

Theories and Practices Nexus of Reading Skill in National University of Bangladesh

Md. Mohoshin Reza*

***Abstract:** Only enunciating the sounds, symbolized with written marks, may be an aspect of reading but is not the final goal. If a learner can utter the words of a text but cannot understand the meaning of it, then, in his activity, reading has not taken place. So, to reach the final goal, one must be taught to derive meaning from the word combinations in the text. The study, at the very outset, discusses 'reading' from various perspectives, states the purposes, general activities and strategies, classroom practices and procedures of efficient reading and evaluates the content of 'reading skill' in the syllabus of National University Compulsory English Course (NUCEC). This article, an outcome of an empirical study, discusses teaching and learning theories of reading developed over the ages and explores the state of teaching and learning situations of reading in Rangpur, Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions of Bangladesh through questionnaire surveys, classroom observations, interviewing and proficiency tests with a view to seeing the overall proficiency level (OPL) of students of National University (NU) in reading which reflects the overall growth rate of the practices (OGRP) of reading in the study areas. It also measures the overall rate of proficient students (ORPS) of NU who have minimum level of standard (MLS) in reading proficiency.*

***Keywords:** NUCEC, OGRP, OSSP, ORPS, MLS*

1. Introduction

Reading with comprehension and fluency is a skill which must be taught in progressive stages and practised regularly with carefully graded material (Rivers, 1968, p. 215). National University (NU) of Bangladesh introduced National University Compulsory English Course (NUCEC) of 100 marks for all of its Bachelor (Pass and Honours) level students. One of the specific objectives of the syllabus is to develop students' reading proficiency so that they can be benefitted personally and professionally. As per the Bangladesh Education Commission Report of 2007, more than 65% (01 million) students

*Department of English, Daffodil International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

of Bangladesh are involved in learning language skills through NUCEC in about 2000 colleges. The present study discusses teaching and learning theories and techniques of 'reading', investigates classrooms of 21 colleges from 3 divisions of Bangladesh under NU and attempts to demonstrate the overall growth rate of the practice (OGRP) of reading and the overall proficiency level (OPL) of students. It also demonstrates the overall rate of students of NU who have minimum level of proficiency in reading.

2. Reading as a Language Skill and Related Factors

Only enunciating the sounds, symbolized with written marks, is one aspect of reading but it is not the final goal. If a learner can read the words of a text but cannot understand the meaning of it, then, in his activity, reading has not completely taken place. To reach the final goal, one must be taught to derive meaning from the word combinations in the text. Fries (1963, p. 121) says that in reading the student develops a considerable range of habitual responses to a specific set of patterns of graphic shapes. According to Scherer (1966), what is needed is a carefully designed programme of developmental stages, at each of which the student is trained in certain aspects of reading so that he gradually acquires sufficient skill to be able to continue on his own. And an easily accessible library with foreign-language magazines may be useful for supplementary reading. (Rivers, 1968, p. 222).

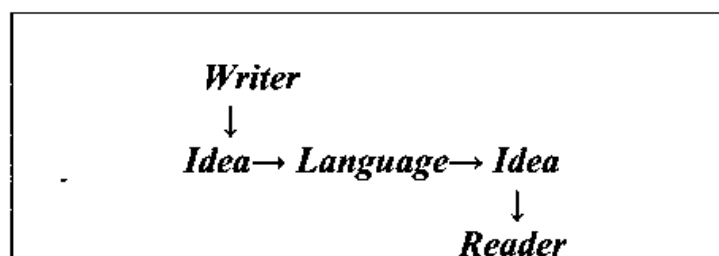
Reading is purposeful. McDonough and Shaw (2003, p. 90) refer to Williams (1984) who usefully classifies the purposes of reading into (a) getting general information from text, (b) getting specific information from a text, and (c) for pleasure or for interest. Rivers and Temperely (1978) enlist some reasons for one to read e.g. to- obtain information, obtain instructions, understand business letters, get pleasure, enjoyment or excitement and know when or where something happens etc. However, the essential purpose of reading is generally to get information and/ or pleasure (p. 187).

3. Classroom Application

Reading activities vary according to the levels but some are commonly practised in classes. Ur (1991) suggests- questioning learners to find out core information of text, do-it-yourself questions, providing title, summarizing, continuing a story, writing preface of a text, practicing with gapped text, comparing ideas, responding to a provocative article or re-presentation of content in which students need to sketch a pen picture of the events etc.

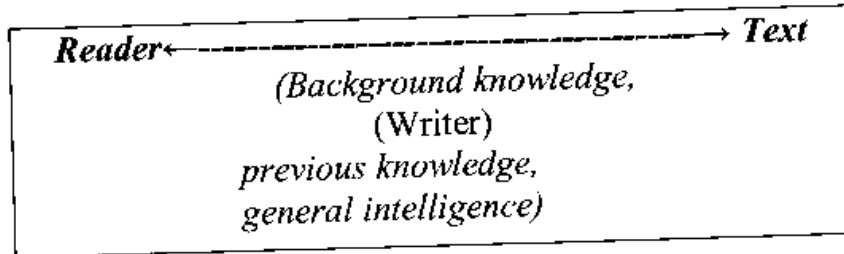
Making learners understand a simple text is only the beginning. Reading skill needs to be fostered so that learners can cope with more sophisticated texts and tasks and deal with them efficiently and skillfully. So, teachers should help students fostering the 'efficient' quality through selection of the types of texts or tasks, and tasks should encourage learners to apply their own background knowledge and experiences to the reading of the text. Tasks aimed at encouraging learners to guess or 'do without' words, can help students in becoming habituated to using these strategies. Teachers make sure that students are provided with different reading tasks which encourage them explicitly to use different strategies. Skimming and scanning are useful strategies for students to operate reading activity. Skilled readers scan to locate specific information in a text from different areas and skim to extract general information from it. Looking for 'clues' in the titles or sub- titles, and within the given text can be another strategy. Scanning tasks are very useful in which students are asked in advance to extract specific item of information (data) while reading. Finally, 'frank explanation' (the teacher 'legitimizes' skipping; insignificant or less significant parts of a text), can help the learner well.

