Research Article

The Effect of Text Familiarity on EFL Students' Reading Comprehension: Focus on Senior Secondary School, Oromia, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Prior knowledge (PK) is a schematic knowledge belonging to constructivist learning theory and contributing to reading comprehension. Hence, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of PK in terms of text familiarity on EFL learners' reading comprehension at senior secondary school. To this end, pragmatic paradigm with concurrent embedded QUAN-qual mixed method design was employed. The QUAN approach encompassed quasi-experimental method and the embedded qual approach was considered for its qualitative data. The participants were 80 grade 11 students selected purposively and their corresponding EFL teachers selected by comprehensive sampling. The data collection instruments were post-test, questionnaire, and group interview. The data analysis methods included descriptive and inferential statistics involving item analysis, KR-21 formula, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Friedman's repeated samples test. The findings revealed that there was the effect of PK in terms of text familiarity. Specifically, the three differently familiar texts' test scores indicated significant difference at $\chi2(2, n = 80) = 109.507$, $p < .001$ rank order with familiar texts ranking top. In addition, there was test score mean significant difference between the three aspects of PK at $\chi2(2, n = 80) = 23.77$, $p < .001$ with cultural PK and content Pk showing better contribution to the reading comprehension. Further, the researchers have recommended that the hierarchical executors need to incorporate the target learners' Prior knowledge activating mechanisms in reading comprehension lesson texts to enhance understanding.

Keywords: cultural schemata; prior knowledge; reading comprehension; text familiarity.

Introduction

Prior knowledge (PK) is a past real or vicarious experience or event, crucial component of or equated with schema theory (Lin, 2004; Yuksel, 2012; Jain, 2014). The merit of prior knowledge, with regard to text familiarity, stresses that comprehension texts or passages are expected to cue the readers' PK (Star *et al*., 2009) for better comprehension. Pointing to this premises, McNamara (2007) says that reading comprehension can be challenging if a text (a given reading piece or passage) is unfamiliar, technical and complex since comprehension goes beyond decoding. The proponents of PK say that unfamiliar texts can be made understandable by imbedding PK in materials for readers. This way, PK can be manifested through cuing by appealing

to the target students' content aspect, formal (linguistic) aspect and cultural aspect of knowledge.

The first PK aspect, content PK refers to individual's conceptual ability (Lin, 2004), universal culture (Carrell, 1983) and world knowledge to guess meaning of a text (Alhaisoni, 2017). It is also meant the knowledge of topic (Alhaisoni, 2017; Klinger *et al.*, 2007) and background knowledge of a reader about text (Abosnan, 2016). Content PK, overlaps with formal PK and cultural PK in some studies; however, it has been made distinct in the current study considering it as general world knowledge of a text, formal PK as linguistic matters and cultural PK as a culture-specific knowledge of a particular community about a text.

The existing studies that indifferently considered content PK, formal and/or cultural PK include that of Alhaisoni (2017), Abosnan (2016), Zarei and Mahmudi (2012) and Erten and Razi (2009). Since all contents of a text are not restricted to a particular society, that is, some aspects can sense universal, they have been distinct from cultural PK in the current study. Society is described, here, as a collection of individuals that share certain relations and mode of behaviour, which others non-involved people cannot share (Kachru and Smith, 2008). The concept of universality of content schemata as distinct from culture-specific content is mentioned in Carrell (1983). According to Carrell, there is content background knowledge that is not culture-specific. For instance, EFL/ESL students bring text-related PK to comprehend contents of subjects like biology, chemistry and physics [which are general academic (formal school) subjects and not based on particular society's indigenous culture].

Content PK or schema, in some literatures, is more general than culture-specific PK. It is divided into background knowledge and subject knowledge (Carrell, 1983). Background knowledge refers to the knowledge that may or may not be relevant to the particular content whereas subject matter knowledge refers to the knowledge relevant to the particular text. In another way, content PK is categorised into cultural PK and subject matter PK. Hence, content PK was seen as topic familiarity or pre-existing knowledge about a reading text of subject matter, previous experience with particular domains and world knowledge apart from the target students' culture specificity.

