

# Investigating the Praxis of EFL teachers' Cognitive Instructional Discourse in Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension in Bahirdar Primary Schools in EFL context

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## Abstract

*Cognitive instructional scaffolding plays great role in helping learners to facilitate their understanding in reading text. The objective of this study was aimed at investigating the praxis of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' cognitive instructional discourse in enhancing students' reading comprehension in Bahirdar primary schools. The primary target of this research was to examine the cognitive instructional scaffolding EFL teachers use to foster students' reading comprehension in EFL classrooms, and the cognitive levels of questioning strategies EFL teachers use in terms of Blooms Revised Taxonomy. The research was carried out in six primary schools in Bahir Dar town. The participants of the study were nine EFL teachers and their relative grade seven students who were attending reading lessons. The data were collected through observations and focused group discussion. The observations were conducted three times per class, and then, 24 observations were conducted. The observations had been undertaken over two months. In addition, focused group discussion was held with nine randomly selected students from all schools. The results of the study indicated, the role of EFL teachers' in organizing groups to share ideas with in groups, making students to visualize the text, inferring the implied meaning, crafting the author's intentions and leading students to critical judgments occur less in EFL classrooms. To overcome these issue EFL teachers should include intentionally direct and indirect explanation of the reading strategies to assist learners to monitor and develop their understandings of text. Moreover, EFL teachers should guide students to monitor themselves in reading activities, encouraging learners in reflecting, relating and supporting students to visualize the reading and assisting them to maximize the implied meaning of the text. Moreover, EFL teachers should balance their questioning on lower level and higher-order level thinking skills in EFL classroom. In doing these, EFL teachers should target their objectives to promote students to build critical thinking and self-regulatory trends in the use of reading.*

**Keywords:** Teachers' cognitive instruction, Reading comprehension, Bloom's revised taxonomy, higher-order thinking skills

## Introduction

Reading, in its broad sense, is defined as "a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes, and the information that we already know" (Grabe, 2009, p. 74). Reading is not a simple phenomenon, but a very complex process. Widdowson (1979) has also defined reading as "the process of getting linguistic information via print." Similarly, Cooper (1997, p. 378) states that reading comprehension is a constructive process in which individuals construct meaning by interacting with the text. In attempting to define the process of reading in a more detailed way, scholars have increasingly come to agree on a view of reading as involving a set of common underlying processes and knowledge bases.

The cognitive orientation focuses on the mental activities of the learner that lead to successful learning. Cognitively, reading comprehension is understood as the processing of textual information relying on new information to established schemata, including prior knowledge, domain and topic knowledge, discourse and genre knowledge and vocabulary knowledge. Current cognitive approaches to learning

stress is that learning is an active, constructive, cumulative, and self-directed process that is dependent on the mental activities of the learner (Shuell 1986; Sternberg 1996). This explicitly acknowledges the role of metacognitive processes and the use of various learning strategies. The importance of constructing meaning from text has led researchers to conclude that “the most important thing about reading is comprehension” (Block, Gambrell, & Presseley, 2002, p.3). Hence, reading comprehension is a cognitive process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language “circumscribed by the socio-cultural context of reading and experiences of the reader” (Snow, 2002, pp, 11-12).

In the theory of cognitive development, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that optimal learning takes place when teachers scaffold students in building and understanding new conceptions or knowledge. Reading comprehension is enhanced by the classroom interaction of students with their teachers and peers, including both small group work and whole class discussion. This implies that when teachers provide support and modeling’ learning occurs within the students’ zone of proximal development. In relation to this, Duke and Pearson (2002) described a cognitive apprenticeship model in which there is a gradual release of responsibility. In this model, teachers make their thinking and application of reading comprehension strategies visible through demonstration and guided practice which facilitates students’ independent use of reading comprehension strategies. The explicit teaching of reading aims to equip learners with the strategies relevant to their varying reading purposes, the nature of text, and the context of situation. In line with this view, English teachers seek to help learners reading for academic purposes and to develop into strategic readers (Grabe, 2009, p.79).

