter of fact, this item is related to item 5. Researches have shown that successful students have strong academic support from their involved parents (Sheldon, 2009 cited in Cleophas, 2014). Despite their economic and social status, parents can create a home environment that encourages learning. Besides, in a five year longitudinal study, Senechal and LeFevre discovered that parent involvement in teaching reading was directly correlated to emergent literacy (as cited in Resetar, Noell, & Pellegrin, 2006:242). Family literacy activities include reading aloud, shared reading, and making print materials available. These activities have been found to have significant effects on children's literacy learning (Huag & Doleis, 2007). Results for the current study, in Appendix G, also show that parents' reading help significantly impacted the students' actual reading ability demonstrated in the reading tests. Nonetheless, based on the responses for item 5 it is unlikely for 75.42% of the students to get reading help in English from their parents or guardians since their parents or guardians remained at grade levels below their children (i.e. maximum of sixth grade) or totally uneducated. On the contrary, there are 12.84% of the students said they could get help while it was unlikely for them to get help. For this case, either the response the students gave was not genuine or their parents had access to learn English, in spite of the low educational status they have.

#### **4.4.5. Students' Access to English Reading Materials**

It is natural that students with access to written materials have high opportunity to practice reading in the target language. As a child is exposing himself or herself to reading books, magazines and newspapers, and develops the love of a book, he/she finds it easier to explore the wealth of human experience and knowledge. Thus, these reading materials should be available to cultivate students' reading habit because researches have shown that children with adequate access to books attain better in their education. For example, a study report of South African project by Montagnes (2001 as cited in Tella, 2007) revealed that children in classes with classroom libraries outperformed their control school counterparts by as much as 189 per cent. In the same manner, the results of the present study, as shown in Appendix G, indicates that students' access to reading materials significantly affected their reading ability that was

demonstrated by the mean scores in their tests. Consequently, students who claimed to have access to English materials demonstrated better reading comprehension ability than their counter group did.

#### **4.4.6. Teachers' Guide to Extensive Reading**

Item number 8 is concerned with the impact of teachers' guide on extensive reading practice on Students' actual reading ability. As cited in Meng (2009:132) ,many researches have emphasized the importance of including extensive reading in foreign language curricula (Day & Bamfor,1998; Grabe,1995B; Krashen,1982; Paran,1996) and numerous studies have shown the effectiveness of extensive reading in the contexts of English as a Second or Foreign language (Elley & Mangubhai,1981; Hitosugi & Day,2004; Mason & Krashen,1997).Harmer (2000:211) also noted that most students need encouragement from their teachers to engage themselves in a lot of extensive reading. Then, in addition to promoting reading and its benefit, one of the duties of an English language teacher must be guiding students to read further any other material written in English (for example newspapers, magazines, short stories, tales, folktales etc.) to develop students' reading ability. In the case of the present study, statistical evidences in Appendix G, reveal that teachers' guide for extensive reading poised significant effect on students' actual reading ability. According to the data, the mean for students who received teachers' extensive reading guidance is better than the mean of those who did not receive.

#### **4.4.7. Students' Frequency of Extensive Reading Practice**

As reviewed in the literature part of the current study, students who are engaged in extensive reading perform much better in reading tests than those who are not. A close look at Appendix G indicates that only 19.15% of the students engaged themselves in extensive reading practice. The statistical data also indicates that students' extensive reading practice significantly contributed to their actual reading comprehension ability. The mean scores of those who have practiced extensive reading is significantly different from the mean scores of those who did not. Thus, extensive reading as an option to boost students' reading ability, and at the same time, engaging students in the proper extensive reading practice is important.

#### **4.4.8. Teacher's Approach in Teaching Reading**

As can be seen from the table in Appendix G, the responses of 30.57% the students reveals that teachers did the reading for students and imposed their understanding of the passage on the students, while the students' were passive listeners to the reading passages. Other 24.28% responses indicate that teachers explained meanings of difficult words, and later students did the reading and the comprehension. In general, the responses of 79.42% students show that most teachers did not follow the three phases of reading and did not engage the students in the tasks at each stage. Only 20.58 % students reported to be provided with the three reading phases.

At the same time, the data for the item, as given in Appendix G, demonstrates that teaching approach applied by the teachers' significantly affected students' reading ability in their reading test. This shows that most teachers do not follow the stages although the phases of reading are readily available in the students' English Textbooks.

#### **4.4.9. Students' Training on Reading Strategies**

Along with the implementation of reading lessons with three phases, teachers need to teach their students to use different strategies to help them understand reading texts whether it is given as a class lesson or done as part of extensive reading practice. The result for this item, in Appendix G, indicates that students' training on different reading strategies significantly impacted their reading ability test performance. The 64.57% students who were reported to take training on reading strategies secured more average reading test result than those 35.43% who were reported not to take the training. This may indicate that giving training on reading strategies is productive, as mentioned in the literature.

#### **4.4.10. Mode of Reading Practiced in Reading Classes**

Research, as mentioned in the review of literature, favours the use silent reading as it was found out to yield better result than loud reading (Hopkins,1997;cited in Jafari,2013:20).As given in Appendix G, students with silent reading practice scored better average than the other students who listened to their teachers' reading, took turns to read aloud ,and read both loudly and silently

in a single or different sessions. Based on this, reading mode has significant effect on students' reading ability.

#### **4.4.11. Difficulty of Reading Passages in Students' English Textbook**

As given in the literature, one way of determining the difficulty of the reading passages is based on counts of words and sentences which done by using readability formulas and graphs. Getting responses from the horse's mouth (i.e. students) is also another method that is used by many educators and practitioners. In this regard, students were made to give their responses on the degree of difficulty of the reading passages in their English Textbook.

The data in the Appendix G, shows that most students (i.e. 70.57%) found the reading passages in their English Textbook difficult and very difficult. Only 29.43% of the students have found the reading passages with an average difficulty level.

The data in Appendix G, shows that difficulty level of the reading passages has significant relation with students' test attainment. The group of students who found the passages difficult and very difficult achieved less than students who found the passages average.

Then the difficulty can be attributed to the factors that are mentioned earlier: students' inadequate language input ( i.e. vocabulary and grammar), students' school background, lack of reading help from parents, lack of extensive reading practice among other things.

### **4.5. Results from the Classroom Observation**

The classroom observation only focused on some of the tasks that are expected to be performed in the three phases of reading. It was meant to find some background on whether reading the skills and strategies mentioned in the list were practiced or not. The observation was made in three sections where three different teachers were teaching (see Appendix I). A single section was observed for three reading sessions. The observations are not enough to generalize about the tasks performed in those classes, but they cast light on what reading skills and strategies are being cultivated; they are believed to be inputs to consider what skills and strategies the reading tests for the present study should include. Otherwise, it is blind judgment to simply give the test

without observing what is happening in the reading classes. The observation can validate the content of the test for it can at least give highlight on whether there were efforts to teach the reading skills and strategies that were included in the reading tests.

Appendix I present the classroom observation tasks which were instructed by the teacher to be done. In fact, it was difficult to figure out whether the students were engaged in the tasks or not. However, effort was made to check whether the skills and strategies included in the reading tests were treated.

Based on the classroom observations, the teachers made efforts to incorporate the three phases of reading. The tasks done under the pre- reading phase were: predicting content based on knowledge of topic, discussing ideas that appear in the text, pre-teaching vocabulary in text, skimming the text for gist comprehension , scanning the text for specific information, and reading comprehension questions. The most frequently practiced pre-reading tasks include discussing ideas that appear in the text, pre-teaching vocabulary in text, skimming and scanning. Most of those pre-reading activities were teacher-centered where teachers were pre-teaching vocabulary and telling the idea of the reading text, whereas students were predominantly observed to be listeners to what the teachers said.

As to the while-reading stage, the tasks that were attempted in the observed classes were: taking brief notes, underlining/ highlighting important information or key words and phrases, making predictions while reading, re-reading to repair comprehension, recognizing key words, making conclusions and references, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying writer's opinion or attitude, scanning or skimming sections of text, and completing a text with given words. Like the pre-reading tasks, students' role in doing the reading tasks was limited. Teachers were reading texts loudly or letting students take turns to read; teachers were explaining points in the reading passages, telling meanings of words and switching to Amharic language.

Answering comprehension questions about content, giving and discussing opinions about text, and summarizing the text in writing or speaking were the types of tasks that were carried out in the post-reading phases of the reading classes. The students' share in these tasks was also limited and teachers were taking the lions share in influencing the discussions because most of the

students were not observed expressing their thought in English. Even the answers for the comprehension questions were mostly told during the pre-reading and while-reading phases, and students were only required to write what has been said.

Though little in scope the classroom observation was, what teachers did was showing their will to incorporate the three phases of reading. As a matter of fact, teachers' somehow followed the procedures that have been described in the Teacher's Guide. This result from the observation is different from students' response for most of the students' said that teachers did not follow the three phases of reading.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

#### 5.1. Summary

The present study was inspired by a series of studies : Mendida (1988), Berhe (1989), Dubale (1990), Abdu (1993) ,Genene (1994), Melkamu (2002), Edaso (2007), Sileshi (2007),Yenus (2007), Gebeyaw (2011) Nardos (2016) etc.. All these studies showed the poor English language reading performance demonstrated by Ethiopian secondary, preparatory and tertiary educational level students. On the basis of those studies, the present researcher sought to find out the actual reading comprehension ability of grade nine students of Entoto Amba Secondary School and what is expected of them. In order to measure the actual reading comprehension ability of the students, two intermediate level tests, which were adopted from Cambridge PET (Preliminary English Test) Tests for ESOL (Tests for Speakers of Other Languages), were administered. The expected reading comprehension ability was determined by reading text types and reading competencies given in Grade Nine English Language syllabus, Grade Nine English Textbook, and relevant documents by Ethiopian Ministry of Education and CEFR. The study employed Fry's readability Graph to determine the grade level the reading passages in Grade Nine English Textbook and the given reading tests fall in to. A questionnaire was distributed to find out the factors that had effect on the students' actual reading comprehension ability. A classroom observation was also made to check whether the three stages of reading were followed and different reading skills and strategies were practiced through tasks and activities at each reading phase, to consider the appropriateness of the reading test.

