



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

**ENGLISH READING DIFFICULTIES AMONG GRADE SIX STUDENTS
IN ADDIS ABABA: YEKA SUB CITY**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	I
Abstract	IV
CHAPTER ONE	1
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Objective of the Study	4
1.3.1 General Objective	4
1.3.2 Specific Objectives	4
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Delimitation of the Study	5
1.6. Significance of the Study	5
1.7. Limitations of the study	5
1.8. Operational definition	6
CHAPTER TWO	7
2. Literature Review	7
2.1 Introduction	7
CHAPTER THREE	15
3. Method	15
3.1 Research Design	15
3.2 Study Area	15
3.3 Research Participants	15
3.3.1 Description of Study population	15
3.4 Sample Procedure	16
3.5. Data Collection Instrument	16
3.6 Data Collection Procedure	16
3.7. Data Analysis	17
3.8 Ethical Consideration	17
3.8.1 Honesty of the Work	18
3.8.2 Informed Consent	18

3.8.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality	19
CHAPTER FOUR.....	20
4. Data Analysis and Presentation	20
4.1 Introduction.....	20
4.2. Reading proficiency among grade six students.....	20
4.3 Reading Difficulties among Grade Six Students	21
4.3.1 Reading difficulty from reading test achievements.....	21
4.3.2 Finding from observation	23
4.3.2.1 Classroom physical environment and reading difficulties	24
4.3.2.1.1 Classroom composition	24
4.3.2.1.2 Teacher-learner ratio.....	24
4.3.2 Classroom psychosocial environment.....	24
4.3.3. Approaches to teaching reading English	25
4.4 Factor affecting reading of grade six in the Yeka sub city in three schools.	26
4.4.1 Decoding and word recognition ability	26
4.4.2 Omission.....	26
4.4.3 Insertion	27
4.4.4 Reading fluency	27
4.4.5 Reading Comprehension.....	27
4.5. Classroom physical environment.	27
4.6. Classroom psycho-social environments	28
4.7. Teachers presentation of lesson.....	28
4.8. Discussion	29
CHAPTER FIVE	30
5. Conclusions and Recommendations	30
5.1 Conclusion.....	30
5.2 Recommendations	30
REFERENCES	32
Annex 1: OBSERVATION-GUIDE.....	36
Annex 2: READING ASSESSMENT	37

Abstract

This study sought to identify the level of reading among grade six students of Addis Ababa and the factors affecting their reading in English language. It followed a mixed research design approach. To obtain a representative sample of the population of primary schools, purposeful sampling was used. Both qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from lesson observation and from reading tests, and findings revealed that, inadequate English, reading materials, improper teaching methodology and insufficient English language development negatively affected their reading. The results from the test indicated that decoding phonemic awareness, word recognition skill and comprehension hamper the reading proficiency. The research recommends that schools should make resources available to by supplementary reading materials by learners and the teachers encourage learners to borrow books from libraries to practice reading independently. This research is conducted on 100 students from three different schools.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading is viewed as an interactive process between the reader and the writer in which the former has to understand the message of the passage and then to decode it. Moreover, it is a dynamic process in which information from the text and knowledge possessed by the reader interact to enable him/her to construct meaning before, during and after reading. In this respect, Goodman (1973) cited in Medjahadi (2015) states that the learner “Interacts with a message encoded by the writer. He concentrates his total prior experience and concepts he/she has attained, as well as the language competence he has achieved (p.162).”

For the child reading is a key to success in school, to the development of out-of-school interests, to the enjoyment of leisure time and to personal and social adjustment. Reading helps the child to adjust to his age mates, to become independent of parents and teachers, to select and prepare for an occupation and to achieve social responsibilities (Harteney, 2011). According to Dechant and Smith (1987), as culture becomes more complex, reading plays an increasingly greater role in satisfying personal needs and in promoting social awareness and growth. It is through reading that one acquires many of his/her standards of behavior and morality, broadens his/her interests, tastes and understanding of others.

Reading difficulties among primary school learners is an issue of concern in any society (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). Reading is considered to be a basic need in the modern world of science and technology. The ability to read is important if one is to succeed in school. According to Nunan (2005), proficient reader’s skill is critical to success. If a child is not competent reader, he is at risk for academic, behavioral, social and emotional difficulties. If children do not learn to read, understand, write and use language to communicate their ideas and perspectives, their favorable conditions for fulfilling and rewarding life as seriously compromised.

Reading is a skill that is important for the learning process, academic performance, research, writing skills and decision making at all levels. According to Dechant and Smith (1987), children who read well in early grades are far more successful in later years, and those who fall behind

often stay behind when it comes to academic achievement. Reading also opens doors to learning all academic subjects, because those who cannot read well are likely to drop out of school and be limited to manual and low-paying jobs throughout their lives. This study aimed at exploring the status of grade six students in reading English language.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (1994) specify the English to be used in education and instruction at different level of education .The policy states English to be taught as a subject starting from grade one and medium of instruction for secondary and higher education. In Ethiopia English is taught as a subject from grade one and is a medium of instruction from grade nine through colleges and universities nation-wide. different regions have adopted different Regional policies and attitudes towards English in their education system; some of the regions have made English to be a medium of instruction from grade 7, some from grade 8 and some from grade 9 (Eshite, 2010). In Addis Ababa English is a medium of instruction for all subjects starting from grade 7. Thus strong English language skills are critical to the educational achievement and success.

A study by American instate of research (2012) shows that the proficiency level of Ethiopian student in English language is very low. The same research show that the overall student performance on the English Ethiopia Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is well below the standards set by the ministry of education (MOE). While the average percent score increases as students' progress through the grade levels, the performance is well below what is expected of students according to the MLCs of each grade level. Based on the results of the English EGRA, at least two thirds of all students in Grades 2 to 4 fall into the below-basic category (EGRA, 2014).

A study by Young Lives (2013) showed number of the students are apprehensive about the transition from mother tongue education to English-medium education because of their poor English language skill. On the other hand, an overall majority of surveyed teachers believed that English should be introduced as the medium of instruction in the first cycle of primary education so that students can cope better in secondary school. In addition students are also unable to cope

with the transition to English medium of instruction in second cycle and secondary school on account of having a poor grasp of the language.

