Students' Awareness of Reading Strategies in 'Communicative English Skills' Across Three Ethiopian Universities

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Abstract—The purpose of this study was to investigate students' awareness of reading strategies in 'Communicative English Skills' (CES) across three Ethiopian universities. A sample of 600 first year regular students and 72 English language teachers were part of the research population. The sample of students was obtained through a random sampling technique (lottery method) and the teachers were selected using a purposive sampling technique; respectively. A descriptive quantitative research design was used for this study. Thus, the data were collected through questionnaires from students and their English teachers. Quantitative analysis of data was made using frequency and percentage. The result indicated that students of the three Ethiopian universities have very limited awareness of both cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies. This problem emanates from students' limited exposure and poor habit of reading in English, their lack of motivation for reading texts in English and their teachers' instructional problems of teaching reading and reading strategies. The recommendations are that students should maximize their exposure of reading texts in English and comprehensively invest their time and efforts to improve their reading habit. The English teachers should teach students the overall conceptualizations of reading and its strategies when they teach reading. The teachers should also provide students with technical and professional support and motivation to make them be cognizant of reading.

Index Terms—reading, reading strategies, students' awareness, Ethiopian universities, communicative English skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four basic language skills that a learner of a foreign language should acquire. It is the most important skill that leads a reader to a successful academic career and a productive personal life (Atwell, 2007; Bayless, 2010; Robinson, 2010). Furthermore, Tinto (1993) contends that reading is one of the attributes on which the academic success of a learner depends. This means, an adequate reading ability is needed for a learner to access any written information and make use of it (Pardo, 2004). Every day, students read different texts such as textbooks, reference materials, short notes and other extracurricular materials to gain certain information for the accomplishment of their academic requirements. Thus, it is through reading that students understand different arrays of subjects and then acquire much of their academic knowledge that can be essential to effectively handling any tasks in their academic studies and in their future careers at work (May, 2009). This implies that, for students, reading different materials and developing their comprehension competence is essential.

According to Aragaw (2015, p. 222), "comprehension in reading is conceived as the ultimate goal of reading". He (Ibid) contends that reading comprehension is the process by which one makes meaning from a written text. On the other hand, Broek and Kremer (2000) define comprehension as a process of making a mental representation of textual information and its interpretation, or the extracting of meaning from written words, sentences, and texts. *i.e.,* comprehension is regarded as the ultimate goal of reading. It is a complex and multifaceted process which requires the reader's ability to construct meaning from the text using different reading strategies (Snow, 2002).

Reading strategies are different techniques that a reader uses in all levels and phases of his/her reading to intensify his/her comprehension (Saricoban, 2002; Yenus, 2018; Anderson, 2003; Pressley, 2002a; May, 2009; Jah, 2013a). The strategies are considered cognitive and metacognitive concepts in reading (Karbalaei, 2010). In other words, readers use varieties of reading strategies in the three phases of their reading (pre, while and post-reading) as well as in their reading proficiency levels (early emergent, emergent, early fluency and fluency levels). Various studies have been conducted on different aspects of English reading comprehension in Ethiopian universities. Most of them reported that Ethiopian university students are ineffective in their English reading comprehension abilities (Belilew, 2015, etc.). For instance,

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Belilew (2015) conducted his study on assessing the English reading comprehension ability of second year English major students at Dilla University in 2014/15 using a reading comprehension test and questionnaire as tools. He concluded that the English reading comprehension ability of the students was unsatisfactory. Similarly, Jha (2013a) did a study on overall students' abilities of English language skills including reading at three Ethiopian universities located in the Eastern part of the country (Haramaya, Dire Dawa and Jigjiga universities) and discovered that the reading comprehension ability of the students was ineffective or unsatisfactory. Wondfiraw (2013) studied the effect of infusing intellectual standards of critical thinking on EFL students' critical reading performance at Haramaya University and concluded that the reading comprehension ability of students was unacceptable.

