RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE LOW EFL READING LEVEL OF GRADE FOUR STUDENTS AND REASONS: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO STUDENTS IN ABOMSA PRIMARY SCHOOL, ETHIOPIA.

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
……………………. 	…………………………………………………………………… The purpose of this study was to explore the EFL reading ability of fourth graders of students in one selected school in Ethiopia. To this end, selected with purposive sampling technique, 118 grade 4 students of Abomsa Primary school in Ethiopia were tested the EFL oral reading test. The results of the data analyzed through frequency and percent, show that the grade four students in the mentioned school were poor readers in English. They were able to name the upper and lower case letters of English language and decode one syllable words with three or four letters. Moreover, the study found the three confusing areas of English letters for these students such as letter shape, letter-sound name and letter similarity with L1 script. Recommendations and implications were provided according to the findings of the study.

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Introduction:-
Though the teaching of English language in Ethiopia has the age of more than hundred years (Dereje, 12) its usage is limited in the EFL classrooms and in some Federal Offices. As a result, students begin to learn all English language skills at school. In other words, students have no exposure to this language outside classroom except at school. In Ethiopia, English language is also used as a medium of instruction in different levels of education starting grade five and onwards (Berhanu, 2009; Heugh, et al, 2006).

The application of this language as a school subject and as a language of teaching can be the manifestation of its necessity for the people of Ethiopia who are with a desire to be successful both when they were students and when they were workers after graduation. Due to the multifaceted purposes of English language in the most part of the world, having good knowledge and skills of it perhaps enables Ethiopians to participate within global economy and society (EGRA Ethiopia, 2012).

Even though it is currently being used as the school subject and as the medium of instruction (MOI), most students who attend in government schools and rural areas are poor in using English language including university students. In Ethiopia, as revealed by Jha (2013), the English language is being learned not being mastered. According to him, students are taught about the language but not how to communicate applying all skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Even though all these language skills play vital roles for the teaching-learning processes of both English language and other school subjects, reading skill takes the lion's share, especially in a foreign language situation like the case

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of Ethiopia. This is because, Ethiopian students are supposed to speak or listen rarely in the English language due to lack of exposure outside classroom (Jha, 2013) even in the classrooms; whereas, they are required to read more because the exposure is ample in both situations. Therefore, in Ethiopia for learning the English language as a subject and other school subjects using as an MOI both at lower and higher grades, the skills of reading is supposed to be the cornerstone (Edosa, 2007).

Regardless of its importance, students in Ethiopia are very poor in their EFL reading achievement though it often serves as a predictor of future academic success. Research shows that, though Ethiopian students begin learning to read since grade one (Heugh, et al, 2006), most of them are able to read below the expected level not only in the English (Eba, 2014; EGRA, 2012; Michael, 2003), but also in their L1 (EGRA Ethiopia, 2010) even when they complete primary school. The reading achievement results of grade 4 students of Ethiopia within the three National Learning Assessment years 2004, 2008 and 2010 were 64.5%, 43.9% and 43.3% respectively (MOE, 2004; 2008; 2010). The implication of this result is the declining of the reading ability of primary school students in the country. Moreover, in Ethiopia, the cause of grade repetition and drop out of students is inability of reading (EGRA Ethiopia, 2010); this in turn resulted in the inability of learning both the school subjects and the language itself.

The assessment made by Early Grade Reading Assessment (Ethiopia EGRA, 2010) on the six Ethiopian languages reading skills of grade 2 and 3 students shows that most students read below the expected level. Based on this alarming finding, grades 2, 3 and 4 students were assessed their English language reading skills by Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA Ethiopia, 2012), and the finding indicates that these students were below the standard made by MOE. Using the recommendations made by the two assessments periods, even though the Ethiopian government made a number of attempts how students were taught reading skills of both L1 and English language the problem is still there (Eba, 2014; Gemechis, 2014).In general, the teaching of English language in Ethiopia is daunting (Dereje, 2012). Therefore, conducting research focusing on the EFL reading skills of primary school students is crucially required. The present research sought to answer the following research questions.
1. Do grade 4 students of the participants of the study name all English language letters and sounds?
2. What are the confusing letters of English language for the participants of the study and what are the reasons behind?
3. What types of sight words the participants of the study were able to decode or unable to decode and what were the reasons behind?

