Addressing Problems with Reading in English: A Case Study of Five Bangladeshi Teachers

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Abstract

Reading is generally considered as one of the essential language learning skills. Unfortunately, in most Bangladeshi government secondary schools, reading is not given its due respect. Recent research indicates that reading is as much important a skill as speaking or writing and therefore, Bangladeshi teachers need to change their mindset towards the significance of reading in classroom, to make the L2 learning a helpful experience for students. Five Bangladeshi teachers from three different schools took part in the study. This study is aimed to see Bangladeshi teacher's analysis of reading problems of their students and the teaching strategies they use in classrooms for teaching reading skills by using questionnaire and interviews as research tools. The research found that teachers recognise students' reading problems and sincerely try to address these but their biggest impediment is the class size for which students are left alone with their reading difficulties. If this skill is not aptly addressed at this level, learning the other three language skills will be difficult for the second language learners. Hence this research suggests that teachers' analysis of the reading problems should be given importance to ensure students' maximum L2 learning.

Keywords: *Second Language (L2), discourse, schema, reading aloud, word recognition.*

Introduction

Reading is used as a technique to teach quality writing skill and as an opportunity to teach pronunciation and practice speaking skills while reading aloud, especially in Bangladeshi classroom settings. So, reading skill is undoubtedly an important one of the four language skills because poor reading skill badly affects L2 learning (Alderson, 2000). So inorder to improve English language skills of students in government schools it is necessary to identify problems associated with reading skill at first and address them in appropriate way. (Jagig & Wan Mohammad, 2016; Parvani & Md Yunus 2018; Wong & Abdul Aziz, 2019). In this regard I tried to investigate L2 reading problems of Bangladeshi students from perspective of experienced teachers rather than students, to get an in depth understanding of the matter.

Research Questions

To investigate students' problems with reading in English, the point of view of five Bangladeshi teachers have been analysed in this research study. They are asked different relevant questions on the based on two research questions. These are:

1)   What are the main reading problems encountered by Secondary school Bangladeshi

students as perceived by their teachers?

2)   What are the strategies teachers adopt in solving students' reading problems?

Literature Review

The existing literature on problems and strategies in developing students' L2 reading skills are critically reviewed here. The focus will be on such core issues in L2 reading that are particularly relevant to this study.

Problems of Teaching Reading Skills

Researchers like Alderson (2000) and Smith (1994) found that there are many problems with teaching reading skill in the L2 classroom setting. The poor reading comprehension skill of students is one of the challenges teachers face in their classrooms (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). So, reading strategies need to be taught so that readers have the freedom to choose strategies for reading effectively. The inability to recognise the more important information in text, skim, preview, use context to avoid misunderstanding, extract information from the text and engage with the text (Alderson, 2000) are resulting inefficient readers.

Secondly, it is often presumed that learners who acquired the reading abilities in their first language are thought to acquire second language reading capabilities automatically. Alderson (2000) mentions, 'in second-language reading, knowledge of the second language is a more important factor than first-language reading abilities'(p. 23). Students are naturally aware of the language structure of their L1 but in, L2 reading problems occur due to inadequate knowledge of the language (Alderson 2000). At times L1 and L2 reading skills correlate not because of transfer of skills but because these reading skills rely on automatic activation of cognitive processing resources (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). This assertion becomes evident in the South Asian context as students are more used to the Grammar Translation Method and try to understand every second language text by translating into their first language and do not focus on linguistic features of the language.

Thirdly, the lack of schematic knowledge and interest may be one of the major problems of reading. Harmer (2001) also says that students who are disinterested or unfamiliar with the text genre may become reluctant to engage fully with the text. So, students should be given the freedom to choose books according to their interests. An increasing body of research on reading (Widdowson, 1990; Alptekin, 1993; Cook, 1997; Grabe, 1991) recognises the importance of schematic knowledge in reading. It is seen that very often literary text and authentic texts of English-speaking world are used as materials for language teaching classes. Harmer (2001) says 'it is when students come into contact with "real" language that they have to work hardest to understand'(p. 205). So, it can be argued that it is important for the readers to be able to relate their pre-existing information with the content of the text (Alderson, 2000). It helps learners to interpret new references of the target the language and teachers cannot ignore the fact that schema theory is an important part of discourse analysis (Cook, 1997).

