

The relationship between grade 9 EFL students' reading engagement and their reading achievement in EFL classrooms

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Abstract

This study investigated the association between reading engagement and reading achievement of grade 9 EFL students of Debre Eba General Secondary school, North Shewa zone, Ethiopia. It also determined the predictive powers of reading engagement factors on reading achievement. The participants of the study were 120 grade 9 EFL students enrolled in 2021 academic year. While a correlational type of research design was employed, questionnaire and reading achievement test were used to collect data. Simple correlations, multiple regression and standardized regression coefficients were employed to perform data analyses. The findings of the study have revealed that there was a significant connection between each aspect of students' reading engagement and their reading achievement. Each of the three reading engagement aspects, namely, strategy, motivation and behavior had moderate, positive as well as significant correlations with reading achievement. The findings also indicated that the three aspects of reading engagement: reading strategy, reading motivation and reading behavior together were found to be statistically significant predictors of reading achievement. Among the three aspects, motivation and behavior were statistically significant predictors of reading achievement, while the influence of motivation is stronger. Thus, it can be concluded that students' high reading engagement aspects are associated to their high reading achievement in reading classes. Hence, it is crucial to take in to account the reading engagement aspects: strategy, motivation and behavior in reading classes to enhance students' reading achievement.

Keywords: Reading engagement, cognitive engagement, motivational engagement, behavioral engagement, reading achievement

1. Introduction

English is the most widely used language in our world today, and it has many purposes to serve. In Ethiopia too, English language is used for many vital purposes in both academic and non-academic settings. As Gerencheal and Mishra (2019) state, English is currently becoming more widely used in a variety of situations, including education, business, publication in governmental and non-governmental organizations. Of course, English was an essential language even since many years ago in the country. Berkessa (2001) asserts that English has been allocated an important place,

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both as a medium of instruction and as a means of communication since the beginning of modern education in the country (for about a century). In the current education and training policy of Ethiopia, English is the language of instruction for secondary and higher education. English is also given as a subject starting from grade one across the nation. Besides, the language is used in the tertiary education system as a medium of instruction. Aside from these, English is the working language at every university in the nation. The previous evidences indicate that English language plays a pivotal role in many aspects of an individual's life in Ethiopia. Thus, every literate Ethiopian is expected to develop one's competence of the language in order to succeed in academic as well as non-academic contexts.

This being the fact, Ethiopian students seem to have weak English language competence and performance. The researchers' experience indicates that particularly, secondary school students lack the basic communication skills of the English language. Regardless of the importance English enjoys and the various initiatives taken to help students become fluent in the language at schools and universities (in Ethiopia), students and graduates fail to achieve the requisite proficiency of the English language practically in every skill (Niguse, 2013). In addition, evaluations from specialists, secondary school teachers, and the greater educational community indicate that many students struggle to comprehend what they read (Mulatu & Regassa, 2022). Based on these justifications and from personal observations, it would be inferred that Ethiopian secondary school students seem to have inadequacy in reading competence and reading achievement, which are expected to be mainly determined by their reading engagement. Thus, Ethiopian secondary school students' reading achievement needs a critical attention from stakeholders like educators and researchers. To this end, it appears necessary that secondary school students' reading achievement should be investigated in relation to their reading engagement which could be closely related to students' English language learning.

Research indicates that students' reading engagement is associated to their reading achievement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, Protacio, 2013). The researchers of this study believed that the association between learners' reading engagement and their reading achievement should be studied in order to suggest solutions for the improvement of secondary school students' language learning and their reading achievement. The current study, therefore, explored whether there is a relationship between secondary school students' reading engagement aspects and their reading achievement in EFL reading classes.

1.1. Reading

Reading appears to be the most crucial of the four basic language abilities for it is the major means in which school-age children acquire knowledge and skills of English as well as other subjects. "This skill allows students to have access to ideas communicated by people in different locations and eras, giving them the opportunity to broaden their horizons and deepen their knowledge of the world" (Teixeira, 2014:1). As Teixeira further explains, reading in a foreign language is a vital tool for boosting

students' studies and employment chances in a globalized environment as well as for fostering their personal and cognitive growth. Hence, it can be concluded that reading skill means a lot of things, especially for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, and it is imperative to understand more about its nature.

