Exploring the Existing Teaching Practices and Challenges for Enhancing Bangla Reading Competency: A Qualitative Study on Government Primary Schools

By

Md. Atoar Hosen

21357043

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BRAC Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University

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Declaration

I hereby declare with confidence that.

1. The thesis presented results from my/our original effort to earn a degree at BRAC University.

2. The thesis contains no previously published or authored content from other individuals, and all referenced material is cited accurately and comprehensively.

3. The thesis does not include any material that has been approved or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or alternative educational institution.

4. I/We have recognized all primary sources of assistance.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

_____

Md. Atoar hosen

21357043

Approval

The thesis is titled " Exploring the Existing Teaching Practices and Challenges for Enhancing Bangla Reading Competency: A Qualitative Study on Government Primary Schools." submitted by

1. Md. Atoar Hosen (21357043)

The fall of 2023 has been considered acceptable as part of fulfilling the requirements for the Master of Education degree in Educational Leadership & School Improvement on February 25, 2024.

Examining Committee

Supervisor:
(Member)

_____
MD Bayezid Islam

Lecturer, BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University

Program
Coordinator:
(Member)

_____
Dr. Manjuma Akhtar Mousumi

Assistant Professor, BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University

External Examiner:
(Member)

_____
Dr. Somnath Saha

Assistant Professor, BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University

Head of the Institute:

_____
Dr. Erum Marium

Executive Director, BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University

Ethical Statement

I, as the author of this thesis, solemnly committed to conducting this research with the utmost honesty, following ethical guidelines, and ensuring the safety of all study participants. Participants were provided with comprehensive details about the study's goals, methods, potential risks, and advantages. They were invited to participate voluntarily and had the option to withdraw from the study at any point without fear of consequences. All participant data was kept confidentially, with personal details anonymized and data securely stored. The study procedures, methodologies, and data analysis techniques were meticulously documented in a transparent manner.

Abstract

The significance of Bangla reading competency in students as a fundamental element for academic achievement is widely recognized. However, the underlying reasons for the low reading proficiency among students in grades two and three remain less explored. This study contributes to existing literature by examining the current teaching practices and challenges faced by Government Primary School teachers in Kurigram Sadar Upazila, Kurigram, concerning the factors contributing to low reading competency and strategies to address this issue.

The research revealed that primary school teachers often lack commitment and readiness when conducting classes, identifying student decoding, phonological awareness, blending words, homework, and irregular attendance as major hindrances to achieving reading proficiency. Furthermore, it was observed that there was no adherence to the teacher's guide, less utilization of teaching aids, and classroom methodologies predominantly followed traditional approaches. Moreover, regular assessment of Bangla reading skills at the school level was found to be lacking. Another factor contributing to low reading rates and poor proficiency among early-grade students is not maintaining the lesson sequence during class.

Keywords: Low reading competency; Teacher perceptions; Decoding; Assessment; Classroom practices

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and supervisor, whose unwavering love and support have been instrumental throughout the research process. Their support and guidance have been priceless, and I am deeply appreciative of their dedication to my academic path. This work stands as a testament to the inspiration and dedication of all those involved, without whom its completion would not have been possible.

Acknowledgment

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List of Acronyms

CAMPE   Campaign for Popular Education

EGRA   Early Grade Reading Assessment

FGD   Focused Group Discussion

NICHD   National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

NCTB   National Curriculum Textbook Board

NSA   National Student Assessment

SDG   Sustainable Development Goal

SRM   Supplementary Reading Materials

TG   Teacher Guide

WB   World Bank

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Numerous studies have identified that a significant number of students struggle with reading Bangla properly. The reading performance of students depends on their decoding skills, which are related to phonological awareness, phonics, and reading comprehension. In addition to these skills, teaching practices, use of teaching aids, assessments, positive environment, and context are also vital factors that contribute to achieving the ability to read Bangla proficiently. The objective of the research paper is to shed light on the low reading competence of the Bangla language by analyzing its root causes, effects, and possible solutions. The paper explores the factors that contribute to poor reading skills and presents various strategies to improve reading competency. Moreover, the study examines the impact of low reading competence on academic performance and provides valuable insights into educational approaches that can help minimize this issue.

The foundation skill of reading competency is a prerequisite for academic success. Also, efficient and significant literacy skills lead to achieving people's desired educational and career opportunities (Project Literacy, 2020). Unluckily, low reading competency among students is gradually increasing (Blickenstaff et al., 2013). At the primary level, low reading competency becomes a burning issue that negatively influences Bangladesh's entire education system (Salahuddin et al., 2020). The current need to emphasize students' foundation skills in early grades at the school level to address and overcome the issue. According to Mathew's effect in the reading Model, from first to third grade, reading performance increases by the foundation skill, which means those students who get academic support and without foundation skills students' performance become decreases in early grades (Visovsky, 2013). The study aims to explore the

factors of low reading competency from the school's context by unfolding the root causes behind this.

1.2 Research Topic and Title

This research topic is "The Current Situation of Bangla Reading Competency in Primary Schools."

The research title is Exploring the Existing Teaching Practices and Challenges for Enhancing Bangla Reading Competency: A Qualitative Study on Government Primary Schools.

Reading is an essential basic skill for language learning (Sattar & Salehi, 2014). A good reader can decode and understand the text at a time. Reading competency at the primary level is very essential for next-level development. Without fluent readers, we would not be able to achieve quality education as well as achieve the SDG-4 goal. The study would explore the existing teaching practices regarding low reading competency that have been persistent in government primary schools. So, the title is important in our primary education context.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Bangla reading competency is one of the emergent issues in early-grade students at the primary level. Although students completed grade three, most students cannot read correctly. The National Student Assessment 2015 published a report that in grade three, 35% of students could not read Bangla fluently, and 43% could not answer a simple question, which means that their comprehension test scores are weak (Ahmed, 2019). Low reading ability in Bangla, which primarily impacts our whole education system. A report published by the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) mentioned that 73% of students in grade three cannot read correctly, and 65% are not proficient in Bangla writing (Jasim, 2019). Very often, students in early grade read out the rhymes and some texts without identifying the words. They tend to memorize before decoding the text. As a result, students completed grade three, only 38% achieved their proficiency

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level, 9% achieved advanced level, and 53% remained at basic and below basic level (National Student Assessment, 2017). According to the World Bank report, one-third of grade three students could not be classified as readers because they did not get enough test scores (World Bank, 2019). A recent report disclosed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board mentioned that in grade two, a severe learning gap in Bangla reading was found at 38.94, In contrast, a countable of 24.57, and in grade three, it was 49.69 whereas, with a countable of 22.14. Students are still facing simple sentences and the meaning of sentences. Besides, students seek to apply appropriate methods and teaching materials from a joyful classroom by the teacher to overcome their reading gap (NCTB, 2023). Therefore, we cannot overlook these issues as we are trying to achieve quality education for all. It is very essential to explore the issues in depth. It is crucial to know the current teaching practices and teachers' perceptions that would help the solution correctly resolve the issues.