Studies on contributing factors for student reading skill come up with different factors that affect or influence the reading proficiency of students. Enyew, Yigzaw and Muche (2015) studied the effect of teachers scaffolding on student oral reading fluency among grade four students and found that teachers scaffolding has statistically significant influence on reading score of the student suggesting scaffolding reading strategy instruction is effective in enhancing student oral reading fluency. On another study by Abera (2014) teaching approach, parental involvement in child education, reading material availability, reading friendly environment, considering the early care and self-contained found as a determinant factors influencing reading skill development.

Enyew, Yigzaw and Muche (2015). Investigate the effect of cooperative learning on learners English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading comprehension in Government High School of grade nine students. The results of the study indicate that cooperative learning can help students improve their English reading comprehension and elevate students' outlook toward English learning as well. Students and the teacher in this study highly reflected Cooperative learning as a helpful and interesting learning method, thus allowing them to have more opportunity and to interact and cooperate with peers in group work.

A study by Weldehanna and Gebremedihin (2016) found a statistically significant relationship between reading outcomes and caregiver's education, urban or rural site, and region, type of school and wealth. The proportion of children who could not read anything was highest for children whose caregivers had had no education. Student from Rural area, government school and bottom wealth found having low reading proficiency.

So far there is a gap in comprehensive studies that encompass the major areas of reading difficulty of English language proficiency in Addis Ababa at primary education level. Studies on reading achievement of students in English language focus on specific aspect of skills. The target of most studies previously was first cycle (grade 1- 4) particularly grade four students. But there are evidences showing that significant number of student in second cycle and secondary school are in a deficient English proficiency level which in turn negatively influence the teaching

learning process where medium of instruction is English (Weldehanna and Gebremedihin 2016). Thus this study aims to fill the gap by assessing the student's status of reading proficiency or difficulty in English language among grade 6 students, which is the transition to the grade level where the medium of instruction is English. In addition the possible factors that contribute for student reading difficulty problems will be explored.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to assess the level of reading proficiency and difficulties and those factors that contribute to reading difficulties among grade six students at government primary schools in Addis Ababa city administration.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the status of grade six students in reading proficiency of English language at Yeka Sub city Addis Ababa city.
2. To find out the reading difficulties among grade six students in three schools
3. To investigate the possible factors contributing to reading difficulty.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the status of second cycle primary school student in reading proficiency in English language at Addis Ababa?
2. What is the reading difficulties students face at secondary education level?
3. What are the possible factors that contribute to reading difficulty of student?

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This study is confined to three government primary schools of Grade six students in Yeka Sub city. The scope is limited to English reading skills. The researcher purposely selected the schools so as to make it easier and quicker for him to collect the data because the sample is small and manageable.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The information from this study would serve as the basis for sensitizing the teachers about the importance of reading and to create awareness about the use of effective reading methods. The research findings might also be useful to the Ministry of Education as well as to all the primary school education stakeholders, including teachers and parents, to enable them to address more successfully the reading difficulties of the Grade 6 learners in Addis Ababa. The findings might also be helpful for learners to improve their reading skills through the teaching methods used by their teachers who receive this information from my thesis.

1.7. Limitations of the study

This study attempts to fill the gap in the academic literature on the reading difficulties of grade six learners in Addis Ababa. It showed that students are unable to read well. But, as stated by Marshall and Rossman (1999), “No proposed research is without limitation” (p.42) and this study has only limited sample size as compared to the size of the city.

Some of the tools the researcher used might not be free of subjectivity. For instance, observation could be biased. The other limitation, the researcher believes, is the answers provided by the students for the questions given to them. Some of the students rushed to answer the questions without realization. This could have affected the results obtained.

1.8. Operational definition

This section digs the meaning of the terms used in this study.

Reading:- is defined as the gaining of meaning from and bringing it to the written page (Wong, 1998).

Medium of instruction:- refers to the language teachers use to teach learners. It is a mean of conveying information to learners, such as the official language of a country or the native mother tongue of the learners.

Literacy:- refers to the ability to read and write (Baker, 2006).

English as a second language:- refers to the use of English by speakers of different native language.

Reading proficiency:- has been achieved when a reader is skillful expert and competent in reading (Cambridge learners dictionary 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the background of the study. This chapter reviews relevant literature on reading difficulties according to the objectives or the research questions of the study. The review is subdivided into the following categories.

- i. Overview of reading
- ii. Theories of reading
- iii. Stages of reading
- iv. Teaching methods of reading
- v. Reading difficulties
- vi. Causes of reading difficulties
- i. Overview of reading**

Reading is not only a cognitive, psycholinguistic activity, but also a social activity. Reading is a complex cognitive process requiring visual, auditory and motor skills to enable a child to recognize words and symbols, to associate them with the appropriate sounds and to invest them with meaning derived from previous experience. As it has been cited in Hartney (2011), Reid and Donaldson (1977) state that reading achievement is related to the skill of the teacher, and that the child taught by untrained, inexperienced and unskilled teachers tend to be especially backward in reading (Reid and Donaldson, 1977). According to Hengari (2007), reading is the ability to make sense of written or printed symbols. It includes word recognition, comprehension and interpretation, appreciation and application of what is read. It is an interaction with language that has been coded into print. Reading performance, good or poor, reflects the knowledge and competencies available to the learner and how these are activated and coordinated during the reading process. Reading is a prominent element of the entire education curriculum across all subject areas beginning in the earliest grade. Children with delays in reading will experience feelings of deep inadequacy. Reading is a language process. The child being taught to read must understand the relationship between reading and his/her language. The facets of reading that

teachers must consider if they are to guide children's growth in reading includes decoding print into sound and decoding a graphic representative of language into meaning .

ii. Theories of reading

1. Traditional view

According to Nunan, (2005) in the traditional view of reading novice readers acquire a set of hierarchically ordered sub skills that sequentially build toward comprehension ability. Having mastered these skills, readers are viewed as experts who will comprehend what they viewed. Readers are passive recipients of information in the text.

