

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES, HUMANITIES
AND JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION
DEPARTMENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF TEACHING READING
IN EARLY GRADE: IN THE CASE OF MENELIK
PRIMARY SCHOOL

By: Sebele Alemu

June 2013
ADDIS ABABA

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PRIMARY SCHOOL**

By:

SEBELE ALEMU

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
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FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS (MA) IN
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TEFL)**

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List of Acronyms

- **EGRA**.....Early Grade Reading Assessment.
- **EQUIP2**.....Educational Quality Improvement Program.
- **GEQIP**.....General Educational Quality Improvement Program.
- **MOE**.....Ministry of Education.
- **REB**.....Regional Education Bureau.
- **Teacher-cod 01**.....The first teacher who is observed and interviewed.
- **Teacher-cod 02**.....The second teacher who is observed and interviewed.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' practices of teaching reading lessons in early grade especially grade one. The subjects of the study were grade one English teachers of Menelik II Primary government School. A sample of 3 grade one English teachers were chosen, however one of the teacher left out due to her personal reason. Thus, the 2 grade one English teachers were observed for 6 periods each while they were teaching reading. After the classroom observation the 2 teachers were interviewed. Next, based on the checklist prepared from the review of related literature the text book used to teach reading was analyzed. Analysis of the data collected through observation, interview, and book analysis shows the following findings: Teachers used whole language method; Most of the basic reading instructional methods were not used; Teachers were not aware of early reading methods; The text book provide activities of phonics, but no phonemic awareness; and the topics and pictures of the text are familiar and predictable for the students. On the basis of these findings, some recommendations were forwarded.

Chapter one

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

From the basic four skills of English reading has a vital effect on the teaching and learning of a foreign language. Kaharma (1981:81) asserts that “even though oral fluency is in a greater demand nowadays than before, reading is in many cases the ultimate objective of foreign language learning.”

Likewise, Nuttal (1982:12) adds that reading is mainly an effective means of developing students’ general language command which in turn help them to comprehend other academic fields better. Furthermore, reading especially during early grades has paramount values in children’s future education. Gove and Wetterberg (2011:1) explain this importance in their article “The Early Grade Reading Assessment” as follows:

Teaching young children to read is the cornerstone of improving educational outcomes and has far-reaching implications. Unless they learn to read at an early age, children cannot absorb more advanced skills and content that relies on reading. Children who do not learn to read in the early grades risk falling further and further behind in later grades, as they cannot absorb printed information, follow written instructions, or communicate well in writing.

Similarly, Gove and Cvelich (2010:3) add that children who didn’t learn reading well face difficulties in later grades. The difficulties in reading and writing in later grades might make them unsuccessful in school or become illiterate.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia is one of the countries which fulfill the campaign of '*Education for All*' and '*Millennium Development Goals*'. In order to achieve this goal, the Ethiopian government constructs lots of primary school buildings as well as increasing the number of students' enrollment in the primary school, and has given lots of in-services trainings for teachers. However, students reading abilities get worsen. For instance, it is common to see upper grade students who do not perform well in reading what is expected of them at their level. There are complaints from parents and upper grade teachers about the failure of students' reading ability from time to time. Moreover, Ethiopian early grade reading assessment (EGRA) has conducted research on the reading achievement of grade 2 and grade 3 students and recently published report that shows almost all of the students are unable to read a word in their respective mother tongue (Piper, 2010:23). One can deduce from this report that the students' reading ability in English will be far worse than expected. The day to day observation, experience of teaching early grades and EGRA's report inspired me to conduct an exploratory study on how the teaching and learning process of early grade-reading takes place especially at grade one level which is the foundation stage of learning to read.

A number of studies that have been done in the local context on students reading ability at Ethiopian secondary and tertiary levels show that students' English reading ability has deteriorated significantly. Among such studies, PHD dissertations by Gebre Medhin (1993), Gessese (1999), and Taye (1999) are worth mentioning. Similarly, there are a number of MA theses on the reading ability of secondary and tertiary levels. Studies were conducted by Getachew (1996), Abel (2000), Aderajaw (2005), Edaso (2007), Negash (2008) etc can be mentioned as examples. However, not much seems to have been done in early grade reading. The few studies available in this context are Chefena (1988) Mesfin (2008) and Hiliay (2011). The three studies were done on the learning

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and teaching of reading at grade 3 and 4 levels. The studies assess reading abilities. Mesfin (2008) look the teaching practice and asses reading abilities of grade 4 students and his findings show that students reading abilities were poor. Chefena (1988) tries to look the method of teaching at grade 3 and 4 and his findings show that most of the teachers used the 'Look-and-Say' method. On the other hand, Hiliay (2011) further tried to see the involvement of parents in helping their children to read and his finding shows teachers were unable to use appropriate methods, teaching aids and reading materials and parental support for developing children reading were very poor. However, as far as the researchers' knowledge goes, studies carried out at grade one which is the foundation stage for later grades and success in students' academic life are almost none. Thus, the purpose of this research is to fill this gap.

1.3 Research Question

Since the problem of reading at early grade is a critical issue, it is appropriate that this study aimed at exploring the practice and the belief of teachers in teaching reading in early grade especially at grade one level. Therefore in order to achieve this objective, the researcher used the following research questions:

- What belief do early grade teachers have about the methods, instructional strategies and the text book of grade one?
- How do early grade teachers teach reading?
- What does the method and content of grade one English text book look like?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the practices of teaching reading in early grade especially at grade one level. More specifically the study was attempted to achieve the following points:

- *Explore teachers' belief about the methods, instructional strategies and the text book.*

- *Explore the methods, instructional strategies and classroom practices of teaching reading at grade one.*
- *Analyze the method and the content of grade one English text book.*

1.5 Significance of the Study

Teaching reading in early grades especially grade one is the foundation of improving educational result and has success in future learning.

Thus this study has the following significances:

- The findings are significant to create awareness for teachers, school and Principals and police makers to design different methods, materials and intervention programs to solve the problem.
- The study will be a provision of useful practical information in the area of early grade-reading with special reference for further research studies.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to look into the practices of teaching early grade reading especially at grade one level. Thus, the study was delimited to a government primary school; more specifically grade one, since it is a critical stage for children to learn reading. It was also delimited to methods and classroom procedures of teaching reading in early grade, the beliefs or ideas of early grade teachers in teaching reading, and the analysis of the reading lessons content in grade one text book, rather than looking at other variables such as teachers' competence, school environment, parents' involvement, parents' economic status and the like.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

Because of short period of time and financial constraints, this study has confined small number of participants and limited to one school. It would have been better and more effective if a good number of schools and participants

were included in the study to obtain more information and investigate it in a wider range.

1.8 Definitions

Some of the important definitions of words and the terms used in this study are presented below:

- **INITIAL/BEGINNING Reading**- a decoding process on the awareness of sound/symbol relationships; focuses on printed symbols; attempts to break code of print; and decoding to figure out words.
- **PHONEMS**-are the smallest units of sound in a spoken language that makes up words that make a difference in the word's meaning.
- **PHONIC**-is a method of instruction that teaches students the relation between letters in written language and phonemes in spoken language in the way that they read and spell words.
- **PHONEMIC AWERNESS**-the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sound.
- **PHONOLOGICAL AWERNESS**- is a broad term that includes phonemic awareness. In addition to phonemes, phonological awareness activities can involve work with rhymes, words, syllables, and onsets and rimes

1.9. Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter contains the introductory frame work of the study. This chapter covers the main frame of the study. It begins from the background of the study to the organizations of the study. The second chapter deals with a review related literature. This chapter deals with the approaches, methods, and instructional strategies of early grade reading as well dimensions of the early grade text book. The third chapter comprises the methodology of the study. In this chapter the researcher explains how the research conducted using the design, the methods, and the data analysis of the study. The fourth chapter covers the presentations, analysis and interpretation of the study. Lastly the fifth chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

This chapter deals with mainly the methods and texts of early grade reading. It consists of four fundamental parts under which different issues are discussed. The first part describes two widely known approaches to teaching reading in early grades- the phonics and the whole-language instructions. Since the interactive approach didn't get much attention, the researcher focuses on the two widely known approaches. The second part consists of the five basic reading instructions of early grade reading set by the National Reading Panel. Under this section, the five research-based instructions: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension and their classroom implementations are discussed in detail. In the third part of this chapter, the typical reading experiences such as reading aloud, shared reading, and guided reading are reviewed. The fourth part of this chapter points out issues concerning about the text book of early grade reading especially what the text books are like and finally a summary of the chapter presented.

2.1 Approaches to Teaching Reading in Early Grades

According to Thogmartin (1997:12) the main aims of teaching reading are for children to recognize words instantly, understand what they read and find pleasure in reading. In order to reach these goals the approaches (models) to reading instruction plays a vital role. There are three research based instructional approaches to reading that influence teachers methods of teaching reading children in early years. These are phonics, whole language and interactive approaches (Glynn, et al, 2006:68). However, the two approaches-phonics and whole language are more dominant and gain high attention than the third approach which is the interactive model. Thus, the

discussion in this section focused on the two approaches-the phonics and whole-language instructions.

2.1.1 Phonics (Bottom-up) Approach

Glynn, et al (2006:68) state that the phonics approach, known as 'bottom-up' model (data-driven model) put forward that readers look first at the letters and hear sounds in the words before understanding their meanings. Similarly, Ehri (2004:167) states "phonics is a method of instruction that teaches student correspondence between letters in written language and phonemes in spoken language and how to apply these relations to read and spell words". Ehri (2004:175) further informs that students need to know the alphabet and learn the shapes and names of all capital and lowercase letters. Additionally, they need to be aware of phonemes, particularly segmenting and blending of sounds and major letter and sound relationship in order to read successfully.

According to Moats (1998:5), teaching reading of phonics can be done as a systematic, explicit instruction or an incidental, implicit instruction. In a systematic, explicit instruction, students are taught phonics in logical sequence, from simple to complex, based on the structure of language itself. On contrary, the incidental approach teaches sound-symbol elements without a logical order from easier to a more difficult. One of the phonic element or pattern may be pointed out by a teacher in the context of words in a book and the sounds stay embedded in whole words, not put in isolation or contrasted with other vowels.

2.1.1.1 Principles of Good Phonics Instruction

Research suggests that the following principles can guide to undertake an effective phonics instruction. According to Sthal et al (1998:339-343) an effective phonics instruction should:

- develop the Alphabetic principles (upper and lower cases of letter) .

- develop phonological awareness such as, Rhyme, Word to word matching, Sound to word matching, Identify initial or final sound, Segmentation, Blending and Deletion and manipulation of sounds.
- provide a thorough grounding in letters.
- provide sufficient practice reading words (reading words in isolation, in story, in writing).
- lead automatic word recognition.
- be part of reading instruction (a balance of activities around the different goals of reading such as, letter sound correspondences and be able to apply this knowledge to recognizing words quickly and automatically enjoying in reading and comprehending etc

2.1.2 Whole-Language (Top-down) Approach

The concept of a whole-language (top-down model) emerges from Goodman (1976) - an assumption that reading is 'psycholinguistic guessing game' which readers read some words and skip others using their normal and natural language process and guess the meaning of the message by applying their knowledge of the world, using context to extract meaning from the print (Thogmartin, 1997:20).

Whole- language theorists explain that reading instruction should be looked like first language acquisition. The advocators assume that learning to read is likely learning to speak which is a normal process of language acquisition and it can also be called a look -and -say method. Liberman and Liberman (1992: 343) states the premise of "learning to speak and learning to read are entirely an analogous occurrence of language developments rather than the abstract structural units by which meaning is conveyed in phonics instruction".

The whole-language approach encourages children to use sentence context as the primary strategy for recognizing words in text. Whenever the children are

unable to read a word, they are asked to guess what the word might be, or if necessary, to leave out the word and read the sentence to the end and place in a word that makes sense (Tunmer & Chapman 200:53).