In the Ethiopian context, researchers such as Gebremedhin (1993); Mendida (1988); Molla (1987); and Hailemichal (1984), carried out researches with a view of assessing the reading challenges of students among students at the university levels. The studies highlight that students’ reading ability was found below what was expected. Furthermore, Dubale (1990, p.1) asserts that “the great majority of the students in government secondary schools in Ethiopia lack the basic reading skills in English.” These research results indicate that there is proven evidence for the existence of the problems in the reading comprehension in Ethiopian English as foreign language (EFL) contexts, but the cause of the problems may be enormous.

The conceptualization of the nature of reading is the view that learning to read should include learning the processes for comprehending a text. Specifically, knowledge of text structure and discourse organization may be particularly important for students who read foreign language (FL) texts in more advanced academic settings, and patterns of discourse organization may need explicit attention (Grabe, 2009, p.81). In short, these assumptions have provided the basis for the meta cognitive-strategy approach to reading instruction which is now deemed to be the most appropriate approach in the higher academic context and capable of meeting the needs of advanced level readers. It is likely to see in a classroom that highly proficient learners become demotivated by the teacher’s poor activities and simple kinds of questions that do not need cognitive.

The strategy of using text structure involves utilizing the organization of a text in order to enhance comprehension (Meyer and Rice, 1984, p.31.). The structure of a text refers to how ideas are organized. For example, textbooks are often organized by main concepts with several paragraphs of supporting details and peripheral concepts. Authors use cues such as topic sentences, headings, transition words, and underlined or bold-faced font to highlight their particular text structure as they write. These cues are used by proficient readers to help them organize the ideas they are learning. In relation to this, the other three important comprehension strategies are summarization, elaboration, and explaining. When students summarize, they choose the most important concepts from the text and express them in their own words. In addition to summarization, effective learners elaborate, which means connecting new information to information that they already know (Gagné et al., 1984). In fact, elaboration is different from mere paraphrasing; when students paraphrase, they simply reinterpret the text they have read in their own words. In contrast, when students elaborate, they actively link the new information to old information. Finally, when students explain ideas, they ask themselves “why” questions and then attempt to answer these questions.

Carlos Booth and Olson (2003) developed a cognitive strategy instruction that develops the thinking skills that seek to make students strategic and flexible learners. For some students, cognitive strategies must be explicitly taught so they will be able to consciously think. Students must also have multiple opportunities to practice cognitive strategies. Thus, strategies become power tools with greater flexibility. Hence, for the purpose of this research, Carlos and Colleague’s (2003) cognitive strategy instruction tool kits are adapted to investigate the extent of these cognitive strategies’ implementation

in fostering students' reading comprehension in EFL classrooms in Ethiopia, Bahir Dar town primary schools.

### **The purpose of the study**

The researcher adapted Carol Booth Olson Robert Land, (2007) cognitive instructional guidelines and Bloom's (1985) revised critical thinking taxonomy in combination to see to what extent these cognitive elements are practiced in the primary school's reading classes. The main aims of the study was to carry out a detailed inquiry to what extent EFL teachers scaffold students 'in reading comprehension in EFL classrooms, and the cognitive levels of questioning or assessment strategies EFL teachers employ in the EFL classroom terms of Blooms revised taxonomy. Further, the main objectives of the study focused on answering specifically the cognitive instructional scaffolding EFL teachers use to foster students' reading comprehension in EFL classroom, and the cognitive levels of questioning strategies EFL teachers use in terms of Blooms Field Revised Taxonomy in EFL classroom

### **Participants of the study**

In order to find out the praxis of EFL teachers' instructional scaffolding and the cognitive levels of teachers' questioning used in EFL reading classroom, the researcher tried to assess the existing situation in Bahir Dar Town's primary schools particularly, grade seven students in focus. Grade seven students are selected, for most often, in Ethiopia, practicing English reading lessons begin in grade seven. In Bahir Dar town, twenty four governmental primary schools are found. Among the twenty four governmental schools, six schools were selected using systematic sampling thinking that six schools are representative to this study. The study was limited on the above six schools in order to make it more manageable, and to investigate the study in depth. In the selected six schools, thirty four English teachers are found. In these schools, each four schools has three sections of grade seven students, and the remaining two schools have two sections of grade seven students respectively. In all the above grade seven students, nine EFL teachers were assigned to teach. Therefore, all the above five male and four female EFL teachers were selected and participated in the study.