Research Methodology
Population, Samples and Sampling Techniques
The main purpose of this article was to explore the EFL reading skills level of grade four students of Abomsa number one primary school in Ethiopia. Thus, out of 170 students of grade four students who were enrolled in 2016/2017 academic year in the school, 118 (64 male (54.2%) and 54 female (45.8 %) were selected as the participants of the study purposely—leaving medium achievers but selecting low and high achievers.

Data Collecting Instruments
Data were collected through a reading test. The test consisted of letter-naming knowledge (hereafter LNK) both capital letter naming knowledge (hereafter CLNK) and small letter naming knowledge (hereafter SLNK), letter-sound naming knowledge (hereafter LSNK) and sight word decoding ability (SWDA). The first part of the test consisted of the 26 upper case English language letters listed down randomly and its second part is lower case letters of the English language that are listed down indiscriminately. The third part of the test included the letter-sound knowledge of the 26 single English language alphabets that are listed down arbitrarily.

The final part of the test consisted of 52 sight words taken from grade three EFL syllabus of Ethiopian curriculum (MOE. 2008). In this part of the test, words were grouped into two categories as shown in table 1.

Table 1:-Categories of words according to the number of syllables

Category One		Category Two	
One syllable	**More than one Syllables**	**One Syllable**	**More than one syllables**
Ox, week, egg, job, year sell, ill, goat, meat, cat	Farmer, tomato, village, outside under	Dress, May, meet, feel, help, lunch, cook,	Barber, mango,begin,garlic, Monday,clinic,Library, finish,

poor, rice, drive, know, line, bowl, hall, queen	kitchen, zebra	valve, maize, blow, horse, quick,	different, remember, fisherman, soldier

Source: English Syllabus for Grade 3 for Ethiopia

Ethical Issue and Data collecting procedures
Informing school director and the homeroom teachers as some of grade four students in the school were going to be selected to participate in the research project, the researcher invited students to be assessed their English language oral reading ability voluntary. It was not required to make parents sign for permission, but through the students, they showed their agreement by sending the children to school against shift for the sake of assessment. Therefore, the students took the test from November 15 to 30/ 2016.

Data Analysis Procedures
The collected data through oral reading test were corrected and marked by the researcher and the assistant. Due to the objective nature of the test, it didn't need to be marked by two expertise or raters. The obtained results were fed into SPSS package 20 and computed applying frequency and percent and displayed using tables and bar-graphs. Each letter and word response of the students were tallied and counted to explore which letters created confusion to name them when reading and to investigate the magnitude of the words being read and misread.

To determine the overall sight word decoding ability level of the participants of the study, the benchmark formulated by EGRA Ethiopia (2012) was applied. Since the number of the words in the test of the current study and the source of the benchmark were different, the following score cut was prepared by the researcher.

Table 2:-Benchmark for Sight Word Decoding Ability Level for Grade Three

Reading Level	EGRA Ethiopia, 2012 (N= 300 words)	This Study (N= 52 words)
Below basic	0-135 Words	0-23 Words
Basic	136-177 Words	24-30 Words
Proficient	178 -234 Words	31-41 Words
Advanced	234-300 Words	42-52 Words

Results and Discussion:-

Results

Letter Naming Knowledge of the Students
As shown in figure 2, most of the students had capital letter naming knowledge**.** About half 58 (49.1%) of the students were able to name more than 20 upper case letters of English language when about 24 (20.2%) students were able to say about half of the English language capital letters. This indicates that students were able to say capital letters despite the existence of children who were not able to name most of the letters.
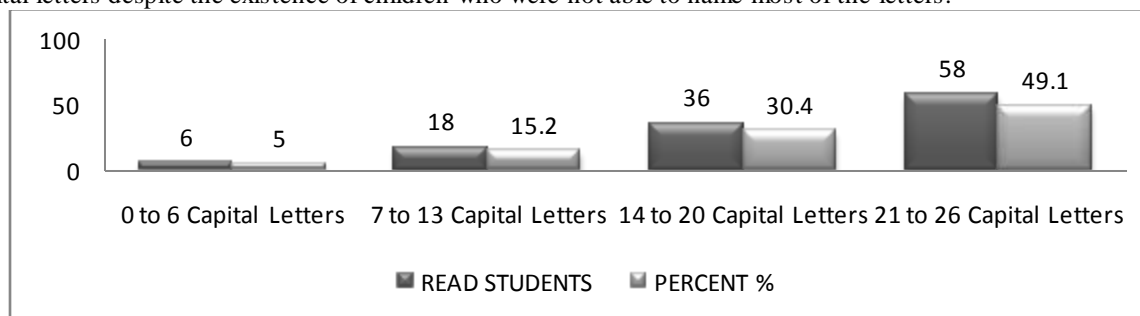