There is another L2 reading problem that can be seen in Asian countries like India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan which is of 'reading aloud'. At the junior schools very often, students are asked to read loudly pointing to the words on the page with their index fingers. This practice may be a reason of their incomprehensible reading. Many students get habituated with this practice and their reading becomes

loud, slow and incomprehensible. According to Smith (1994), 'it overloads short-term memory and leaves the reader floundering in the ambiguity of language' (p. 153).

Strategies in addressing reading problems: Implications for teaching

Since all the language learning skills are interlinked, a student who has a problem with reading may also be deficient in the other language skills. Teachers should put more focus on developing students as efficient readers, so that learning other language skills become easier. In light of existing literature, several issues for improving reading are discussed below which can be seen as a solution to the problems teachers face in South Asian countries.

'Automaticity of word recognition' (Paran, 1996) is a very important aspect of reading which is normally developed in reading in the first language. To develop this same reading strategy in second language readers, students should be inspired to read a lot as practice is the only path to develop automaticity in reading. Exercises of word recognition can be turned into computer games to initiate interest in readers (Paran, 1996). Grellet (1981) agrees with Goodman (1967) and says that 'one does not read all the sentences in the same way, but one relies on many words or cues' (p.56). Students learn more if the connection of new words can be drawn with words they already know (Grabe, 1991).

According to Harmer (2001) students may not understand every word of the text, teachers should teach them how to continue reading in such situations as guessing meaning of unknown words is one of the reading skills students should develop. According to Stanovich's (1980) interactive-compensatory model, 'reader who has deficient word analysis skills might show a greater reliance on contextual factors' (p. 63).

Learners can also be encouraged to choose texts following their interests. Extensive reading improves readers' comprehension skills, automaticity and vocabulary (Colin Davis, 1995). Even in the case of intensive reading, teachers engage students by discussing the topic, showing a relevant picture and asking them to predict the subject matter based on some selected words and titles (Harmer, 2001). Classroom instruction that specifically focuses on asking open-ended questions and examining text content is more productive strategic instruction (McKeown et al., 2009).

Students should be taught how to work interactively with both top-down and bottom-up processes and encourage students in developing automaticity, confidence and interest in reading by initiating group work and discussions after the activity (Rumelhart, 1980; Grabe, 1991). Classroom instruction in reading comprehension led by teachers, group work or pair work of students seemed to be more fruitful and commonly known as guided reading (Ford, 2015; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017) and according to Fountas and Pinnell (2012), "The goal of guided reading is to help students build their reading power-to build a network of strategic actions for processing texts" (p. 272)

Researchers like Swaffar (1985) suggests that texts for teaching should be selected keeping in mind the schematic knowledge of teachers which they are going to transfer to the students. Authentic texts that include everyday material like newspapers, travel, tourism can be used to enhance students' interest as it is written in 'natural situations rather than to the stilted, artificially concocted laboratory materials that accompanied many textbooks' (p. 16) It gives teachers the independence to change and use authentic materials based on students' language competence. If teachers find the text is too problematic concerning 'cultural schema', it would be advisable to choose an alternative (Cook, 1997; Alderson, 2000).

Grabe (1991) mentions that if reading is taught in the context of the content, learner's motivation is developed and the purposeful activities of integrated language skills will enhance learning as 'reading comprehension should not be separated from the other skills'. Moreover instructional approaches like guided reading help students to become independent and strategic readers (Ford & Opitz, 2011). Cameron (2009) states that reading comprehension can be developed by teaching the strategies explicitly, flexibly and using these   in all learning areas and developing lexical resources. Considering students' benefits, teachers should try to overcome the problems associated with reading and make efforts to solve these problems for maximum L2 learning.

Methodology

Research Settings and Participants

Five Bangladeshi L2 teachers participated in this study and are selected based on fixed criteria. The participants are all non-native English Language teachers from different schools in Bangladesh. The schools are located in different parts of the country and are under the same board of education following the same curriculum. The medium of instruction in public schools in Bangladesh is Bengali and the English language is taught as a compulsory subject.

All the teachers have experience of teaching in similar academic settings in Bangladesh for many years. They are teaching students of classes V to X within the age of 10-15 years. The participants are given pseudonyms due to anonymity of the study and they are named as Azan, Ayat, Murad, Salim and Mehmet. A consent form (Appendix A) is given to them with a brief description of the research topic along with this clear assurance that all the pieces of information of the interview and questionnaire will be confidential and anonymous. The number of participants of this qualitative case study is kept small to support the depth of case-oriented analysis.