The advocates of whole-language teaching reading set out the four key defining feature of the whole-language approach to literacy instruction. Tunmer & Chapman (2000:75-79) clearly explain these four key defining feature as Literature-Based Approach, Child-centered Instruction, Integration of Reading and Writing, and Emphasis on meaning Construction.

Literature-Based Approach: In the whole-language approach real books (little story book or trade books) are used. The books should have natural language that is similar to the spoken language of children. Children will be exposed to wider range of vocabulary and a range of language forms. However, studies show that the probability of correctly guessing unfamiliar words is one in ten (Tunmer & Chapman (2000:76)).

Child-Centered Instruction: The whole-language approach regards children to be active rather than passive learners and teachers should build on children's prior knowledge. By sharing books every day, children will develop a range of literacy-related skills and experiences before they enter school. They will learn 'decontextualized' language and understand the nature and functions of print (Tunmer & Chapman (2000:77)).

Integration of Reading and Writing: Smith and Elley (1994) in (Tunmer & Chapman (2000:77) state the importance of children being introduced to writing and reading instruction simultaneously, as there is a mutual relationship between the two. In this approach children are encouraged to write a story for the picture and the teacher shouldn't correct all the errors, as they are encouraged to take risks in both reading and writing (Tunmer & Chapman, 1999:77).

Emphasis on meaning construction: in this approach children should learn reading as they acquire speaking. The focus is on meaning rather than on the abstract structural unit, breaking down words into sounds. Therefore, language instruction should be given as whole. On this point Goodman ((1986:7) in Tunmer & Chapman (1999:79)) comments “teacher make learning to read difficult ‘by breaking the whole (natural) language into bite size abstract little pieces’, and that this postpones the natural purpose of language, which is the communication of meaning”. Similarly, Glynn, et al (2006:68) explain that “if the children are immersed in a print- rich environment in which the focus is on meaning of print, they will readily acquire reading skills” .

2.1:2.1 Basic Principles of Whole-Language Instruction

There are some basic principles of whole-language instruction that distinguish Whole-language instruction from phonics instruction. Thogmartin (1997:37) summarizes Goodman’s (1986) basic principles that underline whole language instruction:

- Focus on making meaning in reading;
- Emphasis on whole, real, natural, and sensible instruction;
- Focus on frequent reading
 - with students in small “guided reading” groups,
 - to students with “read aloud” ,
- Reading and writing for real purposes;
- Focus on motivational aspects of literacy, emphasizing the love of books and engaging reading materials;
- Meaning-centered whole to part to whole instruction where phonics are taught contextually in embedded phonics;
- Emphasis on high-quality and culturally-diverse literature.

2.2 Basic Instructions of Teaching Early Grade Reading

In order to have a successful reading ability that ensures children's educational achievements and future success, they need a well structured reading instruction. After carefully reviewing of many research in reading instruction (focusing on the critical years of kindergarten through third grade) and identifying methods that consistently relate to reading success, the National Institute of literacy (2000:3) sets out five basic reading instructions that help to teach reading for beginning readers and struggling readers successfully. These are *phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.*

2.2.1 Phonemic awareness Instruction

As Opitz (2000:6) defines phonemic awareness refers to the awareness of individual sounds (phonemes) which words are made up of and Phonemes can make a difference in the word's meaning. For instance changing the first phoneme in the word *pin* from /p/ to /f/ change the word from *pin* to *fin*.

Likewise the National Institute of Literacy (2001:3) states phonemic awareness is an ability to identify think about and work with the individual sounds (phonemes) in the spoken words and it is a sub category of phonological awareness. Thus, Phonemic awareness instruction is a method that involves the activity of recognizing, matching, blending, segmenting and manipulation of phonemes which is very helpful for children to read. The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005; 10) states this point as:

The ability to read and comprehend a text depends on the rapid and automatic recognition of single words. All words are visually unfamiliar when encountered for the first time and a powerful strategy in this situation for the students is to use phonemic knowledge to identify the word. That is, students recognize unfamiliar words by identifying, blending and working phonemes (sounds) and comparing that sound pattern to the sound patterns of the words in their oral/aural vocabulary.

2.2.1.1 Teaching Phonemic Awareness in the Classroom.

Different activities can be used to achieve effective phonemic awareness instruction in a classroom that assists children to notice, think about, and work with (manipulate) sounds in spoken language. These are Phoneme isolation, Phoneme identity, Phoneme categorization, Phoneme blending, Phoneme segmentation, Phoneme deletion, Phoneme addition and Phoneme substitution (National Institute of Literacy, 2001:5&6).

- **Phoneme Isolation:** is an activity that helps children to recognize individual sounds (phonemes) in a word.

Teacher: “van?”

Children: “The first sound in **van** is /v/.”

- **Phoneme Identity:** is an activity that helps children to recognize the same sounds in different words.

Teacher: “What sound is the same in **fix**, **fall**, and **fun**?”

Children: “The first sound, /f/, is the same.”

- **Phoneme Categorization:** is an activity that helps children to recognize the word in a set of three or four words that has the “odd” sound and teachers let children to identify the odd one.

Teacher: “Which word doesn’t belong? **Bus**, **bun**, **rug**”

Children: “**Rug** does not belong. It doesn’t begin with /b/.”

- **Phoneme Blending:** is an activity that helps children listen to a sequence of separately spoken phonemes, and then combine the phonemes to form a word. Then they write and read the word.

Teacher: “What word is /b/ /i/ /g/?”

Children: “/b/ /i/ /g/ is **big**.”

Teacher: “Now let’s write the sounds in **big**: /b/, write **b**; /i/, write **i**; /g/, write **g**.”

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Children: “/b/ /i/ /g/ is **big**.”

Teacher: “Now let’s write the sounds in **big**: /b/, write **b**; /i/, write **i**; /g/, write **g**.”

Teacher: (Writes **big** on the board.) "Now we're going to read the word **big**."

- **Phoneme Segmentation:** is an activity that helps children break a word into its separate sounds, saying each sound as they tap out or count it. Then they write and read the word.

Teacher: "How many sounds are in **grab**?"

Children: "/g/ /r/ /a/ /b/. Four sounds."

Teacher: "Now let's write the sounds in **grab**: /g/, write **g**; /r/, write **r**; /a/, write **a**; /b/, write **b**."

Teacher: (Writes **grab** on the board.) "Now we're going to read the word **grab**."

- **Phoneme Deletion:** is an activity that helps children recognize the word that remains when a phoneme is removed from another word.

Teacher: "What is **smile** without the /s/?"

Children: "**Smile** without the /s/ is **mile**."

- **Phoneme Addition:** is an activity that helps children make a new word by adding a phoneme to an existing word.

Teacher: "What word do you have if you add /s/ to the beginning of **park**?"

Children: "**Spark**."

- **Phoneme Substitution:** is an activity that helps children substitute one phoneme for another to make a new word.

Teacher: "The word is **bug**. Change /g/ to /n/. What's the new word?"

Children: "**Bun**."

Teacher: "The word is **mat**. Change /m/ to /b/. What's the new word?"

Children: "**Bat**."

Teacher: (Writes **big** on the board.) “Now we’re going to read the word **big**.”

- **Phoneme Segmentation:** is an activity that helps children break a word into its separate sounds, saying each sound as they tap out or count it. Then they write and read the word.

Teacher: “How many sounds are in **grab**?”

Children: “/g/ /r/ /a/ /b/. Four sounds.”

Teacher: “Now let’s write the sounds in **grab**: /g/, write **g**; /r/, write **r**; /a/, write **a**; /b/, write **b**.”

Teacher: (Writes **grab** on the board.) “Now we’re going to read the word **grab**.”

- **Phoneme Deletion:** is an activity that helps children recognize the word that remains when a phoneme is removed from another word.

Teacher: “What is **smile** without the /s/?”

Children: “**Smile** without the /s/ is **mile**.”

- **Phoneme Addition:** is an activity that helps children make a new word by adding a phoneme to an existing word.

Teacher: “What word do you have if you add /s/ to the beginning of **park**?”

Children: “**Spark**.”

- **Phoneme Substitution:** is an activity that helps children substitute one phoneme for another to make a new word.

Teacher: “The word is **bug**. Change /g/ to /n/. What’s the new word?”

Children: “**Bun**.”

Teacher: “The word is **mat**. Change /m/ to /b/. What’s the new word?”

Children: “**Bat**.”

Hence, phonemic awareness instruction is important since it improves children's word reading and reading comprehension. It also helps children learn to spell.

2.2.2 Phonics Instruction

Many scholars clearly explain phonics as an instruction that teachers teach children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language in order to learn reading. Pang et al (2003:9) define phonics as "a systematic teaching of sound and letter relationships, as well as sound and spelling patterns." In the same manner, Pugh and Rohl (2000:4) define Phonics instruction as:

The sound-letter relationships used in reading and writing that involves an understanding of the alphabetic principle on which the English language is based, and knowledge of the different sounds associated with a particular letter or combination of letters.

The aim of teaching phonics is to enable children to decode a new word. Even though, children may not be able to read the words (it may be in a new language), the phonics instructions will help them to decode and understand the words easily (Maharaja, (2007:13)). Adams (1990:10) also emphasizes "knowledge of phonics as a decisive factor for learning to read since lacking of mapping sounds to letters and letter patterns brings failure in learning to read".

2.2.2.1. Teaching phonics in the Classroom

Children are ready to learn a letter's sound as soon as they can reliably identify the letter. To begin instruction on letter sounds, teachers should demonstrate that the letter tends to make the same sound in different contexts in which it occurs. There are different strategies and activities to teach children learn phonics and one of the instructional strategies is using key words (Mnemonics). Children learn letter-sound associations using Key words

(Mnemonics) which help them remember and give typical examples of sounds on teachers desire students to focus (Scanlon and et al. 2010:130). Ehri and et al (1984) also explain that “when letters and key words were integrated, children seem to learn the letter–sound correspondences more readily”. Here is an extracted sample instruction in a classroom to teach the sound of the letter s, using *sun* as the key word (Scanlon and et al. 2010:132-134):

Teacher: We are going to learn about the sound that the letter s usually tells us to make in words. When we see an s, it tells us to make the /ssss/ sound. (*Shows the letter s*): /sssss/ (*Shows the word sun*).



Here is the word *sun*. It has an s at the beginning. The s tells us to make the /ssss/ we hear at the beginning of *ssssun*. (*Shows a picture of a sun with the letter s next to it [or in it, depending on the key words].*)

Here’s a picture of a sun. We are going to use this picture to help us remember the sound that the s makes. So when we see the letter s, we’ll think of a sun. The word *ssssun* has an s at the beginning, and the s makes the /ssss/ sound that we hear at the beginning of *sssssun*.

(*Shows several other printed words that start with s and that the children know the meaning of, e.g., soup, sock, seat, some, said.*) These words all have an s at the beginning: *ssssoup*, *ssssock*, *sssseat*, *ssssome*, and *ssssaid*. (*Points to each word as it is said.*)

The s makes the same sound in all of these words: *soup*, *sock*, *seat*, *some*, and *said*. (*Points to the s in each word as it is said.*) Do you hear the /s/ at the beginning of each of these words?

(*Repeats the words, stressing the /s/ sound.*) *Sssoup*, *ssssock*, *sssseat*, *ssssome*, and *ssssaid*. Often when there’s an s in a word, it tells us to make the /ssss/ sound.

(If some children in the classroom are at a more advanced level, the teacher would show words with an s sound at the end [e.g., this, yes, bus].)

