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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY OF PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS EFL READING: TINISHU METI AND JAIN PREPARATORY SCHOOLS IN GAMBELLA REGIONIN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the EFL reading attitude of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students at Tinishu Meti and Jain Preparatory Schools, Ethiopia, using quantitative and qualitative methods. Systematic random sampling was used to select 98 samples out of 325 students to provide quantitative data by filling out questionnaire. Purposive sampling technique was used to choose 32 students to participate in FGDs. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 software to calculate mean scores to describe the target students' EFL reading attitude and one sample t-test to compare if there was a significant difference in EFL reading attitude between students in the two schools and between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students. Qualitative data, analyzed qualitatively, were used to find out why the target respondents held certain kinds of attitude towards EFL reading. The findings of the study indicated that most of the sample students had negative attitude towards EFL reading. However, no statistically significant differences were observed between schools and grade levels.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

In Ethiopia English is used as a foreign language (EFL), and is a medium of instruction in secondary and higher education. In this context, EFL reading skill is becoming increasingly important in learning in general and in language learning in particular (Mesfin, 2008). In line with this point, Aydogdu (2007) emphasizes the vitality of EFL reading for success in EFL learning. Therefore, EFL reading at preparatory schools is indisputably one of the most important issues in EFL learning, since students' academic achievement is highly dependent on how much and how effectively they read. Reading proficiency is critically important in educational contexts where English is used as a medium of instruction. However, Amlaku (2008) points out that the English language proficiency of Ethiopian students is low regardless of efforts undertaken by the Government and respective institutions. On the other hand, reading skill is under the influence of students' attitude.

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Since learning English as a foreign language poses a considerable challenge, some students may not hold positive attitude towards learning English in general and reading texts written in this language in particular. According to Wang (2000), 'attitude' is a set of beliefs that learners hold towards certain academic tasks. Put differently, attitude is "an expression of favor or disfavor towards a person, place, thing or event" (Gardner, 1985, p.662). If learners have a favorable attitude towards reading in the target language, they will read a wide range of texts for different purposes. On the contrary, if they have negative attitude towards reading texts written in the target language, they will not have the strength to read and this obviously affects their learning (Kush, Watkins and Brookhart, 2005). Learning English as a foreign language is a complicated task not only because of the linguistic characteristics of the language, but also due to some affective factors such as attitude. The learning context plays an important role in shaping students' EFL reading attitude since it can determine success or failure in language learning (Candlin and Mercer, 2001). Students who learn English as a foreign language can differ in their attitude towards the language from those who learn it as a first or second language. This is true because, as Choy and Troudi (2006) believe, the learners' inner feelings

influence their perspectives towards the target language. This again implies that if students have positive attitude towards reading English texts, they are likely to engage in reading various EFL texts to achieve a variety of reading goals. Conversely, if they have negative attitude towards reading texts written in this language, they are less likely to read such texts. In the context of Ethiopia, English language is being given as a subject in preparatory schools with class contact of five times a week for (40 minutes per class in most cases). Many EFL teachers in preparatory schools complain that most Grade 11 and Grade 12 students have low EFL reading abilities. Experience also shows that the majority of these students do poorly on reading comprehension tests. This problem can be the result of negative attitude towards learning English in general and reading in this language in particular. Therefore, research should focus on this important issue. It is with this rationale that this study examined the EFL reading attitude of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students in Tinishu Meti and Jain Preparatory Schools in Gambella Regional State, Ethiopia.

Statement of the problem

As indicated above, reading is an important tool of second and foreign language learning (Atkins, Hailom and Nuru, 1996), i.e. it especially helps in enhancing our command of a foreign language. Reading helps students to solidify their grasp of vocabulary, structure and others aspects of the language being learned. Therefore, students need to develop their reading skills as much as they can. To this effect, they must have a positive attitude towards the target language and reading texts written in this language. Since attitude is an important variable in reading, research on reading attitude is vital; some studies investigated it in different ways. For example, A descriptive-analytic study called "Motivation, Attitude, and Language Learning" by Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) identified the role of attitude and motivation in language learning. The findings of this study suggested that motivation and attitude play key roles in raising students' proficiency and efficiency in language learning. Likewise, a survey study titled: "Reading Attitude of High School Students: Analysis from Different Variables", conducted by Gomleksiz (2004), as cited in BAS (2012), in high school context found out that reading attitudes of high school students in moderate. However, in spite of some EFL teachers' concerns regarding their students' EFL reading attitude, to the knowledge of the researchers, studies conducted on this issue focusing on Ethiopian preparatory schools are lacking. Therefore, this study attempted to fill this research gap by examining the EFL reading attitude of preparatory students in Tinishu Meti and Jain Preparatory Schools.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the attitude of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students at Tinishu Meti and Jain Preparatory Schools towards EFL reading. Specifically, the study attempted to:

- Identify the attitude the target students have towards EFL reading;

- Find out why students hold a certain kind of EFL reading attitude;
- Determine if there is a significant difference in EFL reading attitude between students in Tinishu Meti Preparatory School and those in Jain Preparatory School;
- Find out if there is a significant difference between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students in their EFL reading attitude.

Review of the related literature

The concept of reading

Reading is a process of decoding meaning from a text (Grabe, 1991). According to this scholar, to be successful in their reading, students must apply efficient strategies such as guessing meanings of new words from context, reading with expectations, making inference about the text, skim-reading to work out the main idea of the text, etc. In a related manner, Paran (1996) views reading as an activity that involves constant guessing and establishing expectations that are later reject or confirmed. This means that the reader does not depend only on the words printed on page, but uses a number of clues to make predictions and connections. In the process of reading, readers use both linguistic knowledge (through bottom-up processing) and schematic knowledge (through top-down processing) in order to interact efficiently with the text as they try to generate meaning. The extent to which top-down or bottom-up reading process is involved more in a particular reading context depends on the nature of the reading text, being reader's reading purpose, his/her language proficiency and background knowledge associated with the text they read, his/her attitudes toward reading and his/her interest in reading a particular text (Anderson, 2000; Koda, 2005). Of these factors, reading attitude is the focus of this study.

Purpose for reading

People read texts for a variety of reasons or purposes: to comprehend a text and answer comprehension questions, to do grammar exercise based on a text which provides context of use, to solve language problems, to improve language ability, to get pleasure, to obtain information, to know the instruction of using a particular tool, to be familiar with a particular country or place, to get idea from decipher inscriptions, etc. As Doff (1997) elaborates, people usually read texts to achieve certain purpose such as to get pleasure, to extract information they want to check or clarify an idea or an assumption. According to Grellet (1996), reading purposes include reading for survival (information), reading for learning (academic) and reading for pleasure (entertainment). For instance, reading for survival or information is done in response to our environment, for example, to find out information from street signs, advertisements, time tables, menu, schedules, etc. It highly depends on the day-to-day needs of the reader and often involves an immediate response to a situation (Wallace, 1992). Grellet (1996) states that people read books "in order to find out something or in order to do something with the information [they] get" (p.4). Similarly, Nuttall (1996) asserts

that people read because they want to obtain something from the written text. For example, in this era of information proliferation, people are busy collecting and storing information, getting updates on business, culture, politics foreign affairs, conflicts, etc. from newspapers, magazines and other texts. Now a day, reading skill in English as second or foreign language is crucial for utilizing the internet, newspapers and magazines written in this language. Moreover, people travel to study abroad, deal with overseas customers, perform professional jobs and engage in a variety of transactions which necessitate the ability to read and understand English texts (Nuttall, 1996).

Williams (1996) states that the need to obtain information in English is one of the most important reading purposes that students have in learning English. For instance, students read texts to get information that they want to answer of certain questions upon certain issues, or to confirm their inferences. To put it in Doff's (1997) words, "Questions and guesses ... make us want to read [because we want to know answers]" (P. 171). At this point, it is worth noting that in order to achieve one's reading purpose such as obtaining information; the reader's positive attitude plays an important role. Positive reading attitude helps readers (students in this case) to read with interest and to persist in reading (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995). The other purpose for reading is academic reading/reading for learning. According to McDonough and Shaw (1993), reading is obviously one of the most important academic skills. That is, reading is the most important foreign language skill, particularly in cases where students have to read English material for their own specialist subject. Especially, where English is a foreign language and used as the language of academia, reading is a critically important skill since it is through reading that students acquire a great deal of learning. To get the most out of their educational reading, apart from knowledge of the instructional language and mastery of effective reading strategies, they must possess a positive attitude towards academic reading. Therefore, attitude towards academic reading is one of the areas EFL research should concentrate on.

Reading for pleasure is the other purpose for reading. As Nell (1988) explicates, reading for pleasure is a form of play that allows readers to experience other worlds and roles in their imagination. Holden (2004) also conceives reading as a creative involvement that is far removed from the passive pursuit it is frequently perceived to be. Others view reading for pleasure as a hermeneutic, interpretative activity shaped by the reader's expectations and experiences in connection to particular social contexts (Graff, 1992). Krashen's (1993, p.85) elaborates more on this point in the following lines:

When children read for pleasure, when they get "hooked on books", they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called "language skills" many people are so concerned about: they will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good spellers. Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable

level. Without it, suspect that children simply do not have a chance.

Reading for pleasure may have the capacity to improve students' reading attitude (Wallace, 1992). This form of reading is essential to encourage students to build a love for reading and become life-long readers (Sanacore, 2000). Studies show that there is a positive relationship between the amount of independent reading students do and their achievement in school (Anderson, Wilson and Fielding, 1988). McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) point out that poor attitude will be understood as the lack of desire to read. Students who are capable readers may not have a strong positive attitude towards reading if they expect that another activity would give them more satisfying results. Therefore, reading for pleasure should be enhanced to help students to develop positive attitude towards reading and develop independent reading habits. Generally, as Nutall (1996) stresses the central reason behind reading is the extraction of meaning from a text based on one's reading purpose. Similarly, Brown (2000) explains that efficient reading consist of clearly identifying the purpose for reading. Thus, the process and purpose for reading should be related to students' attitude. This means that if one does not have positive attitude towards reading, he/she will not succeed in extracting meaning from the written text for a particular purpose.

Reading attitude

As indicated above, reading in a new language requires appropriate attitude on the part of students. Logan and Jounston (2009) maintain that reading attitude is an important factor that determines students' reading involvement and achievement. Attitude can be viewed from behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions (Choy and Troudi, 2006). The way one behaves and reacts in particular situations concerns the behavioral aspect of attitude. Successful language learning inspires learners to interact with the native speakers of that language. This in turn helps them to acquire various aspects of behavior which characterize the members of the target language community. The cognitive aspect of attitude involves the beliefs of language learners about the knowledge and understanding they gain in the process of language learning. The cognitive component of attitude can be further classified into four steps: connecting the previous knowledge with the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge and applying the new knowledge in many situations.

The affective aspect of attitude enables people to express whether they like or dislike the objects or surrounding situations. This implies that the inner feelings and emotions of learners help them to establish perspectives or attitudes towards the target language, which affects them positively or negatively in their learning moves (Choy and Troudi, 2006). McGuire (1969), as cited in Oscamp (1977), suggests that the three components of attitude are closely interrelated. Thus, it is necessary that students develop positive attitude towards a new language and reading materials written in this language. In the Ethiopian context, preparatory school students are expected to engage tremendously in reading English texts for academic and

other purposes. Therefore, to deal with the daunting amounts of reading effectively, they have to develop positive attitude toward learning English in general and reading texts written in English in particular. This argument is related to the view forwarded by Roettger, Yimczuk and Millard (1979), as cited in Ünal (2010) that students must develop positive attitude towards reading since it is crucial in terms of measuring and assessing the objective of reading skills.

The role of attitude in reading

Sainsbury (2004) stresses that reading education has two fundamental objectives: developing reading skills and enhancing positive attitudes towards reading. The implication is that studies of reading should emphasize attitude, since attitude towards reading predicts academic achievement (House and Prion, 1998; Hood, Creed and Neumann, 2012). Reading attitude is thus an important factor that affects students' reading achievement, impacts on learning success and determines whether learners will become independent readers or not (Lipson and Wixson, 1992; Logan and Johnston, 2009). Since reading is the foundation for functioning in school and as a member of society, students' reading attitude determines their future successes (Wang, 2000). In addition, given the critical importance of reading in today's society, it is important that students develop positive attitude towards reading as early as possible. Thus, children's understanding of the purposes for learning to read and their positive attitudes towards reading are fundamental to their attitudes as adults (Davis, 1995). Reading attitude plays a fundamental role in the development of lifelong reading skills among students (Krashen, 2002). It is established that positive reading attitudes lead to positive reading experiences, which lead to a higher academic performance. According to Wang (2000), "If students do not like reading or they think reading is boring, their negative attitude towards reading will hinder their reading improvement" (p.120).

Reading educators and researchers have shown keen interest in reading attitude of students as a variable that influences reading achievement. Educators deal with the issue of attitude daily in their classrooms and are constantly trying to find a way in which they can improve their students' attitudes toward reading. In this regard, McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) argue that understanding the role of attitude in developing students' reading attitude is important for two principal reasons. Firstly, attitude can affect the level of achievement that students ultimately attain due to its influence on engagement and practice. Secondly, even for the fluent readers, poor attitude may compromise the decision to read in the face of other options. However, not many teachers evaluate their students' reading attitude and make efforts to improve it (Howard, 1988). This shows that students' reading attitude along with teachers' efforts to improve it should receive adequate emphasis in research.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This study employed a descriptive-comparative survey which used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive

method was employed to describe the EFL reading attitude of students in both preparatory schools. In addition, the study aimed to compare the students by school and grade level in their EFL reading attitude. Therefore, quantitative method was used for answering specific research objectives 1, 3 and 4 indicated 1.3 above. On the other hand, qualitative method was used since the research also aimed to identify why the target students held certain kinds attitude towards EFL reading (research objective 2).

Population and sampling

Grade 11 and Grade 12 students in Tinishu Meti and Jain Preparatory Schools in Gambella Region were the population of this study. The schools and grade levels of the study were selected using convenient sampling technique. The total number of students learning in Grade 11 and Grade 12 in Tinishu Meti Preparatory Schools in the 2014/2015 academic year was 88 and 112 respectively, while the number of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students in Jain Preparatory School in the same academic year was 76 and 49 respectively. Therefore, the total number of students in the two schools was 325. The researcher used systematic random sampling technique to select student respondents for the quantitative survey taking 30% of the total population in each grade in the respective schools. Thirty percent of the population was taken in order to maximize the sample size. Accordingly, the samples were 98 students as indicated below:

No	Name of School	Total Population	Samples
1	Tinishu Meti	Grade 11 = 88	26
		Grade 12 = 112	34
2	Jain	Grade 11 = 76	23
		Grade 12 = 49	15
Total		325	98

On the other hand, the researcher used purposive sampling to recruit participants for focus group discussions (FGDs). An FGD was conducted with 8 students in each grade level. In this way, 32 participants (16 from Grade 11 and the other 16 from Grade 12 students) were included in the FGD. Two FGDs were conducted in each school.

Data collection instruments

Questionnaire

A pre-tested Likert scale type questionnaire, adapted from McKenna and Kear (1990), was used in this study. The McKenna-Kear questionnaire, known as Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), contains twenty closed-ended items with four response options. Ten of the items measure attitude towards recreational reading, while the other ten measure attitude towards academic reading. McKenna and Kear proved that this instrument is a valid and reliable measure of reading attitude. They also studied many sub-scales of reading attitude in their attempt to determine the validity of their questionnaire. Although this questionnaire was initially developed for classroom application, it was later used for surveying reading attitude. In this study, three new closed-ended items were used to generate data on the respondents' attitude towards English, whereas two open-ended items were added to find out why the

respondents held negative (if any) attitudes towards EFL reading. Therefore, 23 closed-ended items (3 on attitude towards English, 10 on attitude towards recreational reading and 10 on academic reading) and two open-ended items were used in this survey. The closed-ended items contain the options: very unhappy (1), unhappy (2), cannot decide (3), moderately happy (4), very happy (5).

FGD guideline

Also, focus group discussions were used to collect qualitative data. FGD is often conducted in homogenous groups consisting of individuals who share common characteristics. In this study, 32 of the students were selected purposively to participate in the FGDs. Two FGDs were conducted in each school, i.e. one FGD with Grade 11 students and another one with Grade 12 students. The FGDs were conducted using a guideline. Five broad, open-ended questions were prepared based on the literature review. Each FGD was conducted for 45-90 minutes.

Data analysis

The study required both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data analysis. Thus, the quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 software to calculate mean scores used to describe the students' EFL reading attitude. One sample t-test was also calculated to compare if there was a significant difference in EFL reading attitude between students in the target schools and between grade levels. On the other hand, the qualitative data that addressed why students held a certain type of reading attitude was analyzed qualitatively using the methods of description, narration and interpretation (only summary included in this article).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Quantitative findings

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of attitude measures

Items	N	Mean	SD
Attitude towards English	98	2.87	0.94
Attitude towards recreational reading	98	2.67	1.09
Attitude towards academic reading	98	2.75	1.16

One of the aims of the study was to identify the kind of attitude students held towards learning English and reading texts written in this language.

Table 4. T value, df, MD and P value for the various measures of attitudes (p values < 0.05 are considered statistically significant)

	T	df	MD	P
Attitude towards English	-0.841	96	-0.165	0.408
Attitude towards recreational reading	0.227	96	0.052	0.828
Attitude towards academic reading	-0.063	96	-0.015	0.952

Table 5. Descriptive statistic for the various measures of attitudes by Grade levels

	Grade			
	11 th (N=49)		12 th (N=49)	
	Mean	S	Mean	S
Attitude towards English	2.87	1.07	2.86	0.15
Attitude towards recreational reading	2.72	1.13	2.61	1.06
Attitude towards academic reading	2.76	1.19	2.75	1.15

Accordingly, as indicated in Table 1 above, students in both schools did not appear to have positive attitude (had unfavorable attitude) towards learning English, recreational reading and academic reading. This is depicted in the mean scores for all the three dimensions, i.e. attitude towards English (Mean = 2.87), attitude towards recreational reading (Mean = 2.67) and attitude towards academic reading (mean = 2.75) which are below the expected mean (3).

Table 2. T value, df, MD and P value for the various measures of attitudes (p values < 0.05 are considered statistically significant)

	T	df	MD	P
Attitude towards English	-1.429	97	-1.36	0.156
Attitude towards recreational reading	-3.005	97	-3.31	0.003
Attitude towards academic reading	-2.093	97	-2.45	0.039

However, as shown in Table 2 above, the one sample t test revealed that there were statistically significant mean differences on scores of attitude towards English as recreational reading ($t = -3.005$, $df = 97$, $p = .003$) and reading of English texts as academic requirements ($t = -2.093$, $df = 97$, $p = .039$) and the expected mean (3). Nevertheless, the observed difference between attitude towards English and the expected mean (3) was not statistically significant ($t = -1.429$, $df = 97$, $p = .156$). On the other hand, as shown in Table 3 above, the mean score of students' attitude towards the English language and academic reading at Tinishu Meti Preparatory School was better than the mean score of students at Jain Preparatory School. However, the mean score of students' attitude in English as recreational reading at Jain Preparatory School was better than the mean score of students at Tinishu Meti Preparatory School.

Table 3. Descriptive statistic for the different attitudes measures by school

	School			
	Jain (N=38)		Tinishu Meti (N=60)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Attitude towards English	2.76	0.97	2.93	.92
Attitude towards recreational reading	2.7	1.21	2.64	1.01
Attitude towards academic reading	2.74	1.28	2.76	1.09

The independent sample t test results in Table 4, however, reveal that there were not statistically significant mean differences between the two schools on the different measures of reading attitude: attitude towards English ($t = .841$, $df = 96$, $p = .408$), attitude towards recreational reading ($t = .227$, $df = 96$, $p = .828$) and attitude towards academic reading ($t = -.063$, $df = 96$, $p = .952$). This implies that the observed differences in Table 3 might be due to sampling fluctuation.

The study also attempted to determine if there was a significant difference between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students in Tinishu Meti and Jain Preparatory Schools in EFL reading attitude. The intention here was to measure EFL reading attitude across the two grade levels irrespective of school difference. As indicated in Table 5 above, Grade 11 students scored better than Grade 12 students in all measures of the attitude scale, i.e. attitude towards English, attitude towards recreational reading and attitude towards academic reading.

Table 6. *T* value, *df*, *MD* and *P* value for the various measures of attitudes (*p* values < 0.05 are considered statistically significant)

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MD</i>	<i>P</i>
Attitude towards English	0.071	96	0.014	0.943
Attitude towards Recreational Reading	0.543	96	0.120	0.588
Attitude towards Academic Reading	-0.063	96	0.002	0.993

The independent sample *t* test, however, revealed that there were not statistically significant mean differences between the two grade levels on the different measures of attitude: attitude towards English (*p* = .943), attitude towards recreational reading (*p* = .588), attitude towards academic reading (*p* = .993) in (Table 6) above. This means that the observed differences were more of the results of sampling fluctuation or chance.

Qualitative findings

Data were also collected using two open-ended items included in the questionnaire. The first item was designed to elicit whether students like reading materials written in English (fictions, newspapers, the English textbook, references materials). It also required them to list the reasons that made them to hold a particular attitude. Qualitative data were also collected via FGD. The findings from the open-ended items and the FGD are summarized in the following paragraphs. The results obtained through the three open-ended items of the questionnaire showed that some respondents like reading English fictions, newspapers and reference materials written in English and the EFL textbook because such materials to improve their English language skills help them in learning subjects taught in the language. Likewise, some other respondents revealed that they like reading the English textbook and reference materials written in English because they learn most school subjects in English. Nevertheless, few respondents said that they like only reading fictions and newspapers to get much enjoyment.

On the other, the findings from the FGDs showed the following facts. Firstly, most of the FGD participants have the same attitude towards English and other subjects. This means that they do not have special favour for English. Secondly, in a similar matter, most of the participants like the English subject less as compared to the other school subjects because they do not appear to attach particular importance to English which is a subject, a medium of instruction and means of international communication. Thirdly, most of the FGD participants explained that they would not feel happy or jealous if they saw other people read fictions, newspapers, texts and reference books written in English. Fourthly, most of the participants seem to have negative attitude towards reading such materials

for they think that it is difficult and boring. Lastly, the majority of the participants pass their spare time in doing activities other than reading EFL texts.

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrated that, most of the sample students have negative (unfavorable) towards learning English (mean=2.87), recreational reading (mean=2.67) and academic reading (mean=2.75). This is so because the mean scores for all the three dimensions of attitude are below the expected mean (3). However, as shown in Table 2, the one sample *t* test revealed that there were statistically significant mean differences on scores of attitude towards English as recreational reading ($t = -3.005$, $df=97$, $p=.003$) and reading of English texts as academic requirements ($t = -2.093$, $df=97$, $p=.039$) and the expected mean (3). However, the observed difference between attitude towards English and the expected mean (3) was not statistically significant ($t = -1.429$, $df= 97$, $p = .156$). Similarly, the FGD results and the findings from the data collected through open-ended items of the questionnaire revealed that most of the respondents do not like to read fictions, newspapers, textbooks and reference books written in English for they think that reading such materials is difficult and boring. This finding is considered unfortunate by Wang (2000) who writes: "If students do not like reading or they think reading is boring, their negative attitude towards reading will hinder their reading improvement" (p.120). In addition, other researchers reiterate that reading attitude is an important factor that affects students' reading achievement, impacts on reading successes and determines whether they will become independent readers or not (Lipson and Wixson, 1992; Logan and Johnston, 2009).

In a related line of argument, Lafaye and Tsuda (2002) contend that sometimes there can be a relation between students' understanding of the importance of English language and their attitudes towards it. Therefore, if students realize the importance of the English language, they will have positive attitude towards it, which enables them to develop a love for reading texts written in this language. Conversely, they will have negative attitude towards English if they are not aware of the importance of this language. The latter seems true of the target students since it has been found out that they have negative attitude towards all the three dimensions measured in this study. The result regarding the second specific objective, why students hold a certain kind of EFL reading attitude, it was found out that most of the FGD participants have the same attitude towards English and the other school subjects. This implies that they do not have special liking for English which is a subject, a medium of instruction and a means of global communication. The new education policy in Ethiopia underscores the role of English as a medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary levels of education.

What is more, most of the FGD participants like the English subject less as compared to the other school subjects. On the other hand, the majority of the FGD participants would not feel happy or jealous if they saw other people read English fictions, newspapers, reference books written in English and the EFL textbook. This implies that they do not have positive attitude

towards reading those materials. Similarly, the findings from the data collected through the open-ended component of the questionnaire showed that most of the respondents do not like reading English fictions, newspapers, reference materials and the EFL textbook. Therefore, they seem to have negative attitude towards reading such materials because they think these materials are difficult and boring. Similarly, most of the FGD participants pass their spare time by doing activities other than EFL reading. Thus, they are not likely to develop positive attitude towards reading. Regarding this phenomenon, McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) note that poor attitude will be understood as the lack of desire to read. It is also worth noting that students who are capable readers might not have a strong positive attitude towards reading if they expect that another activity would give them more satisfying results. This apparently impacts negatively on their reading persistence and performance.