Figure 1:-Capital Letter Knowledge of the Students

As noticed in Figure 2, most of the students performed well on SLNK test too. 21 to 26 small letters were named by 57 (48.4%) of the students when about less than half of small letters (0-13 letters) were named by 28 (23.5%) students. Therefore, most of the students were able to say both capital and small letters. However, more than half of the students were able say 5 letters wrongly or they did not say.
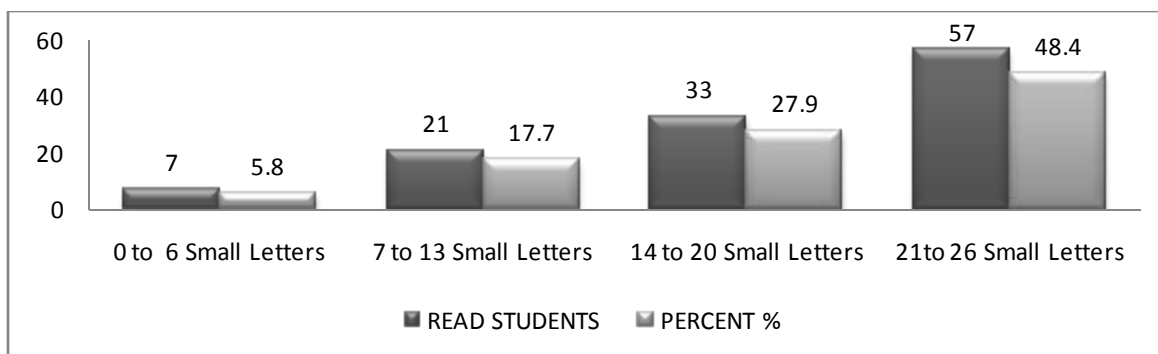
Figure 2:-Small Letter Knowledge of the Students

Letter Sound Knowledge of the Students

Figure 3 shows the single English language letter sound naming knowledge of the participants of the study. As shown in the figure, the participants of the study were able to name some of the sounds of single letters of English language. More than one-third 45 (38.1) of the students were able to say only 6 or less sounds of English letters. 68 (57.6%) students read fewer than half of the sounds of the letters when 50 (42.1%) read more than half the letter sounds. Therefore, the participants of the study had low knowledge of naming the sounds of single English language letters.
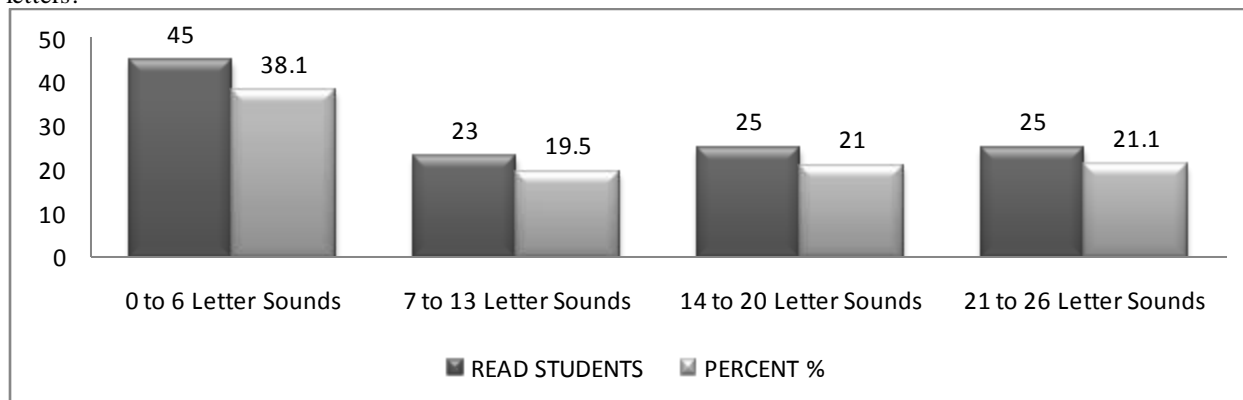