The appropriateness of language level depends to some extent on the tasks. So, texts should be selected through matching the language with the learner's level. In the opinion of Ur (1991, p. 147), the most useful thing for the teachers is to provide students with the opportunities to do as much (successful) reading as possible, including a varied diet of reading types (fast, slow, skimming, scanning, studying and so on). The aim is to encourage 'automatization' of recognizing common words or word combinations because this is in general the crucial contributory factor to reading speed. When readers are merely 'recipients' of information or an 'empty vessel' it is considered 'text as object' view point having nothing to contribute to the reading process.



The Text as Object View Point (McDonough and Shaw, 2003, p. 92)

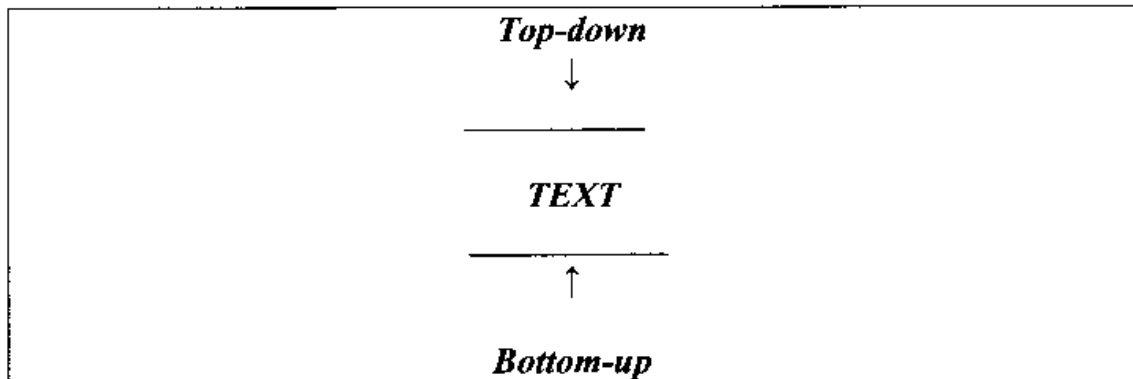
Recently it is replaced by 'text as process' view point which encourages close interaction between the reader and the text-



The Text as Process View Point (Ibid)

An efficient reader is able to interact with various types of texts and can choose appropriate reading strategies depending on the nature of the text. Pre-reading is a useful strategy because it focuses learners' attention to the types of information that they are about to read. Efficient readers can access content by changing reading speed, select significant features, skim the rest, infer meaning, think ahead by predicting, and use background knowledge to understand meaning of the text. The major contribution to the knowledge of reading is provided by Schema theory. Bartlett (1932) first explains that man's present knowledge of the world is interrelated with previous knowledge and experiences i.e. the 'schemata' which allows him to predict what may happen. Brown and Yule (1983), McCarthy and Carter (1994), Cook (1997) and Nunan (1999) all provide accounts of how this background knowledge can influence the comprehension process. Nunan says, "We interpret what we read in terms of what we already know with the content of what we are reading (1999, p. 256)." In line with the schema theory, an efficient reader can also use 'Bottom-up' and 'Top-down' strategies.

According to 'bottom up' theory, the reader tries to decode each individual letter by matching it to the minimal units of meaning and arrives at a meaning. On the other hand, the 'top-down' theory proposes an interaction between the reader and the text involving the man in activating his past knowledge of the world e.g. experiences, intuitions etc. to arrive at the meaning. So, the 'top-down' process interacts with the 'bottom-up' process in order to aid comprehension.



Top-down and Bottom-up Processing of a Text [McDonough and Shaw (2003, p. 93)]

White (1981) suggests ‘the stages and procedures’ of a reading lesson that may help firstly, to put the skill into a classroom context and secondly, to see some of its possible relationships with the other language skills:

Stage 1 Arousing students’ interests and motivation by linking the topic of the text to their own experience or existing knowledge and giving some pre-reading/ focusing questions to help them do this

Stage 2 Giving them points to search for in the reading text, or asking the students to suggest the points

Stage 3 Encouraging a discussion of answers after reading

Stage 4 Developing students into writing by using the gained information for another purpose(p. 191)

Understanding vocabulary is an integral part. Learners need to progress beyond the basic grammar. Lewis (1993) argues for prepositions, modal verbs, and delexical verbs. Ur advocates a type of ‘mini syllabus’ of vocabulary items and collocations.

For feedback, questions should be given to learners in written or spoken form. A balance of the two is appropriate. Yes/no, true/false, multiple choice, open-ended questions can be used. Non-verbal matrix can be given to be completed. And that type of questions should be used which can bring the inner thoughts out of the learner. Nuttall (1996) identifies five basic question types:

- Literal comprehension
- Organizing or putting the information in the text into a different order
- Inferring or reading between the lines
- Questions requiring measures of personal response
- Questions of evaluation (p. 110)

The teacher needs to prepare students to extract meaning from text. When information is extracted, the teacher can use the information to do something else e.g. jigsaw reading or assembling an idea from a set of instructions (Summary writing, extracting main idea, sub-ideas etc.). Thus, a successful reading enables a certain task to be completed. From the above discussion, a list of activities can be obtained. Now it can be seen, from Ur (1996), what the teacher has to do for teaching reading:

1. S/he makes sure that the students get a lot of successful reading experiences.
2. S/he makes sure that most of the vocabulary in reading text is familiar to the students, and that words which are unknown can be either easily guessed or safely ignored.
3. S/he gives interesting tasks before asking the students to read so that they have a clear purpose and motivating challenge.
4. S/he uses texts that are interesting enough for students to provide their own motivation.
5. S/he allows and even encourages students to manage without understanding every word: by the use of scanning tasks. S/he lets them focus on limited items of information which are required.
6. S/he provides as wide a variety of texts and tasks as possible to give them practices in different kinds of reading.