According to Nunan (2005), reading in this view is basically matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents in the quests for making sense of the text. He referred to this process as the "bottom-up" view of reading.

The traditional definition of reading comprehension as it is interpreted by the authors and writers of basal readers and literature anthologies, results in the teaching of reading through "separately defined" comprehension skills, and could be called a "skills model." Skills, separately taught in a logical and sequential order, is thought to result in the improved comprehension of textual material. The traditional definition of reading comprehension as it is interpreted by the authors and writers of basal readers and literature anthologies, results in the teaching of reading through "separately defined" comprehension skills, and could be called a "skills model." Skills, separately taught in a logical and sequential order, is thought to result in the improved comprehension of textual material (Sheridan, 1981)

2. The cognitive theory

The cognitive or top down view of reading is a comprehension driven theory which opposes the view that decoding is a basis to form comprehension. According to Nuna (2005), reading represents an innate capacity for learning which explains how humans acquire their first language.

Goodman (1990) argues that reading under this theory is a “psycholinguistic guessing game” (P. 240), and that reading is a process where by a reader samples the text, makes the hypothesis, that confirms or rejects it. This theory puts the reader at the center of the reading process where by a reader samples the text, makes the hypothesis that confirms or rejects it. This theory puts the reader at the center of the reading process a premise of which is that she/he brings all her or his experiences and background knowledge to the reading task.

3. Schema theory

According to Goodman (1990), it fits within the cognitively based theories he has described schemata as “building blocks of cognition” which are used in the process of interrupting sensory data, in retrieving information from memory in organizing goals and sub goals, in allocating resources and building the how of the process system.

Schemata represent generic concepts which are stored in memory. The way in which a particular concept is stored is not by remembering that isolated event in its totality down to its most basic components, but by identifying those aspects of the event related to other concepts already stored. We make connections between the information in the text and what we already know (Sheridan, 1981)

iii. Stages of reading

Stage 1: the pre readers

According to Taylor (1973) these are the children who have not yet began to interpret the printed words at all and may need a good deal of preparation before they can do so. This is not necessarily related to the age or chronology of the children, rather it’s related to their preparation to achieve the next level. For Taylor the stages are not specifically related to age, but rather to levels of development which will be reached by some children more quickly than by others.

The pre-reading stage or early reader is a stage where the child develops word identification skills. The process concerns the capacity to recognize and identify familiar words. Refusal (unable to respond) and substitution (replacement of a word with one known), mostly occur in this stage. The early stage readers are just beginning to grasp the basic concepts of book and

print. They are acquiring a command of the alphabet with the ability to recognize and name upper- and lowercase letters such as Aa; Bb; Cc; Ff, etc. (Clifford et al 1970) .

As we can clearly understand it here they are also developing many phonological awareness skills, such as recognizing phonemes, syllables and rhyme. Taylor (1973)states that early emergent readers are beginning to learn sound/symbol relationship – starting with consonants and short vowels – and are able to read consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, as well as a number of high-frequency words. They need books with strong picture support, controlled text, repetitive patterns, natural language, large print, wide letter spacing, familiar concepts and limited text on a page. They read one word at a time, read by rote, select simple repetitious books, enjoy retelling stories, etc.

Stage 2: the beginners

The second stage, the beginners, the children are just at the point when reading is beginning to mean something. According to Clifford et.al (1973), this is a formalized reading instruction and under this stage recognition of printed words and the meanings associated with them is involved. Some of them have explanatory captions or short sentences. Basic reading series provide easy reading books.

According to Craig (1989) this stage of development starts approximately from two to seven years. At this stage young children form concepts and have symbols such as language to help them to communicate. These images are limited to their personal (egocentric) and immediate experiences. This children have very limited, sometimes “magical” notions of cause and effect and have difficulty classifying objects or events. Equally, the child at this stage focuses on a single aspect of a problem at a time and does not consider problems in broader and holistic ways, thus failing to understand the relationship between problems.

Stage 3: advanced reading

According to Taylor (1973), children have begin to read and reading is no longer mysterious art which people talk about but a skill which is real and recognizable and these children know they are learning to acquire it.

Funnel and Stuart (1995), state that readers at this stage develop an understanding of the alphabet, phonological awareness and early phonics. They also have command of a significant number of high-frequency words. They are developing much better grasp of comprehension strategies and word attack skills. They can recognize different types of text, particularly fiction and nonfiction, and recognize that reading has a variety of purposes. They need books with increasingly more lines of print per page, more complex sentence structure, less dependency on repetitive pattern and pictures and familiar topics, but greater depth. They can tell the main ideas, identify main characters, use context clues, and understand the meaning of. ? ! Pauses and use appropriate inflection for punctuation. They read phrases, select a variety of books, and begin to feel confident when reading silently or orally.

Stage 4: the fluent stage

At this stage these children can read; that is to say, they can interpret, without experiencing any major technical difficulties. (Taylor, 1973)

The phonological stage also known as fluent stage is concerned with the speech side of the correspondence between letters and sounds. The argument here is that in order to read an alphabetic script, a child needs to understand that words can be broken down into a sequence of elementary sounds (e.g. sprint = “s”+ “p”+ “r”+ “i”+ “n”+ “t”). It is therefore a procedure for division of speech into its component segments and for the retention and manipulation of these segments in memory (Funnel and Stuart, 1995).

At this stage, reading is more automatic, with more energy devoted to comprehension than word attack. Readers are approaching independence in comprehending a text. These readers are experiencing a greater variety of text and are able to recognize different styles and genres. Readers have successfully moved from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”. They use books with more pages and longer sentences, more text per page, richer and challenging vocabulary. They are less reliant on pictures. They are able to recognize the plot of the story, recognize the problem and solution in a story, evaluate characters actions and behaviors, use punctuation correctly of books, they are confident and enjoy sharing favorite books.

Teaching methods of reading

There are several teaching approaches or methods from which teachers can choose. However, the question of which is the most effective continues to concern teachers. This part gives the concern with some of this success.

