

**Assessing Reading Difficulties and Reading
Strategies in the Context of Bangladesh: Tertiary
Level**

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November 2016



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Bangladesh: Tertiary Level**

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English and Humanities

Of BRAC University

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree

Of

Master of Arts in English

November 2016

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to thank Allah for giving me the ability and strength to carry out the research work. It takes support, proper guidance and encouragement of many people to complete any project successfully . I would like to show my appreciation to my honorable supervisor, S.M. Mohibul Hasan, under whose guidance and support this paper is composed with patience and sincerity. I feel motivated and encouraged by his support and assistance, guidance.

And, to Professor Dr. Firdous Azim, the Chairperson of English and Humanities Department, Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam , Dr. Rifat Mahbub , Ms. Asifa Sultana, Ms. Mahmuda Akhter, Mr. Mahumudul Haque, and all others those who helped me in different ways by giving me suggestions and directions. I am grateful for constant support and help from English department of BRAC University.

Lastly, I would like to convey my thankfulness and appreciation to my loving family and caring friends for helping and encouraging enormously for doing this thesis.

Abstract

Reading is not an easy skill since most of the learners have many reading issues specially ESL learners. The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate various reading difficulties are faced by advanced level tertiary students of Bangladesh and to find out what strategies they use to overcome reading difficulties. No doubt on the fact that English is the main language for communication and that is why its requirements in both education and job sector are undeniable. To achieve success in reading English, ESL learners need some strategies and to explore those in the light of previous literature, this paper tries to find out what reading strategies are used by adult learners. For collecting data, a survey was done on sixty students of tertiary level from different universities of English department. And to do the interview , university teachers were chosen randomly. The results obtained from the survey answer the research questions and interview that provide suggestions. Therefore, the paper has been concluded with recommendations for further research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Reading is a process of constructing meaning and there is dynamic interaction goes on between reader, the text and the context of the reading situation. (Wixon, Peters, Weber and Roeber, 1987,p.750). Attention has been shifted from grammatical approach for teaching and learning to communicative approach and so that the practice covers all four areas of skills- listening, writing, speaking and reading. Reading, among four skills, has an important place in Bangladesh because of its requirement in higher education (Haque, 2006). Besides, as this is an age of globalization, reading in English is considered as very crucial skill needed in competitive world of today. So having good command over reading has no alternative.

Reading is an important activity used in many of our everyday takes and a person with good reading skill may function more effectively than an illiterate person. Reading is a linguistic process and Oberhalzer (2005:2) describes, it as the basic life skill and a cornerstone for a successful learner both at school and throughout life. Having proficient reading skill is necessary to academic success. Students with low level of proficiency in reading not only face difficulties in academic arena but also encounter behavioral and social difficulties.

To provide adequate knowledge and skills to children, youth and adults for improving their lives and their roles in equitable societies, The United Nation's Education for All (EFA) is committed. But in some cases, it is not possible to see the effects. So, In spite of importance

given on reading skill and many years of learning, ESL learners can experience various reading difficulties.

A great deal of research was conducted on this issue but the number is less in the context of Bangladesh. So the aim of the paper is to examine complex and diverse reading problems faced by adult learners and their strategies to overcome those problems. For this study, students of tertiary level was chosen for the cause that participants are advanced learners and supposed to have certain standard of skills and knowledge and they have the ability to find out their lacking.

1.2 Objective of the study

This research paper will be focusing on the reading difficulties faced by typical students of tertiary level and to find out what reading strategies they use to deal with those difficulties in Bangladeshi context. Along with that teacher's opinion and suggestions will be collected reading this issue.

1.3 Significance of the study

With the development in the field of reading, reading pedagogy in Bangladesh has changed. Research in this field is important because standard of education depends on students' reading proficiency. That is why it is important to investigate and find out reading difficulties faced by advanced learners.

Thus the findings of this dissertation shed light into the difficulties faced by adult learners of Bangladesh and their use of strategies to cope up with problems. Moreover, data from interview provides expert suggestions from teachers. Lastly, it may create awareness among

educators, learners and policy makers of this country. So this study provides an insight into problems, solutions and suggestions to improve reading skill.

1.4 Research questions

1. Are advanced level students aware of their reading difficulties?
2. What are the strategies for language learners (L2) of Bangladesh to cope up with their reading difficulties?

1.5 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 taking interview as they work under fixed schedule at universities. The researcher chose break time to collect data.

Lastly, it was not possible for the researcher to include universities outside of Dhaka because of time and transport problem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Reading

Reading means not only to read words. Some define reading as a conceptual and thinking process which is interpretive (Dechant, 1982). Ransom (1978, p.14-15) describes reading as “a conversation between the writer and the reader”. According to Williams (1996), reading is a process through which a reader looks at the text and understands what is written.

The process of reading is active, not passive (Doff, 1997). By observing other definitions, Urquhart and Weir (1998, p.22) emphasizes that reading “is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print.”

2.2 Silent Reading

Reading can be done in two ways, one is loudly and another one is silently. This research paper emphasizes on silent reading. Silent reading helps to read faster, it helps to concentrate better and in processing information. (Billah, 2015). Silent reading is not only reading orally rather it is defined by Hartney (2011) as a personal, meaningfully focused activity. So it is needed to be promoted.

The advantage of silent reading is that the reader is not worried about his/her pronunciation and can read for a purpose. Billah (2015) also points that it also helps students absorb ideas into their subconscious minds and then use them in their daily lives.

2.3 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language”. (Snow, 2002)

Richek (1996) as cited in (Hartney, 2011) says that the purpose of reading is comprehension. For a good reader, reading is about understanding, enjoying and learning from reading materials. (Hartney, 2011). Hartney also notes that most learners with reading difficulties think that reading is recognizing words and to some, reading only means reading words orally.

Comprehension can contain three elements (Snow, 2002,):

- the reader
- the text
- the activity

all these elements are interconnected in a certain way that it represents “what the reader brings to read and what the reader takes from reading”. (Snow, 2002).

The reader: a reader needs to know “wide range of capacities and abilities” in order to comprehend a text (Snow, 2002). These capacities and abilities include critical analytic ability, inference, visualization, motivation, knowledge of vocabulary, discourse knowledge and comprehension strategies. The use of these strategies depend on the texts and specific activity done by the reader.

The Text: comprehension is not only about eliciting meaning from text. At the time of reading, a reader establishes different interpretations of a text which is an important part of comprehension. Nowadays text also includes electronic texts and multimedia documents.

Depending on facts such –knowledge, reader’s ability, activity, a text can be easy or can be difficult. A reader’s sphere of knowledge has connection with the context of the text in comprehension. Besides, linguistic structure, vocabulary, content, genre also have interactions with readers’ knowledge and experience.

The Activity: reading is an activity which involves purposes and process the text. With the purpose in mind, a reader does the activity of reading, for instance, a reader can read a paragraph to find specific information. Such activities can lead a reader to increase his/her knowledge level. For example, history books help a reader to enrich their history knowledge. It may have two purposes – reading for enjoyment of reading for learning. “knowledge, applications and engagement” are three effects of reading activity.(Snow, 2002).

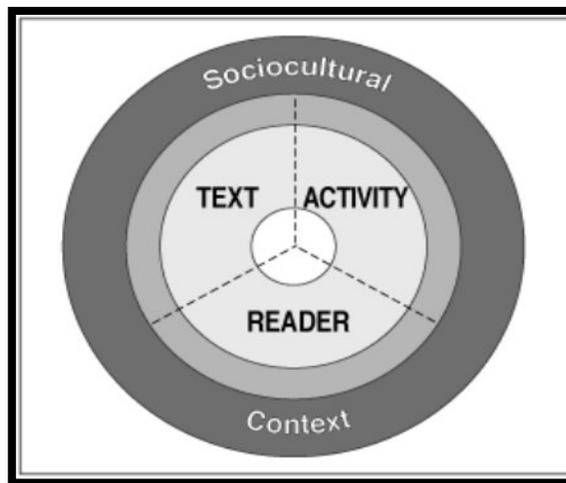


Figure : A Heuristic for Thinking About Reading Comprehension

2.4 Definition of Reading Strategy

According to Aarnoutse and Schelings, reading strategies are “specific heuristics, methods or procedures which readers more or less apply intentionally to adequately process and understand the information presented in a text (2003, p.391).

Oxford(1990) defines reading strategies as actions that make the learning task easier, effective and enjoyable.

To emphasize the importance of reading strategies, Pressley and Harris (2008) state that weak reader read word by word whereas more active readers use various reading strategies. One of the characteristics of proficient reader is using reading strategies (Lenskiand Nierstheimer, 2002).

2.5 Skimming and Scanning

Skimming and scanning are two reading strategies.

Skimming is a method of “rapidly moving the eyes over the text with the purpose of getting only the main ideas and the general overview of the content”. (skimming and scanning, n.d.)

Scanning is “covering a great deal of material in order to locate a specific fact or a piece of information”. (Skimming and Scanning, n.d.).

Both are similar in process but different in purposes.

2.6 Reading Difficulties

There are various ways of reading, and in the paper, the researcher would talk about academic reading and silent reading.

Reading is a complex process which involves eye movement, decoding, encoding and utilizing linguistic awareness (Fisher, 1981). So this complex process can create difficulties among learners and if remains untreated then can affect reading skill of adults. To succeed in academic life, reading skill is required and it is important for all academic purposes specially for students who are learning English as a second language. Regarding this, Sekara (1988:121) commented that in case of tertiary education, reading is “not for pleasure but for information that has been researched, organized and documented in accordance with the rules of academic discourse”. But in the context of Bangladesh, even in undergraduate level, students face various difficulties while reading course materials, especially in Bangla medium schools, students do some reading in school and are not used to of reading extra materials at home as they are hardly taught reading in scientific methods. Compared to other levels of education, at advanced level like college, students have to read more materials at home but they encounter various reading problems. Gray (1936) in his paper mentioned reading difficulties among college students. He analyzed some reasons of causing poor achievement in reading and students were tested for that. He pointed out that students had limited vocabulary, less idea about associate meaning with words and had ineffective habits of reading.

Before moving to various reading difficulties, this section states differences between dyslexia and difficulty.

Dyslexia is a confusing term for “reading difficulties” but it is mostly used in the context of medical. Dyslexia is defined as one kind of language learning disability which has biological trait (Lyon, 2003).

So reading difficulty is different from dyslexia. The Oxford dictionary explains the word “difficulty” as “a thing that is hard to do or understand” and “reading difficulty” denotes to reading problems which can be mechanical skill of the reading process or related to comprehension (World book Encyclopedia, 1994).

To Lovett, Steinbach and Frijters(2000), reading difficulty is characterized as individuals inability to grow “rapid, context-free word identification skill.”

Reading in the second language is different from reading in the first language as because the nature of second language proficiency may affect the reading skill in L2. According to Lerner (2000), “children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up; poor first grade readers are likely to continue to be poor readers. For some children, reading skill does not develop naturally; therefore, decoding, word recognition and reading comprehension skills need to be taught directly and systematically. But in most of the Bangladeshi schools, reading is not taught systematically as a result the country produces poor readers.

To investigate the reasons of reading difficulties, Hartney (2011) stated that most problems of today’s adolescents and adults are because of problems that might be neglected or avoided in their childhood.

Besides, some linguists confirm that reading skill in L1 is important for achieving proficiency in L2. Alderson (2000) noted that one should be a better reader in L1 than in L2 and that fluency will help to be equally good in L2 reading. So, attention to L1 reading is required before developing better L2 reading skill (Nutall, 1882). Other factors like one’s socio-economic status, domestic environment can have impact on reading (Dickenson and Neuman, 2006). They also stated that low reading levels and practices of parents can lead to reading failure.

Reading can be affected by reading habit and use of digital equipments. Studies showed that reading habit started at a young age can create a good impact on reading and it is effective for academic success too (Akarsu and Dariyemez,2014). Findings also showed that participants were influenced by media and technology but what kind of problems they might face was not discussed in the paper.

Vocabulary, another important area of language, is related to reading habit, reading comprehension. A study by Cain (2011) showed that leisure time provides for reading can help in growing vocabulary stock which helps in better comprehension skill.

Internationally some researchers are done in many countries around the world to measure the success of schools and tertiary level institutions. The latest International Reading Literary Study (IRLS) done in 2006 reported that South Africa had the lowest score among 40 countries participated in that study. There is a study done in Philippines on reading difficulties at university level which highlighted some common difficulties, such as- difficulty in understanding, laziness in reading, problems in vocabulary and reading as boring activity, etc. along with reading difficulties and strategies, the study also pointed out some problems with reading aloud. (Garcia, Ramayan, Sepe and Silor,2014).