4. Reading Skill in the Syllabus of NUCEC and Teachers' Roles

The syllabus of National University Compulsory English Course (NUCEC) has a specific section for reading- '*Reading and Understanding*' which includes:

- a) Understanding different purposes and types of readings,
- b) Guessing word-meaning in different contexts,
- c) Understanding long sentences,
- d) Recognizing main ideas and supporting ideas,
- e) Answering comprehension questions,
- f) Writing summaries.

The syllabus mentions-

Students will be expected to read passages that might come across in their everyday life, such as news papers, magazines, and general books. Simple stories will also be included to give students a familiarity with different uses of the language.

However, the syllabus suggests teaching of '*Understanding different purposes and types of readings*'. Much of the current thinking on reading tends to focus primarily on the purpose of reading activity; even if reading is done only for pleasure, it is still purposeful (McDonough and Shaw, 2004, p. 90). Williams (1984) usefully classifies reading into three specific purposes: (a) getting general information from the text, (b) getting specific information from a text, and (c) for pleasure or for interest. The list that is drawn up may include a newspaper, letters (personal and formal), booklets, leaflets, magazines, a telephone directory, timetables, advertisements, labels on jars, tins and packets and so on for reading. Teachers should mention the reading materials in classroom, make students curious and give them practices e.g. reading a story, show them how to obtain instruction from a text to perform some tasks for work or daily life, involve in reading various kinds of texts and instruct them to know how, when, why or where something happens. Above all, teachers think of reading purposes and involve learners in reading by selecting interesting topics.

The syllabus has an item '*Guessing word-meaning in different contexts*'. Naturally, teachers have to instruct students how to use background knowledge, think ahead by predicting and guess or infer meaning from context.

The third item of the syllabus '*Understanding long sentences*' requires teachers to instruct students— how a long sentence is linked together, how to work out with unfamiliar words and how to trace the organization of the structure and infer the meaning. Beaumont's scheme may be highly useful for the teachers of NUCEC to work out the other items of reading in the syllabus e.g. '*Recognizing main ideas and supporting ideas*', '*Answering Comprehension Questions*' and '*Writing Summaries*'. Beaumont's scheme (1983) is as follows-

1. *Text Structure*- how is it linked together? How can one work out unfamiliar words?
2. *Text Purpose*- what is the text for? Who is it written for? What is it written for? What does it do? How does it fulfill its purpose?
3. *Reading for Information*- what are the topic and the main idea? What are the supporting ideas? How can one distinguish between the main and the supporting ideas?
4. *Interpretation*- what are the opinions of the writer? How can one tell what the writer feels?

**Beaumont's Scheme for Achieving Goals and Objectives in Reading
(McDonough & Shaw, 2004, p. 100)**

For the sub-section of reading in the NUCEC- '*Recognizing main ideas and supporting ideas*', teachers can focus on the 3rd point of Beaumont's Scheme. If the teachers learn Beaumont's point *Reading for information* clearly, they can utilize it to teach students '*Answering Comprehension Questions*.' And Beaumont's *Interpretation* is sensitive to teaching another sub-section of reading in the NUCEC which is- '*Writing Summaries*'.

5. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is-

'to investigate and observe teaching, learning and real practice of reading and the proficiency level of students in reading in the National University of Bangladesh'.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. to review the theories of teaching reading
2. to find the overall growth rate of practice (OGRP) of reading in the National University (NU) of Bangladesh
3. to find the overall rate of proficient students (ORPS) in reading in the NU

6. Methodology of the Research

The present study observes the status of the overall growth rate of practices (OGRP) of reading and overall rate of proficient students (ORPS) of National University (NU) of Bangladesh in reading. Thus, it describes "who, what, when, where and how" of situations. In consideration of that, the present research is descriptive in nature since a descriptive research reveals a social situation. Again, a research explaining the causes of social phenomena is

called explanatory (Ahuja, 2002). This research also explores and observes the impediments to the way to practicing reading. It explains the nature of the obstacles and causes of failure. And thus, the study has also become explanatory in nature.

The major issues of investigation of the study are: reading items in the syllabus content of NUCEC, training, experiences and teaching techniques of teachers, teaching materials, classroom environment, facilities and overall classroom situations of reading practice. So, data have been collected through focusing on 4 major concerns:

1. Manpower for teaching of reading
2. Overall classroom situations regarding reading practice
3. Rate of practices of reading
4. Rate of students with minimum level of proficiency in reading

The selected areas of the study are: Dhaka, Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions of Bangladesh. The sample size of the study is 504. The respondents are taken from 21 colleges from 03 divisions of Bangladesh including 07 colleges from each division. This is mentionable that the population in NU is gigantic, as per the report of the National Education Commission, 2007, nearly 70% students of Bangladesh study the NUCEC at more than 20, 000 colleges across the country and practice of language of more than 15, 00,000 students of the country depend on the syllabus of NUCEC. The respondents are: 441 students, 42 teachers and 21 principals from the selected colleges. In total 441 students are chosen as samples from 21 colleges from 3 divisions including 147 from each division. ($441 \div 03 = 147$). 147 students of each division are selected from 07 colleges and they are divided into three (03) slots. Each slot includes 49 students: i) B. A (Hons) in English =49 students; ii) Honours (Non English) =49 students; iii) Degree (Pass Course) =49 students. 21 students are selected from each college. So, students from each division are 147 ($21 \text{ students} \times 07 \text{ colleges} = 147$). 21 students of each college are distributed in 3 slots. Each slot includes 07 students: i) B. A (Hons) English =07; ii) Honours of all Subjects (Non English) =07 and iii) Degree (Pass Course) =07.