The Research Design

It is called a qualitative case study because it is based on a particular context with a definite number of teachers and mostly open-ended questions are used to get detailed analysis of students' reading problems from teachers' point of view. The perspectives of the participants are analysed to understand the phenomena involved in a case study. Cohen et al., (2000) suggested, 'a case study focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events' (p. 182).

The questionnaire (Appendix B) and a semi-structured interview (Appendix C) used for collecting data is kept anonymous to initiate honest answers. The questions of the semi-structured interview allowed changing or modifying the questions according to the interviewee's response and helped to gather some more ideas and perspectives of looking into this research with clear explanations (Cohen et al, 2000; Silverman, 1993). In this research one-to-one interview was done after the filled in questionnaires were emailed back. Therefore, the participants had a good understanding on the research subject before the interview and the interviewer got the platform to discuss some of the answers they had documented in the questionnaires. The thirty minutes' semi-structured online interview with each teacher helped the researcher to elicit practical teaching perspectives of the participants and get a detailed understanding of the problem.

According to Cohen et al. (2000), 'if a site-specific case study is required, then qualitative, less structured, word-based and open-ended questionnaires may be more appropriate as they can capture the specificity of a particular situation' (p. 247). The methodology framework greatly serves the purposes of this study, to analyse how L2 teachers address reading problems in Government schools of Bangladesh.

Data Analysis

This section analyses the data obtained through the questionnaires and interviews employed for the study. As mentioned in the previous section, the teachers were all involved through questionnaires and interviews. The data analysis is based on teachers' views about Bangladeshi students' problems in reading skills.

Problems with Reading

The first question that was asked to all the teachers during both the interview and in the questionnaire was to identify the most common problems with reading English among Bangladeshi students. Almost all of them identified similar kinds of problems. There are many reasons that cause problems to Bangladeshi students while dealing with English reading. The data received from each of the teachers are analysed below:

Teacher Azan says that due to a large number of students in the class, teachers cannot concentrate on an individual student's problems with reading. He further says that his class consists of 62 students and most of them are from lower-middle class society who prefer schools with free or fewer tuition fees. The teacher implies that a huge imbalance in the student to teacher ratio does not allow teachers to ensure that each of his students learns the fundamental reading skills properly. He says-

> *'Bangladesh being a poor country doesn't have enough number schools to meet the requirement of a huge population. So, in a public school 60 to 70 students seat in one class.'*

Moreover, almost all the teachers mentioned that they teach classes of large number of students, which is a reality of the government schools in Bangladesh. The tight schedule of class coupled with pressure to finish the syllabus within the established academic framework does not give them much opportunity to help the students at an individual level. After the class, students are left on their own to fight with their reading problems.

Teacher Ayat on the other hand relates students' habit of memorising whatever they read without understanding as a big obstacle in the way of becoming an effective reader. He particularly mentions the comprehension test where students do well only on the passages they have practised before. If they are given any new passage for a reading comprehension test, they fail to comprehend. He blames students' habit of memorising without understanding as a big impediment in the way of becoming effective readers. This keeps them away from reading thoughtfully and comprehending the meaning. He also evaluates that students' bad habit of translating everything they read in English into Bengali makes them slow readers and hence makes reading a very tiring exercise.

Teacher Murad identifies students' reading problems with word meanings and pronunciation. Since there are many students in a class, only the randomly selected students get a chance to read aloud in

the class. Therefore, the students' lacking of word recognition and pronunciation stay unidentified due to inadequate reading practices in the classroom.

> *'Students pronounce the words peculiarly, do not understand punctuation, and their reading shows no understanding…'*

According to him, this problem with word recognition occurs due to students' lack of hold over the language as a whole. As a result, they cannot interact with the text and become reluctant towards reading.

Teacher Salim however, seems to believe that Bangladeshi student' problems with reading English are due to the lack of proper lessons on reading the English language at the initial stage. Due to this poor foundation, reading in English appears like a difficult task to them and their anxiety and lack of confidence make them more reluctant towards reading. He also points out that most of the texts used in teaching English in Bangladesh are about English-speaking countries whose social context is not familiar to them.