Based on the above reasons, the current researchers split the merged content PK into content (universal type) and cultural PK. The reason is that the researcher's emphasis was more on the effect of cultural PK on reading comprehension. Hence, the general and universal participants' content PK was seen apart from their culture-specific PK identified as cultural PK.

The second text aspect, formal PK is prior linguistic knowledge comprising various perspectives. It can be framed to brief expressions as linguistic elements, text organizations, rhetorical techniques and genres (Rumelhart, 1980; Abosnan, 2016; Yuksel, 2012; An, 2013; Huang, 2009). The linguistic elements briefly involve morphological and syntactical structures and the meanings they carry. Text organization is the arrangement of ideas and their relationships used to predict meanings. Rhetorical arrangements consider communicative samples that signal cause-effect, comparison-contrast and exemplifications. Text genres involve different types and techniques of development (stories, poems, fictions, history, politics, events and similar others), of which the current study's text focused on events (of culture) and history. Text developmental techniques include descriptions, narrations, expository texts and argumentations (Ibid), of which the current study's texts' base was expository text type.

The third aspect, cultural PK (schema) is a prior knowledge of individuals or a particular society related to specific culture. Culture, according to Kachru and Smith (2008) is defined as both historic and immediate that shapes actions, verbal and varieties of other actions and also shaped by them. In this case, individuals and their related society can possess historical or recent knowledge or experiences of linguistic, religious or certain value-specific. This culture can be reflected in reading texts as to Radic-Bojanic and Topalov (2016) who value text as an ambassadorial cultural artefact. It is also highly recommended that text materials should develop issues connected to learners' prior knowledge (Wen-Cheng *et al.*, 2011).

Cultural aspects, in terms of PK research, seem to overlap with content aspects. However, as discussed and refined in literature review of the cultural PK part, the cultural aspects have been limited to the following for the distinct clarity of the current study. These can be found in the form of customs, history, cultural ceremonies, life styles, expressions, material names, foods, symbol and related issues (Ghorbandordinejad and Bayat, 2014). They encompass various aspects of life style common for a group that can help literal and inferential reading comprehension (Samouar and Porter, as cited in Lin, 2004; Almutairi, 2018; Richards and Renandya, as cited in Sharafinejad *et al.*, 2016). These aspects were thought to activate the PK of the Afaan Oromoo MT background students in making meanings out of the texts.

The rationale of focusing on this study emanated from the failure of students in reading comprehension as observed from their practical performances and additional indicators from researches. The tangible initial evidence to this study was Wollega University students' proficiency test scores conducted by English Language Improvement Centre (ELIC) of 2015/16 and 2016/17. Their failure was clear from their test scores that the most students scored less than half of the total with too least scores. This indicator of

failure urged the researcher to make informal assessment using 30 secondary schools' teachers to confirm the failure and the causes. They confirmed as their students were poor in reading comprehension and showed as the reading texts for the reading lessons were not prepared in the context familiar to the target students and were not motivating to read. Following this, grade 11 English language student textbook was overviewed and no local reading text was found. Based on this, the researcher questioned himself why the most texts were not considering local texts to begin from the students' PK and decided to investigate the significance difference between familiar and unfamiliar texts in the selected context in Ethiopia.

To this end, they identified the gap between the previous studies and the current study. Hence, some of the foreign and local studies tried to investigate the effects of text familiarity on students' reading comprehension. These researchers included Liu (2015), Yousef, Karimi and Janfeshan (2014), Woldesenbet (1989) and Mebratu (2014). They focused on PK in terms of cultural background and cognitive strategy on reading comprehension. However, the current study focused on PK in terms of text familiarity involving content PK, formal PK and cultural PK as seen in Fig. 1.
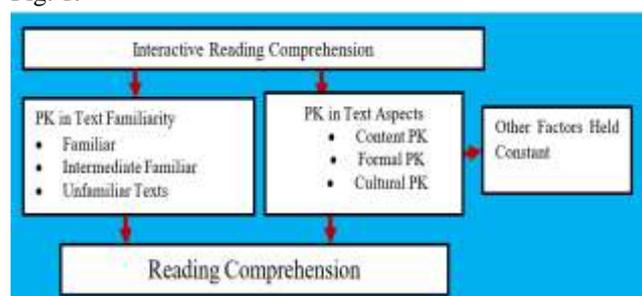

Fig. 1: The Current Study Conceptual Framework Model on Effects of Text Familiarity and Its Aspects on Learners' Reading Comprehension (Adapted from Pei-Shi, 2012, p. 1518); Ghorbandordinejad and Bayat, 2014)

Hence, the study attempted to answer the following specific research questions.