1.4 Research Questions

Three research questions have been generated for this study, which would guide this study and are given below:

Q.1) How do teachers use teaching-learning practices in the classroom for Bangla reading competency?

Q. 2) What are the factors responsible for primary graders' low reading competency?

Q.3) What are the challenges teachers face in improving students' reading competency?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to low reading proficiency among students. The study will analyze the current teaching and learning practices, assessment processes, use of teaching aids and supplementary reading materials, students' decoding skills, and the real

context of the issues. This research aims to better understand the challenges faced by students with low reading skills and the experiences of teachers in dealing with them. The main goal is to identify the primary reasons for the reading gap and propose actionable initiatives to improve it.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Though the students are in grade three, have a major lack of ability to identify conjunct letters and the alphabet, blend words, and make sentences, which largely affects achieving reading skills (Salahuddin et al., 2020). With low reading competency, students cannot continue their education completion up to the primary level.

This research aims to identify the reasons behind low reading competency and highlight areas for improvement, such as teaching practices, materials, and teacher-student interactions. It could provide valuable insights for readers and educators., that helps to achieve the SDG goal, in goal 4 mentioned: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015).

In government primary schools, the teachers play a key role in ensuring learners' Bangla reading skills. There is a gap in the literature about the current practices of teaching activities and issues regarding students' Bangla reading competency in early-grade learners. This study intends to address this gap by exploring teachers' perceptions regarding the current practices and issues in achieving Bangla reading competency in early grades.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

This section involves a detailed investigation of various topics related to existing teaching practices and challenges for enhancing Bangla reading competency. To carry out this exploration, a thorough analysis of relevant literature sources was conducted, including books, research papers, policy documents, academic websites, articles, and journals related to the subject matter of the study. The scrutinized literature and published scholarly works were categorized into some primary subsections. namely: I) Reading competency, ii) Low reading competency, classroom practices, and learning initiatives iii) Teaching Approach iv) Supplementary reading materials v) Effectiveness of assessment and assessment tools vi) Parent's awareness and involvement in students' homework vii) Teacher's Perception and Preparedness viii) Effects of Low Reading Competency and ix) Challenges.

2.2 Reading competency

Proficient reading ability and comprehension are essential for lifelong learning and effective participation in social activities. As readers of different grades perform differently based on their cognitive processes, it is important to identify specific processes for individual students or subgroups (McNamara, 2007).

Reading is generally a complex process; to fulfil reading skills needs many skills in an organized way. From a broader perspective, students' goal is to achieve reading competency. To be a reader, three skills are generally required: reading skills, model-building ability, and comprehension ability (O'Reilly & Sheehan, 2009). To achieve prerequisite reading skills, one should have the ability to decode familiar and unfamiliar words while reading accurately. Model-building skills

help the student to comprehend the decoding text by reading. Therefore, in the early stages, the teaching approach is very important to make the student a skilled reader aligned with the textbook instruction.

Connor (2005) stated that teachers' instructional practices and interactions with students significantly impact students' academic outcomes. Similarly, it is widely recognized that the teaching methods and interactions between teachers and students significantly impact academic performance (NICHD-ECCRN et al. 2002, as cited in Connor 2005). Besides, phonological awareness practices in teacher-guided decoding instruction effectively enhance children's vocabulary and reading skills, even for those with low decoding ability (Connor et al., 2004).

Though researchers and educationalists promote plenty of efforts to ensure reading for children, most children are too frail to touch the basic literacy level (Paris & Stalh, 2005). In the early stages of learning, reading instruction aligned with textbooks and supplementary reading materials is essential for developing and maintaining basic literacy skills.

Children find it easy to connect words with objects when learning an oral language, but achieving reading ability is challenging without the proper decoding process for written text. McNamara (2007) stated that, due to inadequate practice, some students are proficient in verbal communication but dislike reading, leading to poor fluency in their reading skills. (Seidenberg et al. 2001 as cited in McNamara, 2007).

2.3 Low reading competency, classroom practices, and learning initiatives

The whole language approach is essential but not as effective as significant. (Team Tom Education, 2022). The National Reading Panel USA disclosed evidence-based evaluation that the best way for children to read is to learn phonological awareness, then gradually phonics, vocabulary, reading, and comprehension skills (NICHD, 1997). Similarly, the foundation of reading skills

depends on word recognition and decoding, which are the initial skills in reading instruction that ultimately help students develop their comprehension abilities. (Lehr et al. 2005). Besides, in the National Bangla textbook in grade one, lesson 8, where students learn the letter 'E' (ই) from starting the word 'Eit' (ইট) & 'Elish (ইলিশ) (Alam, 2019). According to the textbook, a student first learns a word or sentence and then gradually learns letters, phonics, and phonological awareness, which interrupts reading competency in early grade and is opposite to the National Reading Panel's Scientific Report USA. So, the teaching-learning initiatives make the student a low reader as their phonological awareness and phonics foundation level do not become firm.

Stanovich (2017) stated that Children in early grades who learn to read gradually become fluent readers, expanding their vocabulary and enhancing their ability to comprehend more advanced texts, enabling them to progress further. Furthermore, fluency is important as it is interrelated with comprehension (Hasan, 2011). Frequently, reading may appear to be a simple task, but it is a complex cognitive process for students. They must simultaneously navigate five key components: phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. These elements combine to form the foundation for achieving reading competency (Reader, 2018). Reading for pleasure is necessary to reduce social exclusion and enhance the standard of education. Most research activities initially addressed reading depending on the recognition of words and text comprehension, which means cognitive aspects of reading. It has been emphasized that the cognitive process of reading is not the only important aspect; reading for pleasure is also crucial and complements the cognitive process of reading (Rumbold & Clark, 2006). Students need support to learn five components from the textbook. Also, there needs to be an emphasis on systematic learning opportunities in the education system.

2.4 Teaching Approach

The teaching approach is a set of assumptions that guide the teaching and learning of language, reflecting the nature of language learning. Over the past twenty years, there has been considerable controversy surrounding the acquisition of reading skills, particularly in comparing whole language and phonics approaches (Hempenstall, 2005). On the other hand, the whole language approach is being considered in the context of language development in early-grade textbook design in Bangladesh.

Reading is a complicated process. Letter recognition, decoding, semantic knowledge, phoneme awareness, and comprehension that the proficient reader does together continuously. Besides, (Gleason, 2005) stated that the whole language approach aids in decoding, focusing on letters, the alphabet, phonics segmentation, and blending, and rapid reading comprehension, enhancing spontaneous decoding ability. However, it is crucially important to implement the right instructional practices in the classroom that align with the content of textbooks and teachers' instruction guides. In addition, Gleason (2005) stated that differences in theories of children's learning and development may be reflected in the continuation of higher expectations for teaching methods, which could potentially be associated with reading failure (Flesch, 1985 as cited in Gleason., J.B, 2007).