Figure 3:-Letter Sound knowledge of the Students

Sight Word Decoding Ability of the Students

In figure 4, it was indicated that students had the problem of reading or decoding sight words they were taught in their previous grades. Most of the students 68 (57.2%) were able to read less than twenty words out of fifty-two words. Similarly, more than one-third 44 (37.1) of the students were able to read less than ten words. Surprisingly, 98 (83 %) out of (N=118) of the participants of the study were able to read less than thirty words.
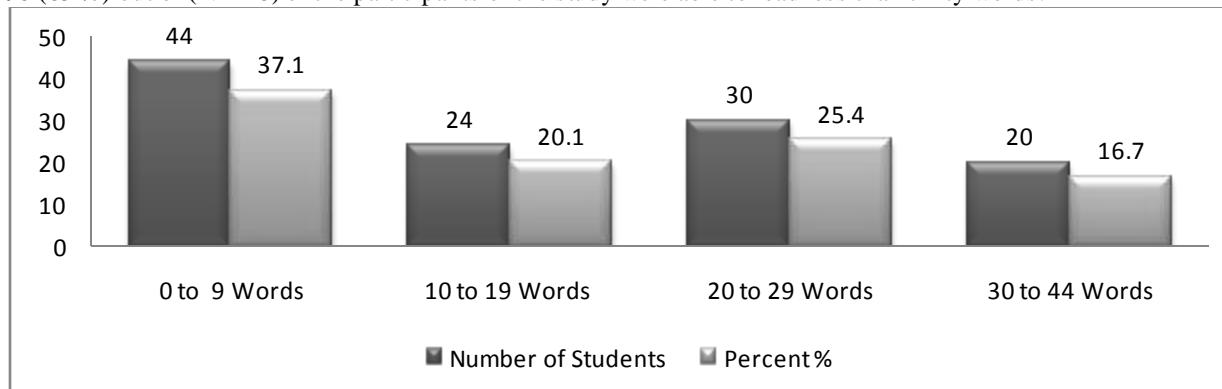

Figure 4:-Sight Word Decoding Ability of the Students

Similarly, a number of students were able to read less than ten words. As it was displayed in figure 5, twelve students read zero word. About one-fourth of the students 29 (24.5%) were able to read less than five words. This number of students read less than ten percent of the sight words they were provided to read. Therefore, their reading or decoding ability is very low.
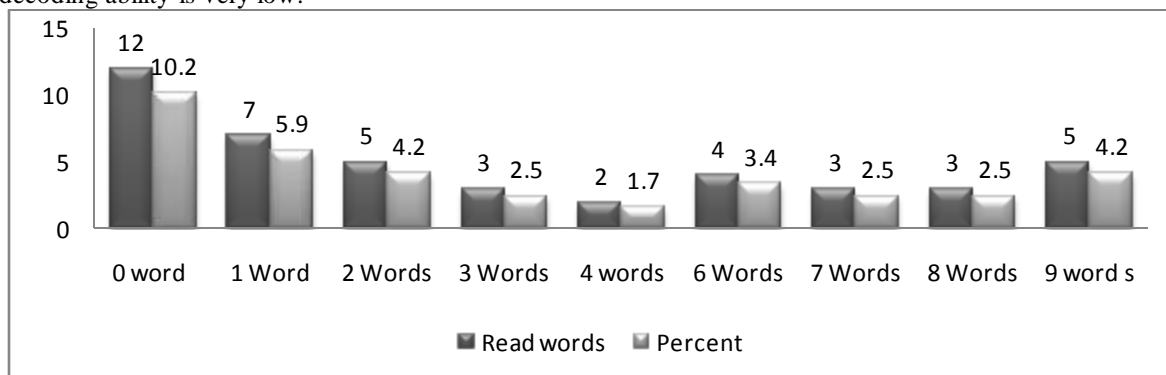