### **Procedure**

The observations were undertaken three times with each teacher per class respectively, but three teachers were observed for two times because of the inconvenience they face at a time. Students were all grade seven students. The observations were undertaken with the help of video recording, note taking and checklists. However, two teachers did not volunteer to be recorded, so from the two EFL teachers, the data were collected through checklists and note taking. In total, twenty four observations were employed. The observation had been done for two months long from March, 2016 to May 2016. In addition to this, focus group discussions were held with representative students from each school.

The researcher adapted Olson's (2003) cognitive instructional guidelines and Bloom's (1985) revised critical thinking taxonomy in combination to see to what extent these cognitive elements are practiced in the primary school's reading classes. The data obtained from the audio-recorded data, note taking and checklists in related to the instructional practices EFL teachers made, and the levels of questioning teachers used while they were teaching in the EFL classroom were documented and analyzed thoroughly. During the investigation of the cognitive instructional activities teachers made, the activities which was undertaken was tallied using (+) and those that were not undertaken were also tallied using the (-) sign (see Table 1). Regarding the cognitive levels of questioning, all types of questions teachers used in the EFL classrooms were categorized according to the revised Blooms Taxonomy, and counted their frequency of occurrence. According to Bloom's revised taxonomy of thinking process, there are specific verbs that are consistent with particular levels of thinking. Then, each action verb was placed under its own level of thinking category. Finally, explanations and interpretations were made by relating the current theories with the results of the data obtained. Eventually, the study has provided a clear picture to what extent EFL teachers 'would use instructional scaffolding while they were teaching reading with regard to cognitive-level questioning they employed in EFL classrooms.

## Methods of the study

In Ethiopia, regardless of students' educational level, plethora of research on the proficiency of students' reading results show that the quality of reading is deteriorating from time to time. For instance, Getachew (1996) and Fisseha (1995) found out that secondary school students lack basic skills of reading, and are in a lower level of reading comprehension. The above situation is also similar in Bahir Dar primary schools. The researcher's main reason to conduct this research here in Bahir Dar primary schools is firstly, most students' lack of interest towards reading lesson. I observed this situation while I was observing EFL classes for my PhD course assignments. The second reason is the schools' proximity to the researcher. The school's proximity helps the researcher to investigate the problem intensively through observation and focus group discussion in depth. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to explore specifically the cognitive instructional scaffolding EFL teachers use to foster students' reading comprehension in EFL classroom, and the cognitive levels of questioning strategies EFL teachers use in terms of Blooms Field Revised Taxonomy in EFL classroom

Therefore, in order to carry out this study, phenomenological study approach was employed, and two data collecting instruments were used primarily, and secondary sources were also used to substantiate the study. These data collecting instruments were classroom observation and focus group discussion (FGD). These tools were selected intentionally because the nature of the study needs closer observation and face to face discussion in order to get first-hand information. The observations were held to see to what extent EFL teachers help students to practice higher cognitive instructional activities in the reading classrooms, and to what extent EFL teachers use higher order critical thinking questions to enhance students' cognitive skills. Each observation was recorded through videos. The other data gathering tool was focus group discussions. In the discussions, various types of points were raised in related to students' experience in their reading classrooms, and some raw data analysis are also written in the result section below.

Concerning data analysis, narrative data analysis techniques were employed. The observation results were tabulated in the table, and tried to interpret each scenario through narration below the table. The focus group discussion was held through Amharic language (the native language of the target area), and later on translated in to English, and then, the transcribed texts has been read repeatedly, and some overlapping statement has been filtered out, and significant statements were classified into meaning units, and has been tried to cluster them into larger themes. In order to make the data closer to the reader, main themes of the focus group discussions and the observation results were presented shortly on their respective topics

In order to maintain the ethical principles of the study throughout the process of the research, the researcher attempted to honor the fundamental ethical obligations required through the entire procedures of data collections and analyses.