The whole language approach aligned with the notion that the top-down method can play a vital role in achieving reading skills (Suknovic, 2020). Psychologists define two types of processing that are included in the reading and relative cognitive tasks. A bottom-up process is where children start learning from first phonological awareness. In the top-down process, there are expectations of some prior knowledge of the reader that the information would guide. Achieving rapid and accurate reading performance in nearly every situation involves combining top-down and bottom-

up processes (Treiman, 2017). In Bangladesh, language learning and teaching practices follow the whole language approach. According to actual practice, students have to memorize rhymes and learn sentences before learning phonics and letters (NCTB, 2015).

2.5 Supplementary reading materials

As per the Report Card Survey 2016, supplementary reading materials (SRM) facilities had a 71% percentage in 2015; in 2016, the report shows 65%. Some school Headteachers responded that they have no SRM facilities (CAMPE, 2017). Effective SRM support ensures increased reading habits; the survey report found deficient support from SRM. Also, reading competency in early grades largely depends on quality instructional and supplemental reading materials. Teachers should incorporate various teaching aids, such as pictures, maps, charts, posters, and audio-visual materials, to enhance students' interest in learning (Joseph, 2015). The outcomes of students are closely linked to teachers' instructional practices, which encompass creative aspects, close interrelationships, two-way participation, and responsive teaching (Pianta et al., 2002). There is a well-accepted belief that a set-up library with free space is necessary for children to learn, which influences the development of a love for reading. In primary schools' children do not have easy library access or opportunities to use libraries as places where they get age-appropriate books and learn to read (Phillips et al., 2017).

2.6 Effectiveness of assessment and assessment tools

Reading fluency is the ability to read the text smoothly and with accuracy. Students read out a grade-level passage per minute aloud, where teachers identify errors in words and take remedies as per errors (Jay et al., 2013). A baseline survey was conducted among the students of grades one, two, and three using IIEGRA tools in Cox's Bazar and Khagrachari with the support of the USAID program. The result has shown that students can read 27 words per minute from grade one, 44

words can read from grade two students, and 54 words per minute from grade three (Shimu et.al, 2016). The result shows low reading in grades one and two. It would be effective to use early-grade reading assessment tools to measure the actual reading problem and take remedy plans as per tracking tools. However, teachers do not use student tracking tools to check Bangla reading performance at the primary level; this is an almost common scenario in our primary context.

Similarly, formative assessment involves ongoing feedback to students regarding their learning advancement while also analyzing their areas of proficiency and areas that need improvement (Voinea, 2018). Likewise, linguistic educators have emphasized a greater emphasis on formative reading assessment in language classrooms (Salauddin, 2020). Furthermore, Black & Wiliam (1988) stated that formative assessment is a teaching approach that focuses on helping students improve their learning abilities; this method aims to provide ongoing feedback based on evaluation.

2.7 Parent's awareness and involvement on students' homework

Active parental involvement is a crucial factor in ensuring the academic success of elementary school students when it comes to completing their homework (Epstein, J. 1988). Also, students need to receive a response on their homework performance. Parents and other adults should possess a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and topics covered in homework to offer specific and constructive support (Johan M.T et al., 2004). Similarly, the existing research suggests the positive impact of parental involvement in homework on student attitude, self-perception, work habits, and self-regulation (Hoove. D. et al., 2001 as cited Vicky. C. T, 2009). Besides, Parents with limited education and resources face significant challenges in providing adequate support for their children's education (Bourdieu, 1986). In Bangladesh, the problem is common at the primary school level in semi-urban, rural, and remote contexts.

2.8 Teacher's Perception and Preparedness

Teachers' perception of low reading competency is of utmost importance, as they play a significant role in the learning process. Their assumptions about students' learning process have a crucial impact on the pedagogical approach (Giles & Tunks, 2014). In the same way, effective teaching is the key to enhancing students' learning abilities (Darling. H, 2000 as cited in Judy, 2008). In the same intonation, Judy (2008) mentioned that effective teaching requires a well-informed understanding of the subject and adapting methods to meet diverse learners' needs, ensuring high standards for all students (Alton-Lee Citation 2003 as cited in Judy, 2008). Enhancing teacher preparedness is a pivotal issue for conducting effective classroom instruction, ultimately enhancing students' reading competence in the primary school context.

2.9 Effects of Low Reading Competency

Students' reading competency levels affect their academic, real-life, social, and extracurricular experiences. The goal for students is to read and write effectively, not just to answer questions or prepare for tests. When teachers' instructions are unclear or do not align with relevant activities, students may struggle to engage and learn effectively (Elfrieda et al., 2005).

Besides, reading comprehension measures are suitable for evaluating third-grade standards, as the primary objective of reading instruction is to provide students with the knowledge and skills to comprehend and extract meaning from text (Torgesen, 2004). In a report published by the World Development Bank, 43% of grade three students could not answer simple questions properly from reading a Bangla text paragraph (World Bank, 2018). So, Students with low reading competency may face academic challenges that can significantly impact their overall life outcomes.

2.10 Challenges:

The impact of missed lessons on irregularly attending students presents a challenge for teachers. Teachers face challenges to ensure that every student can catch up and improve their lesson and reading skills. Khan (2020) stated that students struggle with reading skills due to poor vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, wrong spellings, slow reading pace, and decoding. These areas contribute to over 90% of the challenges faced by learners in reading skills (Khan et al., 2020). Similarly, Challenges in reading competency at the school level encompass students' decoding skills, irregular attendance, absence of a reading culture, and the necessity for contextualized reading curricula (Mary et al., 2021). In the primary school context, students who struggle with low reading skills and understanding are often promoted to the next class in early grades.

2.11 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a design of the study in qualitative research paradigms, interrelatedness, and correlation of concepts (Tamene, 2016). It helps the researcher to explore the actual context of the study. Jabareen (2009) stated that conceptual framework is an interconnected idea that provides a widespread understanding of phenomena. Also, the conceptual framework is considered the heart of the research. The conceptual framework delineates the researcher's approach to formulating a method for investigating the problem and how they extract insights from an analysis of the data source. (Imenda, 2014). It would help to drive the study. Different teaching techniques enhance students' motivation and reading text in classroom practices by the teachers (Dahlina & Fadilah, 2022). Teaching practices in participatory ways is essential for students' learning. Teachers need to ensure five key components of reading: phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension, which help students to be fluent readers and reduce their ability of low reading competency.