1. Is there reading comprehension test mean scores' significance difference due to text familiarity in Getema Senior Secondary School (SSS) grade 11 students?
2. Do Getema SSS grade 11 learners' PK in terms of content, form and culture reveal significance difference of their reading comprehension mean score?

Materials and Methods

Paradigm and Design
The study followed 2 pragmatic paradigm comprising the concurrent embedded mixed method design (MMD). The design particularly involved the QUAN-qual method with quasi-experimental approach for the quantitative part and supportive qualitative data collection methods (See Fig. 2).
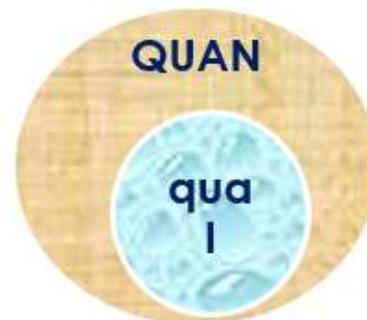

Fig. 2: Concurrent Embedded Design Representing the Current Mixed Methods Study. [Source: Creswell (2009, p. 210)]

The design reveals the dominance of the quantitative method over the qualitative method. The rationale of selecting the design is that it embeds the other data type ("qual" currently) in the primary data ("QUAN" currently). The qual investigation was embedded in the quasi-experiment in the current study as experiment can be embedding part of mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). Second, it gives priority to either quantitative or qualitative flexibly; priority was given to QUAN data in the current study. Third, it is flexible to collect both data types simultaneously or sequentially. In addition, it allows the qual data to address different questions not addressed by the QUAN data which is also the feature of the current study.

The Study Area and Participants
The research site of the current study was Getema Senior Secondary School. It is located in Oromia, Eastern Wollega Zone, Leka Dullacha District, Getema Town. The district is found adjacent to Jimma Arjo District in the south, Digga District in the north and north east and Guto Gida District in the east direction. It was purposively selected for its convenience of relatively similar linguistic and cultural background to test the effect of different texts' familiarity under homogenous context. Though the other schools in the region might possess similar background, the researcher closely studied the school society's composition ahead and geared towards selecting it for the success through creating rapport with the environment and obtaining easy access to the expected data.

The selected population had similar conditions to the rest in Oromia in many cases except specific local and individual differences. Since there are individual differences in relation to the concept of the study, they were controlled ahead by using a proficiency test to avoid extreme upper and lower scorers. The result from the sample can be generalized to similarly framed population provided that the selection needs careful and systematic procedure beginning from sampling frame (Black, 2002; Gray, 2004; Bethlehem, 2009).

Sample Size and the Sampling Technique

The Students:

The participants of the study were Getema Senior Secondary School grade 11 students selected purposively. The reason of selecting grade 11 was that it is closer to higher institution entrance exam time with more stable situation than grade 12 since the grade 12 students' attention and time was thought to be influenced by the upcoming matriculation. According to 2020/21 academic calendar, Getema Senior Secondary School's grade 11 had 06 sections. Among these sections, two sections, each consisting of the average of about 95 students, had been suggested to be considered as samples for the study. They were trimmed through the screening for homogeneity of their reading proficiency.

The sample size left from the trimmed number by the reading proficiency test was 80 students for the group that underwent effect of text familiarity on reading comprehension. The sample size was enough according to Field (2013), who recommends 10 to 15 cases for each predictor in case of a test involving regression. This is despite the fact that the sample size determination for studies involving the effect of the regression model needs sample size of $N \geq 50+8m$ where N = sample size and m = the number of predictive variables. The highest number of predictor variable in case of the current study was three (3) that is the effect of the three varied familiarity texts on the reading comprehension test. Hence, $N \geq 50+8(3) \geq 74$. Thinking of possible absence of participants, 80 students were taken.

