Early-Grades' Vocabulary Instruction and Nation's (2013) Word Learning Framework: the Theory's Realities and Instructional Contents in the Grade One Amharic Textbooks[1]

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the vocabulary knowledge components[4] delivered in grade one Amharic textbooks in light of Nation's (2013) word knowledge framework. It targeted to address two main objectives: firstly, to reveal the Nation's (2013) word knowledge components existing in the grade one Amharic vocabulary instruction with reference to the student book and the teacher's guide. Secondly, it aims to examine the framework's theoretical suggestions in terms of the vocabulary contents appeared in the selected instructional materials. The study employed a qualitative document analysis method. Data was collected using a checklist adapted from Nation's (2013) word awareness components' framework. The results reveal that (a) the textbook consists of more vocabulary knowledge components' activities than the teacher's guide; (b) *meaning* is given more coverage, followed by *form*, where the component of *use* is found to be the least attention. The most impressive finding is that some sub-components of Nation's framework, such as word part (under the component of *form*), and grammatical function (under the component of *use*) do not appear as parts of the contents of the selected instructional materials. On the other hand, *word formation* is found to bean aspect delivered in the materials, which is not a part of Nation's word knowledge framework. Therefore, this study substantiates that vocabulary instruction contents in early grades might go beyond the theoretical suggestions of the Nation's (2013) word learning framework, and the framework might not be fully addressing issues related to the early grades' vocabulary instruction, so it might need to include more elements to be a word learning framework for all grade levels.

Keywords: vocabulary, instruction, Nation's (2013) framework, Amharic, early-grades, components

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[1] Used to refer to both the student's book and the teacher's guide, as they are essential elements of the instruction in delivering the contents.

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[4] A word used interchangeably throughout the paper, with the word *aspect,* both to refer to word knowledge elements, and or sub-elements.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is one of the five core components of early grade reading instruction, identified by the NRP (2000), others being phonological awareness, phonics, fluency and comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge; broadly, relates to the knowledge of a word's meaning and the context in which it can be used (McShane, 2005). It seems that it is taken for granted that vocabulary knowledge associates mostly to knowing the 'meaning' of the word. However, in addition to the knowledge of word 'meaning', vocabulary awareness has multiple components/aspects such as the knowledge of 'forms' and 'uses' (Gonza´ Lez-Ferna´ndez & Schmitt, 2020; Nation, 2013). The *meaning* of a word relates to what it denotes conceptually, *form* relates to its phonological and phonic representations including things as spelling, singular/plural forms, its pronunciations, etc. Next, the *use* refers to where and when the word is (can be) functional.

Vocabulary/word knowledge is naturally related with comprehension that children with good word knowledge can better understand a text. As a result, vocabulary knowledge plays vital roles in developing child reading skills (Biemiller, 2003). As an important element of instructional contents, vocabulary can be learned naturally from oral or spoken language before children start formal schooling. Later on, after they start formal schooling, they are supposed to learn words through exposure to these various word knowledge components so that they could have a full-fledged conceptualization. Before they join formal schooling, child learners are naturally exposed to oral/spoken vocabulary in their home environment, which could help them to develop some basic vocabulary.

The development of vocabulary/word knowledge is an important component of reading instruction in the early grades (NRP, 2000). This is because that learners use words in learning to read even to learn the lower language components such as sounds and symbols/fidäls, through the top-down learning process. Learners start word learning primarily orally and later from print. According to (McShane, 2005), oral vocabulary is the primary resource which learners can have before they are able to recognize symbols in print. Then, when they start learning to read, learners start to connect words in print with their accumulated oral vocabulary basically through decoding. This oral vocabulary is the base for meaningful vocabulary learning and reading. And, vocabulary knowledge is a crucial element for text comprehension (Biemiller, 2003; NRP, 2000; Sedita, 2005). This is because, a text is a coherent composition of related individual vocabularies/words, so to understand the concept of the

text and the recognition of the individual words, the different components of them, their contextual application, etc. becomes important. This demonstrates that the vocabulary knowledge could impact comprehension skills in either way; however, vocabulary knowledge by itself cannot be a determinant factor for improved passage comprehension skills. This is because, the nature of vocabulary knowledge is unlimited and unconstrained that stays open for advancement, so just learning a set of words does not provide a full utility for comprehension (Cantrell et al., 2013; Wright & Neuman, 2013).