A. Phonic method

The phonic method is based on word building according to the sounds of the letters and letter combination (Taylor, 1973). For him it teaches the correspondence between letters and the sounds they represent. Children are thought to look at the individual letters or groups of letters, recognize the sounds and blend letters to form a fluent sound. For example in the word camel, children are thought that the sound are represented by the word camel are 'k' in a glottal sound, then 'a' me' and 'l' which constitute 'k-a-me-l'.

Also Burns et.al (1999: 105) states that there are two major approaches of teaching phonics. In the first, synthetic approach, the teacher instructs children in the speech sound that are associated with individual letters. The analytical approach involves teaching site words, followed by teaching the sounds of the letters within those words.

B. Whole word method (look and say)

According to Lerner (2000), underlying whole language are the unity and interrelation of oral language, reading and writing. Unlike the phonic method, which puts the focus on letter, sound relationships, it emphasizes that active expression in writing and that active expression in writing and oral language improves reading skills. Lerner (2000) adds that the whole language method is based on the belief that all children will learn to read naturally, as they learn to talk and walk. Goodman (1990) initiated the whole language method based on a belief that an emerging reader needs little direction to decode that letters creating sentences representing pictures and sounds of languages.

According to (Taylor 1973), children would recognize words as wholes before they could break them down in to smaller parts. Flash cards with words and an accompanying picture are often

used with this method, until they memorize the pattern of letters, words or sentences can help in building up high frequency site vocabulary. For example a picture of ball is given to learners without the accompanying letter representing it. Learners are asked to say what they see, and name it after which the teacher places the letters string (b-a-l-l) beneath the picture. The activities can be extended to other objects begin with the same letter sound, and even the sentence.

C. Mixed method

The advocates of mixed method (Ginn as cited in Taylor 1973) propose that children should learn to read by both phonic and look and say method.

iv. Reading difficulty

Lovett, Steinbach & Frijters (2000) state that a reading difficulty is an individual's failure to acquire rapid, context-free word identification skills, whilst for Norton (2007) it is characterized as an unexpected obstacle in reading for children who possess the intelligence, motivation and education necessary for developing accurate and fluent reading. The term 'reading difficulties' is, in most instances, equated or used synonymously with 'reading problems', and in the context of this study the former refers to problems associated with reading, whether it be the mechanical skill of the reading process or the comprehension of what is being read.

v. Causes of reading difficulty

There seems to be great controversy on what the causes of reading difficulties are. According to Homler and Dorothy (1972) causes of reading difficulties are grouped under one or more of physical, psychological, sociological and educational factors.

A. Factors attributed to home environment

Different researches show that parental attitudes affect the child's academic progress. According to Homler and Dorothy, (1972) pride, confidence, affection and interest of parents in their children as shown by instances parents read to their children, played with them, or attended school with them appear to result in greater reading capacity. Therefore the absence of these may lead to reading difficulty on children.

The other reason for the decline of reading capacity by students could be related with the parent's habit of reading story to their children. Children need one to one stories. These are called bed time type stories. The child can interact with the reader and get deeply involved (Tina and Caroline, 2006).

B. Factors attributed to teaching methodology and teachers

It is common in a class room situation to find slow and fast learners. Some are good in reading while others are poor readers. In this kind of situation, it all depends on the teachers to use those methods of reading which will help the poor readers. According to Albert White (1967: 26), the teacher in school is most concerned with the large majority of those children whoever is not making progress in reading and therefore, should use appropriate teaching method to solve it out.

According to Allington (2011), gaps in student's educational experiences can also contribute to reading and decoding difficulties. If a child misses school due to illness or neglect, this can also lead to decoding difficulties. Or if there are certain curricular gaps in literacy instruction during a child's previous school experience, this can also result in decoding difficulties.

Familiarity with the material is another factor which influences reading level. Just because of lack of experience, unfamiliar happenings in stories will result in low reading level (Walter 1967).

C. Factors attributed to phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and work with (orally) the sounds of language. According to Allington (2011), if a student for example cannot orally blend the sound h-a-t without any print present, then he is not going to be able to sound out the word in text. Student who struggle with rhyming, counting syllables, and blending phonemes, e t c are also likely to have problem with decoding.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed method of concurrent type where both qualitative and quantitative data is collected in order to answer the research questions postulated.

The researcher mainly uses quantitative technique to measure the status of primary students reading proficiency in English language. Qualitative techniques also used to elaborate the quantitative data and to capture issues that cannot be addressed using the quantitative tools.

3.2 Study Area

This study is conducted Yeka sub city of Addis Ababa city administration. It is located in the north east part of Addis Ababa city. The total area of the sub city is 85.98 KM square. According to Yeka sub city administration office the population size of the sub city estimated around 368,418 people in 2018. According to Yeka sub city education bureau there are a total of 809 educational institutions of which 33 are government owned, 740 private owned and 36 NGO owned.

3.3 Research Participants

3.3.1 Description of Study population

Yeka Sub City is one of the ten Sub Cities in Addis Ababa. It has about thirteen weredas containing 809 educational Institutions, of which 33 are governmental, 740 are private and 36 NGO owned. Out of this 587 are privately owned primary schools and 15 are government owned primary schools. Out of the 15 government schools are located in the three weredas of 8, 12, and 13. Meri Hidassie, Argite Meri and Yekatafo are the subjects of this study.

The study targeted the grade six students because the grade level is a transition to grade seven where the medium of instruction is English.

Accordingly the study targeted grade six students at three governmental primarily school found in the sub city.

In the Yeka Sub City there are about 41,000 grade six students. The three weredas have about 3200 grade six students.

3.4 Sample Procedure

In order to select the sample, the researcher used random sampling technique to select the schools. This method is selected based on area proximity. It enables the researcher to easily access the weredas. Out of the three weredas three schools were randomly selected. This is done after believing that their large number of students could lead to gain good information. 250 grade six students were selected from their attendance by taking every five student. The researcher draw samples from 250 students of the three schools .Finally, 100 students are selected from the sampling frame.