Accordingly, grade nine students were expected to read varieties of texts including instructions, labels, magazine articles, newspaper articles, passages, leaflets, stories, descriptions, directions, letters, etc. Based on Fry's readability graph, these texts were of seventh grade difficult level. Before, while and after reading the texts, students were expected to scan for specific information, skim for gist, as guess meanings of words, read for detailed information, compare and contrast ideas in texts, read for global meaning, reflect on the reading text, read and act out, competing texts, infer meaning, follow directions and instruction, make notes, identify facts from opinion, etc.

Based on this, the reading tests for the present study assessed students' reading comprehension ability of understanding the main message of short texts (for example; text messages, notices, instructions and directions etc.); reading for detailed comprehension, scanning for specific information; reading for gist, reading for inference, reading for global meaning, understanding writer's purpose, attitude and opinion, and completing a text with correct and appropriate vocabulary and grammatical items.

A close investigation of the test results indicated that students' reading comprehension ability across all the tested reading comprehension abilities was below average for each part of the tests. Although the reading competencies mentioned for the grade level expected the students to be at intermediate reading ability level, the reality is that none of the students were at that level. Only 6.28% of the students fell into elementary reading ability level while 93.72% of them were found to be at beginner level. The test results also revealed that all the students are at frustration level at which they can't read and understand the reading texts in their English Textbook, which are of 7<sup>th</sup> grade difficulty level. Moreover, the result for the vocabulary and grammar section is the least when compared to the other sections. Yet, the comparison between the results of the grammar and vocabulary items shows that the students have very poor vocabulary than grammar. All in all, students demonstrated that they do not have enough language vocabulary and grammar to do the reading comprehension tests.

Based on results of the classroom observation, the reading skills and strategies that were in the reading tests were found appropriate to be included in the tests because there were efforts made in the observed classes to practice them.

What is more, results of the students' questionnaire identified the following factors to significantly affect students' reading comprehension ability: students' previous school type, students' previous grade English language performance, parents' educational status, parents' help in students' reading, access to reading materials, teachers' guide to extensive reading practice, students' extensive reading practice, teaching approach employed by teachers, training on reading strategies, and reading mode used in reading classes.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

As presented in chapter four and the summary section of the present paper, there was a gap between the actual and expected reading comprehension ability of grade nine students of Entoto Amba. Their test results came to show that they were at frustration reading ability level, where they could not read the reading passages in Grade Nine English Textbook ,even with the help of others. Even worse, none of them were found to be at intermediate reading ability level. Most of them demonstrated reading comprehension ability which could identify them with beginner ability level. Based on CEFR levels, in Appendix A, at beginner level, learners can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required. In addition to this, the test results also confirmed the poor vocabulary and grammar the students have.

Students' previous school type, students' previous grade English language performance, parents' educational status, parents' help in students' reading, access to reading materials, teachers' guide to extensive reading practice, students' extensive reading practice, teaching approach employed by teachers, training on reading strategies, and reading mode used in reading classes were the factors that were identified to have effect on the students' actual reading comprehension ability.

## **5.3. Recommendations**

Like many other studies, the present study is not an exception from limitations. One of the limitations of the present study was its sample size since it only focused on one school. The other is that the tests assessed only some reading skills and strategies. What is more, the tests were administered by different teachers and in different times-some early in morning, some late in in the morning and others in the afternoon. These factors may have impact on the scope, validity and reliability of the present study. Thus, careful attention should be taken regarding the generalizability of the findings. Regardless of all the limitations, the present study can contribute its share in indicating how grade nine reading instruction should proceed to the next step.

Accordingly, the following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- In the first place, to solve the reading problem the students are facing, the present researcher recommends provision of opportunity for students in a way they can be exposed to a variety of reading texts, with a wide range of words and grammatical structures, in grade nine and grades prior to grade nine .One way of doing this can be providing English language as English Language Arts course. The English Language Arts course can provide contents of ideas, themes, issues, problems and conflicts found in classical and contemporary literature and other texts such as technical manuals, magazines, speeches and videos.
- Second, to ease teachers' burden with the search for reading texts, schools should take their share in providing reading materials which are appropriate for the given grade level; and they should provide softcopies of selected short stories, speeches, fictions, dramas etc. in their ICT rooms.
- As to parents of the study subjects, they should also shoulder their responsibility by providing reading materials to their children and giving support for the students' reading effort.
- Beyond encouraging common classroom approaches of teaching reading, bodies concerned should give teachers up-to-date in-service training on how to help students read more and become efficient readers.
- Teachers, on their part, should take their own initiative to train themselves using any available option, video lessons from the internet, for example. They can play decisive role in producing efficient student readers if they update themselves as to how to teach reading as a skill.
- Students should also practice extensive reading to be efficient readers of English and to achieve better in content subject.

Finally, in order to improve students' reading comprehension ability of the studied grade level, all stakeholders –policy makers, curriculum and syllabus designers, textbook writers, teachers, parents and students - should strive more than ever. It is also advisable for researchers to make efforts to carry out a large scale investigation, at city and country levels, in the area of the present study.

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## Appendix A: CEFR Reading Ability Levels

<b>OVERALL READING COMPREHENSION</b>	
<b>C2</b>	Can understand and interpret critically virtually all forms of the written language including abstract, structurally complex, or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings. Can understand a wide range of long and complex texts, appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning.
<b>C1</b>	Can understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own area of speciality, provided he/she can reread difficult sections.
<b>B2</b>	Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms.
<b>B1</b>	Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
<b>A2</b>	Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type which consist of high frequency everyday or job-related language.
	Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items.
<b>A1</b>	Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.

<b>READING CORRESPONDENCE</b>	
<b>C2</b>	As C1
<b>C1</b>	Can understand any correspondence given the occasional use of a dictionary.
<b>B2</b>	Can read correspondence relating to his/her field of interest and readily grasp the essential meaning.
<b>B1</b>	Can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters well enough to correspond regularly with a pen friend.
<b>A2</b>	Can understand basic types of standard routine letters and faxes (enquiries, orders, letters of confirmation etc.) on familiar topics.
	Can understand short simple personal letters.
<b>A1</b>	Can understand short, simple messages on postcards.
<b>READING FOR ORIENTATION</b>	
<b>C2</b>	As B2
<b>C1</b>	As B2

<b>B2</b>	Can scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details. Can quickly identify the content and relevance of news items, articles and reports on a wide range of professional topics, deciding whether closer study is worthwhile.
<b>B1</b>	Can scan longer texts in order to locate desired information, and gather information from different parts of a text, or from different texts in order to fulfil a specific task. Can find and understand relevant information in everyday material, such as letters, brochures and short official documents.
<b>A2</b>	Can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus, reference lists and timetables. Can locate specific information in lists and isolate the information required (e.g. use the 'Yellow Pages' to find a service or tradesman). Can understand everyday signs and notices: in public places, such as streets, restaurants, railway stations; in workplaces, such as directions, instructions, hazard warnings.
<b>A1</b>	Can recognise familiar names, words and very basic phrases on simple notices in the most common everyday situations.

	<b>READING FOR INFORMATION AND ARGUMENT</b>
<b>C2</b>	As C1
<b>C1</b>	Can understand in detail a wide range of lengthy, complex texts likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life, identifying finer points of detail including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.
<b>B2</b>	Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources within his/her field. Can understand specialised articles outside his/her field, provided he/she can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm his/her interpretation of terminology. Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints.
<b>B1</b>	Can identify the main conclusions in clearly signalled argumentative texts. Can recognise the line of argument in the treatment of the issue presented, though not necessarily in detail. Can recognise significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar subjects.
<b>A2</b>	Can identify specific information in simpler written material he/she encounters such as letters, brochures and short newspaper articles describing events.
<b>A1</b>	Can get an idea of the content of simpler informational material and short simple descriptions, especially if there is visual support.

	<b>READING INSTRUCTIONS</b>
<b>C2</b>	As C1
<b>C1</b>	Can understand in detail lengthy, complex instructions on a new machine or procedure, whether or not the instructions relate to his/her own area of speciality, provided he/she can reread difficult sections.
<b>B2</b>	Can understand lengthy, complex instructions in his field, including details on conditions and warnings, provided he/she can reread difficult sections.
<b>B1</b>	Can understand clearly written, straightforward instructions for a piece of equipment.
<b>A2</b>	Can understand regulations, for example safety, when expressed in simple language.
	Can understand simple instructions on equipment encountered in everyday life – such as a public telephone.
<b>A1</b>	Can follow short, simple written directions (e.g. to go from X to Y).

## Appendix B: Students' Test Results

Code		Test 1	Test 2	Sum	Out of 100	Test Scores in Ascending Order
1		7	8	15	21.4	11.4
2		7	9	16	22.9	15.7
3		12	11	23	32.9	17.1
4		10	12	22	31.4	17.1
5		13	15	28	40	17.1
6		13	15	28	40	17.1
7		6	10	16	22.9	18.6
8		11	13	24	34.3	18.6
9		15	16	31	44.3	18.6
10		13	12	25	35.7	18.6
11		5	7	12	17.1	20
12		11	11	22	31.4	20
13		8	11	19	27.1	20
14		14	16	30	42.9	20
15		10	12	22	31.4	21.4
16		6	10	16	22.9	21.4
17		7	6	13	18.6	21.4
18		11	12	23	32.9	21.4
19		11	15	26	37.1	21.4
20		10	10	20	28.6	21.4
21		9	10	19	27.1	21.4
22		10	15	25	35.7	22.9
23		15	15	30	42.9	22.9
24		12	16	28	40	22.9
25		6	14	20	28.6	22.9
26		12	9	21	30	22.9
27		11	9	20	28.6	22.9
28		12	13	25	35.7	22.9
29		15	17	32	45.7	24.3
30		10	12	22	31.4	24.3
31		10	9	19	27.1	24.3
32		10	11	21	30	25.7
33		11	13	24	34.3	25.7
34		11	14	25	35.7	25.7
35		10	12	22	31.4	25.7
36		10	9	19	27.1	25.7
37		9	11	20	28.6	25.7
38		14	15	29	41.4	25.7

