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Assessment Of The Reading Practices Of Students: The Case Of First Year Natural Science Students Of Bonga College Of Teachers Education

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to examine students' classroom reading practices in relation to reading theories. Hence, a descriptive survey method with both qualitative and quantitative design was made use of. The study was conducted at Bonga College of Teachers' Education. The participants of the study were first year natural science students and teachers. 104 students and four (4) teachers were involved. Two data collection instruments: Classroom observation and questionnaire were used. The findings showed that most students employed word level meaning processing as they read the text. In other words, they did not use strategy based processing including reading for gist, reading for specific information, and guessing meanings from context and the like. In addition, students' limited linguistic knowledge and lack of commitment from teachers' side were the major problems that hampered students' effective reading practices. The researchers conclude that students reading practices appear to be inconsistent with the theoretical framework of reading practices suggested by experts.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the four major language skills, reading is one of the most important and extensively studied skills. ESL has appeared in the field of language study in the early 19 century, in the time of Grammar Translation Method, reading has prominence together with grammar. In the time, the goal of language learning was to master the rules of the target language and to read and enjoy foreign language and literature. Hence, in ESL classroom, reading would have played crucial role where it had certain limited advantages such as emphasizing on word and sentence knowledge to construct meaning out of literary genres like prose and verse and finding its equivalent in the first language (Kritzinger, 1995; Richard and Rodgers, 2000).

As time went, the focus given to reading has increased. A number of researches have been carried out and some theories were developed to direct practitioner towards better performance of reading (Bernhardt, 2006). With the commencement of the field of SLA in the 1970s which was greatly influenced by psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, the field of second-language reading started to flourish and began to introduce different approaches such as bottom-up/text-based perspectives, and latter on more socially-oriented approach, which focuses on readers' background knowledge, top-down were introduced (Razi,2004). The introduction of top-down model diverted the attention of practitioners in to a new direction i.e. to focus on readers' schematic knowledge. Gradually, researchers came up with criticism of both aforementioned reading processing and launched alternative processing called interactive which gives equal weight for both text and readers' background knowledge. Since, it is believed that it fills the gap existed in the former processing models (Bernhardt, 2006).

Despite the introduction of alternative approaches to practice the skill, the way it is practiced is not promising in many EFL classrooms. Gardner (1979, as cited in Nuttall, 1996) stated that, even if, reading

is one of the four major language skills, it has been given inadequate emphasis in many language classroom; and its handling is fragmentary rather than sustained. She said, "What is practiced in reading session is not exactly reading rather it is either grammar or writing" (Nuttall, 1996, P. 149). From this, one can deduce that the way reading is practiced in EFL classrooms are not appropriate. As a result, most students do not practice reading effectively.

For students who are learning English as foreign language, where there is no enough exposure to practice the language, reading is a substantial tool to master the target language. That is why, Nuttall (1996, P. 128) said, "The best way to improve your knowledge of foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it." Despite assuring academic success or failure of students in EFL classrooms, reading improves students' language skills, and helps them access different information through. With regard to this, Atkins and et al (1996, P.39) underline, "In high school and tertiary colleges in Ethiopia, reading is by far the most important of the four skills."

Furthermore, effective reading helps students to overcome the academic challenges and to become successful in all their occupation. This is not the only truth for English language but also for all other disciplines. In any field of study, students are required to carry out vast reading to acquire necessary knowledge and skills, which help them to solve life challenges. So, their reading becomes meaningful and purposeful if and only if they have fundamentals of reading.

Even though reading has countless importance for academic career and in all lifestyles, the current students' reading practice at college level is below standard. Particularly, first year Natural Science Students of Bonga College of Teachers Education who take the course Communicative English Skills-I showed low performance in their reading comprehension. This is contradictory with what the government is implementing. Currently, the government pays attention towards natural science field of study; hoping that students who are graduated from this field of study believed in lifting up the country from the bottom line of poverty to the level of middle income economy i.e. changing the picture of the nation and misery of the society. This dream is realized through students of the stated field of study who are expected to equip the coming generation with knowledge and skills of science and technology. Consequently, 70 to 30 ratios (i.e.70percentage natural science and 30% social science) were implemented nationwide for the enrolment of students at tertiary level years back. Since then, all higher institutes including the college under the study have materialized the policy and accepting students based on the principle.

After all, the researcher intended to conduct this descriptive survey to assess and describe the actual practices of trainees' of the stated stream. In the study, the researcher examined the approach that has been dominantly used by readers; the information processing strategies that have been commonly employed by the subjects of the study. In addition, the researcher examined the reading texts and activities that have been used in the reading classroom. Shortly, the researcher examined the reading practices of students in relation to the theoretical framework suggested by reading researchers.

Statement of the Problem

Many research findings confirmed that reading plays important role in determining academic success or failure of learners at different levels. It is because knowledge is highly dependent on how much a person reads. The only means students have to improve their language is to read extensively (Nuttall, 1996). Getachew (1996, as cited in Atkins et al, 1996, p.39) stated that in academic contexts of Ethiopian high schools and tertiary colleges, reading plays the most crucial role. Furthermore, Atkins et al, (1996, P. 39) state, "...many high school students lack reading proficiency in English which exhibit itself slow and difficult reading and poor comprehension. This ineffective reading hinders their broader studies and inevitably limits their academic performance."