Nunan (1998), as cited in Tercanlioglu (2001) points out that reading is decoding written symbols, which is the process starting with smaller elements (individual letters) and progresses to larger units (words, clauses, and sentences). As Grabe and Stoller (2011) assert, reading comprehension requires a wide range of cognitive abilities that must be coordinated in order to function at their best. Besides, reading is not simply the attaching of sound to grapheme. It includes meaning in a fundamental way (Herath, 2010). Herath adds that reading is beyond merely the cognitive task of word deciphering, fluent reading, or text understanding; it is becoming deeply involved, fascinated, absorbed and immersed in a text, means engaged. Based on these ideas, it can be concluded that reading is very broad and complex in terms of both concept and process, having many features like cognition, motivation and social relations.

1.2. Reading Engagement

While reading skill is an important factor in building students' knowledge and skills, it appears reading engagement that helps students to ultimately comprehend texts and achieve better results in reading comprehension. Reading engagement, which is a recent phenomenon in fields such as psychology, education and language, is defined by scholars differently. As stated by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) and Protacio (2013), reading engagement means the joint functioning of motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interactions during literacy activities. For Unrau and Quirk (2014), reading engagement includes behavioral, motivational, and cognitive processes like curiosity, reading involvement, and active problem-solving. As per Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), highly engaged readers are individuals who are driven to read, apply reading strategies, use reading to extract meaning from texts, and engage in social collaborations related to reading.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) point out that the concept of [academic] engagement is multidimensional and includes three major components: behavioral engagement (actively carrying out learning tasks), cognitive engagement (using sophisticated techniques to promote deep learning), and motivational engagement (enjoying learning tasks and demonstrating enthusiasm for learning). In accordance with this general view, engagement to read has been regarded by Taboada et al. (2013) as the collaboration of cognitive, emotional and behavioral procedures during reading comprehension process. Thus, it can be argued that specifically, reading engagement has three dimensions, namely cognitive (reading strategies), motivational (reading motivation) and behavioral (reading behaviors). These aspects are interrelated to each other, and when they are well integrated during a reading process, a reader becomes engaged and ultimately comprehends a text effectively.

1.3. *The Relationship between Reading Engagement and Reading Achievement*

Scholars argue that there is a close association between reading engagement and reading achievement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Protacio, 2013). According to Mete (2020), primary school students' reading engagement and reading comprehension demonstrated a strong positive association. Fredricks et al. (2004) on their part argue that students need to be actively engaged in order to achieve. The concept of learner engagement and its relationship to academic success have come to the forefront of educational research in recent years (Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). It is claimed that since higher achievement is typically associated with more academically engaged students (Reschly & Christianson, 2012), the interest in engagement stems from a desire to improve student learning. "Reading engagement has been found to be a predictor of reading comprehension and reading achievement" (Taboada et al., 2013:309). It can be deduced that engaging students in language learning activities, especially in reading tasks, can help enhance their reading achievement. Therefore, as students' reading engagement is crucial for their effective text comprehension and reading achievement, it should be studied in the Ethiopian language instruction context to ultimately improve students' reading achievement.

Learners' reading engagement can be affected by various internal or external factors. As stated by Bass-Dolivan (2011), reading comprehension and reading engagement are influenced by behaviors of L2 learners, including cognitive and social factors, individual learner characteristics, affective concerns, motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies. Guthrie (1996) also pin point that factors connected to the students, including self-esteem and self-concept, prior knowledge and interests relevant to the text's content, motivation to learn, the capacity for planning and critical thought, and knowledge from prior interactions with the teacher and other students can facilitate or hinder reading. Besides, reading engagement is characterized as a malleable construct which can be improved by teachers using different strategies and instructional practices in reading classes.

Although reading engagement is claimed to be a central factor in facilitating ELLs reading success, few researchers have examined the association between reading engagement and reading achievement in EFL context by subsuming its three major dimensions- cognitive, motivational and behavioral (Guthrie & Wig field, 2000; Taboada et al., 2013; Lee, 2017; Protacio, 2013). The majority of earlier research on the issue focuses on just one or two engagement categories at a time.