## Results

### Focus group discussion

In order to carry out the focus group discussions, two grade seven students were selected from each six schools to take part in the discussion about their reading experience, and nine students could come to the meeting and three students were absent. Therefore, the discussion was held with the nine students on the above issues. The participants of the focused group discussions were six male and three female students.

The first discussion point was held on whether students like reading in EFL classroom or not. For this question, the majority of students said that reading in the classroom is boring, because teachers always make students to read loudly turn by turn. Hence, classroom students always worry to read in their turn rather than understanding the concepts of the reading text. Furthermore, more often, reading comprehension exercises are given as home works, and in the next day, teachers always try to give correction for the home works by checking students' exercise books. This scenario implies that students always worry for completing exercises rather than understanding the main concepts of the reading text.

The second discussion point was concerning their reading experience in terms of individual reading or group reading in the English classroom. Most students said that they tend to read in groups because of the scarcity of text books. As a result, they stated that they are not comfortable to read a reading text in the group of five or six students together. This is why they are not interested in reading classes, for they cannot read in equal pace, and there is also a disturbance within the groups. Therefore, no one clearly understands what he/she really reads in the groups. On the other hand, teachers also understand that reading in groups using only one text book is not conducive. That is why they always make us either to read loudly or to do it reading activities as homework assignments.

The third discussion point was concerning what would students do when they face difficult terms in the reading text, majority of them expressed that they use either Amharic-English dictionary or their mobile dictionary to look up the words. Therefore, this students' experience show that they do not know how to guess the meaning of difficult terms from the reading context, so difficult terms are always an obstacle for students' reading comprehension.

The fourth discussion agenda was regarding what their teachers do in the pre- reading phases, many of them respond that their teacher always tell them about their reading topic they are going to read, and sometimes the teachers discuss some vocabulary terms from the reading passage. Moreover, the main things what the teachers always do are ordering students to do exercises on the reading passage which are found at the end of the text.

Question number five was on what the teachers do while students are reading, herein, majority of them said that teachers always sit somewhere and do some other different things till students finished their reading. But, some students said that teaches go around the classroom silently in order to avoid the disturbance among students, yet they do not want to intervene students while they are reading.

Regarding the last discussion point what the teachers do during post- reading phases, majority of the respondents agree that teachers always give corrections for the exercises what the students did during while- reading phases, and sometimes teachers give explanations on the answers given for the reading comprehension questions. Lastly, what the teachers do is clarifying points if students ask them unclear ideas or questions.

In general, EFL teachers' scaffolding activities in reading lesson don't seem appropriate because reading should be an active exercise. In doing so, teachers should motivate, encourage and guide the learners while they are reading. Furthermore, reading lesson should not always left to homework assignments. What is more, EFL teachers should be active participants in all phases of reading that takes place in the classroom. English teachers seek to help learners reading for academic purposes and to develop into strategic readers (Grabe, 2009, p.79).

### **Results of observation**

As outlined in Table1, among the observed teachers only four teachers were activating students' background knowledge before students start reading. The remaining five teachers did not activate the schemata of the students before students involve in their reading. Most often, EFL teachers tell the reading passage topic and order them to read the text. Beside this, reading aloud is the common practice in almost all classes. In the focus group discussion many of students confirm their teacher always tell them about their reading topic they are going to read, and sometimes the teachers discuss some vocabulary terms from the reading passage. Here, according to Williams (1984) the pre-phase of reading tries to introduce and arouse interest in the topic, motivate learners by giving a reason for reading, and provide some language preparation for the text.

The activity indicated in roll number two, in Table 1, only four teachers tried to activate students' background knowledge. Similarly, in roll number three, only two teachers tried to guide students to predict contents of the text with in a text. As a result, most of the students do not have experience in predicting texts with in texts.

As it is indicated in roll number four, in Table 1, only two of the teachers tried to explain ideas which seem difficult for students to understand, but seven of the observed teachers do not explain any difficult ideas which they found difficult in the reading passage. Explaining some vocabulary terms were some of the activities done by teachers by writing the meanings of the words on the blackboard.