Students who join colleges for their further education as soon as their completion of their high school education face challenges in their academic competence. The students are put in a situation where they should carry out massive reading tasks and accomplish a lot of activities by themselves with little guidance of their teachers. To equip students with the intended reading skills, the most important thing that has to be done is to materialize suitable reading approach and strategies. In addition, providing students interesting texts with rich content and carefully designed activities are crucial. Because the researcher is convinced that the current students reading skills problem might be caused by a cumulative effect i.e. wrong reading practices such as using inefficient reading approach and ineffective reading strategies; using ineffective texts and activities, that couldn't arouse students motivation and interest; lack of appropriate support(scaffolding). Moreover, in reading classroom teachers expose students to various reading texts and take them through different reading phases by encouraging them to read and construct meaning as they read.

As language teachers, the researchers have taught communicative English skills courses to different batches of natural science students, for pre-service and in-service trainees, at different time. From which, he has learned that most trainees' do not develop reading skills. Most of the time, in reading session, a lot of time was consumed and the actual time was ended up dealing with some part of the lesson and postponed the remaining part of it to the next class. Except few participants, the majority of students remains passive and wants the teacher to explain everything for them. When their exam scores were examined, there is variation among different skills and very low result in reading comprehension items. Similarly, other teaching staffs who have offered the course with him shared similar problem in their reading classroom. Hence, such situation urged him to assess the level of the problem in the stated setting.

We know that reading is highly individualized activity. However, it requires effective learning strategies and careful instructional decision; because, it is highly dependent on learner interest and motivation. In order to meet learners' interest, teachers should first assess students need and background knowledge, which influences one,'s reading practice. Then, they should carefully select texts and activities, which can fit learners need and prior knowledge and bring it to reading session. After that, they can employ suitable reading approach and strategies that are recommended by reading scholars and show students how to make use of them as they read the text and do activities.

Local researchers to examine students reading comprehension skills have carried out few studies and issues related the skill. All findings revealed that students have poor reading comprehension skills. For instance, Mesfin (2008), Sisay (2009), and Teshome (2010) have conducted studies at different grade levels to investigate students reading comprehension skills, to see factors that cause differences on students reading ability, teachers' theoretical belief and their actual practices in the reading classroom respectively. Therefore, the researchers consider valuable to answer questions such as: Which reading approach/approaches do/does students prefer to employ as they carry out reading? What strategies do students make use of to obtain information they need? What type of reading texts and activities are practiced in a reading classroom?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the actual classroom reading practices of students. Specifically, the study planned to identify which reading approach students use as they practice reading, explore what reading strategies students dominantly use while practicing reading examine type of reading texts and activities that are used in the three phases of reading-in pre, while and post reading phases, and describe the students reading practices and recommend possible solutions

RESEARCH DESIGN

The main objective of this study was to examine first year college students' reading practices. To conduct this study, descriptive survey method with both qualitative and quantitative design was found appropriate. The main data-gathering instruments used for the study were questionnaire, and observation. Students' questionnaire was mainly aimed at gathering information about students learning behavior i.e. how they practice reading in the classroom and how their teacher supported them in the session. An observation checklist was designed based on literature review and used during the observation time.

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Approaches to reading

Items	scale	Number of Respondent	Percent
When I read a passage, I follow the steps of identification of letters, words, and sentences to make meaning.	Strongly Agree	64	61.53
	Agree	18	17.30
	Disagree	12	11.53
	Strongly disagree	10	9.6
Total	-	104	100

As in Table1, one can easily see that the majority of the respondents, 61.53 % of them replied that they strongly agree with the statement and hence they often follow the stapes of identification of letters, words and sentences to construct meaning out of their reading. Likewise, 17. 3 % of the population replied that they agree to the statement and hence they practice the stated steps to comprehend what they read. It is

only the minority, 11.53% replied that they strongly disagree with the statement. The remaining, 9.6 % of the respondents replied that they disagree with the statement. Therefore, from information presented in Table 4.2, the researchers learnt that most students depend on bottom-up processing as they practice reading to construct meaning.

Concerning this approach, response given by teachers to the question asked which reading approach their students prefer to use, the following result is obtained. Teacher "A" said, "As I observed them, most students usually read word by word. So, I can say that they use bottom-up approach." Likewise, teacher "B" replied, "students reading speed is very slow. They usually focus on word meaning instead of focusing the overall idea of the passage they read. Hence, they use bottom-up processing" Teacher "C", on his part, stated that he is not quite sure about the approach his students use but he said, "Their reading process is slow and their comprehension is not satisfactory." The other teacher, teacher "D" replied that most of his students do not involve actively in pre-reading discussion which require their former reading experience and background knowledge; so their reading process is bottom-up. In addition, during classroom observation time students were observed as they were straggling to construct meaning at word and sentence levels. Thus, the data derived from all instruments revealed that most students use bottom-up approach.

Table 2. Prediction

Items	scale	Number of Respondent	Percent
Before I start reading, I like to discuss the content of the passage by focusing on topics and sub-topics of the passage.	Strongly Agree	16	15.3
	Agree	21	20.2
	Disagree	35	33.65
	Strongly disagree	32	30.8
Total	-	104	100

From Table 2, one can see that 33.65 % of the respondents replied that they strongly disagree with the statement; hence, they could not exercise prediction of what the passage all about by focusing on the topics and sub-topics in their discussion. Significant number of respondents, 30.8%, also replied that they disagree with the premise; so they could not predict the content of the text by looking at the title and other relevant clues of the text. In reaction to the question, 15.3 % of the respondents answered that they strongly agree with the statement, which implies they predict the text. Likewise 20.2% of respondents replied that they agree with assertion. From the total population, 63.45% of them offered answer that shows they cannot predict what the text all about prior to their reading. Therefore, from the data obtained, it is possible to deduce that most students do not practice top-down processing when they read a passage.

