

EXPLORING THE LINK: A STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEIVED AND ACTUAL READING SKILLS PROFICIENCY

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: January 2024 Revised: April 2024 Published: January 2025	<i>Reading is the most important skills in language learning and teaching. This study aims at identifying secondary school English language teachers' perceived and actual reading proficiency level and the correlation between these variables. The researchers employed mixed methods design and used questionnaire, proficiency test and interview to collect data from the participants. There were 112 secondary school teachers who take part in this study and among them four teachers were interviewed. The data gathered from the instruments were analyzed using SPSS version 24 for the quantitative and NVivo version 10 for the qualitative data. The results of this study revealed that secondary school English language teachers perceived proficiency level of reading skill was high. The proficiency test revealed that the levels secondary school English language teachers actual reading skills was medium. It was also found that there was a positive ($r=.329$) but not significant correlation between the teachers' perceived and actual proficiency level of reading skills. The results indicated that teachers thought they had high proficiency level but their actual reading proficiency was not equivalent with their perceptions. This implies that there should be professional and skill development trainings given for the teachers. Besides, teachers should make themselves familiar with reading materials apart from the text book they are using in the classroom.</i>
Keywords Actual proficiency; English language teachers; Perceived proficiency; Reading skills; Secondary school;	
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INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most important skills in language teaching and learning (Fitri E. et al., 2019; Ginting, 2018; Kung, 2019; Oda & Abdul-Kadhim, 2017; Reza Ahmadi et al., 2013; Wibowo et al., 2020). According to Grabe (1988), reading is more than just the application of skills; it is a complex and active process of constructing meaning. He argues that the construction of meaning is interactive, involving not only the reader but also the text and the context in which reading takes place. It's strategic - readers have a reading goal and use different strategies to achieve it. Readers are adaptive because they read different types of texts and change their strategies to suit different purposes. Therefore, reading requires not only a certain level of comprehension but also a diverse background.

Reading skill proficiency is very important in the fields of English language teaching and learning. It would help both teachers and students increase their vocabulary and understanding of the texts. Different researches indicated that reading skill proficiency has positive impact on the teaching learning process of English language (Stoffelsma & De Jong, 2015; Ahmadi et al., 2013; Zhang, 2019 & Rianto, 2021). Besides, the perceptions that English language teachers' have towards reading skills proficiency has also an impact on the classroom instructional practice and it in turn affects students' reading skill proficiency (Josephine M., 2015: p. 26). It is essential for academic success as "early reading success is

critical because reading is required for practically all academic work” (Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield, 2012 cited in Adelson et al., 2019). Besides, it appears that excellent general reading skills in English imply that one can cope pretty well with a wide range of reading material.

As we all know, teachers and students spend a significant amount of time reading various academic and non-academic subjects. Teaching these talents, on the other hand, is not an easy undertaking. "Reading is known to be a complicated cognitive activity, and teaching reading skills can be challenging at times" (Kavaliauskienė, 2009, p. 172). The ultimate purpose of language instruction is to help students improve their language skills and communicate effectively in English. Teachers play an important role in helping students achieve better (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017; Guo, 2012). In this regard, teachers are supposed to have the expected proficiency level for the specific grade level in all the skills of the language.

According to Butler, 2004, one of the most significant barriers to successful English teaching and learning is the teacher element, specifically their lack of English proficiency. It is often considered in the literature on the issue that instructors' lack of English proficiency is causally related to their lack of confidence in teaching English. Teachers' lack of English competence has been linked to a lack of confidence in teaching English and, as a result, inefficient instruction (Butler, 2004; Nunan, 2003; Sabokrouh & Barimani-Varandi, 2013; Eslami & Harper, 2018). "...a big challenge is that many English teachers just do not have the skill, and thus the confidence, to teach in English," Nunan, (2003, p. 601) remarked.

As a result, the purpose of this study was to look into secondary school English language teachers' actual and perceived reading skills proficiency. It is known that English language reading skills are very essential in any academic career as the medium of instruction in our curriculum is in English. Some scholars argued that "because the ability to read is essential for nearly all academic work, success in reading is crucial (Schiefele et al., 2012).

This study was, therefore, focusing on teachers' perceived and actual English language reading skills proficiency of secondary school English language teachers in North Shoa Zone, Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia. It would address their levels of perceived and actual reading proficiency and how these concepts relate each other. The research addressed research questions related to the two mentioned variables of this study. As far as the researchers' literature review is concerned, there was no study which dealt with identifying the levels of secondary school English language teachers perceived and actual reading skills proficiency. Hence, the study explored secondary school teachers' self-reported level of English language reading skills proficiency that they think they could and their current level of English language reading skills proficiency.

