

Exploring Reading Strategies and Difficulties among Bangladeshi Undergraduates

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Abstract

Reading being one of the four skills has to be mastered properly to be a successful language learner. In an ESL (English as a Second Language) context, particularly in Bangladesh, the newly admitted University students who are from Bangla medium background often find it difficult to understand English textbooks, especially when they are in the Department of English. For most of the students, reading everything in English, decoding the words, understanding the deeper meanings becomes quite difficult and leads them to anxiety. This paper aims to identify the types of difficulties the English Department Undergraduates encounter during reading and also points out the kinds of strategies they implement to prevail over the problems.

Keywords: Reading skills, Strategies, Reading Difficulties, Bangladeshi Undergraduates.

Introduction

Reading is a basic and complementary skill in language learning. (Chastain, 1988, p. 216). Therefore, reading is an important ability for anyone to occupy who wants to have a good command over any language. Reading is more like a problem-solving task, and so, the notion of strategic reading has become a matter of investigation in contemporary years. Since the late 1970s, ESL researchers have begun to recognize the relationship between reading strategies and successful and unsuccessful second language reading in L1 and/or L2 (Block, 1986; Jimenez, Garcia, and Pearson, 1995, Anderson and Roit, 1993; Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Paris, Cross, and Lipson, 1984; Pearson and Fielding, 1991, Carrell, 1998).

Oberholzer (2005:2) depicts reading as the basic life skill and a keystone for a successful learner both at school and throughout life. Proficiency in reading skills is undoubtedly essential for academic success. Students having a low level of proficiency in reading not only face difficulties in the academic arena but also encounter behavioral and social difficulties.

To elaborate, reading is an active process of constructing meanings of words. People who read with purpose can focus their attention on their goals to achieve meaning and information. However, the reasons for reading can vary. Nevertheless, the primary purpose of reading is to understand the meaning of the text. Thus, reading can also be called as a thinking process. This allows the reader to use what he or she may already know, also called prior/background knowledge. Reading, among the four skills of a language, has an important place in Bangladesh because of its requirement in higher education (Haque, 2006). Besides, since this is an age of globalization, reading in English is considered as a crucial ability needed in today's world.

However, in Bangladesh, the students who enter the Department of English at the university-level after completing a Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C) sometimes face some difficulties in reading all the required texts in English. Some students mostly encounter these problems because of not getting acquainted with all the texts in English too much at their primary and secondary levels of education. Anyhow, many students try hard to cope with this issue, and some of them succeed.

Literature Review

Reading does not mean just to read some words or sentences; rather, it is much more than this. According to Ransom (as cited in Sultana, 2016), reading is more like a conversation between the writer and the reader (p.14-15). Reading is kind of a complex process where the reader has to read the text and get the meaning out of it using background knowledge and his/her understanding. As cited in Sultana (2016), the process of reading is active, not passive (Doff, 1997). As for Urquhart and Weir (1998, p.22), reading “is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print.”

Therefore, reading is not just reading; the word “comprehension” is associated with reading a text. Reading comprehension is a procedure where the reader must take out and build up the meaning from the text using his or her attachment and reciprocity with the composed sentences. (Snow, 2002) And Richek (1996), as cited in (Hartney, 2011) says that the reason for reading is comprehension. However, according to Hartney (2011), a good reader reads, understands, enjoys, and learns new things from the reading materials. Hartney (2011) also points out that several learners with reading difficulties believe that reading is just recognizing words, and to some people reading means reading words out loud. According to Snow (2002), reading comprehension must have an interconnection among the reader, the text, and the entire activity.

A reader must know the “wide range of capacities and abilities” to understand a text well (Snow, 2002). These capabilities include critical analytic ability, inference, visualization, motivation, knowledge of vocabulary, discourse knowledge, and

comprehension strategies. However, the use of these strategies relies on the texts and the particular task done by the readers.

Comprehension is not just getting the meaning out of the text. During the reading, a reader can establish multiple interpretations of a text, which may be a significant part of his/her understanding. Considering the aspects like – knowledge, reader’s ability, and activity, a text can either be easy or difficult. The reader’s knowledge can have a connection with the backdrop of the text in terms of comprehension. Moreover, other factors, such as content, linguistic structure, vocabulary, also have connections with readers’ background and practical knowledge.