Teacher Mehmet feels that the reason that gives rise to reading problems among Bangladeshi students is the lack of interest in learning English as a foreign language. He says that,

> *'Most of the students do not recognise the necessity of learning this international language. They think it as extra burden as they do not have any   contact with the language.'*

Mehmet laments that students' lack of exposure to the English language outside the classroom makes the task of learning the language gruesome and boring. They fail to relate themselves with the real implication of the language and English becomes a language confined in books only. So, students fail to interact with the text, lose interest and treat it as an extra burden. He says that, *'…in Bangladesh maximum students live in villages and the environment they live in is not favourable to learn English'.*

Teacher Azan also feels also that students' overall disinterest in the English Language itself makes it difficult for them to generate interest in L2 reading. The students do not use the English language in their daily life and therefore it just becomes a subject to study at school rather than a subject to comprehend and treasure.

Teacher Mehmet incorporates all the reasons mentioned above by the four teachers and says that students get apprehended by the English language as it is difficult for them. They just want to memorize blindly without understanding whatever they read to pass the examination. This fear and anxiety make them disinterested in reading in English.

The majority of teachers mentioned that one of the most important reasons for reading problems of their students was their inability to understand the social context of the text they read. Teachers apprehend that lack of schematic knowledge creates hindrance for students in understanding English as the materials used in teaching the English language in Bangladesh are written in the context of English-speaking countries. Almost all of the teachers feel that at initial stages students should be given to read something whose social context is familiar to them to generate interest in reading.

Lack of quality teaching at the primary schools, poor classroom environment, lack of interest in language learning, ineffective way of assessment, lack of contextual materials and discourse incompetence are among few reading problems analysed from Bangladeshi teachers' point of view.

Research Findings

After bringing light to the reading problems, the researcher tried to find out teachers' adopted ways to tackle the difficulties of students. Although the responses are diverse and different from one teacher to another, everyone came up with his own way of handling students' problems and adopted strategies to help them. Following are the strategies teachers adopt in solving reading problems:

Vocabulary and Pronunciation

All the five Bangladeshi teachers seemed to give importance to understanding the word meanings of the texts and reading aloud in class with the correct pronunciation. Teacher Azan mentions that most of the students do not know the word meanings and becomes nervous in reading. When they tend to ask the word meanings to the teacher, they pronounce the words incorrectly. In such situations, he gives time for correcting their pronunciations and teaches different meanings that one-word form might represent.

Teacher Mehmet says that reading aloud in the classroom helps the student to a greater extent. It allows the teacher to figure out student's problems and to address them. Moreover, reading comprehension tests also help teachers in figuring out students' reading difficulties. Mehmet mentioned that he sets questions from the text which students have been asked to read. If they can answer correctly, it is understood they have comprehended the text correctly. To make the whole class interactive he says,

> *'In the classroom I never allow the student to be silent or a passive listener, while someone is reading other listeners are asked questions about their comprehension of the topics read out'*

All the participants talk in favour of reading aloud as it helps them in identifying students' problems with word recognition and pronunciation. Teacher Ayat identifies that to make the reading session interesting in the classroom he has to employ the practice of reading aloud despite its slow reading practices. He seems to underscore the problem that it is not possible to engage every student in this class-room activity.

Proper Instruction

Teacher Ayat along with the other four teachers believes that students should be given instructions before reading and it should be done in every class until students become independent and confident readers. He has to guide students in understanding each paragraph of the text and then focus on the questions mentioned in the syllabus about the text. He also says that he has to go through line by line of the text in the class and explain every difficult word he comes across. Sometimes, he makes a vocabulary list and explains the word meanings to the students before starting the lesson. He says,

> *'To engage the students in the class, I read aloud individual paragraph in the class. I ask them to explain in their own words what the paragraph wants to say. Sometimes I allow them to explain in their mother tongue what they have just read.'*

Ayat gave a very interesting suggestion to help Bangladeshi students in reading. He suggested that students should be given texts written in easy language so that the flow of reading is not hampered to develop an interest in reading. He says, *'If the text is full of difficult vocabulary, students lose interest in*

He requests teachers not to discourage the student by rebuking him in front of the class if he tends to be a slow reader. The teacher should have the patience to deal with his queries and give him extra attention. He also suggests that in the case of a large class, small groups of students can be made and each group will be handed over to an individual English language teacher. So, the teacher can focus on every student and help them in developing language skills like reading.