In relation with this, vocabulary can impact comprehension in either way. Early grade reading achievement has been a center of attention in the field of child literacy as child learners throughout the world were found to have scored below the expected competencies in different components including vocabulary (NRP, 2000; Connor et al., 2004; Piper, 2010a; Piper, Jepkemei, & Kibukho, 2015). In Ethiopia, early grade reading achievement was assessed consecutively by the Ministry of Education and its partner organizations across years and with different language learners. These achievement assessments were entitled as (EGRA, 2010), (EGRA, 2014), (EGRA, 2016) and (EGRA, 2018). These assessments were made in each individual reading component across the mother tongue languages such as Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Somali, Sidama, Wolata, Hadiyissa, etc. used as a medium of instruction. The results of these assessments revealed that learners have scored below the minimum competency levels in all the mother tongue languages and early grade reading components. Based on this fact, dozens of child learners across the different languages were found to be unable to meet the minimum requirements of word knowledge.

As essential components of the instructional process delivering learning inputs, textbooks have been a center of attention in the area of educational research. Harwood (2013) discussed that textbooks can be studied from three major dimensions: *production*, *consumption*, and *content*. Thus, it has been found worth doing to examine content at this early grade level, based on research-proven theoretical perspectives. As a result, this study intends to examine the Amharic vocabulary instruction contents delivered in grade one textbooks (student book and teacher's guide) in light of Nation's (2013) framework of word learning. Therefore, it tries to substantiate which word knowledge components suggested by Nation's (2013), are delivered in the Amharic vocabulary instruction in grade one, and to demonstrate the extent to which the instructional contents are bound to word knowledge aspects suggested by the theory.

2. Theoretical Framework

Nation's (2013) word learning framework[5]: the components' approach to Vocabulary instruction

Vocabulary can be taught through different instructional techniques. The (NRP, 2000) suggests that like other components, there is no any single 'best' method of teaching vocabulary. It reiterates that vocabulary can be taught directly or indirectly, but the instruction needs to provide multiple exposure of the words to the children. However, in abundance of literature in the area, explicit instruction is more suggested for the early grade contents. In the process of teaching word contents, instructions might employ various strategies as methods of teaching them. Among these strategies comes the use of word components. And, the learning contents may include the 'productive' and 'receptive' activities that can engage the learners, as mentioned by Nation (2013). Nation's (2013) word learning framework is the most comprehensive and highly used components'- based vocabulary instruction material, (Gonza′ Lez-Ferna′ndez & Schmitt, 2020). Children learn new words with repeated encounters such as seeing, hearing, using and working with the words themselves and their different components. As an important component skill, studies on vocabulary instruction suggest that children need to be exposed to variety of vocabulary contents and instructional strategies in their early grade instruction to help them enrich their word knowledge (Coyne et al., 2007; Coyne et al., 2009; Goldstein et al., 2017; NRP, 2000; Sedita, 2005). Regarding vocabulary teaching methods, Nation (2013) also suggests that some vocabulary knowledge components (the aspects of meaning-form and meaning, concept and referents, associations) and constraints on use, require to be taught explicitly whereas others (spoken form, written form, word parts, grammatical functions and collocations) could be taught implicitly.

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[5] One of my anonymous reviewers questioned how we could use Nation's (2013) word learning framework, which is designed for L2 instruction whereas my research investigates a mother tongue instruction. It is true that Nation's framework basically was designed to suggest word learning components for L2 instructions; however, we decided to use the framework in this study for two major reasons; firstly, the textbooks selected here are adapted for Amharic learners in the former Southern Nations' Nationalities and People's Region, after prepared for mother tongue instruction. Most of these learners are presumably non-Amharic mother tongue speakers who have a different home language as their L1, which makes them L2 learners. There are also evidences showing that Nation's framework could also be applied beyond L2 instructions, including foreign language instructions. Therefore, the framework could also be applied for assessing L1 materials, as the case here. Next, we know from literature that L2 theories are formulated based on the knowledge and features existing in L1. Therefore, as one of the aims of this research is to examine which vocabulary components & sub-components suggested by the framework, appear in the instructional materials, the study could also serve as a testimony for whether the framework is possibly fully applicable in instructions beyond L2.