Furthermore, reading is an activity that brings together the reader and the written text. The reader has a purpose of reading in mind, for example, he/she can read just a few lines for a piece of specific information (known as scanning) or the reader can read quickly an entire paragraph to get an overview of the whole thing (known as skimming). A reader may read with a very specific aim on the mind, such as to pass an examination, or he/she can read just to spend some free time for obtaining pleasure. These particular activities can expand the readers’ level of comprehension slowly but surely.

Reading Difficulties

However, reading is not a process without difficulties, which mostly the ESL/EFL readers face in a reading class. Ur (2003) says that the main goal of the reading materials is to expose the learners to authentic materials. However, sometimes, course-book based materials might not be suitable for a particular group of learners or class. As cited in (Sultana, 2016), five problems with the course-book based materials have been specified by Ur (2003), and four of them are:

- they might not meet the learning needs of the readers
- the topics of the materials may not be relevant or interesting.
- they might not suit different levels of ability and knowledge of the readers or their learning styles and strategies.
- they might seem boring and monotonous.

Ur (2003) says that the content of the text should be interesting and the tasks challenging as well as of different types. About the level of the input, Krashen, and Terrell (1983) talk of the Input Hypothesis: the language should be neither too easy nor too difficult for the learners. And Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) recommend the 'judicious' use of L1. Therefore, materials for a particular class and the activities based on them are to be prepared with much care, and their effective use is to be ensured by experienced teachers.

To readers, in particular, the students to whom English is a foreign or second language, reading English texts is not an effortless task. Difficulties are often faced by students at a different level. Sultana (2016) has pointed out some of the difficulties encountered by students from the English Department of different Universities in Bangladesh, where irrespective of their educational institutions, most of the students have agreed on some common issues. The majority of the students have stated that they face difficulty in understanding the meaning of large words and keeping vocabulary in mind after reading. The study has revealed the students' lack of mastery over the lexicon. In contrast, the study has also reported that fewer students face difficulty in figuring out the main points of a text and comprehending the text.

A similar kind of research on reading comprehension problems has been conducted by Kasim & Raisha (2017) on fifth-semester students of the English Department of Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This study has focused on both linguistic and non-linguistic problems faced by the students. It has revealed that students face three types of linguistic problems. These include semantic problems such as inadequate vocabulary and difficulties in grasping the meaning of new words, syntactic problems such as difficulties in comprehending compound, complex, and conditional sentences as well as understanding certain word orders, and lexical problems like understanding the derivation of words. Apart from the linguistic problems, the study has also delineated that the students face non-linguistic problems such as their lacking of adequate cultural knowledge and problems with reading longer texts. Another crucial problem

sorted out in that study is the students' not having any knowledge about the reading strategies exploited by the readers for efficient reading. Difficulties in differentiating main and supporting ideas, problems regarding working memory and speed reading, insufficient background knowledge, and inability to connect ideas effectively are also included in the list of non-linguistic problems faced by the students.

Reading Strategies

To overcome the difficulties during reading, students always adopt some techniques or strategies for a better understanding of the text as well as having pleasure while reading. Many studies have been conducted on reading strategies, particularly cognitive and metacognitive strategies frequently used by students of English Departments from time to time in different countries across the world. The researchers have tried to figure out which reading strategies the readers prefer to use to overcome the difficulties of reading English texts. Baker and Boonkit (2001) (cited in Bashir, 2016) have found out after surveying on Thai undergraduate students that they use cognitive strategies more than metacognitive while reading English texts.

Malaysian students have also been found exploiting cognitive strategies according to the reports of several studies. Cognitive strategies are selected and used by the majority of the Malaysian University students who are studying in English (Hamdan, Ghafar, Sihes, and Sohaila, 2010; Nurazilla et al., 2011; Jusoh & Liza, 2015) In contrast, studies on Taiwanese EFL students demonstrate different findings. Cheng (2009) has found out the preference of using cognitive studies while Shang (2011) has reported of exploiting metacognitive studies more. Similar results, as Shang (2011) has also been found in the study by Hsu (2007 as cited in Bashir, 2016).