The aforementioned empirical research findings indicated that there is a deficiency in the English reading comprehension ability of Ethiopian university students requiring research in order to identify the major source/s of the problem. The researchers of this study believe that the aforementioned reading comprehension gap of Ethiopian university students might emanate from multifaceted strands of factors such as the implementation of communicative approach of teaching reading, large class size, access and authenticity of reading materials used by the students and students' and teachers' attitudes towards the act of reading. However, the researchers were more interested to investigate students' awareness of reading strategies in 'Communicative English Skills' across three Ethiopian universities. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate students' awareness of reading strategies in 'Communicative English Skills' across three Ethiopian universities in all three reading phases and early fluency levels.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading strategies are mind games through which readers interact with written materials in many ways (Roomy & Alhawsawi, 2019). They are part of learning strategies (Oxford, 1992). Reading strategies have many definitions emphasizing on what readers intentionally do to solve their comprehension hurdles. As to Garner (1987), they are regarded as actions or series of actions implemented in order to draw meaning out of a text. On the other hand, Erler and Finkbeiner (2007) argue that reading strategies are self-directed actions where readers flexibly take control with a certain degree of awareness to retrieve, store, regulate, elaborate and evaluate textual information to achieve reading goals. Similarly, Roomy and Alhawsawi (2019) claim that reading strategies are intentional plans that readers use to help themselves make sense of their reading. They are conceived as deliberate actions that readers take voluntarily to develop an understanding of what they read (Pritchard, 1990a). The strategies are classified under different categories and can be used flexibly to meet the demands of the reading task.

According to Williams and Burden (1997), reading strategies can be cognitive, metacognitive or social by their nature. Cognitive reading strategies are strategies that involve mental processing or they involve the effective and efficient retrieval, storage, and acquisition of information for readers to extract and construct meaning from texts. Metacognitive strategies address readers' knowledge of cognitive resources, awareness of cognitive processing, and the ability to adjust the utilized strategies (Baker & Brown, 1984; Carrell et al., 1998). They are performed by readers to "check the outcome of any attempt to solve a problem, plan one's next move, monitor the effectiveness of any attempted action, and test, revise, and evaluate one's strategies for learning" (Brown, 1994, p. 115). On the other hand, social strategies involve "asking for clarification or verification, cooperating with peers and proficient users of the new language, developing cultural understanding and becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings for the meaning of a reading text" (Oxford, 1990, p. 323).

Readers mostly use the aforementioned three categories of reading strategies to confront their comprehension difficulties (Tercanlıoğlu, 2004; McEwan, 2007). They often consciously resort to different mental techniques to help them identify the sources of their reading confusion and address them accordingly (Alexander & Jetton, 2000). Such sorts of techniques involve reader's mental negotiations of various processes. So, a reader needs to possess both knowledge about the techniques and the ability to apply them effectively in procedural steps (Anderson, 1991), which is one of the notable characteristics that distinguish proficient (good) readers from less proficient (poor) readers.

Good readers always change their reading process in response to the text they are reading (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Through their reading process, they keep connecting skillfully and automatically what they are reading to their previous knowledge and experience. This suggests that when these readers encounter challenges during the reading, they often consciously resort to different mental techniques to help them identify the sources of the confusion and address it accordingly (Roomy & Alhawsawi, 2019). Poor readers on the other hand, often mistakenly believe that they are reading when they are actually engaged in what researchers call mindless reading (Schooler et al., 2004). They are characterized by ineffective reading strategies, insufficient linguistic and background knowledge, unconscious monitoring of comprehension, and inconsistent integration of textual meaning (Wang, 2016).

So, helping students to be aware of and master diverse reading strategies allows them to be proficient and independent readers (Booth & Swartz, 2004). If students (readers) are made to be cognizant of the strategies, they can differentiate the reading strategies that they want to use based on their reading tasks. They can easily handle the pre-reading, in-reading and post-reading strategies that will lead them to attain their targeted goal of reading comprehension. *i.e.*, reading strategies are viewed as roadmaps of comprehension. They are conscious, deliberate and intentional actions that readers use to facilitate their understanding of what they read (Pritchard, 1990a).

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A. Design of the Study

For this study, the researchers used descriptive quantitative research design. Descriptive quantitative research design attempts to describe, explain and interpret conditions of the present (Kothari, 2004; Keith, 2000). Supporting this idea, Babbie (2004) argues that the descriptive quantitative research design specifies who or what is to be studied, when it is to be studied, how it is to be studied and for what purpose it is to be studied. Similarly, Mitchell and Jolley (2007) claim that descriptive quantitative research design helps a researcher to answer questions of who, what, when, where and how. Using this design, the researchers investigated students' awareness of reading strategies in 'Communicative English Skills' across three Ethiopian universities (Arba Minch, Hawassa and Wolaita Sodo Universities).

B. Description of the Research Setting

Wolaita Sodo, Arba Minch and Hawassa are three universities out of the total of fifty two public universities in Ethiopia. Even though these universities are in different geographical settings, they enroll students having similar socio-economic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds; from all corners of Ethiopian Nations and Nationalities (all inclusive in each university). Thus, the student communities of the universities have similarities in their overall backgrounds. All of the aforementioned universities have many colleges and schools training students in multi-disciplinary areas. For instance, Wolaita Sodo University (the youngest among the three) has seven colleges and four schools with 54 departments in total. The first year students of all the departments across the three universities take the course 'Communicative English Skills' as an academic requirement in the first semester of their studies.