In roll number five and six, in Table 1, none of the observed teachers' did scaffolding activities to guide students to ask self-questions in combining different related information from the different segment of texts. Similar to this, teachers' effort to help students to try to connect the reading text to students' life

is less. On the other hand, among the observed teachers only two of the teachers ask students to reason out for the answers they give during classroom discussion. The remaining seven of them do not make students to reason out. These could be done by asking students using why and how types of questions, but most of the teachers are reluctant to render such types of intensive discussions in the classroom. Langan (2003, p. 380), Very often, there are three important things we must do as critical readers: Recognizing the point the author is making; deciding whether the author's support is relevant and deciding if the author's support is adequate.

The majority (six) EFL teachers make student to read in groups. However, in my observation, students were highly noisy, and it was difficult to comprehend the reading text in the noisy classroom. However, EFL teachers use group reading activity in uncondusive ways.

As it is shown in roll number nine, 10 and 11, in Table 1, none of the teachers made students to paraphrase some sentences or paragraphs. Paraphrasing is important to develop students' comprehending ability. Similar to this, none of the observed teachers tried to make students to summarize what they have read in the classroom. Summary writing is one of the highest comprehension skills in reading activities. In relation to this, only one teacher tried to make students to figure out the main ideas of the reading passage. Furthermore, teachers tried to make students to figure out the main ideas, but teachers themselves do not try to figure out the main ideas as a feedback except asking the students.

As it is seen in Table 1 below, regarding 'think aloud' technique, in my observation, I couldn't see in any of the classrooms. Think aloud technique is showing students how to think by pretending as if the teacher is thinking about something. I guess that EFL teachers do not have awareness about this activity.

As it is depict in table 1 below, only one observed teacher tried to make students to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context. But, the remaining teachers do not help students to guess the meanings of difficult terms from the given context, but they tried to tell them the meanings of the words in students' mother tongue.

Concerning questions 14, 15, 16, in Table 1, regarding the critical judgment, analyzing author's intention and reflecting the big idea the students explore respectively, I observed that none of the teachers does any kinds of activities in the classroom. For instance, for roll number 14 in the table, only one observed teacher was trying to make students to do critical judgment within the text. Similarly, regarding roll number 15, from the observed teachers, none of them were trying to ask or probe students to understand the intentions of the writer concerning the reading text. Understanding the writer's intention is one of the good ways of comprehending the reading text. Correspondingly, for roll number 16, none of the teachers tried to make students explore the big ideas they explore from the reading text they read. Exploring the big ideas from the text is a big cognitive mental exercise that helps to widen the horizon of the students mind. In relation to this, Grellet, (1981) asserts that students' ability or competence to read and understand effectively the written materials play a significant role in the academic success. This ability or competence includes understanding main ideas, and specific information, meanings of unfamiliar words, or expressions, inferring basic references, understanding writer's intention, and evaluating the text. So, if students couldn't do these reading practices, their reading comprehension would be hampered.

Regarding the activity indicated in roll number 17, in Table 1, on the subject of interpreting the text, the teachers' to guide students to interpret the meanings of the given text is minimal. Interpretation activity is the best mental exercise that helps to understand the reading text in different perspective. In similar way, in relation to prediction none of the teachers made students to revise what they were predicting before the reading, and to compare their prediction after they read the text. This is important activity to boost the reader comprehends ability.

Regarding visualizing the text question number 19, from the observed teachers, I could not observe when teachers encourage students to visualize pictures in their mind regarding the reading text. This is helpful to comprehend the reading text fully.

Regarding the implied meaning in the text, none of the observed teachers was trying to assist students in inferring the implied meanings of the reading text. Comprehending the implied meanings of the reading text requires deep understandings of the text. These activities imply that the way EFL teachers' approach in reading instruction doesn't help students to understand the implied meanings of the text. In general, teachers' instructional scaffolding of students in comprehending the reading text is inadequate, or it is not on the right track. To put differently, Majority of EFL teachers focus on very literal

types of comprehension activities, and the focus on reading comprehension activities which needs high cognitive ability is neglected. In other words, most often, Students answer comprehending questions without understanding the main idea of the reading text. Therefore, these results show that the way EFL teachers' scaffolding of students to understand reading comprehension in EFL context is not on the required level.