Therefore, this study intended to answer the following research questions: what are secondary school English language teachers' perceived proficiency levels of reading skills?; what are the actual reading proficiency levels of secondary school English language teachers?; and is there a match or mismatch between the teachers' perceived and actual reading proficiency levels of secondary school English language teachers?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research utilized a mixed methods design to provide a comprehensive investigation into the perceived and actual reading proficiency of secondary school English language teachers in selected schools within the North Shoa Zone of Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. The study was structured in two distinct phases – a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase – to ensure robust data collection and triangulation. During the quantitative phase, English language teachers from selected secondary schools were invited to participate by completing a structured questionnaire aimed at assessing their self-perceived reading

proficiency. In addition to the questionnaire, the participants were administered a standardized reading proficiency test to objectively measure their actual reading abilities. This dual approach allowed for a comparative analysis between the teachers' self-assessment and their demonstrated proficiency.

Following the quantitative phase, a qualitative component was conducted to deepen the understanding of the findings and provide further context to the results. In this phase, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a purposively selected subgroup of English language teachers who had participated in the initial phase. The interview questions were designed to explore the teachers' reflections on their reading skills, challenges they face in enhancing their reading proficiency, and the potential factors contributing to the discrepancies between perceived and actual performance. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study aimed to generate a more nuanced and holistic understanding of English language teachers' reading proficiency, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers within the region.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were selected from secondary school English language teachers in Amhara Region, North Shoa Zone. Secondary school English language teachers teach English from grades 9 to 12. All English teachers in the selected secondary schools participated to fill the questionnaires and took the proficiency test whereas some teachers among them were asked their willingness to take part in the interview. For this study, both the survey data for quantitative and the interview for qualitative part were collected from secondary schools in Amhara Region, North Shoa Zone. For this study, the researchers applied cluster and availability sampling. There were 114 teachers who were working in eleven secondary schools in the area, so all the teachers in the selected schools participated in the study. However, only 112 of them gave responses for this study because based on health issues, one of the participants was unable to fill the questionnaires and take the proficiency test and the other one was not willing to participate in the study.

The researchers had taken a preliminary data about the number of secondary schools from North Shoa Zone Education office. Based on the data from the office, there were about sixty secondary schools in North Shoa Zone and among them eleven of the schools were selected based on the abovementioned sampling technique; then all English language teachers in the selected schools participated in the study. The researcher asked all the teachers about their permission to fill the questionnaires and take the test for the sake of getting enough data for this study.

Research Instruments

This study employed a mixed method research where quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used to gather numerical and descriptive data. These instruments were questionnaire, interview and proficiency test. The combination of more instruments was for the reasons of triangulation, emergence of different overlapping facets of a phenomenon, supplementing the quantitative data with the qualitative data and to add depth to the study.

The reading proficiency test for this study was adapted from the competency exam prepared by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with language experts. The test, which originally contained seventy five questions, was prepared to measure secondary school English language teachers reading skills proficiency. The researchers then discussed with the colleagues of two English language instructors at Debre Berhan University and two PhD candidates of Addis Ababa University to evaluate and commented on the number of questions and their appropriateness for secondary school English language teachers. Then, it was decided that these number of questions might have been difficult to administer for the

teachers and should be minimized to fifty. Hence, in collaboration with colleagues, about twenty five questions which were similar with other questions were cancelled.

The test contained 50 questions; hence, teachers were asked to choose an appropriate answer they thought for each questions. It contained two reading passages and three cloze questions to ask about their comprehension, references, inferences, language use and vocabularies. Hence, the questions included reading sub skills such as skimming, scanning, summarizing, predicting, and inferring. Among the total number of questions, 22 of them were multiple choice questions, and participants were supposed to choose one of the best answers for each question from the four alternatives given. The remaining 13 of them were filling the blank spaces and finding the right answer from the reading passages, and 9 of them were matching questions. Finally, the remaining 6 questions were about completing a short passage using an appropriate words or phrases from the lists given.