C. Population of the Study

The major population of this study was an average of 9, 000 first year regular students who were taking the course 'Communicative English Skills' and 120 English language teachers who were offering the course in the three Ethiopian universities (Arba Minch, Hawassa and Wolaita Sodo Universities) under study.

D. Sampling Technique

For this study, the researchers used simple random sampling technique (lottery method) to come up with the representative and relevant sample (Ruane, 2005; Corbetta, 2003) of first year students of three selected Ethiopian universities. Simple random sampling is a sampling technique which gives each subject or unit of the population equal chance of being selected (Taye, 2005). By this sampling technique, 600 students from the three selected Ethiopian Universities (200 students from each university) were selected for collecting data through questionnaires. For this, the researchers used a lottery method which is one of the two methods of random selection for simple random sampling. As a procedure, the researchers went to each of the universities in the sample, got names of students in each department taking 'Communicative English Skills' as a course, listed them on slips of paper having the same size, shape and color. Then, they folded and mixed up slips of papers in a container. The required numbers of slips were selected at random for the desired sample size.

After having questionnaire data collected from sample of students, the researchers drew the sample of English language teachers offering the course 'Communicative English Skills' by using purposive sampling technique. By using this sampling technique, the researchers selected 72 teachers (24 from each university who were offering the course 'Communicative English Skills' for the classrooms where the sample students were selected) for filling the questionnaires. These teachers were included in the sample by using the purposive criterion that they were offering the course 'Communicative English Skills' to sections of students included as participants of the study. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that includes subjects selected based on the specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria (Taye, 2005).

E. Tools of Data Collection

In order to achieve the intended research objectives by gathering valid, relevant and reliable information from the pertinent sample of the target population, the researchers used students' and teachers' questionnaires. They used questionnaires for both students and teachers with the rationale that this study is purely quantitative. Using the questionnaires, the researchers conducted survey of students' awareness of reading strategies used in 'Communicative English Skills'.

F. Data Analysis

In this study, purely quantitative data analysis was used. The items of both students' and teachers' questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counting and percentage (Porte, 2002). Using the analysis, the researchers examined the students' awareness of reading strategies in 'Communicative English Skills' at the three Ethiopian universities.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Our results are presented in two thematically categorized sub-headings. The first sub-heading deals with students' awareness of reading strategies in terms of whether they control or maintain the distraction of their reading using different techniques and the second is about students' awareness of reading strategies in terms of whether they understand the multifaceted conceptualizations of reading strategies.

(a). Students' Awareness of Reading Strategies in Terms of Whether They Maintain Focus During Their Reading by Using Different Techniques

There are several strategies that readers use to refocus their attention while reading academic texts. To evaluate these strategies, students and teachers were asked five thematically related survey questions. The summary of their responses are portrayed in Tables 1 and 2 and the analysis of the data is presented below each table.

TABLE 1
STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF DIFFERENT READING STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN FOCUS

No	Item	SDA	DA	UD	AG	SAG
		f	f	f	f	f
		%	%	%	%	%
1	I focus only on the text while reading.	46	172	42	156	164
		8	30	7	27	28
2	I reread the text when I lose focus.	83	43	38	220	196
		14	7	7	38	34
3	I try to get back on track when I lose concentration during reading.	60	71	20	246	183
		10	12	3	42	32
4	I try to reduce my reading speed when I lose my reading focus.	42	68	18	232	220
		7	12	3	40	38
5	I guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases when I lose the focus of my reading.	149	332	30	40	15
		26	57	5	7	3

*SDA = Strongly disagree, DA = Disagree, UD = Undecided, AG = Agree, SAG= Strongly agree
f = Frequency, % = Percentage.
*The percentage of each value in the above table is rounded off to the nearest whole number.

As can be seen in the above table (Table 1), students responded to five survey questions all having the central theme of whether they maintain focus/attention while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'. Their responses clearly portrayed that a majority of them were using the techniques of maintaining focus/attention while reading. For the first item that asks whether students focus only on the text while reading, 55% responded agree (27% agree and 28% strongly agree respectively) that they focus only on the text while they are reading. 38% responded the reverse (30% disagree and 8% strongly disagree respectively). The remaining 7% of students responded with undecided. In this case it seems that the majority of students do not totally lose focus/attention while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'.

However, in item number 2 of Table 1, 72% of students responded that they reread the text when they lose focus. This undoubtedly indicates that the majority of students practically lose focus/attention while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills', even though 21% of students responded the reverse or disagree (14% responded strongly disagree and 7% responded disagree to the question) and the remaining 7% responded undecided.

