English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) in Teaching Reading Skills in Secondary Schools

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Abstract. Improving teacher quality, a pressing concern in modern education and improving instructional quality is becoming crucial particularly in the realm of foreign or second language learners. The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary school English as Foreign Language teachers' general perceptions and practices of pedagogical content knowledge in the teaching of reading skills to grade nine students. The researchers used a descriptive survey design by generating quantitative data from English as Foreign Language teachers' questionnaires and observation checklists as data collection tools. In total, 35 English as Foreign Language teachers participated in filling out the self-report questionnaire. To get insight into the implementation of pedagogical content knowledge, four English as Foreign Language teachers' classroom practices were observed using a structured observation checklist and field notes during one academic semester in 2021. SPSS (IBM version 24) was used to analyse the data. Findings showed that English as Foreign Language teachers' perceptions of pedagogical content knowledge seems to be slightly above average. The relationship between English as Foreign Language teachers' general perception and pedagogical content knowledge implementation in the classroom had a moderately high positive relationship (r =0.67) between them. The results from the observation checklists revealed that teachers lack basic competence in pedagogical content knowledge implementation in teaching reading skills. To fill this gap, continuous professional development training schemes should be arranged for English as Foreign Language teachers.

Keywords: English as foreign language teachers; perception; practice; pedagogical content knowledge; teaching reading skill

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1. Background of the Study

In this globalised world, it is evident that the English language, which is an international language (lingua franca), has received or seized a significant place almost in every sector, such as education, business, agriculture, trade, media and entertainment, tourism and foreign diplomacy. The more proficient the use of English language among stakeholders, the better the results would be in reaching the target for which they are intended, namely effective communication, understanding, and collaboration. In relation to this, Mebratu (2015) says, "English language has several and strong functions/roles in Ethiopia too. Of those roles that English is playing in Ethiopia, the educational/instructional role is the long standing and dominant one" (p. 9). By the same token, Geberew and Tigist (2017) emphasise that the need for the use of the English language originated from the importance it has in forging communications with the outside world and in modern education in the country, Ethiopia.

Regardless of the importance that the English language has throughout the country, it is has a poor level of achievement in the nation as a whole. In line with this, Admassu (2008) also asserts that educational quality in general has declined in the last three decades in the country. The quality of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Ethiopia is no exception. Belay and Melaku (2019), and Fekede and Tynjälä (2015) share the view that in the last two decades the Ethiopian government has worked hard on the massive expansion of the national education system; however, these scholars believe that regardless of the significant achievement in terms of the quantitative expansion of access to education, the quality of education deteriorated and remains a daunting challenge. Similarly, Heugh et al. (2006) describe that in Ethiopian government schools the standard of English teaching i reported to be very low. In this regard, the quality of the teaching of reading skills is no exception. Eba (2013) confirms that there are various factors that contributed to the deterioration of language quality; one such factor is teachers' lack of ability to teach the English language.

Since the time of its inception by Shulman(1986), the study of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) has attracted the attention of many researchers and such studies have emerged all over the world in the past two decades. The focus of such studies covers a wide range of disciplines such as Mathematics and Science. Grossman (1990), and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) share the view that in the area of teaching English, the issue of teachers' PCK is an understudied area. According to Shulman (1987), PCK "represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organised, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (p. 8). Because of this, the teachers' level of PCK is said to have great impact on the development of students' achievement in their respective subjects. This is confirmed by a study that showed the relationship between PCK and students' performance (Hashima, Sailib and Noh, 2015).

It is believed that the teaching and learning process of EFL in general, and teaching reading skills in particular, in the twenty-first century requires teachers

who are capable of handling the complex requirements of the entire education system. In line with this view, one scholar states the following:

> "*Teachers are considered a valuable resource in any educational system and are dominant figures who influence students' learning. The complexity of teaching entails high teacher performance, certainly when striving to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges of the 21st century in a changing world of globalisation.*"
> (Nachmania, 2016, pp. 306-307)

However, according to some reports such as that of Bennell (2004), teachers in most of the low-income countries (sub-Saharan African countries and Asian countries) are considered to be semi-professionals because of their inadequate qualifications and professional training. Furthermore, the status of teachers has declined seriously in recent decades.