Bashir (2016) has researched undergraduate students of the English Department of a public university in Bangladesh. This study has also tried to identify the most frequently used reading strategies between cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which resulted in finding the usage of cognitive strategies more frequently than metacognitive by Bangladeshi undergraduates of the English department. Apart from the two main categories

of reading strategies, this study has also looked into the use of subcategories of reading strategies. Results have shown the use of retrieval strategies, monitoring strategies, comprehending strategies, and memory strategies at a high level where evaluating and planning strategies at a moderate level. The findings have shown that the students use their background knowledge and other relevant knowledge to comprehend the text. They also adopt the strategy of guessing the meanings of words and content. Since more than two-thirds of the strategies are used at a high level and the rest at a moderate level, Bashir (2016) has concluded with the result that “The students are generally high-level strategy user.”

Sultana (2016) in her survey has tried to sort out the most used strategies by the students while reading where most of the participants agreed on using the strategies such as imagining story and using prior knowledge, using graphic contents, summarizing and sorting out main points of the text, reading carefully and slowly, discussion with others about the text after reading, using dictionary, underlining important and significant lines, critical assessment of given information and so on. The study has also found out that the majority of the students sometimes question and try to answer the questions for better understanding. Skimming and scanning have also been focused on the research as mostly used reading strategies where the majority of the students have reported that they always use skimming and scanning as effective reading strategies while the rest of the students do these sometimes. The study has also reported that when the students do not understand an English text, most of the students do not try to translate the text from English to Bangla and do not stop reading as well because of the difficulty in understanding an English text. A large part of the students always reread the text while facing any difficulties during reading.

Research Questions

Mostly the students with Bangla-medium background find it a bit difficult to cope with the English texts in a university phase, particularly when the area of the subject is “English Language and Literature.” Many even try very hard to get the

surface and deeper meaning out of the texts in this very situation. Some of them succeed, some of them lose their motivation, and some of them still keep it up to pass the examination and get the degree at the end. Even the English teachers have to try hard to motivate these students to read effectively. With these things on mind, the researchers developed the following questions to research at a profound level,

1. What are the major difficulties that the Bangladeshi undergraduates from Bangla medium background face reading all texts in English?
2. What kinds of techniques do these learners use to overcome their reading difficulties?
3. How do the teachers manage to motivate these students in reading classes?

Research Methodology

Participants

To conduct the research, we chose 60 students from the English departments of three private universities inside Dhaka. The teachers of the Department of English of these universities also took part in this research process. Participation in the research was voluntary and confidential. The participants were given enough time to respond to the survey questionnaire. Before participating in the survey, they were given proper instruction on it. No rewards in exchange for participation were offered.

Instruments

To collect the data, the researchers used two types of instruments.

Survey Questionnaire for the Students

Questionnaires comprise several questions that participants are required to answer and are, therefore, usually a self-report research method (Stone & Turkkan, 2000). In the questionnaire, students were given statements regarding various reading difficulties and, lastly, about reading strategies, which was modified from the Survey of Reading Strategy (SORS) by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). The statements of our survey did not blindly follow Mokhtari and Sheorey’s (2002) instrument; rather, a modified questionnaire was developed to make it more appropriate.

Open-ended Questions for the Teachers

Another small survey was conducted where six open-ended questions were designed for the English teachers from the three universities. The questions were given to them to be answered only in their free time.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected from the 60 respondents have been computed and analyzed using the SPSS 23.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to discover more about reading difficulties and strategies. Two types of survey questionnaires have been developed for this research. 60 Students have participated in the close-ended survey questionnaire, and 25 teachers took part in the open-ended survey questionnaire. The data collected from the questionnaire was converted into a percentage using Microsoft excel to represent data, and tables

were created by using the SPSS 23. Qualitative data have been collected from another open-ended survey questionnaire, and the results have been presented through the description.

Major Findings and Discussion

The students who came from Bangla medium background into the Department of English were chosen for the research. The questionnaire had a total of 32 statements, which were ranged from 5 point scale format, which ranged from 'Always' to 'Never.' The responses were rated as Always=5, Often=4, Sometimes=3, Rarely=2, and Never=1.

Data Analysis and Results

The survey questionnaire has been divided into four groups. Each table is shown below with the data analysis and its results.