Unlike oral reading, less attention was given to individual reading silent reading but in some countries sustained silent reading has been used for over 30 years as teachers have observed better understanding of comprehension. The aim of such program was to transfer reading strategies taught by teacher to students' silent reading time. To answer to whether students apply what they have learned in the classroom, Pawlaczyk (2006) showed that children utilize the strategies they learned in the classroom in an independent setting.

2.7 Reading Strategies

Using different reading strategies are crucial where critical reading is needed (Simpson and Nist, 2000). To highlight the issue of reading strategies used by EFL learners Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) state that skilled second language learners are better strategy users than less skilled L2 language learners. Other researches done in the same issue also showed similar kind of result.

To investigate strategies used by L2 adult learners, build up an instrument called survey of reading strategies (SORS) was build up by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) to figure out how aware the learners are of reading strategies in case of improving reading comprehension skills. This instrument is created and is influenced by the Meta-cognitive –awareness-of- Reading-Strategies Inventory (MARSI) which was developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey for native speakers. This tool also can be helpful for students to make them aware of their strengths regarding the use of strategies.

There are some researchers are done to find out reading strategies used by students in various contexts. Hutchins (2011) for his study, collected data for 15 weeks to know about how reading strategies were used by students. The researcher used pre and post-survey, informal observation to collect data. And the result showed positive connection in between learning and using those reading strategies.

Anderson (1991) in a study investigates strategy usage of adult ESL learners. In that study, the research included both quantitative and qualitative data and the result showed that both low

and high proficient learners used similar reading strategies. The findings also revealed that high proficient learners used strategies more accurately and effectively than low proficient learners did. So, the researcher of that study concluded that strategy is not only for knowing which one is to use, it is also about applying those successfully.

Moreover, another study done by Anderson (2003) about online meta-cognitive reading strategy use by EFL and ESL learners which was investigated through OSORS which includes global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies and support strategies. It was found by the researcher (2003) that among problem-solving strategies, rereading, slow reading and visualizing info was most frequently used by learners.

Moreover, reading strategies can assist ESL learners reading process by providing them some directions while reading. ESL students use variety of reading strategies in dealing with different reading materials. However, most of the learners have limited knowledge about various strategies. As such, it might not know to them that these techniques can be employed to enrich their understanding and enhancing the capacity of memorization of the reading material (Aziz, Rahim, Harun, Adzmi, Ahmet, Bidin &Shaharuddin, 2011). There are different kinds of reading strategies namely, Global Reading Strategy (GLOB), Problem-Solving Strategy (PROB) and Support Strategy (SUP). These reading strategies can be used in case of reading materials, such as- the academic materials.

Winograd and Hare, 1998 (as cited in Anderson, 1999) define strategies are as “deliberate actions that learners select and control to achieve desired goal or objectives.” To achieve quality reading skill, it is necessary to find out more about what reading strategies need to be employed and how so that the effect can be maximized. A paper on reading strategies in Malaysia’s

university was conducted to measure the level of awareness of ESL learners (Aziz et. Al., 2011). In the context of second language learning, ESL students mainly use reading strategies to master the language. Reading strategies “indicate how readers conceive a task” and I also help them in understanding and comprehending effectively (Singhal, 2001). It is crucial for ESL learner’s to be aware of what are being read by them and to do I properly meta-cognitive awareness is needed. According to Singhal (2001), meta-cognitive awareness makes “reader aware of the strategies during the reading process” and this skill makes ESL learners’ better readers. Therefore, students who have deficiency and are not aware of meta-cognitive awareness take extra time to understand words than to create meaning from the text (Aziz et. Al., 2011). As a result, they “often have difficulties in coping with academic materials and do not have required strategies and skills.” (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002).

Accordingly, to increase awareness regarding such strategies, it is not sole responsibility of learners. Teachers can play a vital role in teaching to determine if they are using strategies successfully (Anderson, 1999). In this issue, Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) commented that to be “strategic and constructively responsive readers” skillful academic reading is needed. Then the strategies can be transferred to silent reading time.

2.8 Scenario in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the teaching has undergone significant changes where emphasis is given on communicative teaching to ensure more active participation of students. But in the case of L2

reading, students find various difficulties like- complex structure, lack of vocabulary, lexical inefficiency etc. to some people, reading is a passive, boring activity done in isolation (Greenwood 1998) and sometimes lack of motivation becomes the cause of lack of interest (Dechant 1982). Sometimes cultural differences, lack of knowledge about context can create problems in reading texts. In a survey by Haque (2006) cited in Shahidullah (2008) showed that in Bangladesh, undergraduate students are needed to read 90 text/reference books in English in four years. So extensive reading in English is required for higher education. The paper also listed sub-skills of reading required for university level.

Sub-skills required for university education (Shahidullah,2008, p. 150):

Lower order sub-skills:

- I) Understand written expression; ii) reading with appropriate speed; iii) Reading for specific information; IV) reading for specific information (Scanning); v) reading for gist, details or general comprehension (skimming); vi) Consulting dictionary for word meanings

Higher order sub-skills:

- i) Predicting about the text; ii) guessing word meanings by using contextual clues; iii) inferring from text; iv) interpreting text; v) critically evaluating texts; vi) giving personal response to texts; vii) relating textual information To the world, to personal experience(s); viii) distinguishing facts from Opinions; ix) surveying text organization (finding coherence of texts and Cohesion of ideas); x) transferring information from tables and graphs or texts and vice versa; xi) understanding the author's position, and attitude; xii)

Understanding tone and mood in a piece of writing. (Nuttal, 1942; Willams, 1984; Grellet, Harmer, 1986 among others) (Shahidullah, 2008).

This study showed that there is a gap between reading at tertiary level and reading done up to class 12 investigated through survey. As students of Bangladesh do a small amount of reading activity and as a result various reading difficulties arise at tertiary level to manage the extensive reading needed at that advanced level of education.

To investigate why Bangladeshi students are weak in reading in English, Quder (1999) revealed that weak readers cannot pinpoint their problem areas and also do not know the reasons for their problems. The findings of that study also showed that 15% of the learners read in their first language and only 3% read anything in English. Another significant finding was that few (12%) learners read English newspaper or magazines. Also weak readers have small stock of vocabulary and poor implication of background knowledge.

Reading difficulties can be seen not only in children but also in adult learners. To identify the difficulties faced by learners, survey method is mostly used. But in most of the papers, strategies to cope up with problems are not provided.

Lastly, the review of the literature revealed that most papers are done with young children (Townsend, 1940) facing reading difficulties and in other countries of the world (Vaughn and Thompson, 2003) and some studies also revealed comprehension difficulties faced by children (Hitchcock and Prater, 2004). As there is little attention paid to the adults with various reading difficulties, the paper aims at working on adult difficulties.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This section includes research instruments, details of participants and method of data analysis.

3.2 Participants

To carry out the research, choose students only from English department of various universities inside Dhaka randomly (irrespective of their age and gender) and for interview purpose, teachers from English department also selected.

3.3 Setting

The survey was conducted face to face situation and few via mail. Students were asked to fill up the questionnaire during their English classes. The teachers' interviews were done in both face to face situations in the campus and via mail.

3.4 Instruments of the study

For this part of dissertation, two instruments were used to collect data.

- **Survey questionnaire for students:** Questionnaire is, according to Merriam-Webster, "a written set of questions that are given to people in order to collect facts or opinions about something". It is the most common tool used in almost every survey and it gives factual and straightforward information in less time at a relatively low cost.

In this research work, the questionnaire has been utilized which contains eleven questions. The reason for choosing this tool is that it is the most used tool and it can be reached to many people in short time. In the questionnaire, students were asked questions regarding various reading difficulties and lastly about reading strategies which was influenced by Survey of Reading Strategy (SORS) by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002).

- **Interview for teachers:** Interview is “particularly useful for getting the story behind participant’s experiences and it can give in-depth information about any issue. (McNamara, 1999).

As a second tool, interview was used which contains 8 questions that are designed for the tertiary level teachers.

3.5 Methods of data analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to find out about the reading difficulties and strategies. Survey and interview were conducted for the research. Students participated in the questionnaire survey and teachers took part in the interview. The data collected from the questionnaire was converted into percentage and charts were created by using Microsoft excel to represent data. Qualitative data were collected from interview section was presented through description. Interview questions are structured and major findings collected from the survey were categorized based on themes.

3.6 Obstacles Encounter

To the researcher, it was not easy to make students fill up the survey questionnaire as they were hesitant and reluctant to read and fill the paper. Also I was difficult to get appointment for interview as most of the teachers were busy with their schedule .

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents findings from questionnaire (Appendix 1) and interview (Appendix 2). The first part will show data through table and pie charts and. The second section will discuss findings thematically , third section will show interview data and last section will represent major findings.

4.1 Findings from Survey Questionnaire

Q1. Are you from English medium school?

Table 1

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	11	18%
No	49	82%

For this survey, 60 students were selected from different universities. They were asked if they were from English medium or not. Among them, 82% students (49) were from Bangla medium background and 18% students (11) were from English medium background. All the students are from English department.

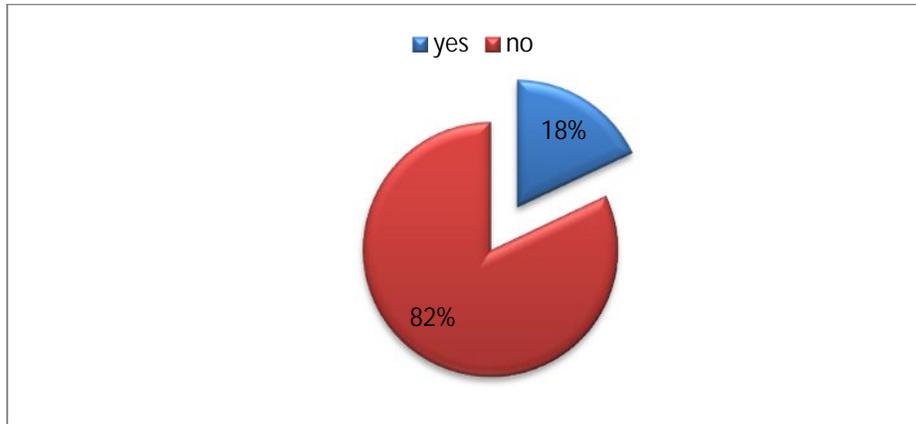


Figure 1: Background

Q2. Do you think you are a good reader?

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	42	70%
No	18	30%

Among 60 students, most of the students think that they are good readers. So 70% students (42) said yes and 30 % students (18) said no.

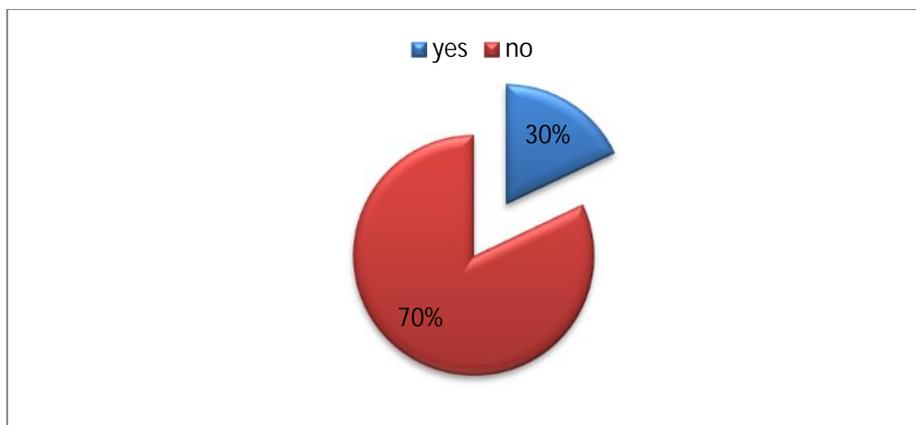


Figure 2: Good or bad reader

Q3. Tell about you reading habit:

a. Reading English newspaper

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Always	30	50%
Sometimes	22	37%
Never	8	13%

Question 3 had 4 sections and all the question were about reading habit. Among 60 students, 50% said they always read English newspaper, 37% said they sometimes read English daily and 13 % said they do not read English newspapers.