In the sampling process, differences among the participants were minimized in terms of linguistic and cultural background, age, reading comprehension proficiency and individuals' special previous experiences (Zhang, 2018; Gray, 2004). Their age was similar since the students were of the same grade and age range. They were probed in case there were some special previous experiences or exposures (training, contact with native speakers) and there was no specialty difference among them. To avoid more hidden differences that might occur as a result of individual reading achievement, proficiency test was administered to screen the participants. Such technique was experienced by previous researchers like Nation (2009), Sharafi-Nejad *et al.* (2016), Lin (2004), Karimi and Nafissi (2017) and Belilew (2015).

The Teachers:

Teachers were selected with comprehensive sampling technique since they were a few in numbers. The number of the senior secondary school teachers was 4. They participated on interview to provide data about the influence of students' text familiarity on their reading comprehension

Data Collection Instruments

Test:

The reading comprehension tests were prepared for students to investigate the significant differences between the scores of the three texts: familiar text, intermediate familiar text and unfamiliar text. It was also intended to examine the investigation of the effect of the three (content, formal and cultural) aspects of text familiarity on the students' reading comprehension. Each test consisted of 18 items comprising questions related to content PK, formal PK and cultural PK of six items each. Each item consisted of four choices (A, B, C and D). In addition, there was subjective summary question at the end of each of the three tests. They were set on the basis of existing literature and studies, approved by experts and checked for reliability.

Questionnaire:

The five-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of sixty-five items was set to gather data pertaining to students' preference of the three text aspects with regard to having contribution to the reading comprehension. The questionnaire was also used to examine the familiarity rank of the three texts as the students ordered them according to their familiarity to each text.

Group Interviews:

The group interview was planned for selective students and available teachers to supplement the information gathered through the test and the questionnaire. The researcher focused on the students, who were active participants in the classroom and those who were expected to provide information through their better speech performances. They found the students through their EFL teachers. They were 12 in number and were sorted to two groups of interview. With regard to EFL teachers, four (comprehensive) were included.

Methods of Data Analysis:

The quantitative and the qualitative data were analysed and interpreted separately and integrated in the discussion. The quantitative part employed descriptive and inferential statistics. In descriptive tests, mean, standard deviation and normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) tests were performed. It also involved frequency and percentage for familiarity rank ratings. In the inferential statistic, test of comparison, particularly Friedman test, the nonparametric version of the repeated measure ANOVA was used to compare the reading comprehension test results of the three text and the three aspects of PK.

Validity and Reliability:

The validity of the instruments, in terms of content, face validity and construct validity were checked by the advisors' and expertise comments and amendments. The reliabilities were confirmed by using the existing statistical tests. These included KR-21 Formula (Spires & Donley, 1998;

Woldesenbet, 1989) for MCIs inter-item consistency test, paired sample correlation for tests-retest reliability of the tests (Pallant, 2011) and Cronbach's Alpha for questionnaire items' reliability test.

Results and Discussion

Effect of Text Familiarity on Reading Comprehension Test Scores (RQ1)

The effect of the three texts' familiarity on the students' reading comprehension was examined on the intact or non-manipulated group. To begin with, the difficulty index and the discrimination index of the MCIs instruments were checked ahead by using 40 other participants by using the formula $FV = \frac{U+L}{N}$, (FV = facility value/difficulty index, U = upper scorers, L = lower scorers and N = total number of upper and lower scorers. The item difficulty index values of 0.30 to 0.70 were used as cut points as preferred by the majority of test item construction professionals. The three tests' scores, consisting of 18 items each and the total of 54 items, was sorted into the upper scorers and the lower scorers.

The discrimination index of the items was calculated by the formula $D = \frac{U-L}{n}$ where D = discrimination index, U = upper scorers, L = lower scorers and n = number of testees in one half of the total testees. The cut point used to judge the discrimination power of an item was D>0.30 (Heaton, as cited in Woldesenbet, 1989).

The internal and external reliabilities of the three tests were also tested. The internal reliabilities were tested using KR-21 formula, specifically $r_{total\ test} = \frac{(K)(D2)-X(K-1)}{D2\ (K-1)}$ wher K = number of test items, D^2 = standard deviation of the test score squared, X = mean score of the test. Accordingly, the number of items (K) for each test (T_1, T_2 and T_3) was 18. The standard deviation (D) calculated for each of the three test scores was 10.5, 11.6 and 12.95 for T_1, T_2 and T_3 respectively. The mean score of each test was 57.38, 50 and 37.88 for T_1, T_2 and T_3 respectively. The test was done for each and it was reliable with correlation coefficients of .51 for T_1, .69 for T_2 and .83 for T_3.