The teaching approach and understanding between teachers and students create positive school environments (Nako, 2015). The teacher's motivation, attitude, and way of interacting with students largely influence the students' learning outcomes. Easy access to supplementary materials for students and teachers is the basic tool to enhance their knowledge and skills. Creating a teaching-learning environment and language-learning materials can create an effective role (Rosario & Diva, 2022). Supplementary reading materials, along with textbooks, could enhance the reading competency of students.

Fluency is the ability of students to decode text with accuracy at their specific speed level (Rasinski, 2004). Teachers could help the students improve their reading fluency by creating a learning environment, which is the main purpose of learning.

Early-grade reading assessment tools are an effective tool for identifying the reading fluency performance of early-grade students who recognize the standard level of words per minute (Dubeck, 2015). Reading assessment tools would help the teachers to explore the students' improvement areas, reading levels, and gaps identified. Assessment tools are essential to identify student learning gaps. Most research considered low reading competency in various student performance dimensions. To sequential guidelines in grades one and two, students become poor readers. Lack of effective teaching methods is also responsible for students' learning gaps (Salauddin, 2020).
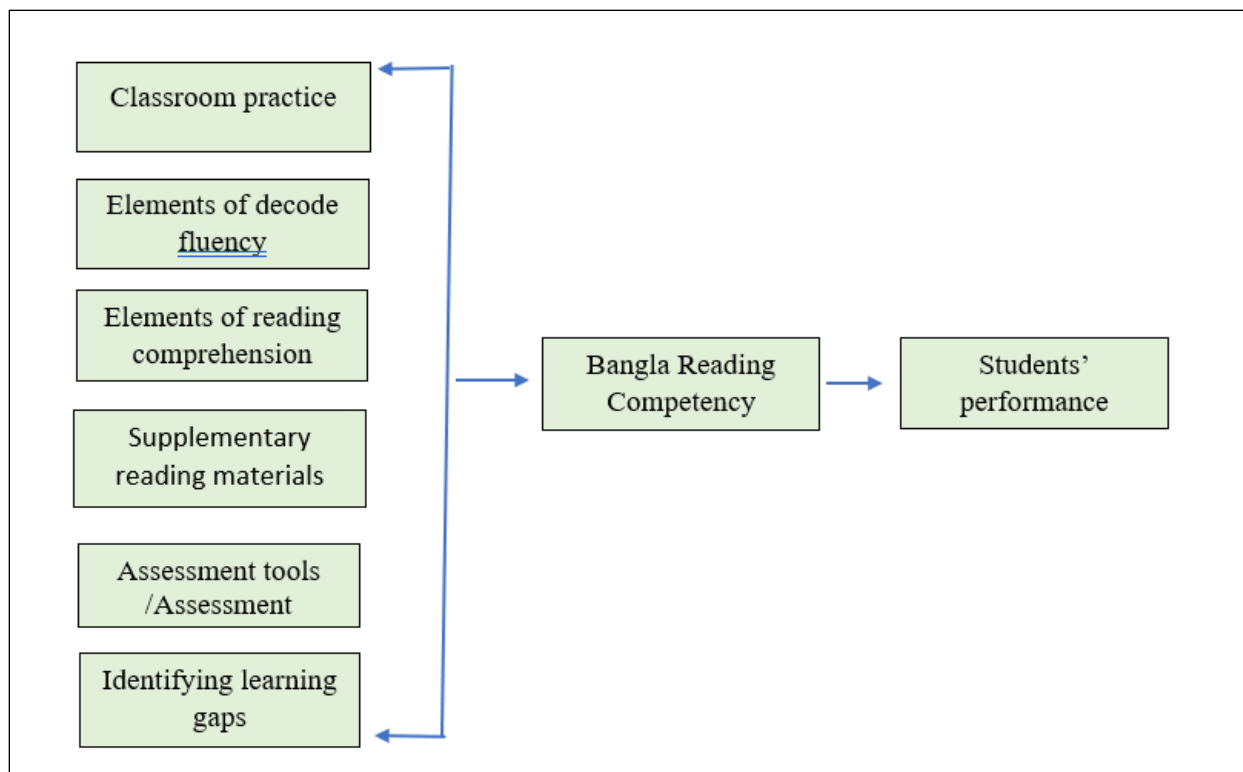
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Reading Competency

In the early stages of reading, children adopt several skills that help them decode words and develop fluency in reading. These skills are aligned with phonological awareness, phonics and reading fluency and are taught in classrooms through various practices, materials, and assessments. Learning to read is influenced by factors like individual differences, cultural background, and the importance of support from teachers and peers. The supplementary reading materials help support students who struggle with reading, as it provides them with the necessary assistance to develop their reading abilities.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology section outlines the research framework utilized, encompassing various elements such as the research approach, research site, research participants, sampling technique, data collection method, methodology matrix, roles of researcher, data analysis procedure, ethical issues and concerns, Trustworthiness and rigour and limitation of the study. The research employed qualitative methods to extensively explore the existing teaching practices and challenges for enhancing Bangla reading competency.

3.2 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was undertaken for the study that helps identify areas of study where the theory of the topic is absent and variables are unknown. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). In qualitative research, three aspects are essential: the research site, process, and participant's level. An effective qualitative study is achieved through the reflection and presentation of the site, process, and participants. (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, qualitative research generates a broader sense of behavior, so the approach helps to link and pick up the information about people's actual conditions and lives (Daniel, 2016). Teachers have unique teaching experiences, practices, and methods. To fully explore these experiences and perceptions, a qualitative research approach would be more effective than closed-ended questions which may limit the range of insights. Additionally, practical experiences can differ depending on the context. Therefore, using semi-structured and open-ended questions through a qualitative approach would be helpful in exploring the rich insights of teachers. To achieve this, researchers need to have a thorough understanding of the subject matter and create innovative perspectives. The research methodology needs to involve

utilizing a qualitative approach guided by the paradigms of constructivism. So, a qualitative research approach would be used for the study.

3.3 Research site

The study was conducted in three government primary schools of Kurigram Sadar Upazila under the Kurigram district. This was a semi-urban area of Bangladesh. The site was selected because the most vulnerable communities of Bangladesh are living, and students are struggling more. In addition, I have been living in the Kurigram district, so I had access to collect data from government primary schools, which made it easier for participants in the data collection phase of the research study.

3.4 Research Participants

Teachers from government primary schools have participated in a research study from three selected schools. The following specific criteria have been considered:

- Teachers who conducted Bangla class
- Taking classes in grades 2 and 3
- Headteachers who monitored the Bangla class and supported Bangla assistant teachers from the management side.
- Both male and female teachers have participated as responders.
- Government recruitment teachers, not volunteer teachers, could not participate as responders.