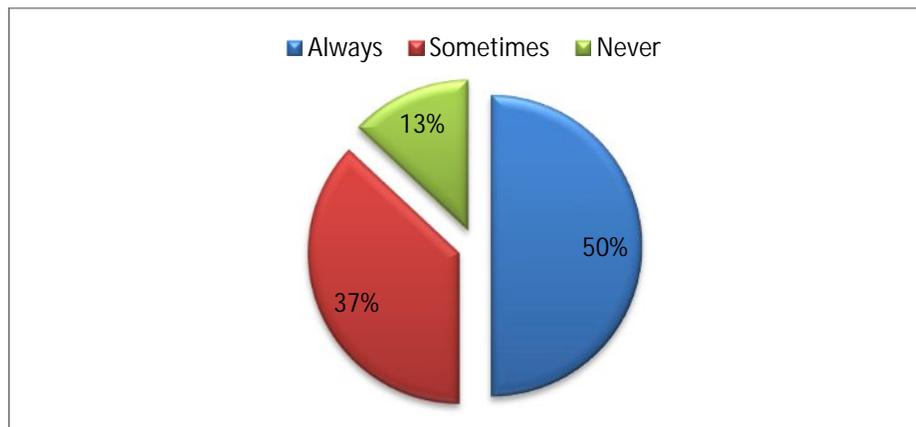


Figure 3a: Reading English newspaper

b. English Magazines

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
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Always	20	33%
Sometimes	15	25%
Never	25	42%

Among all the students, 33% participants (20) said they read English magazines daily, 25% (15) said sometimes and 25% (25) said they never read English magazines.

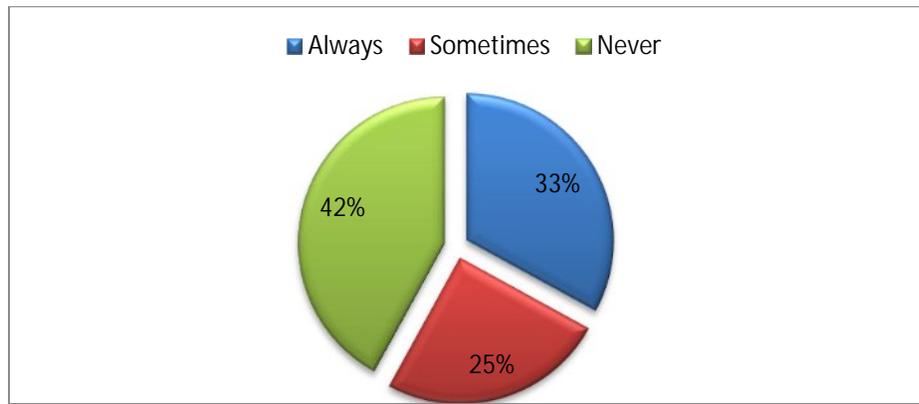


Figure 3b: reading English magazine

c. Story books

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Always	32	54%
Sometimes	20	33%
Never	8	13%

Most of the participants reported that they read story books in English and the percentage is 54% (32), 33% participants (20) said they sometimes read it and only 13% of total participants (8) said no.

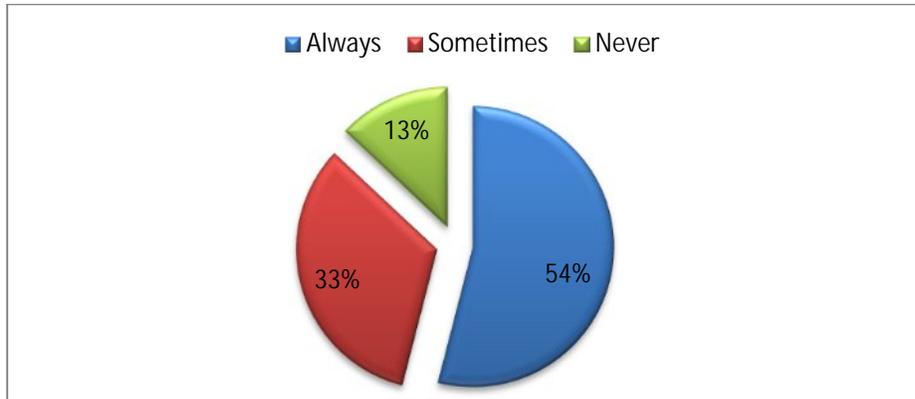


Figure 3c: reading English story books

d. Online Journals (Jstor, Google scholar, etc.)

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Always	35	59%
Sometimes	14	23%
Never	11	18%

About reading online journals for study purposes, 59% participants (35) said they always read, 23 % said sometimes (14) and only 18% said they (11) never read online journals.

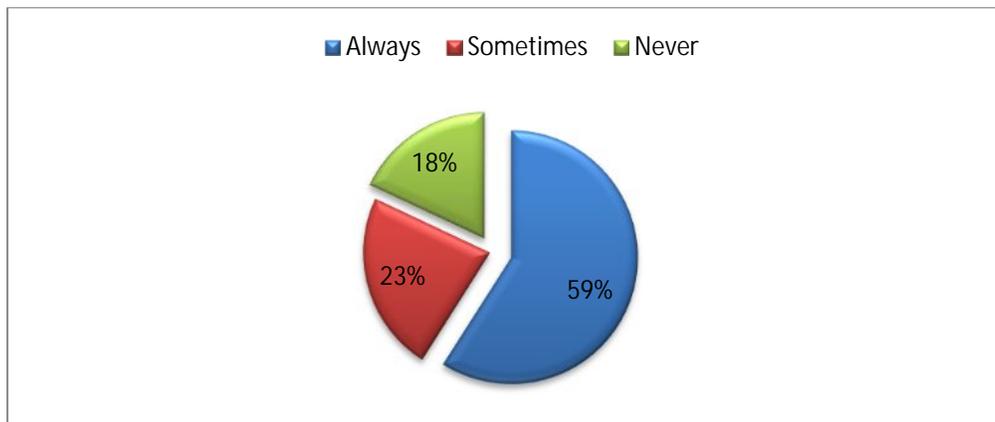


Figure 3d: reading online journals

e. Visit library

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Always	34	57%
Sometimes	14	23%
Never	12	20%

This section was about visiting library and most of the participants 57% said they regularly visit, 23% said sometimes and 20% said no.



Figure 3e: visiting library

Q4. Difficulties regarding vocabulary:

This section contains 3 questions about vocabulary.

a. Difficulty in understanding large words that I read

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	29	48%
Sometimes	21	35%

No	10	17%
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Most of the participants reported that they have difficulty in understanding large words and the percentage is 48%. 35% reported that they sometimes face difficulty and 17% said they do not have difficulty in understanding large words.

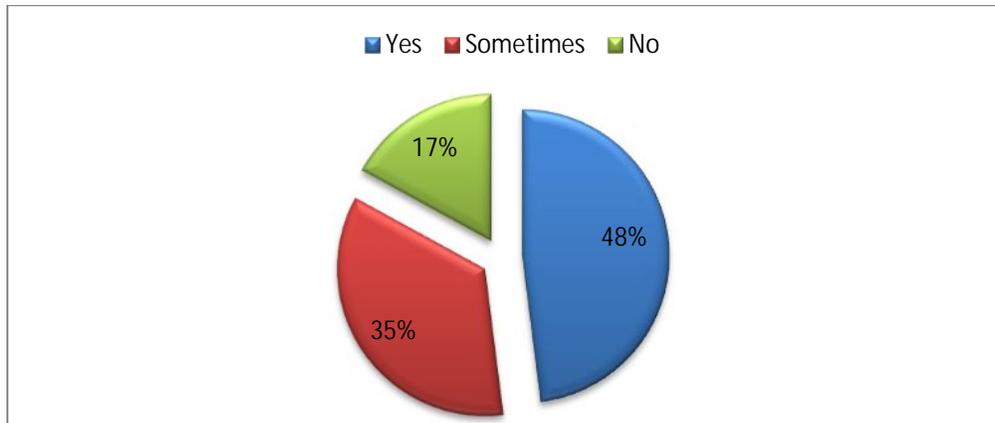


Figure 4a: difficulty in large vocabulary

b. Forget vocabulary that I learn

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	26	43%
Sometimes	21	35%
No	13	22%

In this question, 43% students said they forget vocabulary after learning, 35% said sometimes they forget but only 22% said they do not forget.

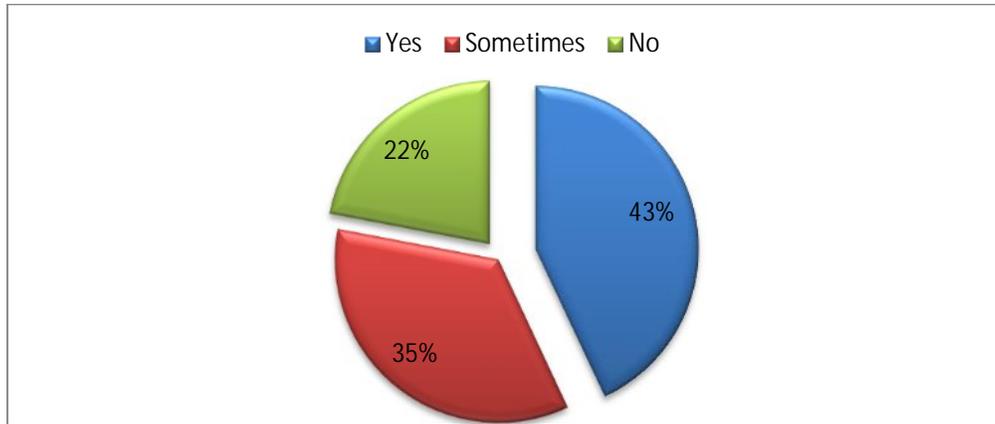


Figure 4b: forget vocabulary

c. Have poor vocabulary

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	40%
Sometimes	23	38%
No	13	22%

Among all the participants, 40% said they have poor vocabulary, 38% said sometimes and only 22% said they do not have poor vocabulary.

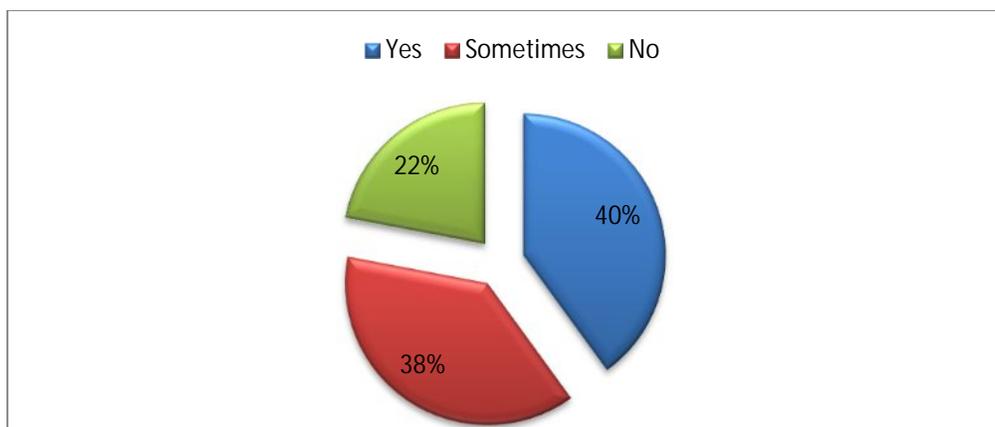


Figure 4c: poor vocabulary

Q5. Difficulties regarding comprehension:

This section has 5 questions regarding difficulties in comprehension.

a. Have difficulty in grasping the main idea of text

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	15	25%
Sometimes	10	17%
No	35	58%

Among 60 students, most of the students (35) said they do not have difficulty in grasping the main idea of a text and the percentage is 58%. 17% said sometimes they face difficulty and 25% said yes in this question.

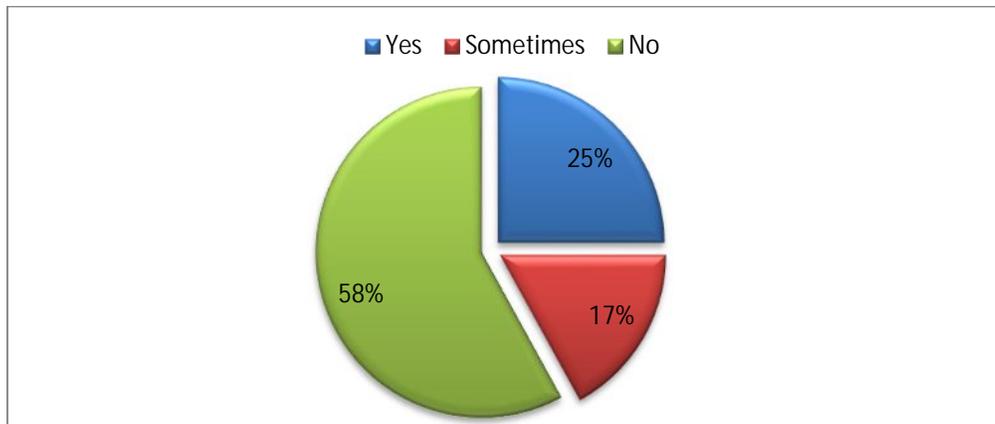


Figure 5a: difficulty in main idea of a text

b. read slowly

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
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Yes	23	38%
Sometimes	22	37%
No	15	25%

Most of the participants (38%) said they read slowly, 37% said sometimes they read slowly and 25 % participants said they do no read slowly.