As reflected throughout Table 1, students lose focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills' but 74% try to get back on track when they lose concentration during reading. Getting back to track while reading indirectly implies that the students lose their focus during reading texts and try to refocus their attention.

In a similar manner, 78% of students responded strongly agree (40% agree and 38% strongly agree) that they try to reduce their reading speed as a technique to maintain their reading focus. This implies that the students adjust their reading speed when they encounter a lack of focus in their reading. From the remaining students, 22%, strongly disagreed and 19% responded disagree, but only 3% responded undecided. This shows that some students do not adjust their reading speed even when they lack focus in their reading.

Students were asked whether they guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases when they lose their focus when reading texts in the course 'Communicative English Skills'. Surprisingly, 83% of students responded disagree that they guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases when they lose their focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'. Only 10% of the students agree or strongly agreed that they guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases when they lose focus as a technique of maintaining their reading focus. The remaining 5% responded undecided.

Figure 1 clearly indicates the overall picture of the students' practical usage of different techniques of maintaining focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills' at the three Ethiopian universities.
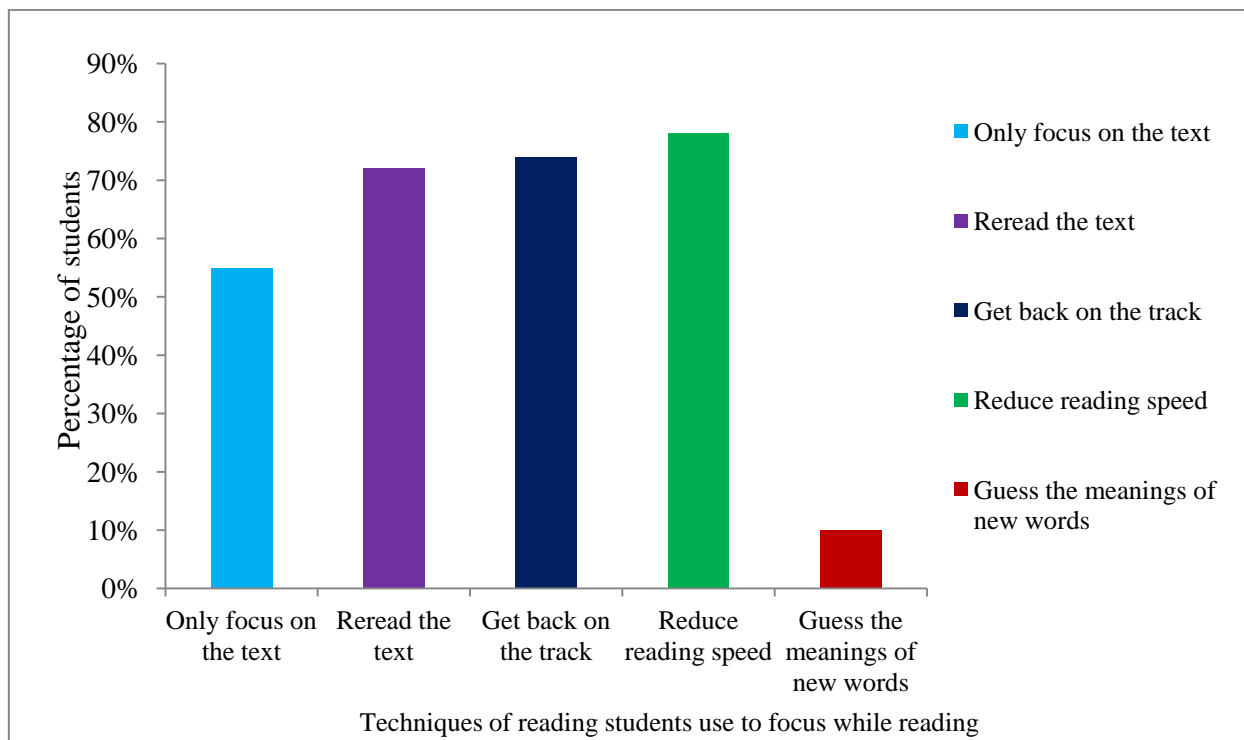
Figure 1. Techniques Students Use for Maintaining Focus While Reading Texts in 'Communicative English Skills'

Teachers were also asked the same survey questions as the students to help us triangulate the data. The summary of their responses is indicated in Table 2 and the analysis is presented under it.

