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The Effect of Reading Strategy Training on Students' Academic Reading Achievement: Grade Nine Students In Firi Gemta Gera And Yukiro High Schools, Ethiopia, In Focus

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Abstract

This study was conducted to find out the effect of reading strategy training on grade nine students' academic reading achievement in Yukiro and Firi Gemta Gera high schools. Quasi-experimental research design was used in the study using two groups of students:one control group and one other experimental group assigned randomly using a lottery method. Of these two groups, 46 grade nine students were involved in the control group from Yukiro High School and 52 grade nine students participated in the experimental group from Firi Gemta Gera High School. The participants of the study, in sum, were 98 grade nine students. A pre-test before the treatment (that is, reading strategy based instruction or trainging) and a post-test of reading comprehension after the treatment were given to both groups to compare their results and find out the differences. Independent samples t-test and two-sample t-test were used to analyse the test scores of the control and experimental groups using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 software. The findings of the study showed that students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in their reading achievements. Hence, the study concluded that reading strategy training brought a significant difference between the control and experimental groups in their reading achievements. Finally, it was recommended that English language teachers should teach different reading strategies to their students in the schools to develop grade nine students' reading comprehension skills.

Key terms: /Comprehension skills /English as a foreign language (EFL) learners/ English as a second language (ESL)learners/Reading achievements/Reading strategies/

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1. Introduction

1.1.Background of the Study

Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols for the attention of deriving meaning. Reading is an individual activity that requires the use of different reading strategies depending on the goals or purposes of reading. It requires the ability to decode the incoming information using background knowledge which helps readers to recognize unfamiliar words quickly and to figure out the meaning of these words (Johnson, 2008).

Different scholars define reading in different ways. Reading is a purposeful activity in which readers plan activities to be performed before, while and after reading a text. This, in turn, needs different reading strategies depending on the types and purposes of reading (Hedge, 2000). According to Wallace (1992), reading strategies involve ways of processing texts. For Palani (2012), effective reading is an important avenue of effective learning, and reading is interrelated with the total educational process and educational success. This scholar further describes that reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. Accordingly, reading requires identification and comprehension and this implies that comprehension skills help learners to understand the meaning of words in context. So, reading comprehension is an interactive activity between students and contexts; when students use contexts, students utilize different experiences and knowledge which involve language skills, cognitive information and world knowledge.

Metacognition refers to one's ability to understand, control and manipulate the cognitive process to maximize learning. Studies reveal that reading strategies can be taught and that once students' metacognitive knowledge about reading strategies and strategy use is developed, they will become better readers (Farrell, 2001). Block (1986) supports the idea that reading strategies help learners to perform a task, identify which textual clues they have to focus on and to gauge how to make sense of what to do when they have problems of understanding a text. Reading strategies involved in this process range from the simple (e.g. scanning, guessing meaning, previewing) to the most complex (e.g. summarizing, making inferences and identifying tone).

Nowadays, English is taught as a foreign language in Ethiopia - it is taught as a subject starting from kindergarten to tertiary levels in the coutry, and it is a medium of instruction at high schools and tertiary levels found in the country. This suggests that among other things, Ethiopian secondary students are supposed to use different reading strategies to properly comprehend the text they are reading, thereby succeeding in passing from one grade levele to another. For the informed effective use of the reading strategies, however, Ethiopian secondary students have to undergo a systematic approach to the use of the strategies which is called reading strategy based instruction or reading strategy training. To this end, the current study was intended to find out the effect of reading strategy based training on learners' reading comprehension.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Reading is one of the most important language skills at every grade level. On the other hand, readers need a lot of practice, effort and experience to understand information conveyed in a text and reading becomes more complicated when the text is written in a foreign language in which the reader is not proficient enough. In relation to why reading takes place and the relevance of context, Wallace (1992, p.87) states, "There are two things which we all know about reading: first, we use it for a purpose; second, it only makes sense in context that is as part of a larger text or in a situation."

Needless to say, it is not always easy to understand a passage without using certain reading strategies. The reading strategies could mean a lot. They, for instance, could mean task or problem oriented actions or techniques, specific mental operations and methods of achieving particular goals or ends.