Previous researchers have studied the association between reading engagement and reading achievement in different forms. Lee (2017) conducted a study on the relationship between student engagement (behavioral and motivational) and academic (reading) performance. She used U.S. data of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2000 (OECD, 2000) with a sample of 3,268 15 year old students selected from 121 US schools. The results disclosed that behavioral and motivational engagement significantly predicted reading performance. Lee's correlational study was done on the association between general engagement and

specifically on reading skill, but it did not consider the cognitive aspect of engagement as well as specific aspects of reading engagement.

In a qualitative study, Protacio (2013) has conducted a case study on the reading engagement of 4 middle school students in USA to check what contributes to English language learners'(ELLs) reading engagement and if strategy, motivation, conceptual knowledge and social relations account for reading engagement. She found that these 4 variables are essential components of students' reading engagement. The study has also indicated that students who were disengaged readers were also found to be those who typically have lower levels of reading achievement. This implies that students' high reading engagement is associated to their high reading engagement. However, Protacio's study didn't examine reading engagement quantitatively.

In Turkey, Mete (2020) carried out research on the impact of the reading engagement model on grade 6 students' reading achievement and engagement in reading. Adopting the Pretest-Posttest Control Group design, 62 students were involved in the control and experimental groups. In the experimental group, 36 class hours of implementations focusing on the Reading Engagement Model were conducted and the reading comprehension strategies were taught. In the control group, activities in the course book were implemented based on the curriculum. Students' reading comprehension achievement was measured by reading achievement test, and reading engagement levels were evaluated by the Reading Engagement Index to the groups as pretests and posttests. Finally, the experimental group who implemented the Reading Engagement Model revealed a significant difference relative to the control group. Thus, in the experimental group, the students' reading performance and reading engagement levels get improved relatively. Besides, there was a high, positive and significant correlation between reading comprehension and reading engagement intensities ($r = .771, p < 0.01$).

Although the existing researches explored the link between reading engagement and reading achievement, they did not directly and comprehensively consider the association between reading engagement aspects and reading achievement at a classroom level. Besides, they have in adequacy in covering the three aspects (cognitive, motivational and behavioral) of reading engagement. To this end, in order to fill these major gaps, this study examined if an association exists between the students' reading engagement domains and their reading achievement. It also determined the predictive powers of reading engagement aspects (strategy, motivation and behavior) on students' reading achievement. By filling the gaps in the literature, the study is expected to shed light on the understanding about the link between reading engagement and reading success in language education context. In line with the objective stated above, the key research questions were set as follows.

1. Is there a significant relationship between grade 9 EFL students' reading engagement aspects (each) and their reading achievement in reading classes?
2. Do grade 9 EFL students' reading engagement aspects predict their

- reading achievement in reading classes?
3. Which aspects of the students' reading engagement contribute to the influence on their reading achievement?

2. Methodology

2.1. The Research Design

The current research employed a correlational research design. As per Creswell (2012:338), "correlational designs provide an opportunity for a researcher to predict scores and explain the relationship among variables". Creswell adds that in correlational research designs, investigators use the correlation statistical test to describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores. Creswell (2012) describes that in this design, the researchers relate variables, using the correlation statistic, two or more scores for each (e.g., a student motivation and a student achievement score for each individual). Besides, as Gay et al. (2010:204) state that "correlational research includes gathering data to determine if, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. It also deals with if a set of independent variables predict a continuous variable." In short, correlational research designs are utilized when researchers want to study a relationship between independent variable(s) and dependent variable (s), and to determine the amount of association between the variables.

The current study is composed of multiple independent variables (reading strategy, reading motivation and reading behavior) and one dependent variable, reading achievement. Thus, a correlational research design is the most applicable design to be employed in this research.

2.2. Participants

Grade 9 students of Debre Eba General Secondary school, at Debreberhan town North Shewa Zone were involved in the study. The samples (120 students) were selected from a population of 870 students (homogeneous-Amharic mother tongue speakers) who were enrolled in 2021 in the school. Grade 9 is preferred for it is a transition period from grade 8 to grade 9, a new instruction style (e.g. a shift in medium of instruction from Amharic to English language). It is believed that the grade is a better stage of secondary school for future intervention.

2.3. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Selection of the School: Among the 85 general secondary schools in North Shewa zone, 7 schools are found in Debre Berhan town. For the purpose of this study, Debre Eba General Secondary school was selected purposively. The school was selected for the researcher is a staff member at Debreberhan University, which is closest to the school. This opportunity was helpful to collect sufficient and relevant information from the students in a more convenient manner.