On the other hand, effectiveness of the overall education system cannot be ensured without giving considerable attention to improving the quality of teachers who have a clear understanding of PCK. As far as the researcher knows, one of the methods of checking and balancing system of this task is by studying teachers' PCK with regard to teaching reading skills. In this regard, Abali (2012) says that the effectiveness of a teacher is a determining factor in the quality of the overall learning process. Hence, the process of improving the educational system may not be realised fully by disregarding the task of improving the quality of teachers' PCK. It is a well-accepted idea that the quality of teachers makes a difference to students' performance. To this effect, the need to improve teachers' competence is observed to be one of the most important issues in the academic arena worldwide and is the concern of this study.

The study of EFL teachers' perceptions of PCK encompasses teachers' knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of subject matter content among other components. According to Cesur and Ertas (2018), a teacher who is said to have good PCK is believed to possess various types of knowledge packages that help them to deliver the subject matter properly to their students. Few of the many instructional strategies mentioned by these scholars include: knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of planning lessons, knowledge of learners, knowledge of teaching methods and techniques, and knowledge of assessment.

It is, therefore, believed that the more the teachers are equipped with these essential skills, the better will be their overall performance in imparting the knowledge and skills, resulting in positive consequences for learners' achievement. The implication of this statement is that teachers who do not have adequate PCK may not be able to teach the subject matter properly resulting in undesirable effects on students' achievement.

The researchers of this study believe that improving teacher quality is one of the most important ways to improve education quality. However, Alimuddin et al. (2020) say, there seems to be lack of studies conducted on teachers' perceptions and practice of PCK. Regardless of their importance, studies on teachers'

knowledge based on PCK, particularly in the field of teaching English as a second or foreign language, are scanty or scarce. To this effect, the present research attempted to investigate secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of PCK in teaching reading skills. Specifically, it sought answers to the following research questions.

1. What perceptions do EFL teachers have of their PCK with regard to teaching reading skills?
2. How do secondary school EFL teachers practice PCK in the teaching of reading skills in the milieu of their classrooms?
3. What is the relationship between secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions of PCK and their actual classroom practices of PCK in teaching reading skills?

2. Conceptual Framework
In the model for teaching reading skills, as illustrated in Figure 1, the central focus is on the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), a specialized form of knowledge that significantly influences students' achievements and, by extension, the overall quality of education and the teaching practices of reading skills. This model serves as a valuable metric for assessing teachers' effectiveness. Effective teaching of EFL reading skills hinges on teachers having an appropriate knowledge base, and the discussion on the type and extent of professional knowledge needed by teachers leads us to the concept of PCK. Teachers with sufficient PCK are considered to encompass all the essential components, contributing to the comprehensive and effective execution of their teaching responsibilities. The teacher's understanding and enactment of PCK can be materialised when its constituting elements are given due consideration.