According to the results concerning the third specific research, whether there is a significant difference in EFL reading attitude between students in the target schools, the mean scores in attitude towards English language and academic reading for Tinishu Meti Preparatory School students was better than the one for Jain Preparatory School students. However, the mean score of students' attitude towards recreational reading at Jain Preparatory School was better than that of students at Tinishu Meti Preparatory School. This difference might be due to the fact that teachers in Tinishu Meti Preparatory School prepare tutorial classes for their students. If that is the case, Tinishu Meti Preparatory School students sometimes pass their free time attending the tutorial classes. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Gokhan's study (2012) which shows that reading attitude of high school students differs significantly according to school differences. The FGDs showed that a few participants from Jain Preparatory School like to read English fictions and newspapers to get pleasure. Wallace's study (1992) which indicates that students' reading attitude arises from reading for pleasure since reading for this purpose has the capacity to build positive reading attitude. However, some of the participants in the FGDs from Tinishu Meti Preparatory School like to read English text books and references because these materials are more related to their academic tasks.

On the other hand, it was found out that a few students from Jain Preparatory School like to read only English text book and reference materials. Therefore, the results of the FGDs indicate that there exist slight differences between students at Tinishu Meti Preparatory School and those at Jain Preparatory School because the latter sometimes engage more in recreational reading as their free time activity than the former. On the other side, the results regarding the fourth specific research objective, concerning the existence a significant difference in EFL reading attitude between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students, showed that Grade 11 students' mean score is slightly better than that of Grade 12 students in the measure of attitude towards English (mean=2.87 for Grade 11 and 2.86 for Grade 12), attitude towards recreation reading (mean=2.72 for Grade 11 and 2.61 for Grade 12) and attitude towards academic reading (mean=2.76 for Grade 11 and 2.75 for Grade 12). This finding supports the finding of Gokhan (2012), which showed that there was a difference between ninth and twelfth grade

high school students in reading attitude. Similarly, a study by McCoy et al. (1991), as cited in McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995), found out that reading attitude declines with increase in grade level. On the contrary, the result of the one sample *t* test (Table 6) showed that there were not statistically significant mean differences between the two grade levels on the different measures: attitude towards English ($p=.943$), attitude towards recreational reading ($p=.588$) and attitude towards academic reading ($p=.993$). In other words, the results seem to suggest that GRADE 11 and Grade 12 students in the two schools have comparable attitudes towards English, recreational reading and academic reading.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Concerning the kind of students' EFL reading attitude (the 1st research objective), the findings showed that the sample students from both schools do not seem to have positive attitude towards learning English, towards recreational reading and towards academic reading. The fact that these students do not have positive attitude towards EFL reading can imply that they will not become independent readers and cannot achieve good results in reading exams.
- Regarding why students held a certain kind of EFL reading attitude (the 2nd specific research objective), the findings indicate that most of the sample students from both schools do not appear to have positive attitude towards EFL reading because they do not attach a particular importance to English which is a subject, a medium of instruction and a means of international communication. The fact that these students do not attach particular importance to English implies that they may not use this language adequately in their academic endeavours which require a great deal of reading. This can hinder them from developing positive EFL reading attitude.
- In respect to whether there is a significant difference in EFL reading attitude between both target schools students (the 3rd research objective), the findings show that Grade 11 and Grade 12 students in Tinishu Meti Preparatory School and those in Jain Preparatory School have comparable attitudes on the different measures of reading attitude used in the study (attitude towards English, attitude towards recreational reading and attitude towards academic reading). This can imply that school difference does not affect much reading attitude of students in the contexts of the study.
- Finally, concerning whether there is a significant difference in EFL reading attitude between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students (the 4th research objective), the findings suggest that the two groups of students have comparable attitudes towards English, towards recreational reading and towards academic reading. The implication of this finding is that grade level does not seem to affect significantly reading attitude of the target students in the study settings in the study setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations can be given.

- It is necessary that Grade 11 and Grade 12 English language teachers in Tinishu Meti and Jain Preparatory Schools understand the importance of attitude in English language learning in general and in EFL reading in particular.
- Grade 11 and Grade 12 English language teachers in the target schools should raise their students' awareness about the importance of English which is a subject, a medium of instruction and a means of international communication.
- It is necessary that Grade 11 and Grade 12 English language teachers in the schools in focus encourage their students to read texts written in English not only for academic purpose but also for pleasure and general information.
- It is advisable that Grade 11 and Grade 12 English language teachers in the study setting use recreational reading texts in classroom reading so that students develop a love for such reading and engage in self-initiated out-of-class reading.
- Further larger scale studies should also be carried out on students' EFL reading attitude in various school contexts in Ethiopia.

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