Regardless of the abundance of vocabulary instruction literature, the comprehensive word learning framework suggested by Nation (2013) is a popular work used as a standard reference in the field of vocabulary teaching (Gonza´ Lez-Ferna´ndez & Schmitt, 2020; Higginbotham, 2015). As a result, Nation (2013, p. 49) exhaustively demonstrates the word learning framework consisting of the different components of word knowledge, which need to be involved in 'knowing a word'. According to this source, vocabulary awareness is associated to three major categories each having three sub-components as knowledge contents/aspects of learning and each again having two forms of knowledge-productive and receptive knowledge. These major components are '**form'** with the sub-components of *spoken*, *written*, *word parts*, '**meaning'** with sub-components of *form and meaning*, *concept and referents*, *associations* and '**use'** with the sub-components of *grammatical functions*, *collocations* and *constraints on use* Nation (2013, p. 49).

When we come to each word knowledge component, 'form' basically refers to the mode of presentation and representation of the word learning contents to the learners. It is concerned with the idea that the words might be delivered orally (spoken) or in print (written), or divided into their making component parts. The component of 'meaning' is associated with the understanding of the referring concepts, objects, forms, and the associated words to the target words. In this case, students are exposed to the understanding of the nature of the words targeted. In the word knowledge component of 'use', the learners are supposed to be taught with practical function of the words in target. The component of 'use' intends to inform the learners about the contextual and practical use and grammatical functions of the target words and the words that appear with them (collocations). Accordingly, learners are supposed to be delivered with the approach of these basic components of 'knowing' a word across the words taught to them. Nation (2013) comprehensively deals with these detailed components of knowing a word. In addition, this work delivers the sub-components of knowing a word to the learners in two basic types of knowledge: *receptive* (in which learners receive and internalize concepts) and *productive* (in which learners are supposed to out-take/ externalize their understanding to produce concepts). As a part of the theoretical discussion here, Nation's (2013) word knowledge framework is presented in the following table.

The grade one Amharic Vocabulary Instruction Contents

Table 1: Nation (2013: 49) framework of word awareness components			
Vocabulary Awareness Components	Form	Spoken	[R] What does the word sound like? [P] How is the word pronounced?
		Written	[R] What does the word look like? [P] How is the word written and spelled?
		Word parts	[R] What parts are recognisable in this word? [P] What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
	Meaning	Form and Meaning	[R] What meaning does this word form signal? [P] What word form can be used to express this meaning?
		Concept and referents	[R] What is included in the concept? [P] What items can the concept refer to?
		Associations	[R] What other words does this make us think of? [P] What other words could we use instead of this one?
	Use	Grammatical functions	[R] In what patterns does the word occur? [P] In what patterns must we use this word?
		Collocations	[R] What words or types of words occur with this one? [P] What words or types of words must we use with this one?
		Constraints on use	[R] Where, when and how often would we expect to meet this word? [P] Where, when, and how often can we use this word?

Key-R-Receptive   P-Productive

This work of Nation (2013) is a foundational word learning framework which is supposed to be applicable in vocabulary instructions at different levels. The grade levels might be differentiated based on the chosen words' complexity, function, frequency, etc. It is; however, not comprehensively studied for a use for classroom instruction.

However there is plenty of literature on textbook studies (content, impact, production & layout, etc.), a highly related work here is (Neary-Sundquist, 2015) which examines which of Nation's word knowledge aspects are addressed in the activities of the beginning-level textbooks of German as a foreign language. The results reveal activities in the selected the lower-level German textbooks focus overwhelmingly on form–meaning connections and grammatical functions while other aspects, such as collocations, word parts, and concept and referents are disregarded. Based on the findings, the study suggests a more comprehensive pedagogical approach which involves all the aspects of word knowledge.