To cross check students replay, teachers were asked a question; which says what reading approach students' use as they read a passage. As a result, the following responses are obtained. Teacher "A's" reply showed that they do not use top-down approach since they read word by word. Similarly, teacher "B's" reply showed that they do not use top-down processing because they unable to employ reading strategies, for instance, inference. Teacher "C's" reply indicated that they use slow and word-by-word reading; hence, it is bottom up processing. Teacher "D's" reply is almost similar to the former respondents. His reply marked that students do not use the stated processing, as it requires their schematic knowledge. However, he does not favor it to be used by the students because they are expected to read much to cope with academic challenges. As an alternative, for the given level students, teacher "B" and "D" suggested that it is better for students to employ their experience and background knowledge as they read a passage.

Furthermore, the data obtained from classroom observation revealed that they couldn't utilize top-down processing in their reading process. During the time, teacher "B" asked students a question on the reading topic hopping that to tell him what they expect to learn from the reading passage "population". For which few students reacted but they were off the point. With regard to this, Sissy-citing Wallace stated that L₂ readers have attended more to bottom-up processing than L₁ readers since their restricted linguistic ability will make it more difficult for them to construct meanings out of top-down processing (Sissy, 2009). From the information obtained, the researcher understood that most students do not use top-down processing in their reading.

Table 3. Use of prior knowledge

Items	Scale	Number of Respondent	Percent
In order to construct meaning from a reading passage, I depend on not only information given in the text but also in my background knowledge and personal experience	Strongly Agree	39	37.5
	Agree	32	30.3
	Strongly disagree	16	15.4
	Disagree	17	16.34
Total	-	104	100

As seen in Table 3 above, 37.5 % of the respondents replied that they strongly agree with the statement. It indicates that they do not only rely on the information in the passage but also rely on their background knowledge and personal experiences. Similarly, significant proportion of the respondents, 30.3% of them stated that they agree with the statement, which shows that they depend on their background knowledge while they attempt to construct meaning. Tiny proportion of the respondents, 15.4% of them replied that they strongly disagree with the statement which marks they do not rely on their schematic knowledge. Likewise, almost equal proportion of respondents, 16.34%, answered that they disagree with the statement. The last two segments of the population, which form significant proportion, about 1/3 of the total population, confirmed that they do not use the given processing model as they read the passage.

From the data obtained, one can deduce that most students employ interactive processing model as they carry out their reading. However, information obtained from teachers showed that they do not utilize this processing strategy. To know what reading approach students use in their reading practices, teachers were asked a question, which says what, approach do students use as they read and they replied as it is stated under Table 4.3. Teacher "A" replied that they have used bottom-up approach since they read word by word. Teacher "B" replied the same; as they have used bottom-up approach, which he dislikes it because it is not productive and time consuming. Teacher "C" and teacher "D" shared responses given by teacher "A" and teacher "B". They replied that students usually use bottom-up processing. Particularly, teacher "D" stated that they have used to practice the model since their early schooling. In addition, responses given for question number one and two stands against this response; because students' once replied that they usually make use of bottom-up processing and they do not use top-down processing. Perhaps, interactive approach puts in to practice the combination bottom-up and top-down models. Interactive approach in reading is an approach, which utilizes a mixture of the two models mentioned above, bottom-up and top-down (see literature review). For instance, if readers find part of a text, which is new and unfamiliar to them, they utilize bottom-up processing to construct meaning. Unlikely, if they find part of a text, which they are familiar, they utilize their schematic knowledge (top-down processing). Therefore, there is a switch of strategies from one to the other (Harmer, 2000; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Nuttall, 1996).

Table 4. Response on how often students involve in pre-reading activities

Items	Scale	Number of Respondent	Percent
We actively involved in pre-reading activities before we start reading	Strongly Agree	62	59.6
	Agree	21	20.2
	Disagree	12	11.5
	strongly disagree	9	8.6
Total	-	104	100

As can be seen in Table 4, 59.6% of the respondents replied that they strongly agree with the statement. It implies, they are involved actively in pre-reading time. Similarly, 20.2% of the population responded that they agree with the statement. This demonstrates that they involve in pre-reading activity. From the entire respondents, 11.5% of them replied that they strongly disagree with the statement, which implies they are not actively involved in the process. The remaining 8.6 % of the respondents stated that they disagree with the premise which marks they do not involve actively in pre-reading activities.

With regard to this teacher, "A" said that they could not involve actively in pre-reading stage because items included in the module are beyond their capacity. Teacher "B" replied that as they cannot discuss and he reasoned out that the pre-reading activities are not appealing and they are not designed in a way that to be tackled using one's prior knowledge. Teacher "C" on his part said, "The pre-reading questions included in the module are difficult. I wonder if students understand the essence of some pre-reading

questions because knowing exactly what the question means is half of getting the answer.” From this, one can infer that students’ do not involve actively during the stage.