The primary data have been collected from teachers, students and principals of the colleges and a member of the syllabus designing committee of the NUCEC. Reports of classroom observations and results of proficiency test of reading are considered the most significant data. Books on curriculum development theories, linguistic theories, research methods, journals,

Government Gazettes, Bangladesh Statistical Year Book, some PhD and M Phil dissertations and internet websites are used as secondary sources of data. Data collection methods used in the study are: i) Questionnaire Survey; ii) Interview; iii) Classroom Observation iv) Focus Group Discussion v) interviewing and vi) Proficiency Test of Reading (PTR) of Students. Structured tools constructed and used in the study are: i) 03 Questionnaires for Teachers, Students and Principals; ii) 03 Check Lists for Classroom Observations and iii) Proficiency Test Papers.

7. Reports of Survey, Interview and Classroom Observations on Reading

Colleges, dealing with foreign language learners should furnish the library with comics, thrillers, poems, rhymes, short stories, classics, general knowledge, puzzles, quizzes and a good number of magazines, journals and so on for every day intensive and extensive reading. Through inspections, the study finds that 23.77% libraries of the colleges are up to the mark in sense of facilities and resources and 76.23% libraries are not standard in that sense:

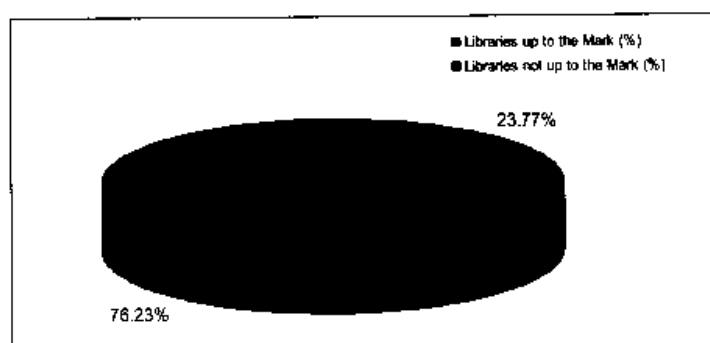


Fig 01: Position of Libraries in the Colleges of Bangladesh

During classroom observation, no teacher has been found to teach students techniques of reading through skimming, predicting and using background knowledge-

Practice through Skimming, Predicting and Background Knowledge	(%)	Practice through Skimming, Predicting and Background Knowledge	(%)	Total No. of teachers/Classrooms (N=100%)
00	0%	42	100%	42

Table 01: Teaching of Reading through Skimming, Predicting & Background Knowledge

92.85% teachers do not know how to use 'Bottom-up' and 'Top-down' processes-

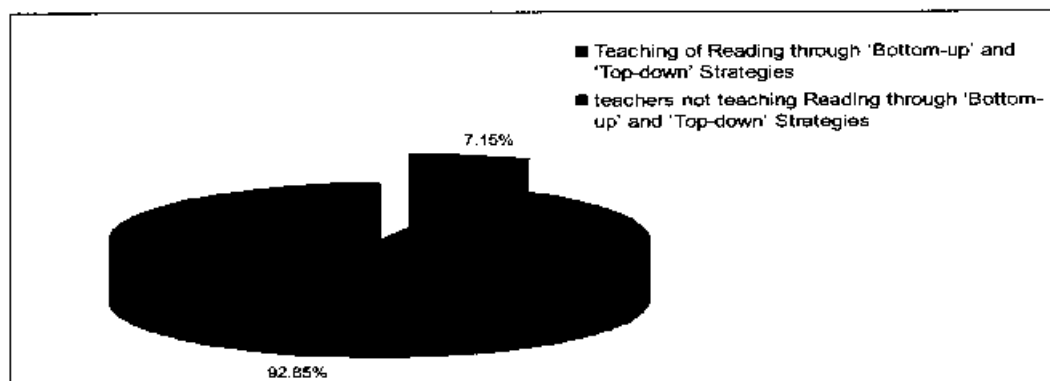


Fig 02: Teaching of Reading through Top-down and Bottom-up Processes

Teachers need to involve students in reading through intensive classroom-based work and extensive out-of-class practices. The following table demonstrates that 9.52% teachers involve students in extensive out-of-class practices of reading while 90.47% teachers ignore it-

No. of teachers involving students in out-of-class practices	(%)	No. of teachers not involving students in extensive out-of-class practices	(%)	Total No. of teachers (N=100%)
04	9.52%	38	90.47%	42

Table 02: Teaching of Reading through Out of Classroom Extensive Work

Generally, students should be taught vocabulary as part of teaching reading. The following table informs that nearly 14% teachers teach vocabulary as part of teaching reading and 86% do not-

No. of teachers teaching vocabulary	(%)	No. of teachers not teaching vocabulary	(%)	Total No. of teachers (N=100%)
06	14.26%	36	85.71%	42

Table 03: Teaching Vocabulary by Teachers

Teachers need feedback of reading and should test students through: Open Ended Questions, True/False Questions, Multiple Choice Questions, Yes/ No Questions etc. The study finds 54.76% teachers used to testing students through applying all of the question types and 45.23% teachers do not hold tests at all-