The purpose of the interview was to get information about their perceived proficiency in reading skills. The interview was a semi-structured, open-ended type in which respondents could easily express their views about the points that were raised in the process. Thus, this interview method was highly useful in gaining deeper insights and additional information about the teachers' insights concerning their perceived English language reading skills proficiency. The researchers developed the semi structured interview questions which were intended to help answer the research questions of the study. This form was used during the face-to-face interviews in the qualitative part of the study. The semi structured questions consisted of five main questions and some sub-questions which happened at the time of interview in order to get comprehensive answer from the interviewees. The one time interview lasted for about 15 up to 20 minutes, and each of the interviews was audio taped and transcribed so as to analyze the data in relation to the data obtained from the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data for both quantitative (questionnaires and test) and qualitative (interview), the researchers applied different methods. For the analysis of quantitative data, Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS Version 24 was applied and for the qualitative data NVivo version 10 was utilized. Descriptive statistics of means, frequencies, standard deviations, and percentages were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses to the questionnaire. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was also used to describe the relationships being investigated.

The procedures used in the analysis of the quantitative data were described. First, the quantitative data were converted into a form useful for data analysis using the SPSS version 24. The descriptive analysis (mean, standard deviation, variance of responses to each item) were conducted so as to determine the general trends of the data. Correlation statistics were used to identify the relationships between secondary school English language teachers' sense of efficacy with their perceived and actual reading proficiency. Appropriate inferential statistics were selected based on the research questions and the number of variables and their distributions. They were analyzed using the SPSS version 24 software to calculate effect sizes and confidence levels. Then, the statistical results, which are statistics and p-values, were summarized in the tables following the American Psychological Association style of reporting results. To determine how the questions were answered in this study, the major results were summarized and compared in terms of the research questions.

The face-to-face semi-structured interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed. They were checked for the accuracy of the transcriptions. These transcribed data were analyzed based on the grounded theory, and recording of the initial thoughts were included by writing memos in the margins of the transcripts. These transcribed data were analyzed using

the Nvivo version 10. After the data were coded, the researchers developed descriptions and themes by grouping the codes which were already prepared.

The data were coded according to the emergent themes. These themes were then be investigated separately from the survey data and later examined in conjunction with the research questions of the present study for the purpose of refining, extending, and/or contextualizing the survey data. The coding ranged from open code to axial coding and to selective coding. In doing this, the researchers reduced the data until credible answers were developed to the research questions. Then, the major findings of the qualitative data were summarized and interpreted how these findings answered the research questions. The researchers were also relating findings with the past literatures and researches done on this issue.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Secondary School English Language teachers' perceived proficiency level of reading skills

This research question was about secondary school English language teachers' perceived proficiency level of their reading skills. To identify self-reported level of reading proficiency among North Shoa Zone secondary school English language teachers, they were asked to rate their perceived reading proficiency level based on the given items. The questionnaire had a 6 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (6) to Strongly Disagree (1). Hence, the mean and standard deviation of the ten items are presented below.

Table 1
Means and standard Deviation of Teachers' Perceived Reading Proficiency

Perceived Reading Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can understand the main points of any reading text.	112	4.84	1.081
I can read a text quickly in order to establish a general idea of the context (skimming).	112	4.91	1.088
I can read a text slowly and carefully in order to understand the details of the text.	112	5.38	.751
I can look through a text quickly in order to locate specific information (Scanning).	112	5.13	.833
I can guess the meanings of unknown words in English from the context.	112	5.25	.508
I can draw inferences/conclusions from what I read in English.	112	4.84	.767
I can figure out the meaning of unknown words in English from the context.	112	4.90	.700
I can read and understand English magazine articles and newspapers without using a dictionary.	112	4.50	.950
I can read and understand popular English novels without using a dictionary.	112	4.06	1.243
I can read highly technical material in a particular academic or professional field with no use or only very rarely use of a dictionary.	112	4.06	1.045
Overall mean	112	4.78	.599
Valid N (listwise)	112		

Based on the above table, items 9 and 10 got the lowest mean score of 4.06 for each. On the other hand, item 3 with the mean score of 5.38 is the highest mean compared with the others. The overall mean score of secondary school English language teachers' perceived reading skill proficiency level was 4.78. The table also show that items "I can read and

understand popular English novels without using a dictionary” and “I can read highly technical material in a particular academic or professional field with no use or only very rarely use of a dictionary” got the lowest mean (4.06). This indicated that most of the teachers had the problem of understanding texts beyond the text books as they reported they should use dictionaries to understand novels and other technical materials.

This data can answer the first research question which was mentioned in the introduction section and asked about secondary school English language teachers’ perceived proficiency level of their reading skills. Based on the findings of the data analysis, teachers had high levels of their perceived reading skills proficiency.