Furthermore, information gathered during observation time proved that they do not involve actively during pre-reading phase. When the researcher observed teacher “A’s” class, he recognized that students are gathered around table and murmur but when the teacher attempts to elicit response from them after their discussion, majority of them were passive. After long attempt, some volunteer students raised their hands up to react for the question but their reaction is not to the point and the teacher has kept on encouraging them to react yet he could not succeed much. Then, he ordered them to move in to the actual reading. Similarly, when the researcher made his observation in teacher “B” class he experienced similar situation. Teacher “B” first ordered students to form a group and then discuss the first five pre-reading questions. In his instruction, he stressed that he has expected every group members to react to those questions, as he would ask them randomly. Then students began discussion; after awhile he tried to draw out responses from them yet he could not obtain satisfactory response.

What was observed in teacher “C” and teacher “D” classes were not entirely different from what were observed in teacher “A” and teacher “B” classes. Teacher “C” opened the reading session in questioning. He asked the students to read the title of a passage (population) and to tell him their expectation of the passage. For this question, some students reacted properly but most students remain passive. However, teacher “D” preferred asking the pre-reading questions orally and wanted to take students through whole class discussion but he could not find them tackling all the questions as he expected them.

Table 5. Purpose of reading

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
How often do you set purpose for your reading activity before you start reading?	Always	23	22.11
	Usually	18	17.3
	Sometimes	26	25
	Never	37	35.6
Total	-	104	100

As seen in Table 5, respondents provided various answers to the question asked whether they set purpose to their reading. From the total respondents, 35.6% of them replied never; hence, they have never set purpose to their reading. Similarly, 25% of them also responded that they sometimes set purpose for their reading. Whereas, 22.11% of the population answered that they always set purpose for their reading. The remaining 17.3% of them replied to the question that they usually set purpose for their reading. In contrast, evidence obtained from classroom observation and teacher respondents’ witnessed that they do not set purpose for their reading in advance. From data displayed in the table above, one can infer that most students do not set purpose for their reading.

In academic reading, setting purpose has many functions. It determines the overall readers’ activities during while reading stage. The speed they use; the area they focus on; the choices they make before they read a text are influenced by purpose. Indeed, to make choice is not a simple task; it requires readers to have purpose; say for instance, to obtain some knowledge or current information. First, they need to decide on their purpose of reading. Then, they need to make choice among alternatives to meet their purpose i.e. materials that could help them achieve their purpose. If their purpose is to obtain specific knowledge, they read either modules or books. Whereas if their purpose if to relax, they read either novels or short stories or journals. In addition, purpose helps readers to choose useful and productive strategies for their reading process such as scanning, skimming, or intensive reading. Thus, in the absence of purpose, readers do nothing because they do not know what to do and how to do (see literature review).

Though having purpose in reading is valuable, the classroom situation witnessed that students have never set it before their reading. This could be due to lack of awareness on the importance of setting purpose and inadequate support from their teachers. It requires immediate attention if remarkable change is needed to come in the students reading performance. The initiative better be taken and put into practice by both teachers and students. As professional, teachers are responsible for bringing the intended change; whereas, students are part of the solution because they are responsible for their own learning. Therefore, teachers need to make sure that students set purpose before they are engaged in the actual reading. If not, teachers should provide them necessary help either to train them to set purpose and/or to give them purpose for their reading.

Table 6. Students' response whether or not they were pre-thought new vocabularies

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
How often does the teacher pre-teach you some selected new vocabularies from the passage? Outstrip, paternalistic, Abhorring	Always	19	18.3
	Usually	8	7.7
	Sometimes	54	51.9
	Never	23	22.1
Total	-	104	100

As seen in Table 6, students offered different responses for the question asked if they are thought some unfamiliar words before they engage in the actual reading. For the given question 51.9 % of the respondents replied sometimes which marks they were rarely thought. Likewise, significant proportion of the respondents, 22.1% answered never; hence, it signifies that they never learnt. In contrast, the minority, which totally consists of 18.3% and 7.7% of the respondents, replied that they are thought always and usually respectively.

From the given information, it is possible to understand that students do not learn some technical words during pre-reading time where the time is allocated to deal with this kind of activity and to elicit students' background knowledge on the topic. This, of course, inhibits students overall reading performance. For instance, during observation time "Hypertension and population" respectively were the topic of reading lessons. In those two reading lessons, the researcher learnt that there were jargon words. For instance, in the text hyperbaton, there were technical terms like aneurysm, atherosclerosis, and stroke. Similarly, in the text population there are words like paternalistic, premarital chastity and subsistence. Most teachers did not think these technical terms as they were made bold for students to find their meaning in context but it is entirely impossible to come across to the meanings of these words in this way.

Though there are some unfamiliar terms in the aforementioned passages, only teacher "B" is observed as he thought them. The rest teacher left them to be tackled by the students themselves using contextual clues were it is difficult to come across to the meaning of those words in the stated way.

Table 7. How often Students make scan-reading

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
How often do you make scan-reading (quick and selective reading) to get specific information?	Always	20	19.2
	Usually	19	18.2
	Sometimes	17	16.34
	Never	48	46.15
Total	-	104	100

From the total respondents, 19.2% of them replied always which indicates they always cry out scanning. Similarly, 18.2 % of them gave their response that they usually carry out scan reading in their reading process. In contrast, 16.34 % of them replied as they sometimes perform and the rest 46.15 of the respondents answered that they never practice scan reading.