Here are some words that have an s at the end: *thissss, yessss, bussss*. *(Points to each word as it is said.)*

When I say these words, you hear the /ssss/ sound at the end. *(Repeats the words, stressing the /ssss/ sound.)* So you need to remember that s often makes the /ssss/ sound that we hear at the beginning of *sun*. *(Points to the symbol for the key word again.)*

After this introduction, the children should be invited to think of words that have the /s/ sound. The teacher might write each word the children suggest and draw their attention to the s in the word. The words should be grouped by the relative position of the s in the words (beginning, middle, or end of the word). If a child suggests a word that has the /s/ sound but no s (e.g., *city, celery*), the teacher should offer praise for noticing the /ssss/ sound but explain that that word does not happen to have an s and that the letter at the beginning of that word will be learned at a different time. Words that start with the target sound but not with the target letter could be put on a separate list for later consideration.

Teachers can also use a variety of simple games for reinforcing letter-sound knowledge associations (Scanlon and et al. 2010:137).

- **Letter bingo.** Each playing card has letters on it, and the caller says sounds.
- **Picture bingo.** Each playing card has pictures beginning with particular sounds, and the caller says letter names.
- **Picture post office.** A “post office” is set up with three or four “mail slots,” each identified with a letter. The children have cards to mail. Each card contains a picture whose name begins with one of the letters on the post office slots. The children can check their own accuracy if the correct pictures are posted into the box under each slot.

2.2.3 Oral Reading Fluency Instruction

Good readers understand that there is a relationship between graphemes in written language and phonemes in spoken language. By applying this knowledge, good readers are able to read familiar words easily and to decode unfamiliar words by recognizing and blending the individual sounds in a word (Lehr and Osborn, 2005:7).

Many scholars define reading fluency in the similar manner as stated above. For example, Rossini, (2003) cited in Ruskey, (2011:26) defines reading fluency as “the ability of readers to read quickly, effortlessly, and efficiently with good meaningful expression.” Likewise, National Institute of Literacy (2000:2-3) explains reading fluency as:

It is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Fluent readers can recognize words automatically and group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they read. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word.

Furthermore, oral reading fluency is a complex process that translates text into spoken language as a skilled reader does. Reading fluency is also important as it links word recognition and comprehension together. Fluent readers do not need to decode the words, but rather focus on what the text means. By reading the text, they make interactions with the author’s ideas their background knowledge. In other words, fluent readers simultaneously recognize words and understand the text. However, less fluent readers need to decode the words; hence there is less opportunity to understand the text they are reading. (National Institute of Literacy 2000:19).

However, at “the earliest stage of reading development, especially, kindergarten and grade one level, students’ oral reading is slow and labored because students are just learning to break the code—to attach sounds to letters and to

blend letter sounds into recognizable words” (National Institute of Literacy, 2001:22)

2.2.3.1. Teaching Oral Reading Fluency in a Classroom

On the teaching of oral reading fluency instruction studies show that ‘repeated’ and ‘monitored’ oral reading developed reading fluency and on the whole reading achievement. This means that Students become better readers if they read and reread passages orally getting guidance and/or feedbacks from the teachers since repeated oral reading develops word recognition, speed, and accuracy as well as fluency. (National Institute of Literacy, 2001:24).

There are studies that reveal reading fluency can be developed by modeling fluent reading and by giving students repeated oral reading exercises. By listening to good models of fluent reading, students will learn how to read with expression, which helps to understand the written text. (Prior, 2007:13).

Teachers can use different activities that develop children oral reading fluency. For instance, in reread oral reading teachers can use activities such as student-adult reading, choral (or unison) reading, tape-assisted reading, partner reading, and readers’ theatre. In a modeling fluent reading, teachers can explicitly teach where and how they are pausing and how the text shows them when to raise or lower their voice while they are reading (National Institute of Literacy, 2001:28).

Here is an extracted sample fluency instruction using modeling strategy presented by the National Institute of Literacy (2001:26).

Teacher: *Did you hear how I grouped the words “Brown bear/ brown bear”?*

That’s because the words brown and bear belong together.

And then I paused a little before repeating the words.

Teacher: *Did you hear how my voice got louder and more excited right here?*

That's because the author put in this exclamation mark (point to it) to show that the speaker was excited or enthusiastic about what she was saying.

2.2.4 Vocabulary Instruction

Children need a broad vocabulary of words that they understand and can use correctly to label their knowledge and experiences. The breadth and depth of a child's vocabulary provide the foundation for decoding and comprehension skill. "Either it is an oral vocabulary or reading vocabulary, vocabularies are an important part in learning to read. At beginning of reading, children use words that they have heard and make sense for them would be used while they see it in print" (National Institute of Literacy, 2000:29).

Scanlon and et al. (2010:205-207) state children also identify new words into two strategies which are based on the methods of teaching reading: cod-based strategy and meaning-based strategy. Each strategy has their own techniques; cod-based (phonics) strategy uses 'Think about the sounds in the word', 'Look for word families' or other parts you know, 'Try out different pronunciations for some of the letters', especially the vowel(s), and 'Break the word into smaller parts'. Whereas, meaning-based(whole language) strategy, uses 'Check the pictures', 'Think of words that might make sense', 'Read past the puzzling word' and then come back to it and Go back to the beginning of the sentence and start again.

Furthermore, some vocabulary words cannot be decoded using phonics rules and principles so that children need to learn words by sight recognizing their shapes, lengths and other features. These words are called "sight words" or high-frequency words like **this**, **because**, **you**, **me**, and **was** (Maharaja, 2007:14).

2.2.4.1. Teaching vocabulary in a Classroom

Teachers must ensure that children are exposed to new oral vocabulary through discussions, through listening to and watching media works, and through listening to a wide variety of texts read to them. Teachers must also, of course, model and teach strategies for reading words and ensure that children are also exposed to new reading vocabulary in a variety of books and other written texts (National Institute of Literacy, 2000:29).

There are two ways of vocabulary teaching. These are indirect instruction and direct instruction. An indirect instruction of vocabulary engages children in oral language that when children hear new repeatedly while they are conversing with adults: They can also be taught when they listen while adults read to them in a reading aloud teachers should pause in the middle to explain unfamiliar words and engage children in discussion about the text. (Scanlon and et al. 2010:256-258 & National Institute of Literacy, 2000:29).

On the other hand, a direct instruction of vocabulary helps students learn difficult words, such as words that represent complex concepts and words which are not part of the students' everyday experiences. As research indicates, direct instruction of vocabulary can be taught by providing students with specific word instruction or by teaching students word-learning strategies. Scanlon and et al. (2010:258) explain this as follows:

Teachers need to provide supportive contexts and strategies that will enable children to learn word meanings and that will generate enthusiasm for doing so. In addition, teachers can, and should, selectively teach and provide ongoing engagement with some words. Indeed, numerous studies demonstrate that direct and explicit teaching of word meanings has a positive impact on young children's vocabulary.

Here is the sample of direct instruction of vocabulary in the classroom presented by Scanlon and et al. (2010:258):

Teacher: In the story it said, “One bad day, a tuna fish, swift, *fierce*, and very hungry, came darting through the waves.” The word I want to talk about is *fierce*. Say the word with me—*fierce*.

Students: (*Say the word.*)

Teacher: When something is *fierce*, it is very powerful and strong. We have had some really bad weather lately, with lots of very hard rain and very *fierce* winds. The winds were very, very strong. Show me how they were blowing.

Teacher and Students: (*Move arms to demonstrate strong, powerful, indeed....fierce winds.*)

Teacher: Tell me something you know that might be *fierce*. Try to use the word *fierce* when you tell about it.

Student: A fierce shark!!!

Teacher: Yes, a fierce shark. *Fierce* means strong and powerful, in a mean kind of a way. (*Several children were given the opportunity to use the word, and the teacher commented on and clarified usage for each one.*) You might want to use the word *fierce* today when you are talking or writing.

Teacher: Let’s say the word *fierce* again.

Students: (*Say the word.*)

2.2.5 Text Comprehension Instruction

Comprehension is one of the core components of the basic reading instructions since the ultimate goal is to comprehend the text. The National Institute for Literacy (2000:41) explains that “If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading.” Similarly, Maharaja (2007:12) states that “children should not only break down print rather they understand and interpret what they are reading. She also added that comprehension (understanding) should be developed from the very start”. Thus, comprehension is a very important skill in the process of reading and even can be taught in early grades.

According to Wren (2000:52) “reading comprehension is composed of two equally important components: decoding, or the ability to translate text in to speech, and language comprehension, or the ability to understand spoken language”. These two important skills of reading comprehension depend on some fundamental skills. Decoding consists of skill on letters knowledge which is concept about print and phoneme awareness. On the other hand, the language comprehension consists of skills with back ground knowledge and linguistic knowledge (phonology, syntax and semantics).

2.2.5.1 Teaching Reading Comprehension in a Classroom

Maharaja (2008:12) states some ways of developing students’ comprehension ability such as activating students’ prior knowledge, developing readers’ decoding skills, developing fluency, and increasing vocabulary. Moreover, Prior (2007:14) states on the strategies and direct instruction of reading comprehension as follows:

Teachers must explicitly explain and model strategies that aid comprehension. Discussion techniques and questioning strategies must also be directly explained and modeled by the teacher. Extended opportunities must be provided to struggling readers—low readers and special-needs students—to participate and be included in successful reading.

In addition, teachers can also use reading-aloud as strategy of teaching reading comprehension especially in very early years. Maharaja (2008:12) explains that reading aloud to learners and discussing meanings, the learners’ impressions, having them guess ahead, are all good ways of teaching reading comprehension.

According to Scanlon and et al. (2010:287), in their research about interactive strategies approach, there are six comprehension strategies such as:

Activating prior knowledge: Thinking about what one already knows about a topic or concept.

Connecting information encountered in a text with existing knowledge is the essence of meaning construction.

Prediction: Anticipating what will occur in the text and then checking to see whether the prediction matches the events in the text.

Visualization: Imagining what events in the text would look like if illustrated or made into a movie.

Summarization: Retelling the events from the text, typically using some sort of organizational structure, such as sequencing (*first, then, finally*) or story setup (setting, characters, problem, resolution).

Questioning: A very broad strategy that entails asking questions related to the content of the text and/or directed to the author of the text (e.g., “I wonder why...” “Why didn’t ...?” “How come....?”).

Comprehension monitoring: Throughout the reading of a text, noticing whether it makes sense and, if not, taking steps to clarify the areas of confusion.

3. Phases of Reading Skill Development

According to Seymour et al. (2003: 10), reading is acquired in three phases. The first phase focuses on letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, and simple decoding of letters into sounds, which are basic skills. In this phase, children are learning to recognize “sight” words, decode words fluently and to identify unfamiliar words (by letter-sound correspondence).

In the second and third phases, children focus on the printed text and it will help them to understand rules and language patterns, which they may relate to their own spoken language. Learners should also know the spelling rules and rimes. Finally, it is essential for the learners to focus on the meaning of written text. All the three phases highlight the need for children to learn a large

number of complex skills in order to become successful reader (Seymour et al., 2003:13).

4. Instructional Strategies of Reading (Typical Reading Experiences)

According to Maharaja (2007:19-28) there are three typical reading experiences that a child can pass through. These are *Read aloud*, *Shared reading*, *Group guided reading* and *Independent reading*. Each of them discussed as follows:

4.1 Read aloud

In read aloud(s), the teacher reads to whole class or to small group, using books that are understandable by the children. Consequently, children will develop a love for books, good attitudes and habits towards reading, and familiarize themselves with a variety of genres including non-fictions (Thogmartin, 1997:30). It provides them with new vocabulary, exposes them to a variety of literature and contributes to their oral and written language development. According to Opitz (2000:14) “the activity of reading aloud should emphasize language features such as rhyme, alliteration etc. Reading aloud also provides a chance for students to be familiar with complex language structures”.

