

## **Regular and Supportive English classes: A Study of Relationship**

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**Abstract:** This study is made to find out the kind of relationship between regular and supportive English classes. Three research questions were raised: What sorts of relationship are there between regular and supportive English classes? What are the attitudes of English teachers and students toward supportive English classes? And how is supportive English class conducted? The study involved twenty-three English teachers and one hundred grade ten supportive English classes students selected from four secondary schools in North Shoa. Questionnaires, interview, and classroom observation were used to gather data. The questionnaires were administered for both English teachers and students. To consolidate the information obtained from the questionnaire, unstructured interview was conducted with four English teachers and classroom observation was used. The study showed that supportive English classes are somewhat related to the regular English classes in some aspects. For instance, it indicated that as supportive English classes enhance the regular class and help students improve their English ability, there is a positive relationship between them. The finding also showed that students do not get support from their peers in the supportive English classes. The study also showed that most of the sampled English teachers and students seemed to hold positive attitudes towards supportive English class program. Hence, the researcher recommends among others the need to understand the main goal of conducting supportive English classes by English teachers as well as students is essential.

**Key words:** Academic performance, Attitude, High achievers, Relationship, Secondary schools

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

In the Ethiopian education system, English language is taught as a subject starting from grade three, and it's used as a medium of instruction in the secondary and tertiary levels. As a result, our students in high schools as well as in institutions of higher learning have a very good reason for learning English. For instance, the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research, ICDR (1996: 6) [1] identifies the following as an additional factor for learning English in Ethiopia. Given the role of English as an international language and its growing use in certain important aspects of Ethiopian life, the students will need to achieve sufficient mastery of the language to enable them to communicate effectively in English socially and in the work place wherever the use of English is necessary. This implies that for students to be competent in the academic career, they need to be competent in the English language skills.

In spite of the fact that students are learning English in the regular class, they have still difficulties in using it for academic as well as communicative purposes. It is also commonly accepted that even students who are in higher institutions to have their own difficulties using English in speech as well as writing effectively. Hence, so as to help students improve their English language ability, schools arrange supportive English classes program. Regarding supportive teaching, Hussein (2002) [2] stated that after school arrangements are alternative means to provide extra help for students. Thus, students who cannot cope with other students in the regular class can be helped in the supportive English class which can be conducted by either regular class teacher or peer tutors.

Henson (1996), [3] Jenkins and Jenkins (1987), [4] and Gartner and Riessman (1994) [5] also remarked that one way of helping students is conducting a special opportunity for them out of the regular class for at least part of the day. Hence, it seems that English teachers give support for the students as the program may facilitate the regular class learning. Moreover, supportive English class has been practiced in secondary schools to help students become better English language learners. Those students who may need support seem to have their own different styles of learning which may not be appropriate to learn English in the regular class properly. That is to say, there are different factors which might make students unable to use English as they should. For instance, Brickbichler and Ommagio (1987), [6] and Mercer and Mercer (1989) [7] indicated that some students come to the language classroom with different interests and preferences, different first language skills, and

different learning styles. This shows that some students may adopt their own strategies which might be ineffective or inefficient, and as a result the students experience difficulties in learning English. For this reason, supportive English class can be taken as a possible means to tackle the problem.

In our situation, too, as learners have their own preferences and styles in learning English, supportive English class is conducted so as to help those students who are not effective in the regular class. However, this does not mean to say that students are not helped in the regular class. Moreover, supportive English class is conducted as it is believed to have a relationship with the regular class. Taking the aforementioned points into account, the need for closer investigation of supportive English classes in relation to the regular English class seems to be important. Besides, as English teachers are conducting supportive English class, it is essential to look into their understanding of supportive English class and see how it is implemented in the actual situation. Therefore, in this study an attempt was made to explore the relationship between regular and supportive English classes focuses on the practice in four secondary schools in North Shoa.

### ***1.2 Objective of the Study***

So as to conduct the study, the following general and specific objectives were designed. Each objective was discussed as follows:

#### ***1.2.1 General Objective***

The main objective of this study was to find out the relationship between regular and supportive English classes in four selected secondary schools in North Shoa. Thus, the study focused on investigating whether there is a relationship, for instance, in content, learning activities, teaching style etc., between tutorial and regular English classes.

#### ***1.2.2 Specific Objectives***

The study was intended to address the following specific research questions:

1. What sorts of relationships are there between regular and supportive English classes?
2. What are the attitudes of English language teachers and students towards supportive English classes?
3. How is supportive English class conducted?