With regard to this, response obtained from the classroom teachers also indicates that they do not use such reading strategies. For instance, teacher "A" replied that students have utilized intensive reading in all their reading practices and they usually read a text uniformly with slow pace whatever information they need. Therefore, whether they have required getting specific information or general idea or detail information to grasp, they employ the same reading strategy. Teacher "B" added that students know theoretically what scanning or skimming means but they do not put them in to practice whenever necessary. Teacher "C" in his part said, "Students do not implement reading strategies because of knowledge gap how to employ the strategies." This implies that they do not know what procedures need to be employed whenever they want to make scanning or skimming so that they read a text for specific information and a general idea uniformly. In addition, the actual classroom observation also coincides with the teachers reply. In the observed reading sessions, there were activities, which require students to make scanning and skimming to tackle. For instance, during second observation time, teacher "D" asked his students the question, which states: "Who opposes Chinas one child policy?" the answer is specific and the name of the person. To react for this question, students took much time.

In academic reading, during while reading stage, students usually use strategies such as scanning and skimming to obtain some information. Likewise, in the stated stage, the main role of teachers is to facilitate students to make use of these strategies as effectively as possible to meet the desired goals.

Besides, teachers are expected to monitor the overall reading performance of students in the stage; however, most of them have not carried out the aforementioned activities in the observed sessions. In those sessions, teachers left everything for students to do it themselves but students could not perform that. Thus, teachers should strictly follow students whether or not they employ the strategies effectively, and provide them necessary support whenever they are in trouble. During observation session such kind of follow up and support were not observed from teachers to enhance the use of different strategies as well as students reading performance.

Table 8. How often Students make skim-reading

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
How often do you make skim-reading (quick & selective reading from the beginning to the end) to get main idea.	Always	15	14.42
	Usually	14	13.5
	Sometimes	28	26.9
	Never	47	45.2
Total	-	104	100

As shown in Table 8, different the respondents to the question offer responses asked whether they carried out skim reading while practicing reading. Among the respondents 14.42 % of the total respondents replied always which shows that they frequently practice skimming. Similarly, 13.5% of them replied that they usually practice skim reading. Contrary to this, 26.9% of them replied that they sometimes practice skimming. In the same way, the largest proportion, 45.5% of the respondents answered that they never practice it. In addition, findings from classroom observation also coincide with the students' response, which indicated that they do not practice skimming as they read a passage. For instance, during observation time, most students were found hardly to tackle questions asked on the main idea. For instance, teacher "B" asked them to tell him the central idea of the passage but most students remained passive and those of who provide their response were also off the point.

With regard to this, most teacher respondents stated that students have never made use of this strategy while they read. For instance, teacher "A" replied, "They always practice one reading strategy which is intensive reading." The response given by teacher "D" is identical to teacher "A's" replay. He said, "Most students do not use different strategies like scanning for specific information, skimming for main idea. The only strategy they accustomed to use is intensive reading." In contrast to this, teacher "C" replied that students wait instruction from him to use different reading strategies. He said, "If they are asked to use skimming, they employ it." However, the way teacher "C" stated is not the right way of employing skimming because the use of various reading strategies are determined by purpose of readers, the while reading activity or the purpose forwarded by a teacher himself (see literature review). Therefore, from all data obtained, the researcher learnt that most students do not practice skimming in their actual reading. Generally, for the result obtained in the reading classroom, it is not only students should be blamed but also teachers should take some share (Teshome, 2010). During observation time, most teachers did not make much effort as it was expected of them. In EFL classroom, some students need scaffolding to learn and to practice reading effectively (Nuttall, 1996). This is because most students do not receive adequate instruction in all language skills in general in reading skills in particular due to numerous factors where they were in lower grades. Among those hindering factors lack of text book, lack of awareness on new findings, resistance to change are cited as the major challenges observed in reading classroom (Mesfin, 2008; Sisay, 2009; Teshome, 2010). Therefore, teachers of higher institutes should offer necessary support for students to fill the gap. For instance, they could show them stapes to be followed when students want to practice skimming and encourage them to practice the skills by focusing on titles, sub-titles, the first and last paragraphs of the passage they read. In the same way, they had better show them stapes to be followed in scanning and intensive reading (see literature review).

Table 9. Students' response to how often they make slow and careful reading

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
I often make reading relatively with slow speed and careful attention to get detail information.	Always	55	52.6
	Usually	24	23.2
	Sometimes	10	9.6
	Never	15	14.4
Total	-	104	100

Most respondents, 52% of them replied always which signifies that they practice intensive reading frequently to obtain detail information. Significant proportion of respondents, 23% of them answered that they usually practice intensive reading. Opposing to this, the tiny minority, 9.6% of the respondents, replied that they sometimes practice intensive reading. The remaining, 14.4% of respondents answered that they never practice intensive reading. Hence, from the total population 75% replied that they have carried out intensive reading. From the given information, one can deduce that most students practice intensive reading. Likewise, responses obtained from teachers fully supported the reply given by the students.

Despite the fact that, the researcher has some reservation because he has experienced that, students did not practice intensive reading in a way that reading researchers recommended. As Nuttall (1996) stated, for instance, intensive reading is not only meant reading a particular text with relatively slow pace and comprehend the literal meaning of the text, but it requires to decode the maximum information that is held in the text and try to comprehend what is not explicitly stated (see literature review). What the researcher has experienced is most students enjoy reading hardly.

Table 10. How often Students guess meanings of unfamiliar words

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
How often do you guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from immediate and wider context while you read?	Always	33	31.7
	Usually	15	14.42
	Sometimes	24	23
	Never	32	30.8
Total	-	104	100

For the question asked how often they guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, student respondents gave the following responses. From the total respondents, 31.7% replied that they always practice guessing meaning from the context while reading. In the same way, 14.42% of the respondents answered that they usually practice guessing the meaning of new words when they encounter in their reading. Whereas, 23% of respondents answered that they sometimes guess. From the entire respondents, 30.8 % of them replied that they never practice guessing.