Before conducting the study, a consent letter was provided to the responders to maintain confidentiality. Participants provided consent prior to each interview, focus group discussion, and class observation, with their consent documented during the interview. This process assured participants of confidentiality, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and

recording of the session. The total participants were 9 teachers, 3 Headteachers, and 6 assistant teachers who conducted Bangla classes in grades two and three.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling helps to understand the real fact that exists or is currently happening based on places and people (Creswell, 2012). Similarly, another writer stated that regarding purposeful sampling, the proper selection while maintaining the standard of individuals and sites is "information rich" (Patton,1990, as cited in Creswell, 2012). The study was conducted based on purposive sampling.

3.6 Data collection method

Data collection tools are important indicators for identifying the real situation of the phenomena. Effective data collection through in-depth interviews and participant observation is helpful for data triangulation (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Data was collected through interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions. The selection of data collection methods in detail is given below.

3.6.1 Interview Method

An interview is crucial for gathering in-person data. A well-designed semi-structured interview ensures key data is captured within the context while allowing participants to share their own perspectives and maintain flexibility during the discussion. (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). For this study, individual teacher interviews have been taken to incorporate their opinion. The interview was conducted with nine teachers, and the Assistant and Headteachers participated as interview respondents. The process of conducting interviews could be a tool for researchers to obtain practical views, unique perspectives, and experiences from study participants. It also helps to explore in-depth descriptions of real contexts and facilitates interaction with students, which is

highly relevant to the study topic. As a result, the interview process is an effective way to capture the true context of the study participants.

3.6.2 Classroom observation

Another relying solely on teacher experience sharing may not provide a complete picture of classroom activities. Therefore, gathering insights through direct observation in the classroom is essential and an important data source for the study. Classroom observation is used as it is the first stage of the data collection method that helps to find out the implicit output of classroom-based learning activities (Wilcox 2000, as cited in Balushi and Saad, 2021). Classroom observation tools and guidelines have been developed to get responses from the selected six participants of Bangla teachers from government primary schools. Conducting classroom observations for research purposes offers invaluable insights into teaching methodologies, explores to enhance their instructional techniques, and drives positive outcomes in student achievement. Researchers can explore student engagement trends and identify disparities linked to outcomes by utilizing classroom observations in research. So, a classroom observation tool has been selected for the study.

3.6.3 Focus group discussion

Focus group discussion helps to explore instant feedback and viewpoints on the effective contribution of group members (Dilshad et al., 2013). In the study, semi-structured, open-ended questions were introduced cautiously to facilitate the focus group discussion. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was a helpful method that provided valuable insights into how teachers perceive and interact with students and areas of agreement or disagreement regarding low reading competency in primary school. The FGD also facilitated friendly exchanges with participants, allowing the researcher to gather diverse opinions. The researcher obtained a holistic

understanding of the subject by capturing both combined and conflicting views on Bangla reading competency. Overall, the FGD was an effective data collection method that enabled the researcher to gather extensive insights into the impacts of teaching practices on the classroom environment from students' perspectives.

3.6.4 *Methodology matrix*

Research questions	Data Source	Sampling Technique	Research Method	Total number of Participants
How do teachers use teaching-learning practices in the classroom for Bangla reading competency?	Primary	Purposive Sampling	Interviews and Observation	• Assistant Teacher's interview (Bangla): 3 • Classroom observation (3 schools): 6
What are the factors responsible for primary graders' low reading competency?	Primary	Purposive Sampling	Interviews, and FGD	• Head Teacher's interview: 3 • Focus group discussion (6 participants): 2
What are the significant challenges teachers face in improving students' reading competency?	Primary	Purposive Sampling	Interviews, and FGD	• Head Teacher's interview: 3 • Focus group discussion (6 participants): 2

3.7 Role of Researchers

As a researcher, I have made sure to use primary data collection tools to gather qualitative data through various methods. After collecting the data, I analyze and interpret it. I also interpret the findings in terms of research questions and reflect on any biases and influences. Additionally, I ensure ethical conduct throughout the study and present my findings through writing and dissemination. Iyengar (2011) calls qualitative data self-reveal data; it has a small chance of bias by the researcher during the presence of data collection. During data collection, I have always tried to collect the actual data that the participants respond to and do not apply any of my personal views that may raise questions about the study. I transcribed and translated only the pertinent sections of this study, as the conversations were in Bangla, the community's native language. My focus was to maintain accuracy: to translate the relevant dialogue accurately, ensuring the original meaning remained unchanged, and to keep the conversation's exactness.

3.8 Data analysis procedure

Qualitative data exploration refers to the way of narrative, arrangement, and interconnection with the concept of the researcher that is aligned with the phenomena (Ian, 1993). The data was collected through interviews, FGD, and observation. During data collection from the field, I have translated and transcribed the data and generated themes and sub-themes that were provided to the responders. Thematic analysis is useful for both small and large data sets, where it helps to analyze focus groups and interview data effectively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For analysis, some steps have been ensured, such as reviewing the data in several ways to better understand the meaning and capturing the real information related to the questions, themes, and sub-themes. Also, there was an emphasis on the content analysis for the study during data collection from the field. After becoming acquainted with the data, I initiated systematic coding to organize and condense it into meaningful

codes. This process involved various coding techniques, including conceptual, relationship, and participant perspective coding.

3.9 Data analyzing:

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis occur concurrently (Creswell, 2012). In the process of data analysis, I employed the subsequent strategies.

3.10 The procedure for scrutinizing qualitative data

3.10.1 Listening with a Deconstructive Approach

After collecting all the data from the participants, I analyzed it thoroughly. Initially, I listened to each recording multiple times to get a better understanding of the practice of classroom teaching in those schools. I then tried to summarize each conversation and sometimes compared it with the existing literature. The recorded interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations helped me to understand the study's focus and provided valuable insights.

3.10.2 Transcription and translation

I transcribed and translated only the relevant portions of the data collected for this study. Since the conversations were entirely in Bangla (the teachers' native language), I paid close attention to two crucial factors while translating. Firstly, I ensured that I accurately translated the relevant portions of the conversation, focusing on preserving the original meaning without altering it and maintaining the accuracy of the dialogue.

3.10.3 Creating the Thematic Categories

To analyze the qualitative data, I used thematic analysis, which is a simple and effective method for interpreting qualitative data. Thematic analysis entails interpreting and deciding the significance of qualitative data, offering an adaptable and user-friendly technique for analyzing such data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After receiving the transcript, I followed a systematic process

to identify themes and sub-themes. This involved developing themes from the data and then splitting them into sub-themes.

3.10.4 Generating Initial Codes

After data familiarization, I used systematic coding with different types of codes, including conceptual, relationship, and participant perspective coding. This categorization helps to organize the codes and compare details before the analytical stages (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

3.10.5 Exploring and building the themes

After coding the data, I widened my analytical range to recognize patterns. I kept my focus on the research questions while developing themes. Once I collected all the codes, I sorted them based on similarities and used my analytical judgment to group them. If a code had characteristics of multiple groups, I assigned it to the group that best suited it.