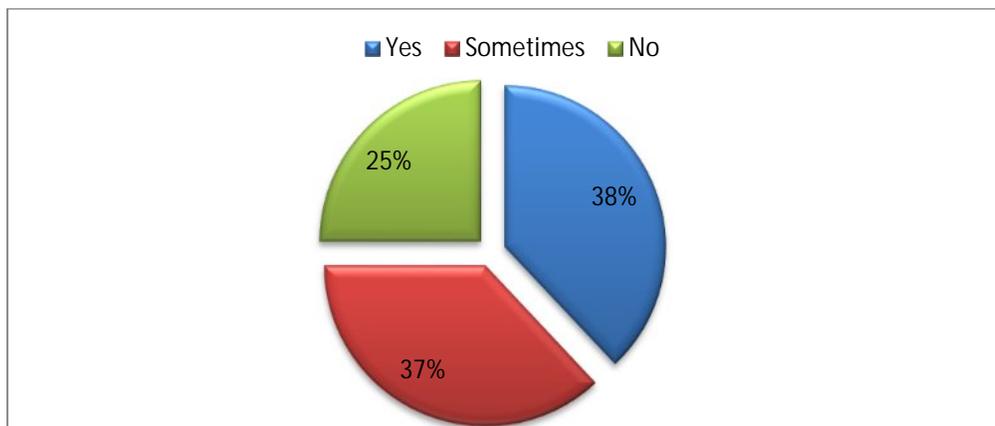


Figure 5b: reading slowly

c. Have difficulty in identifying the main points

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	11	18%
Sometimes	21	35%
No	28	47%

Among all participants, most of the participants (47%) said they do not have difficulty in identifying main points. 35% said they sometimes have difficulty and only 18% said they face difficulty in identifying the main points.

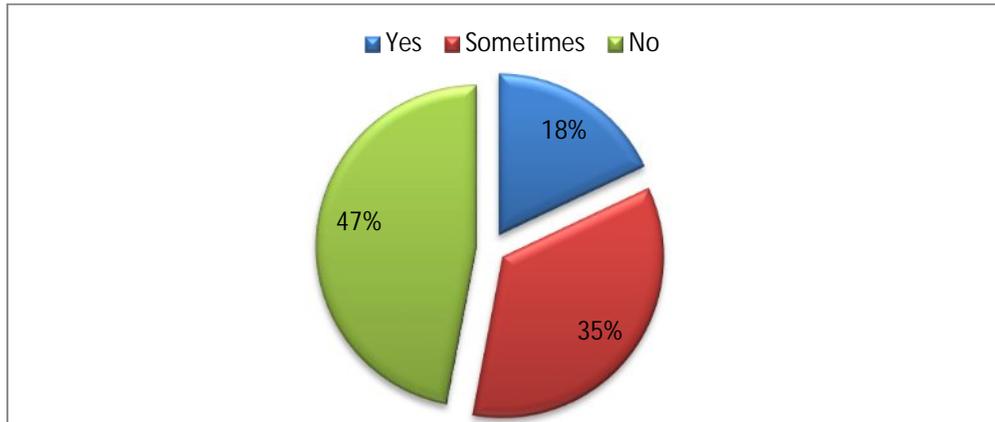


Figure 5c: difficulty in identifying main points

d. Difficulty in comprehending

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	17%
Sometimes	19	32%
No	31	51%

51% of the total students which is a majority reported that they do not have difficulty in comprehending, 32% reported that they sometimes face difficulty and only 17% said no.

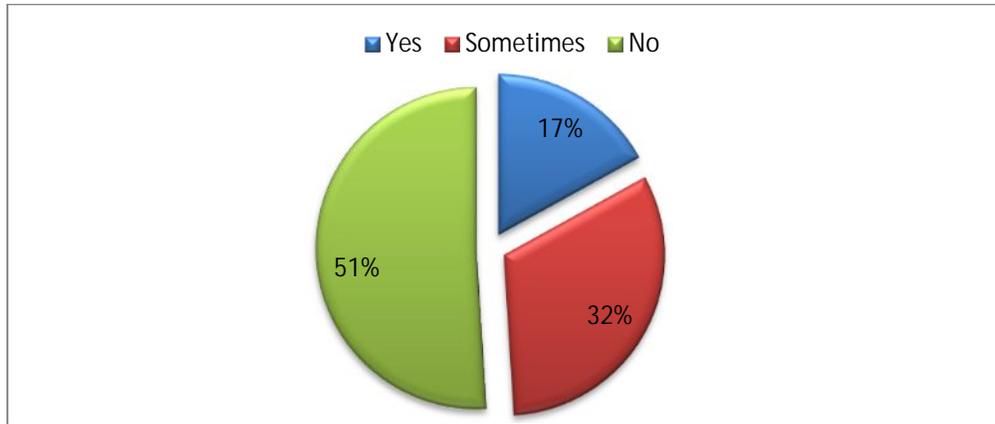


Figure 5d: Difficulty in comprehending

e. Reread to make sense

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	32	53%
Sometimes	18	30%
No	10	17%

Most of the participants (53%) said they reread to make sense of a text, 30% sometimes reread and only 17% said no.

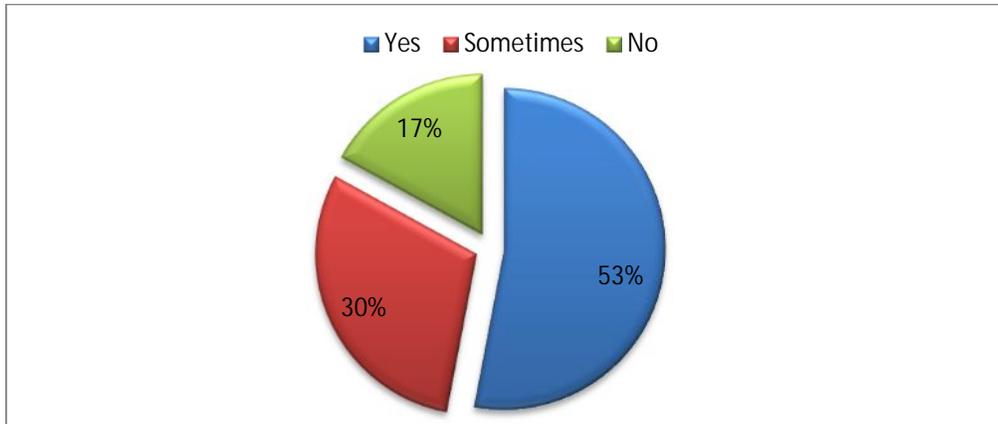


Figure 5e: reread

Q6. Difficulties on conceptual and topic level

This section has 3 questions about conceptual and topic level.

- a. Limited use of title, pictures as part of story orientation

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	8	13%
Sometimes	21	35%
No	31	52%

Among all participants, majority which is 52% said their use of title, pictures as part of story orientation is not limited, 35% said sometimes limited use and only 13% said they use less title, pictures as part of story orientation.

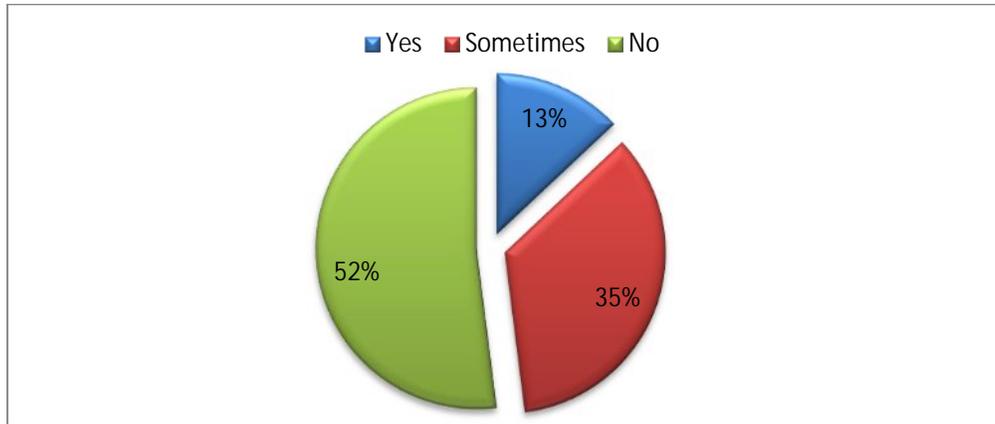


Figure 6a: less use of title, pictures as part of story orientation

b. limited use of prior knowledge in reading new texts

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	15%
Sometimes	21	35%
No	30	50%

To answer this question, 50% participants reported that their use of prior knowledge in reading new texts is not limited, 35% said sometimes and only 15% said their use were limited.

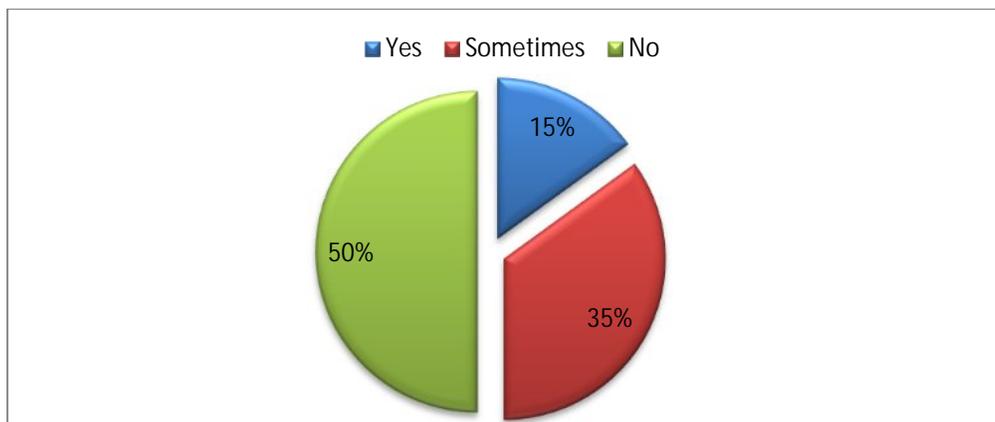


Figure 6b: less use of prior knowledge in reading new texts

c. I have difficulty in elaborating, inferring, predicting or summarizing while reading

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	4	7%
Sometimes	16	26%
No	40	67%

Most of the students (67%) reported they do not have difficulty in elaborating, inferring, predicting or summarizing while reading, 26% reported sometimes and only 7% said yes.

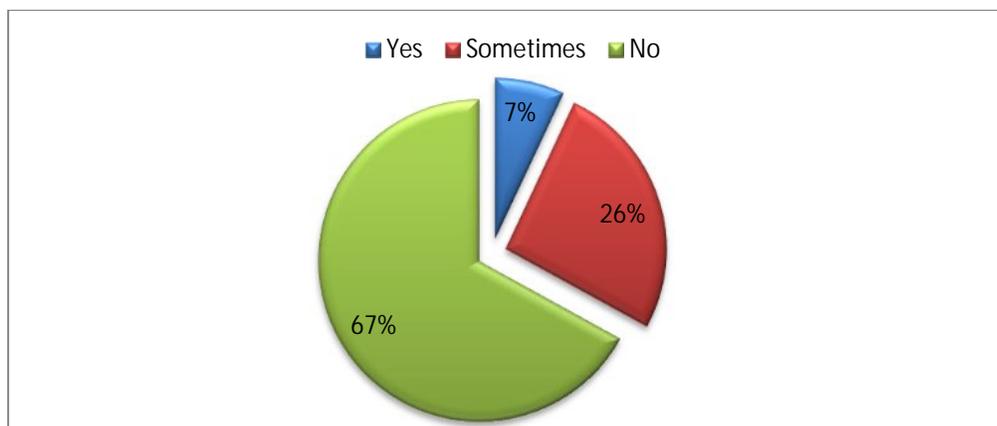


Figure 6c: difficulty in elaborating, inferring, predicting or summarizing

Q7. Importance of motivation and encouragement in reading

This section has 2 questions.

a. Teacher’s motivation

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
important	41	68%
Somewhat important	19	32%
Not very important	0	0%

Almost all the participants (68%) said yes for teacher’s motivation, 19% said somewhat important and none said no for it.