Teacher Mehmet says, *'I as a teacher become a role model of reading text. After reading I ask them a question to evaluate how much they could understand. Sometimes I compare the text of reading with other current affairs in a manner that makes them laugh. In this way I make the class of reading enjoyable to all the students.'*

This is how Mehmet tries to make reading enjoyable for the students and does not want them to feel that they are reading something in a foreign language. He presumes that students' lack of interest and fear of learning a foreign language could be a reason for students' problems with reading.

The reason they do not want to practice reading in English is that they are not confident enough to handle the language and understand it all by themselves. They need the constant help of a teacher to guide them through their reading. This dependency might sometimes become an obstacle in becoming an effective reader. But as a teacher he believes that helping the students constantly at the initial stage of reading is necessary.

Interesting Reading Materials

Teacher Salim appears to be very optimistic in using authentic real-life text materials in classroom language teaching. He says, *'the use of authentic reading materials in the classroom will help students to get a real flavour of the language. They will see how the language is used in a day to day life and English language might become more tangible to them'.* He informs that in Bangladesh many newspapers publish news in English. So, varieties of options are available for the teachers. Teachers can pick up any newspaper whose topic and structure of a language might be suitable for the students and show a variety of language structures used in different newspapers in reporting on the same topic. That will create an interest among the students, and they will realise the importance of learning the English language. Teacher Azan also feels that teachers should have the freedom to choose authentic materials and texts outside the syllabus and use attractive and contemporary issues to attract students' attention to make reading a pleasurable experience for them. Authentic texts are more lively and better than concrete materials of textbooks (Swaffar, 1985). If the subject matter is familiar, they will be enthusiastic in reading and will be able to concentrate on the sentence structure of the language. Discourse competence is necessary for being an effective reader.

Other teacher participants did not directly mention about using authentic texts in classroom language teaching but they suggested using texts whose language is simple and the social context is familiar to the students. All the teachers agree on the fact that   at the beginning, learners should be given to read something whose social context is familiar. They rather insist that it will be better if texts are written from a Bangladeshi context. Teacher Murad says, "*texts of Bangladesh contexts would provide a better understanding of the language. Once they get used to reading, we can provide them texts of dynamic tastes.*" Two other teachers also suggest that as beginners, students should adopt the language and skills of reading in English. They want students to focus on the structure of the language and then on the context.

Grabe (1991) also believes that contextual knowledge can overcome linguistic barriers. Teacher Mehmet says, *'it is natural to comprehend anything from the known circumstance. We would prefer the text to be written in a Bangladesh context.'*

Peer Interaction and Guidance

In response to the question of helping a student in practical settings, Teacher Salim says that *'I help a student in my class who is struggling with English reading and ask the above-average students to assist him as well.'* He also groups struggling students with students who have better understanding of the language and reading skills. The teacher encourages slow readers to read more outside the academic texts and suggests names of books. He believes that reading problems can be overcome through extensive reading practices and says *'no matter how much a teacher helps students with reading, if the students do not practise reading, they would not be able to overcome the problems.'*

The teacher also thinks that schools should issue the practice of going to the library a mandatory task for each student and during every week separate hours should be allotted for library visits. In this way, students may feel that reading is an important aspect and they are being assessed on it.

Changes in Students' English Language Evaluation

At present, the examination system allocates no marks for classroom performance; the students do not concentrate on the class lectures. They only cram the answers for the exam from the selected text without understanding the meaning. Teacher Azan addresses the urgency for the Bangladeshi education system to change the mode of testing and examination by saying, *'I think only a few marks should be fixed for the examination. Most of the marks should be given on class performance. Then the learners will try to give full concentration in the class room.'*

Teacher Ayat also gives importance to classroom activities and does a random selection of students to participate in the class activity of reading. He tries to ensure that every student, no matter whether he is the one reading or listening, is fully engaged in the reading activity. Grabe (1991) mentions that reading for purpose motivates students in becoming effective readers. Moreover, Ayat also asks students to write the summary of their reading as a class-work or home-work to figure out whether they have understood the reading assignment properly and mark them.

Reading is an important language learning skill and learning to read is the first step of language learning. Teacher Murad, like Teacher Azan suggests that students should not be assessed only based on examination rather marks should be allotted on their class performance as well. In the class, teachers make students practice reading by reading aloud so that teachers can correct their mistakes and make them read as they are very reluctant to do it. In summary, data underscores that if reading is to be made effective for Government-run school students, teachers need to concentrate more in the class instead of assessing their students through annual exams.