Teachers getting Feedback through Open Ended, True/False, Multiple Choice & Yes/ No Questions	(%)	Teachers not getting Feedback through Open Ended, True/False, Multiple Choice & Yes/ No Questions	(%)	Total No. of teachers (N=100%)
23	54.76%	19	45.23%	42

Table 04: Procedures of getting Feedback of Reading

The syllabus of NUCEC instructs the teachers to involve students in reading that might come across in their everyday life, i.e. news papers, magazines; general books, simple stories etc. to make students familiar with different uses of language. The study informs only 4.76% teachers involve learners in extensive reading-

No. of teachers involving students in reading news papers, magazines, and general books, simple stories and so on.	(%)	No. of teachers not involving students in reading news papers, magazines, and general books, simple stories and so on.	(%)	Total No. of teachers (N=100%)
02	4.76%	40	95.23%	42

Table 05: Teachers involving students in Reading News Papers, Magazines, General Books, Stories

According to the questionnaire survey report, 22% students reply in the positive that they have been benefited as readers by studying the NUCEC:

No. of students feeling benefited with the Section- <i>Reading and Understanding</i> of the NUCEC	(%)	No. of students not feeling benefited with the Section- <i>Reading and Understanding</i> of the NUCEC	(%)	Total No. of students (N=100%)
97	22%	344	78%	441

Table 06: Students' Opinions about Benefits from the Reading Section of NUCEC

Teaching and learning activities of reading generally include: the processes e.g. making students habituated to predicting contexts, guessing words, finding words from dictionary, skimming, using background knowledge, emphasizing regular and irregular verbs and nouns' while teaching vocabulary, emphasizing multiword verbs, idioms, prepositions, modal verbs, collocations etc. The study finds that 90.47% teachers do not make students habituated to *Guessing Words, Predicting Contexts* and do not use '*Background Knowledge*' as a strategy for reading, 80.95% teachers do not emphasize finding '*Words from Dictionary*', using '*Regular and Irregular Verbs, nouns, multiword verbs, idioms, prepositions, modal verbs, collocations*' while teaching vocabulary. On the other hand, 85.71% teachers do not choose '*Skimming*' as a strategy. On an average, the rate of applications of general techniques methods of reading (GTMR) is 29.62% maintained in the colleges:

General Techniques & Methods of Reading (GTMR) Applied by teachers in the Colleges of Bangladesh	No. of Colleges applying GTMR	GT MR Applied (%)	GTMR not Applied (%)	Average Application of GTMR (%)
Teachers making students habituated to Predicting Contexts	02	9.52 %	90.47%	
Teachers making students habituated to Guessing Words	02	9.52 %	90.47%	
teachers emphasizing finding ' <i>Words from Dictionary</i> ' while teaching vocabulary	04	19.04 %	80.95%	
Teachers using ' <i>Skimming</i> ' as a Reading Strategy	03	14.28 %	85.71%	

Teachers using 'Background Knowledge' as a Reading Strategy	02	9.52 %	90.47%
Teachers emphasizing 'Regular and Irregular Verbs and Nouns' while teaching vocabulary	04	19.04 %	80.95%
Teachers emphasizing Multiword verbs, idioms, prepositions, modal verbs, collocations	04	19.04 %	80.95%
Teachers obtaining Reading Feedback from students with True/False and Multiple Choice Questions	18	85.71 %	14.28%
Teachers obtaining Reading Feedback from students with Open Ended Questions	17	80.95 %	19.04%
Total No. of Colleges (N=100%): 21			

Table 07: GTMR Applied by Teachers in the Colleges of Bangladesh

6. Proficiency Test of Reading (PTR)

The proficiency test of reading (PTR) maintains the following standard of levels to approximate the position of reading practice and reading proficient students in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions:

Scores (%)	Status
0-32.99 Points (Pts)	Frustrating
33-39.99 Pts	Poor
40-44.99 Pts	Substandard
45 and Above Pts	Standard

Table 08: Standard Maintained for the Approximation of the Status of Reading Practice¹

¹ 33% is the minimum pass mark in the National University. So, below 33% points out of 100 is considered a frustrating score. One of the syllabus objectives is "to benefit students professionally". 45% is the minimum criteria fixed by the Public Service Commission of Bangladesh for one to compete for a position in the Civil Services of Bangladesh and therefore, 45% and above points have been considered standard.

The research arranges PTR of students to empirically measure the level of reading proficiency. Through reading text, predicting contexts, guessing meanings students were tested on *i. filling in the blanks, ii. open ended or multiple choice questions, iii. giving a title to the story, and iv. writing summary* getting 2.5 points on each of the items totaling 10 points (2.5+2.5+2.5+2.5). The Proficiency Test Paper (PTP) keeps the 1st item- *Filling in the Blanks* to test students' capability of predicting and guessing the missing ideas. *Multiple Choice Questions* is kept to test students' smooth flow of understanding while reading the text given for test. The PTP includes *Giving a Title to the Story* of the text to test students' capability of understanding the essence of the story. *Writing Summary* is the 4th item of the PTP to test students' capability of recognizing main idea and differentiating it from the supporting ideas.

Twenty one (21) students have been taken from each of the 21 colleges and their fluency of reading is tested on 4 criteria (each having 2.5 Pts). So, 21 students of each of the colleges are tested on aggregate 210 points (10 x 21= 210 Pts). The average score of students of all colleges in the PTR reveals the overall proficiency level (OPL) of the students in reading.