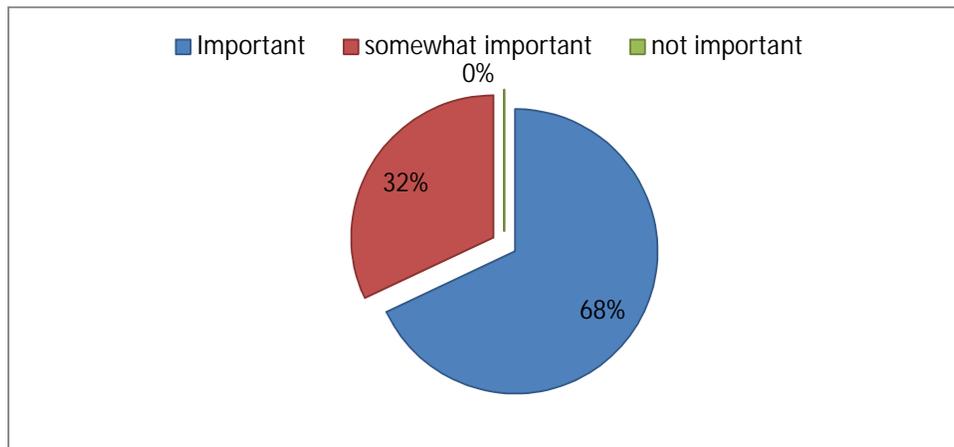


Figure 7a: teacher’s motivation

b. Parents’ encouragement and assistance

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
important	38	63%

Somewhat important	20	33%
Not very important	2	4%

Almost all the participants (63%) said yes for parents’ encouragement and assistance in reading, 33% said somewhat important and only 4% said not very important.

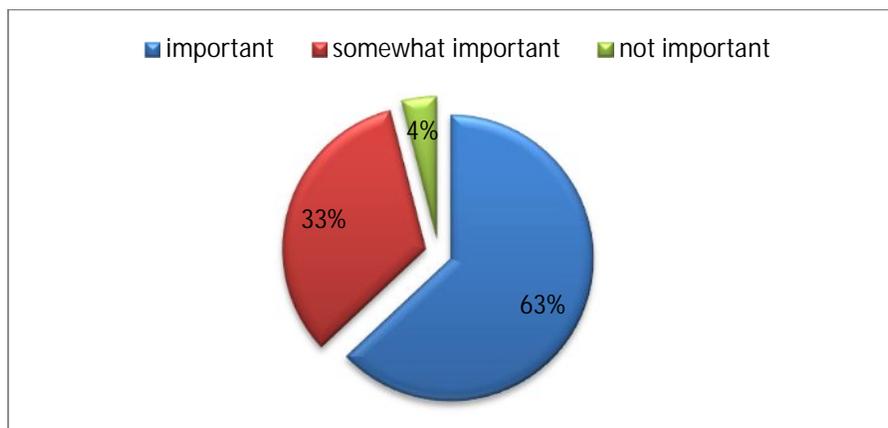


Figure7b: parents’ encouragement and assistance

Q8. What are the causes of reading difficulties?

- a. Lack of reading habit

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	11	47%
Sometimes	17	28%
No	15	25%

47% participants reported that they lack in had lacing in reading habit, 28% said sometimes and other 25% said no for it.

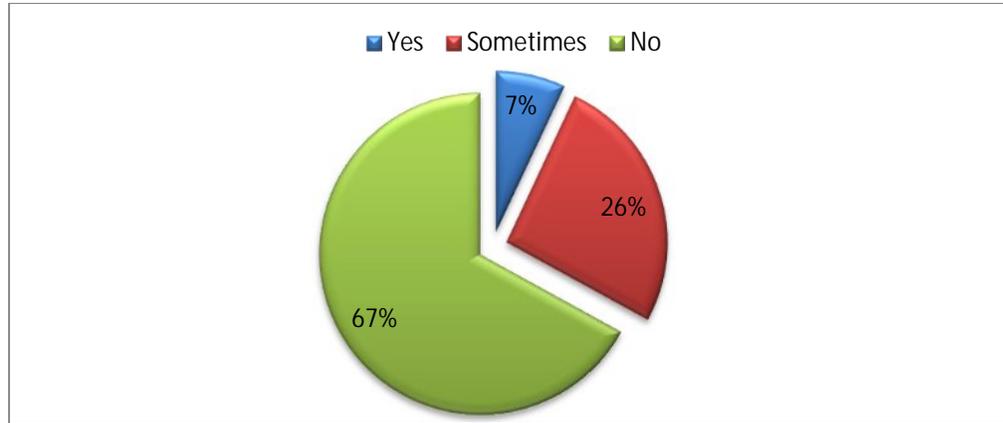


Figure8a: lack of reading habit

b. Lack of interest

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	15%
Sometimes	26	43%
No	25	42%

43% said they sometimes feel less interested, 42% said they do not feel lack of interest and only 14% said they feel lack of interest while reading.

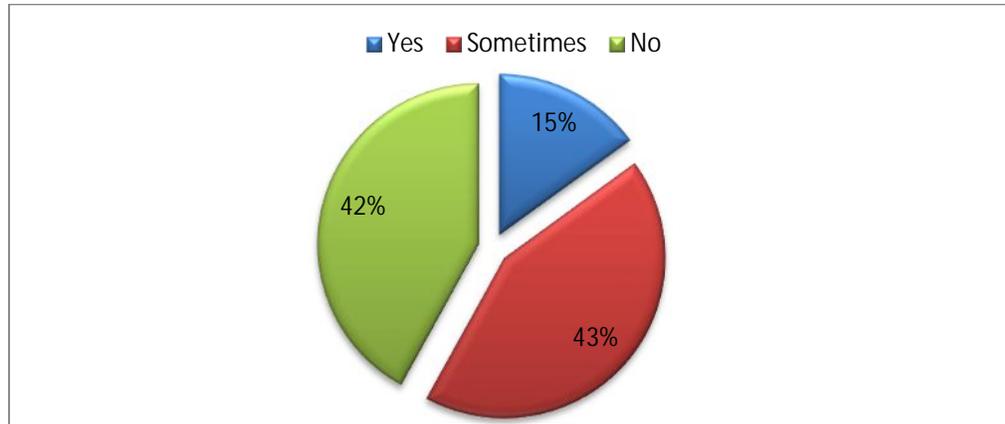


Figure 8b: lack of interest

c. Large piece of text

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	32%
Sometimes	32	53%
No	9	15%

Among all participants, 53% said sometimes as their cause of reading difficulty, 32% said yes and only 15% said no for it.

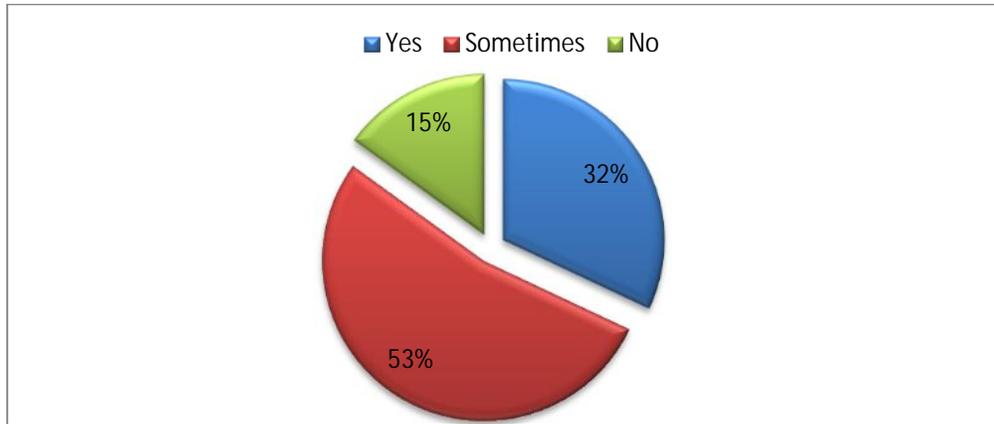


Figure 8c: difficulty for large piece of text

d. Lack of time

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	7	12%
Sometimes	19	32%
No	34	56%

56% reported they do not have lack of time, 32% said sometimes and 12% said they have less time.

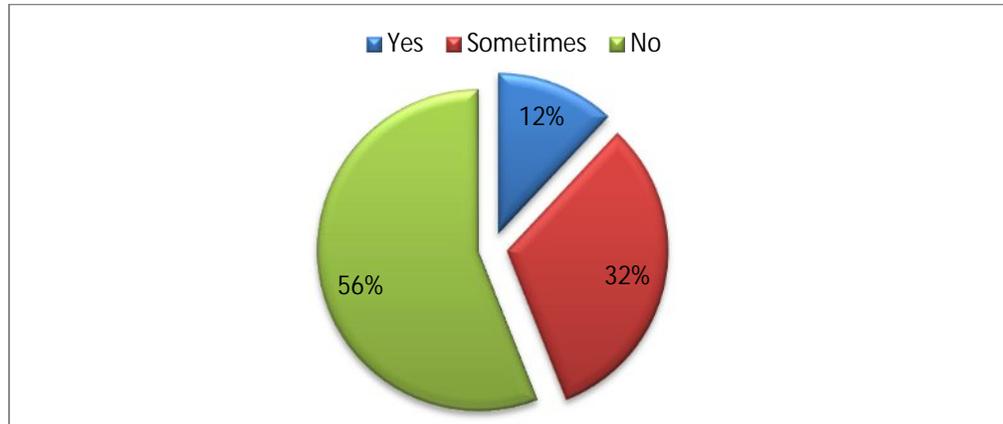


Figure8d: lack of time

Q 9. Which reading technique do you use?

a. Scanning

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	26	43%
Sometimes	30	50%
No idea about scanning	4	7%

Majority of participants (50%) said they do scanning sometimes, 43% said yes and only 7% said they do not have idea about scanning.

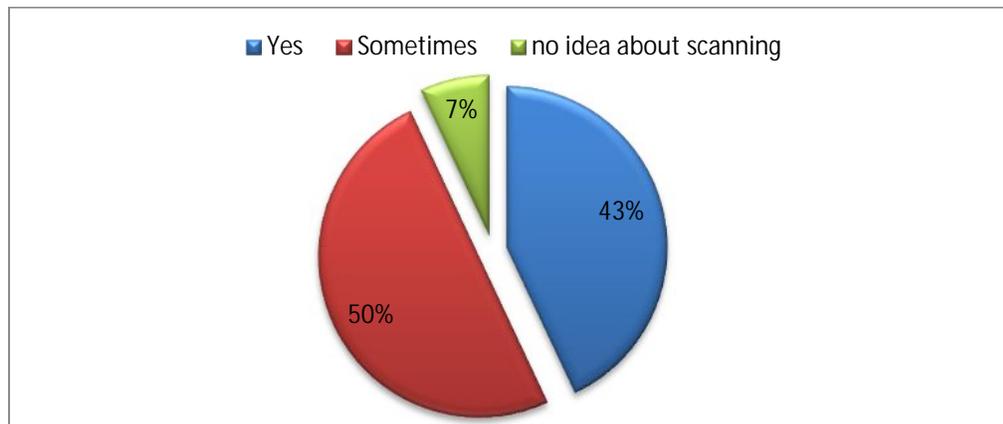


Figure 9a: scanning

b. Skimming

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	23	38%
Sometimes	37	62%
No idea about skimming	0	0%

62% participants reported that sometimes they use skimming as reading technique,

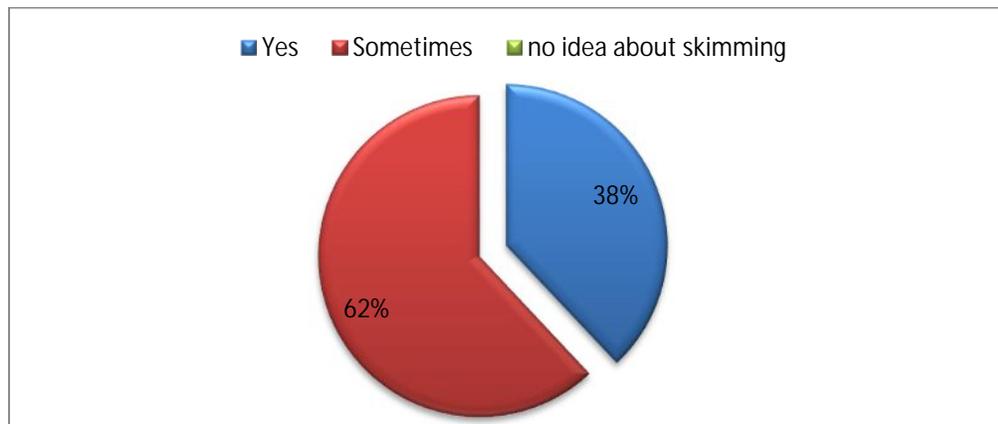


Figure 9b: skimming

c. Detailed reading

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	27	45%

Sometimes	33	55%
No idea about detailed reading	0	%

Most of the participants (55%) stated that they do detailed reading sometimes, not regularly.