3.5. Data Collection Instrument

This research employed the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA, 2014) to measure the reading skills of the children. The EGRA instrument consists of a variety of sub tasks designed to assess foundational reading skills crucial to becoming a fluent reader. It is designed to be a method independent approach (i.e, the instrument doesn't reflect a particular method of reading instruction). Instead EGRA measures the basic skills that a child must possess to eventually be able to read fluently with comprehension. EGRA sub tasks are based on research regarding a comprehensive approach to reading acquisition across languages. These skills are phonological awareness, decoding, reading fluency, reading comprehension and listening comprehension.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher first requested a permission to carry out the study from the head of education in Yeka Sub city. After granting the permission from the sub city education bureau, the researcher also asked permission from each respective woredas education bureau where the selected primary schools found. Then, the researcher contacted the three primary schools and gets the permission to conduct the study by explaining the objective of the study to them. The researcher

contacted the randomly selected students and arranges time with the school personnel's to administer the reading test and free room were arranged and the test is administered.

The observation was arranged during the normal English class at each selected primary schools. The researcher used observation guide to observe aspects of the classroom environment the participants and others.

3.7.Data Analysis

Qualitative data that is obtained from observation are analyzed using qualitative content analysis, a method which involves comparing, contrasting and categorizing data in order to draw meaning from it. The researcher is grouped the data according to the predetermined teams and will look for consistencies and differences to make comparisons and contrasts. This helped to organize ideas that emerged from the data to make a well informed assessment reading difficulties student face and the factors for reading difficulties observable in Grade six learners in Yeka Sub city.

In order to analyze the quantitative data obtained from achievement tests is analyzed using the descriptive statistics and it includes mathematical and graphical techniques to organize or summarize numerical data. The researcher arranged the quantitative data into tables and percentages to indicate key findings of this study.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The researcher will respect the right, privacy, dignity and sensitivity of the population. The in-depth, unstructured nature of qualitative research and the fact that it raises issues that are not always anticipated mean that ethical considerations have a particular resonance in qualitative research studies (Ritche & Lewis, 2003). According to Walliman (2011) there are two aspects of ethical issues in research which relate to the researcher honesty and personal integrity and the researcher's treatment of people involved in the research. In this study, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of the study participants is seriously considered in line with the ethical principle agreed on scientific community to conduct any research. In addition, the researcher is taken appropriate measures to ensure trust and credibility of the study.

3.8.1 Honesty of the Work

The researcher has strictly followed scientific community rules and principles to conduct research and Addis Ababa university ethical committee rules and regulation in terms of maintaining the originality. All the material used in this document is properly cited and acknowledge using the APA style. In addition to citation, honesty is maintained in reporting the works done; the information obtained and the other process undergone to come up to the finding. The researcher keeps the data integrity by maintaining objectivity in interpreting the data and take measures to minimize personal bias as much as possible.

3.8.2 Informed Consent

Before conducting the actual data collection, informed consent is obtained at first from sample participants. Informed consent requires providing potential participants with the information that can enable them to decide whether to participate or not. To do so, the researcher provide sample participants with clear information about the objective and purpose of the study, the profile of the researcher, the way the data used in the study, the level of participation, amount of time required and the way the finding will be reported. By doing so, the researcher provided participants the opportunity to weigh the pros and cons of participating on the study and able to make informed decision to participate in the process of data collection on voluntary basis. Participants also granted with freedom not to share information that they do not want to share.

In considering decision to get informed consent, care is taken to get the right informed consent. The ability of children to provide informed assent is considered at first and their respective homeroom teacher and school administrations is also asked for consent. Written consent for under age children who participated in this study is obtained from the school and homeroom teachers and oral assent is obtained from the respective child. A written statement that include participation is completely voluntary and can be terminated at any time has been prepared and signed by participant.

3.8.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

In order to keep participants identity not disclosed to third party the researcher has been used pseudo names and codes to identify participants than their real name. In the data presentation, any reference that could possibly disclose the participant's identity is not used. Thus, the response of participants and their identity is separated. In addition to protecting the anonymity of the participant, the information they provide also kept secret. The findings are presented as cumulative responses organized by theme than presented individually.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Analysis and Presentation

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter there has been discussion of the method and the research design used in the collection of the data. Under this chapter the result analyzed and presented in accordance with research questions. At first the data collected through observation is presented and discussed. Then the information from the reading test is discussed and analyzed. The researcher prepared some observation guides which used to collect information. This is done with and without the understanding of the students under study. Some information like communication through English during English periods was done without the students understanding. Others like the one related with the interaction between them and the researcher is done after telling the students about it. The observation is done with the help of one foreign teacher who is believed to know the correct pronunciation and grammars of English For the reading test the researcher prepared sight words, pseudo words and 2 passages. After that questions prepared from the passages to check the comprehension of the students.

Finally, possible interventions emanating from this study are suggested to remedy reading difficulties among grade six students in the Yeka sub city.

4.2. Reading proficiency among grade six students

The students reading level or their reading proficiency is found poor in all the three schools. Starting from familiar word reading up to passage comprehension their results are not satisfactory. Their level of letter-sound identification is relatively better than the rest. This of course is expected from a grade six student. But, their ability to read randomly presented list of frequently occurring words by sights or automatically is also not on bad level. The pupil's level of reading unfamiliar words by decoding them is zero percent almost for more than 50 percent of the total students. Level of reading and understanding passages is poorest among all the give tasks reading and understanding passage is not good.

Students of grade six were given three different reading levels. The reading levels are percent correct, percent correct of the total attempted and percent zero scores. The letter-sound identification of these grade 6 students was correctly performed by only 85 percent of the total pupils in the three of the governmental schools. In all the three schools that percent correct among the students from the total answers they attempted in letter- sound identification was 11 percent. Letter- sound identification was answered zero percent by 30 percent of the students. The familiar words reading was answered poorer than letter sound identification. 29 percent of the total students scored correct. 61 percent of the students scored correct of the total attempted questions. The familiar words reading that was scored zero was 10 percent. For non-words reading the percent of correct reading was 15 percent. 39 percent of the children scored correct among the questions they attempted. 56 percent of the students scored zero in non-word reading. The reading comprehension consisted two passages. The student's result on both passages was really poor. Yet the first passage scored better.

