ЛИНГВОДИДАКТИКА И НОВАЦИИ. ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ЯЗЫКОВ И КУЛЬТУР | LINGUODIDACTICS AND INNOVATIONS. PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF LEARNING LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Стратегии обучения предварительному чтению в учебниках английского языка как иностранного для учащихся средних школ Эфиопии

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Цель данного исследования состоит в изучении стратегий обучения предварительному чтению, используемых в учебниках английского языка как иностранного для средних школ Эфиопии. Исследование проводилось на базе описательно-оценочного метода, в рамках социокультурного подхода к обучению чтению на занятиях по английскому языку как иностранному. Объектом исследования послужили учебники английского языка за одиннадцатый и двенадцатый классы. С этой целью задания по предварительному чтению учебников были собраны в отдельный текстовый файл. В качестве инструмента для сбора данных выступил составленный исследователями перечень стратегий обучения предварительному чтению, полученный на основе различных теоретических и эмпирических материалов. Для исследования учебной деятельности использовался метод контент-анализа. Затем вместе с другим участником — кандидатом наук, преподавателем TEFL — исследователь обсудил результаты и пришел к выводу, что данные анализировались последовательно. Как показали итоги исследования, в учебниках не используется широкий спектр стратегий предварительных вопросов. Например, задаются предварительные вопросы для общего понимания, но не для подтверждения ожиданий, извлечения конкретной информации, а также не для получения навыков детального или критического чтения. Помимо этого, не учитывается стадия знакомства с неизвестной лексикой из текста и предварительное обучение метакогнитивным задачам чтения. Исходя из полученных результатов, исследователь считает, что в учебниках английского языка как иностранного для средней школы следует уделять должное внимание различным стратегиям обучения предварительному чтению, необходимым для того, чтобы помочь учащимся развить навыки понимания прочитанного.

Ключевые слова: обучение предварительному чтению, учебники английского языка как иностранного, теория схем, понимание прочитанного, описательно-оценочный метод исследования.

Pre-Reading Teaching Strategies in Ethiopian High School EFL Textbooks

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This study aimed at investigating pre-reading teaching strategies employed in Ethiopian secondary EFL textbooks. The researcher carried out the study based on a descriptive-evaluative research design in the realm of sociocultural perspective of teaching reading in EFL settings. Grades eleven and twelve EFL textbooks were subjects of the study. For this purpose, he documented the softcopy pre-reading instructional tasks of the textbooks in a separate word file. Researcher's self-made checklist about pre-reading teaching strategies adapted from a variety of relevant theoretical and research-based evidence was the data collection instrument. The researcher used content analysis method to analyze the instructional activities. Then, he discussed the results of the data with the participant PhD TEFL instructor and reached an agreement that they analyzed the data consistently. The findings of the study indicate that the textbooks do not use different pre-questioning strategies. For instance, they ask pre-questions to obtain general comprehension abilities, but not to confirm expectations, to extract specific information, and to gain detailed or critical reading facilities. Additionally, they disregard pre-teaching vocabulary and pre-teaching metacognitive reading tasks. Contingent upon the findings, the researcher suggests that secondary EFL textbooks should give due emphasis to different pre-reading teaching strategies necessary to develop students' reading comprehension facilities.

Keywords: pre-reading instruction, EFL textbooks, schema theory, reading comprehension, descriptive-evaluative research design.

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Introduction

Pre-reading teaching strategies stemmed from schema theory-based instruction which is grounded in activating and building students' background knowledge deemed necessary to develop their reading comprehension abilities. According to this theory, background knowledge of reading texts provides students with immediate and effortless access to information that is not clear or even missed out [13; 34; 44] and facilitates the ability to predict, read fluently, and henceforth comprehend better [44]. Therefore, pre-reading teaching strategies are important *«to establish a purpose for reading a given text, to activate existing knowledge about the topic and thus get more out of reading the text, and to establish realistic expectations about what is in the text and thus read more effectively»* [3, p. 66]. They also give students a chance to freely associate their background knowledge with the text and to build their background knowledge significant to comprehend texts.

Commencing to read texts and doing the subsequent comprehension questions without pre-reading activities become tough and demotivating for EFL students [39; 56; 59]. In response to this problem, different pre-reading teaching strategies categorized to five broad groups are suggested in literature. These are providing:

1. background knowledge;
2. pre-questioning;
3. pre-teaching vocabulary;
4. giving collaborative tasks;
5. pre-teaching metacognitive strategies.

The absence of providing students with background knowledge of texts, in particular, obstructs their learning opportunity of metalinguistic knowledge known as *«knowledge of texts and genres and how they are organized»* [22, p. 40]. It also prevents them from learning about sources and/or types of reading texts, reading topics, and features of text organizations from the belief that building students' background knowledge about texts can enhance their reading comprehension abilities [20]. In this regard, Zhaohua's [67] findings showed that *«the more students know about a topic, themore they get out of a text and therefore, the more motivated they are to learn»* (p. 58).

Harmer [26], on the other hand, suggests that pre-questioning teaching strategies activate students' background knowledge of reading texts with four pedagogical purposes of confirming expectation, extracting specific information, obtaining general comprehension, and gaining detail comprehension. Students who have no experience of such questions do not have the habit of reading texts with a purpose of confirming hypotheses resulted from their predictions of the upcoming contents [59]. The second type is used in sharp contrast to the traditional approach of teaching reading that places all text-based questions after reading texts with a pedagogical purpose of evaluating students' comprehension skills [4]. In a similar vein, Nuttall [39] suggests that asking students in the pre-reading instructional stage to answer signpost questions generated from reading texts helps them to activate background knowledge and set goals for reading texts.

Pre-questioning before reading for general comprehension, on the other hand, is used to make students use of different prior knowledge accounts categorized into the referential frames of previous personal experience, general background knowledge, previous lesson taught, and specific text [27]. The last type of pre-questioning teaching strategy, asking questions before reading for detailed comprehension emphasizes students' recognition of synthesized information in reading texts or their critical understanding of the text.

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Pre-reading teaching strategies also initiate students to comprehend difficult linguistic elements. Thus, they encourage them to define the general meanings of words, match keywords with their meanings, elicit relevant words to a semantic map of keywords, fill blank spaces of sentences with correct words among alternatives, or guess the contextual meanings in sentences. Otherwise, the instructional strategy informs them of the meanings of keywords by providing them with dictionary or glossary meanings. Evaluating the use of a definitional technique of pre-teaching keywords [37] suggests that *«by itself, looking up words in a dictionary or memorizing definitions do not reliably improve reading comprehension»* (p. 5).

Initiating students to deal with pre-reading tasks in collaboration or cooperation is another essential feature of pre-reading teaching strategy. This instructional strategy helps students share experiences that can activate their background knowledge or build new concepts [51; 54; 61]. In this regard, Oxford [41] contends that students reading comprehension enhances when they get actively involved in group discussions during the learning tasks.

Pre-reading instructional practices of metacognitive activities are the other essential ingredients of EFL textbooks. The pedagogical purpose of teaching metacognitive activities in the pre-reading stage is to get students explicitly informed about the reading strategies deemed necessary to comprehend texts. These include awareness about the use of prior background knowledge, the importance of predicting incoming ideas in texts, reasons for or ways of previewing (surveying) texts, mechanisms of guessing meanings of new words, and the significance of understanding the meanings of pre-reading words. It was for such instructional purposes that making students strategic readers is incorporated into the nine curricular principles of reading instruction that Grabe and Stoller [22] state.

A variety of experimental research works were carried on the effects the abovementioned pre-reading teaching strategies have on students reading comprehension facilities. The findings of the studies consistently reported that the instructional strategies had a positive relationship with students' comprehension performance [33; 47; 5; 11; 55; 36; 60; 45; 31].

The impetus of the present study is derived from the view that EFL textbooks are educational milieus that determine students' potential and missed learning opportunities [62; 58]. The textbooks become poor supportive mediating tools for preparing students to comprehend texts when they do not engage them in a variety of activities essential to build and activate their background knowledge of reading texts [22; 7]. In this regard, Graves [23] contends that textbooks are obstacles to the process of language learning when they are characterized by irrelevant contents to students' needs, exclusion of important items, and an imbalanced variety of task types.

In the Ethiopian context, research findings indicated that EFL students have low reading comprehension facilities required of their academic levels [1; 2; 50]. One of the factors that result in such a problem is the absence of engaging students into different pre-reading tasks essential to enhance their comprehension abilities [33]. To the best of the present researcher's knowledge, no study was conducted to investigate the implementation of comprehensive pre-reading instructional strategies in actual EFL classes. Additionally, other domestic research findings showed that several secondary school students do not have the experience of using different cognitive reading strategies in EFL classes [52], and they are not consciously aware of the strategies while reading texts [8]. Such problems are among the factors that imped their comprehension abilities.

The present researcher also confirms that a study on pre-reading teaching strategies in textbooks is scarce. Hattan et al. [27] studied the ways USA elementary school instructional resources use to

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activate students' background knowledge which was categorized into four specific referential frames (personal experience, general background knowledge, previous lessons taught, and texts read before). However, the current study is more comprehensive, for it investigates the instructional practices EFL materials apply both to activate and build students' background knowledge. Thus, this study is conducted to address the lacuna that answers the question «what pre-reading teaching strategies EFL textbooks employ in Ethiopian secondary school classes?»

Methods

This section deals with the research design selected and the procedures employed to select participants, collect and analyze data.

Research Design

The present study was conducted to understand in-depth what pre-reading teaching strategies Ethiopian secondary school EFL textbooks use to help students comprehend texts. Thus, it described the types of pre-reading strategies that the instructional materials incorporate and evaluates the extent to which the teaching strategies are concomitant to a comprehensive checklist adapted from theoretical and research-based evidence. To this end, it employed a descriptive-evaluative research design. The former subcomponent of the design, in particular, is qualitative research that *«generates data that describe the 'who, what, and where of events or experiences' from a subjective perspective»* [16, p. 3]. Additionally, it is suitable for researchers who aim at using the document review data collection method [15], content analysis [57], and detailed presentations of findings substantiated by quantitative data [46]. The evaluative subcomponent of the research design, on the other hand, refers to the provision of information for decision-makers with respect to the phenomenon under investigation.

Participants

Grades eleven and twelve EFL textbooks were the participants of the present study because the textbooks need to develop students' text-based and situation-based reading comprehension abilities that prepare them for tertiary level education [35]. In other words, students at this level are expected to learn different types of pre-reading strategies which have facilitative effects on their comprehension skills. Therefore, pre-reading teaching practices found in the textbooks were selected using the purposive sampling technique.

Additionally, the study included a PhD instructor working in the same University with the principal researcher. The participant was selected based on the simple random sampling technique, which aims at drawing a sample from the list of a particular group, staff members of English language department in the case of the present study.

Data Gathering Instrument

The data collection instrument of pre-reading instructional practices in the EFL textbooks refers to the activation or building of students' background knowledge of texts. For this purpose, the researcher prepared a checklist that was adapted from the review of a variety of theoretical and empirical evidence. The checklist aims at pre-reading cognitive, metacognitive, and social tasks which have different pedagogical purposes. Thus, the data gathering instrument is comprehensive to collect the qualitative data employed in the EFL textbooks.

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Data Collection Procedures and Method of Data Analysis

The researcher extracted the soft copy of pre-reading teaching strategies in the respective EFL textbooks and recorded them in separate grids. Thus, all the data found in the twelve units of each textbook were sequentially documented into the grids which entail columns of reading texts important to identify where in the textbooks the pre-reading instructional tasks are employed.

Then, qualitative-driven content analysis was used as a method of data analysis to identify the types of pre-reading teaching strategies based on the adapted checklist. This is to say that the quantitative content analysis used to identify the frequency of the instructional strategies in the textbooks was supplementary to the in-depth descriptions of the qualitative results. For this purpose, the method of data analysis encompassed two units of analysis known as context and recording units. The first feature refers to the instructional activities, whereas the second describes the specific types of teaching strategies that the textbooks implement. For convenience of in-depth description and evaluation of the phenomenon under investigation, the results and their interpretations were discussed in independent sections.

To check the reliability of the data analysis, the researcher and the participant PhD instructor dealt with the types of pre-reading teaching strategies they identified independently. Based on their discussions, they agreed that they analyzed the majority of instructional activities in similar categories of pre-reading teaching strategies. They cleared up their few differences through further discussions.

Results

Based on the content analysis of the textbooks, the study reveals that grades eleven and twelve EFL textbooks use different pre-reading instructional strategies that are stated in the subsequent subsections. Among these pre-reading teaching strategies, some are commonly found in both textbooks while the remaining ones reside in either instructional resource.

Asking Elaborative Questions about Texts

Asking elaborative questions is a pre-reading teaching strategy that encourages students to activate their background knowledge of a reading text so that they would be motivated to read it and carry out the ensuing comprehension questions. In the two EFL textbooks, nineteen pre-reading instructional tasks require students to elaborate on what they know about the contents of reading texts they are to read. Among these, eight tasks are found in the grade eleven EFL textbook.

For instance, the textbook activates students' background knowledge by drawing on the reading topics by asking them to answer the significations of AU flag colors (activation of general world knowledge), their effective study skills (activation of personal experience), names of individuals associated with the development of medical innovations (activation of general world knowledge), major killer diseases in Ethiopia and Western countries (activation of general world knowledge), what malaria is (activation of general world knowledge), the kinds of things they read every day (activation of previously read texts), where Haiti is and what happens during an earthquake (activation of general world knowledge), and where the job advertisements are found (activation of general world knowledge).

Table 1

Pre-Reading Teaching Strategies in Grade Eleven Secondary EFL Textbooks

No.	Pre-reading teaching strategies	Types of	Text

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		strategies	
1	With a partner look at the new flag of the African Union.	Giving collaborative activities	1
2	The flag has a green background, a white sun and gold stars. Each of these has a special significance. Which do you think represents: a. the member states of the AU b. the hope of Africa c. Africa's bright future?	Asking questions about background knowledge	
3	An anthem is a special song. Every country has a national anthem. It voices the country's history, its values, or hopes.	Introducing the text-describing topical concept	
4	This text is an extract from a novel written by a Ugandan writer.		2
5	Work in a small group or with a partner and discuss your answers to these questions.	Giving collaborative activities	
6	Discuss your answers to these questions. Discuss them honestly and also comment on how effective you think your choices are 1 When you are studying outside class on your own (doing independent study), what do you do? 2 How much time every day do you spend doing independent study? 3 When do you do independent study? 4 Where do you do your independent study? 5 Do you study alone or with someone else?	Asking questions about background knowledge	3
7	Work in a group of four.	Giving collaborative activities	
8	Discuss whose name is most closely associated with the development of each of these medical innovations. • modern nursing • antibiotics • x-rays	Asking questions about background knowledge	4
9	Make sure you understand the words on the left, which come from the texts you will read shortly. Match them to their meanings on the right. culture A. clear and able to be seen through mould B. a green or black substance that grows on old food or on wet things mortality rate C. a serious infection of the lungs transplant D. the number of people who die in a given period of time pneumonia E. a crack in a bone	Pre teaching words with semantic framework	

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	fracture F. a medical operation in which part of someone's body is put into the body of another person cathode rays G. cells grown for scientific use photographic plate transparent		
10	This poem is written by one of India's most famous poets: Ezekiel Nissim.	Introducing the text-informing text source	5
11	Work in a group and discuss the following.	Giving collaborative activities	

The grade twelve EFL textbook also employs the pre-reading instructional strategy to encourage students to answer what they know about the topics of reading texts. To this end, it elicits them about works of literature (activation of previously read texts), their characteristics (activation of personal experience), millennium development goals (activation of general world knowledge), good governance (activation of general world knowledge), coffee production (activation of general world knowledge), locations of countries in the map of Africa (activation of previously learned lesson), vultures (activation of general world knowledge), shanty town (activation of general world knowledge), Kate Winslet, a film actress (activation of general world knowledge), blockbusters (activation of general world knowledge), and Titanic film (activation of general world knowledge).

Table 2

Pre-Reading Teaching Strategies in Grade Twelve Secondary EFL Textbooks

No	Pre-reading instructional initiations	Types of initiations	Text
1	The text below comes from The African Child by Camara Laye.	Introducing the text-informing text source	
	Guinea, in West Africa. His father was a goldsmith and had a workshop. He employed a number of apprentices - young boys who were learning the craft — and they lived in the family compound. Read the text and answer the questions below.	describing the general idea	1
2	Landline telephones are connected by cables. The cables are copper wires. You can see them in the air, held up by telegraph or telephone poles.	Introducing the text-describing topical concept	
	This poem was written by an American poet about one hundred years ago, during the First World War, a long time before mobile phones came along.	informing text source	2
	It is about telephone cables and the messages they carry, which reflect the time at which it was written.	describing general idea	
3	Most universities and colleges have a student newspaper or magazine. One of the most popular features in the newspaper is the problem page. Students like to read other people's problems as they are often similar to their own.	Introducing the text-describing topical concept	3

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4	Skim through the following problem page letters and identify what each one is about.	Asking to preview texts	
5	Have you read any works of literature? If so, • Which works have you read? • Were they in Amharic or English or in another language? • What did you think of them? Think of the names of some novelists, poets or playwrights that you have heard of or are familiar with.	Asking questions about background knowledge	
6	African writers have written about many important issues, which affect the lives of ordinary people.	Introducing the text-describing topical concept	4
	You are going to read a poem from Uganda and an extract from a Nigerian novel.	informing text source	
7	Before you read, work with a partner and discuss the differences between these two literary forms: the poem and the novel.	Asking text features or types	
8	Read this poem by Henry Barlow.	Introducing the text informing text source	
9	The Vic is the Lake Victoria Hotel, a well-known hotel in Entebbe; that was renamed the Windsor Lake Victoria when its ownership changed. A Permanent Secretary (or PS) is not a politician but a senior civil servant running a government ministry.	Giving definitions of pre-reading words	
10	Work in a small group of two or three people and discuss your answers to these questions.	Giving collaborative activities	5

The findings of the study show that the instructional strategy predominantly induces students to retrieve relevant information from general world knowledge. Thus, the EFL textbooks do not frequently initiate students to recall personal experiences, ideas taught in previous lessons, and information from texts read previously. Additionally, students have no learning opportunity of providing verbal elaborations in response to pre-reading critical thinking questions.

Asking Prediction Questions

The content analysis of the textbooks shows that there are three predicting instructional practices used to create the learning opportunity of making a hypothesis. The pre-reading teaching strategy encourages students to guess the main idea and specific information as the following instances indicate.

- Look at the headline and discuss what you think the story is about (Grade eleven textbook, p. 110).

- You are going to read a magazine article arguing against digital technology. Before you read it, think of some of the points that might be made. Make a list (p. 295).

- Choose the picture which you think best represents Wariinga (the main character of the literary text) (Grade twelve textbook, p. 87).

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As the above data indicate that students are required to make use of their background knowledge, reading titles and pictures to predict what is to come in the texts. The EFL textbooks encourage them to guess main ideas and specific information which could help them make accurate confirmation of hypotheses while reading texts. The findings show that the grade twelve textbook does not give students frequent practice opportunities to make predictions. In the grade eleven EFL classes, on the other hand, the instructional strategy occurs in two lessons. However, asking students either to answer signpost questions or to produce their text-based questions by overviewing texts is not the focus of the pre-reading instructional practices of both textbooks. In other words, they do not provide students with different alternatives to predict text-related information which could help them confirm their hypotheses while reading texts.

Asking Previewing Questions

The findings of the study also indicate that there are six pre-reading instructional techniques that have an emphasis on previewing texts. The technique is characterized by initiating students to understand the gist and identify genres of texts as stated below.

- Look quickly at the texts on the following pages and answer these questions. Are these texts from a) books b) emails or letters c) newspapers d) brochures? How do you know? Which country is each of them about? (Grade eleven textbook, p. 110)
- Survey the reading text below. Try to do it in two minutes only (p. 198)
- Skim each text to find out what disability each person has (p. 222)
- Skim through the following problem page letters and identify what each one is about. (Grade twelve textbook, p. 62)
- Skim read the text. Try to do it in two minutes only (p. 87).
- Skim read it for one minute and then guess the name of the film (p. 257)

The instructional strategy has a dual purpose in the grade eleven EFL classes. First, it serves to prepare students for jigsaw reading activities comprising five texts about HIV AIDS. Before students begin to read the texts, the textbook asks them to look quickly at factual texts and identify their types. It also elicits them to corroborate their responses with reasons that underlie their techniques of identifying the specific feature(s) each text is characterized. However, the teaching strategy has no clear purpose when it encourages students to survey the text on page 198 as it does on page 222 where they are required to identify the main ideas of the texts. Similarly, the pre-reading task posed on page 87 in the grade twelve EFL textbook does not specify the purpose for previewing the text.

Previewing instructional technique used in both EFL textbooks asks students only to skim the entire body of texts though reading the first sentence of each paragraph is the other way of the strategy. Additionally, it does not encourage them to identify the authors or sources of texts and find difficult meanings of words residing in texts. Therefore, depriving students of previewing texts for different purposes has a missed learning opportunity on their knowledge of paratext and microstructure meaning construction abilities. A paratext refers to *«liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader»* [18, back cover].

Giving Definitions of Pre-Reading Words

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This type of pre-teaching vocabulary strategy occurs in three lessons of the grade twelve EFL textbook which comprises of glossary of pre-reading words used to teach poems entitled 'Building the Nation', and 'Vulture' and an informational text about the multilateral organization. The following extracts are among the glossary definitions that the textbook contains.

- The Vic is the Lake Victoria Hotel, a well-known hotel in Entebbe; that was renamed the Windsor Lake Victoria when its ownership changed (p. 82).
- A Permanent Secretary (or PS) is not a politician but a senior civil servant running a government ministry (p. 82).
- Closer-knit = more integrated (p. 139), in text A.
- Stabilize exchange rates = keep the rates at which money is exchanged into another - Currency at more or less the same levels (p. 139), in text B.
- Creditworthy = able to pay your debts and therefore can be given a loan (p. 139), in text C.
- Sovereignty = the power that an independent country has to govern itself (p. 139), in text D.
- Drizzle: soft, light rain (p. 188).
- Harbinger: a sign that something is going to happen soon (p. 188).

The first two defined words are found in the poem under the title of 'Building the nation'. The next four definitions are samples taken from texts A to D designed to teach jigsaw reading. Since students are required to read these texts in groups, the textbook provides four to six definitions of words from each text. On the other hand, to teach the poem about vulture and its symbolic representation of a corrupted commandant, the textbook presents the meanings of thirteen words including the last two words in the abovementioned extracts. Therefore, the instructional strategy helps students understand the microstructure meanings of texts.

Pre-Teaching Words with a Semantic Framework

The finding of the study shows that in the grade eleven EFL textbook there is one pre-teaching vocabulary that asks students to understand the synonym meanings of words. The textbook consists of a pre-reading vocabulary exercise that directs students as *«Make sure you understand the words on the left, which come from the texts you will read shortly. Match them to their meanings on the right»* (p. 68). This indicates that the semantic framework of pre-teaching vocabulary is not the focus of second-cycle secondary EFL textbooks. The instructional strategy has a pedagogical goal of activating students' semantically and topically related words through semantic maps and semantic feature analysis. Additionally, they do not elicit students' vocabulary knowledge using classification, analogies, antonyms, and homophones.

Asking Text Features or Types

In the content analysis of the present study, this pre-reading instructional strategy occurs in the grade twelve EFL textbook to teach about two literary forms: a poem and novel extract. The strategy initiates students to *«discuss the differences between these two literary forms: the poem and the novel»* (p. 81). The textbook makes use of this directive when it prepares them to read a poem entitled 'Building the Nation' followed by an extract from the novel 'No Longer at Ease' written by Chinua Achebe. This gives students the chance to share ideas on different elements of literature.

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These include the distinct or unique qualities of the two literary texts that poems are short in size, have stanzas and rhythms, and use selective words whereas novels are long, use a battery of paragraphs and dialogues, and have a plot, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

The finding of the study indicates that elicitation of rhetorical organization of factual texts is an ignored pre-reading instructional strategy in both EFL textbooks. Informational texts are characterized by patterns of information organized in the forms of cause and effect, enumeration, description, argumentation (persuasion), comparison and contrast, and sequence. However, none of these discourse structures becomes the pre-reading pedagogical purpose of the textbooks so students are required to begin reading texts without activating their background knowledge of such text structures.

Providing Background Knowledge of Texts

This pre-reading instructional strategy is used when it is believed that the contents of reading texts can be difficult for or unfamiliar with students' already existing knowledge. In the instructional materials of the present study, the teaching strategy is characterized by describing topical concepts of texts, informing text sources, and describing general ideas of texts. These instructional aspects occur in twenty lessons across texts and seven instances within texts. They are employed from the viewpoint of assisting students to build new conceptual schemata and reactivate related ideas from reading texts. Of these specific features, the first two types are used in thirteen and ten instances respectively. The following extracts show a sample background knowledge provision strategy characterized by the two features:

- An anthem is a special song. Every country has a national anthem. It voices the country's history, its values or hopes (Grade eleven textbook, p. 11).
- This text is an extract from a novel written by a Ugandan writer (p. 44).
- In this extract, a young man is leaving his home in Miguel Street, in the capital of Trinidad (Grade twelve textbook, p. 156).
- Most universities and colleges have a student newspaper or magazine. One of the most popular features in the newspaper is the problem page (p. 61).
- African writers have written about many important issues, which affect the lives of ordinary people. You are going to read a poem from Uganda and an extract from a Nigerian novel (p. 81).

The pre-reading instructional initiations serve as a compensatory mechanism for students' conceptual deficiencies of textual ideas that they may not retrieve from their prior knowledge. Topics of reading passages have an underlying relationship with the main ideas of texts and hence describing them for students could help them understand the macrostructure meanings of texts. In addition to describing topical concepts of texts, another type of text introduction strategy informs sources of texts to build students' background knowledge. Such a pre-reading teaching practice emphasizes literary texts in general and their features in particular. For instance, the grade eleven EFL textbook informs students to know the types of literary texts, the names of the poets, the characters involved, the setting, and the themes of texts. The grade twelve textbook, on the other hand, guides them to be familiar with the thematic areas African writers commonly share, the biographies poets have, and the periods of contents poems contain.

The textbooks also describe the general ideas of reading texts which can help students

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understand the gist. This feature of the instructional strategy of the textbooks is used in four reading lessons from which the last three are found in the grade twelve EFL classes as the subsequent extracts indicate.

- The text is his autobiographical account of growing up in a village in Guinea, in West Africa. His father was a goldsmith and had a workshop... (p. 16).
- It (the poem) is about telephone cables and the messages they carry, which reflect the time at which it was written (p. 49).
- There are a number of multilateral organizations that affect people's lives in Ethiopia. We looked at the biggest of all, the United Nations in Unit 5. You are now going to find out about the World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the African Union (p. 137).

The textbooks also describe the general ideas of reading texts which can help students understand the gist. This feature of the instructional strategy of the textbooks is used in four reading lessons from which the last three are found in the grade twelve EFL classes as the subsequent extracts indicate.

Giving Collaborative Activities

The EFL textbooks comprise twenty two collaborative activities that demand students to work out pre-reading tasks in small groups. Of these instructional practices, the grade eleven EFL textbook contains thirteen instances. Teaching tasks using students' collaborative activities has an underlying relationship with indirect language learning strategies that *«work in tandem with the direct strategies»* [41, p. 135]. In the context of teaching pre-reading tasks in EFL textbooks, the instructional practice provides students with the learning opportunity of dealing with memory, cognitive, and compensatory tasks. However, the collaborative activities investigated in the EFL textbooks of the present study are confined to the discussions of a particular type of memory learning strategy known as an elaboration of background knowledge.

Among all teaching strategies of collaborative activities in the grade eleven EFL textbook, one pre- reading task encourages students to engage in a cognitive task stating as *«Form a group with some other students who want to read the same text. In your group, look at the headline and discuss what you think the story is about»* (p. 110). The main headline of the reading text is 'HIV / Aids in Africa' under which there are five passages with their headlines. The discussion of the pre-reading cognitive task, thus, helps students make a variety of hypotheses that result from the activation of their background knowledge.

Pre-Teaching Metacognitive Knowledge/Strategies

Teaching metacognitive knowledge/strategies is the other pre-reading instructional task employed in the grade eleven EFL textbook. It occurs in unit eight in which the textbook requires students to read a recount text entitled 'The tale of a tap' taken from Malimoto in Drum magazine. The story is written from the first-person point of view which consists of dialogues the writer made with different villagers who were troubled to get pipe water. Additionally, on the top of the reading text, there is a picture of three people who held jerry cans and surrounded a water pipe. It is in such a context of the reading lesson the textbook informs students that surveying the text before reading signifies them as the following extracts indicate.

- When faced with a text to read, an important first step is to survey it BEFORE you

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actually start reading it. This will give you useful information about what kind of text it is and what it is about which in turn will help you to understand it better when you read it in detail.

How to survey a text:

1. Look at the title and pictures, if any.

2. Quickly look over — or survey — the first couple of paragraphs without carefully reading every word; just run your eye over each line. Then, survey the first line or two of the other paragraphs.

3. While you are surveying the text, you can ask yourself these questions, depending on what kind of text it is: fiction (Where is it set At home? Another country? In Africa? In a town? In the country? What is happening? Who are the people? What is the tone? Is it sad, humorous?) and nonfiction (What is the subject of the text? People? Places? Things? What school subject is it related to? Biology? History? Geography? Where does it come from? A newspaper? A magazine? What is the writer telling us, what is his or her purpose?) (p. 198).

The instructional strategy focuses on awareness of cognitive tasks of paratextual information (title and pictures) and features of text types (paragraph, setting, theme, tone, and source). The abovementioned data showed that the main function of knowledge about surveying texts is to make students conscious of the relationship the cognitive tasks have with literal comprehension abilities. For instance, getting students informed to preview titles, pictures, and the first lines of texts reinforces them to identify the gist. Similarly, the list of self-questioning activities stated under the genres of texts (see number three above) refers to the identification of main ideas.

Teaching metacognitive knowledge about guessing contextual meanings of difficult words, on the other hand, is found in unit twelve where the textbook teaches about a magazine article that argues against digital technology as the following extract indicates.

- When you come across a new word in a text, usually there are plenty of clues to help you guess its meaning:

The meaning of the sentence in which it occurs (in other words, its context); if you understand the rest of the sentence you should be able to guess the meaning of one of the words in it quite easily. The formation of the word: you may recognize the root of the word and the meaning of any affixes it may have (p. 295).

This instructional strategy emphasizes the provision of knowledge about ways of guessing the meanings of words before students read a text. Such a metacognitive knowledge base could create them the learning opportunity of using the abovementioned cognitive tasks which can help them understand the propositional and microstructure meanings of the text.

Discussions

The purpose of the present study is to describe the pre-reading teaching strategies Ethiopian EFL textbooks employ in grades eleven and twelve classes and evaluate them under the guidance of a checklist adapted from theoretical and practical evidence. The results of the study reveal that in all units of teaching reading sections the textbooks do not initiate students to engage in pre reading tasks. For instance, the materials consist of fifty-eight texts to teach reading, but they use three pre-reading instructional strategies — giving collaborative activities, providing background knowledge

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of texts, and asking elaborative questions within a maximum of twenty two, twenty, and nineteen texts respectively. This indicates that the absence of instructional practices in every reading lesson of the EFL textbooks contradicts with the schema theory-based pre-reading instruction without which comprehension of the target text can be challenging. Activating and building students' background knowledge in pre-reading tasks are compulsory since meaning construction is the interactive process the reader has with the text [11; 12; 9; 25].

The absence of pre-reading teaching strategies has also a contradiction with research-based evidence. Several researchers studied the effects that the instructional strategies have on students' reading motivations and their comprehension abilities and confirmed that students exposed to different pre-reading tasks had positive attitudes toward reading texts [28; 63; 65; 66] and outperformed those who did not engage in any pre-reading tasks [5; 55; 24; 32].

The results of the current research also indicate that the EFL textbooks develop students' background knowledge of texts by providing them with background information about topical concepts. This is congruent with the idea that *«having prior knowledge of a topic allows the students to use the appropriate definition of the word which is important for overall comprehension of the text»* [36, p. 10]. Additionally, Pollock, Chandler and Sweller [43] confirm that building students' background knowledge with appropriate information is a compulsory instructional technique to effectively solve students' complex learning problems. Song [53] had a consistent finding and concluded that *«being more knowledgeable about something means that learners already have schemata relevant to the process of comprehending and thus can invest less mental effort to understand»* (p. 113).

However, the textbooks disregard the instructional strategy of familiarizing students with the meanings of difficult keywords which has a learning opportunity of building mental lexical dictionaries deemed necessary to enhance the limited working capacity of comprehending texts [21; 10]. This is especially a significant instructional strategy when students are of poor vocabulary knowledge to comprehend the target language texts [60; 30].

Another result of this research is that the EFL textbooks employ a pre-reading teaching strategy of eliciting elaborative responses with a predominant pedagogical purpose of activating students' world knowledge. In other words, the textbooks overlook other features of referential frames of background knowledge activation such as personal experience, previously read texts, and lessons taught previously. This is consistent with Hattan et al.'s [27] results which stated that the referential frames of previous lessons taught and texts read before were not the foci of the instructional resources used to teach reading in upper elementary classes in the USA. As for asking contextual meanings of difficult words, prediction questions, and critical thinking questions (the other instructional strategies of activating background knowledge) are concerned, the textbooks disregard them. However, previous research confirmed the effects these teaching strategies have on EFL comprehension performances. For instance, the findings of the National Reading Panel [38] and Rasouli, Vaghei and Pourmohammadi [45] showed that pre-teaching vocabulary in contexts enhances students' comprehension performances. Researchers interested to see the effect of teaching to guess the contents of reading selections reported the same result that the pre-reading instructional strategy facilitates reading comprehension abilities [5; 6; 29].

The findings of this study also show that providing cooperative activities is one of the predominantly used pre-reading teaching strategies in the EFL textbooks. When students engage in collaborative tasks before reading texts, they have the opportunity to ask for clarifications and clear

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confusion that they will encounter during text comprehension processes. Sociocultural and language learning strategy theories contend that the need to encourage students to work out tasks in cooperation [41; 64; 40]. Strengthening the idea, Silberstein [49] states as *«students discuss a text in advance to develop a context in which to read and to develop expectations about what they will find»* (p. 43). In a similar vein, previous research findings revealed that the instructional practice of pre-reading collaborative tasks does not only helpful in *«activating students existing knowledge and increasing sensitivity to the content of the reading material»* [17, p. 23] but it has also a facilitative effect on their reading strategy use and comprehension facilities [31; 19].

Additionally, the current researcher notes that the Ethiopian EFL textbooks do not pre-teach metacognitive strategies in grades eleven and twelve classes. This is in sharp contrast to the theoretical and practical evidence that corroborates the appropriateness of teaching metacognitive knowledge about and regulation of cognitive processes [40; 42; 14; 48]. Good language learning is not only a matter of the cognitive process of storing new information and retrieving it from long-term memory. Instead, it demands learners to have awareness about and control over the learning input [41]. Thus, a dearth of teaching metacognitive knowledge and self-regulated reading behaviors in EFL textbooks has an obstructive effect on students learning classroom reading comprehension tasks and accomplishing reading exams.

Conclusions

The findings of the study imply that designers of secondary EFL textbooks have a content-oriented schema theoretical orientation towards the pre-reading instructional practices. However, they give scant attention to different pre-reading teaching strategies with which students reading comprehension can be improved. For instance, the predominance of eliciting students' general world knowledge about reading texts across some units of the textbooks confines their learning opportunities of using all referential frames of background knowledge activation.

It is also concluded that the textbooks' designers do not acknowledge the importance of linguistic resources in the process of activating and building students' background knowledge of difficult words and grammatical structures of reading texts. A total absence of asking students to guess contextual meanings of difficult pre-reading words, in particular, underlies the idea that the textbooks envisage vocabulary instruction as the subcomponent of teaching inferential comprehension tasks in the post-reading.

Additionally, the absence of pre-reading instructional strategies in EFL textbooks has an effect of pedagogical amnesia on teachers' classroom practices of teaching reading. In contexts such as Ethiopia where EFL teachers follow tailored textbooks, their daily instructional practices are grounded in the methodological approaches of the textbooks. This is to say that experienced and novice teachers' pedagogical content knowledge base of teaching EFL in general and reading, in particular, are influenced by the theoretical orientations that the textbooks hold.

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