Others sated that they (45%) mostly use this technique.

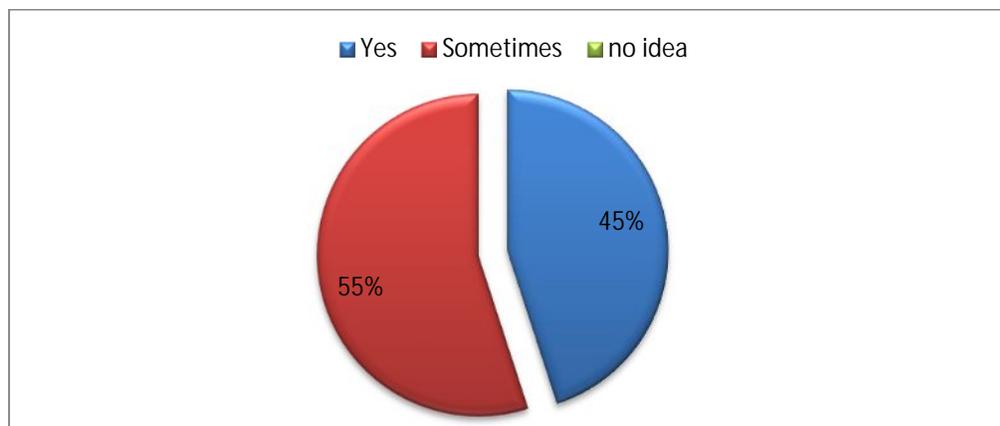


Figure 9c: detailed reading

Q 10. While reading what kind of reading strategies do you follow?

This section contains 10 strategies.

- a. I ask questions and try to answer them.

Table 10 a

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	21	35%
Sometimes	30	50%

No	9	15%
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- a. Among all, most of the participants (50%) responded that they sometimes questions and try to answer them. Other 35% said they use this strategy regularly and only 15% said no for it.

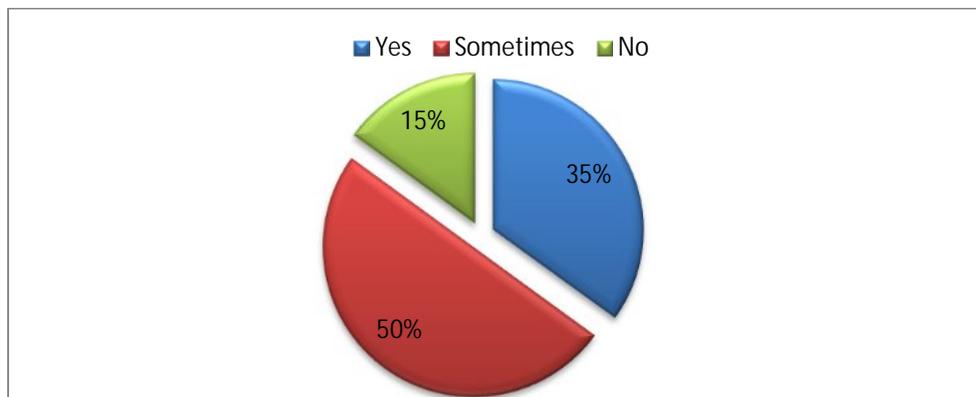


Figure 10 a: ask questions and try to answer

- b. Imagine story and try to use prior knowledge to deal with the text

Table 10b

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	34	57%
Sometimes	24	40%
No	2	3%

To answer this question, most of the participants (57%) said they imagine story and try to use prior knowledge to deal with the text, others said sometimes they do it and only few (3%) said no for it.

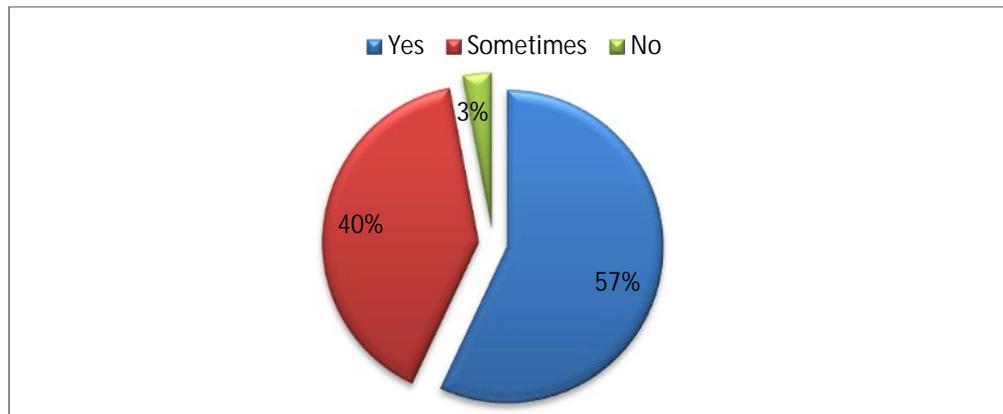


Figure 10b: Imagine story and try to use prior knowledge

c. I use graphic components (if available)

Table 10c

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	50%
Sometimes	28	47%
No	2	3%

To answer, most of the participants (50%) said they use graphic components while reading, 47%, another half of participants said sometimes and only 3% said no.

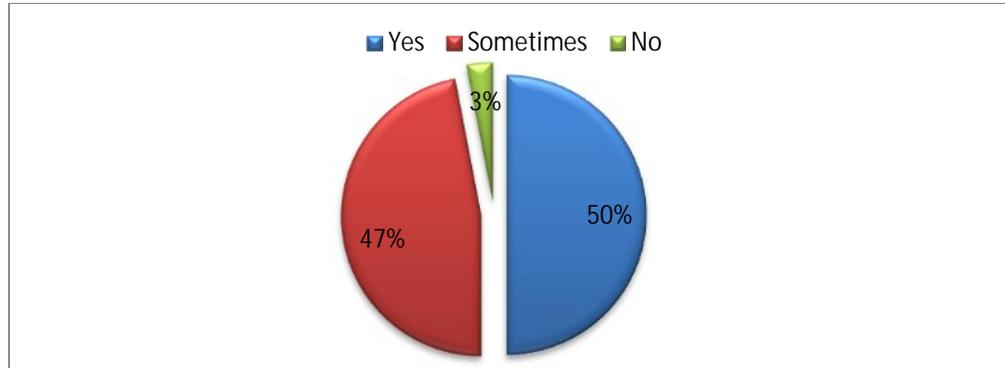


Figure 10c: using graphic components

d. Summarize and try to figure out main points

Table 10 d

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	35	58%
Sometimes	25	42%
No	0	0%

58% participants said yes for summarizing and figuring out main points while reading, 42% said sometimes they do it and none said no for it.

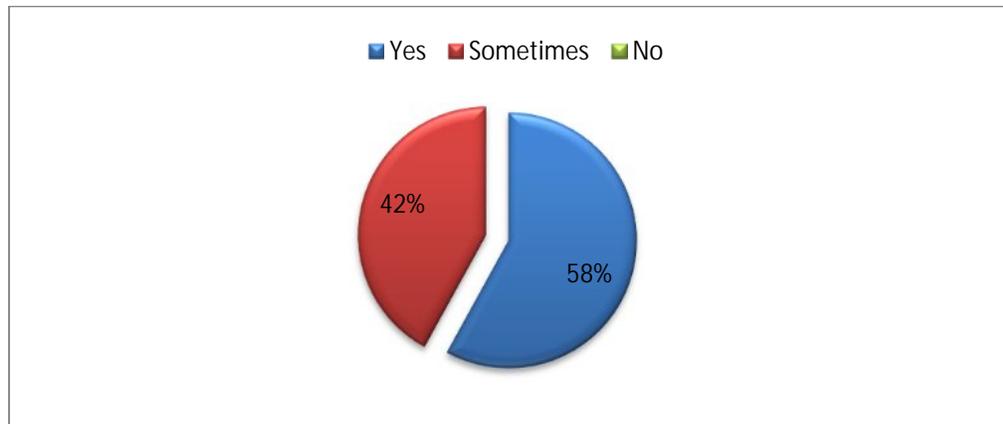


Figure 10 d: summarizing and finding main points

e. I read carefully and slowly

Table 10e

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	34	57%
Sometimes	24	40%
No	2	3%

Almost half of the participants (57%) said they read carefully and slowly, 40% said sometimes they do it and only 3% said they do not read carefully and slowly.

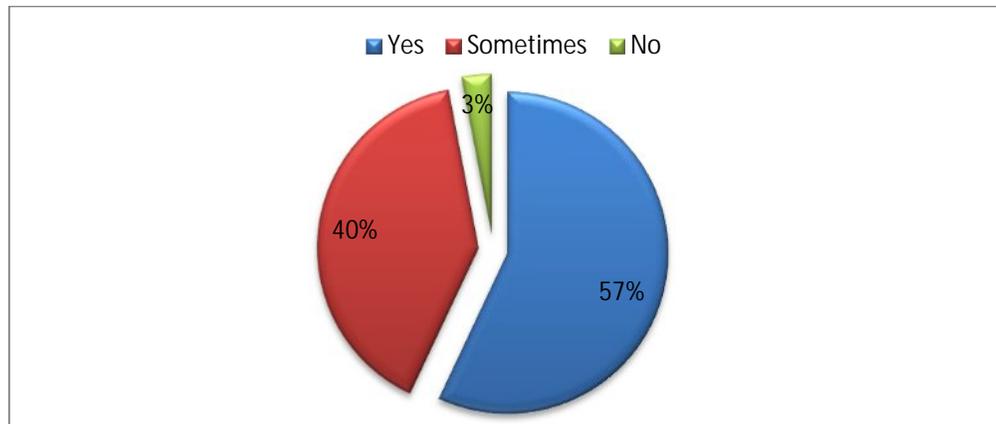


Figure 10 e: reading carefully and slowly

f. I do skimming and scanning

Table 10 f

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	40%
Sometimes	36	60%
No	0	0%

60% participants stated that they use skimming and scanning sometimes, other 40% said they always do skimming and scanning.

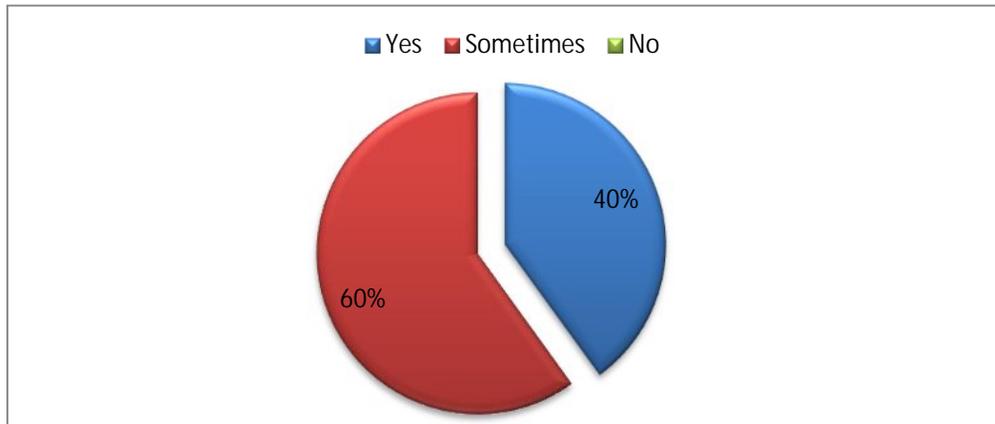


Figure10g: scanning and skimming

g. I discuss things with others

Table 10 g:

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	36	60%
Sometimes	22	37%
No	2	3%

Most of the participants (60%) discuss things with others after reading, 37% discuss sometimes and only 3% do not prefer to discuss things with others.