4.3 Reading Difficulties among Grade Six Students

4.3.1 Reading difficulty from reading test achievements

This research employed the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to measure the reading skills of the children. The EGRA instrument consists of a variety of sub tasks designed to assess foundational reading skills crucial to becoming a fluent reader. It is designed to be a method independent approach (i.e, the instrument doesn't reflect a particular method of reading instruction). Instead EGRA measures the basic skills that a child must possess to eventually be able to read fluently with comprehension. EGRA sub tasks are based on research regarding comprehensive approach to reading acquisition across languages. These skills are phonological awareness, decoding, reading fluency, reading comprehension and listening comprehension.

Table 4.1 EGRA instrument sub tasks

Sub task	Skill	Description the child was asked to...
Letter-sound identification	Knowledge of the alphabet and the sound of letters	Say the sounds of letters while looking at a printed page of the alphabet in random order.
Familiar word reading	Ability to read a randomly presented list of frequently occurring words by sight or automatically	Read list of common words
Non-word reading	Ability to read unfamiliar words by decoding them	Read non-words listed on a page
Reading comprehension	Reading and understanding passage	Responding questions that assessors ask about the story

Based on the sub tasks given by EGRA, this research has tried to assess the student's reading. The overall results are shown below and display the proportion of correct items, the proportion of correct items related to the number of attempted items (since several takes are timed and therefore have a stop rule), and the percent of zero scores for each item.

Table 4.2. Scores based on EGRA instruments

Sub task	Grade	Percent correct (of total)	Percent correct (of attempted)	Percent zero scores
Letter-sound identification	6	85	11	4
Familiar words reading	6	29	61	10
Non word reading	6	15	39	56
Reading comprehension (passage 1)	6	29	31	40
Reading comprehension (passage 2)	6	26	27	47

As the table shows, the scores of the students were low in aggregate. There were high proportions of their scores in many sub tasks and the percent correct of total were not that good. The letter-sound identification of these grade 6 students was correctly performed by only 85 percent of the total pupils in the three of the governmental schools. In all the three schools the percent correct among the students from the total answers they attempted in letter-sound identification was 11 percent. Letter-Sound identification was answered zero percent by 30 percent of the students. The familiar words reading was answered poorer than letter sound identification. 29 percent of the total students scored correct. 61 percent of the students scored correct of the total attempted questions. The familiar words reading that was scored zero was 10 percent. For non-words reading the percent of correct reading was 15 percent. 39 percent of the children scored correct among the questions they attempted. 56 percent of the students scored zero in non-word reading. The reading comprehension consisted two passages. The student's result on both passages was really poor. Yet the first passage scored better. The students result of the first reading comprehension is percent correct 29%, percent correct among the total attempted 31 percent and percent zero score is 40 percent. On the second reading comprehension the students percent correct is 26 percent correct of the total attempted is 27 percent and percent zero scores are 47 percent. The second passage is a little bigger than the first passage.

4.3.2 Finding from observation

The researcher's observation was made so as to obtain data by observing participants and understanding their natural environment without manipulating it. The observation focused on classroom environment approaches and techniques of teaching reading in English, the teacher-learner interactions during English lesson and learners' usage of English as media of communication.

The researcher noticed that most of the classrooms have no tradition of using English as a media of communication. In addition of that the teachers were also explaining the English lesson in Amharic.

Therefore, whenever the students fail to understand what they explain they tell the meaning in Amharic. To the surprise of the reader the teachers in all the schools do not communicate in English out of the classroom. As English teacher they were expected speak their students in

English but they all failed to do so .Language by its nature needs practice. But this is one of the biggest challenges the students face. The researcher observed that there insufficient English reading materials in all of the schools in this study. Teachers have no any educational reading equipment. The only English book used by both teachers and students in their English text book for grade six students. Additional books have very great used to improve students reading.

4.3.2.1 Classroom physical environment and reading difficulties

The physical environments of the classrooms are characterized by the following aspects.

4.3.2.1.1 Classroom composition

All the classes the researchers observed and studied consisted of mixed ability learners of both genders. The female male ratio was almost equal. All the classes have excellent, medium, and weak students. In all of the classes students seated in pairs usually male and female. There were enough tables but in one of the school there was shortage of chairs. The researcher noticed that there are no charts or any teaching aids posted in the classroom to promote the teaching and learning of English language.

4.2.1.2 Teacher-learner ratio

The official teacher- learner ratio of the MOE for the lower primary is 1:40 learner per class. In the classrooms under this study the ratio doesn't match with what is given on the MOE, It is 1:60 or more. This is believed to affect the development of reading in the classes. The researcher also observed lack of learner participation. The students are shy to participate. They hesitate to do so because they fear the teachers respond. One student at Yeka Taffo said that he doesn't want to participate because she fears it he losses. He says if he loses the students will laugh at him and the teacher will tell him to study hard. They are not motivated to read or speak in English. The learners in meri hidassie have relatively better reading chance.

4.3.2 Classroom psychosocial environment

The researcher has noticed that the relationship among learners with each other is good. The social relationship is very good. The researcher noticed that students spend much of their time in group. They support one another academically. One student from Meri Hidassie school explain

that whenever he gets difficulties in his academy he get support from his friends. The researcher noticed the support of the students in one to five groups.

They even have very good interaction with their teachers. They respect the teachers and elderly some classrooms have a very good trend of following classroom rules and regulations. In Yeka Taffo School the students throughout the lesson remind friends to follow procedures when they ask questions even in Meri Hidasse the students rise their hand to ask and give answer.

The researcher noticed one thing in Yeka Taffo School. The teacher read one passage then he questioned. The first student that was given the chance to answer was applauded by the teacher after he tried. This, the researcher believes, gave him confidence. Then the second student was proud to give answer thinking that he will also be applauded. Thus, the researcher believes motivates students. In one of the schools yeka tafo the students were not treated equally. Teachers were giving more chances to the students sitting at the front. It discourages students.