This model, which is shown in Figure 1 has been developed by the researchers, by adapting the PCK conceptualisations of Shulman (1987), Grossman (1990), and Park and Oliver (2008) to best suit the teaching of reading skills. In this model, the components subsumed under the umbrella of EFL teacher's PCK in the teaching of reading skills are: orientation toward teaching reading/knowledge of subject matter/content, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of curriculum, knowledge of students and their understanding, knowledge of assessment, knowledge of instructional strategies and representations and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. An aspect of PCK, teacher's self-efficacy beliefs, affects teacher's PCK and is also affected by understanding and enactment of PCK through its constituents. By putting all these interacting variables together in a well-organised manner, it will be possible to assume desirable performance in learners' reading skills. The role of the classroom teacher in harnessing all the components of PCK is invaluable and should be given due attention.
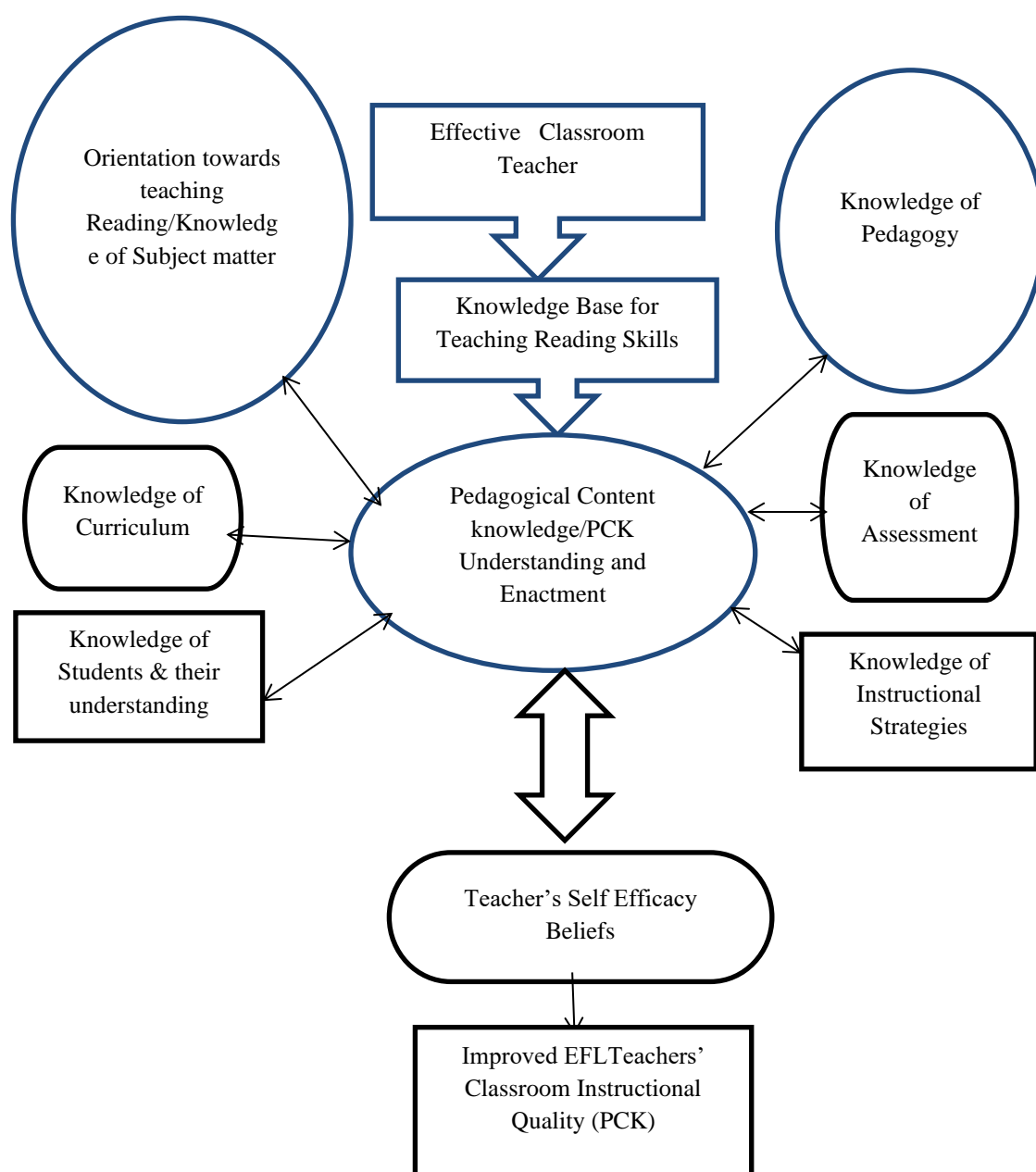
Figure 2: PCK model for teaching reading skills
Adapted from Grossman (1990), Shulman (1987), and Park and Oliver (2008)

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to collect quantitative data from EFL teachers regarding their perceptions and practices of PCK.

3.2 Research Locale and Participants

The present study was conducted at public secondary schools in Hawassa City Administration of the Sidama National Regional State, Ethiopia. This city is located in the south about 273 kms away from the capital city, Addis Ababa. As per the information procured from City Administration Education Department,

in Hawassa City, there were fourteen (14) public secondary schools. Three (3) of these schools were sampled and selected for this study. The participants in the study were the English teachers who were assigned to teach Grade 9 students in these government secondary schools.

To evaluate teachers' perceptions of PCK in the teaching of reading skills, the researchers chose Hawassa City through convenient sampling due to proximity and convenience. The total number of EFL teachers teaching in these 14 secondary schools in Hawassa City Administration was 104. Out of these teachers teaching in these schools, all EFL teachers teaching Grade 9 students in the selected three schools were selected to fill out a research questionnaire. Hence, 40 teachers were included in the study and 35 of the questionnaires were found to be complete and were used by the researchers. Table 1 shows the secondary schools involved in the study and participants' profiles in terms of their qualification and gender composition.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

S. No	Name of Schools	Participants' Academic Rank/ Degree		Gender Composition	
		B.ED/B.A	M.A	Male	Female
1	Addis Ketema Sec. Sch	12	6	11	7
2	Alamura Sec. Sch	9	4	8	5
3	Adare Sec. Sch	1	3	3	1
4	Total No. of participants	18	13	22	13
5	Total Percentage	62%	37.1%	62.9%	37.1%

3.3 Data Gathering Instruments
The researchers employed classroom observation and teacher questionnaires as data collecting tools to ensure in depth investigation of EFL teachers' perception and practice of PCK in teaching reading skills in selected secondary schools of Hawassa City Administration, Sidama National Regional State, Ethiopia.