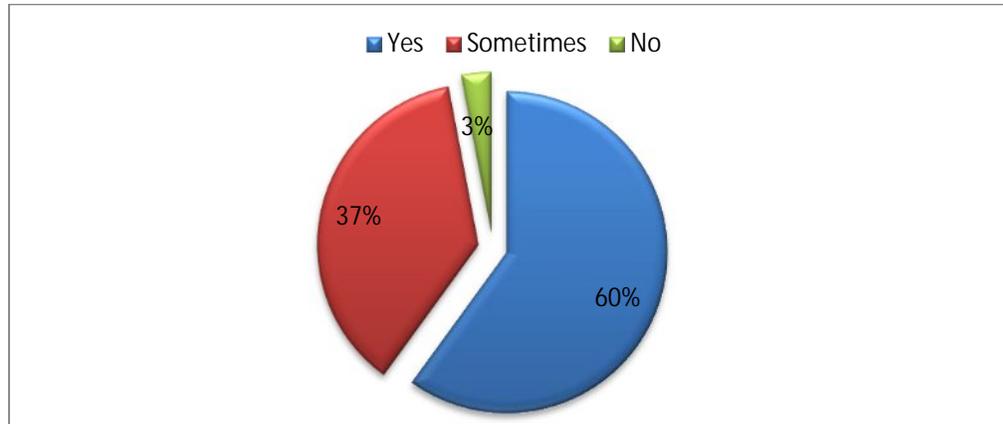


Figure10 g: discussing

h. I use dictionary, underline important lines

Table 10 h:

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	42	70%
Sometimes	18	30%
No	0	0%

70% of total students reported that they use dictionary and underline important lines always and other 30% said sometimes they do it.

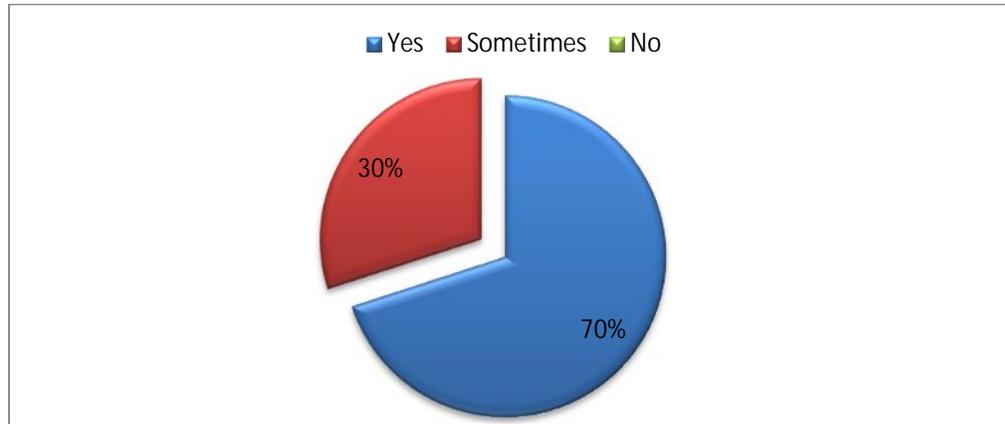


Figure 10 h: using dictionary and underlining

- i. I use context knowledge for better understanding

Table 10 i:

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	35	58%
Sometimes	24	40%
No	1	2%

To answer this question, 58% participants said yes for using context knowledge for better understanding, other 40% said they use this strategy sometimes and only 2% said no.

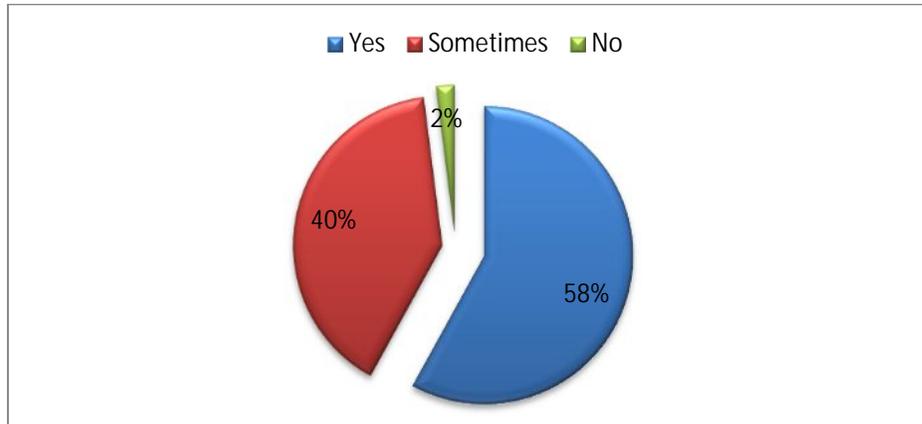


Figure 10 i: using context knowledge

j. I critically analyze and evaluate given information

Table 10 j:

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	30%
Sometimes	36	60%
No	6	10%

Regarding this question, more than half of the participants (60%) said they critically analyze and evaluate given information while reading. 30% students said sometimes they do it and 105 said they never do it.

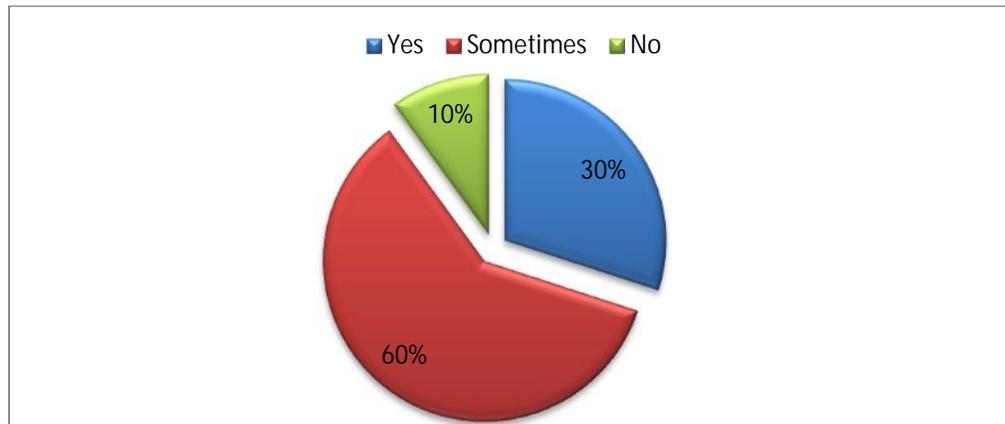


Figure 10 J: critically analyze and evaluate

Q 11. When you do not understand a text, you

- a. Translate to L1 (Bangla)

Table 11a:

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	16	27%
Sometimes	20	33%

No	24	40%
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When a text is difficult to understand, 27% participants translate it from English to Bangla, 33% said sometimes they do it and 40% of them said they do not use translation to make sense.

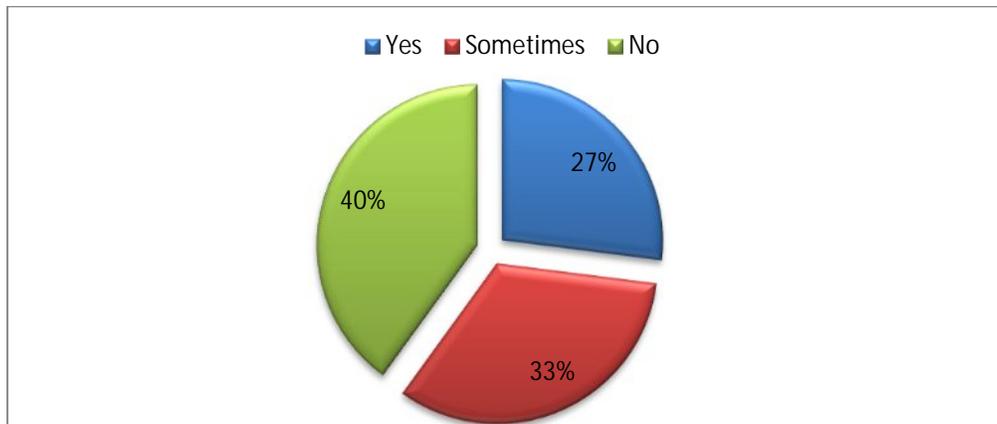


Figure 11a: critically analyze and evaluate

b. Stop reading

Table 11b:

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	4	7%
Sometimes	20	33%
No	36	60%

60% reported that they do not stop reading if they do not understand, 33% reported sometimes they do it and 7% said no.

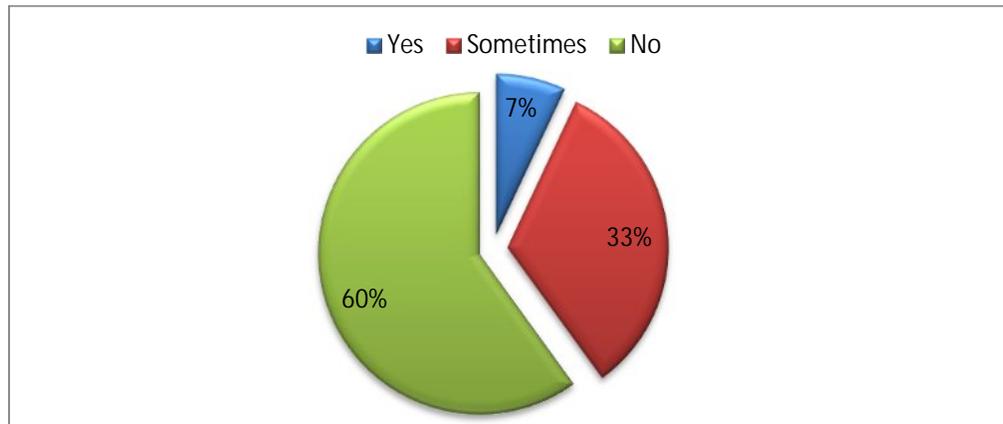


Figure 11 b: stop reading

c. Reread

Table 11c:

Answer Type	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	39	65%
Sometimes	21	35%
No	0	0%

65% of total participants stated that they always reread if they do not understand anything and other 35% said sometimes they reread.

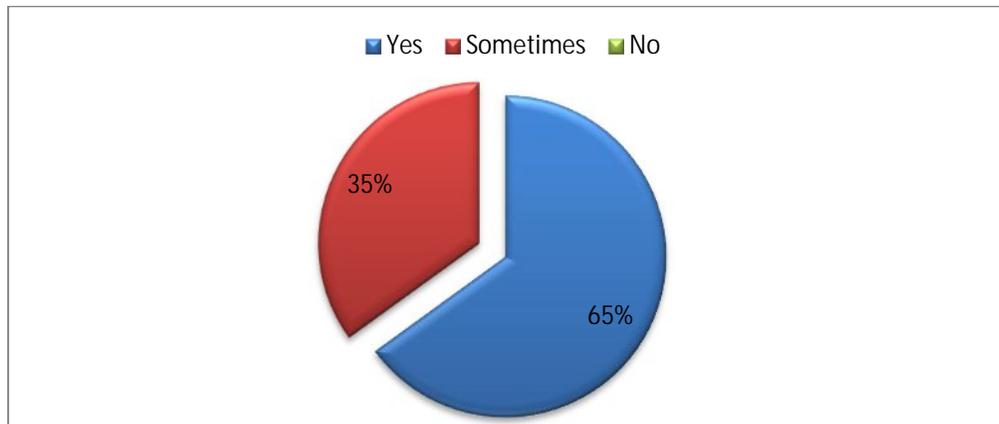


Figure 11c: rereading

4.2 Discussion on Questionnaire

- **Reading Habit:**

This section (table 3) represents materials that are read by students which include reading English newspaper, magazines, story books, going to library for reading and reading online journals. Few students reported that they read from blogs. The results showed that half of the participants (table 3a) read English newspaper which is useful for developing reading skill. This finding contradicts with the study of Quder (1999) where only 12% students were shown reading English newspaper regularly. Other than that, students grew habit of English story books and only few reported that they do not read English story books.

Another fact is that all the postgraduate students reported that they use online journals but not all undergraduate students have this habit of reading English daily. Visiting library is crucial for higher education and most participants (table 3e) said they visit libraries regularly.

These findings suggest that students of English department have got habit of reading materials written in English .

- **Difficulties regarding vocabulary:**

As it can be seen from the table 4 that most of the participants have difficulty in understanding large words and others face difficulty with this kind of problems sometimes. Only few students reported that they do not have difficulty in processing large words.

Second question under this category was about whether they could remember words after learning or not. The table (4b) shows that most of them have tendency to forget what vocabulary they have learnt. Only few participants reported that they do not forget what they learn. The last question of this section was about having poor vocabulary. Most of the students said that they have poor vocabulary and others think that they are in the middle level. But only few students were confident about their vocabulary level (table 4c).

Vocabulary is central to English Language Teaching because it helps to express language.

Vocabulary deals with words which help to make a text meaningful. Vocabulary and reading has strong connection because usually good readers have large sets of .Some participants who think that they are good readers (table 2) reported that they are not poor in vocabulary.