TABLE 2
TEACHERS' RESPONSES ON THE TECHNIQUES THEIR STUDENTS USE TO MAINTAIN READING FOCUS WHILE READING TEXTS IN 'COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH SKILLS'

No	Item	SDA	DA	UD	AG	SAG
		f	f	f	f	f
		%	%	%	%	%
1	My students focus only on the text while reading.	13	52	4	2	1
		18	72	6	3	1
2	My students reread the text when they lose focus.	0	2	2	58	10
		0	3	3	81	14
3	My students try to get back on track when they lose concentration during their reading.	2	10	0	46	14
		3	14	0	64	19
4	My students try to reduce their reading speed when they lose their reading focus.	14	53	1	2	1
		19	74	1	3	1
5	My students guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases when they lose their focus in reading.	16	50	0	4	2
		22	69	0	6	3

*SDA = Strongly disagree, DA = Disagree, UD = Undecided, AG = Agree, SAG= Strongly agree
f = Frequency, % = Percentage.
*The percentage of each value in the above table is rounded off to the nearest whole number.

Teachers clearly indicated how their students try to maintain focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'. Among all of the teachers, 90% (see item 1, Table 2 above) responded that their students do not focus solely on the reading text while they are reading. In other words, this implies that the majority of students lose focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'.

One of the techniques that the students are expected to use to maintain their focus is rereading the text when they lose focus. In line with this, 95% of teachers agree (81% agree and 14% strongly agree) that their students reread the text when they lose focus. Only 3% of the teachers indicated their disagreement and the remaining 3% responded undecided.

Similarly, 83% of the teachers agree (64% agree and 19% strongly agree) that their students try to get back on track when they lose focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'. 17% disagree (14% disagree and 3% strongly disagree) with the statement. No teacher responded undecided for this statement.

However, for the students' practical use of the other two techniques; namely reducing speed and guessing meanings of unfamiliar/new words while reading, the majority of the teachers disagreed (74% disagree and 19% strongly disagree) that their students try to reduce their reading speed when they lose focus while reading. On the other hand, 91% of the teachers disagree (69% disagree and 22% strongly disagree) that their students guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases when they lose focus while reading texts in the aforementioned course. In both cases (in items 4 and 5, see Table 2), an insignificant number of teachers agree and are undecided as well.

(b). Students' Awareness of Reading Strategies in Terms of Understanding the Strategies' Multifaceted Conceptualizations

In this section, students and teachers were asked different items of survey questions to know whether the students had an awareness of multidimensional conceptualizations of reading strategies. The summary of their survey responses are presented in Tables 3 and 4 and the analysis of data in each table is presented below it.

TABLE 3
STUDENT RESPONSES ON THEIR AWARENESS OF READING STRATEGIES IN TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIFACETED CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF READING STRATEGIES

No	Item	SDA	DA	UD	AG	SAG
	Reading strategies are:	f	f	f	f	f
		%	%	%	%	%
1	language processing strategies.	36	52	45	304	143
		6	9	8	52	25
2	conscious plans.	276	219	16	28	41
		48	38	3	5	7
3	tactics for attacking a comprehension problem.	285	90	49	31	165
		49	16	9	5	29
4	mental operations involved in reading.	301	161	63	26	29
		52	28	11	4	5
5	cognitive abilities of a reader.	300	176	50	32	22
		52	30	9	6	4
6	techniques of reading.	92	29	34	370	55
		16	5	6	64	10
7	ways of repairing comprehension breakdown.	198	245	59	58	20
		34	42	10	10	3
8	components of a thinking game in reading.	312	178	28	16	46
		54	31	5	3	8

*SDA = Strongly disagree, DA = Disagree, UD = Undecided, AG = Agree, SAG= Strongly agree
   f = Frequency, % = Percentage.
*The percentage of each value in the above table is rounded off to the nearest whole number

As clearly portrayed in Table 3, students provided responses to eight items conceptualizing reading strategies. Among these eight items, the majority of students provided their agreement to two items namely items number 1 and 6. In item number 1 of Table 3, 52% of students agree and 25% strongly agree that they think reading strategies are conceptualized as language processing strategies. Similarly, in item number 6, 64% agree and 10% strongly agree that they think reading strategies are considered as techniques of reading.

However, for all other items (2,3,4,5,7 and 8) students disagreed regarding the different facets of conceptualizations of reading strategies, such as reading strategies as tactics for attacking a comprehension problem, mental operations involved in reading, cognitive abilities of a reader, ways of repairing comprehension breakdown, and components of a thinking game in reading, the majority of students disagreed.

For instance, 86% of students disagreed that reading strategies are defined as conscious plans, 65% disagreed that they are tactics for attacking a comprehension problem. In a similar vein, 80% disagreed that reading strategies are mental operations involved in reading and 82% disagreed that they are cognitive abilities of a reader. Furthermore, 76% of students disagreed that reading strategies are the ways of repairing comprehension breakdown and 85% of students disagreed that they are components of a thinking game in reading.