In the PTR, the average proficiency level (APL) indicating the average growth rate of the practices (AGRP) of reading in all colleges of Dhaka division has been found 46.72% (99 points out of 210 points). The data also means that 46.72% practice of reading has been held by the students of Dhaka division with minimum level of standard (MLS):

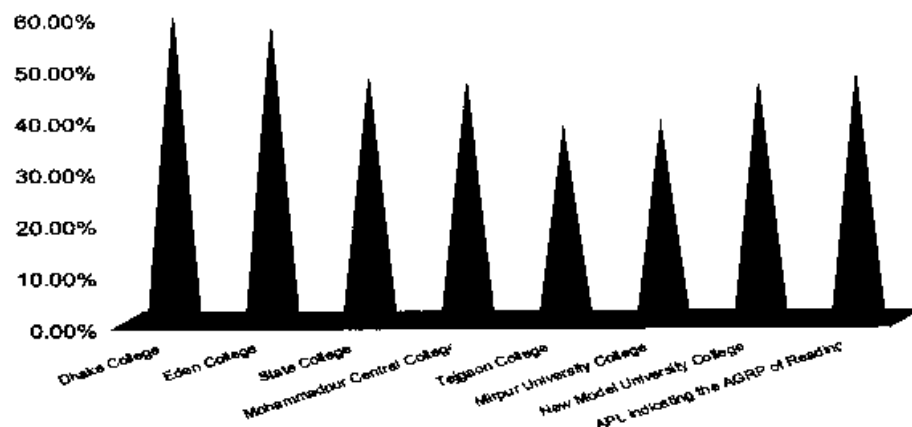


Fig 3: Average Growth Rate of Practices (AGRP) of Reading in Dhaka Division: 46.72%

Reading in Dhaka Division

The AGRP of reading is flowing 1.72% above the margin of the MLS. So, the position of average growth rate of practices (AGRP) of reading in Dhaka Division has been found “Standard” in the PTR.

Reading in Rajshahi Division

The APL indicating the average growth rate of the practices (AGRP) of reading in Rajshahi division has been found 41.43% in the PTR. The AGRP of reading falls 3.57% below the margin of minimum level of standard (MLS). Position of AGRP of reading in Rajshahi Division has been found “Sub-standard”.

Reading in Rangpur Division

In the PTR, the APL indicating the average growth rate of the practices (AGRP) of reading in the colleges of Rangpur division has been found 39.51% (83 points out of 210 points). The data means that 39.51% of the practices of reading has been held by the students of Rangpur division with minimum level of standard (MLS):

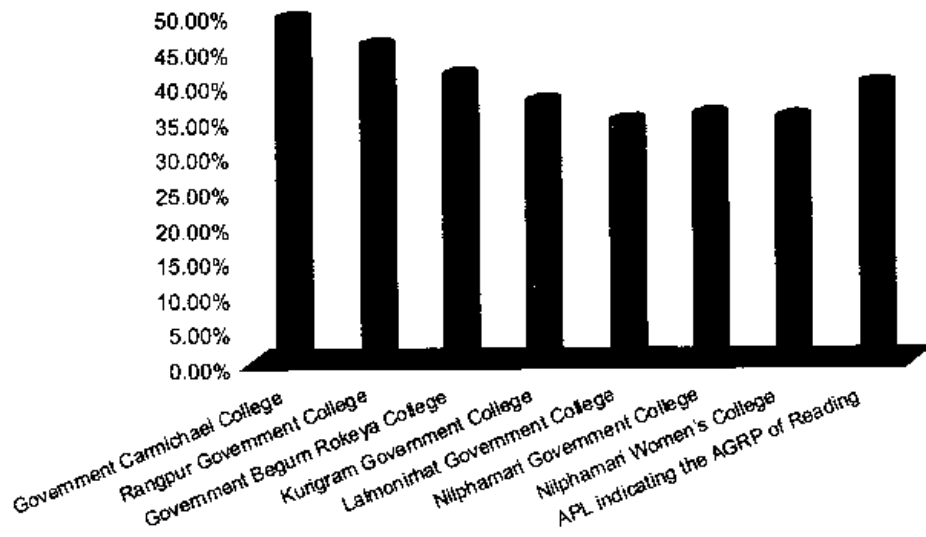


Fig 04: Average Growth Rate of the Practices (AGRP) of Reading in Rangpur Division: 39.51%

The APL indicating the average growth rate of the practices (AGRP) of reading in Rangpur division is 39.51%. The AGRP of reading falls 5.49% below the margin of minimum level of standard (MLS). Position of average growth rate of practices (AGRP) of reading in Rangpur Division has been found “Poor”.

8. Overall Status of Reading in the National University (NU)

The APL indicating the average growth rate of the practices (AGRP) of reading in Dhaka division is 46.72%, in Rajshahi division it is 41.43% and in Rangpur division it is 39.51%.

Divisions	Position of AGRP
Dhaka	Standard
Rajshahi	Substandard
Rangpur	Poor

Table 09: Status of the Practices of Reading in NU

So, as per the standard maintained in the study, position of AGRP of Dhaka division in reading has been found “Standard”, position of AGRP of Rajshahi division has been found “Substandard”, and AGRP of Rangpur division has been found “Poor”. The overall growth rate of the practices (OGRP) of reading in the NU has been found 42.55% in the PTR.