39		13	11	24	34.3	25.7
40		11	12	23	32.9	25.7
41		17	19	36	51.4	25.7
42		13	14	27	38.6	25.7
43		12	15	27	38.6	25.7
44		13	11	24	34.3	25.7
45		10	9	19	27.1	27.1
46		11	13	24	34.3	27.1
47		13	15	28	40	27.1
48		16	14	30	42.9	27.1
49		8	9	17	24.3	27.1
50		14	12	26	37.1	27.1
51		8	10	18	25.7	27.1
52		10	13	23	32.9	27.1
53		8	11	19	27.1	27.1
54		12	11	23	32.9	27.1
55		12	10	22	31.4	27.1
56		12	14	26	37.1	27.1
57		15	13	28	40	27.1
58		12	14	26	37.1	27.1
59		19	21	40	57.1	27.1
60		9	11	20	28.6	27.1
61		13	14	27	38.6	27.1
62		15	13	28	40	27.1
63		13	12	25	35.7	27.1
64		10	12	22	31.4	27.1
65		10	11	21	30	27.1
66		14	14	28	40	27.1
67		10	12	22	31.4	27.1
68		10	13	23	32.9	27.1
69		11	9	20	28.6	27.1
70		8	14	22	31.4	27.1
71		11	13	24	34.3	27.1
72		14	17	31	44.3	27.1
73		12	14	26	37.1	28.6
74		10	13	23	32.9	28.6
75		9	11	20	28.6	28.6
76		5	8	13	18.6	28.6
77		12	13	25	35.7	28.6
78		14	17	31	44.3	28.6
79		10	12	22	31.4	28.6

80		14	13	27	38.6	28.6
81		10	11	21	30	28.6
82		9	13	22	31.4	28.6
83		11	16	27	38.6	28.6
84		11	14	25	35.7	28.6
85		11	13	24	34.3	28.6
86		5	7	12	17.1	28.6
87		4	8	12	17.1	28.6
88		8	10	18	25.7	28.6
89		21	19	40	57.1	28.6
90		15	13	28	40	28.6
91		15	17	32	45.7	28.6
92		12	14	26	37.1	28.6
93		12	11	23	32.9	28.6
94		9	13	22	31.4	28.6
95		13	11	24	34.3	28.6
96		12	9	21	30	28.6
97		12	15	27	38.6	30
98		15	18	33	47.1	30
99		11	15	26	37.1	30
100		10	13	23	32.9	30
101		18	19	37	52.9	30
102		7	9	16	22.9	30
103		5	8	13	18.6	30
104		14	16	30	42.9	30
105		8	11	19	27.1	30
106		12	13	25	35.7	30
107		12	15	27	38.6	30
108		12	16	28	40	30
109		16	17	33	47.1	30
110		14	18	32	45.7	30
111		7	11	18	25.7	30
112		11	14	25	35.7	30
113		12	15	27	38.6	30
114		13	14	27	38.6	31.4
115		13	13	26	37.1	31.4
116		17	19	36	51.4	31.4
117		11	14	25	35.7	31.4
118		11	13	24	34.3	31.4
119		9	12	21	30	31.4
120		11	9	20	28.6	31.4
121		7	11	18	25.7	31.4

122		8	11	19	27.1	31.4
123		11		11	15.7	31.4
124		10	13	23	32.9	31.4
125		15	14	29	41.4	31.4
126		8	11	19	27.1	31.4
127		11	10	21	30	31.4
128		15	14	29	41.4	31.4
129		13	13	26	37.1	31.4
130		10	12	22	31.4	31.4
131		12	11	23	32.9	31.4
132		11	13	24	34.3	31.4
133		11	9	20	28.6	31.4
134		6	8	14	20	31.4
135		10	11	21	30	31.4
136		11	13	24	34.3	31.4
137		9	13	22	31.4	31.4
138		18	19	37	52.9	31.4
139		11	12	23	32.9	31.4
140		6	8	14	20	31.4
141		8	11	19	27.1	31.4
142		12	13	25	35.7	31.4
143		12	15	27	38.6	31.4
144		12	14	26	37.1	31.4
145		10	13	23	32.9	31.4
146		13	14	27	38.6	31.4
147		10	15	25	35.7	31.4
148		8	11	19	27.1	32.9
149		13	15	28	40	32.9
150		10	15	25	35.7	32.9
151		11	13	24	34.3	32.9
152		10	14	24	34.3	32.9
153		10	12	22	31.4	32.9
154		10	14	24	34.3	32.9
155		7	11	18	25.7	32.9
156		14	15	29	41.4	32.9
157		13	12	25	35.7	32.9
158		11	13	24	34.3	32.9
159		12	14	26	37.1	32.9
160		14	16	30	42.9	32.9
161		11	11	22	31.4	32.9
162		15	18	33	47.1	32.9

163		10	12	22	31.4	32.9
164		13	16	29	41.4	32.9
165		7	10	17	24.3	32.9
166		8	10	18	25.7	32.9
167		10	11	21	30	32.9
168		8	11	19	27.1	32.9
169		14	12	26	37.1	32.9
170		11	14	25	35.7	32.9
171		6	9	15	21.4	32.9
172		8	10	18	25.7	32.9
173		11	14	25	35.7	34.3
174		12	13	25	35.7	34.3
175		16	18	34	48.6	34.3
176		7	8	15	21.4	34.3
177		10	12	22	31.4	34.3
178		7	8	15	21.4	34.3
179		10	11	21	30	34.3
180		9	12	21	30	34.3
181		9	10	19	27.1	34.3
182		8	10	18	25.7	34.3
183		9	13	22	31.4	34.3
184		13	15	28	40	34.3
185		7	12	19	27.1	34.3
186		15	14	29	41.4	34.3
187		14	16	30	42.9	34.3
188		14	15	29	41.4	34.3
189		11	14	25	35.7	34.3
190		14	16	30	42.9	34.3
191		15	17	32	45.7	34.3
192		11	13	24	34.3	34.3
193		9	12	21	30	34.3
194		13	15	28	40	34.3
195		10	11	21	30	34.3
196		12	14	26	37.1	34.3
197		10	12	22	31.4	34.3
198		11	13	24	34.3	34.3
199		9	10	19	27.1	34.3
200		14	15	29	41.4	34.3
201		19	21	40	57.1	34.3
202		11	13	24	34.3	34.3
203		12	14	26	37.1	34.3

204		8	11	19	27.1	34.3
205		11	13	24	34.3	34.3
206		12	14	26	37.1	35.7
207		16	18	34	48.6	35.7
208		11	13	24	34.3	35.7
209		11	12	23	32.9	35.7
210		9	10	19	27.1	35.7
211		12	13	25	35.7	35.7
212		8	10	18	25.7	35.7
213		8	11	19	27.1	35.7
214		8	11	19	27.1	35.7
215		11	12	23	32.9	35.7
216		17	19	36	51.4	35.7
217		12	13	25	35.7	35.7
218		9	11	20	28.6	35.7
219		11	12	23	32.9	35.7
220		11	13	24	34.3	35.7
221		12	14	26	37.1	35.7
222		16	18	34	48.6	35.7
223		12	13	25	35.7	35.7
224		9	11	20	28.6	35.7
225		12	14	26	37.1	35.7
226		8	11	19	27.1	35.7
227		10	12	22	31.4	35.7
228		14	15	29	41.4	35.7
229		15	17	32	45.7	35.7
230		17	19	36	51.4	35.7
231		13	15	28	40	37.1
232		10	12	22	31.4	37.1
233		14	15	29	41.4	37.1
234		10	12	22	31.4	37.1
235		14	16	30	42.9	37.1
236		8	10	18	25.7	37.1
237		9	10	19	27.1	37.1
238		8	9	17	24.3	37.1
239		14	15	29	41.4	37.1
240		15	17	32	45.7	37.1
241		16	18	34	48.6	37.1
242		14	15	29	41.4	37.1
243		11	13	24	34.3	37.1
244		13	15	28	40	37.1

245		11	14	25	35.7	37.1
246		10	12	22	31.4	37.1
247		9	11	20	28.6	37.1
248		12	15	27	38.6	37.1
249		11	13	24	34.3	37.1
250		10	13	23	32.9	37.1
251		15	17	32	45.7	38.6
252		6	8	14	20	38.6
253		10	13	23	32.9	38.6
254		10	12	22	31.4	38.6
255		17	19	36	51.4	38.6
256		10	12	22	31.4	38.6
257		6	9	15	21.4	38.6
258		10	13	23	32.9	38.6
259		12	15	27	38.6	38.6
260		10	13	23	32.9	38.6
261		11	13	24	34.3	38.6
262		18	19	37	52.9	38.6
263		10	12	22	31.4	38.6
264		11	13	24	34.3	38.6
265		11	12	23	32.9	40
266		13	15	28	40	40
267		11	13	24	34.3	40
268		10	13	23	32.9	40
269		9	11	20	28.6	40
270		9	12	21	30	40
271		8	10	18	25.7	40
272		14	15	29	41.4	40
273		13	15	28	40	40
274		12	14	26	37.1	40
275		10	13	23	32.9	40
276		14	16	30	42.9	40
277		13	14	27	38.6	40
278		8	11	19	27.1	40
279		11	9	20	28.6	40
280		12	13	25	35.7	40
281		9	11	20	28.6	40
282		9	10	19	27.1	40
283		7	9	16	22.9	40
284		11	13	24	34.3	40
285		9	12	21	30	41.4

286		15	17	32	45.7	41.4
287		10	12	22	31.4	41.4
288		13	15	28	40	41.4
289		9	11	20	28.6	41.4
290		9	10	19	27.1	41.4
291		7	9	16	22.9	41.4
292		11	13	24	34.3	41.4
293		5	7	12	17.1	41.4
294		9	11	20	28.6	41.4
295		12	14	26	37.1	41.4
296		11	13	24	34.3	41.4
297		9	11	20	28.6	41.4
298		11	13	24	34.3	41.4
299		15	17	32	45.7	42.9
300		10	12	22	31.4	42.9
301		10	11	21	30	42.9
302		10	12	22	31.4	42.9
303		15	17	32	45.7	42.9
304		15	17	32	45.7	42.9
305		9	11	20	28.6	42.9
306		10	12	22	31.4	42.9
307		13	15	28	40	42.9
308		16	18	34	48.6	42.9
309		6	8	14	20	42.9
310		16	17	33	47.1	42.9
311		11	13	24	34.3	44.3
312		3	5	8	11.4	44.3
313		9	11	20	28.6	44.3
314		7	8	15	21.4	44.3
315		15	17	32	45.7	45.7
316		14	16	30	42.9	45.7
317		12	14	26	37.1	45.7
318		8	10	18	25.7	45.7
319		9	11	20	28.6	45.7
320		11	12	23	32.9	45.7
321		11	13	24	34.3	45.7
322		7	8	15	21.4	45.7
323		11	12	23	32.9	45.7
324		5	8	13	18.6	45.7
325		8	10	18	25.7	45.7
326		7	9	16	22.9	45.7