With regard to this, responses obtained from teacher respondents contradict with students reply. Accordingly, teacher “A” said, “Most students are poor in guessing meanings of unfamiliar words as they face in their reading. When they encounter such meanings they usually ask him for help.” Correspondingly, teacher “B” on his part responded, “I think it is unusual for them to practice guessing because they couldn’t practice it when they were in high school.” Adding on this, teacher “C” said, “Students do not practice guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words rather they strive for to know only their dictionary meaning.” Furthermore, teacher “D” stated a little bit in a different way, saying that, they are weak in guessing because they have felt that guessing does not take them to the right meaning of words.

After all, during classroom observation, the researcher observed that students who sat next to him ask each other the meaning of unfamiliar words that they encountered. Therefore, by crosschecking all the evidences presented above, the researcher recognized that students do not practice guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words when they encounter in their reading. This, undoubtedly, hinders students reading comprehension because texts are built from words. So, failing to know the meanings of words that form part of a text means, by analogy, failing to construct meaning out of a text they read (see literature review).

Table 11. Students’ response on understanding through discussion

Items	Degree	Number of Respondent	Percent
I like to show my understanding of ideas/issues of the reading text through discussion.	To a Great Extent	12	11.53
	To somewhat	23	22.11
	Very Little	62	59.6
	Not at All	7	6.7
Total	-	104	100

Students replied for the question differently. The majority, 59.6% of the respondents replied very little. This implies, most students almost never demonstrated their comprehension through discussion. Significant number of the respondents 22.11% answered that to some extent for the same question. This

also signifies some students rarely practice the stated task. In contrary to this, the tiny minority, 11.53% of the respondents answered that they like to demonstrate their understanding in the stated way to great extent. The remaining proportion, 6.7% of the respondents replied that they carry out discussion not at all. From the data presented above, one can infer that most students do not demonstrate their understanding through discussion.

In academic reading, one of the most important activities is discussion that is held after students finished their reading. This stage helps readers to retain the most important points of the reading in their mind (see literature review). In the given stage, readers are required to recall important points from the text they read such as events, facts, characters, and make discussion on them. Regarding this, citing (Williams, 1984) Mesfin stated that during post-reading phase students carry out group discussion which should be followed by whole class discussion that help both a teacher and students to check whether or not comprehension is taken place (Mesfin, 2008).

Obviously, as Teshome (2010) also stated teachers may face some challenges in implementing this task due to various factors, for instance, students' poor educational background. For this, they should work their level best to improve the situation and capitalize some good practices.

Table 12. How often Students write the summary of a passage

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
How often do you write the summary of the passage you read in your own words?	Always	23	22.11
	Usually	19	18.2
	Sometimes	35	33.6
	never	27	26
Total	-	104	100

For the question asked whether students demonstrate their understanding of the reading passage through summary writing or not, the following responses are obtained. From the total respondents, 33.6 % of them replied that they sometimes write summary to show their understanding of the passage. Likewise, 26 % of the respondents replied that they never perform such activity after they have completed their reading. Opposing to this, 22.11 % of the respondents answered that they always practice the given task. The remaining 18.2 % of the respondents answered that they usually practice summary writing after finishing their reading.

With regard to this, teacher respondents stated that what is actually happening during post-reading stage in the following way. Teacher "A" said, "Students' are poor in reading comprehension. Mostly, when they reach at the end of the text, they forget what they have read at the beginning. So, they don't demonstrate their comprehension through summary writing." Similarly, teacher "D" replied, "Students do not demonstrate their comprehension through summary writing or paraphrasing because they couldn't practice it when they were in high school." In addition, he said, the module does not incorporate such activity for post-reading stage." Teacher "B", on his part, said that only few students try to demonstrate their understanding through writing summary or paraphrasing. However, for the give question teacher "C" reacted differently. He said, "I strictly follow student's module which doesn't consist of this activity."

In the same way, during classroom observation, the researcher observed that no students demonstrated his/her understanding in the stated way and no teacher was observed as he has encouraged students to do the given activity. Therefore, from information depicted in table 4.12 the researcher understood that most students did not practice paraphrasing and summary writing to demonstrate their comprehension after they have completed their reading activities. Though doing the given activity is a key to comprehension and retention of what they read.

Although many reading researchers agreed, teaching reading can be effective and meaningful if the three stages of reading are effectively implemented, the classroom atmosphere had no good signs of implementation of those strategies. To implement the strategies in the phases of reading, teachers should play a leading role and students show their willingness to practice the strategies as they read. If one of the two unable to overcome their responsibility, the teaching learning process of the stated skill will persist as it has been. From actual observation, the researcher learnt that most classroom practices were contradictory with the procedures suggested by experts.

Table 13. Students if they are motivated enough to find answers for questions

Items	Scale	Number of Respondent	Percent
In reading class, I am motivated enough to find answers for questions from a passage by reading/rereading the text than expecting the teacher to tell me the answers.	Strongly Agree	23	22.11
	Agree	37	35.6
	Disagree	17	16.3
	Strongly disagree	27	25.96
Total		104	100

Students give different responses for the question asked if they are motivated enough to find answers for the questions given through reading rather than expecting their teacher to tell them. From total population, 22.11% of the respondents replied that they strongly agree with the statement which marks they are keen enough to search answers for the questions given by themselves. Likewise, 35.6 % of them answered that they agree with the statement which implies they are motivated enough to carry out the activity. Opposing to this, 16.3 % of the respondents stated that they strongly disagree with the premise; hence, they never be motivated to carry out such activity. The remaining, 16.3% of the respondents replied that they disagree with the statements i.e. they are not entirely prompted to carry out the stated activity.