4.3.3. Approaches to teaching reading English

Unlike the private schools in Addis Ababa city, the three schools under this study have teachers graduated from teacher's educational school. All the teachers have taken pedagogy. These teachers used English for Ethiopia to teach English. Teachers focus on scaffolding. The weakness noticed during the study was lack of attention to English Pronunciation. Even if teachers get graduated from universities and colleges, they lack quality pronunciation. They stick to the text book only. No additional books used in any of the schools.

At Meri Hidasse School a teacher read a fiction story from the text book and asked them. The way he asks to the students was wrong to some extent. It was only the clever students who were participating. A student from that school told the researcher that teachers give more attention to the girls and clever students. This appears specially during reading time. According to the student the reading chance is given usually to the clever once. He added that he refrains from participating because he fears that the teacher does not give the chance to him. This kills the appetite of the students for reading particularly and English class generally. The other fact the researcher noticed was teachers are not regular in reading stories. There is even a time by which teachers skip passages from the text book. The teachers let the students read passages only

sometimes and whenever students make pronunciation mistake teachers don't give corrections on the moment. This made the students unable to improve their reading.

4.4 Factor affecting reading of grade six in the Yeka sub city in three schools.

4.4.1 Decoding and word recognition ability

It was observed that 70 percent of the learners had reached the frustration level of reading passage one, whilst 77 percent had reached frustration level in reading passage two, and those who couldn't read had decoding problems. During the reading process it was observed that the learners failed to sound out words or to recognize words in the sentences and confused letters and the sound they represented. For example instead of reading *aging* they read *age* and read sentences ignoring punctuation. For instance in the case of others saying on the passage they forget the purpose of quotation marks and read it. For example 'the behavior is unacceptable', said the duck, the cow and the sheep. They read it in the way the audience couldn't know whose saying it is.

The researcher sees that the lack of word recognition ability is due to the faulty recognition and naming of letters of the alphabet. They couldn't deconstruct words in their sound unit. The researcher believes that poor decoding skills emanated from wrong teaching methods applied to teaching reading in English. During the observations teachers didn't show to learners how to break words in unit words.

4.4.2 Omission

Large number of grade six students omitted words. It was noted that during the reading test some were trying to read fast but they actually could not, thus resulting omission of words. For example one child read the sentence on the second passage like this, 'we are guest it is our responsibility to clean house'. But the statement says, 'we are guests, and it is not our responsibility to clean your house'. He omitted three words and, not and your. This changes the meaning of the sentence and results in failing to answer the comprehension part of the passage provided to them.

4.4.3 Insertion

Insertion noted during the reading test too. For instance on the first passage it says 'Lion ate every animal that entered the den' lots of students read it 'Lion will eat every animal that entered the den'. This kind of mistake changes the meaning of the sentence. The researcher observed common insertion of articles (a, an and the) in almost every single sentence.

4.4.4 Reading fluency

A large number of students lack reading fluency as a result of poor decoding skill. Because of lack of reading fluency students were failing to remember sentence after sentence. This resulted in poor comprehension they were reading very slowly and due to this they forget one sentence's idea after the other one.

4.4.5 Reading Comprehension

A total of 74 percent learners read passage one at frustration level. This let the researcher know that they have insufficient word recognition and vocabulary. The students were unable to understand meaning of lots of words. The researcher tried to ask the meaning of some common words but they failed to answer. As it is known questions from passage ask a student understands of meaning of words from the passage. Since most of the students under the research don't know the meaning of the words they failed to score good on their comprehension

4.5. Classroom physical environment.

The teacher-learners ratio is about 1:60. This has negatively affected the students' English reading performance. This is due to the inability of the teacher to access to all the students. The time the researcher asked students about their class participation they answered that even if they raise their hands the teachers usually do not choose them. The researcher observed that even if these are enough tables the number of chairs in some of the schools is scarce at Yeka Taffo. This negatively affected the student's English reading performance. Students do not give attention to the teacher's discussion because they don't have enough seats.

The other thing related with classroom physical environment is shortage of reading materials. Only text books from the school, but also additional teaching aids are not prepared by the

teacher. This hindered the students from getting time and chance of reading passages or even words. Books available are not attractive for reading. It is because they are Or dirty.

4.6. Classroom psycho-social environments

In most of the schools the teachers are not friendly. They don't want the students to approach them. This works especially to the poor and average students. They don't show any affection to their students this made the students not to develop positive feeling about English language where the students approach their teachers for questioning they don't answer properly. Due to this the students don't feel at ease during English lesson and they frustrate to communicate in class room in English.

4.7. Teachers presentation of lesson

The researchers noticed that the researchers are busy on the explanation part and making of exercising. They don't give appropriate time for reading. The researcher hasn't seen any time by which the teacher was applauding students who has the best reading skill. This is a special problem in Meri Hidassie School. The teachers lack good pronunciation the teachers are not willing to bring teaching aids to the classroom. The teachers are not willing to review the previous day reading lesson.

The students' parents have really poor help to the education of their kids. Parents don't buy story books to their kids.

4.8. Discussion

This study was conducted in schools with students who have experienced difficulties in reading English. Hartney (2011) states that reading achievement is related to the skill of the teacher and that the child taught by untrained inexperienced and unskilled teachers tends to be backward in reading. In line with these teachers must appreciate their involvement in taking trainings of teaching methodology. Learner (2002) cautions that the causes of reading difficulties are stemmed from a variety of issues of which some are not easily diagnoses or understand by teachers. However, she suggests that effective instructions to remediate reading difficulties where they persisted should be given (p.354). Reading difficulties, such as lack of comprehension can be easily identified in learners but often teachers ignore its development. Instead teachers will pay more attention to fluency.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to identify the status of reading difficulties among grade six learners. It also discussed the factors attributed to that reading difficulties displayed by the learners. The researcher found that the causes of reading difficulties were lack of English language development in learners, lack of English reading materials, insufficient word recognition strategy and lack of comprehension skills. The reason that learners failed to acquire decoding skills was that the teachers lacked the competencies in teaching reading English explicitly. The teachers must possess the requisite specialization required to teach English as a subject, and reading in particular. It was noted that in all three schools the theoretical approach in teaching reading in English was used. There should be a wider exposure of learners to a variety of reading materials for the students.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made and may be utilized by relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Education in an effort to alleviate reading difficulties among primary school learners in general and grade six learners in particular.