327		14	15	29	41.4	45.7
328		11	14	25	35.7	47.1
329		8	11	19	27.1	47.1
330		11	11	22	31.4	47.1
331		8	11	19	27.1	47.1
332		11	13	24	34.3	48.6
333		10	11	21	30	48.6
334		15	17	32	45.7	48.6
335		9	11	20	28.6	48.6
336		14	16	30	42.9	48.6
337		10	12	22	31.4	48.6
338		9	11	20	28.6	51.4
339		13	15	28	40	51.4
340		9	11	20	28.6	51.4
341		19	21	40	57.1	51.4
342		8	11	19	27.1	51.4
343		15	16	31	44.3	52.9
344		14	16	30	42.9	52.9
345		12	13	25	35.7	52.9
346		13	15	28	40	54.3
347		18	20	38	54.3	57.1
348		16	18	34	48.6	57.1
349		10	12	22	31.4	57.1
350		8	11	19	27.1	57.1
	Mean out of 35	11.1	13.0			
	Mean out of 100	31.7	37		34.2	
	Standard Deviation(out of 35 or 100)	2.9	2.8		7.9	
	Maximum(out of 35 or 100)	21	21		57.1	
	Minimum (out of 35 or 100)	3	5		11.4	
	Range (out of 35 or 100)	18	16		45.7	
	Standard Error				0.421758476	
	Median				34.3	
	Mode				31.4	
	Sample Variance				62.25807417	
	Kurtosis				0.339712191	
	Skewness				0.321929155	
	Sum				11963.2	
	Count				350	
	Confidence Level(95.0%)				0.829508057	
	Upper Score Based on Confidence level				35.0	
	Lower Score Based on Confidence Level				33.35	

**Appendix C: Reading Comprehension Ability Test 1**  
**Reading Comprehension Ability Test for Grade Nine students**  
**Time Allotted: 1:45 Hrs**

**Part 1**

**Questions 1-5**

Look at the text in each question. What does it say? Write the correct letter A, B or C on your answer sheet.

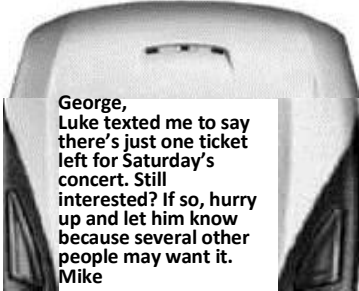
Example:



- A. Do not leave your bicycle touching the window.
- B. Broken glass may damage your bicycle tyres.
- C. Your bicycle may not be safe here.

Answer: A

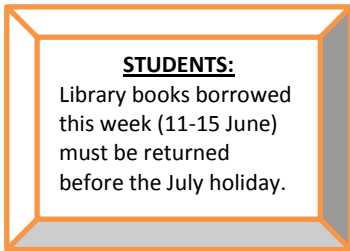
1.



**What should George do?**

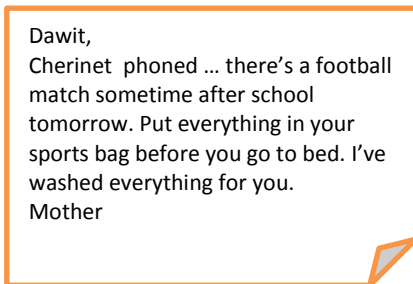
- A. reserve the last concert ticket before anyone else does
- B. tell Luke how many people are going to the concert
- C. buy several concert tickets because many people want to go

2.



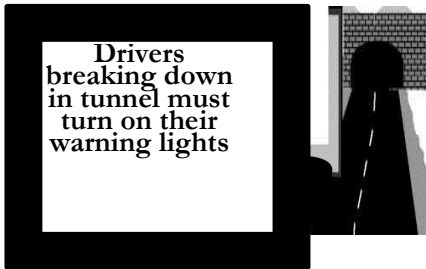
- A. Students wishing to keep books for the holiday should borrow them this week.
- B. Students borrowing books now can only keep them for one week.
- C. Students borrowing books now have to bring them back before the holiday.

3.



- A. Dawit should get his football things ready this evening.
- B. Cherinet will ring Dawit back about the time of the match.
- C. Mum will wash Dawit's football clothes for him.

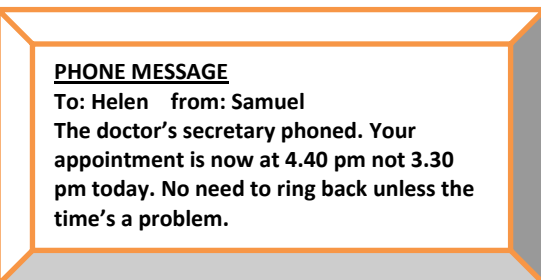
4.



- A. Use warning lights at all times when driving through the tunnel.
- B. Tunnel warning lights will be turned on if a car has broken down.
- C. Switch on warning lights if your car breaks down in the tunnel.

**Helen should ring the doctor**

5.



- A. in order to make another appointment.
- B. if the new appointment is inconvenient.
- C. to change the day of her appointment.

## Part 2

### Questions 6-10

The people below all want to get some information from an internet website. On the same page there are descriptions of eight websites. Decide which website would be the most suitable for the following people. For questions 6-10, write the correct letter (A-H) on your answer sheet.

6.



Rosa is 20 and studies Spanish and German. She's planning to spend six months at a German university and, before going, she wants to find out what life there is like for people of her age.

7.



Petros is keen on teaching himself languages. He's going on holiday to Spain next year and would like to be able to say some simple things in the language when he gets there.

8.



Claudia is learning about life among the ancient Romans. Her teacher has asked her to choose a famous Roman and find out as much as she can about him or her.

9.



Ivan teaches history. He wants some information about the changes that have taken place since earliest times in the ways in which people exchange ideas.

10.



Seble wants to encourage her children to find out something about classical music. They need basic information, but she also wants them to have some fun while they're learning.

### Educational sites on the web

#### A. Let's communicate!

If you're interested in how people share information and thoughts, you'll find this website useful. It begins over five thousand years ago with the writings of the ancient world. The inventions of printing and of sound recording are covered, and so is the development of the internet.

#### C. Mouth Piece

Clear explanations, exercises and vocabulary games will help you revise your Spanish or even learn the language from the beginning. The pages cover a wide range, from 'Irregular verbs' to 'Cook in Spanish' and 'Public speaking'. There are useful links to other websites, providing historical and cultural information, including sites in Latin America.

#### E. Roman Games

Nobody understands all the rules of games which were popular in ancient Rome. However, by exploring the social history of the period, the designers of this site have developed some interesting ideas for games which can be played in the playground or as board games or singing games.

#### G. In Touch

If you need to check on the facts, use this multilingual site to get all kinds of information about Spanish music, art and literature, history and politics, as well as useful lists of sites for those travelling to Spain.

#### B. Sights and Sounds

This is for anyone studying the Latin language or who is interested in the ancient world. There are amazing facts about the rulers of ancient Rome, interactive family trees, the words or popular songs, and maps of battles.

#### D. Speak Up

This small but complete site aims to help language learners with the pronunciation of all the main sounds in German, with additional advice on spelling. This will be of use to students trying to teach themselves the language from the beginning, teachers preparing classes for beginners or parents looking for ways to encourage their children to develop basic language skills.

#### F. In the Air

This is a young person's online guide to the orchestra. It describes each instrument, with a recording of its range of sounds, and gives a brief history of the instrument. It also explains how to make some amusing instruments at home using everyday objects.

#### H. Oskar's Magazine

This amusing and colorful magazine is designed for university students of German. There are interesting articles by young German writers on a range of subjects, from where to find cheap accommodation in Berlin to reviews of current dance music CDs and classical music concerts, and student-exchange experiences.

### Part 3

#### Questions 11-20

Look at the sentences below about walking tours in London. Read the text on the same page to decide if each sentence is correct or incorrect. If it is correct, write 'true'. If it is not correct, write 'false' on your answer sheet.

11. It is essential to book a place before you join a London Walk.
12. The guide can be recognized because of the papers he is carrying.
13. You can tour the Houses of Parliament free following the 1000 Years of History walk.
14. There is an opportunity to go on a boat after visiting Camden Town.
15. You will have to walk from Tower Bridge to Greenwich.
16. The Historic Greenwich walk includes a visit to a museum.
17. There is an extra charge of €3.50 on the Historic Greenwich walk.
18. You have to take a train on the Unexpected London walk.
19. If it is raining, you should check whether your walk is going ahead.
20. Teenagers who are with their parents can join a walk without paying.

### London Weekend Walks

We are the oldest walking tour company in London and offer a wide variety of routes with the best tour guides in London.

To go on one of our walks, simply meet your guide and fellow walkers in the street outside the underground stations and at the times given below. Your guide will have copies of this information sheet in his hand.

Below is our range of walks for this Saturday.

#### 1000 Years of History

##### 11.00am Westminster underground

This walk is essential for the first-time visitor. We'll show you the place where kings and queens are crowned, where they lived and often where they are buried. You will see where politicians have shaped the course of history over the years. This walk finishes at the Houses of Parliament, which you can visit afterwards at a good discount.

#### Canals and cafés

##### 11.00 am Camden Town underground

Camden Town, with its canals, cafés and studios, is the home of many artists, musicians and writers. The high point of the walk is a visit to Camden Lock, London's brightest and most exciting street market. You may like to take a canal trip to London Zoo after this walk.

#### Historic Greenwich

##### 2.00 pm Tower Hill Underground

The walk begins with the best boat ride in London, five kilometers down the river from Tower Bridge to the Royal Naval College in Greenwich. From there you'll walk through Greenwich Park past the Naval Museum and other historic buildings to the village itself. We'll take you down narrow streets with busy antique shops and markets, back to the riverside where this walk ends.