The reliabilities of the three tests were also checked using paired sample correlations of the test-retest method as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: The Three Texts' Reading Comprehension Scores Paired Sample Correlations

Test Variables		N	Correlation	Sig
Pair 1	Text1 test-retest	40	.507	.001
Pair 2	Text2 test-retest	40	.692	.000
Pair 3	Text3 test-retest	40	.817	.000

According to Table 1 all the three tests showed external reliability with correlation coefficients .507, .692 and .817, all with p < .001 significance level for text1, text2 and text3 respectively.

Reading Comprehension Test Scores' Differences Due to Text Familiarity (RQ1)

The test of comparison, to investigate whether there was statistically significant difference or not, between the three test scores of the reading comprehension in Getema SSS grade 11 students began with checking for assumptions. At this stage, the test of normality of distribution of the scores was performed using Kolmogorov-Smirnov since it is applied to the sample size greater than 50 (Pallant, 2011; Field, 2009). See Table 2.

Table 2: Normality of the MCTs Test Score Distribution

Reading Comprehension Text Topic	Mean	Statistics	df	Sig
Symbolism of Coffee	50.75	.144	80	.000
Marriage in Goshwuha	41.69	.116	80	.009
The Miracle on the Hann River	44.19	.154	80	.000

The result of the analysis of the test of normality for the three aspects of PK in terms of text familiarity (See Table 2) with specific reference to the reading comprehension test result of the text "Symbolism of Coffee" showed non-normal distribution at D(80) = .171, p < .001. Similarly, the distribution of scores for the text "Marriage in Goshwuha", was non-normal at D(80) = .119, p < .05. It was also non-normal for the reading test scores of the text "The Miracle on the Hann River" at D(80) = .169, p < .001.

The normality test with the subjective summary showed non-normality distribution for "Symbolism of Coffee" at D(80) = .131, p < .01; "Marriage in Goshwuha" at D(80) = .193, p <.001 and "The Miracle on the Hann River" at D(80) = .160, p < .001. All the normality test results indicated significant difference between the normal distribution and the actual distribution of the sample scores. Hence, the researcher preferred nonparametric tests for further tests.

The comparison between the three differently familiar texts' reading comprehension test scores of the intact group were conducted by using Friedman test, the non-parametric version of one-way repeated measure ANOVA.

The multiple-choice items (MCIs) test scores of the three texts were compared for significant difference using Friedman rank order test as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparison between the MCIs Reading Test Results of the Three Texts

Item	Mean	Friedman Rank Order
Total Test Result of the Text Symbolism of Coffee	52.57	2.77
Total Test Result of the Text Marriage in Goshwuha	46.56	2.03
Total Test Result of the Text the Miracle on the Hann River	37.31	.20
Test Statistics		
N	80	
Chi-square	109.507	
df	2	
Asymp Sig.	.000	

Table 3 shows that the Friedman statistical test of the three texts' reading comprehension test results comparison had significant difference. Statistically, it can be interpreted as $\chi2$ (2, n = 80) = 109.507, p < .001. The rank order of the three test scores decreased from the familiar text (Symbolism of Coffee) through intermediate familiar (Marriage in Goshwuha) to the unfamiliar text (The Miracle on the Hann River). Their actual mean order was 52.57, 46.56 and 37.31 respectively. That is, the students scored the highest mean in the familiar text, medium mean in the intermediate familiar text and the least mean in the unfamiliar text. From this result, it is possible to say that text familiarity could affect the reading comprehension test scores of Getema Senior Secondary School, grade 11 students.

Table 4: Comparison between the Subjective Summary Reading Comprehension Test Results of the Three Texts

Item	Mean	Friedman Rank Order
Total Test Result of the Text Symbolism of Coffee	4.18	2.59
Total Test Result of the Text Marriage in Goshwuha	2.34	1.73
Total Test Result of the Text The Miracle on the Hann River	2.31	1.69
Test Statistics		
N	80	
Chi-square	48.087	
df	2	
Asymp Sig.	.000	

Table 4 points out that there was reading comprehension subjective summary mean score significant difference among the three familiar, intermediate familiar and unfamiliar texts. This is statistically shown as $\chi2$(2, n = 80) = 48.087, p < .001. The actual means of the three texts were also different as 4.18 for "Symbolism of Coffee", 2.34 for "Marriage in Goshwuha" and 3.31 for "The Miracle on the Hann River". This enables to say that text familiarity affected the reading comprehension of the subjective summary scores of the participants in terms of both the MCI test scores and the subjective summary of the messages of the paragraphs.

The interview result goes in line with the result of the test analysis. The students revealed that they, relatively, got the text they were familiar with (T1) easy to understand since it is related to the coffee and the cultural food made of it (buna qalaa). They also said that that the expressions like coffee slaughter, coffee bean, butter, waciitii, etc, used in the text designate the culture they lived and these expressions made them more focus on the text for understanding. They also mentioned that the intermediate text (T2) was the next that made them feel a bit familiar due to some common expressions and familiar English (marriage, bride, bride groom) words they found in it. They said that some Amharic words like "demoz, digis, shint, tella..." they informally heard from their environment helped them suggest the message of the text. However, the majority responded that they heard about the unfamiliar text (T3) only the exam day and the context of the Hann River was strange to them. Only a few students said that they could estimate the message of T3 based on some expressions they knew from their academic life and various media. These expressions included "North/South Korea, River, Kenya, capitalist, socialist, Obama and the like".

The result of the study pointed out that there was effect of PK on the students' reading comprehension. The effect was seen from text familiarity's perspective on reading comprehension. With this perspective, as ranked by the students, the most familiar text (T$_1$) was the one with the highest score, medium for the intermediate text (T$_2$) and the least for the unfamiliar text (T$_3$), but with no statistically significant difference between T$_2$ and T$_3$. The obtained effect of text familiarity on the reading comprehension coincides with the existing literature as theories of Bartlett (1932) and preceding studies of Woldesenbet (1989) and McNemar (2009).

Text Familiarity Rank as Rated by the Students:
The data for familiarity ranks of the three texts were collected from the participant students who sat for the reading comprehension tests. This was aimed to investigate if their familiarity rank went in line with their test score means. To this end the data collected from test takers to examine which text they were familiar, intermediate familiar and unfamiliar with using a three-point Likert scale. These data were analysed in terms of frequency and percentage to identify their judgements on their extent of familiarity to each text (See Table 5).

Table 5: The Students' Familiarity Rank with the Reading Texts as Rated by Them

Text	Familiar		Intermediate Familiar		Unfamiliar	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Symbolism of Coffee (T1)	47	58.7	16	20	17	21.3
Marriage in Goshwuha (T2)	25	31.3	33	41.3	22	27.5
The Miracle on the Hann River (T3)	8	10	31	38.7	41	51.2
N	80		80		80	

The frequencies and percentages of the sample students' familiarity with the three texts revealed that the familiarity of the texts to the students went on decreasing as it goes away from the target students' culture (Table 5). According to the data in the table, participants 47 (58.7%) rated familiar, 16 (20%) rated intermediate familiar and 17 (21.3%) rated unfamiliar for the text "Symbolism of Coffee". For the text "Marriage in Goshwuha", 25 (31.3%) rated familiar, 33 (41.3%) rated intermediate familiar and 22 (27.3%) rated unfamiliar. Similarly, 8 (10%) of them rated familiar, 31 (38.7%) rated intermediate familiar and 41 (51.2%) rated unfamiliar for the text "The Miracle on the Hann River". The reading comprehension test scores were found high for the familiar text, medium for the intermediate familiar text and low for the unfamiliar text.

The result of the analysis was summarized that the text "Symbolism of Coffee" that was written on the cultural context of the target students was more familiar (65%) than the text "Marriage in Goshwuha" (40%) that was local, but written on non-cultural context of the target students. Similarly, the local text "Marriage in Goshwuha" (40%) was more familiar than the text written in foreign context, "The Miracle on the Hann River" (25%). The reading comprehension test scores of these texts were highest for the most familiar text and lowest for the least familiar text. So, both results supported each other that text familiarity affects reading comprehension in the context of the current study area.

With regard to the interview data analysis, except a few students (S_2 and S_7 for instance) who said that T1 is familiar, T3 intermediate familiar and T2 unfamiliar, the most of them (S_1, S_3, S_4, ...S_{12}) rated the T1 as familiar, T2 as intermediate familiar and T3 as unfamiliar. Concerning this, S11 is quoted as follows (Responded in mother tongue - Afaan Oromoo).

Teekistoota jiran keessaa, kan ijoolleen baay'inaan filatan keessaa, kan baay'ee nama hawwisiisu ... isa jalqabaa fi isa dhumaati jedhan. Sababnisaas, jechootni Afaan Ingiliffaa achi keessa jiran jechoota kanaan dura itti fayyadamaa turre yookaan immoo jechoota nun beeknudha jedhan. ... Ani garuu akka koottimmoo teekistii inni lammaffaa sunis gaariidha jedheen fudha. Hundisaanii iyyuu gaariidha.

The response implies that the respondent benefited from the cultural aspect of T1, general content of T2 and formal aspect of T3. In general, these responses make the interview result coincide with the questionnaire data analysis result and the reading comprehension test results. The students mentioned that their extent of familiarity to the texts was based on the context, and the expressions found in each text. In relation to this, most of them said that they were familiar with the T1 (Symbolism of Coffee) as the culture is practiced at different occasions including marriage ceremony which they also attended. Even, they mentioned that they knew how 'buna qalaa' is made of butter and coffee and why it is made. Similarly, they mentioned that the intermediate or next familiar text was T2 (Marriage in Goshwuha) since they knew a few words and some elements in the practice. Some of the terms they were cued with were "gan", "tella", and "shint" even though they did not know the marriage ceremony in Goshwuha. Lastly, the students replied that T3 (The Miracle on the Hann River) was unfamiliar. However, a few students revealed that it is a bit familiar since they were familiar with the name of the country (Korea), common land feature names like "river" and ideological terms like "capitalist" and "communist" from their academy and various media.

Teachers also confirm, as to their experience and suggestion, that students read familiar texts in focus and actively, but not the unfamiliar texts. For instance, one of the teachers (Tr4) was quoted as:

In my experience, I found students reading in focus when the texts were familiar. When reading passages or topics are about what they know, may

be fully or partially, they try to reflect the idea from it. When the topics are not familiar and the inner is difficult to understand, they do not say anything, meaning become silent. They do not respond to questions. They also lack contextual meaning to new words, because they do not understand what the main idea and the details say.

The above quotation enriched the reading comprehension test results' dependence on the text familiarity to the students under local situation. The students' reading of the familiar texts in focus than the unfamiliar texts implies that they are in condition to understand the text more than the one they do not focus on.

The Reading Comprehension Test Scores Differences in Terms of Prior Knowledge (PK) Aspects: Content, Formal and cultural Aspects (RQ2):

The comparison of scores between the reading comprehension tests of the three PK aspects of the three texts was performed in Getema Senior Secondary School, grade 11 students. To this end, the assumptions were checked using descriptive statistics. In this statistical test, the normality of distribution was tested using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test (See Table 6).

Table 6: Students' PK Aspects Score Normality Distribution

Item	Mean	Statistics	df	Sig
Content PK Score	50.75	.144	80	.000
Formal PK Score	41.69	.116	80	.009
Cultural PK Score	44.19	.154	80	.000

Table 6 reveals that the statistical normality distribution of the participants showed significant difference between the actual mean and the population mean at D (80) = .144, p < .001 for content PK, D(80) = .116, p < .05 for formal PK and D(80) = .154, p < .001 for cultural PK. The statistical test results indicated non-normal distribution, leading to the use of nonparametric test of comparison.

The other assumption considered was the homogeneity test of variances. However, it was skipped since the violation of this assumption does not have seriousness on the results and the robust nonparametric test was used (See Table 7).