3.3.1. Classroom Observation
The purpose of conducting classroom observation was to explore EFL teachers' classroom practice in the teaching of reading skills. Observation as a method of data collection has several advantages. Lynda (2006) posits that observation allows researchers to learn about people and things in their natural settings. In the process of observing EFL teachers' practice of teaching reading skills, two different techniques were used concomitantly, namely structured observation with a checklist to be filled out by the researcher and trained observers and unstructured observation with audio recording. Kothari (2004) recommends that researchers use structured observation as it is considered to be suitable in descriptive studies. Four (4) Grade 9 English language teachers were observed twice each by the two observers within the stipulated time frame in the 2021 academic year. The audio recorded data helped the researchers to complete filling out the observation checklist carefully without rushing during the session. The

observation data which was gathered through the structured observation checklist was later analysed by the researchers.

3.3.2 Questionnaire for Teachers
The questionnaire for teachers was used to collect information pertaining to their perceived PCK in the teaching of reading skills in EFL classrooms at grade nine. The self-report questionnaire included close ended items containing two parts. The first part consisted of personal information of the responding teachers, and the second part consists of 42 items. The researchers tried to capture the complete picture of EFL teachers' perception of PCK using six (6) components of PCK in the questionnaire, namely, Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK), Knowledge of Instructional Objectives, Context and Curriculum (KIOCC), Knowledge of Instructional Representation and Strategies (KIRS), Knowledge of Students and their Understanding (KSU), Knowledge of Pedagogy (KP), and Knowledge of Assessment (KA). Some part of this questionnaire was adapted mainly from (Janga, et al, 2009). Originally the questionnaire consisted of 28 items, but the researchers developed some more important items about KP and KA, and then increased the number of items to 42 to make it more appealing and comprehensive.

The researchers used summated scales (Likert-type scales) to extract self-report information about EFL teachers' perceptions. The value assigned to respondents' agreement or disagreement with certain questions ranged from strongly agree (SA), Agree (AG), Undecided (UD), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD). According to Kothari (2004) these Likert-type scales are used to collect responses from respondents about their agreement and disagreement in terms of different types of scale, usually five scales, and each response was given a numerical score. This helped the researchers to gather accurate data about EFL teachers' perceptions of PCK in teaching reading skills.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Data Collection Instruments
The researchers of the present study adapted standard questionnaire items best suited to the teaching of reading skills in general and the objectives of this study in particular. Expert opinions from supervisor of this research, PhD candidates and senior staff in the field of TEFL were requested to check the validity of the instruments employed in this study. The researcher checked the internal consistency/ or reliability of the items on the EFL teachers' questionnaires using SPSS (IBM version 24) and found that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.802 indicating that the items in the questionnaire were highly reliable. In addition, the researchers ran the SPSS (IBM version 24) to test the reliability of the classroom observation checklist and found that a Cronbach's alpha reliability value of 0.936. This value suggests that the items developed by the researchers had strong internal consistency reliability.

4. Results and Discussions
In this section, the researchers present the results and discussion on the research questions. These include: EFL teachers' perception of PCK, practice of PCK and their relationships under the umbrella of teaching reading skills.

4.1 EFL Teachers' Perceptions of PCK With Regard to Teaching Reading Skills

Table 2: Results of EFL Teachers' Responses of their Knowledge of Subject Matter (SMK)

Q. No	Items	SD %	DA%	UD%	AG %	SA%	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I have sufficient content knowledge of reading skills lesson.	2.9	11.4	20.0	42.9	22.9	3.71	1.045
2	I explain clearly the content of the subject/reading lesson.	-	14.3	17.1	37.1	31.4	3.86	1.033
3	I understand how theories or principles of the teaching reading have been developed	-	11.4	25.7	45.7	17.1	3.69	.900
4	I select and adapt the appropriate content for students' diverse needs.	11.4	5.7	20.0	40.0	22.9	3.57	1.243
5	I find it easy to give responses to my students' questions on reading.	2.9	42.9	11.4	22.9	20.0	3.14	1.264
6	I explain about the impact of subject matter/reading skills on learners' achievement.	5.7	20.0	14.3	48.6	11.4	3.40	1.117
7	I have a complete grasp of the whole structure and direction of SMK of teaching reading (comprehension, fluency, vocabulary,…)	5.7	17.1	22.9	34.3	20.0	3.46	1.172