Table 1 Reading Habit of Each Student

	Sample (60)						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
	%	%	%	%	%		
q1	25.00	21.67	31.03	32.00	30.00	3.5667	.92730
q2	30.60	27.85	33.00	32.58	25.50	2.8333	1.06033
q3	31.43	32.21	29.58	29.55	28.78	2.7833	1.39115
q4	36.00	20.60	21.79	34.22	40.83	3.6667	.95077

SD: Standard Deviation; %: Percentage

Table 1 includes four items. The survey shows that 32% of students often enjoy reading English texts, which was the first statement. 33% of participants have said that they sometimes read English newspapers and magazines besides academic books that are in the English language. These two percentages shed a positive light on the matter that the students being from Bangla medium background, many of them go through reading materials in English, which can enhance their general knowledge and English vocabulary. However, the standard deviation for the second item shows that

many students (30.60%) still are not used to reading English reading materials outside academic books. As for the third statement (I use online journals such as jstor or google scholar), the majority of the participants (31.43%) visit these helpful sites for reading in-depth articles on rare occasions. The good point about the fourth statement is, most of the students (40.83%) have said that they always visit their campus libraries, which is a promising aspect if anyone wants to intensify his/her love for reading texts in English.

Table 2 Various Types of Reading Difficulties

	Sample (60)						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always		
	%	%	%	%	%	Mean	SD
q5	.	.	24.09	35.87	33.55	3.9833	.87317
q6	.	.	30.96	27.05	34.87	3.8667	.79119
q7	18.50	18.29	30.36	38.57	30.50	3.4500	1.04840
q8	32.00	41.33	30.11	31.70	25.22	3.5500	.87188
q9	.	46.40	29.12	17.78	30.44	3.2833	.92226
q10	.	30.80	34.18	22.06	35.13	3.7167	.94046
q11	.	32.67	30.79	24.27	32.59	4.0333	.99092
q12	.	36.70	28.24	32.00	25.50	3.1500	.73242

SD: Standard Deviation; %: Percentage

The second part of the questionnaire had eight statements in total. These questions were designed to identify the reading difficulties among the participants. For item number 5, a large number of students (35.87%) said that they often find it hard to understand the big words in English texts. For item number 6 (I forget the vocabularies during reading), 34.87% agreed that they always cannot remember the meaning of the words while they read. These two are the most common problems among the students, particularly coming from the Bangla Medium School and College because in these institutions, reading in English is only emphasized for passing the examinations. The 7th statement shows another difficulty faced by the English Department students, which is taking too much time to read English texts. 38.57% of students said that they often face this trouble, and it is quite time consuming as well. This may happen because of not reading more texts in English outside the academic syllabus. The 8th statement, however, shows a slight deviation (SD = 1.04840), which is, 41.33 participants have said that they rarely find difficulty in realizing the meaning of a lengthy text. As all the participants have been selected from 3rd year 1st and 2nd semesters of their

departments, it is possible that reading English books from the syllabus is getting them acquainted with the prolonged texts. As for the ninth statement, 46.40% of students have said that they rarely find it strenuous to point out the main idea of the passage. This is a positive feature of studying a four year Honours degree in English Language and Literature because it is really important to understand the central concept of any text after reading very carefully. Item 10 was about, if too many lengthy statements make the participants feel anxious, to which 34.18% of students responded that sometimes they get nervous seeing lots of sentences of considerable length. Item 11 (I have to use a dictionary for difficult words which makes me bored) shows a balance between the responses. Some participants felt that using a dictionary is not a boring task at all, whereas some other participants disagreed with it. In response to the 12th statement (I have difficulty in elaborating, inferring or predicting while reading the texts), 36.70% students went for the "Rarely" option which shows that they can at least deduce things from the given details and speculate what is going to happen next in the book.

Table 3 Strategies that the Students Implement to Overcome the Difficulties

	Sample (60)						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always		
	%	%	%	%	%	Mean	SD
q13	.	31.25	32.06	26.31	31.48	4.0500	.99873
q14	.	37.00	22.09	35.67	30.56	4.2833	.88474

q15	28.67	16.80	28.88	45.80	33.36	3.2667	1.10264
q16	.	28.00	32.25	29.00	30.60	3.7667	1.04746
q17	.	34.00	29.67	36.57	28.36	4.5167	.74769
q18	.	35.00	31.54	26.75	33.64	3.6500	.84020
q19	.	31.00	26.29	30.06	33.64	4.1000	.87721
q20	.	39.00	30.38	19.30	32.72	4.1500	1.03866
q21	.	27.17	23.83	42.00	36.47	3.5000	1.11233
q22	.	27.38	26.83	32.60	32.00	3.9500	1.08025
q23	29.33	19.00	31.06	29.67	31.34	3.9833	1.17158
q24	.	30.00	25.33	27.53	34.41	4.2167	.88474
q25	.	26.67	31.90	24.67	35.33	3.8500	.91735
q26	30.50	33.92	27.48	27.17	36.13	2.8167	1.22808