The boat trip costs £3.50 on top of the normal price (see below).

#### Unexpected London

##### 3.00 pm Tower Hill Underground

This walk begins with a ride on Europe's most modern city railway giving you fine views across the Thames and the riverside area. We will get on and off the train for mini-walks to explore the hidden corners of the former port of London. You should buy a two-zone underground ticket at the beginning of your journey.

All these walks last about two hours and end near underground stations. The walks take place in all weathers.

Large groups are requested to phone and let us know they are coming.

A walk costs £4.50 (€3.50 for senior citizens and full-time students under 26 with an identity card).

Children under 12 go free but they must be with a responsible adult. If you plan to go on several walks, ask your guide about a discount card.

LONDON WEEKEND WALKS  
PO Box 1526, LONDON NW8 6SW

TEL:02074268462

**Part 4**

**Questions 21-25**

**Read the text and questions below. For each question, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on your answer sheet.**

**Charlotte Uhlenbroek**



Dr Charlotte Uhlenbroek recently returned to London after filming her second series, *Jungle*. It was a difficult, 19-week trip, during which she explored the rainforests of Borneo, the amazon and the Congo, travelling around using a variety of means of transport, including hot-air balloons and canoes.

'I'm interested in the way animals communicate with each other. It was sometimes dangerous making the programme- I even went swimming with piranha fish. But the worst thing was the insects. On one occasion I had 70 sandfly bites on my arm. Luckily didn't get sick. I prefer not to take tablets every day, but if I get a fever I take some medicine immediately.'

Filming the series was exciting, but also frightening at times. Her most challenging experience was climbing a 100-metre tree in Borneo, as she has a great fear of heights. 'I had to keep pulling myself further and further upwards. All I wanted to do was get down again. Suddenly the safety equipment didn't look very strong and though that my ropes would break and I would crash to the ground.'

What did she enjoy most about returning to London? 'When I've been away in how uncomfortable conditions for a long time I dream about an ice-cold drink and my bed at home! But the thing I look forward to the most is nice long showers. There wasn't much water in some of the places we visited and I worried that I was using it all up and not leaving any for my colleagues on the camera team!'

21. What is the writer doing in this text?  
A. giving information for visitors to the rainforest  
B. describing how animals in the rainforest communicate  
C. reporting an interview with a television presenter  
D. giving advice about travel health
22. When does Charlotte take medicine on her travels?  
A. whenever she goes into water    B. if she has a high temperature  
C. every day to prevent illness    D. if she is bitten by insects
23. Charlotte found climbing the tree in Borneo so frightening because  
A. she hates being in high places.    B. she was unable to get down.  
C. her equipment suddenly broke.    D. she slipped and fell to the ground.
24. What does Charlotte miss most when she is away filming?  
A. air-conditioning    B. an unlimited water supply  
C. a comfortable bed    D. iced drinks
25. Which best describes the TV series *Jungle*?

A. The forest floor has thousands of different insects – let Charlotte Uhlenbroek be your guide to these fascinating creatures.

B. Making her first television appearance, Charlotte Uhlenbroek explores some of the wildest places on earth.

C. Charlotte Uhlenbroek looks at ways in which the animals of rainforest manage to live beside their human neighbors.

D. Insects, piranha fish, hot-air balloons – it's all in a day's work for Charlotte Uhlenbroek in her latest series.

**Part 5****Questions 26-35**

Read the text below and choose the correct word for each space. For each question, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on your answer sheet.

Example:

(0) A. have B. had C. were D. are

Answer: A

**Postcards**

Many people receive picture postcards nowadays of places their friends and family (0) \_\_\_\_\_ visited. They (26) \_\_\_\_\_ became popular in the 1890s. Until then it was only the rich who took holidays but at that time, because of the opening of the railways, ordinary people (27) \_\_\_\_\_ to go to the seaside too. Photographers (28) \_\_\_\_\_ that people wanted to take home a picture of their holiday (29), \_\_\_\_\_ they started to offer photographs for sale in seaside towns. And they sold millions (30) \_\_\_\_\_ them.

Today those old photographs give use a very (31) \_\_\_\_\_ idea of what holidays were like (32) \_\_\_\_\_ a hundred years ago. People did not actually post the photographs but brought them home to (33) \_\_\_\_\_ and show their friends. This was, however, (34) \_\_\_\_\_ beginning to today's picture postcard (35) \_\_\_\_\_ which is important to tourists everywhere.

- |     |             |               |              |             |
|-----|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 26. | A. once     | B. first      | C. just      | D. already  |
| 27. | A. imagined | B. supposed   | C. dream     | D. decided  |
| 28. | A. realized | B. remembered | C. persuaded | D. wondered |
| 29. | A. but      | B. so         | C. although  | D. since    |
| 30. | A. in       | B. from       | C. of        | D. with     |
| 31. | A. main     | B. open       | C. clear     | D. deep     |
| 32. | A. more     | B. over       | C. greater   | D. longer   |
| 33. | A. stay     | B. remain     | C. reserve   | D. keep     |
| 34. | A. that     | B. the        | C. one       | D. a        |
| 35. | A. industry | B. Job        | C. work      | D. factory  |

(Taken from Cambridge English Language Assessment, PET Exams 2016)

**Answer Sheet**

Section \_\_\_\_\_ Roll No \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
1.	6.	11.	21.	26.
2.	7.	12.	22.	27.
3.	8.	13.	23.	28.
4.	9.	14.	24.	29.
5.	10.	15.	25.	30.
		16.		31.
		17.		32.
		18.		33.
		19.		34.
		20.		35.

**For the Researcher's Use  
Only**

Code \_\_\_\_\_

Mark out of 35 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark out of 100 \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Reading Comprehension Ability Test 2

### Reading Comprehension Ability Test Two for Grade Nine students

Time Allotted: 1:45Hrs

#### Part 1

#### Questions 1-5

Look at the text in each question. What does it say? Write the correct letter A, B or C on your answer sheet.

Example:

0.



FOR SALE

*Rainforest* Computer Game  
2-4 players  
Bought last month  
Played once - works perfectly  
Phone Tom: 255324

The advert says the computer game

- A. is almost new and in good condition.
- B. does not work on the seller's computer.
- C. is only suitable for younger players.

Answer: A

1.

Sara,  
Beza rang. She's lost the notes she took in class about the history homework and wants to borrow yours. She can come here later for them if that's Ok.

Mum

- A. Beza would like to know if Sara is going to do her history homework later this evening.
- B. Beza wants to compare the notes she wrote about the history homework with Sara's.
- C. Beza hopes she can look at the information Sara has for the history homework.

2.



What should Peter do?

- A. let Stefan know if he is delayed
- B. tell Stefan which film he wants to watch
- C. wait for Stefan inside the cinema

3. From: Kidus  
To: Hiwot

Hi. Have you remembered about the youth club camping trip?

We have to tell the organizer tomorrow if we're interested and I wanted to know if you are going.

Why has Kidus written the email?

- A. to check if Hiwot is going on the trip
- B. to ask Hiwot to book places on the trip
- C. to remind Hiwot about the date of the trip

4. **Swimming Club**

Saturday's competition starts at 6.30 pm.  
Arrive one hour before for a practice swim.

- A. The swimming competition will last for one hour.
- B. All swimmers should get some practice before Saturday.
- C. There is an opportunity to swim before the competition starts.

5. Saron,

I won't be back in time to take you to dance class. I have arranged for Hanna's mum to collect you at 5. Please be ready and remember your things.  
Mum

What must Saron do?

- A. Get ready for the dance class before Hanna's mother arrives.
- B. Ask Hanna's mother for a lift to the dance class.
- C. Collect her things for the dance class from Hanna's mother.

**Part 2**  
**Questions 6-10**

The teenagers below are all looking for a magazine to read. On the next page there are descriptions of eight magazines for young people. Decide which magazine would be the most suitable for the following teenagers. For questions 6-10, write the correct letter (A-H) on your answer sheet.



Kidist would like to read stories that people her own age have written. She is also keen on music and would like some recommendations on the best bands to listen to.



Blen wants to know more about the lives of famous people who frequently appear in the news. She is also interested in clothes and would like recommendations on what to wear.



Henok is interested in learning more about the latest international events. He is also keen on the cinema and would like to read different opinions on what to see.



Genet is interested in geography and the natural world. She would also like to read articles that tell her about the lives of people from other countries.



David enjoys going to concerts and wants to find out more about the people in his favourite bands. He is also keen to read articles written by other teenagers.

## Teen Magazines

- A. Youth World is an entertainment magazine full of ideas on what to do. It provides details of all the latest films, concerts, exhibitions and fashion shows. If you are someone who prefers to stay in, it also recommends the best DVDs to watch.
- C. NS Teens magazine is well-known for its wildlife and environmental content but it also has articles on the history and culture of people from around the world. Some of the articles are long and detailed but the magazine is also famous for its fantastic photo-journalism. There are also letters from readers as well as maps and fact sheets.
- E. Top **Teens** is easy to read and full of colour photographs. There are a range of different sections including those offering fashion and beauty advice. But the majority of its pages are devoted to interviews with the popular, well-known stars of cinema, music and sport.
- G. **Teenplus** is very different from the average teen magazine that simply offers articles on pop stars and fashion. This exciting new magazine informs readers about what is happening in the world through its in-depth articles on current affairs, politics and science. It also offers a variety of reviews on recent books, films and music CDs.
- B. Teens Now is a successful music magazine for teenagers that lists who is playing, where and when and how to get tickets. Interviews with well-known singers and groups as well as detailed biographies are included. It also gives its readers the chance to send in their own articles.
- D. Some leading journalists write for Teen People, a music magazine aimed at the teen market. There are interviews with new bands as well as the latest news on recordings, tours and festivals. A popular feature is the annual reader's vote for the best new band.
- F. The only environmental magazine written by teenagers for teenagers is Young WB. Readers are invited to send their articles and photographs to the magazine's offices and material is chosen for the next issue. As well as articles about the natural world, the magazine also has many special offers and competitions.
- H. No journalists write for Teen Voice. This magazine depends completely on articles sent in by its teenage readers. It gives young people the opportunity to publish their creative work, such as poems or short works of fiction or to voice their opinions on important issues. They can also write reviews of the latest music CDs.