As it is depicted the raw data in Table 2, EFL teachers forwarded 67 different kinds of questions in the observed 6 classes. Among these questions 41 (61.2%) of the questions are questions that require remembering. These kinds of questions are dominant in the observed six reading classes. Here, students are the passive receivers of knowledge without questioning or discussing the issues. They are simply considered as giving an answer from what they know and remember. Teachers most often asked learners to memorize new vocabularies or grammar points and to describe particular information presented in reading section. Moreover, learners were required to understand teacher's monologue and to show their understanding in the similar activities by explaining it to the teacher. Learners are more dependent on the teacher. As a result, they cannot take the lead by themselves and they see the teacher as the only person whom they should listen to and speak too.

The outcome of cognitive development is thinking. The intelligent mind creates from experience "generic coding systems that permit one to go beyond the data to new and possibly fruitful predictions" (Bruner, 1957, p. 234). this implies that students should not over involved in questions which needs remembering facts rather they should be allowed to think about and discuss the process of learning. In teaching reading, teachers should not provide all the answers but they should help learners to increase their thinking ability, so that they would be able to take the responsibility of their learning to become autonomous learners.

The second type of questioning category which indicated in Table 2 is the concepts of 'understand'. This is higher-level-thinking process compared to the remember type of questions. Among the observed six reading classes, 22 (33%) of the questions are questions which needs students' understanding. In reading, students' reasoning and comprehension ability would develop when students are allowed to explore and solve their problems through the process of cognitive thinking process. But, in the actual observation of the six reading classrooms' the numbers of questions are less than the number of 'remember questions. This shows that teachers do not give much emphasis for students' cognitive development through allowing them to solve the problems they encounter during the process of learning. Bruner (1961) argues that the purpose of teaching is not to impart knowledge, but instead to facilitate a child's thinking and problem solving skills which can then be transferred to a range of situations.

In the observed classes, in Table 2, the cognitive domains of applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating types of questions are given less emphasis. These are the higher-level thinking processes that enable learners to develop their reasoning, analyzing, evaluating, and their creative capability in exploring the reading text. As it is depicted Table 2, only 4 (5.9 %) questions are forwarded by the EFL teachers. This showed that the higher-orders of thinking activities are almost neglected. In relation to this, Bruner (1960, p.29) suggests the following:

The purpose of instruction for Bruner is to create an environment in which a person can discover new knowledge for him or herself. Instruction exists to guide and support new learners as they interact with their environment to construct new knowledge for themselves. The purpose of instruction is not to tell the student that which they ought to learn but rather to create an interesting and stimulating environment in which students can discover this knowledge with the teacher's support.

This implies that EFL teachers, most often, should focus on questions that facilitate students' thinking ability in the process of the students' learning. But, the actual practices those observed in the EFL reading classrooms contradict to the above assertions. It might be a lack of awareness of EFL teachers in their instructional process.



Table 1: Cognitive instructional activities in EFL classroom

Participant EFL teachers		T1		T2		T3		T4		T5		T6		T7		T8		T9	
R.no	Teacher's instructional scaffolding activities	Yes	no																
1	Activating background knowledge	+		+			-	+			-		-		-		-	+	
2	Guiding students to predict contents of the reading text		-	+			-		-	+		-			-		-		-
3	Teachers' scaffolding to practice prediction within the text		-		-		-		-			-			-		-		-
4	Teachers' explanation to clarify vague ideas of the reading content		-		-	+			-		-		-		-	+			-
5	Teachers' assistance to learn to ask themselves to combine information within a text		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
6	Teachers' guidance to connect the reading text to their life experience		-	+			-		-		-		-		-		-		-
7	Teachers' support students to reason out		-		-		-		+		-		-	+		-		-	-
8	Teachers' assistance to share ideas with in the students' groups	+		+			-		-	+		+		-	+		+		+
9	Teachers' guidance to practice paraphrasing		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
10	Teachers' support to figure out the main idea	+			-		-		-		-		-		-		-	+	
11	Teachers' help to summarizing activities		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
12	Teachers' use of 'think aloud' strategies		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
13	Teachers' assistance to guess the meanings of unfamiliar terms		-		-		-		-	+		-		-		-		-	-
14	Teachers' guidance to make critical judgment		-		-		-		-		-		-		-	+			-
15	Teachers' support to analyze author's craft		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
16	Teachers' favor to reflect the big idea		-		-		-		-	+			-		-		-		-
17	Teachers' guidance to practice interpretation		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
18	Teachers' assistance to revise the gist of the text to their expectation		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
19	Teachers' guidance to visualize the reading text in their mind		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-
20	Teachers' help to infer the implied meanings of the text		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-