As can be seen from Table 2, a significant proportion (48.6%) of the responding teachers agreed that they had a good understanding of the impact of reading skills on learners' achievement with a mean score of (M=3.40) for this construct. It is assumed that this behaviour of teachers would have a positive impact on the learners' reading skills achievement. Just over 11% of the respondents said that they strongly disagreed that they were able to select and adapt appropriate content to meet the diverse needs of the learners. The highest mean score of reading skills teachers about their explanation of the content of the reading lesson was found to be (M=3.86).

Pedagogical content knowledge is an amalgamation of several knowledge domains of which SMK is one. Table 1 shows that Grade 9 teachers who responded to this questionnaire said giving response to students' questions was not an easy task for them as the mean score was (M=3.14). In this regard, 22.9% of respondents said that they found it difficult to respond to students' questions in reading skills classrooms. On the other hand, they agreed that explaining the content of the reading lesson was easy for them as the mean score of this construct was the highest of all the categories, (M= 3.86) which indicates that teachers had a good understanding of the subject matter.

Westbrook et al. (2013) argue that a teacher's effectiveness can be primarily attributed to their disciplinary knowledge. This is further substantiated by their PCK, as evidenced by their actions, such as demonstrating, providing explanations, employing higher-order questioning, designing tasks, and using comprehensible input, all of which effectively challenge learners' schemata. These researchers clarify that investigations carried out in countries such as Uganda, India and Malawi revealed that the content and PCK levels of certain teachers were assessed as inadequate. This level was found to be insufficient to assist teachers in employing diverse pedagogical approaches flexibly for teaching and problem-solving, especially in subjects like English Language and Mathematics. This result is in contrast with the present research which depicts above average levels of SMK of EFL teachers in teaching reading skills.

Table 3: Results of EFL Teachers' Responses about their knowledge of Objectives, Curriculum and Context (KOCC)

Q. No	Items	SD %	DA%	UD%	AG%	SA%	Mean	Std. Dev.
8	I make an attempt to help my students clearly understand objectives of this course/Curricular material.	-	8.6	17.1	45.7	28.6	3.94	9.06
9	I provide an appropriate interaction or good atmosphere while teaching reading.	-	11.4	17.1	42.9	28.6	3.89	.963
10	I pay attention to students' reaction during class and adjust my teaching attitude accordingly.	2.9	5.7	8.6	51.4	31.4	4.03	.954
11	I make an attempt to create conducive classroom environment to promote students' interest/motivation for learning reading.	-	14.3	14.4	42.9	28.6	3.86	1.004
12	I prepare some additional teaching materials to help my learners understand or comprehend better.	-	5.7	25.7	40.0	28.6	3.91	.887
13	I understand and cope with reading skills classroom context appropriately.	-	14.3	14.3	60.0	11.4	3.69	.867
14	I know curricular materials available for students to teach reading.	11.4	11.4	25.7	28.6	22.9	3.40	1.288

From Table 3, it is noted that 60% of the respondents agreed that they clearly understood and coped with the reading skills classroom context, where the mean score of this construct was found to be (M= 3.69). Teachers display different types of classroom behaviours while delivering lessons to their students. As can be seen from this table, participants in this study responded to the questionnaire that they

were good at paying attention to the students' reactions and were ready to adjust their teaching approach on that basis; the mean score of this construct seemed to be the highest (M=4.03) of all in this category (instructional objectives, curriculum and context knowledge) and 51.4% of the responding teachers agreed that they teach following their students' reactions.

However, the mean score of teachers' response about their knowledge of curricular materials available for teaching reading skills is the lowest (M= 3.40) among the constructs, but this value is still well above average.

Table 4: Results of EFL Teachers' Responses about their KIRS

Q. No	Items	SD %	DA%	UD%	AG%	SA%	Mean	Std. Dev.
15	I use appropriate examples to explain concepts related to subject matter/ reading.	5.7	2.9	8.6	51.4	31.4	4.00	1.029
16	I use familiar analogies or illustrations to explain concepts of reading skills.	-	8.6	17.1	54.3	20.0	3.86	.845
17	I try to capture the interest of my students using my teaching methods in this subject/ reading.	-	2.9	28.6	45.7	22.9	3.89	.796
18	I create opportunities for students to express their views during class.	-	8.6	25.7	45.7	20.0	3.77	.877
19	I use demonstrations to help explaining the main concept of teaching reading comprehension/ skills.	-	14.3	28.6	37.1	20.0	3.63	.973
20	I use a variety of teaching approaches (loud reading, silent reading) to transform subject matter into comprehensible knowledge.	5.7	8.6	17.1	45.7	22.9	3.71	1.100
21	I use multimedia or other technology (e.g. PowerPoint, hands on activities of printed texts) to express the concept of subject matter/reading activities	14.3	31.4	22.9	17.1	14.3	2.86	1.287

Table 4 clearly shows that the mean scores of each component under the construct KIRS ranges between the highest value of (M= 4.00) and the lowest value of (M= 2.86). As can be seen from Table 4, 51.4% of responding teachers agreed that they were able to use appropriate examples while explaining the subject matter of the reading to students and the mean score of this construct showed (M=4.00). Teachers' responses about their own use of multimedia or other technologies to further explain the concept in the reading skills was recorded to be the lowest

(M= 2.86) mean value and teachers' use familiar analogies or illustrations to explain concepts of reading skills had the highest mean score (M= 54.3) within this category.

Table 5: Results of EFL Teachers' Responses about KSU

Q. No	Item	SD %	DA%	UD%	AG%	SA%	Mean	Std. Dev.
22	I am aware of students' prior knowledge when I teach reading skills (before class)/or during class.	-	20.0	14.3	42.9	22.9	3.69	1.051
23	I know students' learning difficulties, errors and misconceptions of subject/reading comprehension before class /or during class.	-	14.3	22.9	40.0	22.9	3.71	.987
24	I ask questions to evaluate students' understanding of a topic/reading lesson.	-	5.7	14.3	57.1	22.9	3.97	.785
25	I assess/evaluate my students' understanding of the reading skills using various assessment methods.	2.9	11.4	22.9	42.9	20.0	3.66	1.027
26	I use different approaches (questions, discussion, pair/group work etc.) to find out whether learners understand.	2.9	20.0	8.6	45.7	22.9	3.66	1.136
27	I give assignments to facilitate learners' understanding of the subject/reading lesson.	2.9	8.6	22.9	34.3	31.4	3.83	1.1071
28	I know the learning strategies (using background knowledge, making predictions, summarising, cooperating, etc.) of my students	2.9	17.1	11.4	31.4	37.1	3.83	1.200

As can be seen from Table 5, 57.1% of the EFL teachers agreed that they usually asked questions to evaluate students' understanding of a topic or a reading lesson. For this same item, the mean score was (M= 3.97) which indicates that EFL teachers who gave response to this questionnaire seemed to have high perception as the mean value is nearly (M=4.00). Similarly, 37.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that they were aware of the learning strategies such as using background knowledge, making predictions, summarising and cooperating; the mean score of which was (M=3.83). The mean value of (M=3.66) was obtained for both teachers responses on their use of different approaches (questions, discussions, pair work, / group work etc) and teachers' use of various assessment methods.

Table 6: Results of EFL Teachers' Responses about their KP

Q. No	Item	SD %	DA%	UD%	AG%	SA%	Mean	Std. Dev.
29	I use a wide range of teaching approaches in a reading classroom setting.	5.7	8.6	20.0	51.4	14.3	3.60	1.035
30	I select effective teaching approaches to guide students' thinking and learning reading.	2.9	2.9	28.6	51.4	14.3	3.71	.860
31	I integrate language skills, such as reading with writing while teaching reading.	-	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	3.60	1.035
32	I encourage learner autonomy and promote self-direction.	5.7	5.7	17.1	42.9	28.6	3.83	1.098
33	I encourage students to participate and make meaningful interactions.	5.7	2.9	2.9	45.7	42.9	4.17	1.043
34	I adapt my teaching based up on what students currently understand or do not understand	2.9	8.6	11.4	57.1	20.0	3.83	.954
35	I have a repertoire of using pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages/strategies	-	5.7	14.3	45.7	34.3	4.09	.853

As can be seen from Table 6 above, 45.7% of the responding teachers agreed that they had a good repertoire of using pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading strategies in the pursuit of delivering reading skills lesson. The mean of this construct was (M=4.09) which is relatively high value. Similarly, the same 45.7% of the respondents showed agreement that they encouraged their students to participate and interact in the classroom activities. As indicated in Table 5, the mean score of teachers' responses about the issue of encouraging students to participate and meaningful interactions was (M=4.17). This score was the highest of all in this category meaning that the participating teachers seemed to be well aware of that component of the KP.