Secondary School English Language Teachers’ Actual Proficiency level of Reading Skill

The other research question of this study was about secondary school English language teachers actual level of reading skills proficiency. To get the answer for this research question, the researchers used a reading competency exam which was prepared by the Ministry of Education. The proficiency test was used so as to get the actual reading proficiency level of secondary school English language teachers.

Table 2
Means and standard Deviation of Teachers’ Actual Reading Proficiency

Itmes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers' reading proficiency score	112	64.81	14.566
Valid N (listwise)	112		

As it can be seen in the above table, the mean score of reading proficiency test for secondary school teachers was 64.81. This indicated that North Shoa Zone secondary school English language teachers have a medium proficiency level of reading skill based on the Ministry of Education proficiency test score result analysis. In the report, it was shown that scores below 50 were low, scores between 51 and 69 was considered medium and scores above 70 was considered as high proficiency level. This data answered the second research question of this study which dealt about teachers’ actual reading skills proficiency. The finding indicated that their actual reading skills proficiency level was medium.

Secondary School English Language Teachers’ Perceived and Actual Reading Proficiency levels

The third research question was about if there was a match or mismatch between the teachers’ perceived and actual reading proficiency levels of secondary school English language teachers. Hence, a correlation statistics was conducted to identify the relationship between what teachers’ perceived about their reading proficiency and their English reading skills proficiency test results.

Table 3
A correlation between Teachers’ Perceived and Actual Reading Proficiency

	Teachers' reading proficiency score	Perceived RP
Teachers' reading proficiency score	1	
Perceived RP	.329	1

As the table 12 shows above, English language teachers reading skills proficiency and their perceived reading skills proficiency had a positive and moderate correlation ($r=.329$). Though their correlation was not significant, the result showed there was a moderate indication that when their perceived reading skills proficiency increases, their actual reading skills proficiency increases. The above mentioned result indicated that there was positive and

moderate correlation between secondary school English language teachers' perceived and actual proficiency.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Findings

To triangulate the data which was gathered and analyzed through questionnaires and test, the researchers conducted an interview with four secondary school English language teachers, who participated in filling the questionnaires and taking the proficiency test, concerning their self-report reading skills proficiency. The researchers also believed that those key informants were interested in giving their opinions and sharing experiences concerning the issue.

Levels of reading skills perceived proficiency

One of the questions was about their perceptions of level of reading skills proficiency. Teachers said that they were good at reading, and they replied that they could read and understand different texts. However, most of the interviewee replied that they were not very familiar with reading texts apart from academic contexts. When they read different texts in which there were unfamiliar and with difficult words, they tried to guess the meanings based on the context where the words or expressions appear. In some cases, they claimed that they use dictionaries for some unfamiliar and strange vocabularies to understand the idea of a text.

One of the respondents said:

I think I am good at reading. I can read different texts and can easily understand them. In my opinion, though there are some reading texts which are difficult to understand because they are jargons and when their ideas are in complex scientific issues, I may not understand them. However, most of the time, I can read and understand many reading materials even when there are some vocabularies which are not familiar for me. (Interviewee)

As it was mentioned, most of the teachers read academic texts and they sometimes use supplementary materials in order to support their teaching with additional materials. They also believed that the texts they usually read and could easily understand were academic books and some supplementary materials. In this case, they were not challenged in understanding and getting the main idea of the texts.

I usually read academic texts. When I think of the materials, I read beyond the academic area, I don't think they are that much considered. As a teacher, I am supposed to read my teaching materials like the text book, the teacher guide and in addition to them, I sometimes read supplementary materials in order to make myself ready for teaching. If you ask me my understanding level, I don't think I have a problem of understanding academic materials. (Interviewee)

The proficiency test

The other question was about the reading skill proficiency test they had taken in the time of quantitative data collection. The researchers asked them how they got the test and their feelings towards the proficiency test. They found the test interesting and appropriate for evaluating the current reading proficiency levels of secondary school teachers. They also replied that the reading passages and the contents of the questions were related to the sub-skills of reading. One of the interviewee expressed his perceptions by saying:

That was very interesting test though I am not sure how much I get. Even the structures and the kind of questions available in the test are very interesting and appropriate for us. I find it interesting and it is appealing even I was reading it with some interest. I really like the text. When I come to the questions, the questions are common that we ask our students in text books or in final exams, so this is how I see it. (Interviewee)

The last question was about their perceptions concerning their self-report proficiency levels of their reading skills and their actual reading proficiencies based on the test they had

taken. They believed that what they thought about their proficiency and their performance in the test was the same. Their perception was that what they believed they have about their reading proficiency and what they actually took in the test were the same.

We completed a questionnaire about our perceived reading proficiency levels. I found all the sentences very appropriate and I was not challenged to rate myself based on the points. When I come to the reading proficiency test, as I told you earlier, it was interesting and found it appropriate. So I think my personal self-report reading proficiency and the test score match. That is what I believe. (Interviewee)

However, the researcher found in the quantitative phase of the results and findings that though their perceived reading proficiency and their actual reading proficiency were positively correlate, their relationship was not significant.

Discussion

In this section, the discussions of the findings were presented in relation to the research questions as a framework. The findings were discussed using the data collected through questionnaires, proficiency test and an interview. Then, the research findings of this study were presented her under by comparing them with the findings of the previous studies.

Research Question 1: What are secondary school English language teachers' perceived proficiency levels of reading skills?

The descriptive statistical analysis of secondary school teachers' perceived reading proficiency levels revealed significant insights into their self-assessed abilities. The findings indicated that the mean score of the teachers' perceived reading proficiency was 4.78, suggesting a relatively high level of self-reported competence. According to the collected and analyzed data, most teachers demonstrated a tendency to read texts slowly and carefully, ensuring they grasp the details presented. This meticulous approach to reading reflects a focus on comprehension and accuracy, essential attributes for effective teaching. However, a notable challenge emerged as many teachers reported difficulties in understanding texts beyond the standard textbooks. Specifically, they expressed the need to rely on dictionaries to comprehend novels and technical materials, highlighting gaps in their ability to engage with more complex and diverse texts. Despite these challenges, the overall mean score indicated that secondary school English language teachers perceived their reading skills proficiency to be high.

The findings align with research conducted by Wulyani et al. (2019), who similarly reported that most teachers assessed their reading proficiency as satisfactory. Their study underscores a trend in which teachers generally express confidence in their reading skills, despite potential underlying difficulties with more advanced materials. The current study's results also resonate with prior research conducted by Chacon (2002) and Ghasemboland and Hashim (2013), both of which found that teachers rated their reading proficiency higher than other language skills such as writing, speaking, and listening. Chacon's (2002) study revealed that reading proficiency consistently yielded higher mean scores compared to other skills, suggesting that teachers perceive reading as one of their stronger competencies. Similarly, Ghasemboland and Hashim (2013) reported a mean score of 5.03 for reading proficiency, further reinforcing the notion that teachers tend to rate their reading skills at a high level, with limited variability in scores. This consistency across studies suggests a broader pattern in which teachers perceive themselves as proficient readers, potentially due to the emphasis on reading within teacher training programs and professional development initiatives.

However, the findings of the current study contrast with other literature that highlights the disconnect between perceived and actual reading proficiency. Researchers such as Yamashita (2002) and Yoshikawa and Leung (2020), as cited in Maghsoudi (2022), have argued that without a sufficient level of language proficiency, achieving a high level of

reading competence is unlikely. This discrepancy suggests that while teachers may believe they possess strong reading skills, their actual performance on objective measures may not align with these perceptions. The divergence between perceived and actual proficiency underscores the need for more rigorous assessments to accurately gauge teachers' reading abilities, ensuring that their self-assessments do not overestimate their actual skill levels.

The importance of reading proficiency extends beyond individual teachers, influencing broader educational outcomes. Stoffelsma and De Jong (2015) emphasized that teachers' reading fluency directly impacts the quality of instruction in their classrooms, subsequently affecting the overall standard of education in the country. Teachers who demonstrate higher reading proficiency are better equipped to engage with curricular materials, model effective reading strategies for students, and foster a culture of literacy within their classrooms. This, in turn, enhances students' reading performance and contributes to improved educational outcomes. The qualitative data gathered in this study further reinforced the quantitative findings, with teachers consistently expressing high levels of confidence in their reading skills. This corroborates the research conducted by Lee (2009), which found similar patterns of high self-assessed reading proficiency among teachers.

Research Question 2: What are the actual reading proficiency levels of secondary school English language teachers'?

Based on the descriptive statistics concerning secondary school English language teachers' reading skill proficiency, the mean score was 64.81. This result revealed that North Shoa Zone secondary school English language teachers have a medium proficiency level of reading skill based on the Ministry of Education proficiency test score result analysis report (2011). In the report, it was shown that scores below 50 were low, scores between 51 and 69 was considered medium proficiency level and scores above 70 was considered as high proficiency level. In this study, as it was seen, the mean score was between 51 and 69; therefore, it would be possible to conclude that they had a medium level of reading skills proficiency. This result was consistent with the findings of the Ministry of Education competency test which was given in 2011.

Though their actual reading proficiency level of secondary school English language teachers' is medium, this could not be appropriate for them to be good at reading. Almost all the teachers have had long years of experience and it could have helped them to improve their reading skills proficiency. However, one thing we could mention is that their proficiency level is not as it was expected may be because the teachers have not had any exposure to other reading materials apart from the text book they are using to teach their students. The absence of additional resources could have an impact on their reading skills proficiency.

In the previous research question, the teachers replied that they perceived themselves as they had high proficiency level of reading skill. On the contrary, their actual reading skill proficiency revealed that they were at a medium level. This implies that they could fairly understand and comprehend written materials, but they are also supposed to improve their proficiency levels.

Research Question 3: Is there match or mismatch between the teachers' perceived and actual reading proficiency levels of secondary school English language teachers?

The analysis of the correlation coefficient between secondary school English language teachers' perceived reading skill proficiency and their actual reading proficiency revealed important insights into the nature of this relationship. Through the application of Pearson's correlation coefficient, the study identified a positive correlation ($r = .329$) between the two variables. Although this correlation indicates that higher perceived proficiency tends to align with higher actual proficiency, the relationship was not statistically significant, suggesting that the observed correlation could have been influenced by external factors or sample

variability. The strength of the correlation was classified as moderate, indicating that while there is a connection between perceived and actual proficiency, the alignment between teachers' self-assessment and their demonstrated reading skills is not robust enough to draw definitive conclusions. This highlights the complexity of self-perception in professional competencies and the need for further investigation into factors contributing to this moderate alignment.

In comparison with prior research, the present findings align partially with the study conducted by Wulyani et al. (2019), which explored discrepancies between EFL teachers' perceived and actual English language proficiency. However, Wulyani et al.'s study focused on overall language proficiency rather than isolating specific skills such as reading. This distinction underscores the unique contribution of the current research, which narrows its focus to the reading proficiency of secondary school English teachers. By emphasizing reading – a core component of language instruction – the study addresses a gap in existing literature, providing targeted insights into how accurately teachers gauge their reading skills. This focus is particularly relevant in the context of English language teaching, where reading comprehension plays a pivotal role in curriculum delivery, student engagement, and the broader pedagogical process.

A review of the existing literature revealed that, to date, no study has explicitly examined the relationship between teachers' perceived reading proficiency and their actual reading proficiency. Most prior studies have concentrated on broader aspects of self-reported language proficiency, linking them with variables such as teacher self-efficacy, classroom performance, and overall language competence. This research, therefore, represents a novel contribution to the field by isolating reading proficiency as an area of study. The absence of prior investigations into this specific relationship highlights the importance of the current research in filling a critical knowledge gap. The findings underscore the necessity for more focused inquiries that explore how self-assessment accuracy in individual language skills can influence professional development and instructional quality among secondary school English teachers.

CONCLUSION

The study's major findings regarding the perceived and actual reading skill proficiency of secondary school English language teachers in the North Shoa Zone were comprehensively analyzed and presented in the preceding sections. The descriptive statistical analysis concluded that teachers held high perceptions of their reading skill proficiency, indicating a sense of confidence in their abilities. However, this self-assessed proficiency was not reflected in their actual performance, as the results revealed that their demonstrated reading skills were at a medium level. This discrepancy between perceived and actual proficiency underscores the need for targeted interventions and professional development programs aimed at enhancing teachers' reading abilities. The moderate level of actual proficiency suggests that while teachers may believe they possess strong reading skills, their ability to engage with more complex texts and academic materials may be limited. This gap can have cascading effects on their students' reading performance, as teachers' reading skills play a critical role in shaping students' literacy development. Consequently, addressing this issue is essential to improving overall teaching effectiveness and student outcomes in reading.

The correlation analysis between teachers' perceived and actual reading proficiency further highlighted the nuanced relationship between self-assessment and real performance. The relationship was not statistically significant, suggesting that while a connection exists, it is not strong enough to assert a direct alignment between perceived and actual skills. This moderate correlation points to the importance of reinforcing reading instruction through supplementary training and continuous professional development. By engaging in training programs and expanding their exposure to diverse reading materials beyond standard

textbooks, teachers can bridge the gap between perception and reality. Encouraging teachers to read novels, academic papers, and technical documents can enhance their reading fluency and comprehension, ultimately benefiting their instructional practices.

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