Key = T<sub>1</sub> = teacher one T<sub>2</sub>= teacher two..... + = observed action - =unobserved actions

Table 2: Cognitive levels of questioning strategies EFL teachers use in terms of Blooms field revised Taxonomy

Phases of reading	Action verbs	Category	frequency		Sample questions?
	Recognizing Identifying recalling	Remember	9 12 10	41	Who is studying to be a medical doctor? Where is the story taking place?
Pre-reading phases  While-reading phases  Post-reading phases	Interpreting Clarifying Paraphrasing Representing Exemplifying Classifying Summarizing Inferring Comparing Explaining	Understand	- 2 - - 6 2 - 1 1 1	22	What does it mean? What does it mean in other words? Can you mention some examples which support your argument from the reading text? Can you summarize the reading text with in 100 words? Compare virus and bacteria in terms of their reproduction? Compare the similarities between virus and bacteria? Explain the main intent of the reading text?
	Executing Implementing	Apply	2	2	Use one of the underlined words from the reading text to make your own sentences
	Differentiating Organizing	Analyze	1	1	What is the difference between bacteria and virus?
	Checking Monitoring critiquing	Evaluate	1	1	How do you evaluate the reading text? How do you examine the writer's view?
	Generating Planning Producing	Create	0	0	

As Table 3 summarizes the type of questions EFL teachers use in the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading phases, 41 (61.2%) of questions are 'remember' level questions. Among these questions, 11 (26.6%) questions were asked in the pre-reading phases, and 4 (9.8%) of questions were asked in the while-reading phases, and 26 (63.3%) of questions were asked during post reading phases (see Table 3). These are the highest numbers of questions posed in the EFL classrooms, but none of them require students' higher- level of thinking. This implies that most often EFL teachers use questions that do not require higher order thinking skill. Similarly, 22 (32.8%) of questions are 'understand' level questions. Among these questions 2 (2.9%) questions were asked in the pre-reading phases, and 3 (4.8%) of questions were asked in the while-reading phases, and 17 (25.3%) of questions were asked during post reading phases. This indicates that majority of understand-level questions are posed at the end of the reading text. In relation to this, researchers claim that questions belonging to lower-cognitive levels are likely to require students to simply recall the prescribed data from memory, concentrating on factual information (Gall, 1970). Similarly, it is true that EFL teachers in Ethiopian schools pose questions which can be easily answered by students. As a result, most often,

students focus on simple questions that do not require higher order level questions. Therefore, EFL learners higher order critical thinking development is under question.

In the same vein, 4 (9.8%) of teachers' questioning were relying on 'apply', 'analyze', 'evaluate' and 'create' level questions in general. From these questions, 2 (2.9%), 1 (1.5%), 1 (1.5%) and 0 (0%) questions were 'apply', 'analyze', 'evaluate' and 'create' level questions respectively. In relation to these, all types of the above mentioned questions were asked during post-reading phases. Very limited questions those require higher order thinking skills like applying, analyzing and evaluating level types were asked in post reading phases. During the observation, no questions were posed that require students' creativity level in anywhere. This indicates higher level questions are not emphasized in EFL context. In connection to this, researchers states that higher-cognitive levels require students to be engaged in higher-order thinking like problem solving, analyzing, creating or evaluating information (Gall, 1970). In contrast to this, the practice of EFL teachers' questioning practices heavily relies on lower level questions rather than on higher level questions in Bahir Dar primary schools. This implies that EFL learners in Ethiopian schools' are not on the right truck to develop their critical thinking skills in English classroom.