So, this section reveals that the most advanced learners of tertiary level have some difficulty in vocabulary and it is concurred with the study of Quder(1999). Moreover, some students marked

themselves with poor vocabulary and poor comprehension skill as both are related which supports the study of Cain (2011).

- **Difficulties regarding comprehension:**

This section contains five questions on reading comprehension. Reading is not only about reading words, it is all about getting the meaning of something. Comprehending means to apprehend, to perceive the text.

Responses from the first question (table 5a) show that the most students think they do not have difficulty in grasping the main idea of a text. Responses of Second question (table 5b) of this category shows that the most students prefer reading slowly and others read slowly sometimes. Another question was about comprehending and most students reported that they do not have difficulty in comprehending. Only few students said they have difficulty (table 5d). The last question of this section was on rereading to understand a text. Most of the students agreed on rereading and only few said that they do not reread (table 5e).

These findings suggest that tertiary level students do not have much difficulty in reading comprehension.

- **Difficulties on conceptual and topic level:**

This section was developed to assess problems of conceptual and topic level. When students were asked about their use of title, pictures as part of story orientation, answers were varied. Most participants do not limit their use of title, pictures at the beginning of a text (table 6a).

Some students integrate these things while reading and only few do not used these part of story

orientation. Second question were asked on using prior knowledge in reading new texts. Here, most of the participants reported that they do not limit their use of prior knowledge while reading new texts. Some participants added that using prior knowledge help them to connect strongly with the text. Another finding of this section show that students with problems in elaborating, inferring and predicting while reading are less in number(table 6c).

Overall, the section highlights that most adult students of universities do not have much difficulty in conceptual and topic level. They can use titles, pictures and prior knowledge while reading texts.

- **Motivation and encouragement:**

Motivation from teachers and encouragement from can help a great deal in becoming skilled readers and in fighting with reading difficulties. When students were asked to report on teachers'' motivation in reading, most marked it as very important (table 7a). In individual silent reading time, students do transfer their knowledge taught by teachers as stated in Pawlaczyk (2006). Like teachers' motivation in reading, parents' encouragement and assistance were marked s important by most of the participants. Only few said it was not very important.

So encouragement and motivation are important as lack of these factors might cause lack of interest in reading and promote less reading which refers to Dechant's (1982) study.

- **Causes of reading difficulties:**

This section deals with various reading difficulties altogether which include 4 options and a comment box to write up any other difficulty faced by readers. On asking about reading habit, most of the participants stated that they do not have habit of reading and only few stated they

have formed habit of reading (table 8a).to report about interest in reading, most participants said that they do not lack of interest in reading and others said sometimes they feel disinterested and only few said they were least interested (table8b). In next option, students were asked about difficulty in dealing with large piece of text. Most participants said that sometimes they face difficulty because of larger piece of text (table 8c).lastly, students were asked about time given for reading and most participants said they devote time for reading and only few said they do not have sufficient time for reading. One participant commented that because of depression and stress, he feels difficulty in reading and managing time for reading large piece of text. These findings somewhat contradicts with the findings of Quder (1999).

- **Reading strategies:**

Participants were asked about reading strategies like scanning, skimming and detailed reading. To give answer about scanning, it can be understood that though there are almost same number of responses for both the options “always” and sometimes” yet most of the participants stated that sometimes they use this technique. Others reported that they always use scanning but surprisingly, few participants reported that they have no idea about what scanning is. While asking bout skimming and detailed reading, most participants stated that depending on the situation, they use these strategies and no one reported that they have no idea about these strategies. Besides, summarizing is another strategy mostly used by the students. While reading students imagine storyline and use their background knowledge while reading new texts which helps then to critically think about the text and ensures involvement with the text. Another strategy mostly used by all participants is rereading which is supports the study of Anderson(2003). Some participants reported that if they face problems they read carefully and

sometimes slowly for better understanding. Lastly, more than half of the participants discuss things with others, use dictionary and sometimes critically analyze texts if needed.

4.3 Analysis of teachers' interview:

The second instrument was an interview form for teachers of English department who were selected randomly for a further investigation into the issue. Following is the analysis of interview:

Q1. Do you think reading difficulties affect students' performances? How?

Responses: all the teachers (6) said that reading is extremely important for doing well in academia. And difficulties in reading skill can hamper students' performances. Some teachers (3) also added that students of higher level courses need to read various materials and if they cannot read strategically and with considerable understanding, it becomes difficult for them to use their skill in improving their performances. Besides, because of difficulties, students tend to read without understanding which is detrimental to proper learning.

Q2. How important forming reading habit is for English department students?

Responses: like the first question, all the teachers agreed on the fact that forming reading habit for students of English department is absolutely crucial and some (4) teachers added that is have no other alternative. One teacher tagged it as the most important habit that English department students should form. However, some teachers also stated another important fact which is that a

poor reader with poor reading habit from school cannot overnight become a good reader. They also added that they usually find many students who are afraid of reading the text and instead learn from notebooks and memorize readymade answers.

Q3. Have you ever had any reading difficulty and if yes then how did you deal with it?

Responses: among 3 teachers, only 2 said that they had reading difficulties. One reported that the time of reading English literature, they found it difficult to read texts widely and effectively. Others said that they did not have difficulties as they were avid readers from early schooldays and enjoyed reading all kinds of materials available: newspaper, magazines, fiction, poetry, drama etc.

Teachers with difficulties dealt with their problems by reading routinely and widely. So, practicing reading regularly can minimize difficulties.

Q4. Do you assess student's reading skill?

Responses: some teachers (2) reported that sometimes they assess reading skill when they take language courses but to deal with problems with silent reading, various tasks are given to students to check how well they can grasp the meaning of the texts they are given to read.

Others (3) reported that they do not directly assess reading skill of the students. However, when students write answers and prepare their assignments, teachers do comment on the effectiveness of reading.

Q5. According to you, what are some causes of reading difficulties among adult students?

Responses: to answer about the causes of reading difficulties among adult learners, more than half of the teachers (4) stated that if adult students do not develop the habit of reading from early on, they do not learn how to read effectively and as a result they will have continual problems in reading. From teachers' point of view, some of the causes of reading difficulties are: short attention span, poor vocabulary, inability to understand, students' fear towards the foreign language, their tendency to memorize answers etc.

Q6. How do you prepare your students for any text? Do you ask various questions related to a particular text in order to prepare the students to read the text ?

Responses: this question was set to know how teachers prepare students to read and make them curious to read. All the teachers responded that they do ask questions to make students curious about particular reading material. Some teachers (3) added that they ask detail questions to make students read the whole text and give some tasks as homework so that students have purpose in mind and read carefully.

Q7. Do you teach various reading techniques in the class?

Responses: this question was set to know whether teachers teach reading techniques in the class or not. The researcher got mixed responses. Some (3) said that they teach various techniques and others (3) said not necessarily. One teacher responded that various questions were asked to students to make them think before reading. And to find out the answers of those questions, students give extra effort in their silent reading time.

From their point of view, it is important to give students purpose of reading so that they feel interested.

Q8. What are your suggestions for improving reading skill and overcoming any difficulty?

Responses: to answer this question, every teacher gave their respective suggestions. From their point of view, students have to read in order to improve their skill and overcome any difficulty. The more students read the more interest they will get in reading. Some other suggestions are:

- Adapting new teaching techniques.
- Forming reading groups and arrange discussion sessions
- Teaching how to read from early childhood
- Parents' involvement in promoting silent reading at home.

4.4 Major findings

This section will highlight major findings based on survey questionnaire and interview questions in the light of research questions.

Basically, in this dissertation, the researcher tried to find out various general reading difficulties faced adult learners in the context of Bangladesh. The first research question was set to find out whether students are aware of their reading difficulties or not. The result revealed that they know their problem areas and they have difficulty in vocabulary. Second major finding is according to

participants, most do not have difficulty in comprehension and conceptual level. Third finding is participants are aware of role of teachers and parents in improving skills like reading. Some students could pinpoint reasons of their difficulties and most of them reported that they feel interest in reading English texts. The last question was set to know the strategies for language learners (L2) of Bangladesh to cope up with their reading difficulties. Students reported what strategies they use most . they mostly use scanning, rereading, summarizing, using prior knowledge and discuss things with others.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

Reading as one of the basic skills, is considered as an crucial element for everyday life. As stated in earlier chapters, the aim of this dissertation was to investigate various reading difficulties faced by advanced level students of Bangladesh and to explore what reading strategies they use to overcome reading difficulties in silent reading time. The standard of reading skill is not satisfactory for all the students and have multifaceted difficulties. The study has tried to find out those difficulties and strategies use by them in detail. This study encompasses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data. Based on the findings it can be said that students need to grow habit of reading from early childhood as it has connection with vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Also attention needs to be given on adult students with difficulties and they should be taught reading strategies so that they can master English language.

5.2 Further research

The researcher suggests to do further research on reading difficulties. The reasons are:

- This work has focused on tertiary level only. So primary and secondary levels can be examined to get holistic picture of Bangladesh.
- More teachers can be included for further research.
- Only private universities of Dhaka city were chosen to do survey. So public and national universities can be included outside Dhaka.

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Appendix 1

A Questionnaire on Reading Difficulties and Strategies

Name:

University:

Department:

1. Are you from English medium school?
a. Yes b. No
2. Do you think you are a good reader?
a. Yes b. no
3. Tell about you reading habit : (tick the answer)
a. English newspaper

yes	sometimes	No

b. Magazines

yes	sometimes	No

c. Story books

yes	sometimes	No

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d. Online journal (Jstor,google scholar)

yes	sometimes	No

e. Visit library

yes	sometimes	No

f. Other:

4. Difficulties regarding vocabulary: (tick the answer)

a. Difficulty in understanding large words that I read

yes	sometimes	No

b. Forget vocabulary that I learn

yes	sometimes	No

c. Have poor vocabulary

yes	sometimes	No
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5. Difficulties regarding comprehension: (circle the answer)

a. Have difficulty in grasping the main idea of text

yes	sometimes	No

b. read slowly

yes	sometimes	No

c. Have difficulty in identifying the main points

yes	sometimes	No

d. Difficulty in comprehending

yes	sometimes	No

e. Reread to make sense

yes	sometimes	No

6. Difficulties on conceptual and topic level: (circle the answer)

a. I use title, pictures as part of story orientation

yes	sometimes	No

b. I use prior knowledge in reading new texts

yes	sometimes	No

c. I do/do not elaborate, infer, predict or summarize while reading.

yes	sometimes	No

7. Importance of motivation and encouragement in reading

a. Teacher's motivation :

Important	Somewhat important	Not very important

b. Parents' encouragement and assistance :

important	Somewhat important	Not very important

8. What are the causes of reading difficulties?

e. Lack of reading habit

yes	sometimes	No

f. Lack of interest

yes	sometimes	No

g. Large piece of text

yes	sometimes	No

h. Lack of time

yes	sometimes	No

i. Other:

9. Which reading technique do you use?

d. Scanning

Always	Sometimes	No idea about scanning
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e. Skimming

Always	Sometimes	No idea about skimming

f. Detailed reading

Always	Sometimes	No idea about detailed reading

g. Other.....

10. While reading what kind of reading strategies do you follow?

b. I ask questions and try to answer them.

Always	Sometimes	Never

c. Imagine story and try to use prior knowledge to deal with the text

Always	Sometimes	Never

d. I use graphic components

Always	Sometimes	Never

e. Summarize and try to figure out main points

Always	Sometimes	Never

f. I read carefully and slowly

Always	Sometimes	Never

g. I do skimming and scanning

Always	Sometimes	Never

h. I discuss things with others

Always	Sometimes	Never

i. I use dictionary, underline important lines

Always	Sometimes	Never

j. I use context knowledge for better understanding

Always	Sometimes	Never

k. I critically analyze and evaluate given information

Always	Sometimes	Never

11. When you do not understand a text, you

a. Translate to L1 (Bangla)

yes	sometimes	No

b. Keep reading without understanding it

yes	sometimes	No

c.Reread

yes	sometimes	No

d. Other:

Appendix 2

Name:

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. Do you think reading difficulties affect students' performances? How?

Ans:

2. How important forming reading habit is for English department students?

Ans:

3. Have you ever had any reading difficulty and if yes then how did you deal with it?

Ans:

4. Do you assess student's reading skill?

Ans:

5. According to you, what are some causes of reading difficulties among adult students?

Ans:

6. How do you prepare your students for any text? Do you ask various questions related to a particular text in order to prepare the students to read the text ?

Ans:

7. Do you teach various reading techniques in the class?

Ans :

8. What are your suggestions for improving reading skill and overcoming any difficulty?

Answer: