The Impact of Reading Strategies on Second Language Learners' Reading Comprehension and Motivation

[1]**Hailay Tesfay Gebremariam** and [2]**Mahlet Zenebe Weldeyohannes**

[1,2]*Arba Minch University, Arba Minch, Ethiopia*
Corresponding Authors Email: hailay33@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the use of reading strategies and reading motivation among second language students in relation to their comprehension of Amharic language reading skills. To achieve this goal, data was collected from 228 9th graders through reading strategies and reading motivation questionnaires, as well as reading comprehension tests. The data was analyzed using Spearman Rho and Regression techniques. The results indicate a low correlation between reading comprehension and reading strategies, as well as reading comprehension and reading motivation. However, there is a significant relationship between the use of reading strategies and reading motivation ($p < .05$), suggesting their impact on students' reading comprehension. Predictability was found to have the greatest impact on reading comprehension ($p < .05$). By understanding and utilizing reading strategies in the Amharic reading process, students can improve their reading abilities with healthy motivation. Hence, it is recommended to equip students and teachers with the knowledge and motivation to employ both formal and informal reading strategies, which could significantly benefit students in reading comprehension training.

Keywords: second language students; reading strategies; reading motivation; reading comprehension; Amharic language learning

1. INTRODUCTION

In the field of reading, there are many concepts such as reading and comprehension, each with its own profile. Reading is the ability to read, while reading comprehension involves understanding the context in which a message is conveyed through written form or pictures. After reading the text, reading comprehension is the result. Understanding and responding to a reading is more important than just reading, as it allows one to see the truth beyond the text. If a reader can read and understand the language in which the text is presented, they will be able to answer questions about the written passage. Phakiti (2006) notes differences in the second language learning process, stating that reading in a second language is more challenging than in a first language due to its complex processes. Alderson (1984) argues that early adolescents may lack prior knowledge, but differences in reading strategies and motivation can affect second language readers based on their mother tongue. Maghsoudi (2022) suggests that while the focus is on second language students in reading, their skills vary, leading to conflicting interests and outcomes. Han (2021) suggests that this discrepancy may stem from language issues or differences in reading strategies. Overall, students' ability to read a second language can be categorized into first language proficiency limitations, second language proficiency limitations, and a combination of both.

Building on the work of Alderson (1984) and Han (2021), the issue of reading comprehension in second language students can be attributed to weaknesses in the second language resulting from poor reading skills in the first language. Conversely, if students excel in reading their first language, they are likely to perform well in their second language. Weaknesses in the second language may also arise from a lack of fundamental knowledge of the target language, hindering their reading ability. Jiang (2011) points out a gap in the use of reading strategies between first and second languages, suggesting that if students employ effective strategies in their first language, they are likely to do the same in their second language.Brown (2007) identifies basic reading disorders such as literacy techniques, emotional coordination, and reading skills. However, teachers' perception of reading as a personal skill (Cummins, 2007; Han, 2021) has impacted students' reading abilities. With language teachers focusing on structural aspects, students may overlook the strategies that can help them guide and control their reading. This lack of control over their reading skills prevents students from mastering effective reading strategies (Meyer and Ray, 2011; Sarafini, 2004). Teele (2004)

emphasizes the importance of exploring the link between motivation and reading comprehension to ensure that students can identify and motivate themselves to read effectively.

There are three aspects to reading history. One focuses on the individual approach to skills. In this approach, skills are applied not based on context, but on a deep understanding. The second focuses on activities that play a positive role in reading comprehension, covering the detailed process from the title to the conclusion (Jiang, 2011; Maghsoudi, 2022; Meniado, 2016). However, according to Dincer (2018), readers do not focus on identifying strategies used to facilitate comprehension. The strategies and comprehension support activities are presented in the students' exercises and questions, resulting in a lack of understanding of how to use them effectively. The third approach encourages students to use activities that will help them understand the text presented (Meniado, 2016; Maghsoudi, 2022), primarily focusing on the reading process so that students can use their own strategies to understand the text (Brown, 2007; Han, 2021).