The comparison of the three PK aspects of the three texts was further processed using the Friedman test of comparison for related samples through the non-parametric test command. According to the test (See Table 7), there is statistically significance difference between content PK, formal PK and cultural PK in terms of text familiarity on reading comprehension. The significance difference was interpreted as $\chi^2(2, n = 80) = 23.77$, p < .001. It was, so possible to judge that all the three aspects of PK have varied

contributions on the students' reading comprehension test scores. The mean scores of each aspect (See Table 6) revealed that content PK had the highest mean score (50.75) followed by cultural PK mean score (44.19) and formal PK had the least mean score (41.69) of the reading comprehension scores.

Table 7: Comparison of Reading Comprehension Test Results Based on PK Aspects: Content PK, Formal PK and Cultural PK

Item	Mean	Friedman Rank Order
Total Content PK Score	50.75	2.41
Total Formal PK Score	41.69	1.71
Total Cultural PK Score	44.19	1.88
Test Statistics		
N	80	
Chi-square	23.77	
df	2	
Asymp Sig.	.000	

For further evidence, the result from the students' interview analysis about these PK aspects indicated that what they knew from different contexts helped them to understand the texts. For instance, S_6 pointed out that the students understood the text "Symbolism of Coffee" from what they knew in their society's culture and environmental experiences. This implies that the cultural PK of the students helped them to understand it. S_7 said that the words in the text, that he knew their meaning (formal PK) helped him to guess the messages of the texts. Similarly, S_{10} responded that she first read the second paragraph of the text "Symbolism of Coffee" and related what she previously knew (content PK) to the other paragraphs and could understand. As to her, she comprehended the text beyond the difficulty of the language of the text (cultural PK). S_9 and S_{11} shared the idea of supporting the unfamiliar with the familiar for better understanding.

EFL teachers' interview analysis supports the students' results and their responses to the interview in one or another way. The teachers accounted for the contribution of the different aspects of familiarity to the reading comprehension. Specifically, they said that local texts related to culture and custom of the students help them to understand messages of texts (Tr1, Tr2). They also added that texts about known contents like that of the local athletes recurring on media helped them to familiarize related unfamiliar aspects of a given text (Tr1, Tr3). From their experiences, the teachers witnessed that the students could try to reflect their text comprehension provided that the language (formal PK) was easier, but not exceeding familiar texts in terms of specific culture and general content area.

In relation to this, literature supports the significance of cultural PK in that students' cultural adaptation can affect their level of motivation (Bouchard, 2005). The finding is replicable in line with the finding of Lin (2004) that studied the effect of culturally specific and non-specific texts on Taiwanese students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study result has been briefly concluded and remedies have been recommended as follow.

Conclusions

The result of the current study has enabled to arrive at some conclusions. These have been identified according to the main research questions. Hence,

- ❖ First, the study found out that prior knowledge, in terms of text familiarity had paramount effect on students reading comprehension in Getema Senior Secondary School, Ethiopian context. This was despite its being overlooked in practice. That is, the reading comprehension test scores of the students increased as the students were more familiar with the texts. The study result has also indicated that the extent of familiarity varied among the texts based on different local contexts or cultures and between the local texts and the foreign text. It showed increasing unfamiliarity from local text to foreign text.

- ❖ Second, the result has revealed that the three PK aspects of texts had immense contributions to the reading comprehension of the three texts. Particularly, the statistical test and the interview results recognized that cultural PK and content PK had better effect in contributing to the students' reading comprehension. This implies that reading texts need to be prepared in such a way that readers (students) can easily understand the texts' new concept by relating their PK aspects to it.

Recommendations

The researcher has recommended the following measures to be taken by the concerned bodies in line with the research findings.

1. The finding should be disseminated, and awareness rising measures need to be taken in the form of panel discussion, conferences, training and policy briefings. This is to reveal that prior knowledge, in terms of text familiarity effect on reading comprehension at local context has been ignored while it has shown varied levels contribution in the current study.

2. Similar action, mentioned above in 1, needs to be taken with regard to curriculum developers, textbook writers and teachers to aware them to consider the three PK aspects (content, formal and cultural) in reading texts. This is to enable the students relate their related prior knowledge for ease of understanding of the new concepts that might be given as reading texts.

3. The researcher recommends further study that involves samples from different linguistic or cultural background in Ethiopia to see the effect of text familiarity on the students' reading comprehension more comprehensively.

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