Evaluation of English for Ethiopia Grade Nine Textbook Reading Texts' Appropriateness: From Teachers' and Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to examine the appropriateness of grade 9 English reading texts in terms of content, authenticity, exploitability, socio-cultural context and students' background, and readability from the perspective of teachers and students. To this study purpose purely quantitative research approach was adopted. As a result, the study employed descriptive survey design and quantitative content analysis design. A sample of 197 grade 9 students and 10 grade 9 English subject teachers were involved in this study. Simple random sampling technique, notably lottery system was employed. The questionnaire and content analysis checklist were data collection instruments. Students' questionnaire had Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient (α) of .81 while the teachers' instrument had a reliability measure of .76. The study found that the reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia textbook are in conformity with the criteria of content suitability, authenticity, exploitability, and readability. However, the fitness of the reading texts for socio-cultural contexts and students' background seem to be suspicious. This seems to indicate that the reading texts do not satisfy the whole measures of appropriateness. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia student's textbook seem to be partially appropriate.

Keywords: Reading texts; exploitability; authenticity; readability

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1. Introduction

The quality of English language teaching and learning materials has paramount importance (Hashemi, & Borhani, 2015; Mohammadi, & Abdi, 2014). Cognizant of such an importance, textbooks play a significant role in the English language teaching and learning steps (Pouranshirvani, 2017) and are the key components of instruction that enable English language classrooms and programs successful (Mohammadi & Abdi, 2014). Similarly, a study by Hashemi and Borhani (2015) depicts that the textbooks play a very crucial role in language teaching and learning and are considered to be the second important factor in the second language classroom compared to the teacher. To fit for purpose textbook must be appropriate for learners. Hence, textbook must be of a suitable level of quality and appropriateness for the context and people with whom they are being used (Hashemi & Borhani, 2015). To address this era's varied interests, needs and backgrounds of learners, textbook evaluation has paramount importance. Notably, textbook should be evaluated in advance with regard to the unique characteristics and specific needs of students and the classroom (Nezhad, Atarodi, & Khalili, 2013). In this regard, textbook evaluation is an important process which can be beneficial to curriculum designers, teachers and students (Karamifar, Barati, & Youhanaee, 2014).

Reading has been acknowledged as the most important language skill throughout the world (McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara, 2013). Of all the language skills, according to McDonough et al. (2013), reading is the most important for language learning through private process. In countries, like Ethiopia, where English is rarely used outside the classroom, reading can be a major source of comprehensible input for language learning (Krashen, 2004, cited in McDonough et al., 2013). As long as reading skill is eminent for holistic language learning English textbooks should comprise quality, appropriate, authentic, exploitable, readable, and sufficient reading texts.

Literatures on reading texts have acknowledged that the efficient reading texts use comprehensible language to the learners, the content of the text is accessible to the learners, motivates the reader to read by providing interesting content or challenging task (Ur, 1999). However, McDonough et al. (2013) attested that the traditional way of organizing textbooks in a unit which essentially focuses on items of grammar and vocabulary is inadequate if we are attempting to teach reading skills. This argument may necessitate the need for evaluating the appropriateness of EFL textbooks in non-English speaking countries. Accordingly, evaluating the appropriateness of reading texts in terms of content, authenticity, exploitability, readability, and socio-cultural context was the main concern of the present study.

Cognizant of Ethiopian context, a study by Belilew (2015) suggested that English language textbooks should be prepared in a way that make learners practice the different types of reading strategies for effective reading comprehension. Similarly, the students reported that the grade 9 English textbook was difficult for them due to new vocabularies, difficult words, complex sentences and unfamiliarity of the topics in the reading passage (Solomon, 2013). Similarly, USAID (2013) stated that English textbook content correctness and relevance to Ethiopian culture in certain instances was erroneous, and only minimal attention was paid to cross-cutting themes. In line to this, although skimming and scanning are useful strategies for learners to operate the text in the reading sections, Hailu (2008) claims that skimming and scanning activities are not included at all. He also found that most of the activities do not engage the students in the reading process by presenting them with decisions making activities such as drawing diagram with the information given in the text solving the problems, and completing a table. Belilew's (2015) and Solomon's (2013) studies found below expected reading ability of students, and their inability to read and understand the passage because of

the gap between the topics and their background knowledge, lack of confidence and lack of interest to read. This study did not analyze the appropriateness of reading texts though it has significant impact on students' reading skill learning. In line to this, a number of international studies on English textbooks revealed that English textbooks were not in harmony with students' culture, customs, and traditions (Hashemi & Borhani, 2015; Mohammadi, & Abdi, 2014) In connection to this, a small number of English for grade 9 textbooks utilize effective vocabulary building tasks and a variety of authentic reading texts (Aftab, 2011).

Moreover, the local studies have revealed that English textbooks have bounded with critical problems that need serious attention of curriculum developers. In line to this, the studies found out that English textbook, in Ethiopia, is not in harmony with students' culture, traditions and customs (Hailu, 2008; Solomon, 2013; USAID, 2013). Despite the fact that there are very few recent studies on English for Ethiopia grade 9 textbook (e.g. Solomon, 2013; Yohannes & Mahlalela, 2015), none of these studies evaluated the appropriateness of reading texts. Therefore, it seems important to evaluate the appropriateness of reading texts as long as reading skill is essential for students' academic success.

However, there is no a study that testified whether reading texts of English for Ethiopia grade 9 textbook are appropriate for students' genuine learning of language skills, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, learning styles, self-learning, pair/group learning, meaning making, etc. Likewise, the content, authenticity, exploitability, and readability of grade 9 English reading texts are not examined yet. This reality called up the present study in order to examine the appropriateness of English grade 9 textbook reading texts in terms of content, authenticity, exploitability, socio-cultural context, and readability.

In principle, reading texts in English textbook should include suitable content, suitable vocabulary and structures, order and proportion, exercise glossary and illustrations (Raval, 2013). Accordingly, the evaluation of reading texts is needed in order to select appropriate and authentic language learning contents that correspond to the needs of the learners and teaching/learning requirements (Pouranshirvani, 2017). As long as reading skill is a key for students' academic success, evaluating the appropriateness of English for Ethiopia grade 9 textbook reading texts in terms of content, authenticity, exploitability, and readability has eminent importance to ensure effective reading skill learning at the inception of secondary school education. Thus, this study sought to examine the appropriateness of grade 9 English reading texts in terms of content, authenticity, exploitability, socio-cultural context and students' background, and readability from the perspective of teachers and students.

Methodology

This study adopted purely quantitative research approach. As a result, the study employed descriptive survey design and quantitative content analysis design. According to Creswell (2012), survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population. Like this study, if the study collected quantitative, numbered data using questionnaires and statistically analyze the data and interpret the meaning of the data by relating results of the statistical test back to past research studies the research design is called survey design (Creswell, 2012). In the same vein, Krippendorff (2004) claims that content analysis is also one of quantitative research design that uses numerical analysis of the contents of a particular text. Thus, the "content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use"(Krippendorff , 2004, p. 18). As a research technique and scientific tool, content analysis provides new insights,

increases a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions (Krippendorff, 2004).

A sample of 197 students and ten grade 9 English teachers were involved in the study. Sample students were selected through simple random sampling technique, notably lottery system. Besides, 45 reading texts were selected using comprehensive sampling technique. To maintain semantic coherence the entire reading texts incorporated in English for Ethiopia grade 9 students' textbook were evaluated for appropriateness. Therefore, the contents of all of 45 reading texts were analyzed for content suitability, exploitability, authenticity, readability, and socio-cultural context and students' background appropriateness. The content analysis of the reading texts was done by seven experienced teachers (including the researcher) who were teaching the textbook. To this study purpose both primary and secondary source of data were used. Primary data was collected from teachers and students through questionnaire. Before actual administration, the questionnaire was pilot-tested to check the reliability and validity of the instrument. Likewise, English for grade 9 textbook reading texts were used as secondary source to conduct content analysis.

Teachers' Questionnaire : In order to collect data from teachers the questionnaire items will be adopted from Aftab (2011), Ali (2010), and Karamifar et al. (2014). Regarding item scales, the alternative "No Idea" was discarded in order to minimize careless and unreasonable response by participants. Teachers' questionnaire had a total of 23 4-point Likert scale items. During analysis, the items were grouped into four categories. Accordingly, suitability of contents had six items, readability had five items, exploitability of reading texts had ten items, and fitness to social and cultural contexts that comprised two items. All items had 4-point Likert scales ranging from completely agree (4) to completely disagree (1). the scoring of scales was as follows: completely disagree=1; disagree=2; agree=3, and completely agree=4.

To check the reliability of instrument, pilot study was conducted on five teachers who taught grade 9 English last year. Accordingly, the instrument had a reliability coefficient of the Cronbach's Alpha of .76 which was acceptable reliability level**.**

Students' Questionnaire: The questionnaire for students was adapted from Ling, Tong, and Jin (2012). The questionnaire had 17 items with four scales. The instrument was divided into four categories: suitability of contents (2 items); readability (6 items); exploitability (6 items) and authenticity (3 items). To minimize careless and unreasonable responses, the alternative "Undecided" was discarded from the scales. Like that of teachers' questionnaire, the items had 4-point scales ranging from completely agree (4) to completely disagree (1). The scoring of scales was as follows: completely disagree=1; disagree=2; agree=3, and completely agree=4. A pilot study was carried out on 10 students to test the reliability of instrument. Hence, the questionnaire had Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient (α) of .81.

Content Analysis of Reading Texts: To analyze reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English student textbook, the content analysis checklist was adapted from AbdelWahab (2013), Aftab (2011), and Ali (2010). The checklist comprised 62 individual items grouped into eight themes. The content analysis checklist for the social and cultural contexts of reading texts theme consisted of five items, while the appropriateness of the contents of reading texts theme comprised seven individual items. Likewise, the theme that dealt with reading texts appropriateness for meaning construction ability of students had nine items; whereas the reading texts appropriateness for reading skill learning opportunities theme had eight individual items. To analyze the appropriateness of grade 9 English reading texts for vocabulary learning and for students' backgrounds, eight and fourteen content analysis checklist items were used respectively. In the same vein, the content analysis checklist for the appropriateness of

reading texts for team-based reading skill learning had four items; while the reading texts' appropriateness for individualized reading skill learning had six content analysis items. All items had "Yes" or "No" dichotomous response options in which the coding was: Yes =1 and No=2.

Data Collection Procedures

Before administering to participants, the instrument was given to well experienced and master degree holder English teachers for validation. Similarly, as stated above the reliability of instrument was checked through pilot study. After validation and reliability testing process, the refined final instrument was developed to collect data. Then, the questionnaire was administered to 200 sample students and 10 English for grade nine teachers. During the collection of the filled questionnaire, the researcher scrutinized completeness of the data and incomplete items were filled immediately by the respective participants. In spite of this fact, the data from three students were discarded because of internal inconsistency and incomplete responses. Before engaging in the reading texts content analysis, the analysts were oriented about the overall analyses process and procedures. Each analyst analyzed the whole reading texts independently. Accordingly, the content analysis was done by seven teachers, including the researcher.

Data Analysis Methods

This study followed purely quantitative approach so that the study employed quantitative data analyses methods. As a result, the whole data were analyzed quantitatively using frequency tables, percentage, and one-sample t-test. To elaborate, the participants' demographic data and content analyses data were analyzed using frequency and percentage. Whereas, the variable related data collected from students and teachers through questionnaire were analyzed using one-sample t-test data analysis methods. One-sample t-test analysis was computed by comparing the observed mean score of the samples with the expected mean score of population. Likewise, the reading texts content

analysis was computed by counting the frequency of each analyst's response in each case. Since each variable had different number of items, the total value varied among variables. As a result, the frequency of each response was counted using SPSS case summary outputs. Overall, the data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 below summarizes the frequency and percentage of teachers by sex, teaching experience, and educational level, while it summarizes students involved in the study merely in terms of sex.

As portrayed in Table 1 above, the number of male teachers (5, 50.0%) participated in the study was equal with that of female teachers (5, 50.0%). However, relatively large number of male students (116, 58.9%) involved in this study compared to female students (81, 41.1%). Regarding teaching experience, most of teachers (80.0%) involved in this study have had more than ten years of teaching experience, while 2(20%) teachers had a teaching experience that ranges seven to ten years. Moreover, as depicted in table 1, all teachers involved in the present study were first degree holders. This result suggests that almost all of the teachers who have been teaching English for Ethiopia subject for 9th graders are bachelor's degree graduates.

Results from Students' Questionnaire

To determine students' perception of the appropriateness of grade nine English reading texts, one-sample t-test was calculated using SPSS version 20. Hence, Table 2 summarizes the expected population mean, calculated mean, standard deviation, calculated t-value, critical t-value, and significance level for students' perception of the appropriateness of the content, exploitability, readability and authenticity of

reading texts included in 9th graders English textbook.

As delineated in Table 2, the calculated mean for the perceived appropriateness of reading texts content (*M*=6.32; *SD*=1.15) was significantly higher than the expected population mean of 5. Hence, the calculated t-value (*t* (196) = 16.108) significantly exceeds the critical t-value (*t*=1.960) at *p*<.001.In the same vein, students perceived that there is appropriate exploitability (*M*=17.36; *SD*= 2.45) the reading texts of ninth graders' English textbook compared with the expected population mean of 15. This result is statistically significant at *p*<.001; as a result the calculated t-value (*t* (196) =13.471) is statistically greater than the critical t-value of 1.960.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics results of the teachers' and students' demographic characteristics

Participants	Variables		Frequency	Percent
Teachers [N=10]	Sex	Male	5	50.0
		Female	5	50.0
	Teaching Experience	7-10 years	2	20.0
		More than 10 years	8	80.0
	Degree	Bachelor(First Degree	10	100.0
Students [N=197]	Sex	Male	116	58.9
		Female	81	41.1

Table 2. One-sample t-test results of students' perceptions of the appropriateness of the reading texts of English for grade 9 (N=19; df=196; α=.05)

Students' perception of the reading texts' appropriateness in terms of:	Expected Mean	Calculated Mean	SD	t-calculated	t-critical	Sig. (2-tailed)
Content	5	6.32	1.15	16.108	1.960	.000
Exploitability	15	17.36	2.45	13.471	1.960	.000
Readability	15	15.93	2.34	5.567	1.960	.000
Authenticity	7.5	8.76	1.80	9.815	1.960	.000

One-sample t-test result also showed that the obtained mean score of the readability of grade nine English reading texts (*M*=15.93; *SD*=2.34) significantly exceeds the expected mean score (15) at *p*<.001. Likewise, the calculated t-value (*t*=5.567) was statistically higher than the critical t-value (1.960). Table 2 also portrayed that the calculated mean value of authenticity of reading texts (*M*= 8.76; *SD*=1.80), as perceived by students, was statistically greater than the expected population mean score, i.e. 7.5. Thus, the calculated t-value (*t* (196) = 9.815) significantly exceeds the critical t-value of 1.960 at *p*<.001.

Results from Teachers' Questionnaire

This study sought to investigate the teachers' perception of appropriateness of ninth graders English reading texts in terms of content,

exploitability, readability, and socio-cultural contexts. Accordingly, one-sample t-test results that comprised mean, standard deviation, t- value, and significance level are displayed hereunder in Table 3.

Table 3 . One-sample t-test results of teachers' perceptions of the appropriateness of reading texts of English for grade 9 (N=10; df=9; α=.05)

Teachers' perception of the reading texts' appropriateness in terms of:	Expected Mean	Calculated Mean	SD	t-calculated	t-critical	Sig. (2-tailed)
Content	15	18.60	1.77	6.409	2.262	.000
Exploitability	25	29.60	3.06	4.750	2.262	.001
Readability	12.5	14.40	3.02	1.986	2.262	.078
Socio-cultural context	5	5.40	1.17	1.078	2.262	.309

As indicated in Table 3 above, one sample t-test was computed to determine whether or not teachers' perception of reading texts appropriateness was statistically significant as compared to expected population mean. In this regard, the results have revealed that there is significantly appropriate content of reading texts (*M*=18.60; *SD*=1.77) compared with the expected mean (15) of the study population. This result was statistically significant at *p*<.001, so that the calculated t-value (*t* (9)= 6.409) significantly exceeds the critical t-value of 2.262. Likewise, Table 3 showed that the calculated t-value (*t* (9) = 4.750) for the exploitability of reading texts significantly exceeds the critical t-value, which is 2.262. Hence, the obtained mean score for teachers' perceived exploitability of reading texts (*M*=29.60; *SD*=3.06) was statistically greater than the expected mean of 25. This result was statistically significant at *p*=.001.

On the other hand, as shown in Table 3, the mean of teachers' perception of appropriateness regarding readability of reading texts (*M*=14.40; *SD*=3.02) was not significantly different from expected mean of 12.5. As a result, there was no statistically significant difference between calculated t-value (*t*(9)= 1.986) and the critical t-value of 2.262 (*p*=.078). In the same vein, the finding of this study revealed statistically non-significant difference between the obtained mean of teachers' perception of reading texts appropriateness in terms of socio-cultural contexts (*M*=5.40; *SD*=1.17) and the expected population mean of 5 (*p*=.309). Therefore, no statistically significant difference was observed between calculated t-value (*t* (9) = 1.078) and the critical t-value of 2.262 at alpha level of .05.

Content Analyses Results

To analyze the appropriateness of reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia student textbook, content analysis checklist composed of 62 items was developed. To maintain the reliability and validity of analysis results seven well experienced teachers (including researcher) had evaluated 45 reading texts included in the textbook. Believably, blending the evaluation results from seven evaluators minimized the suspiciousness of results that might be caused by personal biases of a single evaluator. Table 4 below summarizes the frequency and percentage of grade 9 English reading texts content analysis. It should be noted that the analysis was carried out through counting each case (response) for each individual item checked by each evaluator.

To assess the appropriateness of the reading texts included in grade 9 English textbook vis-à-vis social and cultural contexts content analysis was worked out. As indicated in Table 4, content analysis revealed that 65.71% of reading texts were suitable to social and cultural contexts,

while 34.29% were not suitable for social and cultural contexts of the learners. Likewise, Table 4 portrayed that 67.35% of grade 9 English reading texts contents were appropriate, while 32.65% contents were doubted for appropriateness. Table 4 also indicated that 58.73% of case responses attested the appropriateness of the reading texts for meaning construction ability of students, while 41.27% responded that reading texts were not appropriate for meaning construction ability of students. In the same vein, the analyses results revealed that 64.29% of grade 9 English reading texts were appropriate for reading skill learning opportunities, while 35.71% of analyses output attested that the reading texts were not appropriate for students' reading skill learning opportunities.

Table 4. Frequency distribution for content analysis of grade 9 English reading texts

Themes	Case Responses		Total
	Yes	No	
Appropriateness of the reading texts regarding social and cultural contexts	23 (65.71%)	12 (34.29%)	35(100%)
Appropriateness of the contents of reading texts	33 (67.35%)	16 (32.65%)	49(100%)
Appropriateness of the reading texts for meaning construction ability of students	37 (58.73%)	26 (41.27%)	63(100%)
Appropriateness for reading skill learning opportunities	36 (64.29%)	20 (35.71%)	56(100%)
Appropriateness of reading texts for vocabulary learning	38 (67.86%)	18 (32.14%)	56(100%)
Appropriateness of reading texts for students' backgrounds	67 (68.37%)	31 (31.63%)	98(100%)
Appropriateness of reading texts for team-based reading skill learning	18 (64.29%)	10 (35.71%)	28(100%)
Appropriateness of reading texts for individualized reading skill learning	31 (73.81%)	11 (26.19%)	42(100%)

As delineated in the above table, 67.86% of content analyses result attested that grade 9 English reading texts were appropriate for vocabulary learning, while 32.14% of analyses result revealed that the reading texts were not appropriate for vocabulary learning. Likewise, 68.37% of analyses result confirmed that reading texts were suitable for students' backgrounds, while 31.63% analyses results differed in this regard. Moreover, content analysis was carried out to determine the appropriateness of grade 9 English reading texts for students' team-based and individualized reading skills. In this regard, 64.29% of analysis output affirmed the appropriateness of reading texts for team-based reading skill learning, while 35.71% of analysis results foretold that the reading texts were inappropriate for team-based reading skill learning. In the same vein, 73.81% of results revealed the appropriateness of reading texts for individualized reading skill

learning, while 26.19% opposed the appropriateness of reading texts in this regard.

DISCUSSION

Appropriateness of the Contents of Reading Texts

The most significant measure in selecting a reading text for our students is the suitability of the content (Nuttall, 2000, cited in Ling, Tong, & Jin, 2012). In this regard, this study intends to examine the appropriateness of the contents of grade 9 English for Ethiopia reading texts from the teachers and students viewpoint. Accordingly, the present study results show that the teachers and students have positive perception of the appropriateness of reading texts contents incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia student textbook. The results are statistically significant (see Table 2 & 3 above). Students also believe that the reading passages are enjoyable and make them enthusiastic about reading the topic. English language teachers involved in the study also believe that the reading texts are authentic and sufficient in size. This suggests that the contents of grade 9 English reading texts are perhaps appropriate for students. Likewise, the content analysis result indicates that most of the reading texts are evidently appropriate in terms of developing comprehension skills, up-to-datedness, length and sufficiency. Consistent with this finding, a study by Ali (2010) found that English reading texts in the textbook employed a wide variety of topics as well as values and good manners. Ideally, the content of the reading text should be accessible to the learners to be said efficient content for improving reading skills (Ur, 1999). Hence, this study seems to attest the congruence of the contents of grade 9 English reading texts with previous theoretical assumption. Likewise, a study by Abebe (2016) depicted that 100% of the teachers and 67% of the students agreed that there is a variety of contents in English for Ethiopia textbooks.

Authenticity of Reading Texts

The present study investigates how authentic are the contents of reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia student textbook. According to Ali (2010), the use of truly authentic reading texts is an important means of teaching students to communicate effectively. In the same vein, the language of the authentic reading text efficient in improving reading skills is comprehensible to the learners, and the language of the inauthentic reading text is too difficult which is inefficient in improving learners' reading skills (Ur, 1999). In this regard, the present study shows that the reading texts included in grade 9 English textbook are authentic as perceived by ninth grader students. The result is statistically significant (see Table 2).

Students participated in this study perceive that the reading passages have used a language that is used in real world, and the texts contain real-life issues that challenge them to think critically about their worldview. They also believe that the passages are accurate and up-to-date. This finding implies that the grade 9 English reading texts meet the criteria of authenticity. Consistently, Ling, Tong, and Jin (2012) found that more than 60% of students agreed that English textbook language is used in real world, the reading texts have real-life issues that challenge them to think of their viewpoint, and the texts are accurate and up-to-date. Similarly, content analysis results indicate that most of reading texts are authentic and appropriate for reading skill learning opportunities, and to improve students' team-based and individualized reading skills (see Table 4). Congruent with this finding, a study by Nahrkhalaji (2012) attested that the language used in English textbook was rated as highly authentic and accurate.

Exploitability of Reading Texts

The present study also seeks to assess the exploitability of grade 9 English reading texts from the perspective of students and teachers. Principally, exploitability focuses on both content and language which are the key elements of the reading texts (Ling et al., 2012). In line to this, the findings of this study show that both teachers

and students involved in the study have had a positive perception of the exploitability of the reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia student textbook. These findings are statistically significant (see Table 2 &3).

Students also believe that the reading texts help them construct contextual meaning of the new words, and understand the feeling of individuals from different backgrounds. The teachers also believe that the reading texts are structured for maximal development of students' reading comprehension abilities, and enable students to do some out of class readings (extensive reading). Consistent with this finding, Ling et al. (2012) found that more than 56% of students believe that English reading texts allow them to make inference, apply what they read in their life, identify meaning of unknown words from the context, replace difficult words with simpler words, and new words are repeated for reinforcement. Likewise, Mitchell and Monk (2003) suggest that all reading texts' activities should add to the children's understanding of the text, and the choice of reading texts need careful consideration. As to them this approach is an effective way of teaching the key skills of reading in developing an understanding of the structure of texts. In the same vein, reading texts content analysis also indicates that 58.73% of the reading texts are appropriate for meaning construction ability of students, while 67.86% of content analyses result attests that grade 9 English reading texts are appropriate for vocabulary learning (see Table 4). This finding implies that the reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia textbook partially meets the criteria of exploitability.

Readability of Reading Texts

Readability is one criterion that the reading texts should met so as to be efficient in improving the learners' reading skills. Accordingly, this study investigates the readability of grade 9 English reading texts from the perspective of teachers and students, and through content analysis. Hence, the finding shows that the students have positive perception of the readability of the reading texts. They also believe that the passages in the text are not as such difficult, the new words are worth learning and are introduced from simple to complex, and the sentences have reasonable length. This finding is supported by Ling et al.'s (2012) study which affirmed that more than 50% of the students agree that the passages are not difficult. This study also found that the words are introduced from simple to complex, the sentence length is reasonable, the structural complexity increase gradually, and the new words are worth learning (Ling et al., 2012). Similarly, another study also found that all the new (unknown) vocabulary are easy to learn and guessable by 9th graders (Ali, 2010). Moreover, Nahrkhalaji (2012) found that the reading texts level of readability matches the proficiency level of the learners. This study also indicated that reading passages were rated as excellent regarding their sufficiency, appropriateness of length and difficulty and attractiveness (Nahrkhalaji, 2012). However, teachers seem to have negative perception of the readability of grade 9 English reading texts (see Table 3). Though their response to individual item indicates positive perception of teachers, the overall result shows that the teachers seem to be doubtful about the readability of English reading texts. In relation to this finding, a study by Belilew (2015) attested that the students have problems in reading in English and using reading strategies for better comprehension. As to Belilew (2015) most students have experienced difficulties in reading texts in their studies. Hailu (2008) also found that English reading texts did not consider the skimming and scanning skills.

The above-mentioned findings of this study imply that students and teachers have different perception of the readability of grade 9 English reading texts. Having these contrasting perceptions, inferring as the reading texts have had an appropriate readability level might be misleading. It is therefore important to note that the readability level of the reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia student's textbook seem to be questionable.

Appropriateness for Socio-Cultural Contexts and Students' Backgrounds

An ideal reading text is appropriate for the learners, and in accordance with learners' socio-cultural contexts and learning backgrounds. Examining whether or not the grade 9 English reading texts fit into the socio-cultural contexts and backgrounds of the learners was one objective of this study. In this regard, the findings have shown that the grade 9 English teachers' perception of the appropriateness of reading texts for students' background and socio-cultural contexts is not statistically significant (see Table 3). They perceive that the reading texts do not allow students to explore their present situation or move beyond it to experience different times, discuss different cultural dimensions, different viewpoints and situations. In congruence with this finding, it has been found that the significant numbers of reading topics and contents are not in harmony with the learners' interest and culture (Hailu, 2008).

In contrast to aforementioned findings, content analysis of grade 9 English reading texts shows that 65.71% of analyses output shows suitable reading texts to social and cultural contexts, while 68.37% of analyses result indicates that reading texts are appropriate for students' backgrounds. In connection with this finding, the previous studies have shown that the significant numbers of English reading topics and contents are in harmony with the learners' interest and culture (Abebe, 2016; Nahrkhalaji, 2012). Abebe's (2016) study on grade 12 English for Ethiopia textbook found that 75% of the teachers, and 66% of the students believe that the topics are in harmony with learners' cultural background. Moreover, in all the reading texts, students' background knowledge is activated before reading the text through questioning, picture reading and word clustering (Ali, 2010).

The above-mentioned contradicting findings from teachers' questionnaire and content analysis imply that the teachers' seem to be different in the perception of the appropriateness of reading texts for socio-cultural contexts and students' background. Due to this fact it is hardly possible for the researcher to take a position, and make unbiased conclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

Reading is a substantive skill for students' all-round learning and academic success. It is therefore substantially important to select the reading texts that accompany suitable contents and that are authentic, exploitable, and readable. Likewise, the fitness for socio-cultural contexts and students' background need to be considered while selecting the reading texts. In this regard, the present study seems to provide some fascinating insights into the substantial criteria that significantly determine the appropriateness and suitability of the reading texts. The above-mentioned findings of the study suggest that the reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia textbook are in conformity with the criteria of content suitability, authenticity, exploitability, and readability. However, the teachers' perception of the fitness of the reading texts for socio-cultural contexts and students' background differs from the content analysis result. This seems to indicate that the reading texts do not satisfy the whole measures of appropriateness. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reading texts incorporated in grade 9 English for Ethiopia student's textbook seem to be partially appropriate.

Based on the above findings and conclusions, the study suggested that, as long as reading is the mother of all skills which is a key tool for entire learning, the textbook writers should scrutinize the suitability of the contents of reading texts for students' all-round reading skills development.

Besides, in order to maintain authentic and exploitable reading texts, subject specialists should cooperatively evaluate learner-friendliness of the language used and up-to-datedness of the contents included in reading texts. Furthermore, the forthcoming researcher may examine the appropriateness of reading texts, exercises, and activities in integrating

reading skills learning with writing, listening, and speaking skills learning of the students.

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