### ***1.3 Significance of the Study***

As the main concern of the study was to explore the relationship between regular and supportive English classes, the results of the study may provide the following pedagogical contributions: Secondary School English language teachers and students may benefit from the result of the study since it can make them be aware of the reasons why supportive English classes are conducted. The study could also serve as an addition to the body of research conducted around the teaching of English and may initiate further researchers to make related studies. Besides, as sufficient studies of this kind have not been carried out in our context, it is hoped that the results of this study may shed some light on better ways of conducting supportive English classes so as to improve the teaching of English in secondary schools. Finally, the study could also be significant for students because of its direct relevance to the immediate and long run needs of them.

### ***1.4 Scope of the Study***

This study explored the relationship between regular and supportive English classes. It focused on the practice in four secondary schools in North Shoa. Moreover, the study was limited to one hundred randomly selected grade ten supportive English classes' students and twenty-three English teachers.

## **II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This part of the study presents the methods that were employed to achieve the research objectives. As it has been previously stated, the main purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between regular and supportive English classes. Hence, this part dealt with the subjects, instruments, and procedures of collecting data for the study.

### ***2.1 Subjects and Sampling***

The target population of this study was the English teachers and students from four secondary schools in North Shoa.

#### ***2.1.1 Selection of Schools***

1. There were twelve secondary schools in North Shoa. Of these schools, four secondary schools, namely Haile Mariam Mamo Comp. Secondary School, DebreSina Senior Secondary School, Shoarobit Senior Secondary School and Ataye Senior Secondary School were purposely selected. The rest were not included because they were far away and the writer of this study has not much acquaintance with most of the schools.

### **2.1.2 Selection of Teachers**

English teachers were participants of this study. As there were not many English teachers in the selected four schools, all English teachers took part in this research. That is to say, from each of the four secondary schools mentioned above, all English teachers in each school were directly involved in the study. Thus, twenty-three English teachers participated in filling out the questionnaire and four of them in answering the interview. They were asked for their willingness to answer the questionnaires and interview.

### **2.1.3 Selection of Students**

The actual number of students who were directly involved in the study were one-hundred. The students were selected from the secondary schools mentioned above using a simple random sampling method. All the students were selected from grade ten supportive English classes. Hence, out of 308 supportive English classes' students in the four schools, 100 students (32.4%) of the total students participated in the study. In other words, twenty-five students were involved from the supportive English classes of each school. So as to select the students from each school, their names were put in an alphabetical order. Then, the first twenty-five students were taken from each class in each school as samples of the study.

## **2.2 Data Collection Instruments**

The following research instruments were used to collect data for the study: Questionnaire, interview, and classroom observation.

### **2.2.1 Questionnaire**

Questionnaires were designed and administered to twenty-three English teachers and one hundred supportive English classes' students. The questionnaires were used to obtain the necessary information about the practice of supportive English classes and to find out the opinions and attitudes of English teachers and students towards the relationship between regular and supportive English classes. Two sets of questionnaires, one in English for teachers and the other one in Amharic for the students were used for data collection. The questionnaire for the students was conducted in Amharic so as to ensure better communication and maintain reliability.

#### **2.2.1.1 Design of the Questionnaires**

The items in the questionnaires were designed based on the ideas discussed in the review of related literature. The teachers' questionnaire consisted of twenty-three closed types and three open-ended items whereas the students' questionnaire comprised eighteen closed items and two open-ended questions. The closed-type items in the questionnaires were followed by a five-point response scale, with the alternatives labeled as 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'not sure', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.

#### **2.2.1.2 Administration of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaires were administered for 23 English teachers in the selected four schools. Except one teacher, the rest twenty-two teachers filled in the questionnaires and returned them. Later on, another questionnaire was administered for one hundred randomly selected supportive English classes' students. All the students' questionnaires were filled in and returned. The questions in the questionnaires were designed and administered after considering some comments gathered from colleagues. Besides, the tool was piloted on teachers and students at Wondirad Secondary School in Addis Ababa.

### **2.2.2 Interview**

Some unstructured interview questions were also designed and administered for English teachers to further consolidate the responses gained through the questionnaire and gather additional information that can validate the awareness of teachers about supportive English classes. The interview was held with four English teachers who were selected purposely. The questions were designed based on the questionnaire items and some insights obtained from the literature in the study. The interview was recorded with a tape recorder.

### **2.2.3 Classroom Observation**

The classroom observation was made just to see what was actually happening in the regular and supportive English classes. In other words, this instrument was used to confirm the kind of relationship that exists between regular and supportive English classes. Thus, the writer of this paper observed the regular and supportive English classes for four sessions (two periods for each) to further enrich the information obtained through the other instruments. In most cases, the supportive English classes are conducted in the opposite shift. Moreover, in most of the selected schools supportive English class is conducted for one hour two days a week.

**2.3 Method of Data Analysis**

The following procedures were used in analyzing the data gathered through the questionnaires, interview, and classroom observation. The teachers' and students' responses to each item in the questionnaires were tallied. Then, the tallies were counted and registered as frequency which showed the number of respondents. Finally, the percentage was computed on the basis of the responses of the respondents to each item. However, the percentage for the students' responses to each item was not computed as the number of students is one hundred. So, the figures are used to show the frequencies and percentages. Moreover, a qualitative analysis of the data was used for the open-ended items in the questionnaires.

Responses for the interview were recorded using a tape recorder. Hence, the interview was transcribed and discussed qualitatively using the common ideas. Finally, based on the checklist that was used for the classroom observation a sort of analysis and interpretation was given.

**III. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA**

**3.1 Introduction**

The main purpose of this research was to study the relationship between regular and supportive English classes. Hence, this part of the study presents the findings and discussions of data gathered through questionnaire, interview and classroom observation.

**3.2 Questionnaire Responses, Interpretation and Discussion**

The results from the data are discussed under the following three categories: the relationship between regular and supportive English classes, attitudes of English teachers towards supportive English classes and the way supportive English class is conducted. Hence, the tables that follow show the frequencies, and percentages of the teachers' responses to each item under each category.

**Table 1: The relationship between regular and supportive English classes**

Seven items were included under this category to the questionnaire. The items were meant to get the teachers' reactions to the kind of link that may exist between supportive and regular classes.

Item No	Response										Total	
	Strongly agree		Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree			
	5	4	3	2	1							
1	8	36.37	14	63.63	63.63	...	...	...	...	...	22	100
2	9	40.91	11	50.00	1	4.54	1	4.55	...	...	22	100
3	17	77.28	3	13.64	...	...	1	4.54	...	...	22	100
4	18	81.82	3	13.64	...	...	1	4.54	...	...	22	100
5	15	68.19	6	27.27	...	...	1	4.54	...	...	22	100
6	11	50.00	8	36.37	3	13.63	...	...	...	...	22	100
7	10	45.46	7	31.82	3	13.63	2	9.09	...	...	22	100

**Findings And Discussion**

Teachers were asked whether supportive English class students show improvements in positive attitudes about themselves and may be motivated to work harder more than before. Almost all of the respondents showed their strong agreement. Similarly, the majority of teachers agreed that supportive English classes lead to better learning and result. Thus, it seems that supportive English class is closely related to the regular class by enhancing students' motivation to learn English in the regular class. This might be the result of teachers' method of instruction in the supportive class which is appropriate to the students.

Regarding whether the learning activities selected for supportive class relate to the textbook used in the regular class, 90.91% of the respondents agreed. This also possibly shows that the activities, especially, writing and grammar tasks in both classes are somewhat related. However, this might not be to say that the same activities will be required in the supportive and regular English classes.

Teachers were also asked the sort of improvements students could get as a result of participating in supportive English classes. Concerning this, almost all of the subjects (95.46%) strongly agreed that regular class students may show improvements in their academic performance; most of the respondents (86.37%) agreed that students may show improvements in their learning styles, and 77.28% showed their agreement for item 7. From these responses, it is likely to infer that supportive English class may have positive impacts on students if teachers clearly understand why and how supportive English class is conducted. In short, based on the teachers' responses, it seems that there is a strong relationship between regular and supportive English classes.

**Table 2: Attitudes of teachers towards supportive English classes**

It is assumed that supportive class may benefit students a lot. Hence, so as to make this program as effective as possible, finding out teachers' attitudes is important. Under this category, twelve items are included to obtain what teachers feel towards supportive English classes.

Item No	Response										Total	
	Strongly agree		Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree			
	5	4	3	2	1							
8	13	59.09	7	31.82	2	9.09	...	...	...	...	22	100
9	7	31.82	8	36.37	7	31.81	...	...	...	...	22	100
10	1	4.54	2	9.09	6	27.28	9	40.91	4	18.18	22	100
11	10	45.45	8	36.37	3	13.64	1	4.54	...	...	22	100
12	13	50.09	5	22.72	4	18.19	...	...	...	...	22	100
13	3	13.64	6	27.28	7	31.81	5	22.73	1	4.54	22	100
14	6	27.28	8	36.37	4	18.18	3	13.63	1	4.54	22	100
15	7	31.82	9	40.91	3	13.64	2	9.09	1	4.54	22	100
16	...	...	3	13.64	3	13.64	9	40.91	7	31.81	22	100
17	7	31.82	10	45.46	3	13.64	1	4.54	1	4.54	22	100
18	5	22.73	4	18.18	7	31.82	5	22.73	1	4.54	22	100
19	5	22.73	7	31.82	6	27.28	3	13.63	1	4.54	22	100

Teachers were asked to show their attitudes towards the responsibility of English teachers to participate in supportive English classes. 90.91% of the respondents showed their agreement. Likewise, the majority of the respondents (81.81%) agreed with the idea that English teachers as well as school administrators should support the tutorial English program (item 11). This may indicate that teachers have positive attitudes to participate in the supportive English program. Moreover, teachers were asked whether supportive English class benefits teachers and students or is boring for teachers. Most of the respondents (68.19%) favored the benefits of supportive English classes and at the same time 59.08% of them revealed that supportive English class is not boring for them (items 9 and 10). Hence, one can infer that English teachers admit the advantages of supportive English classes. Moreover, it might mean that helping students is not something boring for teachers.

The majority of the respondents (81.81%) agreed that students need supportive English classes to improve their English ability. On the other hand, in item 13, 40.92% of them agreed that students do not want to participate in supportive English class and a significant number of the subjects (31.82%) were not sure. It seems that teachers believe in the fact that supportive class helps students improve their English, but their attitudes towards the participation of students seem questionable. That is to say, teachers seem to consider that students are not willing to participate in supportive English classes. This shows that teachers are expected to encourage and motivate students to participate in the supportive English class. For item 14, 63.64% responded that the school environment is not conducive to implement supportive English classes. This might indicate that even though teachers may want to give support, the situation in the schools is not conducive.

From item 15-19, teachers were asked to show why some English teachers are unwilling to participate in supportive English classes. The majority of teachers (72.73%) showed their agreement with the idea that said because of high teaching load. (72.72%) of the teachers responded by showing their disagreement with the statement that said because of lack of training in tutoring. This may show that lack of training in tutoring does not seem to be a factor for teachers' unwillingness to participate. Concerning the absence of moral or material incentive (item 17), most of the teachers (77.28%) showed their agreement. This indicates that as teachers do some extra work, rewards/incentives are important. Moreover, 22.73% strongly agreed, 18.18% agreed, 31.82% were not sure, and 22.73% disagreed with the statement that said because teachers do not have time. From this, we can infer that although most teachers showed their agreement, there are still some teachers who do not seem to consider the given reason as a serious problem. Finally, in item 19, most of the respondents (54.55%) showed their agreement, where as 27.28% were not sure. This may show that lack of classroom might be a factor for teachers to be unwilling to give support. Hence, it seems that some teachers may not want to participate in supportive English classes for different reasons. Even so, the responses showed that most teachers support the idea of supportive English classes if the school environment is convenient.

**Table 3: Ways of conducting supportive English class**

Four items were included under this category to obtain the teachers' responses on how support is given to the students.

Item No	Response										Total	
	Strongly agree		Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree			
	5	4	3	2	1							
20	...	...	10	45.46	11	50.00	1	4.54	...	...	22	100
21	1	4.54	8	36.37	7	31.81	...	...	...	...	22	100
22	1	4.54	2	9.09	6	27.28	9	40.91	4	18.18	22	100
23	5	22.73	12	54.54	5	22.73	...	...	...	...	22	100

**Findings and Discussions**

In Table 3, teachers were asked to what extent they agree with ways of conducting supportive English classes. For instance, the teachers were asked whether or not English teachers teach in supportive English classes. As a reaction to the statement, 45.46% of them agreed and 50% of them were not sure. This may imply that some of the teachers know that English teachers teach in the supportive English classes. At the same time, it may indicate that all English teachers may not participate in the supportive English class. Hence, teachers who teach in the supportive English classes might be asked their willingness or selected by the school.

The teachers were also asked whether or not students get support through peer- tutoring and cross age-tutoring. Regarding peer-tutoring, 36.36% of the respondents agreed, 40.91% of them were not sure, and 22.73% of them disagreed. This may imply that peer-tutoring is to some extent practiced to give support for students. However, some teachers still do not seem to know whether peer tutoring is used or not. Furthermore, 50% of the teachers were not sure whether or not students get support through cross-age tutoring, 36.37% of them disagreed, and only 13.63% of the respondent's regular class. They are positively interrelated, i.e., supportive class gives extra help, but not something totally new, the same lesson can be given to selected students from the same text book, the regular class teacher gets a chance to help weak students, and supportive English classes increase the rapport of the students to work and help each other. From the aforementioned extracts it seems that supportive English class contributes a lot to the regular class. Therefore, it can be estimated that there is a strong relationship between the regular and supportive English classes. From the responses, it seems that students do not often get support through cross-age tutoring.

In item 23, teachers were also asked whether or not supportive English class teachers select and adapt learning materials. To this idea, the majority of respondents (77.27%) showed their agreement, and 22.73% of them were not sure. This may indicate that so as to meet the needs and abilities of supportive English class students, teachers seem to use appropriate learning materials. In general, from the discussions one can infer that regular English class teachers teach in the supportive English classes, too. However, it seems that students sometimes get support through peer-tutoring, and they do not get support through cross-age tutoring. Thus, the findings may also reveal that teachers do not give much attention to peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring as means of giving support.

**3.2.1 Responses to the Open-ended Questions**

There were three open-ended questions. They were to be filled out right after the closed items. Below are the questions and extracts from some of the most frequently given responses.

The teachers were asked to express their opinions regarding the relationship between regular and supportive English classes. To this item, most of the teachers suggested that there is a sort of relationship between supportive English classes and the regular class. Among the points they mentioned were: both direct towards helping students master the language, supportive English classes strengthen students' academic achievement, both regular and supportive classes are meant to achieve good results and help students improve their knowledge, and the regular class can be facilitated by the supportive class

What is taught in the supportive English classes originate from what is taught in the regular class. Furthermore, the teachers were asked to specify what they feel about supportive English classes. Some of the responses indicated that they feel happy to participate in the supportive English classes. Moreover, they replied that supportive English class is essential to bring about changes in students' academic performance. However, most of the teachers remarked that the school administrators and concerned people should create a conducive environment.

Generally, the responses seem to show that teachers have positive attitudes towards supportive English classes if there is a conducive situation in the schools. The last question inquired the teachers what they think should be the role of English teachers. The majority of the teachers expressed that English teachers are expected to help students use English effectively, to arrange and conduct supportive English classes, to participate with

full interest and dedication in the supportive class, to encourage students to discuss with their friends, etc. Hence, it appears that teachers realize what their role should be so as to help the students.

**3.3 Students' questionnaire responses, interpretation and discussions**

The tables that follow show the frequencies of the students' responses to each item under each category.

**Table 1: The relationship between regular and supportive English classes**

Six items were included under this category. The items were meant to get the students' responses to show to what extent the supportive class is related with the regular one.

Item No	Response					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
	5	4	3	2	1	
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
1	92	8	...	...	...	100
2	51	42	7	...	...	100
3	68	23	7	...	...	100
4	60	32	5	3	...	100
5	52	35	11	1	1	100
6	58	33	5	4	...	100

**Findings and Discussion**

It is mentioned that to the extent that a supportive program effective, it may have positive implications for the effectiveness of the teaching learning process (Polloway & Patton, 1997 [8]; Cottrell, 2001[9] ; Colangelo & Davis, 1997) [10]. Hence, it can be realized that supportive class may benefit regular class students. For instance, the majority of students, that is to say, 92, expressed their strong agreement by saying they have positive attitudes towards learning English because of the supportive English classes Concerning how supportive classes benefit students, the majority of them admitted the fact that they have shown some changes in their learning. Regarding the type of lesson, 51 and 42 of the respondents replied 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively. This shows that what teachers teach in the supportive class is not something totally different from the regular one. In general, regarding the relationship between regular and supportive English classes, the responses given by most of the students indicated that there is a strong relationship between the two.

**Table 2: Attitudes of students toward supportive English classes**

Under this category, eight items were included to obtain students' reactions to supportive English classes and the participation of teachers in the program.

Item No	Response					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
	5	4	3	2	1	
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
7	37	38	17	5	3	100
8	...	6	5	15	74	100
9	9	19	38	14	20	100
10	10	7	35	24	24	100
11	13	16	41	17	13	100
12	3	13	26	28	30	100
13	6	6	28	14	46	100
14	7	8	28	19	38	100

**Findings and Discussions**

In the review of related literature, some researchers indicated that tutoring benefits not only the students but also the teachers. That is why, in item 7, 75 students have shown their positive attitudes toward the benefit of supportive English classes for students as well as teachers. On the contrary, for item 8, which said "supportive English class is boring for students", most of the students expressed that they strongly disagreed with the given idea. Besides, 57 students disagreed with item 14. Here also, it seems that students like to be involved in supportive English classes.

In Table 2, students were also asked to reveal the attitudes they have regarding the English teachers' participation in supportive English classes. For instance, 28 students agreed, 38 students were not sure, and 34 students disagreed with the statement that said because teachers teach many classes, they are unwilling to participate in supportive English classes. For item 10, 48 respondents showed their disagreement, and a significant number of students (35) were not sure. It seems that students may not realize well that lack of incentive can be a factor for teachers to be reluctant. Similarly, 29 students agreed that some teachers are not willing because they do not have free time. On the other hand, 30 students disagreed and still most of them (41) were not sure whether teachers are unwilling because of lack of free time. It is possible again to say that for some students the suggested reasons are not taken as serious factors. Moreover, 58 students expressed their disagreement with item 12, and still 26 students were in doubt. Finally, with item 13, most of the students (60) disagreed with the reason which said that because teachers are not motivated. However, for item 14, 57 students showed their disagreement. That means most students like attending the supportive class program which is contrary to the attitude of teachers to the participation of students in the supportive English class. Hence, from the findings it is possible to infer that students have positive attitudes toward supportive English classes. It also seems to show that for some students the reasons why teachers are unwilling to participate in supportive English classes are not clear. In short, it seems that students like to participate if teachers are volunteers to help them.

**Table 3: Ways of conducting supportive English class**

Under this category, four items were included to find out what students know how support is provided.

Item No	Response					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
	5	4	3	2	1	
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
15	34	40	16	3	7	100
16	20	24	34	15	7	100
17	12	22	27	16	23	100
18	53	27	13	2	5	100

In the review of related literature, it has been discussed that there are some possible ways of conducting supportive English classes. As to Good and Brophy (1997), [11] and Callahane and Clark (1988) [12] one way to supplement instruction is to arrange for students to be tutored by someone other than the teachers. Hence, in Table 3, students were asked to express their opinions on how students get support.

Students were asked whether or not English teachers teach in supportive English classes. As a reaction to this statement, the majority of respondents (74) showed their agreement. This may show that English teachers teach in supportive classes. Regarding whether or not students get support through peer-tutoring, 44 students agreed, 34 of them were not sure, and 22 students disagreed. From this, we may infer that peer-tutoring is somewhat practiced in some schools, but at the same time it seems that the idea of peer-tutoring is not used well as a means of giving help. Besides, 34 respondents agreed, 27 of them were not sure, and most of them, 39, disagreed with the statement that said students get support through cross-age tutoring. It seems that again cross-age tutoring is not as such a common means of giving support although it has some contributions. Finally, for item 18, the majority of students (80) showed their agreements by saying English teachers provide learning activities according to the students' abilities and needs. All in all, it is possible to say that although peer tutoring is to some extent used, cross age tutoring is not often used either because the teachers may not understand their benefits or they may consider them unnecessary to give support.

**3.3.1 Responses to the Open-ended Questions**

There were two open-ended questions. They were designed just to make the students express what they feel about supportive and regular English classes. Below are the questions and some excerpts from some of the most frequently given responses.

Item 19 inquired the students to reveal what they feel about supportive English classes. To this item, almost all students replied that supportive English class is very useful to improve the students' English language ability. Moreover, they mentioned that they are happy to learn in supportive English classes. However, they commented that supportive class program should start from the lower grades and much attention should be given to make it more effective. In general, most of them like the supportive class to be given continuously. The following were some of the common points mentioned: I like the supportive class because it helps me improve my English result and ability, as a lot of students are weak in English, the supportive English class is useful. I am happy, we learn all subjects in Amharic in the lower grades. So, we have difficulty in English, supportive class should be given seriously, we learn what we want to learn in the supportive class. So, we like it, and it



initiates me to give more attention to learn English. It is very important. So, effective teachers should teach in supportive class. The students should learn with interest. In short, they have positive attitudes towards supportive English classes and are willing to take part in if they get the opportunity.

The students were also asked to express their opinions regarding the relationship between regular and supportive English classes. Concerning this question, some students said that the two are somewhat related. For instance, they stated that when the lesson was not clear in the regular class, the teacher explained again using additional examples in the supportive English classes. In addition, some other respondents indicated how the two are closely related by saying the teachers who teach in the supportive English classes are those who teach in the regular classes. In general, most of the respondents agreed that the regular as well as the supportive English classes are meant to help students develop their English ability. Thus, there is a strong relationship between them. Most of the respondents, for instance, stated the following: Supportive English class is given based on what we learn in the regular class. So, they are related, in the supportive class, we sometimes learn what we do not learn in the regular class, we do a lot of exercises that are related to the regular class, sometimes they are not related. In the regular class, we focus on the textbook, but in the supportive class we learn from other materials, etc. Therefore, from the students' responses it can be taken for granted that there is a relationship between regular and supportive English classes.

### **3.4 Interview responses, interpretation and discussion**

Due to time constraints, the interview was made with only four teachers. They were chosen from the four schools. The interviewees were chosen purposely because I was informed that they had the experience in teaching in supportive English classes, and I saw some of them teaching. The following were the interview questions and extracts from some of the responses that were given.

In the first question, the teachers were asked whether there are students who could benefit from supportive English classes and if possible to suggest what percentage of students need support. Regarding this question, almost all the interviewees admitted that there are a lot of students who could benefit. This is because, they added, students learn additional points in the supportive English classes. Concerning the percentage, one respondent said that at least 40% of the students, especially girls, need help. The rest indicated simply by saying some students need help. For question number two which asked the teachers what support students need, most of the interviewees indicated that as the students are preparing for the national exam, they focus on grammar. However, some of them remarked that students need help in most of the skills.

In question number three and four, teachers were asked what the strong and weak part of supportive English classes, and what kind of relationship is there between regular and supportive English classes. The majority of the respondents mentioned that although supportive English class has its own weakness, it has by far a lot of strong sides. As a result, most of them further stated that as the supportive English classes enhance the regular class, there is a relationship between them. Moreover, almost all of them expressed that the content is much related to the regular lesson.

In question five and six, the interviewees were asked whether they would be willing to participate in supportive English classes or not. Most of the interviewees reported that they are willing to help students, and some of them added that they are teaching in supportive English classes. Whether or not other English teachers are interested in teaching in supportive English classes, most of them explained that it is difficult to talk about them. However, they stated that there might be some teachers who may not be willing to be involved in supportive English classes for a variety of factors. For instance, some of the interviewees indicated that some teachers may be reluctant because they teach many classes and there is no incentive from the school.

For question number seven which asked teachers to suggest solutions to make supportive English classes more effective, almost all the interviewees suggested that the school administrators should create conducive situations to conduct supportive English class program. Moreover, some of them commented that teachers as well as students should believe in the benefit of the program. Overall, the responses indicated that there are a lot of things that should be fulfilled by the cooperation of teachers, students, and school administrators to make the program more effective. In general, what teachers responded for most of the questions in the questionnaire are almost similar to their responses for the interview questions. As to the researchers understanding, almost all teachers support the idea of supportive English classes, but the necessary conditions should be taken into account for the participation of teachers and students in particular and for the success of the supportive program in general.

### **3.5 Interpretation and discussion of classroom observation**

The classroom observation was made at Haile Mariam Mamo Secondary School. I observed the supportive and the regular English classes for two sessions each. The supportive English classes are conducted two days a week. The time allotted for each period is an hour. Because of time constraints and other inconveniences, I could not observe the other classes in the other schools. Besides, so as to enable me to see the

kind of connection between regular and supportive English classes, I observed one English teacher who was teaching in both classes. Hence, the classroom observation was employed to get some ideas as to how the supportive English class is related to the regular English class. During my observation, an attempt was made to see whether or not there is a similarity between regular and supportive English classes on the following points: method of instruction, learning materials, learning activities / content, classroom interaction, student grouping, etc., Taking the above points into account and some other points, I observed both regular and supportive English classes for two days each.

Regarding the method of instruction and presentation of the lesson, the teacher almost used the same style of presenting the lesson. That is to say, in my two days class room observation, I saw that the teacher first revised the previous lesson and proceeded to the new topic. In both classes, I observed that, the teacher used a combination of deductive and inductive method of teaching. However, the method of instruction was not the same. For instance, he explained in detail and gave brief notes in the supportive English class. Hence, the way he taught the lesson was not exactly the same as that of the regular class. Concerning the kind of learning materials, in the regular class, the teacher used the published textbook whereas in the supportive English class he used other supplementary materials in addition to the textbook. Thus, there is a sort of relationship as far as the learning materials are concerned.

Similarly, the learning activities in the regular class focused on the textbook and the learning activities in the supportive class were somewhat from the students' text. That is to say, the teacher discussed other related tasks outside the students' textbook. During my first day observation, I observed that the teacher was revising and giving additional exercises which were related to what students learned in the regular class. However, during the second day of my observation, students were learning different lessons. In the regular class, it was a reading comprehension lesson, where as in the supportive English class it was a grammar lesson. So, it can be said that the contents or learning activities seem sometimes the continuation of the regular class, and sometimes different. As a result, one can infer that the contents, in the regular and supportive English classes are to some extent similar. Moreover, it seems that the choice of the content in the supportive English class might be according to the needs of students and the level of difficulty. For this reason, the content sometimes may not be similar in the regular and supportive English classes.

Moreover, I observed that the classroom interaction style was almost the same in both classes. I observed that the teacher asked questions, praised students, explained the lesson, and gave instruction. At the same time, students answered questions, asked questions, talked to each other and participated. Besides, the teacher ordered students to do some exercises in group and pair, and sometimes he asked questions individually in both classes. So, there is high similarity in classroom interaction between regular and supportive English classes. In general, although it is difficult to come to a sort of generalization, it is possible to say that what teachers teach and the way they teach are not something totally different. However, from my discussion with the teacher whom I observed immediately after the class was over, I somewhat realized that teachers summarize what students have learned, give additional exercise and notes, and discuss clearly in the supportive English classes. Moreover, I understood that teachers in the supportive English class use different ways of teaching. Thus, the important point is that in both classes teachers are trying to help students improve their English and academic performance. That is why teachers as well as students seem to agree that supportive class should be related to the regular class. Nevertheless, this does not mean that everything in the regular class should be applied or repeated in the same manner by the same teacher.

## **IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

In this study, an attempt was made to explore the relationship between regular and supportive English classes in four secondary schools in North Shoa. Based on the findings of the investigation, the following conclusions are reached.

The study showed that there is somewhat a positive relationship in the kind of learning tasks students learn, the materials used, and the goals of teaching English. The study also showed that most of the teachers and students have positive attitudes toward supportive English class. In addition to this, the study revealed that there are some factors which may have negative impact on the program. Moreover, it is found out that supportive class is not well implemented by peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring. As a result, the study indicated that students get support from their English teachers.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the findings of this study are almost in line with what has been stated in the literature part. That is to say, supportive English class is conducted because it contributes a lot for the success of the regular class students. For instance, the supportive English class should help students improve their academic performance as well as their English ability. Hence, although the idea of conducting supportive English class needs to be clearly understood by teachers and students, there is a practice of giving support which is intended to strengthen or enhance the regular English class.

Moreover, although both teachers and students have positive attitudes toward supportive English class, there are still some problems, for instance, lack of incentives, high teaching loads, etc., which make, especially, teachers unwilling to participate in the supportive English classes. Thus, the effectiveness of the supportive English class in the schools might be questionable as teachers might not support students whole heartedly. This should be taken seriously by the school administrators, teachers, and students. In addition, it can also be concluded that supportive English class is mainly conducted by regular English class teachers. So, it seems that even though peer-tutoring and cross-age tutoring are some ways of giving help to students, they are less practiced in the secondary schools. In general, the schools conduct supportive English class by considering the relationship it has got with the regular class. Yet, a lot of things should be taken into account to implement supportive English class in such a way that it may contribute to the success of the students.

#### **4.2 Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings, the following pedagogical recommendations are suggested:

1. As the main purpose of giving support is to help students become better English language learners, school administrators should try their best to create a conducive environment for the implementation of the program, and encourage teachers as well as students to participate whole heartedly.
2. English teachers as well as students should believe in the fact that supportive English classes may benefit the regular class and should give due consideration before and after starting the program.
3. Students as well as teachers should know the purpose of the supportive English class program and the responsibilities that accompany being a tutor. Moreover, teachers and students should participate in supportive English classes not because it is imposed by the school administrators but because it is necessary to do so.
4. Since the present study is not a large scale study given the limited number of teachers and students involved, further study embodying more subjects and more elaborate issues of supportive class might be necessary to be conducted. For instance, interested researchers can do their study on the effectiveness of supportive English classes on the performance of students, or major problems / factors affecting the implementation of supportive classes, etc.
5. Finally, teachers who want to run a peer or cross-age tutoring program need to take the teacher(s), school resources of space and materials, and the students who are to be tutored or who are to serve as tutors, etc., into account before launching the program

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