4.2 Shared Reading

According to Maharaja (2007:19-22), shared reading is usually a whole class activity in a relaxed learning environment. At the beginning stage of shared reading, the reading task is shared with the teacher, and gradually the children take over the task of reading. Children are encouraged to guess and to take risks, recognizing by making mistakes they learn; teachers should also accept children’s efforts and attempts, praise them for trying and use this to promote

further learning. In general, Maharaja (2007:22) suggests that teacher should do the following points during shared reading session:

- Read to-and with-the whole class.
- Help learners to use their own knowledge, relevant to the text being read, by engaging them in discussion.
- Demonstrate reading behavior (especially to foundation phase learners). Demonstrate by showing how to read expressively, reading from left to right, or dealing with unfamiliar words.
- Practice word recognition skills such as phonics, sight words, context clues and structural analysis in the context of real texts.
- Model and teach a variety of reading strategies.
- Promote comprehension through differentiated questioning and discussion

4.3 Guided Reading

Teachers direct guided reading activities. They carefully select books according to the children's reading ability, for example, the use of a graded reading scheme. It involves talking, reading and thinking their way through a text (Maharaja, 2007:25). Through guided reading activities, children have opportunities to familiarize themselves with of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationships and other basic skills. It also helps children to learn new vocabulary and use a variety of comprehension strategies (Ministry of Education of Ontario, 2003:20). Furthermore, teachers will have the opportunity to observe children reading behaviors and assess their needs. Children have a chance to read independently and develop their confidence through practice and consolidation of reading behaviors and skills. (Maharaja, 2007:26).

5. Factors Related to Reading Texts

The types of texts are important in children's learning of reading as they have an effect on the teaching and learning process. On this point Hiebert (1999:20) states that 'text is what matters in learning to read.' According to Hoffman & Schallert (2004:4) there are four important aspects when looking at a text. These are *word level*, *sentences level*, *whole-text level*, and *illustrations in the text*.

5.1 Dimensions at the Level of the Word

There are words in a text which are present in the child's existing vocabulary, others not. Some are high frequency; others are easily decoded by very common sound-letter relationships. These different types of words cause different challenges and require different strategies for the beginning readers. Thus, it is important to evaluate the words in the text based on their frequency and 'decodability'. (Hoffman & Schallert, 2004:4).

Frequency: Research shows that in a text some words appear more frequently than others; therefore, readers will meet them often while they read. When same words occur more frequently and they are recognized by children, it will help them to read more easily (Thogmartin, 1997:76-77).

Decodability: *Decodability* is when readers use their knowledge of sound-letter relationships to decode words. When a text contains many decodable words, it is easier to read than a text that contains words with fewer known sound-letter patterns. Moreover, "the decodability of words in texts used with beginning readers may impact the kinds of word identification strategies those readers use in that and future reading" (Juel, 1988: 8).

5.2 Dimensions at the Level of the Sentence

A sentence is made out of a number of words. Both the dimensions of the individual words and the dimensions of the way in which the words are put together in a sentence what matter in a text. According to Hoffman & Schallert (2004: 8) there are two important dimensions that should be seen in the sentences level. These are *Predictability and Written-ness*.

Predictability: It is important to predict at the sentence level as well as at word and letters level. Predictability at the sentence level means what comes later in a sentence or what has come before. Good readers pay attention to meaning and order of words, as well as their sound-letter composition at the same time; the strategies the readers have used in a sentence earlier, will determine how they decode or recognize words in following sentences (Adams, 1990) in Hoffman & Schallert (2004: 9).

Written-ness: Texts are different in the degree of written-ness of the language within them. Some texts for young readers are written similar to spoken language. Others are written in a language not like spoken. Children should be exposed to both types of text, written and spoken; this is important with beginning readers (Hoffman & Schallert, 2004:10).

5.3 Dimensions at the Level of Text

The genre of the entire text consists of specific features, such as vocabulary, the syntactic meanings and purposes. The exposure to different genre will enhance children's reading and writing skills. Hoffman & Schallert (2004:11-13) state the following dimensions at the text level. These are *Familiarity of Topic/Content and Predictability*.

Familiarity of Topic/Content: familiarity with the topic or content of a given text significantly affects all reader; even the strongest adult readers. On this point Hoffman & Schallert (2004:11) say that "Lack of relevant background knowledge, failure to understand key assumptions of the area, lack of

familiarity with the vocabulary and concepts employed, and other factors make it very difficult for them to comprehend and in some cases even decode the text”.

As it is mentioned above, if there is a lack of background knowledge as to what it is read, vocabulary and concepts are included, the reader will face difficulties to understand and decode the text.

Predictability: If a text is written in a predictable way, children will read it more easily. The previous pages in the text, the illustrations, and the content, will help children to predict the whole-text (Hoffman & Schallert (2004:11)).

5.2.4 Dimensions of Illustrations

Significant evidence shows that both reading accuracy and reading comprehension of children can be affected by illustrations in a text. Poor readers' increased their reading abilities when there is illustration in the text they read than the text without illustrations. Moreover, illustrations are more likely to be facilitative when the text is quite difficult (Hoffman & Schallert, 2004:14). Great varieties and ranges of illustration in a text facilitate and widen children's reading performance. Some texts are wordless; young readers get the meaning of the text from the illustrations. (Hoffman & Schallert; 2004:14)

Chapter Summary

There are two commonly known approaches to teaching early grade reading-the phonics and the whole-language instruction. The phonics approach states that children should first taught the smallest units which are letters and their associated sounds before they begin reading words. On the other hand the whole language approach suggests that breaking down into meaningless units make learning reading difficult for children. So children should taught reading with the whole context without being broken into isolated fragment. Each of the approaches has their own principles and methods of teaching reading.

Recent researches show that children especially early grade readers should develop the basic reading skills through the five basic instructions: phonemic awareness, phonics, oral fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. The first, instruction is the phonemic awareness which focuses on manipulation of individual sounds (phonemes) to make up words. Teachers at the classroom can use different activities such as blending, segmenting, matching, identifying etc.

The second is Phonics instruction that teaches the relationships between letters and sounds to decode new words. Teachers in the class room can use activities that facilitate alphabetic principles, naming letters, letters and sound correspondence. Teachers can also use different methods like synthetic, analytic, embedded, spelling based phonics approach.

The third basic instruction is oral fluency which deals with the ability to read words accurately, effortlessly with the right expression and recognize words automatically. Teachers can develop students oral fluency by engaging repeated oral reading and modeling fluent readers.

The fourth basic instruction is vocabulary. This instruction aims at teaching children oral and reading vocabulary in order to decode and comprehend words. Students can be taught vocabulary either directly or indirectly. Teachers also can teach the two vocabulary instructions cod-based strategies and meaning- based strategies.

Comprehension is the last instruction that enables students to understand what they read, remember what they read, and communicate with others about what they read. Developing students' prior knowledge, decoding skills, fluency and vocabulary can enhance students' comprehension ability. Teachers can also use explicit instruction and strategies that develop students' comprehension ability like discussion techniques, questioning strategies, predicting through reading- aloud.

Another important concept of early grade reading is phases of reading skills development. There are three phases in early grade reading. In the first phase students acquire the fundamental skills, such as letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, and simple decoding of letters into sounds. In the second and third phases learners are exposed to written texts and take on the language rules and patterns from the spoken form of language.

Moreover, there are also four key instructional strategies which children can go through (experience of reading) to develop their reading skills. These are reading-aloud, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading. However, independent reading is not discussed in this paper since it is not applicable for beginning readers. The first strategy of reading instruction is reading-aloud. It helps students to develop oral language, promote a love of reading, stimulate imagination, increase vocabulary, develop comprehension, and identify structures of language in print. The second strategy of reading is a shared reading. It allows students to see themselves as readers. They will feel comfortable and experience fluency when joining in the reading of familiar, repetitive text in which they practice new and familiar reading strategies. The third strategy of reading is a group guided reading that enables learners to extend vocabulary development and knowledge and use of comprehension strategies.

The last point raised in this chapter is how the text book of early grade reading should be. There are four important dimensions about early grade text book. Dimension at the word level, the sentences level, the whole-text level, and illustrations in the text. At the word level the text should contain high frequency words, words which convey high meaning and words which can be easily decodable with sound letter relationships. At the sentences level the text should contain predictable sentences and word orders that children predict what comes afterwards. Texts with familiar language register and variety of written-ness can help learners predict the words and sentences and comprehend

the text. The written-text for beginning reader should look like more of the oral language. Last but not least is the whole-text level dimension, texts should have familiar topic, predictable content and different genres. Finally, the text illustrations, should be colorful, predictable, and widen children's imagination.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the teaching practice of reading in early grade especially at grade one level. To attain this purpose, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative study design.

3.1 Setting of the Study

There are a lot of government primary schools in Addis Ababa. Among these schools the researcher used purposeful sampling to select the setting of the study based on the years of establishment of the school and the experience of the teachers. Thus, the study was conducted in one of the oldest government primary schools in Addis known as Menelik II Primary School and most of the teachers in this school have more than 20 years of teaching experience.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were supposed to be 3 Grade One English teachers who are teaching at Menelik II government Primary School. However, one of the teachers left out due to her personal reason. Thus, the other 2 teachers were taken as participants of the study. One of them got a diploma and 20 years of working experience and the other is a TTI certificate graduate and got 32 years of working experience.

3.3 Sampling

An available sampling technique was used to conduct the study. Since there are only 3 Grade One English teachers at Menelik II government Primary School, the researcher were consider the 3 English teachers as sample.

However, one of teacher left out that, the researcher took the 2 Grade one English teachers as a sample.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

In order to conduct the study the researcher used three data collecting instruments-classroom observation, unstructured interview, and document analysis.

3.4.1 Classroom Observation

Observation is one of the data collecting tools that the researchers used to see the teaching practice of reading at the classroom. Thus, the researcher first used classroom observation using a checklist which was supported by someone who recorded the video as the same time. Recording was used to ensure the reliability of the data as well as to get first hand and complete information on the teaching methods and classroom instructional strategies of early-grade reading while the data were analyzed. In the first round observation, Teacher cod1 was observed 6 consecutive days while she was teaching different reading lessons. In each day of the observation the full lesson session of the class was observed and the checklist was filled. In the second round observation Teacher cod 2 was observed 6 consecutive days while teaching different reading lessons. Each day of the observation the full lesson session of the class was observed and the checklist was filled. In total the 2 Grade One English teachers were observed 12 consecutive sessions while they taught different reading lessons. The duration of the observation and the varieties of the lesson helped the researcher not to reach naïve conclusions about the methods and instructional strategies of reading.

3.4.2 Unstructured Interview

After the observation was conducted, the researcher used unstructured interview with the 2 observed teachers. The two teachers (Teacher cod 1 and Teacher cod 2) were interviewed to get their beliefs and their ideas about the methods, instructional strategies of teaching reading in early grade and as well as their beliefs about the English text book of grade one since our beliefs affects our practice. To have a clear understanding between the researcher and the teachers, each of the interview questions were translated into Amharic. Each teacher's interview was tape recorded so as to strengthen the reliability of the data and get the complete response of the teacher.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

Finally, the researcher used a document analysis of Grade one English text book to assess the methodology and content of the reading lessons. The researcher used checklist which was designed from the review of related literature. This checklist has two parts; the first part contains five items that indicate the methodology of the text book and the second part also contains five items that indicate the content dimensions of the text. The ration behind analyzing the text book was that methods and the contents of the text book can have a great influence on teachers regarding what methodology should they us.

3.5 Data Analysis

After carefully gathering the data using the three instruments of data collection, the data were qualitatively analyzed in an integrated manner. The data collected through observation were first categorized into themes based on the items in the observation checklist and replay the video record and took the specific examples, and then it was summarized, and discussed thoroughly.

Whereas, the data collected from the recorded interview were transcribed and the response were translated into English and then sorted out based on the points that in line with the question. Some of the responses were not in line with the question asked that the researcher had an appointment with the teacher again and interviewed them for the second round. Finally the data collected were edited, summarized, and discussed.