When it comes to reading ability, why and how do students read? According to Teele (2004), students determine the purpose of reading and use effective reading motivation. According to Dincer (2018), reading is a complex skill that combines cognitive, content, and emotional coordination. However, according to Maghsoudi (2022), teachers' reading skills are so low that students struggle with reading strategies. This is due to the lack of practical classroom practice in lessons, leading to students not understanding why and how to read. Cummins (2007) argues that because reading is a complex process, students should be allowed to read independently. On the other hand, Kucukoglu (2012) and Meniado (2016) argue that reading strategies help students participate in social interactions in addition to academic achievement. Given the significant role literacy plays in socio-economic and academic development (Teele, 2004), research should address the issue of illiteracy in reading skills in any language.

In particular, as students progress to the second grade of elementary school and their grades increase, the purpose of reading shifts to not only reading but also understanding (James & Gentry, 2008; Williams, 1984). However, according to Habibi et al. (2015), most students struggle to summarize ideas, distinguish main ideas, and identify supporting information from the text. They tend to focus on distinguishing concepts from passages rather than extracting concepts. International studies (e.g., Goodman, 1988; Topping et al., 2012) indicate that most students struggle with reading

comprehension when they do not pay attention to new content. Furthermore, bilingual students have difficulty in translating their understanding and contextual context into second and foreign languages (Habibi et al., 2015; Meniado, 2016; Williams, 1984).

Research by McNamara et al. (2009), Salmeron et al. (2006), and Sani et al. (2011) confirm a connection between knowledge, specific reading strategies, and reading motivation. Meyer and Ray's (2011) study also demonstrated a link between intellectual learning, reading motivation, and reading comprehension. The development of text-based reading strategies has contributed to motivation for reading. Maghsoudi's (2022) study revealed a significant positive relationship between reading strategies and reading comprehension.

Ethiopian students are not meeting expectations in terms of reading and understanding in Amharic (EGRA, 2010). A study by EGRA (2010) indicates a decline in students' reading skills in primary schools. For instance, in 2007, a survey of fourth-grade students found that 14.6% were proficient readers, 33.7% were low readers, and 51.7% were struggling readers. Many studies addressing this issue have not explored the relationship between different reading instructional approaches. This study aims to investigate the connections between second language students' use of reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension, addressing the following questions:

1. Are 9th-grade Amharic second language learners' reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension related?

2. What impact do reading strategies and reading motivation have on the reading comprehension of 9th-grade second language students?

2. METHODS OF STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to examine the interrelationships between students' use of reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension in the Amharic context. To gather scientific data from the respected participants, this study applied a correlation design. The participants were 9th-grade students from secondary schools in the Gamo, Gofa, and South Omo zones of South Ethiopia. Since the study's design involved a sample of 228, the schools involved in data collection were willing to participate.

Participants

Participants in the study attended from five secondary schools in Gamo, Gofa, and South Omo zones. The study areas and schools were selected using a cluster-based sampling technique because the students were at least bilingual in their language proficiency. The main focus was on 9th-grade students who were learning Amharic as a second language. The number of 9th graders in each focus school was determined by the pre-survey field trip and how many to take from each school. In total, 228 students were selected from all schools.

In this case, the Amharic language skill had to be taken into account, and school administrators and teachers were selected based on a convenience sampling technique. Participants in the study also filled out questionnaires on the use of reading strategies and reading motivation, and they also took a reading comprehension test.

Data collection instruments

Data for this study were collected through questionnaires on reading strategies use, reading motivation, and a reading comprehension test. The questionnaires were developed based on Komiyama (2013) and Teele (2004) questionnaires. They were divided into two sections: general information and the main questionnaire. The main questionnaire consisted of standardized questions measuring reading motivation and reading strategies in six categories. Language education experts reviewed the questionnaires for internal and external relevance. To test reliability, 30 students at the same grade level piloted the questionnaires, resulting in a Cronbach Alpha of .885 for the reading motivation questionnaire and .841 for the reading strategies use questionnaire, indicating high levels of reliability.