The lowest mean score (M= 3.60) was observed for two components of PK, such as selecting a wide range of teaching approaches and integrating language skills while teaching reading skills. Even though this score was the lowest among the group, the value was still above average which indicates high level of perception.

Table 7: Results of EFL Teachers' Responses about their (KA)

Q. No	Item.	SD %	DA%	UD%	AG%	SA%	Mean	Std. Dev.
36	I determine the aims of assessment practices.	2.9	2.9	14.3	48.6	31.4	4.03	.923
37	I'm well informed about the uses of a wide variety of assessments of reading skills.	-	8.6	25.7	42.9	22.9	3.80	.901
38	I choose the methods of assessment which is appropriate for my students.	-	14.3	11.4	51.4	22.9	3.83	.954
40	I give appropriate feedback according to the results of the measurement process.	2.9	2.9	29.6	42.9	22.9	3.80	.933
40	I assess students' ability to generate and answer questions.	-	8.6	11.4	42.9	37.1	4.09	.919
41	I assess students' understanding/comprehension of the reading text.	8.6	5.7	14.3	34.3	37.1	3.86	1.240
42	I assess students' critical thinking skills by giving tests.	5.7	5.7	20.0	45.7	22.9	3.74	1.067

Table 7 showed that 51.4% of the respondents agreed that they were motivated to choose appropriate methods of assessment for checking their students' performance. The mean score of this construct was (M=3.83). The highest mean score (4.09) was obtained for teachers' knowledge of the assessment and evaluation of students' skill of generating and answering questions; for this item 42.9% of the EFL teachers that gave response to this question showed agreement on it.

Similarly, the mean score value of (M=4.03) was registered for the teachers' determination about aims of assessment practices; this value also showed the existence of high level of understanding of assessment practices among teachers. The mean score of (M=3.80) was obtained for both feedback provision and the use of various types of assessment modalities. To put it in a nut shell, the participating teachers seemed to have an adequate perception level of assessment of their students' reading skills performances.

4.2 PCK Practice by EFL Teachers in Teaching Reading Skills
The third research question sought answers on how English teachers implemented their PCK while teaching reading skills at the secondary schools in Hawassa City Administration, Sidama National Regional state, Ethiopia. Table 8 shows result obtained from classroom observation checklist.

Table 8: Result of Classroom Observation (CRO) Checklist:EFL Teachers' Behaviours

		Instruction	Explaining	Strategy	Modelling	Feedback	Questioning	Pre-reading	While-Reading	Post-Reading	Grand mean Score
N Valid		8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	
Mean		1.25	1.00	1.13	1.63	1.38	1.38	1.00	1.00	.88	1.18
Std. Deviation		.463	.535	.354	.744	.744	.518	.756	.535	.354	
Type of use & Frequency	Exemplary Use	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	
	Some Use	2	1	1	3	4	3	2	1	-	
	Attempted Use	6	6	7	4	3	5	4	6	7	
	Not Evident	-	1	-	-	1	-	2	1	1	

Four distinct categories (scales) were used in the classroom observation sessions of teachers' PCK implementation: Exemplary Use, Some use, Attempted Use and Not evident. As shown in Table 8, for the classroom teachers' performance in the teaching of reading skills, the minimum mean score (M=0.88) was obtained for the teachers' efforts in teaching post-reading phases, and the highest mean score (M=1.63) was recorded for the teachers' behaviour of modelling. On the whole, it can be said that the classroom teachers' practices of PCK in teaching reading skills were far below the average value on the scale. Table 8 indicates that the grand mean score of the constructs included in the classroom observation was 1.18. This was not satisfactory with regard to the criteria outlined for observation.

A recent study conducted in Ethiopia explored EFL teachers' PCK, beliefs and practices on basic writing skills at Wollo University (Birhan, 2020). In that study, the researcher employed a case study design and involved three teachers who offered the course on basic writing skills. The researcher used classroom observation and semi-structured interviews to gather the required data. The findings revealed that EFL basic writing skills instructors' PCK which they claimed they had lacked consistency and did not correspond with their classroom practices. The researcher in the current study also arrived at a similar result in the

context of teaching reading skills where EFL teachers displayed weak PCK implementation.