Figure 5:-Number of Students Read < 10 Words

Generally writing, the participants of the study were categorized as below basic level in EFL sight word reading skills. As can be shown on figure 6, out of 118 students participated in the study, 88 (74.3%) of them were placed under this level of reading. About one tenth 11 (9.4%) of the students were placed under the basic level of reading when good number 16 (13.7%) of students were categorized under proficient level of sight word decoding ability. Finger counting 3 (2.6%) students were labeled as advanced sight word decoding ability.
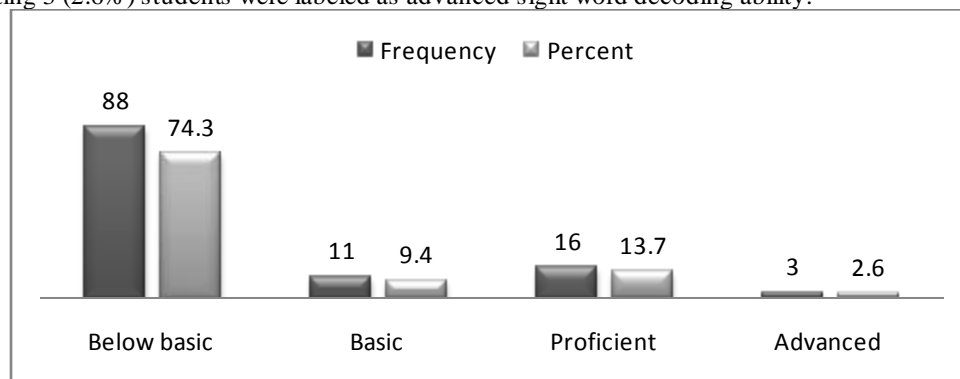

Figure 6:-Reading level of the students

The Most Frequently Decoded Words
Table 4:-The highly decoded words

Results in		(Wrongly read words	Results in		(Wrongly read words)
Frequency	%		Frequency	%	
76.4	88	**ox**	55.1	65	**cook**
72	85	**cat**	54.5	64	**zebra**
60.1	71	**egg**	54.2	64	**week**
56.9	67	**job**	53.5	62	**Monday**
55.9	66	**goat**	51.7	61	**feel**
55.9	66	**ill**	51.7	61	**tomato**

As indicated in data collection instrument section, the sight words were grouped into two: category one and category two. Each category was also classified as one-syllable word and more than one syllable word.
As can be seen in table 4, the most frequently decoded one-syllable words of the first category are ox (76.4%), cat (72), egg (60.1%), job (56.9%), goat (55.9%), ill (55.9%), week (54.5%), and from the second category, cook (55.1%), feel (51.7%). A few words from both categories with two or more syllables were read by most of the students. The words are **Monday** from the second category, **zebra** and **tomato** from the first category.

The Highly Misread Words
Most of the words were misread by 55% to 79% of the students. These words were read moderately. In the first category words with one-syllable are bowl (58.5%), meat (58.5%), sell (59.3%), poor (59.3%), year (66.1%), and queen (74.6%); in the second category, the one-syllable words are horse (59.9%), help (61%) dress (63.6%), and blow (72%). With the two-syllable words from category one are farmer (59.3%), angry (69.5%), kitchen, (76.3%), and under (78.8%) that are read moderately. Moreover, the two-thirds of category two words—with more than one-syllable are misread moderately; the words are mango (55.1%), finish (65.3%), boxer (66.1%), different (70.3%), begin (76.3%), barber (77.1%), clinic (77.1%), and library (78%).

Table 5:-The highly misread words

Results in		(Wrongly read words)	Results in		(Wrongly read words)
Frequency	%		Frequency	%	
96	81.4	lunch	103	87.3	maize
96	81.4	know	104	88.1	garlic
97	82.2	village	105	89	outside
99	83.9	May	108	91.5	fisherman
99	83.9	quick	108	91.5	rice
99	83.9	line	108	91.5	drive
101	85.6	hall	110	93.2	soldier
102	86.4	Puppet	111	94.1	valve
103	87.3	remember			

Large numbers of the students were not able to read the following one-syllable words from category one. The words are know (81.4%), line (83.9%), hall (85.6%), rice (91.5%), and drive (91.5%), and from category two, lunch (81.4%), May (83.9%), quick (83.9%), and maize (87.3%). The two-syllable words were also misread by most of the participants of the study. These are village (82.2%) and outside (89%) from category one, and puppet (86.4%), remember (87.3%), garlic (88.1%), fisherman (91.5%), and soldier (93.2%) from category two.

To sum up, words such as valve, soldier, drive, rice, fisherman, outside, garlic, maize, remember, puppet, hall, line, quick, May, village, know, and lunch are read by less than 20% of the participants of the study; whereas, words such as ox, cat, egg, job, goat, ill, cook, zebra, week, Monday, feel, and tomato are read by most of the students (<50%). Mango, meet, bowl, meat, sell, farmer, poor, and horse are the words read by the students between of 55% and 60%. Help, dress, finish, boxer, year, angry, different, blow, queen, begin, kitchen, barber, clinic, library and under are words read moderately by the participants of the students, the range of the students in percent is between 61and 79.
In conclusion, the finding reveals that students had better performance on both capital and small letters naming; on the other hand, they had problems of saying the single letter sound and decoding the sight words taken from their previous class of the English language syllabus.

Discussion:-
The purpose of this study was to explore the EFL reading ability level of fourth graders of students in Abomsa Primary schoolin Ethiopia. Having the ability to differentiating English language letters by names, shapes, and linguistic functions help children develop their reading skills performance (Wood and McLemore, 2011).

The finding of this study evidenced that the participants of the study were weak in their EFL reading skills performance. They were able to read the kindergarten level and below (Michael, 2003), that is saying letter names and single syllable words.

The huge numbers of the students have the problems of differentiating some of the English letters. Research shows that having letter name knowledge at preschool level supports students in their reading achievement when they are at school (Foulin, 2005). Its knowledge also helps students to learn easily letter sounds (Treiman et al., 2008). Students who were taught letter sound name identification skills perform better in decoding words than students who were taught letter name identification skills, the knowledge and the skills of both is imperative, however. In the following consecutive sections letter name identification, letter sound recognition and decoding sight word were discussed in detail.

Letter Name Knowledge
In order to learn reading skills successfully, the knowledge of alphabet is crucially demanding (Ehri, 2003). The finding of this study reveals that most of the participants of the study were able to name both upper and lower case letters. However, the problem dwelt to identifying the name of some letters with confusing sounds (Block and Duke, 2015), similar shapes, and similar name with L1 letters.

Letters with Similar Sounds
Except some of English language letters, most of them are created in a combination of different sounds of the language. Some letters are created by combination of vowel sound and consonant sound, some others by consonant sound and the vowel sound; and still, some others in different structures. According to Piasta & Wagner (2010), the structure of the English language letters is grouped into consonant-vowel (CV), vowel consonant (VC) and Letters with no association (NA). Having the knowledge of letter-sound name is considered to be good for students to easily recognize the consonant letters with consonant-vowel (CV) structure than for those with vowel–consonant (VC) structure and with no relation to their sounds (Evans et al, 2003)

There are ten English letters with the first combination. In this structure, ten consonant sounds (/b/, /s/, /d/, /g/, /p/, /t/, /v/) and three vowel sounds (/i/, /e/ and /u/) are constituted. Using the consonant sounds /b/, /s/, /d/, /g/, /p/, /t/, and /v/, as initial and the vowel sounds /i/ as final, letters B, C, D, G, P, T and V are created. Using consonant sounds /j/ and /k/ as initial and vowel sound /e/ as final letters J and K are created; whereas, letter U is the only one which is created by the combination of consonant sound /y/ and vowel sound /u/.

In the second combination—vowel and consonant (VC), some English language letters are created. In such kind of structure two vowel sounds (/e/ and /a/) and eight consonant sounds /f/, /ch/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /s/ /y/ and /r/ are used to create eight English language letters. With the combination of vowel sound /e/ and consonant sounds /f/, /ch/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /s/, letters F, H, L, M, N and S are created when letters I and R are created by combination of vowel sound /a/ and consonant sounds /y/ and /r/ respectively.

Some letters have different structures which are named by Piasta and Wagner (2010) as letters without the above two combinations in the researchers' term letters with 'no association'; however, they have their own association. Some letters such as Y and Z are created using CVC structure /way/ and /zed/. With VCC structure letter X /eks/, and letter W /double-u/ with the initial sound of /d/ and one vowel sound /e/ and two consonant sounds /bl/ in the middle and one vowel /u/ at the end are created. The rest three letters A, E and O are created differently—each was created using only one vowel sound. Hence, the similarity in sound among letters can be the inception of confusion for EFL learners. As a study conducted in the first language context indicates, preschoolers are able to say the letters with the first category (e.g. b) better than the rest category letters (e.g. m) (Treiman et al., 2008). Even though it is difficult teaching children considering such kind of relationship among the letters of English, it would be effective if they are taught by simplifying based on their age and literacy level. According to Block and Duke (2015), teachers should consider the confusing nature of English letters, their orthographical complexity and their varied representation of letters to sounds and vice versa when teaching English letter names in relation to their sound names.

Letter Shape Similarity
Some English language letters are also made of similar shapes despite their position difference. Due to their similarity in shape, lower case letters "b" and "d"; as well as, lower case letters "p" and "q" are the confusing letters of the English language. In this study, most of the students in both groups named these lower case letters interchangeably. Some of the students said letter "b" in place of letter "d" and letter "p" instead of letter "q" and vice-versa. Moreover, upper case letter "I" was difficult to be differentiated with the lower case letter "l".

Mother Tongue Letter name knowledge Interference
Another cause of the deficit of student letter naming knowledge is the interference of script or letter type the students use in their mother tongue. In the Ethiopian educational context, two types of scripts are used for writing and reading—the Saba script and the Latin script. Some of the languages are applying the former while others are using the latter one. For example, in the place where this study was taken place both of the scripts are used even in the same school. The participants of this study were from both scripts. Though the script of the Latin is similar to English language, it has both negative and positive impact on the students' literacy skills development. Students need to differentiate the two names of one thing as the same time. The same is happening on students of Afan

Oromo medium. When they are in Afan Oromo class they are required to name letter "S" as /sa/, letter "K" as /ka/, letter "C" as /cha/, letter "X" as "ta"; however, when he/she is in English classroom, she is required to name the letters as /es/, /ke/ /si/, /eks/ respectively.

Hence, this study divulges that students with the medium of Afan Oromo were confused about the English language letters due to the influence of the script they use in their L1 literacy skills. Most of these students were in confusion while naming the English language letters such as "e" and "i". This is because in Afan Oromo, the letter "I" is read as the letter "E", and the letter "E" is read like the letter "A". Therefore, most of Afan Oromo students have the limitation of naming such English language letters. Beginning naming the letters of the English language correctly; for example, "B" as /bi/, "F" as /ef/, "G" as /ji/…"O" as /o/… most of the time, they shift the next letters to Afan Oromo script such as "R" as /ra/ "S" as /sa/ instead of saying /ar/ and /es/ respectively.

Moreover, the finding of the current study reveals that students have problems of distinguishing letter "W" from letter "Y". About 70% of the students were not able to say these letters correctly. These amount of students read letter "W" as it was letter "Y". Moreover, letter "U" and letter "W" are also read in place of letter "Y". Therefore, these letters are found to be confusing for the students. The result of the study theorized that students read letter "W" as /way/ due to the /w/ initial sound of letter "Y". According to Block and Duke (2015) when children are writing letters, they sometimes write letter "w" as letter "y"; they sometimes write YAT for the word "wait" and YD for the word "wide". Moreover, Block and Duke indicate that instead of writing letter w children wrote the letter d. However, in this study, no students named these letters in place of the other.

Second, students read the letter "G" and letter "J" interchangeably. In the study, 30% of the students were not able to read these letters. Most of the students read letter "J" as letter "G". Of these students when two-thirds of them were with Afan Oromo L1 (one of the Ethiopian regional state language, Oromia) and one-third were with Amharic L1 (the working language of Ethiopian governement). This shows that the latter students performed better than the former students by naming these letters. Perhaps, this is occurred due to the support of L1 letters; in the former language, these letters are represented differently with a little shape difference as for example (G=ጘ, J=ጅ), but in the latter language these two letters have totally different names and sounds and shapes; for example, in English, when letter G has different sounds in the words (**g**rand and chan**ge),** letter J has only one sound in all words of the language. However, in Afan Oromo language both of the letters have single sound each in the words of the language they are used. When the former letter is read as /ga/ like in English word "**ga**r" and the latter letter is pronounced as /ja/ like in English word "**ja**r".

In short, the study discovered the following three problematic areas of naming the English language letters — inability to identify letters with similar sounds but with different shapes (J and G), with similar shapes but different positions (p and q), and with similar names with L1 letters (i and e). Nevertheless, research declares the importance of identifying the letters by their shapes, by their names and by their sound names in order to acquire literacy skills successfully (Wood and McLemore, 2011).

Successful readers have the ability of looking at all the letters and the words and recognize them when they are reading. In other words, according to Rosenberg, the effective knowledge of letters creates the beneficial mental environment for reading words.

However, the students with this language background performed better on LSNK and decoding sight words than students with Amharic language background. In contrast, students with the latter language background performed better than the students with the former language background in both upper and lower case letters of English language. Therefore, L1 had both positive and negative impact on students' reading ability of English language.

Word Decoding Ability
The decoding ability of familiar words is important for the future success of students reading skills development. If students are able to decode words by using different strategies such as recalling the sound of each letter applying their knowledge of letter-sound correspondence and blending those sounds into words (Ehri, 2003), they are able to read unfamiliar words too. As theorized by Horner(2004), letter name knowledge has positive consequence on the word decoding ability of the students due to two reasons. First, some of the English language words have the pronunciation of the letter names as (e.g. A as in the word ape, B as in the word big, D as in the word dig). Second, the letter names and the sounds of the letters have the logical connection between them. Cited in Horner (2004),

Durrell (1980) discloses that 22 of the English language letters have representation sounds in them. However, the students in this study, although they have the knowledge of naming letters, they were not able to decode most of the words they were provided with.

The participants of the study were weak in word decoding ability. The current study shows that the words such as ox, cat, egg, job, goat, ill, cook, zebra, week, Monday, feel and tomato were read most frequently compared to others by the participants of the study. Most of these words are single syllable and three or four letter words. The finding suggested that students were able to read one-syllable words with only three or four letters. Moreover, they were able to read words with two or more-syllable if they are everyday words like Monday and tomato. They were able to read such kinds of words not by using their linguistic knowledge but by memorizing them (Ehri, 2005).

On the other hand, the words "valve, soldier, drive, rice, fisherman, outside, garlic, maize, remember, puppet, hall, line, quick, May, village, know, and lunch" were decoded less frequently than the rest words in the test. Less than 20% of the participants of the study were able to read these words. This indicated that students do not have the understanding ability of the different sounds of English language letters. For illustration the vowel letter "i" has the different sounds in different words like **rice**, **soldier, garlic**, and **maize.** In the first word, the letter "i" is pronounced as /ay/, in the second as /à/, in the third as /i/, and in the fourth as /y/. Moreover, in the words **puppet**, **outside** and **under** the letter "u" is pronounced differently. The same is true for letter "d" in the words **drive** and **soldier**. Therefore, the students may have difficulty with such words due to the absence of information from their teachers and/or the textbooks.

Conclusions and Recommendations:-
The EFL reading skills performance of the participants of the study was considered below basic. Most of the students were not able to read most of the words particularly words with more than one syllable. Even though there were students who were not able to identify upper and lower case letters, their achievement on these skills were better in comparison to word decoding ability. In the study, some confusing letters were found which were difficult to be named by the grade four students of Abomsa Number One Primary school in Ethiopia. These are "W" versus "Y"; "W" versus "U"; "W" versus "V"; "G" versus "J"; "p" versus "q"; "d" versus "b"; "I" versus "e", "l" versus "I". The confusion of these paired letters are sourced from three features of the English alphabet such as having similar sounds, having similar shapes and having similar names in the first language scripts.

Students were able to decode few of the words in the samples taken from their previous class. The most frequently decoded words are ox, cat, egg, job, ill and cook. In addition, words such as Monday and tomato were decoded by most of the students. Valve, soldier, drive, rice, fisherman, outside, garlic, puppet and lunch are some of the less frequently read words by the students. Therefore, it can be concluded that students were able to read one syllable words with two or three letters. The multiple sounds of letters (e.g. the sound of letter "I" in rice, garlic and soldier; the sound of letter "d" in drive and soldier; the sound of letter "u" in puppet and under) may affect on the decoding ability of the students.

The finding of this study implies that the textbook writers should consider the different sounds of letters in the words while preparing books. EFL Primary school teachers should be trained such kind of reading skills in order to solve the mentioned problems in the finding. Moreover, EFL teachers who teach students with a language in Latin script should show the relationship the letters have in the English langaug and the first language (e.g. Afan Oromo). Since the nature of English language writing system is opaque, it is difficult for both teachers and students to teach and to learn. Children can easily become confused and fail to learn to read. Hence, in EFL teacher education curriculum, the complex nature of English language should be included and a thorough training should be given for teachers.

Since data were collected from only one school only using reading test, the study is not out of limitation. Thus, the finding of the study indicates merely the difficulty area of the reading failure of the students and minor reasons; it couldn't find the root causes of their underachievement in reading of the English language. Therefore, other studies should be conducted on the nature of the textbooks of grade two and three, the roles of teachers, the roles of parents, the preschool experience of the students and their family educational background.

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