Selection of the Students: In 2021, there were 870 grade 9 students at Debre Eba General Secondary school. Out of the total 870 students, about 14 % of them i.e. 120 students were selected using simple random sampling technique. Creswell (2012) points out that with the random sampling

technique, the researcher chooses the sample's participants (or units, such as schools), ensuring that each person has an equal chance of being chosen from the population.

2.4. Data Collection Instruments

Students' reading engagement questionnaires and standardized reading achievement test were used to collect data. The two instruments that were utilized simultaneously to collect data are discussed and justified in depth as follows.

2.4.1. Reading Engagement Questionnaires

Reading engagement questionnaire is the combination of three questionnaires in line with the three aspects of reading engagement (strategy, motivation and behavior).

2.4.1.1. Survey of Reading Strategies

To assess the students' cognitive engagement, Survey of Reading Strategies developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) was utilized which was initially created to assess the awareness of reading strategy use in native English language learners. However, it also systematically looks at the kind and frequency of reading strategies used by ESL adult and adolescent students when they read academic texts in English and newspapers. Internal consistency reliability coefficients for the survey's validation by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) ranged from 0.89 to 0.93. The SORS has 30 questions testing three types of English reading strategies: global strategies, with 13 questions, problem-solving strategies, having 8 questions, and support strategies consisting of 9 items. A group of reading techniques geared toward a text's overall analysis were referred to as global reading strategies. Approaches to overcoming issues when reading material becomes challenging is the focus of problem-solving strategies. Whereas, support strategies deal with the utilization of external reference materials, taking notes, and other doable tactics that could be referred to as functional strategies.

This questionnaire was adapted and employed here as it is a valid and reliable tool. It was also used by previous ESL researchers such as Solak and Altay (2014), and Chen and Chen (2015). It was adapted in such a way that it suits the Ethiopian context. It takes approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. The scores indicate the rate of students' uses of survey in general and in each survey category.

2.4.1.2. Motivations for Reading Questionnaire

Wilde et al. (1996) note that the MRQ was prepared to assess 11 dimensions of reading motivations, including reading efficacy, many intrinsic and several extrinsic reading motivations, social aspects of reading, and the desire to avoid reading. It has passed through rigorous validation stages, with many versions, ranging from 53 to 82 items long.

One version of the MRQ, validated by Matsela, Wigfield and Mc Cann (1999) is the one in which out of the original 11 dimensions, 8 of them appeared to be sound. These best characterized reading motivation in

previous researchers. Thus, they were used in this research as the major subcomponents of motivation for reading. This survey consists of self-efficacy, three aspects of intrinsic motivation (curiosity, involvement, challenge) and two elements of extrinsic motivation (recognition, competition), social motivation and reading avoidance. This survey is a valid and consistent measure of pupils' motivation to read. The scale whose items are rated on a 5 –point Likert scale, takes about 10-15 minutes to fill in.

2.4.1.3. Reading Behavior Questionnaire

The subcomponent of Boakye's (2012) questionnaire (a part used to assess students' reading habits) was adapted to assess the reading behavior in the current study. Boakye (2012) confirms that the Cronbach Alpha was 0.68 for the pre-intervention survey and 0.67 for the post- intervention survey. The current researchers adapted this questionnaire and included few additional questions believed necessary. Then, they pilot tested the survey to check its validity and reliability in the Ethiopian context among students of another school together with the other questions in the MRQ and in the SORS. The survey was found to be valid as well as reliable to be used for this study.

The 20 items in this questionnaire focus on students' reading behaviors or habits, whether they read academic or no-academic texts. Additionally, they deal with how frequently children currently read. Twelve (12) of the items contribute to academic texts while eight (8) items represent non-academic texts.

Overall, the reading engagement questionnaire (the combination of the 3 surveys) was checked for its internal consistency, and it showed 0.92 alpha coefficients. Finally, the combination of the three questionnaires discussed above, the 88-item reading engagement survey was administered to one hundred 120 students. This was done after the data collection process of reading test was completed.