Another related work is (Brown, 2011) which examines vocabulary activities in nine General English textbooks at three proficiency levels (beginner, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels) in light of the nine word knowledge aspects mentioned above. The results show that form and meaning has received the most attention in the textbooks at all three levels, by far. In

addition the study reveals that while grammatical functions and spoken form – also receive attention, the other six aspects receive little or no attention. Finally, this study suggests that materials writers need to adopt a more rounded view of vocabulary knowledge.

Similarly, the current study focuses on analyzing the grade one Amharic textbooks in terms of the vocabulary knowledge aspects suggested by Nation (2013), and demonstrating implications of the findings towards the framework. It is hoped it fills the gap that Amharic instruction was not studied with approach so far. Similarly, the study contributes to the vocabulary literature in addressing the issue from both theoretical and instructional approaches.

Having stated all these facts about vocabulary instruction, its features, relevance and Nation's (2013) word knowledge components' framework, the study aims to answer the following two basic questions:

1. Which of Nation's (2013) vocabulary awareness aspects are delivered in the grade one Amharic textbooks?
2. Do the textbooks' contents exist within the framework per se?

3. Methods

Data Sources

The data sources used for the study are the grade one Amharic textbook and the Teacher's guide, adapted to be used for the former Southern Nation's Nationalities and Peoples' region Amharic as a mother tongue learners. The textbook is made up of 144 pages. It consists of the raw activities divided under 30 weeks delivered to the child learners in different modes. It begins with pictorial presentations and proceeds with fidäls, words, short sentences and brief passages around the end. On the other hand, the Teacher's guide is made up of 261 pages. In addition to the lesson contents delivered in the textbook, this document consists of teaching strategies, specific timed activities for every day and week, expected competencies, etc. in detail in all early grade reading components.

Data Collection Tools

The study employed a qualitative research approach. It uses document analysis as its data gathering tool, and extracted the data from the two targeted documents. The data was gathered from the documents through counting of the vocabulary teaching-learning activities in light of Nation's (2013) word

knowledge components' framework. Therefore, this framework was adapted and used to approach the data in the documents.

Table 2: Document analysis Tool adapted from Nation's (2013) word learning framework

No	Vocabulary Awareness Components	Sub-Components	Student book	Teacher's guide	Total
1.	**Form**	Spoken			
		Written			
		Word part			
	Total no. of form-based activities				
2.	**Meaning**	Form & meaning			
		Concept & referent			
		Associations			
	Total no. of meaning-based activities				
3.	**Use**	Grammatical Function			
		Collocations			
		Constraints on use			
	Total no. of Use-based Activities				
	Total Vocabulary Awareness component activities in each material				

Data Processing Procedure

To collect the data, activities delivered in the student book and the teacher's guide, were coded under each-vocabulary awareness component and sub-component by using NVivo 10. Nodes and sub-nodes were created as codes on the software by using the components & sub-components of vocabulary awareness. Firstly, major nodes (parent nodes) were formulated by using the three major components which are *form, meaning* and *use.* Then, the sub-components were created as sub-nodes (child nodes) under each major node. Then, under each sub-node (child node), the source documents (the Textbook and the Teacher's guide) were created as grand-child nodes for the sub-nodes (child nodes). Then, each vocabulary knowledge component was categorized under the fitting nodes. For example, one of the major word awareness components is 'form' which has the sub-components of *spoken*, *written* and *word parts.* In this case, firstly, the activities that belong to each sub-component (*spoken, written and word parts*, in this case) were coded separately for each document; then, the numbers were used as the total numbers of activities delivered under each major component/parent node (*form* in this case). Throughout the coding process, activities consisting of

contents belonging to different vocabulary components and sub-components were found; in this case, they were counted independently (based on the lesson objectives) for each component as far as they deliver the different word knowledge aspects.

Data Analysis Techniques

After coded in the way mentioned above, data in each sub-component were copied together on a page under the title of the major component (parent node) to observe their common features. Then, the summary of the counted data were collected and presented in a table. Afterwards, the analysis was written accordingly. During the data analysis, textual data are presented as evidences of argument only where necessary.