Figure 2 clearly demonstrates the students' awareness of the multifaceted conceptualizations of reading strategies.
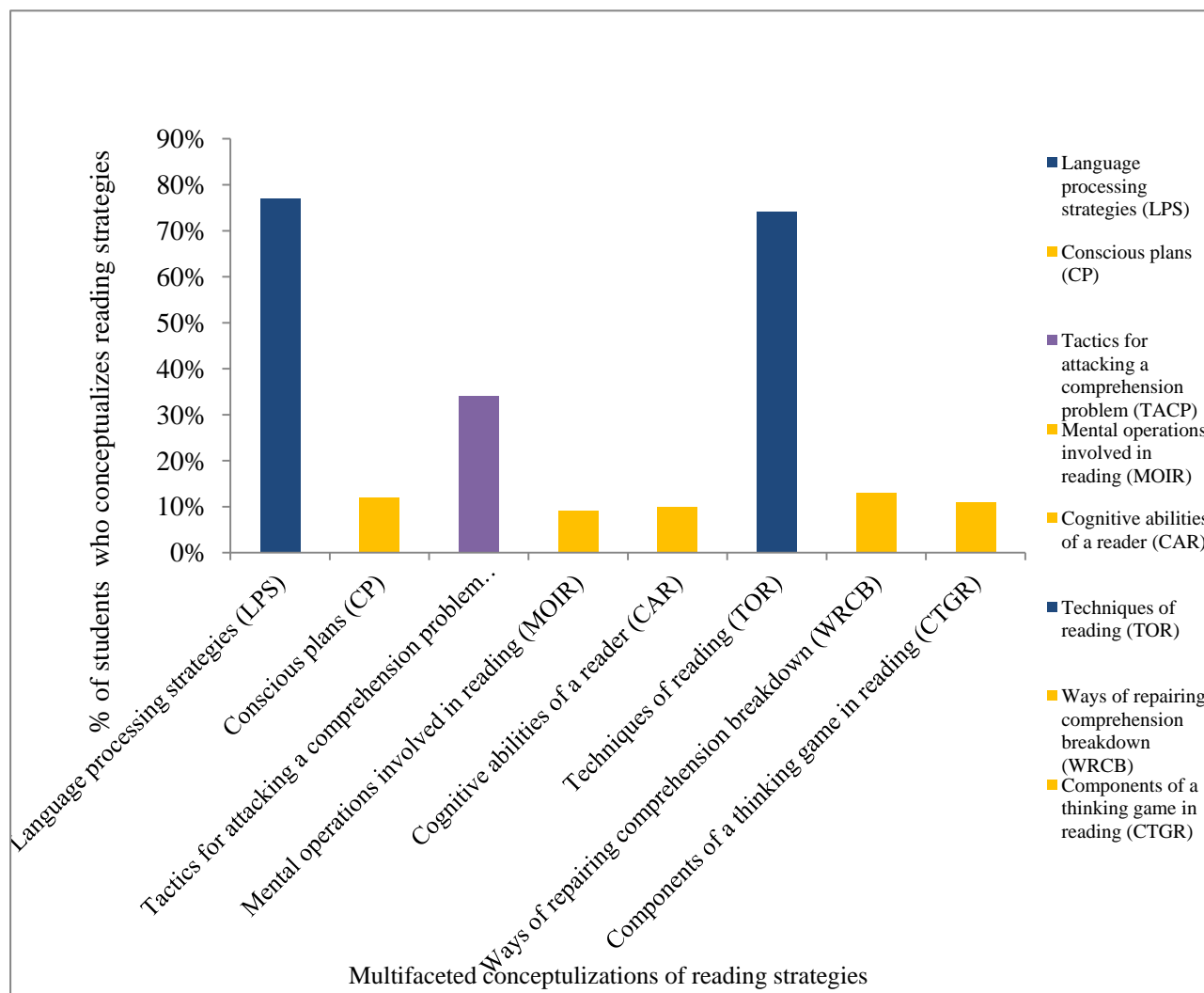
Figure 2. Students' Awareness of Multifaceted Conceptualizations of Reading Strategies

On the other hand, teachers were also asked similar survey items to know whether their students have adequate awareness of how reading strategies are conceptualized. Their responses are presented in Table 4 and the analysis is indicated below the table.