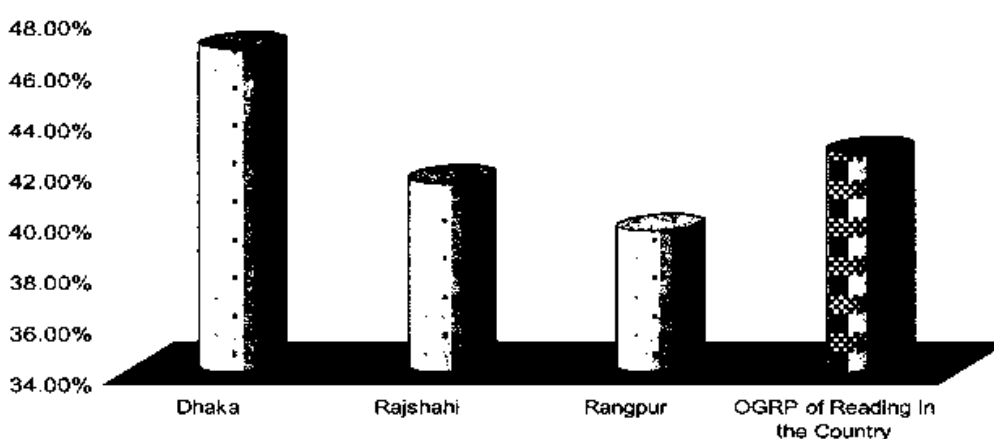


Fig 05: Overall Growth Rate of the Practices (OGRP) of Reading in NU

The data mean that NU students are able to practise 42.55% of reading with minimum level of standard but 57.45% of their practice of reading is mere uttering of an empty vessel. Dhaka division has qualified in the PTR. Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions have not qualified in the PTR. So, statistically, one third population of the NU has minimum proficiency of practising reading while two thirds of them do not have it:

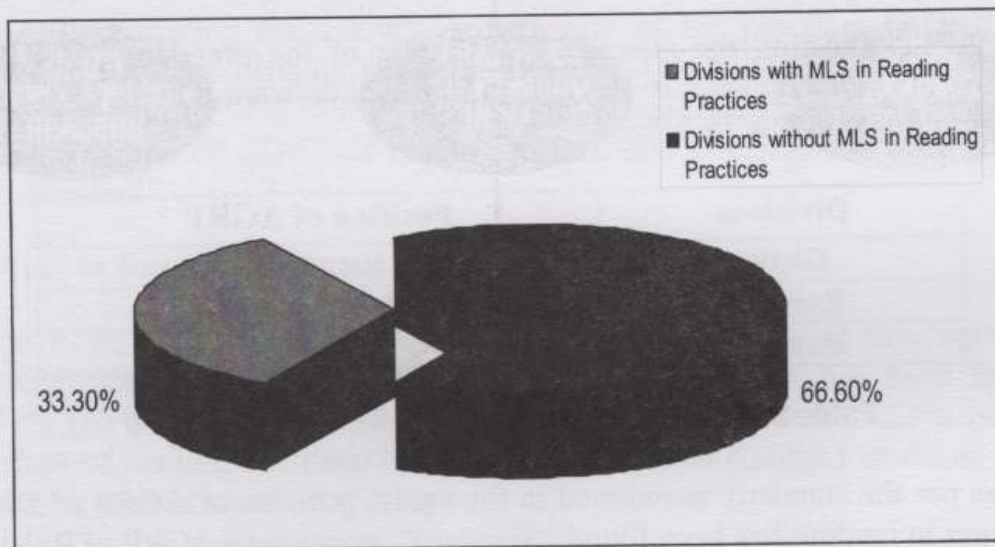


Fig 06: Divisions with MLS in Reading Practices

Therefore, the overall growth rate of the practices (OGRP) of reading in NU is 42.55% which falls 2.45% below the minimum level of standard (MLS). So, the status of reading practices in the NU is “Substandard” since it is below 45%. 42.55%, being the OGRP of reading, reveals that students suffer from 57.45% reading failure in the NU.

9. The Overall Rate of Proficient Students (ORPS) in Reading in NU

Students obtaining at least 45% points in the PTR, have been considered reading proficient students in the NU. The following table shows that 26.53% students from Dhaka division, 23.12% students from Rajshahi division and 22.44% students from Rangpur division have qualified in the PTR. The overall qualifying rate of students (OQRS) in reading is 24.03% in the PTR. The OQRS reflects the overall rate of proficient students (ORPS) in reading in the NU -

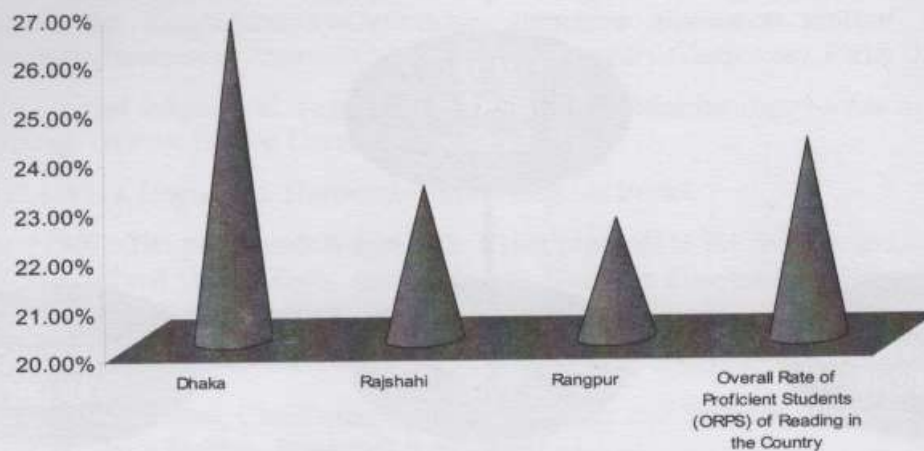


Fig 07: Overall Rate of Reading Proficient Students in NU

In reality, 24.03% students of NU practise reading with minimum level of standard (MLS) while 75.97% are not involved in real practices of reading. These 75.97% students of NU are empty vessel. The report reveals that 42.55% practices of reading take place in reality by 24.03% students in NU.