At last data collected from the text book using a check list which was designed from the review of related literature was analyzed based on each of the items in the checklist, then it was categorized, summarized and discussed qualitatively.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussions

Introduction

In this chapter the data collected using the instruments such as classroom observation, interview and text book analysis were categorized into themes, summarized, analyzed and presented. The results and discussions of the data were presented according to the data collection instrument. First the results and discussions of classroom observations were presented, and then the results and discussions of the interview were presented. Next, the results and the discussions of text book analysis were presented and finally, based on the results and discussions of the analyzed data findings were reported.

4.1 Back Ground Information of the Teachers

The data of the two grade one English Teachers' background information was summarized in Table 4.1. As the table shows their work experience, their qualification, whether they took training, workshop, or seminar relating to teaching children reading, and the duration of the attained training were presented below.

Table -4.1 Background Information of the Teachers.

	Teacher cod-01	Teacher cod-02
<i>Educational Level (qualifications)</i>	<i>T.T.I certificate</i>	<i>Diploma</i>
<i>College or Institute attended</i>	<i>Deberbrhan college of Teachers</i>	<i>Adama college</i>
<i>Years of work experience</i>	<i>32 years</i>	<i>20 years</i>
<i>Training, Workshop, Seminar, related to beginning reading taken currently</i>	<i>Yes, (training on how to use the new grade one text book)</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Length of the training</i>	<i>15 days</i>	<i>-</i>

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<i>Length of the training</i>	<i>15 days</i>	<i>-</i>

4.2 Classroom Observation Results and discussion

4.2.1 Approaches to Teaching Reading: The Phonics Method

In this section the data of classroom observation summarized in Table 4.2. . The two teachers were observed for six periods each against the seven indicators of phonics method. Then, results of each item were analyzed and discussed.

Table-4.2 Approaches to Teaching Reading: phonics Method

Item numbers		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
Observed Teacher cod O1	Lesson one	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson Two	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson three	Yes						
		No	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson four	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson Five	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson Six	Yes						
		No	√	√	√	√	√	√
Observed Teacher cod O2	Lesson one	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson two	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson three	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson four	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson five	Yes						
		No	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Lesson six	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√

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Table-4.2 Approaches to Teaching Reading: phonics Method

Item numbers		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
Observed Teacher cod O1	<i>Lesson one</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson Two</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson three</i>	Yes						
		No	√	√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson four</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson Five</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson Six</i>	Yes						
		No	√	√	√	√	√	√
Observed Teacher cod O2	<i>Lesson one</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson two</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson three</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson four</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson five</i>	Yes						
		No	√	√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Lesson six</i>	Yes	√					
		No		√	√	√	√	√

As seen in the above table (see item 1.1), it was observed that both teachers taught students the initial letters of the words as well as the upper and lower case of the letters. However, the teachers did not teach the sounds of the letters. They taught the letters' name. For instance, in the second observed lesson which is about the letter **'U'** and its sound **/a/** as read in the words **"umbrella," "under", "up"**. The first teacher taught students the letter's name **'u'** instead of its sound and let students read the whole words after her. After that she asked the students to tell her which letter the words begin with and every student called out the name of letter **'u'** instead of its sound. Likewise, in another lesson which is the letter **"P"** and its sound **/pe/** using words like **"pig", "pen", "pot", "pencil"**. The second teacher taught the name of the initial letter **p** instead its sound **/pe/**. Every student called out the name of the initial letter **p** and then read the whole word several times with the teacher. Data from the interview also indicates that there is a misconception about sounds and letters. The teachers considered the letter's name as the sounds of the letters. Pressly (2006:151) states that knowing letter names is not sufficient knowledge for learning to decode, however, learning to analyze a printed word into component sounds followed by blending of those sounds requires knowledge of the letters-sound association.

Item 1.2 was designed to see if the teachers use letter-sound relationship to teach new words. The classroom observation data shows that both teachers never used letter-sound relationship activities to teach new words. Instead they used repeated reading, picture cues and translating the words into Amharic. Similarly, data from the interview shows both teachers didn't use letter-sound relation to teach new words. They said that drawing pictures, translating the meaning into Amharic and repeated reading were the strategies they used to teach new word. Pressly (2006:129) states that the letters-sound association which is basic method of a systematic mapping between subcomponents of written and spoken words enables beginning readers to identify unknown words.

The purpose of Item 1.3 was planned to see whether the teachers provided activities of matching of individual sounds with the initial, middle or final sounds of word. The responses show that both teachers provide alliteration words to identify the initial sounds of the each word, however, rather than teaching the initial sounds of the words, the teachers taught the letter names. For example, the first teacher taught the initial letter name **y** as in **young**, **yoyo**, and **yellow** than identifying initial sound /**ye**/ of the alliteration words. In this regard, Yopp (1992:699) states sound matching activities such as initial, middle and final sounds of the given words are part of the phonics awareness instruction which positively affects students reading and writing achievements. In the teaching of phonemics awareness the children and the teachers should focus on the calling the phoneme (individual sound) rather than naming the letters.

Items 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6 aimed to identify whether teachers provide activities of segmenting, isolating, blending, identifying, or manipulation of phonemes (individual sound) in order to read a word. The classroom observations indicate that both teachers never used these kinds of activities. However, the teachers broke down the words into their individual letters. For instance, in the third classroom observation which is the teaching of letter **"y"** and the sound /**ye**/ using the words **"yellow"**, **"yoyo"**, and **"young"**; the first teacher let the students read the whole word (**yellow**) first for several times and named each letter (**y/e/l/l/o/w**) with the students repeatedly and then reread the whole word (**yellow**) again. Similarly, when the second teacher taught in the first lesson observation which is teaching of letter **"k"** and its sound /**ke**/ using the words like **"kangaroo"**, **"key"**, **"kite"** and **"kitten"**, she let students read the whole words several times and told them the meanings of the words in Amharic. Later she asked them to tell her the first letter name (**"k"**) in each order rather than identifying its sound (/ke/). These shows that both teachers did not teach students the individual sounds of the word which is important in teaching of reading in early years.

As seen in the above table (see item 1.1), it was observed that both teachers taught students the initial letters of the words as well as the upper and lower case of the letters. However, the teachers did not teach the sounds of the letters. They taught the letters' name. For instance, in the second observed lesson which is about the letter **'U'** and its sound **/a/** as read in the words **"umbrella," "under", "up"**. The first teacher taught students the letter's name **'u'** instead of its sound and let students read the whole words after her. After that she asked the students to tell her which letter the words begin with and every student called out the name of letter **'u'** instead of its sound. Likewise, in another lesson which is the letter **"P"** and its sound **/pe/** using words like **"pig", "pen", "pot", "pencil"**. The second teacher taught the name of the initial letter **p** instead its sound **/pe/**. Every student called out the name of the initial letter **p** and then read the whole word several times with the teacher. Data from the interview also indicates that there is a misconception about sounds and letters. The teachers considered the letter's name as the sounds of the letters. Pressly (2006:151) states that knowing letter names is not sufficient knowledge for learning to decode, however, learning to analyze a printed word into component sounds followed by blending of those sounds requires knowledge of the letters-sound association.

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On this issue Juel (1988:9) states that "phonemic awareness was an important preliminary skill in learning to read." Juel's study indicates that Children who did not learn to read were the ones who started school with low levels of phonemic awareness.

Concerning whether the teachers use some rhyme recognition, syllable break down, or onset-rime tasks, (see Item 1.7) the response on the above table shows that both teachers never used these kinds of tasks which develop student's phonological awareness. Nielson (1999:46) states that phonological awareness skills seem to be an excellent insurance that a child will learn, to read and spell. The correlation between phonemic awareness and reading progress is strong. Moreover, Opitz (2000:13-16) suggests some of that phonological awareness activates such as activities on identifying and producing rhyme and alliteration, songs, nursery rhymes, poems, and other forms of language plays that allow students to sense how language works.

4.2.2. Approaches to Teaching Reading: Whole-Language Method

In this section there are five items that indicate the whole language (look and say) method. The data of the two teachers observed six periods each were summarized and presented in Table 4.3. Each of them was observed against these indicators and the results of each item were analyzed and discussed below.

Table-4.3 Approaches to Teaching Reading: Whole Language Method

Item numbers			2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5
Observed Teacher cod O1	Lesson one	Yes	√	√	√	√	√
		No					
	Lesson Two	Yes	√		√	√	√
		No		√			
	Lesson three	Yes	√		√		√
		No		√		√	
	Lesson four	Yes	√	√		√	√
		No			√		
	Lesson Five	Yes	√		√	√	√
		No		√			
Lesson Six	Yes	√	√	√		√	
	No				√		
Observed Teacher cod O2	Lesson one	Yes	√		√	√	√
		No		√			
	Lesson two	Yes	√	√	√	√	√
		No					
	Lesson three	Yes	√	√			√
		No			√	√	
	Lesson four	Yes	√		√	√	√
		No		√			
	Lesson five	Yes	√		√	√	√
		No		√			
	Lesson six	Yes	√	√	√	√	√
		No					

Based on the data displayed in Table 4.3 (see item 2.1), it was observed that almost in all observed lessons the teachers let students to read the whole word repeatedly. For example, in lesson six a short passage entitled “where is Fayesa?”, the first teacher read the whole passage repeatedly with the students. Then, she allowed a model student to read the passage with little guidance and the whole class read the short sentences in the passage again and again after the student. Similarly, the second teacher also used this strategy while she taught the words in lesson four. She wrote the key words such as “**kangaroo**”, “**key**”, “**kite**” and “**kitten**” with their pictures on the blackboard; then, she read aloud each word without breaking it into its component. After that, she let students read the whole words with her several times. However, data from the interview shows that they taught words by breaking down into their sounds and by reading the words as a whole. This shows that there is a gap between what they said in the interview and what they did in the classroom. Literature indicates that this kind of strategy is commonly practiced in a whole language method. In connection with this, Pressley (2006:18) stated that the whole language instruction is more committed to teaching words and sentences wholly than breaking it into sounds and letters.

The purpose of item 2.2, in the observation check list was to see if the teachers read stories or short texts from the book or other books. Classroom observations show that both teachers used short passages from the students’ text book and read them to the students; so that students were exposed to print. For instance, the first teacher read two short stories entitled “**My teacher**” and “**Where is Fayesa?**”, and the second teacher read short passages entitled “**The box in the classroom?**” and “**Necho the donkey**”. On this point, Tunmer and Chapman (2002:52) state that “in the whole language method approach children are introduced to a wide range of environmental print which provides for learning about the graphic system through literature”. Moreover, Pressley (2006:34) states that “in the whole language method class

students told stories and talked about them and students learn more about literature”.

Item 2.3 in Table 4.3 focuses on if the teachers integrate the reading with the writing activity or not. Almost in all of the lessons both teachers let students read the words as a whole for several times and then, let them write the words. They told them how to write the key letters with the upper and lower case in the exercise book. Concerning this point, Elley (1994) in (Tunmer & Chapman (2000:77) states that “children should be introduced to writing instruction and, at the same time, they should receive reading instruction”. Likewise, Pressley (2006:35) states that “engagement in reading and writing is striking in the whole language classrooms compared to the skill based classroom. The students in the skill based classroom certainly did not seem to be interested in reading and writing”.

In item 2.4, whether the teachers emphasize the meaning of the word or not, in all of the lessons, both teachers drew picture of the word and translated the meaning of the word into Amharic. For example, in second session, teaching the letter “**u**” and the sound /**a**/ for the words “**umbrella**” and “**under**”, the first teacher drew a picture of umbrella, and a picture of a ball beneath the table. The second teacher also gave emphasis to the meaning of words by drawing pictures and translating them into Amharic. When she taught the short passage entitled “**Necho the donkey**”, she read the text and translates the story into Amharic rather than drawing picture.

Liberman and Liberman (1992:5) argue that the whole language program emphasizes meaning construction since reading is natural and the purpose of the language is communication of meaning. Making meaning is not the mechanics of reading words in isolation to translating written words in to sounds rather immersed children in a print-rich environment which focuses on the meaning of prints through sentence contexts and picture cues as a primary

strategy for recognizing words from the text. In the same manner, Nicholson (2002:28) explains that “whole language teacher believe that if the children are taught to read for the meaning they will quickly learn for themselves how to recognize words”.

Item 2.5, As indicated in Table 4.3 above, most of the time both teachers draw picture and read it aloud for several times and translated into Amharic. For instance, in the fifth lesson, the teacher used the picture of the new word **/yo-yo/**, wrote the word beside the picture and let the students read it aloud with her again and again. Moreover, the second teacher taught the new words from the short text “**Necho the donkey**”. In this text there are new words like “**strange**”, and “**garei**” etc. Even though the teacher misinterpreted **strange** as *strong* and **garei** as *agree*; she translated both into Amharic. She also tried to explain the meaning of the sentences.

Routman (1991 in Pressley 1998:23) lists some of strategies taught in whole language program when children come to difficult word these are “skip the difficult word, read on , then go back ; re-read from the beginning of the sentence ; substitute a word that make sense ; look for a known chunk of the word ; and look for a picture clues”.

4.3 Basic Instructions of Teaching Early Grade Reading

There are five items that indicate the basic reading instruction set by the National Reading Panel. The data of the two teachers were observed six sessions each and summarized and presented in table 4.4. Each of them was observed against with the five basic reading instructions. The results of each item were analyzed and discussed below.

Table-4.4 Basic Instructions of Teaching Early Grade Reading

Item numbers			3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5
Observed Teacher cod 01	Lesson one	Yes				√	√
		No	√	√	√		
	Lesson Two	Yes				√	√
		No	√	√	√		
	Lesson three	Yes				√	√
		No	√	√	√		
	Lesson four	Yes					√
		No	√	√	√	√	
	Lesson Five	Yes				√	
		No	√	√	√		√
	Lesson Six	Yes				√	√
		No	√	√	√		
Observed Teacher cod 02	Lesson one	Yes					√
		No	√	√	√	√	
	Lesson two	Yes		√	√	√	√
		No	√				
	Lesson three	Yes				√	√
		No	√	√	√		
	Lesson four	Yes					√
		No	√	√	√	√	
	Lesson five	Yes				√	
		No	√	√	√		√
	Lesson six	Yes			√	√	√
		No	√	√			

Item 3.1 was designed to identify whether the teachers teach phonemic awareness through activities of blending, isolating, segmenting, identifying and manipulation of phoneme (individual sound) the classroom observations

results show that both teachers never used activities that develop students' phonemic awareness. Literature gives a great emphasis on the teaching phonemic awareness in early grades. It has significant benefits to students in order to decode written texts. Pressely (2006:114) states that "lack in phonemic awareness can weaken learning to decode, which undermines reading as a wide range of materials and comprehending what is read". Thus there is a need to provide phonemic awareness instruction to kindergarten and grade one children in order to develop their reading ability.

In item 3.2 (see table 4.4) checked whether teachers used phonics instruction or not, based on the classroom observations both teachers didn't provide activities that develop the relationships between letters and sounds in their lessons. However both of the teachers tried to teach the names of the initial letters of the words and taught how to write these initial letters (formation of letters). For instance, the first teacher drew a line on the board and showed the students how to write the letter "U". (by tracing and saying "down, round, up, down".) Similarly, Data from the interview also indicates that there is a misconception about sounds and letters. The teachers considered the letters name as the sounds of the letters. Literature indicates that phonics instruction is very important to teach students reading. The National Institute of Literacy (2001:12) states that Phonics instruction helps children learn and use alphabetic principle-the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds.

Item 2.3, relating to fluency instruction (see in Table 4.4), the classroom observation results show that almost in the entire observed lessons both teachers used reading aloud and repeated reading .However students could not read accurately. This is perhaps because the repeated reading and the reading aloud strategies were not implemented with the activities that develop the skills rather it is rote memorization. For example, in lesson four and six which are short passages about "*where is Feyisssa?*" and "*My Teacher*", the first

teacher read aloud the text to the students and then let them read it several times without teaching them how to group words and how they could read the text with its expressions. Similarly, the second teacher also used reading aloud and repeated reading while she was teaching the letter "**P**" using words like **"pig"**, **"pen"**, **"pot"**, and **"pencil"**. Fluency cannot develop in the classroom merely repeated reading rather needs teachers' feedback. Teachers can explicitly teach where and how they are pausing and how the text shows them when to raise or lower their voice while they are reading. (Pressely et. al, 2003:153).

In item 2.4, (i.e., oral vocabulary) both teachers taught the new words indirectly using picture cue and directly translating to Amharic. For instance, the first teacher drew a picture of **"yoyo"** and wrote the word under it. After reading the whole word several times with the students, she translated the word-**"yoyo"** into Amharic. Again in teaching the short text about **"where is Feyisssa"**, the teacher read aloud the passage repeatedly and discussed the specific words in the passage (**in, on, and under**) with the students. She then translated it into Amharic and reread it several times with the students. According to National Institute of Literacy (2000:29) there is a direct and indirect instruction of vocabulary teaching instruction (It is stated in chapter two page 22. Moreover, as Scanlon and et al. (2010:205-207) states different reading strategies children use to identify new words. (see chapter 2page 21)

item 2.5, was concerned to identify whether the teachers develop students understanding of the text or word, the observed periods indicate that both teachers developing students understanding of the text through repeating oral questions, read aloud, using picture cues, using real objects and translating into Amharic. For instance, while the second teacher taught a short passage entitled **"The boxes in the classroom"**, she first read the passage aloud to the student; then she read the passage repeatedly with the student. After she called one model students to read the passage aloud, she tried to draw picture

of the words in the passage like a picture of the box. Next she tried to teach the words that show colors (**red, green, yellow**) using real objects like color papers, clothes. She also translated into Amharic some words like **near, under, in, on** and asked them oral questions to check comprehension. Finally she read the passages several times with the whole class. In this point, Scanlon and et al. (2010:208) states that engage children in meaning construction by engaging them in conversations about the texts they read or heard, and, in the context of these conversations, teachers modeled some of the most commonly taught comprehension strategies. Teachers can also use prompt questions and structure their conversations with students during read aloud and shared and supported reading.

4.4. Instructional Strategies of Reading (Typical Reading Experiences)

Table 4.5 below summarizes instructional strategies of reading. The two teachers were observed six sessions of each. Each of them was observed against these indicators and the results of each item were analyzed and discussed bellow.

Table 4.5 Instructional Reading Strategies (Typical Reading Experiences)

Item numbers		1.1	1.2	1.3
Observed Teacher cod O1	<i>Lesson one</i>	Yes	√	
		No		√
	<i>Lesson Two</i>	Yes		
		No	√	√
	<i>Lesson three</i>	Yes		
		No	√	√
	<i>Lesson four</i>	Yes	√	
		No		√
	<i>Lesson Five</i>	Yes		
		No	√	√
	<i>Lesson Six</i>	Yes	√	
		No		√
Observed Teacher cod O2	<i>Lesson one</i>	Yes		
		No	√	√
	<i>Lesson two</i>	Yes		√
		No		√
	<i>Lesson three</i>	Yes	√	
		No		√
	<i>Lesson four</i>	Yes	√	
		No		√
	<i>Lesson five</i>	Yes	√	
		No		√
	<i>Lesson six</i>	Yes		
		No	√	√

In item 3.1 (see the above Table 4.5) was needed to see whether the teachers used reading aloud strategy while they were teaching reading. The observations

show that almost in all the lessons, both teachers used reading aloud strategy and choral reading while they were teaching words and short passages from the text. For example, the first teacher used reading aloud while she was teaching the short passage entitled **"My teacher"**. She read the whole passage to the students repeatedly first and read it with the whole class later on. Likewise, the second teacher also used reading aloud while she was teaching a short passage entitled **"The box in the classroom"**. She first read the whole passage to the class repeatedly and the students looked and listened carefully. Then she read the whole passage with the whole class. Even when she taught words, she first read the whole words aloud several times and read it with the students later on. Concerning this Maharaja, (2007:26) states that reading-aloud provides students with new vocabulary. It exposes them to a variety of literature and contributes to their oral and written language development. Reading aloud also provides a chance for students to be familiar with complex language structures. It also helps to develop fluency and comprehension strategies by modeling the teacher (Ministry of Education of Ontario, 2003:18).

Item 3.2 was designed to find out whether or not the teachers use shared reading strategy while they taught reading. The observations indicate that both teachers did not use almost the entire observed sessions. For instance, in session six **"where is Feyissa?"** the first teacher read the passage aloud first and let students read the passage with her repeatedly and, then she allowed a student to stand up and read the text aloud. Then asked the whole class to read with the student. The second teacher also taught the short passage entitled **"Necho the donkey"**. She first read the text to the student and then read the text with the class and translated the story into Amharic. She read the text again and again. Before she allowed one students to come out to the front and read the passage aloud. Both teachers did not do activities like discussing the title and the blurb of the text with the students. They did not also ask question that help students to walk through the text and pictures. They did not and making prediction about what they were going to read. Concerning this

point, Maharaja (2007:19-22) explains that in a shared reading lesson, learners share the reading task with the teacher, and gradually take over the task of reading. Teachers also encourage guessing and risk-taking, picture walks; making predictions; brainstorming; posing questions, retelling the story orally and accepting all attempts from learners and using their responses to promote further learning. This reading also exposes all learners to a range of reading strategies that they can use independently in the future (Ministry of Education of Ontario, 2003:19).

In item 3.3, if the teachers used guided reading with small group of students or not, the result showed that both teachers almost did not use this strategy. However, literature indicates that guided reading is important in providing opportunities to integrate learner's growing knowledge of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationships and other foundational skills in context through modeling instruction (Maharaja, 2007: 25). It also enables teachers to extend the learner's vocabulary development and knowledge and use of comprehension strategies (Ministry of Education of Ontario, 2003:20).

4.5. Results and Discussions of Interview

The beliefs of teachers in early grade reading were collected through interview. The interview was conducted with the two observed teachers and it has two parts. The first part of the interview is beliefs of the teachers regarding with the methods and instructional strategies of teaching early grade reading and the second part of the interview is beliefs of the teachers about the text book summarized below.

I) Beliefs of Teachers in Teaching Reading Early Grade

Data of the two observed teachers' beliefs about teaching early grade reading were collected through the unstructured interview. The interview consists of questions on their early experience of learning reading, beliefs about the

methods and instructional strategies of early grade reading and finally beliefs about the grade one text book. This interview was conducted in order to obtain information about teachers' awareness of teaching reading in early grades.

Q.1. Do you remember how you learned reading English at school? And how does this affect your present teaching?

Teacher-cod 01: When I was a student I started learning English from grade three. At that time we started identifying the letters- A, B, C at grade one and two ..., then we began reading words at grade three and real reading passages began at grade four. The way learned reading when I was a child doesn't affect my present teaching reading. The systems of teaching in our days were quite different from the current days of teaching.

Teacher-cod 02: When I was a kid we started reading at grade three. We began with the A, B, C counting the letter orally... then we started writing and naming letters and read short words at the middle of grade three. I remember real reading of sentences and short paragraph started at grade five. We memorize the short passages and read it orally I remembered memorizing and presenting a conversation from the book orally in front of the class. At that time the teaching method was good and students were working hard. I have good base and this helps me a lot. But there is no influence in the present day of my teaching.

The above response shows that both teachers had the same kind of experience in learning reading. Some people had one or two model teachers when they were kids at school and they may try to follow their footsteps after they become teachers this might affect the current practice of teaching methods. However, the teachers' responses show that their previous learning experience of reading doesn't affect the current teaching.

Teacher-cod 01: Well, when there is a passage, first, I write it on the blackboard and read it aloud; at this time students open their book and follow me. Sometime, I group them in a small group to read and make them to compete with one another. Of course, not all students can read.

Teacher-cod 02: ... Most of the time I write short passage taken from the book on the black board first, then I read it to them. After hearing what I read, they read it with me together. Sometimes I put the students in small groups of five and let each group read the short passages with me. Finally, I call a model student to read the short passage alone and then call others to read the passage. If they make some mistake, I will correct them. This method helps students be independent readers and build self confidence. They think that they are able to read even though there is some stumbles while they read...

The above responses show that both teachers use reading aloud strategy, but not shared and guided reading. The data from classroom practice also indicates that both teachers apply reading aloud strategy and coral reading. In this regard literature shows there are different instructional strategies of reading such as reading aloud, shared reading and guided reading. (Ministry of Education of Ontario, 2003:17-20).

Q.7. How would you describe your method of teaching reading in grade one? And do you think it enables the students to read? Why?

Teacher-cod 01: It is a student-centered method, I mean participating them in naming the letters then in reading the words. Yes, it will enable them. If they knew how to blend letters, then they will read words.

Teacher-cod 02: As I said it before, first I teach them the 26 letters. I give the cod for instance letter "A" is 1, letter "B" is 2, letter "C" is 3 etc. Then, I ask them which letter is number 26 and they answer letter "z". After asking

of follow up and support), lack of students' motivation and effort to learn etc.

Both teachers said that there is a challenge related to parental problems, student related problems and socio economic influence. These are the factors related to factors that affect reading instructions. There are also teacher factors related with the methodology. Regarding this issue, Julian Darkin (1969:118) referring to Morris's findings, says that the cause of most failures lies with the teacher. Schools which have the same kinds of children and use the same material get different results. Morris's scales which assess the teaching shows that in nearly every case where the results are bad, the teaching is also bad.

III) Teachers belief about the Text Book

Q.1. Do you think a teacher's manual is helpful, self-explanatory and allows you to use different methods of teaching reading?

Teacher-cod 01: We have one teacher guide for the three of us; there is shortage of the manuals. Most of the time I use the teachers' guide to limit the content of the day lesson. The teachers' manual is very important that guides you how to teach students, but it is difficult to understand. Even though the manual is difficult to use it gives as a room to incorporate our own methods. I use it sometimes when I want to plan.

Teacher-cod 02: The teacher guide is not given to each teacher. There is one guide for the three of us. The teacher guide is good; it gives idea on how to teach the lesson. However, it doesn't describe each and every thing the teachers do to teach the lesson. I sometime see it. Every activity in the lesson is not prescribed in the teachers' guide. The teachers guide gives you a general idea on how you can teach the lesson. So, what I just do is getting an idea from the guide and do it in my own way.

The above replies show that both teachers did not use the teacher guide frequently. They said that the teacher guide is no self explanatory and that teachers use their own idea and methods to teach. Their responses matched with what they do in the classroom. The lesson in the classroom did not match with what the teachers guide says.

Q.2. Do you think the presentation of the lessons and pictures attract children?

Teacher-cod 01: Yes, the pictures in the book are good and colorful but the book starts with words which are difficult to the students. The objective does not go with the students; most of the students don't know well. So it is just overloading children.

Teacher-cod 02: The new text book is quite different than the previous text book that had been taught for many years. The new text book has only pictures and words and some short passages. The pictures in the text are good. They increase students understanding. They are also colorful. However, it doesn't present a clear lesson. For example, the pervious text book presents the lesson clearly. After reading the passage, it shows how the verbs like "is", "are", "am" go with the pronouns "he", "she", "they". In general the presentation of the lesson is difficult to understand.

Both teachers said that the pictures in the book are colorful and attract students. However, they complain that it is crammed with pictures and words and little passages with no clear objective. Of course the text book should present pictures which are predictable and attractive to the students. According to, related literature there is significant evidence to show that both reading accuracy and reading comprehension of children can be affected by illustrations in a text. It shows that reader, text, and task are influential (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). With regard to the reader, level of reading skill is one important factor. Poor readers' performance in reading is increased when there is illustration in the text (Hoffman & Schallert, 2004:14).

Q.3. Do you think the contents/topics of the text familiar to the children?

Teacher-cod 01: Yes, most of the topics and the words in the text are familiar to the students. Most of them are related to the school environment.

Teacher-cod 02: Yes, the contents or topics in the textbook such as the words and the short passages are familiar to the students. Of course there are some words which are new and difficult to the students even for the teacher. In this case, I look up in the dictionary or ask one of the teachers. However, the content of the book is very small; there are no enough words in the text.

The above responses show that both teachers believe that the topics, the words and the content of passages are familiar to the students. Their interview responses match with the data from the book analysis. Concerning this issue, Hoffman & Schallert (2004:11) say that:

Lack of relevant background knowledge, failure to understand key assumptions of the area, lack of familiarity with the vocabulary and concepts employed, and other factors make it very difficult for [teachers] to comprehend and in some cases even decode the text.

Q.4. Do you think the words in the text are easily decodable (knowledge of letter-sound-relation)?

Teacher-cod 01: The words are easy to read. There are words with two letters, three letters or four later words but sometimes there are difficult words even for teachers.

Teacher-cod 02: Some of the words are easy for the student. They can read them. Some earlier students specially those who are younger or who come

from private KG schools can understand the words quickly and know them without a great effort. Those who come from country side or from government KG classes find it difficult to read.

According to the above responses of teachers, most of words in the grade one text books are easily decodable, but there are also some factors that affect students' reading abilities. Their back ground knowledge and their ages are the teachers mentioned in their interview. But the data from the classroom observation indicates that teachers did not apply decodable strategies while they were teaching in the class. This shows that both teachers do not have a clear understanding about decoding words. Research on the nature of sound-letter relationships in English reveals that some relationships or patterns are quite common, others are far less (Venezky, 1999:23). The term *decodability* is commonly used to refer to the extent to which readers can decode a text based on their knowledge of sound-letter relationships (Hoffman & Schallert (2004:8).

Q.5. Do you think the pictures and the words in the text are predictable?

Teacher-cod 01: Yes most of the words have pictures so that the students can predict what comes in the passage and predict the meanings of the words.

Teacher-cod 02: Yes, most of the words in the text book are familiar to the students and the pictures that accompany those words make easy to predict their meanings. The contents and the topics of the short passages are also familiar to the students. However, some of the words and the passages are difficult that I can translate it into Amharic.

From the above responses, both teachers believe that words and pictures in the text books are predictable; however, in the classroom they only use pictures to guess the meanings of the words. They did not use the picture cues to develop students' comprehension for the short passages. They also didn't

use the letters patterns to predict the unknown word. Smith (1978) in Hoffman & Schallert (2004:9) states that predictability at the sentences level as well as word and letters level is very important.

Q.6. Do you think most of the words in the text book are high frequency words?

Teacher-cod 01: Yes, there are high frequency words. You can get one word in different activities. Most of the words are repeated.

Teacher-cod 02: Yes, most of the words in the text book are high frequency words.

The responses indicate that both teachers believe that the text book contains high frequency words since the words are found frequently. One way of teaching students vocabulary is by teaching them the high frequency words and most of the time high frequency words are function words. Research shows that in a text some words appear more frequently than others. Some words appear in a high frequency that they cover a large portion in a text and beginning readers encounter them so often while they read. The presence of so many high-frequency words in text will increase children's ability to read (Thogmartin, 1997:76-77).

4.6 Text Book Analysis

In this section the book analysis was made based on the checklist which is made from the review literature. This checklist has two parts; the first part contains five items that indicate the methodology of the text book; the second part also contains five items that indicate the content dimensions of the text book which were summarized in table 4.5. Based on these items in the table text was analyzed and the results were presented and discussed bellow.

Table 4.6 Results of text book analysis

	Item no.	Text book analysis points	Yes	No
Methodology of the text book	4.4.1	Does the text book provide activities on letters and sounds identification?	√	
	4.4.2	Does the text book allow activities that help students develop phonemic awareness?		√
	4.4.3	Does the text book provide activities that students read the whole word first and then break down into its components (letters and sounds)?		√
	4.4.4	Does the text book focus on meanings and repeatedly saying the whole word?		√
	4.4.5	Does the text book provide the different instructional reading strategies?	√	
	4.4.6	Are the words in the text book decodable easily (not more than 4 or 5 letter words)?	√	
Dimensions of the text	4.4.7	Are the words in the text book high frequency words?		√
	4.4.8	Are the short passages in the text book predictable and familiar to students?	√	
	4.4.9	Are the sentences in the text book predictable and variety of writtenness?	√	
	4.4.10	Are the pictures attractive and explanatory?	√	

Concerning (see item 4.4.1 in the table) whether or not most of the activities are built around letter and sound identification. Even though there is a listening and reading section under each unit, the focus is letters and sounds identification. Starting from unit one to unit eight the reading lesson focuses on the letter name and identification of the 26 letters. Then, unit nine to unit fourteen focuses on the sounds of the letters. Even though the letters and the sounds are presented separately and there is no teaching of phonemic

awareness. The books follow a phonics method. Concerning this, National Institute of Literacy (2001:12) explain this phonics instruction helps children learn and use alphabetic principle-the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds.

Regarding 4.4.2, whether the text book provides phonemic awareness activity, all the activities in the text book do not develop phonemic awareness activity such as matching, blending, identifying, isolating and manipulation of phonemes. However, teaching phonemic awareness is very important for children to distinguish the individual sound and read rapidly and automatically. The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005; 10) states this point clearly (see chapter 2, page.13).

In item 4.4.3 which is whether the text encourages students to read words as a whole, even though there is whole word reading in the speaking section of each lesson, there are no activities in the reading section of the text that expect students to read the words as a whole. From unit 1 to unit 8 it focuses on identifying the 26 letters and from unit 9 to unit13, the focus is on teaching sounds of the letters. For example, the activity in unit 4 lesson 8 showed letter matching activities. Moreover, the activity in unit 12, lesson 5 showed game of the odd one out sound game of the sound /ge/. Another activity like producing words with the sound /ge/ and other activity of clapping hands whenever they hear a word begins with the sound /ge/ while the teachers read aloud for students. This indicates that the text book follows the phonics method even if it is not totally phonics book. Regarding this, Maharaja, (2007:13) states that phonics instruction is a central building block for making and understanding meaning in the teaching of reading and Knowledge of phonics will help children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically and decode knew words.

Concerning item 4.4.4, whether the text book focuses on meaning and reading the word repeatedly, the activities in the text book show that the focus of the book is not reading the words as a whole even though there is a repetitive

reading aloud in speaking and listening activities. Knowing the meaning is important in learning words so as to understand the text. However, the main focus is reading the words by identifying letters and sounds. Ehri (2004: 167) states that phonics is a method of teaching in which children learn to connect letters in written language and phonemes in spoken language. It helps how to apply these relations to read and spell words.

In item 4.4.5, whether the text encourages using the different instructional strategies, the activities in the text show that there are short passages prepared to use the reading instructional strategies such as reading aloud, choral reading and shared reading for instance the short story in unit six page 91 entitled "the goat" should be read aloud by the teachers. According to Opitz (2000:14) the activity of reading aloud should emphasize language features such as rhyme, alliteration etc. Reading aloud also provides a chance for students to be familiar with complex language structures. It also helps to develop fluency and comprehension strategies by modeling the teacher

Concerning item 4.4.6, whether the words in the text are decodable or not, most of words in the book are decodable. These words are designed based on the knowledge of letter-sound relationships so that students can decode them easily. Most of the words are also constituted of not more than four or five letters. For example: words in unit nine, lesson nine- **leg, log, line, light**, and words in unit eleven lesson eight- **jug, job, jar, jump**. On this point literature discusses that the decodability of words in texts used with beginning readers may impact the kinds of word identification strategies those readers use in that and future reading (Juel, 1988: 8). Moreover, Hoffman & Schallert (2004: 8) state texts for beginning readers need to be written specifically to be highly decodable by a small set of sound-letter patterns, and then to increase the number of patterns as the reader increases in pattern knowledge.

Regarding the item 4.4.7, whether the words in the text are high frequency words, almost none of the words in the text are high frequency words. Most of

the words in the text are high content words. However, high frequency words are very important in teaching children vocabulary and reading. The extent to which texts with high frequency are helpful for beginning readers, and for which beginning readers, is an important area for consideration, as are relationships among the proportion of high-frequency words in texts in general and beginning readers' success in reading and learning to read (Hoffman & Schallert (2004: 6,7)).

In item 4.4.8 whether the text in the book are predictable, familiar to students, and contain different genres, most of the words and short passages in the text book are familiar to the student so that students can predict them easily and the short stories in the text book present different genres. For example words in unit 1 are name of things found in the classroom, unit 2, are name of the body parts, unit 7 are names of family members, unit 9 are names of shapes etc. most of the short texts in the book are also presented in different genres. For instance the short texts in unit 11 entitled "My Teacher", "People and Object We Find at the School", and "Where is Feyessia?" are informative texts whereas there are short texts in unit 10 entitled "Mother rat and her nest", and in unit 13 entitled "Necho the Donkey", "The Farmer and the Garden" are story texts. The familiarity of the text topics/contents and the readers experience vary greatly. The most direct means of matching text to reader along dimensions of familiarity are found in language experience approaches (Lee & Van Allen, 1963; cited in Hoffman & Schallert, 2004:11)

Concerning item 4.4.9, if the sentences in the text are predictable and contain Variety of written-ness or not, the short texts in the book have a variety of written-ness such as in the narrative form like short texts in unit 10 entitled "Mother rat and her nest", and in unit 13 entitled "Necho the Donkey", "The Farmer and the Garden". There are also texts in the book written in spoken form such as the short texts entitled "My Teacher", "People and Object We Find at the School", and "Where is Feyessia?"

The sentences and words in these texts are repetitive that students can easily predict the coming sentences and words. For instance, the text "Mother rat and her nest":

"What is that? It's a tall blue hat.

I will make my round nest in that hat.

Now the rat's nest is in the hat" (Page, 59)

In this extract the underlined words – "that" and "rat" are repeatedly written that student can easily predict and read this words. Moreover, in the short text "Where is Feyessia?"

"Is he under the tree?

Is he near the house?

Is he under the table?

Is he on the donkey?

Is he in the big box?" (Page, 64)

In this extract there are also repeatedly written question format that students can easily predict how the next sentences be read orally. Predictability of the text supports the beginning reader's ability to actually read the text. This kind of text allows children to read fluently, freeing up their attention such as decoding of each word based solely or largely on graph phonics cues for learning of other kinds (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Smith, 1973; cited in Hoffman & Schallert, 2004:11)

Regarding item 4.4.10 whether the pictures in the text are attractive, explanatory or not, the pictures in the text book are not as such attractive and explanatory. Pictures in children text book should be large, colorful, and self-explanatory one. pictures themselves clearly tell the story in a sequence without the words or few words sentences beneath them. With regard to this Hoffman & Schallert (2004:14) states that illustrations are more likely to be

facilitative when the text is quite difficult and great varieties and ranges of illustration in a text facilitate and widen children's reading performance. Some texts are wordless that children get the meaning of the text from the illustrations.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Summary

The complaints from parents and upper grade teachers about the failure of students' reading ability from time to time, the Ethiopian early grade reading assessment research report that shows almost all of the students are unable to read a word in their irrespective mother tongue, and the day-to-day observation and experience in teaching early grades inspired the researcher to conduct an exploratory study on how the teaching and learning process of early grade-reading takes place especially at grade one level which is the foundation stage of learning to read. Thus, in order to conduct the research set the following specific objectives:

- *Explore teachers' belief about the methods, instructional strategies and the text book.*
- *Explore the methods, instructional strategies and classroom practices of teaching reading at grade one.*
- *Analyze the method and the content of grade one English text book.*

In order to achieve these specific objectives three data gathering instruments were used namely classroom observations, interviews and text book analysis. Then, the data obtained through these instruments were analyzed, presented, and discussed. Finally, findings were made and then the overall conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study were presented in the following subsections.

5.2. Conclusions

The main conclusion based on the findings of the study revealed that

- Teachers used whole language method;
- Most of the basic instructional methods were not used;
- Teachers were not aware of early reading methods, and they believe that the text book is not suitable to grade one students.
- The text book provides activities of phonics, but no phonemic awareness and phonological awareness. Moreover, the topics and pictures of the text are familiar and predictable for the students.

The following specific conclusions were also made:

5.2.1. Regarding the teaching methods of the teacher, the data from the twelve sessions of (six session for each teacher) classroom observation show that the teachers used the whole language (look and say) method. Moreover, the 'phonic' method as well as phonemic awareness instruction which is an important element of word recognition skill and decoding new words has not been given due attention.

5.2.2. Concerning to the teaching instructional methods, the instruction strategies of oral fluency was not given much concern even though there is a repeated reading; the students were not able to read accurately. The instruction rather lends itself to rote memorization. Instruction of vocabulary and teaching new words were translation into Amharic and picture cue; rather than breaking the words into smaller parts, sounds and letters. Instruction of comprehension was translating in to Amharic; picture cues, oral questions, repeated reading and using real objects, but not teaching comprehension strategies.

5.2.3. Concerning the reading instructional strategies, reading aloud and choral reading were the main instructional strategies however there is no much evidence that shows shared reading and guided reading has been observed.

5.2.4. Regarding the beliefs of the teachers, shows that there is misconception with the teachers about letter name and sounds of letters as well as the different methods of teaching early grade reading. Moreover, teachers lack preparation; and they did not use teacher's manual before entering the class. Concerning to the text book, they belief that the text book is not appropriate for the students and didn't help students to develop their reading skill.

5.2.5. The findings from the text book analysis shows that, the text book follows phonics method however there is no phonemic awareness activities. Regarding the content of the text book, its topic is familiar, decodable and predictable to students.

5.3. Recommendations

In line with the conclusions and the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

5.3.1. Training should be given for early grade teachers related to the methodologies and instructional strategies of early grade reading and how to implement in the classroom. Practical Trainings on phonics and phonological as well as phonemic awareness should also be given for teachers.

5.3.2. There should be a balance between Code emphasis' techniques of the phonic method and the 'meaning emphasis' of the look-and-say or the whole-word techniques so that one method compensates the weakness of other.

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Appendix-A:

Observation Checklist

This is an observation checklist that is designed to explore the methods, classroom procedures and the practices of the teachers in teaching early grade-reading especially grade one at Menelilk government primary school.

Date _____ time _____

Topic of the lesson: _____

Observed Class: Grade _____ Section _____

Teachers Cod: _____ No of Observation _____

1.1 Approach to Teaching Reading: Phonics Method

Item No	Observed activities	Yes	No
1.1.1	Does the teacher provide the alphabetic principles? (Identifying the upper and the lower case and identifying each letters each its corresponding sounds.)		
1.1.2	Does the teacher lead students to recognize new words through letter and sound relationships?		
1.1.3	Does the teacher provide some phoneme matching tasks? (Alliteration and generating words that have a given sound beginning, middle, or end.)		
1.1.4	Does the teacher provide some phoneme segmentation tasks? (Isolating sounds in a word- hearing and counting or producing sounds etc.)		
1.1.5	Does the teacher provide some phoneme blending tasks? (Putting sounds together to form a word.)		
1.1.6	Does the teacher provide some phoneme manipulation tasks? (Substituting, adding, or deleting sounds to create new words.)		
1.1.7	Does the teacher provide some rhyme recognition, syllable break down or onset-rime tasks?		

1.2 Approach to Teaching Reading: Whole Language Method

Item no	Observed activities	Yes	No
2.1	Does the teacher call out the students and repeat the whole words or sentences in a 'chunk' after him or her?		
2.2	Does the teacher read stories or short texts from the text or outside so that students exposed to prints?		
2.3	Does the teacher provide activities that emphasis integrating reading and writing simultaneously? (read and write activity)		
2.4	Does the teacher provide activities that emphasis meaning construction?		
2.5	Does the teacher provide sentences context or picture cues for the students to identify new words?		

2) Basic Instructions of Teaching Early Grade Reading

Items	Observed activities	Yes	No
2.1	Does the teacher develop students' phonemic awareness? (Isolation, segmentation, identification, blending, and manipulations of sounds etc.)		
2.2	Does the teacher provide word recognition tasks? (Develop graphemes and phonemes relations.		
2.3	Does the teacher develop students' reading fluency?(read aloud repeatedly)		
2.4	Does the teacher develop students' Oral vocabulary?(listen to adults read them or taught both individual words or word-learning strategies),		
2.5	Does the teacher develop students' text understanding?(asking oral question or use graphic organizers)		

3) Typical Reading Experiences (Instructional Strategies)

<i>Item No</i>	Observed activities	Yes	No
3.1	Does the teacher read-aloud a text for the students from the text book or a book which is to the level of the student?		
3.2	Does the teacher read a text out loud with the students from the text book or a book which is to the level of the student and dose student model the teacher how she/he thinks about the text?		
3.3	Does the teacher provide a text from the text book or a book which is to the level of the student to be read-aloud by students in small guided reading groups, with the teacher offering support as necessary?		

3. How do you teach new words to your student? (Relating sound with letter, look and say, giving picture or other cues)
4. How can you help students to recognize words quickly, accurately, automatically (fluency)?
5. How can you improve students' understanding (comprehension) and of words or texts read to them?
6. Which instructional strategy do you apply to teach students reading? And how are they important? (Reading-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, choral reading or all of them)
7. How would you describe your method of teaching reading in grade one? And do you think it enable the students to read? Why?
8. What preparation do you do before you get in to a class?
9. What difficult situations do you face when you teach students reading?

III) Teachers Opinions about the Text Book

1. Do you think a teacher's manual is it helpful, self-explanatory and allow you to use different methods of teaching reading?
2. Do you think the presentation of the lessons and pictures attract children?
3. Do you think the contents/topics of the text familiar to the children?
4. Do you think the words in the text are easily decodable (knowledge of letter-sound relation)?
5. Do you think the pictures and the words in the text are predictable?
6. Do you think most of the words in the text book are high frequency words?

Appendix-C:

Text Book Analysis Checklist

This is text book analysis checklist that is designed to assess the methods and content of the grade one text book.

	Item no.	<i>Text book analysis points</i>	Yes	No
	Methodology of the text book	4.4.1	Does the text book provide activities on letters and sounds identification?	
4.4.2		Does the text book allow activities that help students develop phonemic awareness?		
4.4.3		Does the text book provide activities that students read the whole word first and then break down into its components (letters and sounds)?		
4.4.4		Dose the text book focuses on meanings and repeatedly saying the whole word?		
4.4.5		Does the text book proved the different instructional reading strategies?		
Dimensions of the text		4.4.6	Are the words in the text book decodable easily (not more 4or 5 letter words)?	
	4.4.7	Are the words in the text high frequency words?		
	4.4.8	Are the short passages in the text book predictable, familiar to students, and contain different genres?		
	4.4.9	Are the sentences in the text book predictable and variety of written-ness?		
	4.4.10	Are the pictures attractive, explanatory?		

Declaration

I, the undersigned graduate student, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, and that all sources of the materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Sebele Alemu

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'SA', written over a horizontal line.