TABLE 4
TEACHERS' RESPONSES ON THEIR STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF READING STRATEGIES IN TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIFACETED CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF READING STRATEGIES

No	Item	SDA	DA	UD	AG	SAG
	My students know reading strategies as:	**f**	**f**	**f**	**f**	**f**
		%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
1	language processing strategies.	9	55	3	2	3
		13	76	4	3	4
2	conscious plans.	16	48	0	5	3
		22	67	0	7	4
3	tactics for attacking comprehension problems.	13	52	2	1	4
		18	72	3	1	6
4	mental operations involved in reading.	8	58	0	4	2
		11	81	0	6	3
5	cognitive abilities of a reader.	12	48	3	5	4
		17	67	4	7	6
6	techniques of reading.	3	3	0	56	10
		4	4	0	78	14
7	ways of repairing comprehension breakdown.	18	46	4	2	2
		25	64	6	3	3
8	components of a thinking game in reading.	12	50	5	4	3
		17	69	7	6	4

The majority of teachers provided their disagreement that their students have awareness of the different facets of conceptualizations of reading strategies. For instance, 89% of teachers disagree that their students define reading

strategies as language processing strategies, 89% of teachers disagree that their students define reading strategies as conscious plans. Similarly, in item number 3, 90% of teachers disagree that their students define reading strategies as tactics for attacking comprehension problems and in item 4, 92% of teachers disagree that their students define reading strategies as mental operations involved in reading. Furthermore, in item number 5, 84% of teachers disagree that their students conceptualize reading strategies as cognitive abilities of a reader and in item 7, 89% of teachers disagree that their students conceptualize reading strategies as ways of repairing comprehension breakdown and in item 8, 86% of teachers disagree that their students conceptualize reading strategies as components of a thinking game in reading.

However, only in item number 6, 92% of teachers responded that their students define reading strategies as techniques of reading which is in accordance with students' responses in table 3 above. This implies that students have a very limited understanding of how reading strategies are conceptualized.

B. Discussion of the Findings

In this section, the discussions of results identified in the previous two sections are presented. The discussion comprises two sub-headings. The first sub-heading focuses on whether the students have awareness of controlling or maintaining the distraction of their reading by using different techniques and the second one is on whether the students understand the multifaceted conceptualizations of reading strategies.

(a). Students' Awareness of Reading Strategies in Terms of Whether They Maintain Focus During Their Reading by Using Different Techniques

Focus in reading is one of the essential techniques that facilitate comprehension. It is a reader's ability to concentrate on or provide attention to his/her reading task (Wager et al., 2004; Sarter et al., 2001). Distractions or lack of focus in reading is controlled or maintained by using different strategies. Among these strategies, focusing only on the text while reading, rereading the text, getting back on track when the focus is lost, reducing reading speed, and guessing the meanings of unknown words or phrases are worth mentioning. The quantitative data analysis was made in the previous sections to see whether the students use these techniques to preserve their focus or not.

The results clearly indicated that the students lost their attention while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills' (55% of students and 90% of teachers affirmed this fact). The teachers reported different reasons as to why the students lost their focus while reading. One of the reasons was that the students had a lack of motivation for reading texts in English. The students also had very low motivation for reading texts in English, particularly in the course 'Communicative English Skills'. Secondly, students had a poor habit of reading; therefore, they were characterized by their poor experiences of reading texts in English. Thirdly, the students had a deficiency in reading competency especially in comprehending reading texts for the course 'Communicative English Skills'.

As clearly indicated by the results of the quantitative data analyses, students had a problem with rereading texts when they lost focus even though 72% of students and 95% of teachers reported that the students tried to reread the texts when they lost focus. However, they did not reread correctly, *i.e.*, they frequently tried to reread (repeat) the whole text from beginning to the end. They did not conduct rereading properly as it requires the repeating of certain essential sections (paragraphs) of a text (Garner & Reis, 1981). Rather, they immediately turned back to the beginning of the text and reread it from beginning to end.

The results showed that the students got back on track when they lost concentration while reading in the course 'Communicative English Skills' (74% students and 83% of teachers verified this fact). However, the students did not know how to get back on track and concentrate when losing their focus while reading. The students perceived their non-technical and continuous repetition as getting back on track or concentration which is not considered as getting back on track to conserve focus. This implies that the students had a misunderstanding of the concept of focus; hence they did not implement it properly. Getting back on track when focus is lost while reading does not involve rereading of the whole text; rather it involves the reading of some selected sections of a text using certain procedural steps.

It was also found that the students did not have satisfactory understanding of the relationship between reading comprehension and reading speed. The students' experience was to read English texts very slowly (78% of students supported this argument). They do not do this intentionally (as a technique of controlling their reading speed); rather they do it because they have a lack of quick reading habits in English. The students' problem of managing reading speed is due to their inherent unfamiliarity of a large number of English words and phrases that distract their reading comprehension when they read texts in 'communicative English Skills'. The students are discernibly characterized by their poor familiarity of a large number of English words, but being familiar to large number of words in English has a facilitative effect on reading comprehension (Alderson, 2000; Stanovich, 1991). So, they are expected to mitigate this problem by using different techniques like guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words.