4.3. Relationship Between Secondary School EFL Teachers' Perception of PCK and Their Actual Classroom Practices of PCK in Teaching Reading Skills

The researchers evaluated the relationship that existed between the two constructs – EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of PCK. This is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: The Relationship between Results of EFL Teachers' Perception and Practice of PCK

		Perception of PCK	Practice of PCK
Perception of PCK	Pearson Correlation	1	0.666
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.071
	N	35	8
Practice of PCK	Pearson Correlation	0.666	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.071	
	N	8	8

It is evident from Table 9 that there was some degree of relationship of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r = 0.67) between teachers' perceptions or understanding about their own level of PCK in the teaching of reading skills and their classroom practices of PCK. This showed that there was moderately high positive relationship between teachers' perception and practice of PCK. It was also noted that the level of strength between the two variables, was p = 0.071, which was a slightly higher than 0.05 indicating to some extent a weaker association between them. However, in this particular situation where the variables were teachers' perception and practice of PCK in the context of teaching reading skills the Sig (2-tailed), the p-value was 0.071. This Sig Value indicates that the results from teachers' response of their perception is to some extent in line with what they do practically in their classrooms though it does not exactly match.

Brunsberg (2013) conducted a study in North Dakota about the level of teacher's CK, PCK, instructional practices and demographics and their effects on learners' literacy achievement. As it was a correlational study, its concern was to observe the relative relationship of teachers' PCK and CK with other variables. The finding showed the significance of a teacher's content knowledge, PCK, instructional methods and demographic background for students' literacy achievement at lower grades. In this instance, teachers' level of PCK along with aforementioned variables was found to affect students' reading achievement positively. Findings on teachers' demographics revealed that those teachers with extra qualifications in teaching reading showed better enactment of PCK than those who did not receive additional qualifications. Those teachers with more education also displayed a better understanding of PCK. In results on teachers' PCK in literacy achievement, Brunsberg (2013) did not see PCK from the point of view of its constituent elements and it was simply considered as an independent factor which was devoid of content knowledge within itself. So far, the researcher of this study has not come across a study conducted on secondary school EFL teachers' PCK in Ethiopia.

The researchers found a recent article published on PCK of English teachers' on reading comprehension during the COVID-19 pandemic with online classes in senior high school (Kusuma, 2021). The purpose of this research was to gain insight into the PCK of prospective teachers of English courses and data was collected using various tools. The findings indicated that PCK of English teachers on reading comprehension was below the expected level and needed improvement and adjustment to get better results from student. This result is congruent with what was found in the present study.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was investigating secondary school English teachers' perceptions and practices of PCK in the teaching of reading skills. The findings from the study revealed that these teachers had a moderately above-average level of PCK perception, which in fact was not congruent with their actual classroom practices of PCK implementation. This suggests that EFL teachers need to improve the implementation of PCK in their classrooms. It was noteworthy that in this particular study the competing components of EFL teachers' perceptions of PCK were viewed from the vantage point of the following: SMK, KIOCC, KIRS, KSU, KP and finally KA. Further study should be conducted to determine the relationships that exist between the PCK components treated in this study.

Improving instructional quality is becoming more important in education. This can be realised if EFL teachers had a understanding of the implementation of PCK in the realm of foreign or second language classrooms. Enhancing the perception of EFL teachers' PCK in the realm of teaching reading skills requires dedicated efforts from concerned individuals. Crucially, for the advancement of PCK in the classroom, teachers must exert additional efforts independently to address the challenges prevalent in twenty-first century classroom.

The researchers recommend that the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia should organise continuous professional development (CPD) programmes for EFL teachers by concerned professionals. This training could address the missing link between teachers' PCK and their PCK enactment in the classroom. It is, therefore, assumed that teachers' deficiencies in the PCK of teaching reading skills would be alleviated to ensure effective learning outcomes from students.

The researchers noted that there is shortage of relevant studies that could bridge the gap in this regard. To this end, the researchers propose conducting additional studies with a larger and more diverse sample size, using various approaches to enhance the clarity of the implementation of PCK. In a broader context, the researchers posit that this study holds pedagogical implications, potentially highlighting specific areas where EFL teachers may exhibit weaknesses in their perception and practice of PCK in teaching reading skills. Moreover, the study might offer solutions to foster improvements among secondary school English teachers in teaching reading skills.

Declaration of Conflict
The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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