The reading comprehension test included 25 questions divided into two parts, each with true or false questions. The test was reviewed by three Amharic language teachers to ensure alignment with the grade level curriculum and textbook. Before data collection, the test was piloted with 30 students to ensure question reliability. Any necessary corrections were made before using the test in the main study.

Procedures

In order to achieve the study goal, a total of 228 9th graders from Gamo, Gofa, and South Omo

zones took part in the study. Initially, 30 students who were not part of the main study were tested to evaluate the appropriateness and reliability of data collection tools. After that, a four-round field trip was carried out to the study areas for the main data collection process. Once approval was obtained from the schools and students voluntarily agreed to participate, the study objective was explained. Data was then collected from 9th-grade students in each of the sample schools through reading comprehension tests, reading strategy assessments, and reading motivation questionnaires.

Data Analysis Technique

The variables in this study include the use of reading strategies and reading motivation in relation to reading comprehension. Written questionnaires and reading comprehension tests were used to examine the use of information and reading skills in order to test the individual and general correlations of these variables.

Analytical methods were then selected to obtain the results of each question, ensuring that the criteria were met first. The results were analyzed by comparing the use of reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension levels of 9th-grade students, assessing the relative levels of correlation and the presence or absence of significant correlations by comparing the interrelationships. The data on reading strategies use and reading motivation were then calculated individually and collectively to examine their impact on reading comprehension. The quality of data and its distribution accuracy were calculated using descriptive statistics. Each correlation statistic was measured according to Pallant (2011).

3. RESULTS

The primary question of this study is: What is the relationship between the use of reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension in 9th grade students learning a second language? To answer this question, the results are analyzed in Tables 1 and 2 using Spearman's Rho correlation statistics.

TABLE 1 Reading strategies use, reading motivation and reading comprehension correlation; By Multiple correlation

Variables	N	(1)	(2)	(3)
Reading Comprehension (1)	228	---		
Reading strategies use (2)	228	-.044	---	
Reading Motivation (3)	228	.161*	.365**	---

*Indicates a significant correlation of 0.05.

**Indicates a significant correlation of 0.01.

Analysis of Table 1 reveals that the correlation between reading comprehension and the use of reading strategies is low (t (228) = .044, p > .05). Similarly, the correlation between reading comprehension and reading motivation is also low (t (228) = .161*, p < .05). Although the relationship (.161*) is weak, it is significant at the .05 level. Another noteworthy finding is the moderate relationship between the use of reading strategies and reading motivation (t (228) = .365**, p < .01), indicating a stronger relationship at the .01 level of significance.

Furthermore, the study suggests that reading strategies use, reading motivation, and reading comprehension are interconnected with the level and intensity of variables in the context of 9th graders learning Amharic as a second language.

TABLE 2 Reading strategies Use, reading motivation and reading comprehension correlation in terms of second language proficiency; by multiple correlation

Language proficiency	Variables	Average	St. Dev.	N	(1)	(2)	(3)
Bilingual students	Reading Comprehension (1)	14.00	5.67	53	---		
	Reading Strategies (2)	3.79	.53	53	-.091	---	
	Reading motivation (3)	3.95	.47	53	.270	.116	---
Multilingual students	Reading Comprehension (1)	12.61	5.12	175	---	-.020	.132
	Reading Strategies (2)	3.75	.58	175		---	.420**
	Reading motivation (3)	3.83	.51	175			---

**Indicates a significant correlation of 0.01.

The results presented in Table 2 for bilingual students indicate that the correlation between reading comprehension and the use of reading strategies by second language students is low (t(53) = -0.91, p

> .05). Similarly, the correlation between reading comprehension and reading motivation is also low (t(53) = 0.270, p > .05), and the correlation between reading strategies use and reading motivation yields a low result as well (t(53) = 0.116, p > .05). Not only are the correlation coefficients for the three variables low, but their levels of significance are not significant (p > .05). Furthermore, the results for multilingual students indicate that the correlation between reading comprehension and reading strategies use (t(175) = -0.020, p > .05) and the correlation between reading comprehension and reading motivation (t(175) = 0.132, p > .05) are low. These results not only show a low level of correlation but also indicate that they do not have a strong correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. Conversely, the relationship between reading strategies use and reading motivation (t(175) = 0.420**, p < .01) is moderate and the strength of this correlation is significant at the 0.01 level of significance.

The second question pertains to the impact of reading strategies use and reading motivation on second language students' reading comprehension. The data for reading strategies use and reading motivation are calculated and presented in Table 3 for further analysis.

TABLE 3 The impact of reading strategies use and reading motivation on reading comprehension; Predictive linearity regression analysis

Predictable Variables	N	R	R^{Sqare}	Adjusted r^2	F	Sig	Beta	T	Sig
Reading Strategies	228	.183	.034	.029	7.859	.005	5.447	2.042	.042
Reading motivation	228						1.934	2.803	.005

Table 3 displays the prediction of two variables (reading strategy use and reading motivation) on the effect of reading comprehension to determine which variable has the greatest impact. The relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable is weak (R = .185, R Square = .034). The adjusted r2 results (.029) indicate that only 2.9% of reading comprehension is attributed to reading strategy use and reading motivation. The results of the predictive correlation analysis demonstrate that, despite the low effect, the results are reliable (F = 7.859, p < .005). In Table 4.3, the predicted effects of reading strategy use and reading motivation are calculated individually; the impact of reading strategy use (β = 5.447, t = 2.042, p < .042), and the impact of reading motivation

(β = 1.934, t = 2.803, p < .005). This suggests that the most significant effect comes from reading motivation (β = 1.934, t = 2.803, p < .005) rather than reading strategy use (β = 5.447, t = 2.042, p < .042).

4. DISCUSSIONS

In The main purpose of this study was to examine the interrelationships between the use of reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension in second language learning. Data were collected from 228 9th graders through reading comprehension tests, reading motivation surveys, and assessments of reading strategy use. The results were analyzed using the Spearman Rho and predictive analytics. The primary question addressed in this study was: What is the relationship between reading skills, reading motivation, and reading comprehension? This question was answered through the use of reading strategy surveys, reading motivation questionnaires, and reading comprehension tests, with results calculated using the Spearman Rho coefficient. The analysis revealed a low correlation between the three variables, with no significant strength (P > .05). Similarly, there was a low correlation between reading comprehension and reading strategy use, as well as reading comprehension and reading motivation, with no significant strength (P > .05). However, there was a moderate and significant difference between reading strategy use and reading motivation (P < .01).

In examining all three variables - reading comprehension, reading strategy use, and reading motivation - it was found that reading comprehension had a low correlation with both reading strategy use and reading motivation, with no significant strength (P > .05). The correlation between reading strategy use and reading motivation was moderate (.420), with a significant strength level (P < .01). These results suggest that the impact of reading strategy use on reading comprehension is minimal, contradicting the findings of Komiyama (2013) who identified reading skills and motivation as key differentiators between weak and talented readers.

Although all variables have their own characteristics, they appear to be consistent with the findings of Teele (2004) and Toping et al. (2012). They have also been found to be partially consistent with studies that show a link between reading skills and reading comprehension (Meyer & Ray, 2011; Souhila, 2014). This seems to contradict the idea that Dincer (2018) and Maghsoudi (2022) combine

reading skills, reading strategies use, knowledge of reading content, and emotional focus. According to Habibi et al. (2015) and Maniado (2016), reading skills are intellectual activities that help the reader understand the message in various ways. However, Sani et al. (2011) argue that teachers do not teach reading skills, leading to poor reading skills in students, which contradicts the assertion, that reading has nothing to do with it. Specifically, students may not know why or how to read, as evidenced by Han's (2021) study attributing it to a lack of practical classroom application.

The second question of this study focused on the implications of reading strategies use and reading motivation for reading comprehension. The data collected to answer this question was analyzed using regression analysis, revealing that reading strategies use and reading motivation significantly impact reading comprehension (F = 7.859, p < .005). Among the two, reading motivation has the greatest influence on reading comprehension (β = 1.934, t = 2.803, p < .005). This aligns with the findings of Souhila (2014) and Kucukoglu (2012), indicating that teaching reading skills, along with reading strategies use and reading motivation, can help improve reading comprehension.

Furthermore, the study found that while second language students may vary in their reading strategies and preferences, their motivation to learn to read has a significant impact on their reading comprehension, consistent with Dincer's (2018) study. In contrast, Komiyama (2013) argues that reading comprehension results from the use of appropriate and effective reading strategies. Understanding the content of reading material begins with language skills, followed by knowledge of grammatical and linguistic structures presented in the text. The reader is expected to have background knowledge that aligns with the reading material to fully comprehend it.

In addition, according to Kucukoglu (2012), reading strategies help students to participate in social interactions as well as improve academic achievement. Therefore, reading strategies need to be utilized and encouraged. Without them, a student may not become a proficient reader; without the ability to read, they will struggle to comprehend written material. However, according to Han (2021), there is a distinction between reading strategies and reading comprehension. Reading strategies are tools to aid in understanding reading material, not the ultimate goal. They are meant to facilitate the learning process. Nevertheless, findings from previous studies (e.g., Han, 2021;

Komiyama, 2013; Kucukoglu, 2012; Meyer & Ray, 2011; Souhila, 2014) demonstrate that both the use of reading strategies and reading motivation significantly impact reading comprehension.

Therefore, the outcomes of this study suggest that students' reading proficiency is closely linked to their reading strategies and motivation. According to Brown (2007) and James and Gentry (2008), various factors such as readers, reading materials, reading skills, reading strategies, reading motivation, and goals play a role in determining reading comprehension. Salmeron et al. (2006) also suggest that students' reading strategies in their native language can enhance their motivation to read. Having a strong foundation in reading strategies and motivation predicts a student's future reading success. Consequently, reading comprehension serves as a key indicator of a student's overall academic achievement.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of the study was to examine the interrelationships between the use of reading strategies in second language students' Amharic reading skills, reading motivation, reading comprehension, and their proficiency in language. Data was collected from 228 9th graders through reading strategies use and reading motivation questionnaires, as well as a reading comprehension test. The data was analyzed using multiple correlation and predictive linearity regression techniques. The results of the data analysis indicated that the relationship between all three variables (except for the use of reading strategies and reading motivation) in the first question was low and not significant. However, in comparison to reading strategies use and reading motivation, the significant effect on reading comprehension had a greater value.

Based on the study's results, three conclusions can be drawn:

1. Second language teachers should consider their students' reading motivation and reading strategies and incorporate them into their teaching when necessary. Further research is needed to determine the significance of content teaching in reading comprehension.
2. Reading comprehension did not significantly differ between bilingual and multilingual students in most results. It is advisable to study both groups in practical research to confirm the validity of the study.

3. The study only focused on 9th-grade second language students. Including students from other grade levels in future research would provide more reliable information.

In conclusion, studying reading comprehension requires a series of investigations using different designs and approaches. Examining various languages and grade levels will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Further studies on this topic are recommended.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

We, authors, declare that this research design and data collection process has been proved by two reviewers assigned by College of Social Science and Humanities Research Coordination office, Arba Minch University. And all the participants have been informed that they could voluntarily take part in the study and the results would be conducted for the educational purpose.

Data availability and Materials

All the data are available upon the request of the editors and/or reviewers and the corresponding author can provide them.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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