However, as 83% of students and 91% of teachers reported, the students do not properly use the techniques of guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words or phrases which is contrary to a lot of reading lessons that require students to guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases in the course 'Communicative English Skills'.

Overall, one can conclude that the students had a lack of awareness in reading strategies in the perspective of controlling or maintaining their focus when they lost focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'. Focus in reading requires effective use of different reading techniques, as stated above. The students had a very limited understanding of techniques such as only focusing on the text while reading, rereading the text when they lose focus,

getting back on track when they lose concentration, reducing reading speed to focus and guessing the meanings of unknown words.

(b). Students' Awareness of Reading Strategies in Terms of Understanding the Strategies' Multifaceted Conceptualizations

As cognitive and metacognitive processes, reading strategies have a plethora of conceptualizations. For instance, Cohen (1986) defines them as mental processes chosen by the reader consciously in order to achieve certain reading goals. Block (1986) perceives them as a set of methods and techniques used by readers to achieve success in reading. On the other hand, McNamara (2007); Saricoban (2002) and Yenus (2018) conceptualize them as the different actions that readers use under the purpose of achieving comprehension in reading.

As analyses of quantitative data indicated, the students of the three universities have very limited understanding of reading strategies. They merely think that the concept of reading strategies is only confined to the idea of language processing strategies (as 77% of students reported) or techniques of reading (as 74% of students reported). 92% of teachers verified this fact. This implies that the students had no satisfactory understanding on the technical aspects of conceptualizing reading strategies such as reading strategies as 'conscious plans', 'tactics for attacking comprehension problems', ways of 'repairing comprehension breakdown' and 'components of a thinking game in reading'.

One of the major barriers in students' learning of reading strategies is that students have been exposed to teachers' who have varying levels of English. Ethiopian teachers are teaching English at different education levels and are not properly trained to teach reading strategies successfully. The curricula used for their training at different levels of education comprise of the macro skills of English language (reading, writing, speaking and listening). However, such curricula do not give adequate emphasis to reading strategies which has a clear impact on the students' understanding of reading strategies.

Another source of students' limited understanding of reading strategies is limited exposure to using reference materials (Sanford, 2015). As clearly indicated in the results section, the students do not refer to relevant reference materials, which are available in their university libraries. 'Communicative English Skills' comprises a very large number of lessons and tasks in reading skills; therefore, the students are expected to use varieties of reading strategies to solve their comprehension difficulties.

In general, we conclude that students have very shallow or limited understanding of the multifaceted conceptualizations of reading strategies (77% of students and 92% of teachers reported this fact). The students perceive reading strategies as simply language processing strategies or techniques of reading. However, as cognitive and metacognitive processes, reading strategies are beyond such conceptualizations. They rather comprise multi-layered aspects of reader's cognition of planning, monitoring and evaluating the overall process of reading in three different phases: before, during and after reading (Ozek & Civelek, 2006; May, 2009; Booth & Swartz, 2004).

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

The findings of the study suggest that students of the three Ethiopian universities have very limited awareness of reading and its strategies. The students have a lack of awareness in reading strategies in the perspective of controlling or maintaining their focus while reading texts in 'Communicative English Skills'. The students also have very limited understanding of techniques like rereading the text, getting back on track when reading, reducing their reading speed and guessing the meanings of unknown words.

In general, we conclude that the students have very shallow or limited understanding of the multifaceted conceptualizations of reading strategies. They perceive reading strategies simply as language processing strategies or the techniques of reading. However, according to Pritchard (1990a) and Ozek and Civelek (2006), reading strategies are conceived as cognitive and metacognitive processes that comprise multi-layered aspects of reader's cognition of planning, monitoring and evaluating his/her overall process of reading in three different phases: before, during and after reading with intention to facilitate comprehension.

B. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions made above, the following recommendations have been forwarded.
  ➢ Students should maximize their exposure of reading texts in English
  ➢ They should exhaustively invest their time and efforts to improve reading habits.
  ➢ Students should also invest their overall academic efforts to improve their focus/attention while reading texts in English.
  ➢ Students should improve their reading speed and make use of the technical aspects of conceptualizing reading strategies.
  ➢ English teachers should teach their students the overall conceptualizations of reading and its strategies when they teach reading.
  ➢ The teachers should also provide their students with technical and professional support and motivation to help them to be cognizant of reading in general and its strategies in particular.

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