4. Findings

This section presents the summary of the findings on vocabulary knowledge components' delivery in the selected materials. Research on vocabulary instruction suggests that learners need to master various aspects of vocabulary knowledge to own a real awareness of the words (Brown, 2011). This mastery of word awareness might be facilitated through a multi-component vocabulary instruction to help children improve their word awareness. This suggests that word knowledge goes beyond the knowledge of their definition (meaning); as mentioned above; rather, it includes the knowledge of meaning, functional context, sound/pronunciation, spelling, forms, etc. (Nation, 2013; Sedita, 2005). The grade one Amharic textbooks (Student book & Teacher's guide) are analyzed with this domain of Nation's (2013) comprehensive word knowledge components' framework, and the findings are presented in the table below.

Table 3: The summary of the Analysis findings

The grade one Amharic Vocabulary Instruction Contents

No	Vocabulary Awareness Components	Sub-Components		Student book	Teacher's guide	Total	
1.	**Form**	Spoken		122	75	197	
		Written		36	31	67	
		Word part		0	0	0	
		Word formation	Morpheme-based word formation	5	2	7	26
			Fidel-based word formation	10	9	19	
	Total no. of form-based activities			**173**	**117**		**290**
2.	**Meaning**	Form & meaning		88	0	88	
		Concept& referent		124	57	181	
		Associations		13	20	33	
	Total no. of meaning-based activities			**225**	**77**	**302**	
3.	**Use**	Grammatical Function		0	0	0	
		Collocations		3	2	5	
		Constraints on use		11	17	28	
	Total no. of Use-based Activities			**14**	**19**	**33**	
	Total Vocabulary Awareness component activities in the materials			**412**	**213**	**625**	

Description of the Findings

The findings reveal that the student book presents more activities than the teacher's guide, in total and in most of the individual components. It consists of 412 vocabulary-based activities out of the total 625, whereas the teacher's guide presents only 213. Coming to the individual components, the *meaning*[6]-based vocabulary activities have received more coverage followed by *form*, individually in each material and in unison. The *use*-based activities are found to be the least incorporated activities. When we come to the findings in each individual material, in all aspects of *form* and in most cases of *meaning* and *use* (with the exception of *associations* in *meaning* and *constrains on use* in *form)*, the number of activities are greater in the student book than the teacher's guide. However, in the two sub-components mentioned above, the teacher's guide uniquely presents more number of activities than the student book (not with a significant number of differences, though).

On the other hand, *word part* in *form* and *grammatical function* under the aspect of *use*, are found to be non-existent in both materials. When the content

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[6] All the components and the sub-components of word learning are presented in italics throughout the text.

activities were approached in light of the framework's sub-components, no data were found to fit to lie under these sub-components. In relation to this, while it appears with a significant number of activities in the student book (88 activities), *form and meaning* under the component of *meaning* is found to be non-existent in the teacher's guide.

The most significant finding in this analysis is that the materials consist of an activity on word learning that does not fit to any of Nation's (2013) framework suggestions. This activity mainly centers on forming new words in different ways; therefore, the component is coined as *word formation*. This aspect of word learning is situated under the major component of *form*, so it has become a fourth sub-component there, after *word part*. Activities on the sub-component of *word formation* appear in both materials.

Both of these discoveries (the disappearance of some aspects of Nation's framework and the appearance of the extra word learning aspect) seem to be related to the nature of the early grade reading instruction. The details of the activities are presented below, under each major component, with the order of data presentation as the total number of activities, the student book and the teacher's guide.

Meaning

Meaning is one of the three basic components of vocabulary knowledge suggested by Nation (2013). Like the other components, it consists of three different sub-components. These include; *form and meaning, concept and referents* and *associations*. In the sub-component of *form and meaning,* Nation (2013) articulates that learners are supposed to be taught what meaning is signaled with the word's forms and what word form is used to showcase the meaning of the word. Next comes the sub-component of *concept and referents* which is related to the idea represented in the word and the items (objects) used to refer to these ideas, according to Nation (2013). Finally comes *associations,* a meaning formed because of the meaning of other related words with the target word. Precisely, Nation discusses that a meaning of a word can be learnt through the three sub-components mentioned above

Coming to the selected materials, the component of *meaning* is the largely covered vocabulary content, with 302 total activities; 225 in the textbook and 77 in the teacher's guide. From the sub-components here, most of the vocabulary teaching-learning activities are delivered through the sub-component of *concept and referents* (with 181 total, 124 & 57) followed by

form and meaning (with a total of 88 activities appearing only in the textbook), finally followed by *associations* (with a total of 33, 13 & 20).

With the case of *concepts & referents* (181 total, 124 & 57)*,* teachers are mostly required to use real references to teach word concepts. These activities require learners' practical involvement in a certain way. For example, color names were taught through a practical identification of each. Teachers are requested to show real and familiar objects to the learners to help them name each. These words are mostly words that are already familiar to the learners, including stationery materials, utensils, clothes, etc.

Teaching words through objects in visualization/picturing is a feature of the sub-component of *form and meaning*. In this case, the pictured mode of word presentation to the child learners, associates meaning and form through the visual & pictorial representation of the words. Therefore, pictures are used as forms of meaning demonstration through visually portrayed object pictures. What is more, the pictured objects delivered colorfully in the textbook aimed the child learners' exposure; there are a significant number of words presented in the form of pictures only in the textbook (88 in total). The colorful pictures make the learning contents more engaging to the child learners as they are more appealing to the children's needs. This seems to address children's learning needs in visual elements such as colors and pictures as research reveals (Bulat et al., 2017; Robledo & Gove, 2018).

The use of *associations* is the next component delivered in the materials. Here also, words that are familiar/common to the learners are used as association making agents with other related words delivered as contents. The data for *associations* reveals that the number of activities is lower than other sub-components of *meaning* and that more are in the teacher's guide (33, 13 & 20). This may be because learning through the relationship of words could be somewhat advanced for the grade level, and that teachers are delivered more examples to run the lesson than exposing learners with this activity.

Form

Form is one of the word knowledge components suggested by Nation's (2013) word knowledge framework. Form as mentioned above is a component that relates to mode of exposing the words to be taught to the learners. Accordingly, it consists of *written*, *spoken* and *word parts,* as stated by Nation. The *spoken* form is related with phonological issues related to a word. It is the knowledge of pronouncing and articulating the word under target. The *spoken*

form of a word could be realized from oral communications or by reading from print. *Written* form is related with the knowledge of the word's representation in print; this includes how the word is spelt and represented in alphabets. Next, *word part* is mainly related to morphological aspects of a word including the use of prefixes and suffixes.

In the selected instructional materials, *form* has been provided with a significant amount of coverage (290 total activities, 173 & 117) preceded by *meaning*. From the sub-components of it, the *spoken* sub-component of *form* is dominantly used to present activities (197, 122 & 75). It is mainly delivered in a form of oral practicing where the learners are delivered with a significant amount of activities. This seems for the learners are early graders that oral skills are more practical for them than the print ones. The activities are presented mainly in two forms; one is in a form of instruction to the teachers to make learners pronounce words of a certain area (such as naming numerals, family members, etc.). The other is through naming objects delivered to them in pictures. The activities for practicing the *spoken* form are suggested through these all activities.

Next, comes the *written* form; this sub-component is also used to present some activities throughout the materials; however, limited amount when compared to the *spoken* contents (67 in total, 36 & 31). These activities deliver the words written on the materials and require learners to read them and practice word recognition. Most of these activities are presented concurrently with their pictures. On the other hand, *word part* is a sub-component of form in which no activity is delivered in the materials. The materials do not consist of words that are broken into their component parts; the words used there are mostly free morphemes that are practically associated with the day to day lives of the learners, such as food items (milk, yoghurt, water, egg, etc.), family members (mother, father, grandmother/father, etc.). However, there are a limited number of words with suffixes, the word forming morphemes are not recognized separately and independently, and words are not presented with their visible breakable units (morphemes) in the materials, to teach them independently of their meanings, roles, etc.

Finally, Nation's (2013) word learning framework which is used as a frame of analysis in this study, consists of three major components of word knowledge with three sub-components each, as mentioned earlier. Then, the data reveals that there is one more major component of word learning, which is *word formation.* Different activities in both materials are delivered for practicing

word formation; basically, it is used as a means of teaching the targeted fidäls. If, for example, the targeted fidäl of the day's lesson is /bä/, then words are formed and practiced by using fidäl /bä/ as an initial. The same strategy is used throughout the documents for the words presented both in written and pictured modes. However, these kind of activities are not treated as word formation activities as their primary objective is teaching the 'fidäl' under target, but not the word. Thus, though the children are provided with plenty of word forming practices in the documents, the counted word formation activities in this study are only those aiming to teach vocabulary and delivered under the vocabulary lesson objectives.

Accordingly, the analysis demonstrates different word formation activities throughout the documents; basically, at the later part of the documents. These activities are delivered through different modes which can be taken as sub-components of the word formation category. These modes can be categorized under two major topics.

The first category consists of activities that require learners to change given words to a new word class/category by using suffixes (morphemes). In this case, suffixes such as /-ʔinnət/-ism are used to form new word category from the given base word. Next comes the category of *word formation* through some established linkages between words, word parts and fidäls. These linkages include the use of association and collocations between the fidäls and their combinations. Therefore, finding out a certain relationship over words and fidäls, learners are supposed to create other words in light of the given ones. For example, in this case, some parts of a word may be given and a part of it is missing and/or given far out there in a form of diagrams; then, learners are supposed to form the words themselves by choosing the appropriate component part(s) there. In general, word formation has been found to be a component activity that does not fit to any of the components suggested by Nation (2013); as a result, it is treated as an independent sub-component of *form*.

In conclusion, a word can be taught of its *written* form which is about how it looks like in print and how it is spelt, its *spoken* form which is about ways of pronouncing and articulating it, what word parts does it have which is about how the word could be broken down into parts and what meaning does each part have, how it is formed, etc. However, not all these word learning elements and not only of them, have been found to be practicable in grade one according to the analysis.

Use

The last major component of word knowledge in Nation's (2013) word learning framework is *use*. Like the previously mentioned word awareness components, this component consists of three sub-components including *grammatical function, collocations* and *constraints on use*. Accordingly, *grammatical function* refers to teaching the patterns in which the word can occur when in use; this could include word class or the role a word can play in a sentence or other larger linguistic units. The next sub-component of word use is the use of *collocations*. Collocations are words that appear because of the occurrence of other related words to them. In other words, they are words that we can think of to appear when we hear or see a word. Again, like associations, collocations are taught based on the learners' earlier familiar words. The last sub-component of *use* is *constraint on use*. This basically relates to the knowledge of the contextual applications of the words in target. As discussed by Nation, it refers to the knowledge of when, how and how often the word could be used in the process of communication.

In the selected materials, the component of *use* is thinly delivered, compared to other components; *grammatical function*-based activities are non-existent, *collocations* are highly limited (5, 3&2), but activities on *constraint on use* are relatively better presented (28, 11 & 17). Some limited numbers of activities on words that collocate to each other are delivered in both materials. Collocation might be limited because the unlimited list of words that could collocate to each other may sound complicated for the child learners at this grade level. In the case of *constraints on use*, some common words are delivered to the children to show their functions. These words include words such as /mäzmur/-'song' to show that it is among the words used to be practiced every day during the flag raising ceremony. There are also function words delivered to the learners showing what for they are used in communication. These words include the verb /näw/-is, and the word /ʔɨnna/-and.

In general, the word knowledge components suggested by Nation (2013) are found to be delivered respectively in descending order of *meaning*, *form* and *use*. Therefore, *meaning* is presented with more coverage followed by *form* and then *use*, with more activities of *concept and referents* in meaning-based activities. In this sense, it seems that the framework is fitting for delivering the early grade vocabulary instruction contents as the learners are more attracted to meaning and form-based contents and might be less responsive to explanations such as the case in the component of *use*. In addition to the word learning components established by Nation, one more sub-component that

belongs to the component of *form* was discovered by the analysis; this sub component is *word formation*, as mentioned above. Moreover, the textbook consists of more of the activities in all the major components and in most of the sub-components except *associations* and *constraint on use*, which are presented with more numbers in the teacher's guide. This might be because these concepts need more access by the teachers firstly than the students.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the vocabulary awareness components delivered in the grade one Amharic textbooks in light of Nation's (2013) word learning framework through document analysis. The findings reveal that there are activities delivered through the different components of word learning as suggested by Nation (2013). This probably makes the findings conforming to Nation's word learning framework. And the counted data suggests that the activities are presented in descending order of *meaning*, *form* and *use* in both materials. Also, the student textbook consists of more vocabulary activities than the teacher's guide.

The two most interesting findings are that there are vocabulary knowledge components of the framework that are not delivered in the materials at all, and there is a sub-component delivered, which is not part of the framework. In relation to this, one sub-component in two major word learning components (in *form* and *use*), has been found to be non-existent. These components on which activities do not exist in the materials include *word part* in the component of *form,* and *grammatical function* in the component of *use*. When we look at the nature of these missing components, it seems that they have something in common which is to sound a bit more advanced for child learners at the selected grade level. On the other hand, the newly discovered component, which belongs to the component of *form,* is *word formation.* Word formation activities seem to relate with early-grades' instruction.

The current study reveals that *meaning* has received more attention in the materials followed by *form* and *use*, *word parts and grammatical function* having no coverage at all. The findings have conformities and disconformities with the previous related studies. It is different from Brown (2011) which has found out that *form* followed by *meaning* received the highest coverage. This study also reveals that *grammatical function* has received the highest coverage from the sub-components whereas the current study reveals that it does not receive any coverage in the selected materials. The current study is similar with this study; however, in that *use* is found to be the least addressed component.

The study also shares some features with the other related study-Neary-Sundquist (2015). This study discovers that the textbooks gave the most attention to *use* followed by *meaning* and *form*. In this case, the current study is different that *use* is found to be the least covered component. In addition, Neary-Sundquist (2015) states that word parts has received no coverage at all, which conforms with the current study.

The result differences mentioned above might be inspired by the grade levels. This is to mean that the grade levels might determine the vocabulary components covered in instructions.

In relation with this, the findings might imply that Nation's (2013) word learning framework might not be fully applicable to the early grade reading instructions. This is because that the missing components sound somewhat beyond the level of the early-graders, and the raw data in the materials are more associated to the natural needs of the child learners. For example, *word formation* which is the newly discovered sub-component in the data is again naturally related to early word learning practices.

To sum up, as some of the components it suggests are not feasible for the grade level and that some other feasible components are not included in it, Nation's (2013) word learning framework seems to be not inclusive of issues in word learning at the earlier stages. Therefore, this word learning framework might require a modification so that it can be practically inclusive and workable in the early grades, too.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The contents of the instructional materials are in line with one another. The textbook presents the main input in a colorful and pictorial manner where vocabulary is presented mostly in pictures too. The guide provides the ways of delivery and lesson objectives as mentioned earlier. This integrated presentation of contents enables learners to further and easily internalize the concepts. Different activities are delivered throughout via the vocabulary awareness components used as a frame of analysis here. Therefore, the selected materials emphasized the instruction of vocabulary to children consistent with the existing literature. The inclusion of these activities in different vocabulary learning components exposes learners for more practice and learning. This extended exposure is also significant in deciding later reading ability of children for vocabulary knowledge would affect comprehension and learning in either way. The activities in the vocabulary

awareness components such as *form*, *meaning* and *use* make the learners get more opportunity of practicing. This, then, helps them to develop their learning as a whole.

Based on the vocabulary activities' presentation, it is possible to say that the instructional materials took into account the view that teaching reading to children needs careful preparation of materials which include important elements of phonological, phonetic and vocabulary building elements (Taylor et al., 2011). Teaching reading to children requires ample inclusion of linguistic elements and practical drills such as the ones targeted to teach vocabulary here, which can help them internalize the items. Accordingly, the selected instructional materials endeavored to incorporate such important elements to develop child reading literacy which is crucial in the future academic life of the children, as mentioned above.

This study recommends that the material writers may need to consider incorporating activities in all the vocabulary knowledge components and sub-components. This might help learners (basically those at the lower grades) to be introduced with the different concepts of word learning down there.

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