SD: Standard Deviation; %: Percentage

The third table is all about the strategies that the students follow to solve the problems they face during reading English texts. This table has 14 statements in total. As for the 13th statement (I reread the texts to get the meaning out of the texts), most of the participants (32.06%) have sometimes said they follow this strategy, and some of them (26.31%) have said that they often do it. Rereading texts can lead to a better understanding. In response to statement number 14 (When reading an English passage, I highlight the words that I do not understand), 35.67% of students have given a positive answer, but 37% of students mentioned that they rarely do it. Item number 15 is about reading aloud out of the classroom context. Reading aloud is a very good strategy to remember more information from the texts. Here, 45.80% of students have mentioned that they often read aloud outside the class, which shows that they try hard enough to prevail over their reading problems. For statements 16 (I take notes while reading English texts.) and 17 (When I become confused about something I am reading, I start over and try to figure it out again), 32.25% and 36.57% of participants have been positive respectively. In response to item 18 (I map information that I get from the text to have a better understanding), 35% of students have said that they rarely do it. As for the nineteenth statement (I try to find the key vocabularies from the texts.), 33.64% of students confirmed that they do it always, which is a good scheme to be a good reader. In response to item number 20 (I read the texts and try

to predict what may happen next), the majority of the participants have stated that they seldom do it. As for item 21 (While reading, I create questions to have a good understanding of the text.), 42.00% of participants have cited that they often do it. This is a positive aspect of becoming an advanced reader. The 22nd statement (I try to make a connection to the text to myself.) presented a balanced response among readers where 32.60% and 32% of students confirmed doing it often and always, respectively. As for the 23rd item, the majority of the students have said that they sometimes try to summarize the main points of a text before analyzing an English text from the syllabus. The good thing about the 24th statement is 34.41% have stated that they visualize the incident, which they read from the given text. This shows that many students are going to such an extent to understand the English texts to a deeper level. Discussion after reading always enhances the knowledge of texts because a huge amount of information can be exchanged through conversation with others. Therefore, in response to the 25th statement, 35.33% of participants have stated that they always have a group discussion once the text reading is done. Participants were divided on the 26th statement (I write my own opinion after reading any English text) because here, some students have said they often do it, and some have mentioned that they never do it. However, reading one's own opinion is a powerful way to realize if the text has been thoroughly understood.

Table 4 Opinions about Teachers and Reading Classrooms

	Sample (60)						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always		
	%	%	%	%	%	Mean	SD
q27	.	44.00	41.82	26.40	22.79	3.9833	.98276
q28	.	.	33.12	35.88	25.67	4.1667	.84706
q29	.	28.75	32.30	26.27	32.14	3.8833	.97584
q30	.	30.67	34.94	36.25	24.96	4.0500	.98161
q31	.	51.00	29.78	32.15	28.93	4.3167	.79173
q32	25.50	33.00	31.74	27.22	32.82	3.5000	1.01681

SD: Standard Deviation; %: Percentage

The fourth group is about the students' viewpoints on their teachers in classrooms. This part has a total of six statements. In response to the 27th statement (The teacher shows pictures/maps/diagrams before reading any particular text in class), 44% have mentioned that the teachers hardly do this. However, 41.82% of participants have stated that the teachers sometimes employ this strategy, whereas 26.40% of participants have stated that the teachers often use this scheme in class. This variation is seen as the students were from three different universities and so there has been a slight discord among the students' opinions. As for the 28th statement (The teacher asks the whole class to guess from the title of the reading passage), 35.88% of participants have been affirmative in response. In regards to the 29th (The teacher uses Bangla translation to make us understand the reading texts better) and 30th (The teacher uses different reading activities to help us understand more), a substantial amount of the students have been quite positive in response. However, for the 31st statement (The teacher gives feedback on the tasks that he/she makes us do after reading), 51% of students have said that the teachers rarely provide feedback on reading tasks in class. The 32nd statement (The teacher gives us interesting tasks so that we can comprehend the text properly) gave a variation in the participants' responses. 33.00% of participants have stated that their teachers rarely give them interesting tasks on reading texts, whereas, 25.50% of students have mentioned that the teachers never do it in class. The standard deviation for this statement is 1.01681.