### Part 3

#### Questions 11-20

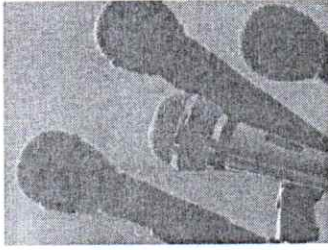
Look at the sentences below about a comedy club for young people, called *Comedy Kids*.

Read the text on the opposite page to decide if each sentence is correct or incorrect.

If it is correct, write true on your answer sheet. If it is not correct, write false on your answer sheet.

11. **Comedy Kids** operates a number of internationally-based clubs for young people.
12. **Comedy Kids** comedians have had as much experience working with children as with adults.
13. According to John Winterton, he is the first ever young people's stand-up comedian.
14. John looks like most people's idea of a typical entertainer for young people.
15. **Comedy Kids** will hold special parties at their clubs for young people if requested.
16. A lot of **Comedy Kids** comedians have the right qualities for performing at young people's parties.
17. Guests at **Comedy Kids** parties are invited to perform if they wish.
18. **Comedy Kids** have discovered lots of good young comedians who have not been trained.
19. In a year's time there'll be more classes available for young people wanting to be comedians.
20. **Comedy Kids** prefer it if the young people who join them are already quite confident.

## Comedy Kids



Do you enjoy watching comedy? Do all your friends at school think you tell great jokes? Then why not come and see what's happening at *Comedy Kids*?

*Comedy Kids* own comedy clubs in several countries that are run just for young people aged 10-15. They're real clubs with real comedians, who are just as familiar with working in adult comedy clubs as they are working with children. But don't take our word for it - come and see for yourself!

The *Comedy Kids* company was set up by John Winterton, who says that no-one had thought of being a stand-up comedian for young people until he came along. In fact, his act quickly became so popular that he soon found lots of other comedians who wanted to join his company and perform for families and young people. And if you think, as many others do, that a young people's comedian leaps on stage in a brightly-coloured costume and big red nose - think again. John usually appears dressed in a cool black jacket and trousers - more like a Hollywood movie star than a circus clown!

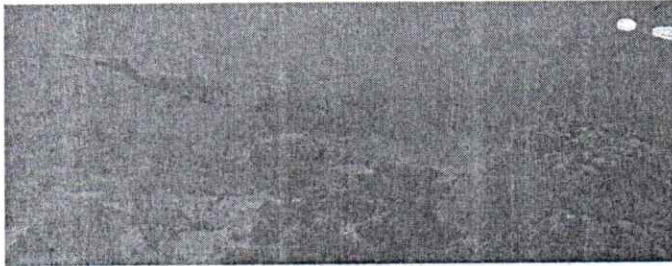
If you're having a party at home *Comedy Kids* can come and perform for you there at your party - just ask! Of course, it's not the same as performing on stage, so we're always looking for comedians in the clubs who are good at working with small numbers of young people - and we've discovered there aren't many of them about! But the ones we have found are brilliant. Your very own comedian will also help you to tell your guests some jokes and silly stories - and they can join in too, if they want! It'll be fun - and very different from any party you've ever had before!

Here at *Comedy Kids*, it's not just about the adults telling the jokes. We also have very short 'open spots' where young people get the chance to perform. But we've yet to find someone who can do that without preparation, so we've set up the world's first 'Comedy Classes' to teach young people how to tell jokes on stage. At the moment our classes are only monthly, but we're planning to start a number of others over the coming year. So if you want to be a comedian but don't want to wait until you grow up, this is where you can do it. And if you're creative but feel you're lacking in the confidence to speak up, we can certainly help. We'll listen to what you want to do, and try to make it happen. So what are you waiting for? Come and join *Comedy Kids*!

Part 4

Questions 21 - 25

Read the text and questions below. For each question, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on your answer sheet.



Underwater Research

*Fourteen-year-old Daniel Fassil talks about an exciting science project*

Last month I got the chance to take part in an underwater research project in an area of the Gulf of Mexico called the Flower Gardens. A team of professional researchers, led by the scientist Dr. Kidus Girum, was trying to learn more about the fish and various creatures that live in this part of the sea. The Flower Gardens are a long way from the shore and we spent three days on a boat.

The team used a piece of underwater equipment called a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) to collect information. The ROV could measure water depth and temperature and it also had a camera that sent live film back to the boat. The ROV was great fun. It was controlled by a computer on the boat, and I was allowed to operate it a few times.

However, the thing I enjoyed most was diving into the water. At first, I was quite frightened - mainly because I couldn't see land in any direction. But as soon as I jumped into the water, I wasn't afraid anymore. It was amazing to see the colourful fish swimming around and I could see all the way to the Flower Gardens, which are almost 30 metres down.

I will never forget the Flower Gardens. The trip was like a holiday but I also learnt new things about science and research projects. The team was very friendly and everyone was happy to explain what they knew about the sea. It was a great opportunity and it has made me think about my goals in life. The experience will definitely help me work harder to become a scientist.

21. What is Daniel Fassil doing in the text?
- A. describing the part he played in a science project
  - B. explaining how to apply for a place on a science trip
  - C. giving advice on understanding difficult areas of science
  - D. persuading others to organise their own science projects
22. What does Daniel say about the ROV?
- A. It was difficult to operate.
  - B. It could only go so far under water.
  - C. It was an expensive piece of equipment.
  - D. It recorded what was happening under water.
23. What was Daniel's attitude towards diving?
- A. His main worry was losing sight of the boat.
  - B. He enjoyed it less than other parts of the trip.
  - C. His feelings changed once he was in the water.
  - D. He was quite disappointed by the variety of fish.
24. What effect has the trip had on Daniel?
- A. It has changed his opinion of science.
  - B. It has improved the way he works in a team.
  - C. It has made him a lot more interested in the sea.
  - D. It has encouraged him to work towards his goals.
25. What might Daniel write in his diary about the trip?

A. It was very interesting working with Dr Kidus and his team but I wish someone else my age had been on the trip.

C. The trip was like a holiday and I saw some amazing fish. The only thing I disliked was collecting information about the sea.

B. Going to the Flower Gardens was great fun. I now know much more about science but I realise there's still a lot more to learn.

D. The Flower Gardens is a beautiful place but scientists are worried that pollution levels there will increase.

**Part 5**

**Questions 26-35**

Read the text below and choose the correct word for each space. For each question, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on your answer sheet.

Example: Example: (0) A. with B. for C.by D. on

Answer: A

**Superheroes**

A superhero is a fictional character (0) \_\_\_\_\_ special powers. (26) \_\_\_\_\_ the first Superman story was written in the USA in 1938, superheroes have (27) \_\_\_\_\_ in various comic books around the world. But more recently they have (28) \_\_\_\_\_ better known as film characters.

(29) \_\_\_\_\_ superhero powers vary widely, superhuman strength and the ability to fly are common. (30) \_\_\_\_\_ superheroes do not have special powers but have (31) \_\_\_\_\_ other important abilities. In order to protect friends and family, a superhero's identity is normally (32) \_\_\_\_\_ secret, which often means superheroes have a complicated double life.

(33) \_\_\_\_\_ have been successful superheroes in countries other than the USA. Examples (34) \_\_\_\_\_ Cybersix from Argentina and the heroes of AK Comics from Egypt. Japan is the only country that has created as many superhero characters as the USA. However, most Japanese superheroes are short-lived. While American entertainment companies reinvent superheroes, (35) \_\_\_\_\_ they will stay popular, Japanese companies frequently introduce new characters.

- 26. A.Until                      B. Since                      C .From                      D.Before
- 27. A.shown                      B. entered                      C. come                      D. appeared
- 28. A. become                      B. returned                      C. changed                      D. grown
- 29. A .Because                      B. If                      C .Although                      D .So
- 30. A. each                      B .some                      C .Another                      D .both
- 31. A. made                      B. increased                      C .prepared                      D .developed
- 32. A. held                      B. put                      C .kept                      D .got
- 33. A. These                      B. That                      C .There                      D .Those
- 34. A. consist                      B. involve                      C .contain                      D .include
- 35. A. hoping                      B. requiring                      C .needing                      D .asking

(Taken from Cambridge PET Exams, 2009)

**Answer Sheet**

Section \_\_\_\_\_ Roll No \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
1.	6.	11.	21.	26.
2.	7.	12.	22.	27.
3.	8.	13.	23.	28.
4.	9.	14.	24.	29.
5.	10.	15.	25.	30.
		16.		31.
		17.		32.
		18.		33.
		19.		34.
		20.		35.

**For the Researcher's Use Only**  
Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark out of 35 \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark out of 100 \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E: Students' Questionnaire**  
**Addis Ababa University**  
**College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication**  
**Department of Foreign Languages and Literature**  
**Students' Questionnaire**

**Dear Student,**

I am a graduate student of English at Addis Ababa University. I am conducting a study on “The Actual and Expected Reading Comprehension Ability of Grade Nine Students.” The purpose of this questionnaire is to get your responses about the factors that affect your reading ability. The success of the study depends on the will and genuine responses you give to the questions given in the questionnaire. Thus, I kindly request you to respond to all the questions as honestly and objectively as possible.

It will take an average of 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Read the statements in each section and answer by circling the response of your choice.

Your answers will exclusively be used for the purpose of this research, and please rest assured that your identity will be kept confidential.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

**Part One: Background Information**

1. Your Sex

- A. male                      B. Female

2. How old are you?

- A. 11-13 years              B.14-16 years              C. above 16 years

3. Which school did you attend for your eight grade learning?

- A. Private                      B. Governmental

4. Your English language result (out of 60) in Grade Eight Regional Examination

- A. Less than 10    B. 11-20    C.21-30    D.31-40    E.41-50    F.51-60

5. Your parents' (mother's, father's or guardians) current highest educational status

- A. 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade    B. 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade    C. 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> Grades/ Diploma  
D. Degree    E. Master's degree

**Part Two: Reading Practice**

6. Do you get help in your reading in English at home?

- A. Yes    B. No

7. Do you have access to books, magazines or computer at home or at school to read in English?

- A. Yes    B. No

8. Does your English teacher guide you to read other books, magazines, newspapers etc. written in English?

- A. Yes    B. No

9. How often do you read books, newspapers or magazines written in English?

- A. Every day    B. Once in a week    C. More than once in a week    D. Never at all

10. How has reading been being practiced in your English classes?

- A. The teacher explains the meanings of difficult words in the passage, and then the students read the passage and answer the reading comprehension questions.
- B. The teacher introduces the topic, asks some related questions to raise students' interest and curiosity towards the reading passage, and then he/she allows the students to read and do the comprehension questions by themselves. He/she finally checks the students' answers.
- C. The teacher explains the meanings of difficult words and read the reading passage explaining the ideas in the passage. Then the students work on the reading comprehension questions with the teacher.
- D. The teacher just orders the students to read the reading passages and do the reading comprehension questions.
- E. The teacher uses all the above approaches during different reading sessions, and sometimes mixes two or three of the approaches mentioned above.