According to Brown (1994), reading is a complex process that largely demands the use of various reading strategies which are vital in increasing comprehension. Thus, reading strategy based instruction or training needs to be given due emphasis in reading classes because it helps students become informed, purposeful and active readers who are in control of their own reading (Bouchard, 2005). Reading, as shortly stated at the beginning of this section, is a decisive skill to learn a language or other subjects. It is one of the major language skills, which plays an important role in determining academic success or failure of students at different grade levels. To be successful, students should use different reading strategies and their background knowledge when they read a text. On top of that, from practical experience, the survey of reading tests results show that it seems that most of grade nine students in Firi Gemta Gera high school, which is found in Gera district, have reading problem. It appears that the students in the school lack the specific reading strategies which are necessary for effective reading. It was further observed that it seems that the students have lack of reading strategies, and they do not use reading strategies properly in the school. The lack of reading strategies might lead students to be unwilling to read in the target language. It also appears that the students in the school are usually unaware of when to apply appropriate reading strategies.

A number of studies have been conducted related to reading in Ethiopia. To mention a few studies, Negash Getachew (2008) conducted a comparative study on the methods of teaching reading employed by the televised teacher and the classroom teacher with reference to grade nine students who learned at Jiren and Setto Senior Secondary Schools in Jimma town, Ethiopia. The findings showed that televised teacher used relatively different methods of teaching reading from the classroom teacher. Solomon Abera (2014) further conducted a study on status and determinants to reading skill development on grade four students that learned at three schools (Sera Gudina, Welegabi and Sire primary schools) found in Sibu Sire district which is located in eastern Wollega zone of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. The findings revealed that grade four students who learned in the schools could not understand the text they read, albeit the students were taught through their mother tongue. Chanyalew Enyew, Abiy Yigzaw and Mesafint Muche (2015) on their part conducted a study on effects of teacher scaffolding on students' oral reading fulency at Dona Berber Primary School, Ethiopia. The findings implied that scaffolding reading strategy instruction was effective in enhancing students'

oral reading fluency of grade four students at the school. Nevertheless, these studies differ from the present study pertaining to the research question of the study, setting of the study and topic of the study.

Thus, it was hypothesized that a clear reading strategy instruction could be an effective way to help the students overcome their comprehension problems, thereby improving their academic reading achievement. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of reading strategy training on grade nine students' academic achievements in the Firi Gemta Gera and Yukiro high schools. To this end, the research attempted to answer the following research question:

To what extent does reading strategy training affect students' academic reading achievements in Firi Gemta Gera and Yukiro high schools?

1.3. Research Hypotheses

There are two types of hypohtheses:

(A). Null hypothesis (H_o): There is no significant relationship among reading strategy training, grade 9 students' reading strategy use and their academic reading achievement in Firi Gemta Gera and Yukiro high schools.
(B). Alternative hypothesis (H_1): There is significant relationship among reading strategy training, grade 9 students' reading strategy use and their academic reading achievement in Firi Gemta Gera and Yukiro high schools.

The study hypothesises that there is significant relationship among reading strategy training and students' academic reading achievement.

14. Significance of the Study

It was hoped that the research may indicate solutions to different problem of reading in an English classroom. For instance, it may provide informative feedback for students and teachers to give considerable attention to teaching and learning reading strategies. It may also serve as springboard for those who are interested to conduct further researches in the related area in the future. Furthemore, the study may provide valuable suggestions for textbook designers and writers.

1.5. Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted only in Firi Gemta Gera and Yukiro high schools which are found in Gera district in 2016 academic year. The study was delimited to only assessing the relationship between reading strategy training and academic reading achievement. Moreover, the study was conducted only on two sections of grade 9, in which one section was a control group from Yukiro high school and the other section was an experimental group from Firi Gemta Gera high school. As to the limitation of the study, the study was conducted on only two groups of grade nine students, the control and experimental groups in the schools. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be generalized to all grade nine students or other students found in Ethiopia or elsewhere.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Definition of Reading

Reading is defined as a complex interaction between a text and a reader, which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experience and attitudes. Different scholars define reading differently. Hedge (2000) defines reading as a dialogue between a reader and a text and between a reader and an author. On the other hand, Ur (1991) defines reading as understanding, decoding and translating written symbols in to equivalent sound. Reading, according to Johnson (2008), is a complex process of meaning construction using a number of coordinated skills. These include decoding, word reading, background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and the like. According to Cline, Johnston and King (2006), the National Accessible Reading Assessment Projects defines reading in three ways as follow:

- Reading is decoding and understanding a written text. Decoding requires the translation of symbols in writing systems in spoken words. Understanding is determined by a purpose of reading, context, the nature of a text and by readers' strategies and knowledge.
- Reading is decoding and understanding a text for a particular purpose. Readers decode written text by translating the text to speech, and translating directly relates to meaning. To understand a written text, readers engage in constructive processes to make the text meaningful, which is the end goal or product.
- Reading is the process of deriving meaning from a text. For the majority of readers, this process involves decoding a written text. Some individuals require adaptation, such as auditorization to support the decoding process.