Concerning this, teachers replied in the following way. Teacher "A" said, "Most students are not capable enough to find answers for the questions because their comprehension skill is very poor. After their attempt, I always tell them answers." Likewise, teacher "C" said, "They do not find answers for the questions because they have comprehension problem. Besides, most of the activities are beyond their capacity." Furthermore, teacher "B" replied that students are not motivated enough because some reading texts are not appealing to them. Finally, Teacher "D" stated that they perform it sometime.

Similarly, information obtained during actual classroom match with teachers' response. During the first observation, teacher "A" used whole class discussion to carry out the post reading activity. At the time, he encouraged students to react to the questions, he found most students answering the questions hardly. In the same way, teacher "C" carried out the whole class discussion for the given activities; what he experienced is not much different from teacher "A's" experience. In the given phase, teacher "B" and "D" preferred to use group discussion and asked students after some time. The responses they obtain from most students were not satisfactory. As a result, teacher "B" ordered them to read the passage once again at home and attempt the entire questions, whereas, teacher "D" writes some answers of the questions on the board and ordered them to complete the rest activities. From teachers reply and what the researcher observed in the actual classroom, he learnt that most students were passive and only few students try to search answers by themselves and responded to the question asked.

Table 14. Students' response whether or not they are given feedback on their reading

Items	Scale	Number of Respondent	Percent
The teacher gives us general feedback on the overall performance of our reading at the end of every reading class.	Strongly Agree	20	19.2
	Agree	15	14.4
	Disagree	24	23
	Strongly disagree	45	43.3
Total		104	100

For the question asked whether or not students are given feedback at the end of every reading session, the following answers are obtained. From the total respondents, 43% of them replied that they disagree with the statement, which implies they were not given feedback. Likewise, 23% of them answered that they strongly disagree with the statement. In contrast, some proportion of the respondents, 19.2% of them answered that they strongly agree with the statement, which indicates they were given. In the same way, 14.4 % of the population replied that they were agreed with the statement which marks they were provided. Thus, from data depicted in table 4.14, one can infer that most of the respondents are not provided enough feedback on their reading lessons.

Concerning this, the following responses are obtained from teachers. For instance, teacher "A" left this question unfilled. Teacher "B" replied, "I provide, by ordering them to share their ideas with their classmate." Teacher "C" said, "I have given them feedback on their reading styles." This is not clear to the

researcher what kind of feedback it is. Teacher “D” also stated, “I ordered them to share their ideas in a group or pairs.”

Although the last three teachers replied as they have given feedback to their students, the way they employed it did not follow procedures of feedback provision (see literature review). There are two reasons for offering feedback in reading classroom. The first is to show readers how well they are reading and processing meaning. The second is to measure how much progress they have been made so far; hence, for both forms of feedback assessments are needed. To improve students reading practices, teacher should carry out both forms of feedbacks. But during classroom observation, the researcher observed that no teacher carried out such kind feedback.

As most scholars agreed, teaching has three major pillars. They are planning, implementing and evaluating. In fact, all these three major parts have detail description and subdivisions. Here some focus is given to evaluation from which feedback is derived. In the teaching and learning process, what comes next to assessment is giving feedback, which is mostly neglected in many ESL reading classroom (Macdonough & Shaw, 1993). Feedback is not seen separately from teaching learning process because it is part of assessment, which logically comes next to it.

In the process of teaching, one of the most important duties of a teacher is giving feedback. Thus, as mentioned before, they should offer feedback to their students because it is a means to correct or improve learners’ performance to strengthen their good practices. From which, students can learn more, perform better, and improve their overall reading performances. If readers exactly know what their strong and weak side, they can work more to keep their strong side and to avoid the weak one; unless they stay in their comfort zone.

Table 15. Students’ response how often they are encouraged to read books and other reading materials

Items	Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percent
How often the teacher encourages you to read books and other reading materials which are written in English language outside the classroom?	Always	27	26
	Usually	9	8.6
	Sometimes	31	29.8
	Never	37	35.5
Total	-	104	100

For the question asked if teachers encourage students to read various reading texts written in the target language, the following responses are obtained. As can be shown in the table above, 35.5 % of the population replied that they have never been encouraged to carry out such reading activity outside the classroom. Likewise, 29.8% of the respondents answered that they were sometimes encouraged to carry out such reading. Apart from this, 26% of the respondents reacted that they are always encouraged to practice reading. The remaining, 8.6% of the respondents replied that they are usually encouraged to make extensive reading.

In relation to this, the following responses were obtained from classroom teachers. For instance, teacher “A” replied that he has encouraged them to make extensive reading through offering them reading assignments on different topics. Teacher “B” said, “I have encouraged them to read much different articles written in the target language, particularly journals and news papers because it helps them to improve their language skills.” Teacher “C”, on his part, replied that he has encouraged them to do so because he believed that extensive reading is useful to improve their reading ability. However, teacher “D” replied in a different way; he said that he does not encourage them to do so because such activity is not included in the module. Though most teachers replied as they have encouraged students to perform extensive reading, during classroom observation there was no sign of encouragement or motivation of students to carry out the activity whenever and wherever possible. From responses obtained, the researcher learnt that students were not motivated and encouraged to carry out extensive reading.