11. Does your teacher train you to use reading strategies like scanning, skimming, predicting, summarizing etc.?

- A. Yes                      B. No

12. How has reading been being done in your grade nine English classes?

- A. Our teacher reads aloud to the class.
- B. Students take turns to read aloud.
- C. Students read silently by their own.
- D. Students read both loudly and silently in a single or different

13. How difficult are the reading passages in your English Textbook?

- A. Very difficult      B. Difficult      C. Average      D. Easy      E. Very easy





### Appendix G: Statistical Results for the Students' Questionnaire

Item	Responses	Number of Responses	Percentage	Group Mean of Scores	Standard Deviation	t Stat T-test	t Critical two-tail	Significance Level at 0.05	Difference Between Means	Sampling Error or P(T<=t) two-tail	Standard Error
<b>Sex</b>	A.Male	151	43.15%								
	B.Female	199	56.85%								
<b>Age</b>	A.11-13	6	1.71%								
	B.14-16	265	75.21%								
	C.Above16	79	22.57%								
<b>Eighth grade school type</b>	A.Governmental	276	78.85%	32.82	7.52	-3.0463	1.9686	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0020	0.4526
	B.Private	74	21.14%	39.40	7.36	6.8350	1.9930	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.8554
<b>Eighth grade English Exam result out of 60</b>	A.<10	23	6.57%	22.53	5.29	-10.6272	2.0738	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	1.1038
	B.11-20	56	16%	27.68	4.20	-11.3091	2.0040	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5618
	C.21-30	125	35.71%	33.69	5.77	-0.9922	1.9792	Not significant	There is no significant difference	0.3230	0.5618
	D.31-40	96	27.42%	38.05	6.87	5.5059	1.9852	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.7008
	E.41-50	38	10.85%	38.31	6.23	4.1112	2.0261	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0002	1.0111
	F.>50	12	3.42%	48.8	4.29	10.2068	2.2009	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	1.4304

<b>Parents' or Guardians' Highest Educational Status</b>	A. Uneducated	98	28%	29.7	5.44	-8.1783	1.9847	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5496
	B.1 <sup>st</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> grades	166	47.42%	33.7	6.94	-1.0027	1.9672	Not significant	There is no significant difference	0.3168	0.5383
	C.8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> grades	43	12.28%	39.17	9.32	3.4923	2.0181	Significant	There is significant difference	0.0011	1.4217
	D.11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grades/ College Diploma	32	9.14%	41.69	7.28	5.8250	2.0395	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	1.2865
	E. Degree	11	3.14%	40.78	3.28	6.6469	2.0860	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.9902
	F. Master's degree	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Reading help from parents</b>	A.Students who get help	131	37.42%	37.42	6.77	5.4435	1.9784	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5912
	B.Students who do not get help	219	62.58%	31.53	7.62	-5.1881	1.9709	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5150
<b>Access to materials written in English</b>	A.Students who have access	163	45.71%	39.49	6.96	9.7088	1.9747	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5449
	B.Students who do not have access	187	54.29%	29.68	5.59	-11.0586	1.9728	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.4085
<b>Extensive reading guidance from teachers</b>	A. Students who get guidance	170	48.57%	38.81	6.97	8.6252	1.9741	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5343
	B. Students who do not get guidance	180	51.43%	28.94	5.15	-13.7138	1.9733	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.3836

<b>Frequency of extensive reading practice</b>	A.Daily	8	2.28%	52.66	2.98	17.5015	2.3646	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	1.0549
	B.More than once in a week	16	4.57%	42.22	2.65	12.1091	2.1314	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.6622
	C.Once in a week	43	12.28%	36.88	2.15	8.1964	2.0181	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.3271
	D.Never at all	283	80.85%	32.24	7.54	-4.3756	1.9684	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.4480
<b>Teaching approach</b>	A	85	24.28%	32.45	7.59	-2.1211	1.9886	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0369	0.8231
	B	72	20.58%	40.45	8.69	6.1080	1.9939	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	1.0237
	C	117	33.42%	29.64	5.56	-8.8696	1.9806	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5142
	D	30	8.57%	24.57	2.81	-18.7780	2.0452	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.5130
	E	46	13.14%	31.56	1.68	-10.6844	2.0141	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.2474
<b>Training on reading strategies</b>	A.Students who were trained	226	64.57%	35.95	7.43	3.5335	1.9706	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0005	0.4945
	B.Students who were not trained	124	35.42%	31.16	7.94	-4.2691	1.9794	Significant	There is a significant difference	0.0000	0.7127











### Appendix I: Raw Data of the Classroom Observation

Classes		Class 1 Day 1		Class 1 Day 2		Class 1 Day 3		Class 2 Day 1		Class 2 Day 2		Class 2 Day 3		Class 3 Day 1		Class 3 Day 2		Class 3 Day 3		
Dates		Nov 12		Dec11		Feb 4		Nov 13		Dec 12		Feb		Nov14		Dec 19		Feb 6		
Lesson Topics		The Arts and Crafts Club (pp. 41-42)		The Need for Balanced Diet (pp.67-68)		Cities of the Future (pp.133)		The Karate Lesson (pp.49-51)		Oranges (pp.73-74)		Opening a Bank Account (pp.138-140)		An Informal Letter (p. 5)		Living with AIDS (pp.83-84)		Success in the Fashion world (pp.143-144)		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
No	Pre-reading Tasks																			
1	Predicting content of text based on titles and visuals	√								√							√			
2	Predicting content based on knowledge of topic																			
3	Predicting content based on knowledge of genre																			
4	Reading or listening to background information																			
5	Brainstorming vocabulary that might appear																			
6	Discussing ideas that appear in the text	√				√				√		√		√		√		√		
7	Learning the meaning and use of discourse markers																			
8	Pre-teaching vocabulary in text	√		√		√														
9	Skimming the text for gist comprehension									√		√				√		√		





**Appendix J: Readability of Grade Nine English Textbook**  
**Selected Reading Passages from Grade Nine English Textbook and Their Readability**  
**Grade level By Fry's Readability Formula**

**1. Reading Passage ( page 15 )**

Addis Ababa,

June 2010

My dear nephew,

I am delighted to hear from your father that you are going to Bole Senior secondary School. Did he tell you that I was a former student there? I am afraid that I was not a very good student, so I thought I should give you some advice. First of all, do remember to get to school on time each day for the first lesson! I was always in trouble for arriving late and disrupting the class. Also, before you leave home, make sure you have got all that you need for the day in your school bag. It is annoying for your friends if you are always forgetting to bring the right book and need to share or borrow it from them. In addition, it is even worse if you have left your homework at home by mistake! That will not please your new teachers! So try to get out of bed in good time, make sure you have everything you need for the school day, and do not be late for lessons.

Remember also to keep your books neat and tidy. My teachers always told me that my work was very untidy and my handwriting was so bad that they could not give me any good marks – so take note of this friendly advice from your old uncle. Also, do not be afraid to take part in things because you think you might be laughed at or make silly mistakes. Believe me, I made lots of errors when I was at school, but other boys still made friends with me and I had a lot of fun, even though sometimes they made fun of me and teased me. I hope these few remarks will help you enjoy your new school and I wish you every success as you start the new school year. Do not forget to see if you can find my name on the board of honors!

Your loving uncle,

Bekele

## Readability of the Letter

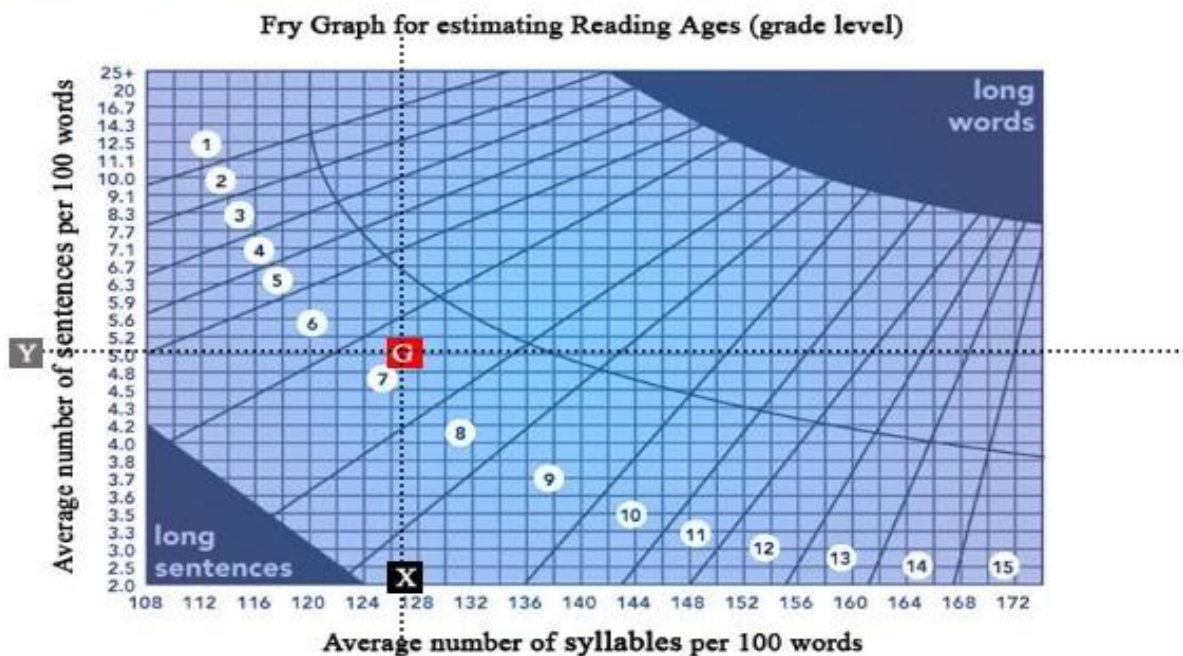
### Fry Graph and Raygor Graph Readability Tool

**Purpose:** Both readability formulas will visually plot the grade level on a chart. The number between the two parallel lines represents the U.S. grade level.

#### Your Results:

Your text: Addis Ababa, June 2010 My dear nephew, I am del ... ([show all text](#))

#### Show FRY GRAPH



Average # of syllables per 100 words: 127

Average # of sentences per 100 words: 5.1

**X** = 127

**Y** = 5.1

**G** = Grade level (the number in the white circle between the dark blue parallel lines is the grade level)

## **2. Reading Passage 2 (page 148)**

Does money make you happy? Many people dream of a sudden windfall, but does it bring satisfaction? Some say that money does not bring you happiness, and this is especially true for those who have won the lottery.

At first, when I heard of my win on the Ethiopian National Lottery, I was speechless-I could not believe my good fortune. Then as the news sank in, I couldn't wait to tell my family and all my friends. Soon the newspapers heard of my win, and our house was besieged by reporters and photographers, all wanting photographs and interviews, and wanting to know what I would do with the money. I tried to explain that I really wanted to think of the best way to spend my winnings, but time was against me. Very soon, people were coming round to beg for some money for this project or for the other. On the internet, I received pleading letters from all over the world and all sorts of strangers, suggesting all sorts of ways that I could make use of the money. The phone never stopped ringing, and there was no peace in the house. Arguments broke out among the members of the family as to how I should spend my winnings-"Buy a big new house and a shiny new car (or two)", they said. "Spend it on foreign holidays". "Give some money to start a business" or "Give it all to charity" was more of their advice. I said I wanted to go to study in America, and hoped to become a doctor, but people thought this was a waste of time-what did I need to work for now with such a lot of money in the bank?

In the end, I decided to give some money for my family, some to charity, and the rest I invested in the bank. But until things calmed down, I almost had to go into hiding to escape the demands of so many strangers who wanted to spend the money for me. It was not the happiest time to my life! I realized that even if you win the lottery, good health, friend and family, and living in a law abiding society are essential to your happiness.

## Readability of the Passage

### Fry Graph and Raygor Graph Readability Tool

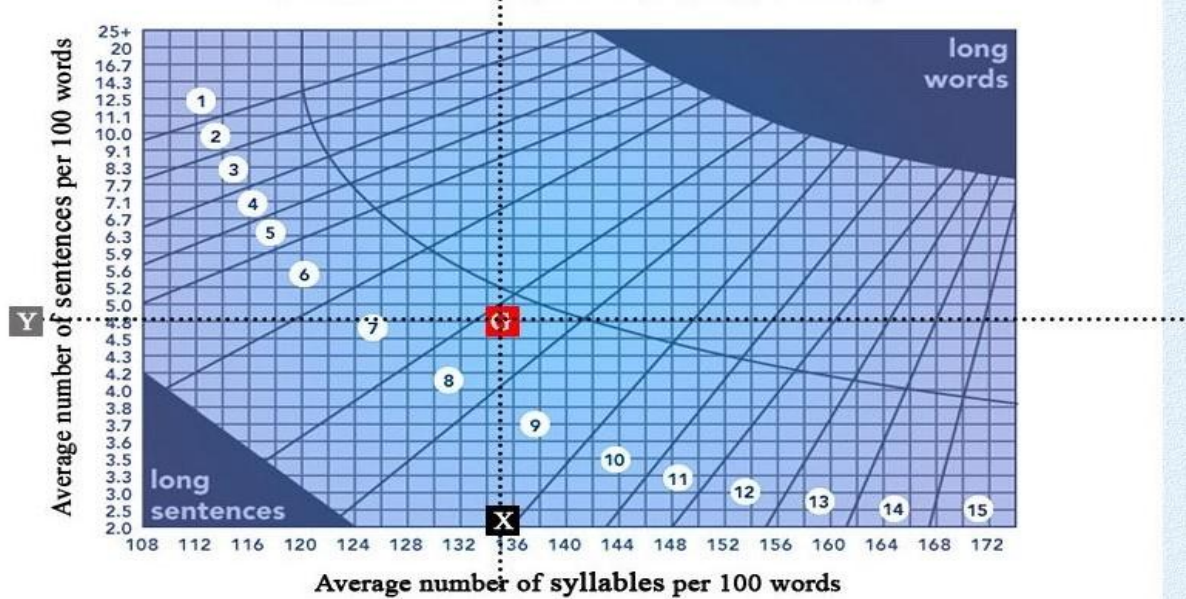
**Purpose:** Both readability formulas will visually plot the grade level on a chart. The number between the two parallel lines represents the U.S. grade level.

#### Your Results:

Your text: Does money make you happy? Many people dream of a ...[\(show all text\)](#)

#### Show FRY GRAPH

Fry Graph for estimating Reading Ages (grade level)



Average # of syllables per 100 words: **135**  
Average # of sentences per 100 words: **4.8**

**X** = 135

**Y** = 4.8

**G** = Grade level (the number in the white circle between the dark blue parallel lines is the grade level)

### **3. Reading Passage 3 (page 198)**

300 years ago, a bird called dodo lived on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. It had a roundy body, short legs, a large head and a very large beak with a hook at the end. At that time there were lots of dodos on the island. Ships went to Mauritius and when the sailors went ashore, they hunted the dodos for fresh meat to eat. The dodos could not fly, so they were easy prey for the hunters. Later on, settlers arrived on the island with their domestic animals. Their pigs destroyed many of the eggs and ate the young dodos. After many years there were no dodos left on the island, and the birds became extinct. All that remains of the dodo today are some skeleton in museums, plus one head and two feet.

Today, elephants are in the same position that dodos were 300 years ago. People are killing so many elephants that soon there will be none left. Men kill elephants because they want the ivory from their tusks to make ornaments and jewelry. People who buy ivory pay the hunters to kill the elephants. When a mother elephant is killed, her newly born babies die too, because there is no one to look after them.

Rhinos are also in danger of extinction because some people in Asia believe their horns have magic power. In the past, there were dozens of different kinds of rhinos in the world. Today, although only five kinds survive, they are still hunted and killed for their horns. If we do not stop people killing elephants and rhinos, they may die out, just like the dodo.

Some animals become extinct because men hunt them. Others die out because people destroy their food. A lot of animals live in the forest, but all over the world people are cutting down and burning the forests. Every minute of the day 40 hectares of trees are destroyed in the world.

We must stop killing huge numbers of animals. The pictures show some of the animals which may die out if we do not stop killing so many of them. We must look after our forests. If we do not, more animals in the world will die out, including humans.

## Readability of the Passage

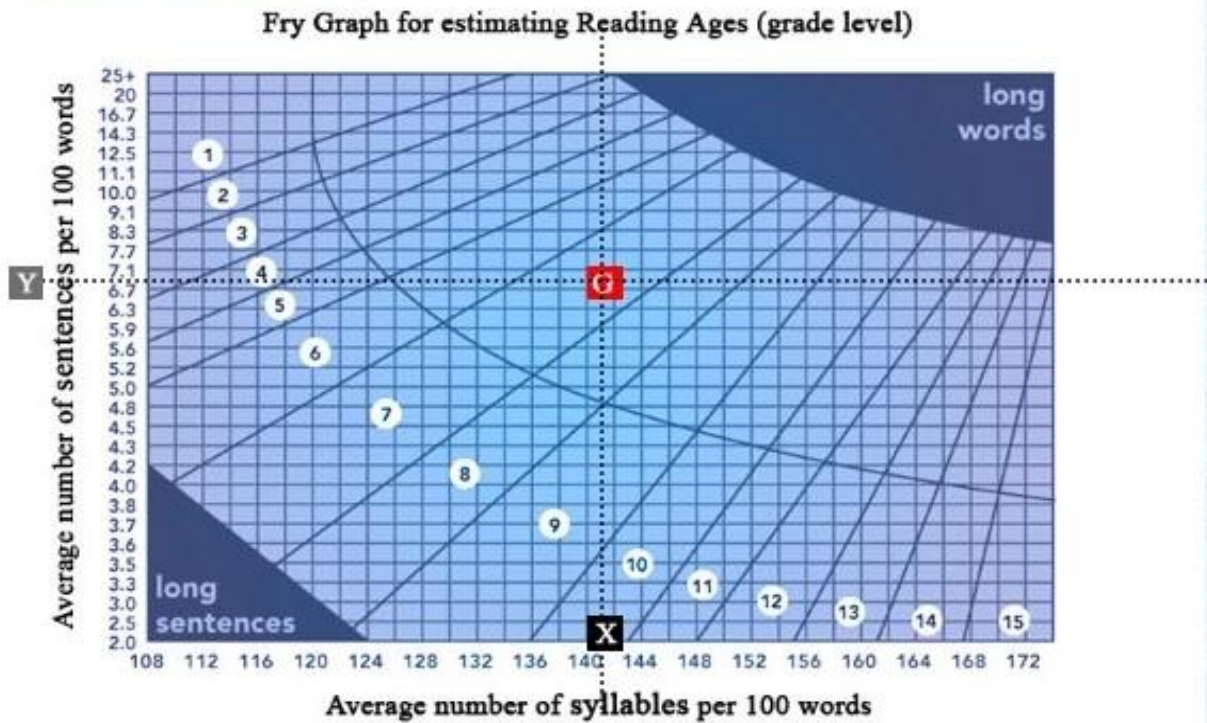
### Fry Graph and Raygor Graph Readability Tool

**Purpose:** Both readability formulas will visually plot the grade level on a chart. The number between the two parallel lines represents the U.S. grade level.

#### Your Results:

Your text: 300 years ago, a bird called dodo lived on the isl ...[\(show all text\)](#)

#### Show FRY GRAPH



Average # of syllables per 100 words: 141  
Average # of sentences per 100 words: 6.9

**X** = 141

**Y** = 6.9

**G** = Grade level (the number in the white circle between the dark blue parallel lines is the grade level)

## **DECLARATION**

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

Name: Teshome Fekadu

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: Addis Ababa University

Date of Submission: 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2019