Nuttal (1996) on his part defines reading as transfer of meaning from one mind to another mind or the transfer of a message from a writer to a reader. Nuttal further states that reading is a process by which readers actively involve in creating meaning in a text. This shows that reading is a cognitive activity in which the reader takes part in the conversation with the author through the text. Reading is one of the most important language skills for English as foreign language (EFL) learners, for it enables the learners to gain exposure to the target language and receive valuable linguistic input which help them to build their language proficiency (Erten & Razi, 2003). As to Grabe and Stoller (2002), reading is one of the most difficult language skills to develop to highest level of proficiency for English as second language (ESL) learners. Many learners have difficulties in understanding what they read, in particular comprehending academic text (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Therefore, reading needs a especial attention in foreign language teaching.

Reading is an active, constructive and meaning making process. Metacognition, which is learners' awareness and control of their cognitive process, is crucial tool to successful reading (Alvermann & Phelps, 2002). As Parry (1996) indicates, there is a relationship between the function of reading strategies and culture of readers. Similarly, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) describe that there is a close relationship between

metacognitive and cognitive strategies to L2 reading performance. Furthermore, metacognitive strategies are supposed to be sequential processes that learners apply with the aim of controlling cognitive activities and being sure about cognitive goal, such as understanding a text. Reading comprehension has been identified as the cognitive skill that learners use to comprehend what they read.

The process of reading comprehension provides a link between thinking, textual content and a reader's level of readiness, expectation and objectives of reading. According to Block (2004), the main goal of reading is to construct and structure the intellectual development.

2.2. Factors that Affect Reading Comprehension in Second Language Learning

There are several factors which hinder learners' reading comprehension ability in second language learning. According to Cook (2001), the following factors affect reading in a second language:

- *Factors related to readers.* These refer to the ability of decoding to receive meaning by processing language. Different levels of decoding ability affect reading comprehension, and it is believed that poor decoding ability leads to poor comprehension. Prior knowledge or background knowledge is important aids of reading comprehension. It is reported that prior knowledge or background knowledge is involved in both L1 and L2 processing of what is read. Many learning difficulties result from the lack of general knowledge and cross-cultural backgrounds (Boothe & Walter, 1999).
- *Factors related to texts .* These refer to the readability levels of texts that affect the degree of ease or difficulty when readers read texts. The length of each word and sentence as well as the complexity of structure can cause reading difficulties.
- *Factors related to teachers and school environment.*Factors related to teachers and school environment can affect reading in a second language. Teachers' reading instruction that is enough time to read, peer interaction, students and teacher interaction, expectation of reading competence and adoption of strategies, classroom climate, classroom setting, room arrangement are crucial to develop readers' motivation, attitudes, task completion and reading experience (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Grabe, 2002).
- *Socio-cultural factors.* Language may be interpreted and comprehend differently as a result of readers' social and cultural background and values (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

2.3. Purposes of Reading

Reading is a purposeful activity. According to Johnson (1998), students have their own purposes when they read a text. Obtaining information, understanding concepts and theories and so forth can be the purposes of reading. Similarly, Wallace (1992) describes that reading for survival, reading for learning and reading for pleasure are the purposes of reading. Reading for survival is a kind of reading in which readers read a text to give response to their environment. It is a kind of reading that is related to life. Whereas, reading for learning is a kind of reading in which readers are expected to

acquire some knowledge by analysing information. Reading for pleasure has an influence over the mental ability of readers because it creates a new opportunity for readers to understand and memorize their environment in a better way. It further enables readers to add new knowledge, enjoy literature and do their daily routine that are necessary for life (Milan, 1996).

2.4. Reading Strategies

Aebersold and Field (1997,p.134) define reading strategies as "the mental activities that readers use to construct meaning from a text." Furthermore, Cohen (1990) defines reading strategies as mental processes that readers consciously select to complete their reading tasks successfully. As to Baker and Boonkit (2004, p.302), reading strategies are "techniques and methods that readers use to make their reading successful." They are also plans and behaviours for solving problems which are faced in constructing meaning. Reading strategies are essential for successful comprehension (Waker, 2000; May, 2001; Zare, 2012). Reading strategies as defined by Winograd and Hare (1998, p.102) (cited in Anderson, 1999) are "deliberate actions that learners select and control to achieve desired goals or objectives."

Readers need to use different types of reading strategies to understand and internalize texts they are reading (Stopar, 2003). It is obvious that the more readers use different strategies of reading, the more they comprehend a text. There is a relationship between reading strategy use and reading comprehension level. In this regard, Burnetts (1988) confirmed in his study that students who were taught reading strategy use scored a better result in comprehension than students who were traditionally taught. Burnetts also found in his study that learners who utilised their general knowledge and highlighted the overall ideas from supporting points were more effective than those of students who rarely used any of these reading strategies during reading.

Oxford (1990) suggests that EFL/ESL learners should use reading strategies to be more efficient and effective language learns. Using these reading strategies provides EFL/ESL learners with good models for writing, gives opportunities to them to introduce new topics, stimulates discussion and allows the study of micro language skills such as vocabulary, grammar and idioms. Reading strategies can further help EFL/ESL students to overcome their reading difficulties.

Chamot and O'Malley (1996) classify learning strategies in to three types: namely metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies involve executive process in planning for learning, monitoring ones' comprehension and production, and checking or evaluating how well one achieved a learning objective. In cognitive strategies the learner interacts with the material to be learned by manipulating it mentally. In socio-affective strategies the learner either interacts with another person to assess learning as in cooperation or asking question for clarification, or uses some kind of affective control to assist a learning task. These three types of reading strategies are discussed in detail in the following subsequent sections.

2.4.1. Metacognitive in Reading

According to Chamot and O'Mally (1996), metacognitive strategies refer to strategies that students use to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning goals and processes. Strategies that are used to monitor or regulate cognitive strategies are called metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring of comprehension while it is taking place, self-evaluation of learning after the language activity is completed (Skehan, 1993). According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), metacognitive strategies refer to 'higher order executive skills that may entail planning for monitoring or evaluating the success of a learning activity.'

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) point out that metacognitive strategies are higher order executive skills which involve knowledge about cognitive processes, regulation of cognition, self-management, planning for learning, monitoring and self-evaluating after the learning activities have been completed. Oxford (1990) considers metacognitive strategies as 'actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process.' She describes that metacognitive strategies are essential for successful language learning. Metacognitive strategies such as organizing, setting goals, considering the purpose and planning for a language task help learners to arrange and/or plan their language learning in an efficient way. Oxford (1990) further describes that metacognitive strategies refer to over viewing already known material, paying attention, finding out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task, planning for a language task, seeking practice opportunities, self-monitoring and self-evaluating .

According to Brown (1994), metacognitive strategies include 'checking the outcome of learning, planning one's move, monitoring the effectiveness of any attempted action, testing, revising and evaluating one's strategies for learning.' Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) on their part define metacognitive strategies for reading as 'intentional, carefully planned techniques by which learners monitor or manage their reading.' Metacognitive awareness refers to one's ability to understand, control and manipulate his/her own cognitive process to maximize learning. Metacognitive strategy awareness entails readers' knowledge of strategies for processing text, the ability to monitor comprehension and the ability to adjust strategies as it is needed (Pressley, 2002). This concept offers insight as to how learners manage their cognitive activities to achieve comprehension before, during and after reading. McNeil (1987) describes, "Metacognition refers to one's awareness of what one's purposes for reading are, how to proceed in achieving these purposes and how to regulate self-checking of comprehension and self-test." He further states that a metacognitive process refers to self-knowledge, task-knowledge and self-monitoring. On top of that, Zhang and Seepho (2013) assert that metacognitive strategies in reading are those strategies designed to increase reader's knowledge of awareness and control, to improve their reading comprehension and to evaluate whether their attempt of comprehension has been achieved.

As to Alexander and Jetton (2000), metacognitive strategies are procedural, purposeful, effortful, essential and facilitative in nature. They recommend that readers need to be purposefully or intentionally informed to learn and use strategies so as to

regulate and facitate their learning and comprehension. This is very likely to result in better performance or achievement for learners.

Effective readers know how to use a variety of appropriate metacognitive reading strategies to enhance their reading ability in English. In this regard, a study conducted on metacognitive reading strategy use in second language acquisition has identified the reading strategies used by effective and poor readers (Chamot, 2005). Empirical evidences further show that metacognitive strategies result in more effective reading and recalling among L1 and L2 learners. The use of metacognitive strategies in reading process has been generally supported as a valuable aid for its cognitive, social and linguistic benefits. Many studies (e.g. Carrel, 1995; Wenden, 2001; Chamot, 2005) have studied the positive effect of utilizing metacognitive strategies in reading process. These studies assert the positive relationship between metacognitive strategies and reading comprehension. Wen's (2003) study on metacognition and reading also shows that when students face difficulties in reading comprehension, they tend to use some metacognitive strategies to cope with these difficulties.

According to Oxford (1990), learners' metacognitive strategies allow them to be responsible for their own language learning. These learning strategies help students solve their learning problems and become an autonomous learner. Oxford believes that metacognitive reading strategies provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process. Anderson (2002) also states that metacognitive strategies ignite one's thinking and can lead to higher and better performance. Students who use a wide range of metacognitive strategies perform better on examinations and complete work more efficiently. Learners who have a high level of metacognitive knowledge identify blocks of their learning as early as possible and devise tools or strategies to attain their goals.

Proficient readers use one or more metacognitive reading strategies to comprehend a text. The use of such strategies will be developed over time as a reader learns which ones are best suited to aid in comprehension (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampton & Echevaria, 1998). O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper (1985) state that students who do not have metacognitive strategies will be without direction or opportunity to review their progress, accomplishment and future directions. Moreover, Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito and Sumurall (1993) assert that the use of appropriate language learning strategies often results in improved proficiency or accomplishment overall or in specific skills areas. Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies can help students to understand not only what strategies they can use, but also why, when and where they are supposed to use them at a particular stage, and how to evaluate their efficiency along with awareness of the purposes of reading that might trigger particular strategies (Carrell, 1998; Anderson, 2002). Pressley and Woloshyn (1995) hold that metacognitive information is so valuable, and it is one of the known characteristics of instructional models. These scholars suggest that learners need to be instructed how to use meta-cognitive strategies in classrooms. Similarly, Silberstein (1994) suggests that readers should have the knowledge of their metacognitive strategies.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that metacognitive strategies involve planning for learning, thinking about the learning process, monitoring of comprehension and self-evaluating after the learning activities are finished. It is also known that they are higher-order executive skills which may make planning, monitoring

or evaluating become an important part of a learning activity (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Wenden, 1998).

2.4.2. Cognitive Strategies in Reading

Bouchard (2005) states that cognitive strategies are mental processes which are directly related to the processing of information, which are obtaining, storing, retrieving and using of information. Cognitive strategies are types of learning strategies in which learners use to learn more successfully. Predicting, summarizing, guessing meaning from context, making inferences and using imagery for memorization are examples of cognitive strategies (Oxford, 1990). Cognitive strategies are more limited to specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of a learning material itself (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Studies conducted on L1 and L2 readings provide a binary division of cognitive strategies which are bottom-up and top-down. Bottom-up strategies are defined as making use of linguistics information which are already presented in a text such as understanding the text by analysing the words and sentences in the text itself or looking up unfamiliar words in the dictionary (Graham, 1997). Goodman (1996,p.65) calls the bottom-up model as the "common sense notion.'' In this approach, reading is a process of decoding, identifying letters, words, phrases and sentences to get the meaning from a given text. On the other hand, top-down model advocates "the selection of fewest and most productive elements from a text so as to make sense of it using background knowledge" (Graham, 1997,p. 98). It assumes that reading requires readers to make a prediction and a hypothesis about a text`s content by relating the new information to their prior knowledge and by using as few language clues as possible (Janzen, 2003). The top-down model is influenced by schema theory which emphasizes the importance of readers' background knowledge in a reading process (Carrell, 1998). According to this theory, readers make use of both a text and their background knowledge so as to comprehend a text they are reading. It theorises that reading is a cognitive activity in which readers take part in a 'conversation' with an author through a text by evaluating, asking, checking , predicting, summarising, paraphrasing and translating.

Generally, cognitive reading strategies are considered as one of the features of cognitive psychology which are essential for successful comprehension of a text (Walker, 2000; May, 2001; Zare, 2012). Cognitive reading strategies are mental processes such as comparing, analyzing and inferring that readers consciously use to complete reading tasks successfully (Cohen, 1990).

2.4.3. Socio-affective Strategy in Reading

Socio-affective strategies in reading represent a broad grouping of strategies that involves either interaction with another person or emotional control over learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Generally, they are considered applicable to a wide variety of tasks. As to Vygotsky (1986), the social and cultural environment is an important factor in personal development. Social interaction and interactive learning of learners play an important role in reading comprehension as well as in all learning. This is because students learn well through social interaction with their teachers and peers. Similarly, Vygotsky (1987) introduces that learning will be increased when students learn how to learn together, engage in series of discussion, examine important topics and share

responsibility for applying what they know to the new situation. Asking questions for clarification and cooperative learning are instances of socio-affective strategies.

2.5. Strategy Based Instruction

In 1990's, there was a shift from describing and classifying learning strategies to experimenting with different kinds of interventions in the classroom. The interest was now on whether learners could enhance their learning by either using new strategies or by using familiar ones more effectively (Cohen & Weaver, 2005). Regarding metacognition instruction, Veenman, Vout-Wolters and Afflerbach (2006) state, "Metacognitive instruction appears to enhance metacognition and learning in a broad range of students" because students are encouraged to think about to comprehend a text and how they should do next. For an effective metacognitive instruction, Veenman, Vout-Wolters and Afflerbach (2006) stress the importance of ensuring connectivity by embedding metacognitive instruction in a content matter for connectivity, informing learners about the usefulness of metacognitive strategies and activities, and guaranteeing the smooth and maintained applications of meta cognitive strategies and activities through prolonged training.

Strategy training is defined as the explicit teaching of how, when and why students should employ language-learning strategies to enhance their efforts at reading language program goals (Cohen, 1990). Assessing the need for strategy training, Cohen points out, "the ultimate goal of strategy training is to empower students by allowing them to take control of the language-learning process" (1990, p.70). He, thus, outlines three major objectives for strategy training: to develop the learners' own individualized strategy systems, to promote the learners' autonomy, self-direction and self-evaluation and to encourage learners to take more responsibility for their own language learning. Since these objectives emphasize on the process than the end product of learning, foreign and second language educators need effective, process-oriented and qualitative measures when they examine the success of strategy training.

Students are basically modeled and guided for particular strategies presented through contextual examples supporting how and when to use them. When the students are modeled, they are also explained why a particular strategy is being handled in a particular case, and how useful it is for their reading comprehension. Explicit instruction is important for students' rationalisation of the effective procedures. Therefore, they can recognise appropriate contexts for its uses, develop criteria for evaluating their strategy use, and regulate themselves and their reading process (Hartman, 2001). This suggests that strategy based instruction should be researched (Pressley, 2002). Strategy based instruction creates an opportunity to students to understand not only what they can learn in the classroom, but also how they can learn the language they are studying. Studies conducted on strategy training have found that when strategies are modeled for students and when students have found an opportunity to practice the strategy, their reading comprehension improved (Baker & Brown, 1984).

Chamot and O'Malley (1990) proposed the following four important uses of learning strategy instruction as methodological approaches:

- Mentally active learners are better learners; students who organise new information and consciously relate it to existing knowledge have more cognitive linkages to assist comprehension and recall.
- Strategies can be taught; students who are taught to use strategies and who are provided with sufficient practice in using them will learn more effectively than students who had no experience with learning strategies.
- Learning strategies transfer to new tasks; once students have become accustomed to using learning strategies, they will use them on new tasks that are similar to the learning activities on which they were initially trained.
- Academic language learning becomes more effective if learning strategies are used; academic language learning among students of English as foreign language is governed by some of the same principles that govern reading and problem solving among native English speaking.

3. Research Methodology

3.1.   Setting of the Study

This study was conducted in two government schools which are Firi Gemta Gera and Yikuro high schools that are located in Gera district, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. These schools are found in the southwest part of the country at 420 kms from Addis Ababa. In terms of the study time, it was conducted in 2015/16 academic year.

3.2.   Research Design

The main objective of this study was to determine to what extent reading strategy instruction affects students' reading comprehension or reading achievements. Quasi-experimental research design was used in the study using two groups of students:one control group and one experimental group assigned randomly using a lottery method. Of these two groups, 46 grade nine students were involved in the control group from Yukiro High School and 52 grade nine students participated in the experimental group from Firi Gemta Gera High School. The participants of the study, in sum, were 98 grade nine students. A pre-test before the treatment (that is, reading strategy based instruction or training) and a post-test of reading comprehension after the treatment were given to both groups to compare their results and find out the differences.

3.3. Participants of the Study

Grade 9 students who were registered in Firi Gemta Gera and Yikuro high schools in the 2015/16 academic year were the target population of this study. Totally, 98 students were selected for the study using simple random samling technique which is a lottery method. Among these students, 52 students were grouped in the experimental group and the rest 46 students were assigned under control group.

3.4. Sampling Techniques

A simple random sampling technique which is a lottery method was used to select the two schools which are Firi Gemta Gera and Yukiro schools and to determine the experimental group and the controll group. Furthermore, grade 9 was selected purposefully to conduct the research on this grade level because grade 9 was the grade level at which the problem was identified or observed.