10. Findings

- The Overall Growth Rate of Practices (OGRP) of Reading in NU is 42.55%.
- The practice rate flows 2.45% below the minimum level of standard (MLS).
- The Status of Reading Practices in NU is Substandard.
- Overall Rate of Proficient students (ORPS) in Reading in NU is 24.03%.
- Students without minimum proficiency in Reading are 75.07%.
- The rate of Proficient students (ORPS) in Reading is Frustrating.
- Rate of the Colleges producing students with MLS in Reading is 28.57%
- Rate of the Colleges not producing students with MLS in Reading is 71.41%

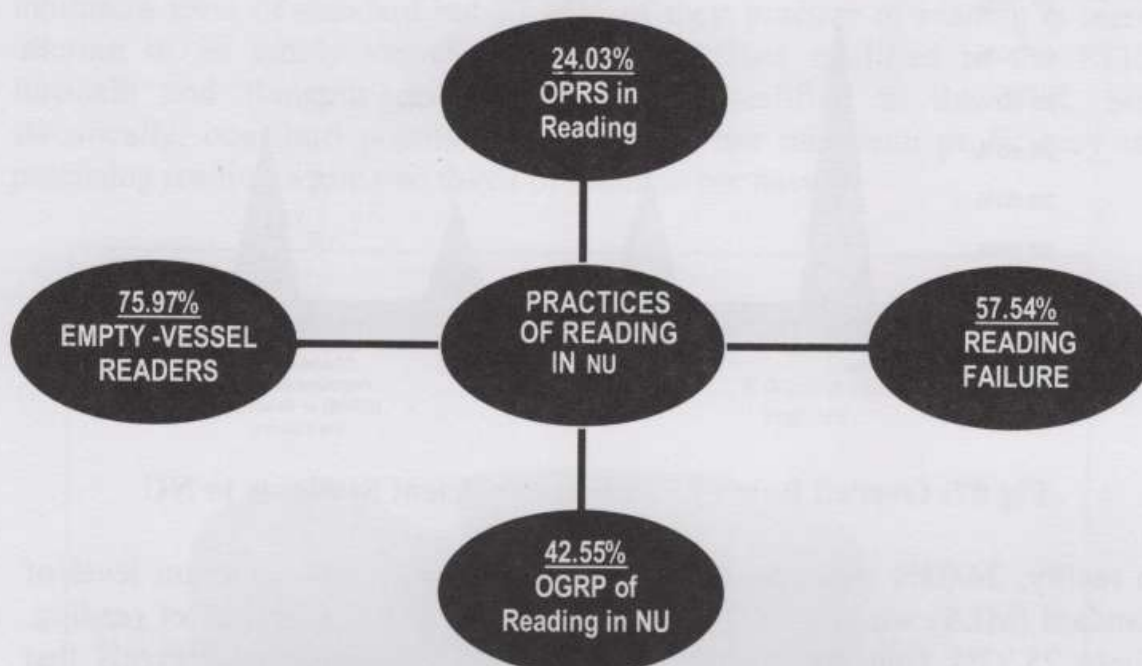


Fig 8: Status of the Practices of Reading in NU

11. Conclusion

The study discusses 'reading' from various perspectives, states the purposes of reading, points out the general activities and strategies of efficient reading, classroom practices and procedures of reading and finally evaluates the practice of the 'reading skill' in the National University (NU) of Bangladesh. The study has explored and described the teaching and learning situations of 'reading' in the NU. It has demonstrated the reports of the surveys, observations and the proficiency test of reading (PTR). The study shows that the overall growth rate of the practices (OGRP) of reading in NU is 42.55% while the overall rate of proficient students (ORPS) in reading in NU has been found 24.03%. The overall growth rate of reading practices in the NU is yet to reach a standard position and the ORPS is an indicator of a poor number of learners who practice reading with the minimum level of standard.

References

- Ahuja, Ram. (2002). *Research Methods*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Allen, J.P.B. (ed.). (1965). *Teaching English as a Second Language*. New York: McGraw Hill.

- Black P, Wiliam D. (2005). 'Changing teaching through formative assessment: research and practice: the King's-Medway-Oxfordshire formative assessment project'. in *OECD Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*. Paris: OECD.
- Brumfit, C. J. and Johnson, K. (eds.), (1979). *The Communicative Approaches to Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (1971). *Linguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Eschholz. (1980). The prose models approach: Using products in the process. In Donovan and BW McClelland (eds.), *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Fries, C. C. (1963). *Linguistics and Reading*. New York: The University of Chicago Press.
- McDonough, Jo. & Shaw, Christopher. (2003). *Materials and Methods in ELT: A Teacher's Guide*, (2nd ed.). Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Nunan, David. (1997). *Syllabus Design* (7th imp.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nunan, Devid. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*, Boston & Mass: Heinle and Heinle.
- Nunan, David. (1988). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*, (13th Printing.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*, London: Heinemann.
- Rahman, Afzalur. (2003). Higher Education: An Empirical Study, In *Bangladesh National Education Commission Report*, Dhaka.
- Rivers, M. Wilge. (1968). *Teaching Foreign Language Skills*, New York & Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Scherer. (1966). "Programming Second Language Reading," In Mathieu, (ed.), *Advances in the Teaching of Modern Languages*, vol. 2. London: Pergamon Press.
- Silva. (1990). Second Language Composition Instruction: Developments, Issues, and Directions in ESL. In B. Kroll (ed.), *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ur, Penny. (1991). *A Course in Language Teaching: Practices and Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verplank, W.S. (1965). *Journal of Abnormal Social psychology*, 51 pp. 668-79, qouted in White, Ronald V. (1993). *The ELT Curriculum: Design, Innovation and Management*, (rept.), Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.