The teacher- learner ratio must be reduced so as to enable individual attention especially when it comes to assisting pupils with reading difficulties. In this regard, government has to employ more teachers and build more schools.

- Government and other stakeholders must provide more teaching and learning materials in schools where these items are lacking.
- Children must be encouraged to learn to read as this would enhance their understanding of other subjects at school and life in general.
- Parents must make sure that they provide enough reading materials to their children.
- Teachers must bring additional reading materials to the school.

- The size of students in every class must be reduced.
- Teachers must improve their interaction with the students.
- More time should be given to reading.

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Annex 1: OBSERVATION-GUIDE

1. Classroom physical-environment

- (i) What is the Grade 6 teacher-learners' ratio?
- (ii) Are there enough chairs and tables in the Grade 6 classroom?
- (iii) Does the classroom environment promote reading? Are there reading materials on display?
- (iv) How is the classroom arranged?
- (v) Are there enough English reading books?

2. Classroom psycho-social environment

- (i) What is the teacher-learners' relation? Are they communicating in a friendly manner?
- (ii) Do all learners feel at ease during the lesson?
- (iii) Can learners express themselves freely during the lesson?
- (vi) How do learners assist one another to learn to read English?
- (v) Does the teacher motivate learners to read more?

3. Teacher lesson conduct

- (i) What reading method does the teacher use?
- (ii) Does the teacher model good reading skill to learners?
- (iii) How is the teacher's pronunciation?
- (iv) Is the teacher suitably qualified to teach at the Lower Primary phase?
- (v) What is the level of difficulty of the reading activities given to Grade 6 learners?

Annex 2: READING ASSESSMENT

Pseudo Name

Sex.....

Age-----

Grade.....

Rank.....

Family status single headed.....female headed/male headed..... Both parents.....

Reading assessment section one: Single word reading Non-word (one and two syllable words)

SINGLE WORD OR NON-WORD SCORING KEY

If 2 words wrong 1 (independent level) If 3 or 4 words wrong 2 (instructional level) If more than 4 words wrong 3 (frustration level)

The primary aim of this activity was to assess the Grade 6 learners’ decoding and word-recognition abilities.

plood

fign

paunt

tlos

milf

patch

argon

andlis

gsin

hausage

Reading assessment section 2: Regular words or sight words (one or two syllable words)

Scoring key:

At least 35 of these words correct 1 independent level

Between 25 and 34 words correct 2 instruction level

Fewer than 25 words correct 3 frustration level

Comment.....
.....

Sight words

The have how look down

from how low they and

their more did awake had

write get fight had will

come in build speed see

words other number may you

about no part that not

way send what many could

teach all then people person

them write for speak these
think when first make your
water dream can her been
said would called they ground

Reading assessment section 3: Reading comprehension

Task: 2

The Aging Sick Lion

Once upon a time there lived an old Lion who could not hunt for food due to old age and sickness. He decided to trick other animals. He lay down in his den and pretended to be sick. A few days later, the other animals decided to visit lion in the den.

Lion ate every animal that entered the den. One day Fox also went to visit the king of jungle. When he reached the entrance, he noticed that the footprints were showing one direction into the den and not the outside. He knew how dangerous Lion was.

He greeted Lion from the entrance. Lion politely invited Fox into the den. The Fox told Lion that he was dirty so he couldn't enter. Lion said it was alright for Fox to enter. But Fox insisted there was another problem that stopped him from entering. He said, "All the footprints show the animals which had entered the den did not come out again".

1. Did Lion really fall sick?
2. Did Lion become too old to hunt?
3. Did Lion lie down in his den?
4. Did animals enter the den?
5. Did Lion eat some animals?
6. Did Fox enter the den?
7. Did Fox see any animals at the den?
8. Did Lion talk to Fox?
9. Did Fox meet any animal?

Ato Alemu's animal friends

Once upon a time, there was a man called Ato Alemu. He lived together with his wife, woizero Lelise, on an island. The island, Ato Alemu lived on, was occupied by a variety of animals which include rat, snakes, lizards, goats, cows, dogs, ducks, chickens and donkeys.

During the rainy season Ato Alemu built a big house. The animals asked him for accommodation since it was cold and wet. Ato Alemu agreed to help the animals and he let them into his house. The animals were happy and lived happily.

In the course of time, the animals grew fond of his wife. Ato Alemu also got along well with most of them. However, some of the animals become notorious and unmanageable. They started to come in and out of his house, without permission and would not clean the house. This annoyed Ato Alemu and his wife. "You are no longer good to live with" he said. One of the snakes answered rudely, "We are guests, and it's not our responsibility to clean your house".

Ato Alemu got angry and yelled at the animals. The snake hissed at him bit his wife. She died instantly.

At woizero Lelise's death the dog expressed his disappointment at snake's behavior to the rest. The snake hissed again and killed the dog. The animals held a meeting. They were fed up with the snake's hissing. "Your behavior is unacceptable," said the duck, the cow, and sheep.

Ato Alemu then said, "All snakes must leave my house immediately." This time the snake waited for Ato Alemu to go to bed. While he was sleeping, the snake bit him and he died.

Goat said, "we cannot live here anymore. Without Ato Alemu, there will be no food for us to eat!"

The snake's bad habits and the behavior of the other notorious animals teaches us today that it is not safe for us to live in the same house with all animals.

1. Where did Ato Alemu and his wife live?
2. Why did the animals ask Ato Alemu For accommodation?
3. What do you think annoyed Ato Alemu?

4. What work did the animals refuse to do?
5. Which animal killed Ato Alemu's wife ?
6. Why wouldn't the animals stay in to Alemu's house anymore?
7. Which animals do you think were well behaved?
8. Why were the other animals not happy with the snake?
9. Why don't we stay with all animals in the house anymore?
10. What do the colored words mean?