2.4.2. Reading Achievement Test

Standardized reading achievement test was employed to assess the students' general reading ability or achievement. For this purpose, Abiy's (2005) reading comprehension test (designed for his PhD thesis) was adapted. There were two sets of tests in Abiy's (2005) reading test (each set consisting of three tests): the pre mediation and the post mediation tests. The first group of tests (the pre-mediation tests) was adapted for this study. The tests were used as they were prepared for students learning in similar context (Ethiopia, Amhara Region) and the same grade level (grade 9). Rigorous processes of development and validation, as well as ways of checking reliability were also made as tests are already standardized reading achievement tests. Reading tests were administered to the students before questionnaires were distributed to them.

2.5. Data collection procedures

After the data gathering tools were prepared, they were made ready for administration. The reading test was organized in English language while the structured questionnaire was translated in to Amharic (students' mother

tongue) for clear understanding to the respondents. When the researcher had got an introduction letter from Addis Ababa University, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, he immediately went to DebreEba Secondary school and met the school principals. As soon as he got permission from the school administration, he contacted grade 9 English language teachers and selected the volunteer ones who can cooperate in selecting students from each section and in collecting data. Then, students were selected from the 14 sections. The respondents were given orientation and were guaranteed of confidentiality about the data they give. Data collection dates were agreed upon and carried out accordingly at appropriate schedules. Subsequently, the students took the reading test in April, 2021 in the second semester. After a week's gap, they filled in the reading engagement questionnaires themselves. The data were collected by the researcher with the help of three teachers in the school.

2.6. Validity and Reliability of the Tools

The section under here explains the validity and reliability of the two tools.

2.6.1. Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaires

Although a validated questionnaire was used, the researchers have considered the reliability and validity of this tool. Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) verified the reading strategy questionnaire, and the internal consistency reliability coefficient varied from 0.89 to 0.93. With a little improvement, the questionnaire's internal consistency reliability was examined by the current researchers, and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.819.

Concerning the motivations for reading questionnaire, one version of MRQ, developed and validated by Metsela, Wig field and Mc Cann (1999) is a standardized questionnaire. Additionally, the tool's internal consistency reliability was examined by the current researchers, who discovered that it was 0.849.

Regarding the reliability of reading behavior questionnaire (RBQ), Boakye (2012) confirmed that the Cronbach Alpha for this survey was 0.68 and 0.67 for the pre-intervention survey and for the post- intervention survey respectively. When it was checked by the current researchers before administration, its Cronbach alpha was 0.74. Over all, the reading engagement questionnaire was checked for its internal consistency reliability, and it showed 0.92 alpha coefficients. To consider the questionnaire's validity, it was given to three PhD psychology candidates who have related works to this questionnaire. To this end, good insights were found and improvements were made to it.

2.6.2. Validity and Reliability of the Reading Achievement Test

The adapted reading achievement test has passed rigorous steps of validation and checking reliability. It is a standardized test. Its validity was also checked for the context of the current study. To look in to the content and face validities of the test, it was given to two doctors (one from ELT and one from psychology) and for two experienced high school English teachers

for comment. Criteria included clarity of directions, appropriateness of items, coverage of different comprehension skills and level of difficulty. The lecturers commented that the test is longer for grade 9 students; the students may get bored during administration. Besides, they suggested that some of the questions seem to be a little bit difficult to answer. The high school teachers also commented that the test is longer (70 items) as compared to their classroom tests and final exams. They also suggested that the passages are equivalent to and are even shorter than those in the student text. Both the lecturers and the teachers commented some minor typographical errors such as font size and spacing.

Based on all the comments given by the practitioners and the researchers' observations, some improvements were made on the test. Concerning the length of the test items, the researchers gave orientation for the students in advance ensuring that the length does not matter as they answer questions of similar nature. The students were also made answer the questions in two sessions, taking a 5 minutes break. Two items, which were deemed difficult, were deleted. Finally, the test consisting of 68 items was administered to 120 grade 9 students of Debre Eba General Secondary School. Regarding the reliability of test, the researchers believed that as the original researcher has checked its reliability, it is not necessary to check it again.

3. Findings

This study explored the relationships of students' reading engagement aspects (strategy, motivation and behavior) assessed by a questionnaire, with their reading achievement measured by reading achievement test. It also determined the predictive powers of the three reading engagement factors on reading achievement. To analyze the data, correlation and regression analyses were performed. In consequence, results of data analyses are presented in this part to respond to the research questions.