Teacher Mehmet suggests that Bangladeshi schools should have more English language teachers and government should give proper teaching training to them so that they can make the class a more interactive one. He emphasizes that the ratio of a number of students to the teacher should be balanced, only then students will be able to get proper attention and guidance from the teachers and language learning will be a feasible and exciting experience.

On the question of using reading strategies like skimming, scanning, predicting and inferring in the classroom, most of the teachers found the question difficult to answer. In the interview it became evident that the learning environment has a direct bearing on teaching reading strategies. Teacher Azan feels that students do not have enough hold over the English language required to teach them these reading strategies. Teacher Ayat's answer on the role of prediction in developing effective reading skills is noteworthy. He says that it is not possible to practice reading strategies like predicting and inferring due to large number of students and short duration of classes. Teacher Mehmet seems to use prediction in teaching 'word guessing' and shows students how to go on reading without looking for the word meaning in the dictionary. The rest of them did not give a proper answer even on the question on prediction and using reading strategies in the classroom. They somehow avoided the question by saying that due to students' English language problems, these four reading strategies are far beyond their understanding.

Discussion

The data received from the respondents suggests that they were not aware of the effective reading strategies. One of the respondents seemed to follow bottom-up approaches where they could teach their students how to focus on words, phases, sentences and paragraphs. It may be argued that students following this approach may focus on smaller parts of the texts thereby failing to grasp the basic meaning of the text (Harmer, 2001).

Most of the teachers gave more importance to vocabulary and correct pronunciation over reading strategies. Some of them mentioned that these reading strategies are difficult to be taught in an overcrowded class where each student needs proper attention and guidance. It can be considered as a fact to a certain extent but in the long run students need to learn these reading skills to be efficient readers. Surveying, skimming, scanning, inference, predicting, and guessing are important reading skills and teachers should select reading strategies for teaching according to students' needs (Grabe, 1991).

Almost all of the teachers mentioned that they teach classes with many students, which is a reality of the government schools in Bangladesh. According to Harmer (2000) large classes cause difficulties for both teachers and students. "National Council of Teachers of English Guidelines" and "The Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates" suggests that a foreign language class size should not be more than twenty-five students. Classes larger than that do not allow teachers and students to interact. In addition, the tight schedule of class coupled with pressure to finish syllabus within the established academic framework do not give them enough opportunity to work on the student's weakness at an individual level. This echoes with Kumaravadivelu (2005) who talks about teacher's limitations to go beyond the rules set at ministry levels. The ideal kind of classroom environment which is in favour of language teaching rarely exists in public schools of Bangladesh.

It is noted that the medium of teaching in Bangladesh is their L1, which is Bengali. Even teachers use Bengali while taking an English class. This constant interference of the first language while reading and dependency on the Grammar Translation Method hinders effective reading. Students try to understand reading by translating it to their L1 which makes them slow readers and gradually they lose interest in the foreign language. Alderson (2000) mentions that the dependency of L2 learners on their L1 is due to their insufficient knowledge in L2. In L2 reading, the overall understanding of the second language is important than reading in L1.

Data further show that if the context and content of the text is familiar to the pupils, they can

concentrate on the sentence structure with greater involvement. Grabe (1991) also believes that contextual knowledge can overcome linguistic barriers. The students should be made familiar with the sentence structure of English so they can easily identify and comprehend what they are reading. Cook (1997) also notes that schemas help students to comprehend the text quickly. Widdowson (1990) and Alptekin (1993) also identify the importance of schematic knowledge in reading. Some of the teachers even feel that authentic materials like newspaper articles can be used for reading tests to make them feel the real use of the language.

The study reveals that there is a dearth of well-trained English language teachers in Bangladesh. One teacher teaching a class of sixty to seventy students cannot be expected to help individual students with their reading problems. There should be a balanced proportion between several students and teachers. Large classes cause difficulties for both teachers and students (Harmer, 2000) and Bangladeshi students, in general, need more help in improving their English language skills. Pre-teaching activities can develop students' ability for word guessing and automaticity of word recognition, according to Paran (1996). This will reduce students' stress and they can engage more with the text.