DISCUSSION

However, reading is one of the most important skills, which determine the academic success, or failure of students, the current practices of students’ is not satisfactory. Inability to perform effective reading is not only put a negative impact on students’ language skills but also it hurts their overall academic performance. In the 21st century where the technological advancement reaches its climax and where information is disseminated through various media, electronic and written media, there is no substitute for reading to access any information. Therefore, effective reading ability is unquestionably very helpful.

Particularly, students who have been trained as future teachers shoulder great responsibility to take out children of the community from the darkness of illiteracy by shining the light of education. Currently, students could develop good reading skills and abilities that help them to gather necessary knowledge and skills in their stay at collage and after college as a professional.

Despite the benefit of effective reading, efforts made by natural science stream students of the college understudy is inadequate. Since the researcher has worked in the college, he experienced that most students of the aforementioned field of study had poor reading skills, which inspired him to conduct the study. Thus, the general objectives of the study was to assess students' actual classroom reading practices in line with theoretical frame work of reading set by reading researchers

Accordingly, a descriptive survey method with both quantitative and qualitative design was made use of to answer the previously mentioned objectives. Two data collection instruments, namely classroom observation and questionnaire were designed and used. With regard to the subjects of the study, 104 natural science students and four (4) teachers who offered them the course Communicative English skills-I were involved. Then data from all sources and instruments were tallied, tabulated, analyzed and discussed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Finally, the researcher extracted the following main finding from the analysis and discussion made so far:

The majority of the students surveyed in this study were found as they use bottom-up approach in their reading. The students believed that reading was meant the process of identification of letters, words and sentences and construct meaning out it.

The findings showed that students' do not involve actively during pre-reading time wherein they are expected to discuss with their sit mate on the topic of a passage using their background knowledge of the topic and to predict what it is all about. It was in this stage that the foundation of reading laid down such as by setting purpose, short-listing some guiding questions, which should get answers during while reading stage. Though the information obtained confirmed that students did not discuss and set purpose as they carried out their reading. It was happened that due to factors such as lack of effective pre-reading task, lack of adequate background knowledge and lack of proper guidance and support.

Information obtained from classroom observation and teacher's questionnaire on while-reading phase indicated that students did not utilize reading strategies such as skimming, scanning and guessing meanings from context. Hence students were found as they read the whole text uniformly which clearly shows failure of students to utilize various techniques suggested by reading researchers. Moreover, there is no separate and clearly put while reading activity in the module which leads students to perform the stated techniques as they read a text.

Students' motivation level to reading was very low. Teachers were found doing nothing to motivate them. The reading texts and activities are inauthentic which did not stimulate students to involve actively during different reading stages. Teachers were found unable to rewrite particularly reading activities and present for students in a sensible manner. The provision of feedback in all observed session was almost none. Furthermore, teacher did not encourage students to read extensive reading though it has magnificent role for EFL learners. After all, there was a difference in the students' actual classroom reading practice and what researchers of reading suggested to be practiced by learners.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions reached:

1. The majority of students in this study were found as they practiced reading using bottom-up approach
2. Students did not involve actively during pre-reading time through active discussion, in setting purpose, listing down some signpost questions that guide them in which aspect of the passage they should focus on; predicting what the passage is all about by looking at the topic and sub-topics.
3. There was not clearly put while-reading activity. Students were observed as they fail to utilize reading strategies such as scanning, skimming, and intensive reading flexibly and interchangeably whenever they are necessary during while-reading stage. Rather they stick to slow reading with same pace from the start till the end which is entirely contradicted with the principles of effective reading suggested by scholars of the field.
4. Lack of effective post-reading activity that enhances discussion during stage, initiates students either to paraphrase or summarize what they read in their own words which in turn facilitates students retention skills, improve their recalling ability, facilitates their comprehension skills; even enhances their writing skills.
5. Teachers are unable to maintain the active involvement of students throughout the three stages of reading. They couldn't pre-teach some key words, during pre-reading time; they couldn't encourage students to set purpose; they failed to motivate students to use various strategies; they couldn't offer

feedback at the end the session; they fail to redesign pre-reading activity which they considered it as ineffective for pre-reading phase. They could not motivate students to read various texts outside the classroom even if one of the ways to improve EFL learners reading skills is to encourage them carry out massive reading outside the classroom etc.

6. The big challenge that influenced the reading practices of students was how to put in to practice their knowledge and skills. Students know what scanning or skimming means but they do not know how to make use of them whenever necessary i.e. their practical aspect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers should update themselves with research findings to learn the current convention of teaching language in general and teaching of reading in particular so as to help their students cope with academic challenges.

2. Educational training program ought to focus on approaches, theories, strategies, and techniques of teaching and learning if tangible change is needed to take place. The majority of students were found practicing bottom-up approach as they perform reading because they did not know or understand how to use other approaches and strategies as they practice reading.

3. Teacher should evaluate the activity and redesign it whenever necessary; try to upgrade reading texts to authentic level; they should know the level of their students' background knowledge first and implement techniques such as accretion, tuning, and restructuring.

4. Teachers strictly follow students up whether or not they use reading strategies and provide them necessary help to employ it as effectively as possible. Most students only know the theories of those strategies but not know how they are practically implemented. So, before they order students to employ the strategies, teacher should show them how they apply the strategies i.e. serve as role model.

5. The college should look for ways to improve the reading texts and activities used in the module Communicative English skills-I.

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