3.1. Correlations between each reading engagement aspect and reading achievement

The students' reading engagement aspects (reading strategy, reading motivation and reading behavior) were correlated to their reading achievement. As such, the results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Pearson Product-moment correlations between reading engagement aspects and reading achievement RAT

		RAT
RS	Pearson Correlation	.339**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120
RM	Pearson Correlation	.433**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120
Pearson Correlation		.423**

RB	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to analyze the relationships between strategy, motivation and behavior, and reading achievement. The normality, linearity and homoscedasticity assumptions were not violated, according to preliminary assessments. As shown in the above table, there was a moderate, positive, and significant link between reading strategy and reading achievement (RAT) ($r = .339$, $P < 0.01$), reading motivation and RAT ($r = .433$, $p < 0.01$), and reading behavior and RAT ($r = .423$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, the correlations of strategy, motivation and behavior with reading achievement were moderate, positive and significant. This value implies that high reading strategy use, high level of reading motivation and frequent reading behavior are associated with high students' reading achievement as measured by reading test. In other words, the result indicates that students' high reading engagement is related to their high achievement in reading when they read different texts in EFL classes.

3.2. *Reading engagement aspects as predictors of reading achievement*

Standard multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how much the reading engagement factors together predict reading achievement. The regression analyses were conducted on strategy, motivation and behavior as predictor variables and reading achievement as the dependent variable. The results are presented in the table under here.

Table 2

Analysis of multiple regression for the relation between the set of reading engagement aspects and reading achievement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.468 ^a	.219	.199	11.642

As shown in Table 2, the result of multiple regression analysis indicated that the influence of the combined reading engagement aspects on reading achievement was significant ($p < 0.01$) and positive. The set of reading engagement aspects accounted for 21.9% of the variance in reading achievement ($R^2 = 0.219$). This value shows that the set of reading engagement aspects i.e. strategy, motivation and behavior account for 21.9% of the variance in reading achievement while reading texts in English. This means reading engagement factors together have predicted students' reading achievement. The Adjusted R square was found to be 0.199 for reading achievement. This value suggests that the predictors are good at predicting students' reading achievement. As per Muijs's (2004) standard, the Adjusted R square (model) which is found between 0.11 and 0.3 has modest fit, while

Adjusted R Square (R²) that ranges from 0.31 to 0.5 is said to have moderate fit. The above value suggests that the predictor variables are relatively modest at predicting the students' achievement in reading. Thus, it could be deduced that the set of reading engagement aspects modestly predicts students' reading achievement when they read texts during EFL reading classes.

3.3. *The relative contribution of each reading engagement aspects on reading achievement*

To identify the reading engagement aspects that contributed most in predicting students' reading achievement, the standardized regression coefficients (β) were computed. The results are reported in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Influence of each reading engagement aspect on reading achievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	5.666	8.295		.683	.496
RS	-.321	3.269	-.012	-.098	.922
1					
RM	7.831	3.656	.278	2.142	.034 **
RB	6.636	3.107	.244	2.136	.035**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed)

As per standard multiple regression analysis, Table 3 indicates that reading motivation and reading behavior were statistically significant predictors of reading achievement. As a result, reading motivation made a significant impact to the prediction of reading achievement with ($\beta=.278$, $p < 0.05$) followed by reading behavior ($\beta=.244$, $p < 0.05$). However, reading strategy made negative, insignificant contribution to the prediction of reading achievement with ($\beta=-0.321$, $p > 0.05$).

4. Discussion

This study looked in to the association between grade 9 FFL students' reading engagement aspects and their reading achievement in reading classes. It also determined the predictive power of reading engagement aspects on reading achievement. To address these objectives, Pearson correlation and multiple regressions were calculated. Besides, to identify which aspects of reading engagement influenced students' reading achievement, the standardized regression coefficients (β) were computed.

Accordingly, the results of Pearson correlation analyses reveal that each of the three reading engagement aspects had a statistically significant

correlation with students' reading achievement. All correlations were positive and had moderate effect sizes. The findings suggest that all the three aspects of reading engagement are likely to influence students' reading achievement. The positive association detected between each reading engagement aspect and reading achievement suggests that students are likely to have high reading performance in English reading classes when the students are strategic, motivated and are consistent and frequent with their reading behavior.