3.5. Instrument

Reading comprehension tests, which were extracted from grade 9 textbook, were used to measure the reading performances of students during pre-test and post-test. The questions used in the pre-test and post-test were objective and subjective types which aimed at measuring strategies such as predicting, scanning, skimming, inferring and summarizing.

The post-test was given for both experimental and control groups. It was given after the experimental group had been taught the reading strategies. The questions in the post-test were objective and subjective types that aimed at measuring the cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies of the students. During the intervention phase, the participants assigned to the experimental group were exposed to the reading strategies training based on the CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning) model which was adapted from (Chamot and O'malley, 1994). The model contains five stages such as presentation, preparation, practice, self-evaluation and expansion. In the presentation phase, students were helped to identify the strategy they were already using. The preparation phase focused on explaining and modelling the learning strategies. The students were explained the characteristics, usefulness and application of the strategies, and they were taught examples and illustration of strategies through reading tasks. In the practice phase, the students were given an opportunity to practice a specific strategy or set of strategies with authentic reading task. On the other hand, in the self-evaluation stage, the students were given opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their success or failure in using reading strategies. Lastly, in the expansion phase of strategy instruction, students were encouraged to transfer the strategies that they found most effective to new context and to develop their own individual combinations and interpretations of metacognitive learning strategy.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

This study consisted three main phases which are (1) pre-testing, (2) strategy training and (3) post-testing. Before the strategy training was given, both experimental and control groups had been given a pre-test so as to assess their prior knowledge of reading comprehension. In the pre-test stage, students were informed to give their appropriate responses without any fear and negative consequences, and one of the researchers facilitated the classroom environment to be comfortable during the test. Then, the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups were marked. Next, the students in the experimental group attended reading strategy training for eight weeks in a semester - for two periods per week. During this time, the students in the experimental

group received instruction based on the strategic-based format. The strategy instruction phase was made following the CALLA model (adapted from Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). The instruction focused on five stages which were presentation, preparation, practice, self-evaluation and expansion. In these stages, the subjects were exposed to variety of reading strategies that enable them to comprehend texts.

After the reading strategy instruction had been given for experimental group for eight weeks, the same reading comprehension post-test was given to both experimental and control groups. Finally, the data gathered using pre-test and post-test were analysed statistically using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.

To ensure validity, the reading comprehension tests were given to appropriate experts for their comment. Furthermore, they were piloted using some grade nine students who learned in the sample schools and who did not participat in the actual study. Moreover, the researchers looked the content of reading comprehension, types and structures of items in the reading comprehension tests to avoid vague, ambiguous and fuzzy ideas and concepts, thereby increasing the reliability of reading comprehension tests. In addition, the mood of the participants when taking the test and the temperature in the room were taken into account in administering the reading comprehension tests.

3.7. Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics which are means and standard deviation have been used to analyse the collected data. Inferential statistics which is independent samples t-test and two-sample t-test have also been used to measure mean differences of the reading strategies of the control and the experimental groups after intervention. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 was employed to analyse quantitative data.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

To get access to the research sites, a letter of cooperation was written to the concerned administrative bodies in the research areas from research and postgraduate coordinating office of College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Jimma University. Furthermore, the purpose and objectives of the study were explained to the participants of the study to get their informed consent. Moreover, the participants of the study were requested to give their appropriate and genuine responses in the questionnaire. The participants of the study were told to carefully fill the questionnaire and not to write their names as well. They were also informed to withdraw from participating in the study for any reason without fear of any negative consequence.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the study. The data gained from pre-test and post-test have been presented, analysed and interpreted in the section.

Table 1: Statistical Analysis of the Pre-test for Control and Experimental Groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Sig.(2-tailed)
Control group pre-test	46	15.00	2.84	.379
Experimental group pre-test	52	15.58	3.53	

An independent T-Test was carried out to measure whether students in the control group and students in experimental group significantly differ on the mean score of a pre-test of reading comparison and vocabulary test (Table 1). The test indicated that the control group (M=15, SD =2.84, n= 46) scored slightly less than the experimental group (M=15.5769, SD =3.53, n=52), and the mean score difference between the two groups is not statistically significant (t(96) = .884, p =.379;95%; CI=-1.87, .72)).

Table 2: Statistical Analysis of the Post-test for Control and Experimental Groups

Groups	Test	N	Mean	SD	Sig.(2-tailed)
Control group	Post-test	46	15.30	1.99	.000
Experimental group	Post-test	52	20.85	3.12	

An independent T-Test was carried out to measure whether students in the control group and students in experimental group significantly differ on the mean score of a pre-test of reading comparison (Table 2). The test indicated that the control group (M=15.30, SD =1.99, n= 46) scored less than the experimental group (M=20.85, SD =3.12, n=52), and the mean score difference between the two groups is statistically significant (t(96) = -10.314, p =.000; 95% CI=14.71, -4.48)). The results reflect that the reading strategy significantly influences reading achievements. These results indicate that reading strategies play a very important role in the students' English reading comprehension tests.

Table 3: Independent Sample Test Result of Pre-test and Post-test for Control and Experimental Groups

Test	Control			Experimental		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Pre-test	46	15.00	2.84	52	15.58	3.53
Post- test	46	15.30	2.00	52	20.85	3.12

An independent T-Test was carried out to measure whether students in the control group and students in experimental group significantly differ on the mean score in the pre-test and post-test of reading comparison and vocabulary test (Table 3). The test indicated that the control group (M=15, SD = 2.84, n= 46) scored less than the experimental group (M=15.58, SD =3.53, n=52), but the mean score difference between the two groups is not statistically significant (t(96) = -.884, p =.379; 95% CI=-1.87282, .71897)). On the other hand, the experimental group (M=20.85, SD =3.12, n=52) performed better than the control group (M=15.30, SD = 2.00, n= 46) on the post-test, and the difference is statistically significant (t(96) = -10.314, p =.000; 95%; CI= 14.7109, -4.47523)). From this, it can be concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control group due to the reading strategy based instructions (the intervention) given to them. The result agrees with Carrell's (1998) study who investigated the relationship between the metacognitive awareness of second language readers and comprehension in both their first and second language reading through metacognitive strategy training, and concluded that better readers were also better strategy users.

Table 4: Independent Sample Test Result of Pre-test and Post-test for Experimental Group

Test	Experimental		
	N	Mean diffrence	SD
Pair 1 experimental group pre-test - experimental group post	52	-5.28	4.51

Table 4 above indicates the paired difference of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group. The mean difference of the pre-test and post-test shows -5.2783 at standard deviation of 4.5075, and the difference is statistically significant (t(51) = -8.430, p =.000; 95% CI= -6.52, -4.01)). This shows that there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test score of the experimental group. The post-test result of the experimental group indicates that the students who have better English reading performance applied cognitive strategies more frequently after the intervention. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experimental group benefitted from the reading strategy training. Oxford (1990) also argue that the more informed the learners are about language and language learning, the more effective they will be at managing their

own learning. So, once learners are trained to use various learning strategies, it is meant that they are armed with the different means or techniques of enhancing their learning outcomes.

The above paired t-test results reveal the control group had weakness in reading comprehension. During the pre-test, the mean score of the control and experimental groups were not wide. That is, almost the distribution of the test score is around the same area. For instance, the result of the mean score of the pre-test of the experimental group was 15.5679; whereas it was 15.00 for the control group. The mean difference between experimental and control groups was 0.5679, which was very little. However, when the mean score of the post-test for experimental and control groups compared, the mean difference is too wide, which is 5.5032. From this, one can conclude that the eight weeks reading strategy instruction given to the experimental group resulted in meaningful improvement in the experimental group.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

Based on the major findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. It can be concluded that most students have reading comprehension problem due to their use of poor reading strategies.
2. As a result of using reading strategy training , students could comprehend reading passages with ease. Hence, it can be concluded that explicit reading strategy instruction enables students to understand a text.
3. The subjects in the experimental group had scored better results in their tests after they had taken reading strategy instruction. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that reading strategy instruction helps students to score a better result in an examination.
4. Reading strategy training helps students to be responsible for their own learning. It further helps them to be active, interactive and cooperative learners.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the major findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were suggested:

- English language teachers should teach their students different reading strategies rather than ordering their students to read a text without teaching them reading strategies.
- English language teachers should modify difficult texts so that their students use different reading strategies when they read texts.
- Furthermore, it would be advisable for English language teachers to use authentic reading materials when they teach their students reading skill so as to attract the attention of their students.

- English language teachers should teach reading skill by introducing and practicing different reading strategies when they teach reading skill for their students.
- Textbook designers should consider reading passages which encourage students to use different reading strategies.
- Textbook designers should prepare reading passage questions which enable students to apply different reading strategies.
- It is suggested that English language teachers should enhance their knowledge and application of reading strategies so that they teach effectively reading strategies to their students.
- Finally, as a limitation, this study was conducted only on two grade nine levels in two high schools. The study would have been more comprehensive if more schools had been included in the study. Therefore, a further and compressive research is needed in the future.

Acknolegements

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