Discussion on the Survey Questionnaire

The study revealed that a good number of students, despite having Bangla medium background, often find pleasure in reading English texts while the percentage of students who always enjoy reading English texts is also satisfactory. This can be taken as a positive sign that since the majority of the students are interested in reading English texts, certainly they are well aware of the difficulties they have faced and the different strategies they have adopted to overcome those obstacles. The depressing fact is that the students are not much eager to read and use English newspapers and magazines as well as online journals besides their academic books. This might be possible that most of the students do not want to go through the struggle of reading so much, or they are not familiar with the materials scattered around. Possibilities are also high that the students also lack the knowledge of the effectiveness of reading non-academic books, newspapers, magazines, and online journals in enhancing their reading ability. In contrast, the students showed their inclination to visit the library on their campus.

During the attempt to sort out various types of reading difficulties, most of the students agreed on the fact that they faced problems at a lexical, grammatical, and syntactic level, such as understanding the big words, forgetting vocabulary, whereas fewer students stated that they had semantic problems. A probable explanation can be attempted that as most of the schools and colleges exploit grammar-translation method to teach English language, students at primary and secondary level try to memorize the rules, structures as well as vocabulary. With the passing of the time, it becomes quite impossible to

keep all those structures and vocabulary in mind without knowing how to apply those in different contexts. As a result, learners can remember only simpler and easier structures and vocabulary. When they reach the tertiary level, they lack the knowledge of using complex structures and difficult words in different contexts and situations. Therefore, they feel extremely stressed out encountering words that they did not learn while their English lessons were going on at primary and secondary level, and according to them, too many lengthy sentences make them anxious. Taking a long time to finish reading a text is also a by-product of the constant struggle between memory and forgetting. However, the majority of the students have given an opinion that they can grasp the meaning of a long text, identify the central idea of the text, and elaborate and predict during the reading activity. After studying in the English Department for two years, the students are supposed to be familiar with lengthy English texts. Despite all the difficulties at different levels, this familiarity and more or less practice for academic purposes may be the reason behind their acquiring these abilities.

Whenever students face various types of problems, they naturally invent and exploit various strategies to continue the act of reading and comprehending the meaning of the text. This study has also explored the strategies delineated by the participants. In terms of the adopted strategies and techniques, the majority of the students have demonstrated affinities. They agreed on the points that they more or less reread that particular text to perceive the meaning, and they also highlight the words they do not understand while reading. Reading aloud outside the classrooms and taking notes while reading English texts are also excessively utilized strategies by the students. When learners start learning English, they are generally instructed to read the structures and examples aloud again and again. They also highlight the difficult words so that they can look for the meaning of those particular words later. From the statements of the students of the English Department, this assumption can be drawn that the students retain those practices while reading an English text at the tertiary level also. The study has also discovered a positive attitude of the students to start over and try to figure out again while they became confused about

something. Other strategies used by the students to solve reading difficulties include their attempt to find out the keywords from the text, endeavour to create various questions out of the text in order to have a better understanding, trying to make a connection of themselves to the text, and giving an effort to summarize the central points before analyzing the text. Students have shown their attempt to visualize the story or the incident they read in the text clearly in their minds. Open discussion with others also gained a positive response from the learners.

In contrast, this study has revealed a majority of the students' negative attitudes towards mapping information from the texts for a better understanding as well as trying to predict what may happen in the text. Generally, the students were not supposed to be familiar with these strategies. They simply could not think about inferencing or mapping information because they did not learn to read in these ways. In terms of using strategies, they have remained traditional. However, the students were equally divided in their opinion regarding the writing of their own opinion after reading any English text. This is a ray of hope that at least half of the students tried to come out of typical tactics, practice thinking, and use their creativity.

The study attempted to explore students' views regarding the role of teacher and in-class reading activities. The use of relevant pictures, maps, or diagrams by the teacher before reading a particular text was found very rare. Feedback is a very important tool in learning. Positive feedback encourages the learners, whereas negative feedback demotivates them. The study discovered various reading activities used by the teacher to help the learners understand better, but the absence of teachers' feedback on the assigned tasks and activities. This may create a barrier for the students trying to improve their reading skills. When a student does not have that feedback, certainly it will become difficult to concentrate on a task where there is no encouragement or careful attempt to correct the mistakes on the teacher's part.