This study's findings on correlations are consistent with that of the existing researches. Guthrie, Wig field, Matsela and Cox (1999); Guthrie and Wig field (2000) have demonstrated a positive link between engaged reading and academic [reading] achievement. As per Protacio's (2013) research, pupils who are not engaged readers are also those who are with lower amount of reading achievement. This statement implies that engaged readers are individuals who are with high levels of achievement in reading. Or students' high reading engagement aspects are related to their high reading achievement when they read texts in English. Besides, Mete (2020) found out a high, positive and meaningful correlation between students' reading comprehension and reading engagement levels in grade six. Thus, it could be concluded that students' high reading engagement aspects are related to their high reading achievement when they read texts in English.

Multiple regression analyses results also indicate that strategy, motivation and behavior in combination were statistically significant predictors of reading achievement ($R^2 = 0.219$). The set of reading engagement aspects accounted for 21.9 % of the variance in reading achievement. The adjusted R Square (R^2) was also 0.199 (modest fit). This means that the predictors are modest in predicting the students' reading achievement. That is, the set of reading engagement aspects modestly predicts students' reading achievement in reading classes. This result is consistent with the findings of previous researchers. Wig field and Guthrie (1997) revealed that achievement in reading highly depends on and is predicted by the amount of time students read and how involved they are in the reading activity (engaged). In addition, engaged reading was shown to be a predictor of comprehension in reading and reading accomplishment, according to Taboada et al. (2013). Lee (2017) on her part disclosed that behavioral engagement (defined as making an effort and sticking with it while reading) and emotional involvement (relating to a sense of belonging) strongly influenced students' reading achievement.

Further, the standardized regression coefficients (β) analyses indicate that two of the three reading engagement aspects, namely, reading motivation and reading behavior, contributed to a statistically significant and positive variation to students' reading achievement. This means, the two aspects accounted for the variance in reading achievement. Reading motivation has made the strongest contribution ($\beta = .278$) followed by reading behavior ($\beta = .244$). The implication is that students achieve better in reading when teachers provide them different motivating activities in reading classes and when they let students read materials consistently and frequently.

5. Conclusions and implications

This study explored the relationship between students' reading engagement aspects and their reading success. The results of the study revealed that grade 9 EFL students' reading engagement aspects are associated with their reading achievement. Pearson correlation analyses indicated that the three reading engagement factors (strategy, motivation and behavior) have moderate, positive and significant ($p < 0.01$) correlations with reading achievement. This finding suggests that as students' reading engagement is improved, their reading achievement increases when they read texts in English. Besides, multiple regression analyses indicated that grade 9 EFL students' reading engagement aspects in combination have predicted their reading achievement. The three domains of reading engagement: reading strategy, reading motivation and reading behavior together were statistically significant predictors of reading achievement ($R^2 = 0.219$). Reading motivation and reading behavior aspects of reading engagement were also found to be positive and significant predictors of reading achievement. They influence reading achievement though reading motivation aspect contributed the highest variance. This implies that sound reading motivation as well as consistent and frequent reading behavior play a crucial role in enhancing students' reading success when they learn reading in English classes. Hence, English teachers should create various ways of engaging students in reading classes. The current study has explored the association between students' reading engagement aspects and their reading achievement in EFL reading classes. However, it did not examine the cause effect relationship of reading engagement aspects and reading achievement. Thus, future research should examine the causal relationship between the two variables so that useful results will be drawn on the link between these variables to enhance students' reading achievement.

6. Recommendations

Consistent with the findings and the conclusions, recommendations were reflected. Examining the association between learners' reading engagement and their reading achievement can be valuable to clearly understand the influence of students' engaged reading on their reading performance. As a result, stake holders like curriculum specialists, practitioners and the research community should pay more attention to reading engagement and the ways to maximize it, especially at a classroom level. Moreover, reading engagement is contextual and is fostered by classroom practices. Thus, particularly, English teachers need to deliver reading strategy instructions for high school students in reading classes. They should also provide adequate practices for motivating students to be engaged in reading different types of texts in and outside class. Equally important is students should get good access to nonacademic or authentic texts such as magazines, newspapers and fiction to help them develop frequent reading habits for speed and pleasure.

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Authors' contributions

Author 1 conceived and drafted the study; collected data; analyzed and discussed the data; made conclusions, and organized the manuscript. Author 2 supervised all the research process; edited the manuscript and approved it.

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