It became quite evident that teachers make their students practice reading by reading aloud. This is a practice that has been carried out for a long. It is discussed in the literature review that most students in South Asian countries like Bangladesh are expected to read aloud pointing to the words on the page with their index fingers. As a result of this approach, these students may get habituated with this practice and their reading becomes loud, slow and sometimes incomprehensible. But teachers mention that reading aloud with correct pronunciation can help them in independent reading. Teachers feel that by asking students to read aloud they can judge students' reading capabilities and level of competence in reading.

Data demonstrates, it is very necessary to develop students' awareness on importance in learning the English language as they do not have much exposure to the language outside the classroom. Grabe (1991) says that if students realise that they are reading for a purpose, it will motivate them to be good readers. Thus, data further identifies that students should be constantly made aware that English is an international language and they need to learn it to communicate with other parts of the world. In the long run, the English language is going to help them to a greater extent. Even in the job market, higher education, travel and in many other aspects, competence in the English language is very necessary. Therefore, in the globalising world, students should be motivated to learn this international language. The education system should also allot marks on class performance to make students feel that reading is an important aspect and they are being assessed on it. Harmer (2001) also reviewed that students should be encouraged to do extensive reading and authentic texts will be able to motivate students to a greater extent. It is important to make learners realise that the English language is the only way to see the world outside their territory of Bangladesh. Even authentic materials like newspaper and magazine articles can be used for reading tests to make them feel the real use of the language.

In sum, the study reveals that most Bangladeshi government school teachers are not adequately equipped to address this problem of reading as some teachers themselves have mentioned that they need proper training. The participants regret that the reality of the classroom has been ignored by the policymakers as there is a communication gap between policymakers and implementers (Rahman & Pandian, 2018a; 2018b). School systems that practice complex curriculum and are less concerned about the learners' needs, actually illustrate the inefficiency of the school administration system of a country (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 2018) and hence making language development difficult. Over crowdedness is an issue that is beyond teachers' control and teachers would benefit from an appropriate environment and a manageable number of students to deliver their teaching.

Conclusion

This research work has attempted to identify some of the major problems the Bangladeshi students encounter when reading English text. Problems like poor L2 learning environment, students' reluctance to the English language learning, ineffective way of assessment, lack of contextual reading materials and discourse incompetence are identified but a much deeper and longitudinal study would reveal more. The study tried to find out the strategies teachers adopt to deal with students' reading problems and their suggested solutions which seem to be consistent with the literature on second language reading. Their strategies are fruitful but cannot address the reading problems of every students of their class due to imbalance in teacher-student ratio and the findings to a large extent are representative of the situation in Bangladesh.

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Appendix- A

Consent Letter and form

Dear Participants,

I would like to invite you to take part in a survey questionnaire and my research is based on teachers' analysis of students' problems with reading in English. I would like to know your impression and experience related to Bangladeshi students' problems in second language reading. It will be highly appreciated it if you could kindly fill in the questionnaire at your earliest convenience. After you send me back the questionnaire, I would like take an interview to discuss the issues related to reading in English. I would like to conduct the online interview by using 'Skype'. Your co-operation will be invaluable for this study.

The information you provide will be confidential and used only for this research. I also guarantee that your identities will remain completely anonymous.

Thank you for your keen interest and thorough cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Participant's Consent Form

Please tick each box if you agree with the statement.

- I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved and have been explained to me.

- I understand that my involvement in this study will remain strictly confidential and that data collected will be made anonymous

- I hereby fully and freely consent to participation in the study.

- Having given this consent, I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's name

(BLOCK CAPITALS):

Participant's signature: Date:

Appendix B

Questionnaire

1)   How many students do you teach in each class?

     .... students (write numbers)

2)   What are the most common problems Bangladeshi students faces with reading in English language?

     ....

3)   How would you describe the reading level of the students in your class?

     ....

4)   How often students need instructions before reading? Could you explain the reason for   your answer?

     ....

5)   Are the students interested in reading in English? If not, then why?

6)   What are the reasons that cause Bangladeshi students problems with reading?

     ....

7)   Do you think at initial stage you should give students to read something whose social context is familiar to the students? Could you explain the reasons for the answer?

     ....

8)   How do you make students practice reading strategies to develop their reading skill?

     ....

9)   When do you help students in understanding new words   of their prescribed textbook?

     ....

10) Do you ask students to identify the main ideas of what they have read and how?

     ....

11) How do you assess their understanding of what they have read? Could you explain in details?

     ....