On the other hand, the students revealed that the teacher asked the whole class to guess from the title of the reading passage, which may work in enhancing their ability to predict the strategy which most of the students do not use. Bangla translation

of the English text was also used by the teacher in class to explain the texts to the readers and help them understand better. However, the study came across a completely negative statement from most of the students regarding assigning them to various interesting tasks so that they can comprehend the text properly.

Analysis of the Open-ended Questions Filled up by the Teachers

The second instrument was an open-ended survey questionnaire that was given out to the teachers of the English Departments from the three universities. Twenty-five teachers were selected for further investigation into the issue. The questionnaire contained six questions.

As for the first question, all the teachers agreed that, without a doubt, it is very important to develop reading habit among the students. To understand a text in depth and enrich vocabulary, reading skill is a must. The second question wanted to know how the teachers could assess the reading skills of their students. In response to this question, most of them (18 out of 25) stated that they took comprehension tests, and the rest of them said that they made their students take part in group discussions where the students were assigned some topics from their reading texts to talk about.

The third question wanted to inquire about the main causes of reading difficulties among learners from the teachers' viewpoints. About this inquiry, the majority of the teachers have stated that students' lack of sufficient vocabulary knowledge and taking the reading skill for granted are the two major reasons behind the reading difficulties. Some teachers have pointed out that the learners do not read texts outside the academic syllabus, which they should.

Regarding the fourth question, many teachers have responded that they try to motivate their students in a reading class by making them reading aloud and sometimes listening to the audiobooks. Some of the teachers have said that they make their learners act out the reading text if it is possible. As for the fifth question, the teachers have said that they try to use different types of techniques to arouse interest in reading texts among their students. Here, many of them talked about role-playing techniques,

using PowerPoint slides, showing video contents (where necessary), reading aloud, and distributing worksheets based on the texts among the students. This shows that the techniques vary from teachers to teachers.

The final question asked for some suggestions from the teachers on how the students can overcome the reading difficulties and improve their reading skills. In response to this query, all of them have said that the students have to read English texts, be it on the syllabus or not, as much as possible. Some of them have suggested that the students take part in different reading competitions held by various organizations whenever possible. The learners should not stop reading even when they do not understand the meaning thoroughly.

Limitations

While conducting the survey, there was no control over the truthfulness of the answers collected from the participants. Besides, some of the participants showed negative attitudes in filling the questionnaire, and it was difficult to get time with the teachers for giving out the survey questions to them as they work under a fixed schedule at universities. And finally, the researchers could not include other universities outside of Dhaka because of time and transport problems. The researchers chose these three universities only because, in these universities, no research work on reading problems and solutions has been done before. However, the research has some limitations since this study is only about three private universities in Dhaka city, and so, later on, public and national universities can be included outside Dhaka for further research.

The researchers suggest doing further research on reading difficulties and strategies. The major reasons are:

- This work has focused on a tertiary level only. So primary and secondary levels can be examined to get a holistic picture of Bangladesh.
- More teachers can be counted in for further research.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Reading is a crucial element for everyday life because it is a medium of language acquisition and

successful communication. Reading is a complex cognitive process and to read successfully in another language can take a large amount of time for a particular learner. This research aimed to investigate numerous reading complications encountered by the advanced level learners of Bangladeshi Private Universities and to explore their strategies to overcome these difficulties. For an in-depth study, the researchers have also documented what tactics the teachers use in their classrooms to make reading more interesting. However, it is to be noted that the levels and skills of all the students are not the same regarding the reading process. This study deals with both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data. It is important to note that reading is a required skill in language acquisition, and even in proficiency tests like IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, and so on, the reading skill is tested. Thus, the reading skill among the undergraduates has to be developed, no matter how long it takes. The following are the researcher's recommendations:

- a. A placement test should be held at the universities after the admission tests so that the authorities can comprehend the levels of proficiency of the students.
- b. English teachers should adapt and adopt materials that are appropriate for the students.
- c. The language teachers have to pay close attention to the implementation of pre-reading activities. They should also devise different strategies to make in-class activities more interesting.
- e. Assignments and examination questions should be set up by the course outline and needs of the students.
- f. Teachers can use Bangla vocabulary in the reading classroom only when the words or phrases are completely new to the learners.

The researchers believe that implementations of these recommendations can create a successful and engrossing reading environment in a classroom where the learning materials and activities can meet the students' expectations.

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