Table 3: *Distribution of teachers' questioning level in the three reading phases*

<b>Level</b>	<b>Phases</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<i>Pre-reading</i>	<i>While-reading</i>	<i>Post-reading</i>	
<i>Remember</i>	11	4	26	41
<i>Understand</i>	2	3	17	22
<i>Apply</i>	0	0	2	2
<i>Analyze</i>	0	0	1	1
<i>Evaluate</i>	0	0	1	1
<i>Create</i>	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	13	7	47	67

## Discussion and conclusion

Cognitive strategy instruction develops the thinking skills that will make students strategic and flexible learners. It is very important to help students to be self-regulated learner in developing themselves through education. In order to maximize the students' reading comprehension level, EFL teachers' scaffolding activities plays a great role. But, the data collected from the actual observations and focus group discussions from the six primary schools proved that EFL teachers' instructional strategies they follow towards reading do not seem on the right track. As it is indicated in the data analysis section, EFL teachers' involvement particularly in enhancing students thinking ability is analyzed. Moreover, in the observation, teachers' questioning level was also considered. In general, Based on the above two basic pillars, the followings were found:

Majority of EFL teachers' practices to activate students' background knowledge regarding the reading topic has not been given much emphasis, and teachers' involvement in helping students' to practice prediction about the reading content and predicting ideas within the text is less. In the observed classrooms, majority of EFL teachers practice loud reading in the classroom. However, loud reading may not be very helpful for students' comprehending ability. Similarly, the role of EFL teachers' in helping students' to reason out and to ask self-questions while they are reading is minimal. Moreover, EFL teachers' contributions in guiding students' to connect the reading text to their life and to interpret the text within the contexts are insignificant. Furthermore, the role of EFL teachers' effort in organizing groups, sharing ideas with in groups and leading them to critical judgment is less. In connection to this, EFL teacher's role in guiding, in encouraging, in supporting learners in reflecting and to visualize the reading in inferring the implied meaning is neglected. In the same vein, no attention has been given in making students to involve in paraphrasing activities, in summarizing the gist of the text and in analyzing author's craft in the given reading context.

On the other hand, majority of EFL teachers use questions which are 'remember level' during reading comprehension exercises. Furthermore, majority of these questions are practiced in the post-reading phases. Less emphasis is given for higher order level questionings in EFL reading context. In general,

EFL teachers' knowledge in scaffolding students' in cognitive reading instructional practices and the use of higher order thinking level questions are found very minimal.

## Recommendations

As the data depicted, EFL teachers are not fully aware about some cognitive instructional scaffolding techniques to helping students' comprehend the reading text. Therefore, Universities are supposed to train primary EFL teachers on the implementation of the cognitive scaffolding techniques teachers should use during reading exercises. Moreover, EFL teachers should give due attention in activating students' background knowledge using different techniques like probing questions, making them remember related experiences, making them predict the contents of the reading, and etc. Furthermore, Universities should give due attention in training EFL teachers on how to help students' in making critical judgment, in analyzing author's craft, in summarizing, in paraphrasing, in inferring the implied meanings and in visualizing the reading text, and etc. These are very important cognitive domains to develop learner's thinking ability to higher level.

In connection to the above, explicit and implicit cognitive instructional teaching techniques are effective for comprehension strategy instruction. Therefore, in order to implement the strategy, EFL teachers should include direct explanation, teacher modeling ("thinking aloud") and guided practice, in helping students' comprehend the reading text. Put briefly, in order to develop students' strategy use, sometimes, EFL teachers should use shared reading to model the synthesized process of reading. This means that teachers may read stories, articles, poetry, songs, etc. out loud to students to model the whole reading process. As a result, students need to see and hear modeled reading that integrates all of the reading skills with a focus on meaning-making. In the same vein, EFL teachers should use both lower level and higher order level questions in EFL classroom accordingly.

Finally, the results of this study may pave the way for other researchers to conduct further study. Furthermore, there should be training on scaffolding reading strategy use for the English language teachers in order to make the reading lesson student friendly and engaging.

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