3.10.6 Finalizing the sub-themes and themes

In this phase, I performed interpretive analytical work. I provided detailed definitions for each theme and created a list of sub-themes that aligned with significant themes. Sub-themes were developed based on the data's demands. This stage finalized the analysis, ensuring each theme directly addressed the research questions by crafting a profound narrative.

3.11 Ethical issues and concerns

Generally, research ethics means maintaining some morals in conducting the research. Qualitative research aims to promote the human experience, values, self-belief, and culture within the actual context. It identifies evidence and creates a pathway to elaborate on the entire experience (Creswell et al., 2011). Researchers must ensure the collected information's confidentiality and reassure respondents that only aggregate data will be disclosed to the public (Okparaugo, 2021). To ensure confidentiality, a consent letter has been developed where all the relevant information was

incorporated, such as data preservation as confidentially, the right to refine information of the responder, the purpose of the study, data validation, and sharing process.

3.12 Trustworthiness and rigour

As a researcher, to ensure the study's trustworthiness, it has ensured to show the truth of the findings from the data collection. For truthfulness, during data collection, the data was checked several times, and ensured a review of the data from the responders. After data collection, I presented data on triangulation for validation, peer debriefing for better understanding, and cross-checked by the participant to ensure the participant's consent. To promote the human experience, values, self-belief, and culture of the real context, qualitative research identifies some evidence and creates the pathway elaborating the whole experience (Creswell et al., 2011). All the relevant information has been incorporated, such as data preservation, the right to refine information of the responder, the purpose of the study, data validation, and sharing process that I have kept confidential.

3.13 Limitations of the Study

A few limitations were raised during the research. Based on the topic, the participants' interest was a bit slow to spontaneous. This study has a few limitations. To start, the researcher utilized interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions all on the same day at one school, which was challenging to accomplish. Additionally, the research only gathered data from three schools in Kurigram Sadar, limiting the coverage of the research site. Furthermore, the data collected from interviews with headteachers was also a limitation.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, I present the findings gained from the participants. I carefully addressed all the predetermined questions during interviews, classroom observations, and FGDs that predominantly focused on students' Bangla reading competency and its correlation to classroom practices, curriculum, teaching-learning activities, and teachers' perceptions. Reading Bangla proficiently is essential for quality education, and the respondents acknowledged that students who cannot read Bangla properly must struggle to study other subjects, such as English, math, science, etc. A few issues have been identified in the teaching-learning process that could improve classroom practices and help students improve their reading skills. Furthermore, the identified issues may help the students to achieve their reading skills simultaneously.

The sections below are categorized into three main categories and eleven sub-categories that were derived from the analysis of interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. Each category is discussed in detail with examples from the findings that relate to exploring the existing teaching practices in Bangla reading competency at government primary schools.

1. Teaching-learning practices in the classroom for Bangla reading competency
2. The contributory factors for students' low reading competency
3. Major barriers and ways of overcoming

4.2 Teaching-learning practices in the classroom for Bangla reading competency

4.2.1 Significance of student's reading skills

Each respondent has acknowledged that enhanced reading skills are essential for students' academic success in primary education and beyond. Specifically, at the beginning of the primary level, strong reading skills are crucial for continuing students' further education, as Ms. Jiniya, a senior teacher (Interview #5, 13.06.2023), believed that Bangla is the foundation for all subjects. Likewise, Ms. Halima Begum, one of the Headteachers of a studied school (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), mentioned that students' future educational outcome depends on fluent Bangla reading skills since it will help students excel in the future. Without proper Bangla reading and comprehension skills, students may struggle with other subjects and with presenting their knowledge. Students must learn phonemic knowledge, letters, vocabulary, Kar sign, and conjunct letters to improve reading skills.

Ms. Jabunnesa, an assistant teacher (Interview # 4, 13.06.2023), echoed, saying, " To comprehend difficult vocabulary, students' reading skills are essential, including recognizing letters, Kar sign, and repeated reading and writing. However, Ms. Shoheli, the Headteacher (Interview #3, 13.06.2023), stated, "It is important to teach the letters well, including conjunct letters, small, big, and difficult words. Only then can they learn to read effectively. Otherwise, it becomes challenging."

4.2.2. Learning different reading skills through existing practice

Learning in letters, phonics, conjunct letters, Kar sign, and vocabulary decoding effectively improves students' reading skills in primary school contexts. Ms. Shoheli, the headteacher (Interview #3, 13.06.2023), described that "A student needs a comprehensive knowledge of the

alphabet, including letters, Kar signs, and conjunct letters, vocabulary, and a good understanding of words to read easily. Proper pronunciation is also crucial.″

Besides, from the observation (Observation #1, 13.06.2023) it was observed that the teacher verbally taught পাড়ি (selvage), হাঁক (shouting out), and ঢালু (slope) words without using the board. Little time was given to word pronunciation and breakdown. When taught how to pronounce the word, he did not use the board to break it down into letters. According to the teachers' guide (TG), the teacher needs to use the board to write vocabulary words and teach them by breaking them down. Similarly, (Observation #2, 13.06.2023), little concentration is given to the pronunciation, where letters and letters make sounds, verbally taught pronouncing পাড়ি (selvage), হাঁক (shouting out), without demonstrating the letter breakdown on the board.

Ms. Jabunnesa, an assistant teacher (Interview # 4, 13.06.2023), described that in grades one and two, students learn all the conjunct letters. Sometimes, it isn't easy to teach them as all students are not at the same level. "Everyone can't identify the conjunct letter, which is one of the problems.″

At the primary level, students often struggle with pronunciation and developing their reading skills. However, it was found that (Observation #3, 15. 06.2023) students did not have an opportunity to read the poem fluently and accurately or to practice reading with proper intonation. Additionally, the students were struggling with decoding, and reading was not supported. Likewise, (Observation #2, 15.06.2023) found that the teacher read a poem aloud and instructed the students to follow along with their fingers, whereas the students did not get help when struggling with matching fingers. Memorizing the poem was emphasized, and as a result, the class ended quickly.

4.2.3 Usage of teaching and learning materials

A different dimension was found when exploring the supplementary materials used in the classroom along with the textbook, as Ms. Halima, the headteacher, described:

> To improve students' reading skills, we provide supplementary books to reading practice by encouraging students to share stories in class. During the Supplementary Reading Materials (SRM) period, students read and discuss storybooks in groups. Struggling students are paired with more proficient ones to improve their skills (Personal interview #1, 15.06.2023),

In this regard, Ms. Jiniya, an assistant teacher (Interview #5, 13.06.2023), mentioned, "We use a variety of teaching aids, such as textbooks, pictures, models, and posters. In addition, we utilize the textbook's illustrations to facilitate discussions and comprehension checks with students about the topic."

However, from the observation (Observation #6, 14.06.2023), the teacher followed the teacher guide (TG) systemically, introducing new words and conjunct letters, making sentences, and practicing reading and writing. Besides (Observation # 3, 15.06.2023), the teacher depended on the textbook to teach conjunct letters without using supplementary materials like charts or diagrams.

During class, only textbooks were used as materials, and no additional resources, such as letter charts, cards, or conjunct letter charts, were utilized to provide visual aids. Similarly, the teacher only used textbooks as teaching material during class and showed pictures without any supplementary materials. Although the teacher tried to introduce some new words, they were not

explained thoroughly on the board. Consequently, the students adopted the words without fully understanding their meanings (Observation #2, 13.06.2023).

4.2.4 Assessment practices

The early-grade reading assessment tools (EGRA) are important for identifying reading competency gaps. The tools help to identify the students' reading gaps and help to prepare remedy plans. Mrs. Halima, the Headteacher (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), described, " To identify students' low reading competency, we individually assess their reading skills with a specific text. This enables us to find solutions and address weaknesses effectively."Additionally, Ms. Shakina, another Headteacher (Interview #2, 14.06.2023), mentioned that we create reading groups in class and provide additional reading materials but do not use extra assessment tools to evaluate reading competency.

From the classroom observation (Observation # 6, 14.06.2023) it was found that, during class, the teacher carefully evaluated each step, asked questions, corrected errors, and assessed the student's use of conjunct letters.

Besides, Ms. Shoheli, another headteacher (Interview #3, 14.06.2023), mentioned, "After each lesson, we only thoroughly assess reading competency without relying on other tools."

During FGD (Focus group #1, 14.06.2023). one respondent described that we conduct Supplementary Reading Materials (SRM) classes for reading assessments, provide storybooks, and use cards as teaching aids. We assign homework, monitor progress, and identify struggling students for separate classes. However, we do not use specific tools to identify low reading competency gaps.

Besides, from the FGD, another respondent described that continuous assessment is far more effective in enhancing reading skills than exams, which leads to improved student performance. Regrettably, our education system tends to prioritize summative evaluation over formative assessment, although formative assessment helps repeatedly improve students' reading competency. (Focus group notes #1, 14.06. 2023).

4.3 Factors responsible for low reading competency of the students

4.3.1 Lack of dedication of the teachers

Teachers' sincerity such as preparing a lesson plan, time management, proper interaction and instruction, and participation in the classroom may help students in their progress. In this regard, Ms. Shakina, the Headteacher (Interview #2, 14.06.2023), described that "Bangla teachers have specific roles in arranging additional classes for weaker students to improve their reading skills." Similarly, Ms. Shoheli, another Headteacher (Interview #3, 13.06.2023), mentioned that teachers should be committed to teaching Bangla with proper spelling, pronunciation, and punctuation while providing ample student support.

Likewise, Mr. Rafiqul Islam, the assistant teacher, described that teachers must ensure students recognize letters, kar symbols, conjunct letters, and vocabulary to improve their reading abilities. He also mentioned even in fourth and fifth grades; students often struggle to match kar signs with letters, which impairs their comprehension. (Personal interview #6, 14.06 2023)

From the observation, it was observed that (Observation #1, 13.06.2023) teacher asked the grade two students to read one line of the poem at a time and match their fingers with the teacher. The students tried to read correctly, and some struggled in reading but did not get support to read correctly from the teacher. Similarly, (Observation #3, 15.06.2023) found that the student who

faced reading difficulties was unfortunately not provided with the necessary support in the classroom. Furthermore, from the classroom observation (Observation #2, 13.06.2023), it was found that the teacher prioritized group work for the students' reading correctly rather than supporting the individual students struggling with decoding and reading severely.

4.3.2 Lack of parental involvement

Completing students' home tasks and awareness of parents is essential to improve performance. Students often receive homework, but their home environment is sometimes not conducive to studying. The Headteacher, Ms. Shakina (Interview # 2, 14.06.2023), stated, "Practicing at home can improve reading performance."

Similarly, Ms. Halima Begum, the Headteacher (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), described that teachers and parents must be more aware of improving students' reading competency. Many students do not complete their homework, and some parents do not supervise their children's homework. Unfortunately, some guardians and teachers neglect their children's education. Ms. Shoheli, the Headteacher (Interview #3, 13.06.2023), echoed, saying parents should ensure their children complete homework and reading at home to improve their competency. However, Ms. Salma, the assistant teacher (Interview #8, 15.06.2023), stated, "Active communication between parents and teachers is essential for improving students' reading skills."

During the FGD, one respondent (Focus group #1, 14.06.2023) described it as a big problem when students don't complete assigned homework and return to school without practicing. However, the assistant teacher (Interview #7, 14.06.2023) described that "Many students from families with limited education struggle with reading. Increased parental involvement is crucial to address this issue."

4.3.3 Students' irregularity and low attendance rate

Regular attendance is an essential issue in our primary school's context in our education system. From the FGD, the respondents (Focus group #1, 14.06. 2023) stated that regular school attendance is crucial for struggling students as it can significantly enhance their reading proficiency. Similarly, in another FGD, the respondents (Focus group #2, 13.06.2023) agreed that "Irregular attendance negatively affects student confidence and concentration in class."

Furthermore, Ms. Shakina, the Headteacher (Interview #2, 14.06.2023), mentioned that "Irregular attendance negatively affects student learning, a significant challenge for teachers."

Besides, Ms. Shoheli, the headteacher (Interview #3, 13.06.2023), stated that although some students attend class, their mischievous behavior and lack of attention suggest they are not fully engaged. Some students are frequently absent, leading to isolation and difficulty participating in class.

4.3.4. Teachers' perception of textbooks and curriculum

A new dimension is uncovered when exploring the teacher's views on the curriculum and textbook. Ms. Halima, the headteacher (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), stated that "students who use these textbooks and curriculum will achieve the necessary learning outcomes for future success." Similarly, Ms. Shakina, another Headteacher (Interview #2, 14.06.2023), said that textbooks present letters, vocabulary, fill-in-the-blanks, and conjunct letters separately with clear instructions for teachers, which helps students.

Likewise, Ms. Halima, the Headteacher (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), mentioned that the teaching method and textbooks instill practical skills in students by providing real-life examples, such as learning letters, words, and sentences.

Besides, Ms. Amena Begum, an assistant teacher, said every student has a unique learning style, but our one-dimensional education system restricts opportunities for talent development, such as the Sundarban lesson in textbooks, which lacks reality for students learning. To enhance the learning experience, students need to witness the Sundarban firsthand. The current education system needs more scope for talent development. Students generally fall into three categories such as good, medium, and low understanding levels in a classroom; however, textbooks are not designed to cater to these different category levels, which may impede effective learning. (Personal interview #7, 14.06. 2023).

4.4 Major barriers and ways of overcoming

4.4.1 Lack of decoding skills in the earlier grades

Student's fluency largely depends on the first and second grades as in this stage, students learn letters, Kar sign, conjunct letters, and decoding skills to increase reading skills. Ms. Halima, the headteacher (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), revealed that some first graders struggle with recognizing letters, causing frustration. At my school, about 5% face these challenges. Teachers must prioritize reinforcing these skills in class and encourage practice at home. Similarly, Ms. Amena Begum, the assistant teacher (Interview #7, 15.06.2023), described that "weak students struggle with reading and writing fluency, which becomes apparent in first grade and intensifies in second grade."

Ms. Jiniya, the assistant teacher (Interview #5, 13.06.2023), emphasized that "students must develop phonological awareness, letter knowledge, vocabulary, reading skills, and comprehension. As children learn to read, they gradually improve their comprehension level." Similarly, Ms. Shakina, the Headteacher (Interview #2, 14.06.2023), described that "before students can read

fluently, they must first learn the alphabet and read with proper spelling. Over time, their reading fluency will improve."

Besides, during FGD one respondent (Focus group #2, 13.06.2023). agreed that the students struggle with recognizing letters, which hinders their ability to understand words and sentences. This is due to a lack of stored vocabulary, making it difficult to comprehend complex texts like poetry. Additionally, recognizing new words is challenging for students.

From the focus group discussion, the respondents (Focus group #1, 14.06.2023) said, "Decoding letters, words, and phonemes is challenging for some students."

Besides, Ms. Salma Begum, the assistant teacher, described that due to a lack of vocabulary, conjunct letters, and punctuation, some students struggle to comprehend text while reading with the teacher in the same intonation. It's difficult for students to understand complex conjunct letters. For example: ব্রাহ্মন, ব্রাহ্মন is spelled হ্ম (Personal interview #8, 15.06.2023).

Ms. Halima, the headteacher (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), stated that students who struggle with reading skills, conjunct words, pronunciation, and punctuation are often promoted to the next grade without adequate knowledge in primary schools.

In addition, the assistant teacher (Interview #7, 14.06.2023) stated that some students struggle with pronunciation, letter recognition, understanding the word meanings, and comprehending subject content. These are the vital challenges.

4.4.2 Teachers' Preparedness

Ensuring a congenial environment in the classroom and the teacher's student interaction is essential to engage all the students in learning activities. Ms. Jiniya, an assistant teacher (interview #5, 13.06.2023), emphasized "One of the teachers stated the importance of teachers' preparation, and without appropriate teacher presentation, reading competency cannot be achieved for student's effectively."

From class observation (Observation #1, 13.06.2023) it was found that the teacher did not follow the Teacher guide (TG) outlined, resulting in a disrupted class sequence, and completed the class in less than the allotted time. Similarly, (Observation #2, 13.06.2023) the class was shortened due to the emphasis on memorization, which took up most of the class time. The lack of preparation was evident in the conduction of the class.

Besides, another observation was found (Observation #3, 15.06.2023) that the teacher instructed the students to open the relevant book page and read the poem. However, he did not provide any guidance on how to read the sentence correctly or how to comprehend the text properly. Additionally, he was not active in conducting the class.

4.4.3 Strategies for Improving Reading Competency

The study's most crucial factor is how to maximize low reading competency. One of the vital areas to be explored is closely related to the research questions.

Mr. Rafiqul Islam, the assistant teacher (Interview #6, 14.06.2023), stated that "students should learn letters, kar symbols, and conjunct letters. They must read conjunct letters phonetically to learn new words." Similarly, Ms. Halima, the Headteacher (Interview #1, 15.06.2023), described that students should consistently practice letter pronunciation and phonemes to develop reading

and speaking skills. Also, teachers should prioritize teaching correct letter pronunciation, writing, and reading. Teachers and parents must encourage students to practice regularly at home and school. Likewise, the assistant teacher (Interview #7, 14.06.2023) mentioned that "students must acquire listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to improve their reading abilities. Recognizing letters accurately to match the text with the fingers is essential."

Mr. Harun-or-Rashid, the assistant teacher (Interview #9, 15.06.2023), mentioned, " When delivering a lesson, using visual materials such as letter charts, cards, and pictures is crucial in facilitating students' comprehension and understanding."

From the classroom observation (Observation # 6, 14.06.2023), it was found that "Proper instruction is essential to ensure effective teaching and learning. Similarly, (Observation # 6, 14.06.2023) Incorporating real-life examples during class is an incredibly effective way to help students understand lessons more clearly and confidently. Additionally, Mr. Rafiqul Islam, the assistant teacher (Interview #6, 15.06.2023), stated that teachers should use content pictures in their textbooks, practical materials such as letter charts, letter cards, conjunct letters charts, and other supplementary reading materials.

During FGD, one respondent (Focus group #2, 13.06.2023) stated, "To improve students' reading skills, it is necessary to practice formative assessments while teaching decoding and reading. Identifying reading gaps and adjusting instruction accordingly is also crucial."

However, from the FGD, the respondents agreed that (Focus group #2, 13.06.2023) By motivating the teachers to prepare for classes, the headteacher can significantly play a role in improving the student's reading skills.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The discussion section mainly focuses on examining the findings in relation to the existing literature, identifying implications for practice, and suggesting areas for future recommendations. It explores the various factors contributing to the gap, such as teachers' preparedness, use of materials, and curriculum effectiveness. Additionally, this section aims to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding early-grade reading competency and offers insights on how to minimize reading gaps. This portion of this research has been explained mainly under the three main areas, i.e., existing teaching-learning practices, which are focused on the interrelation to improving student's reading skills. The relevant factors associated with low reading competency in early grades of primary schools. Also, there are challenges teachers face for experiencing low reading competency for the students. The chapter concludes by providing recommendations for improving reading competency at the primary level.

5.1.1 Improvement of students' reading proficiency through teaching and teaching materials

The USA's National Reading Panel recommends teaching children phonological awareness first, followed by a gradual emphasis on phonics, vocabulary, reading, and comprehension to be student fluent readers. (NICHD, 1997). The acquisition of letters, conjunct letters, kar signs, and vocabulary has been agreed upon by almost all teachers as a crucial requirement for early-grade students to attain reading competency. Teaching phonemic awareness starts with words and initial consonants, vowels, letters, decoding, and blending letters. This helps to improve children's understanding of the parts of printed words and makes them proficient in phonemic awareness (Treiman, 2017). However, based on classroom observations, it has been found that some teachers

conduct their classes using traditional methods. They tend to rely less on the Teacher Guide's (TG) instructions. Specifically, they teach conjunct letters and vocabulary verbally instead of utilizing the blackboard to break down the words. Additionally, the teacher emphasized memorizing.

Acquiring reading skills is a vital foundation for gaining language abilities (Sattar & Salehi, 2014). The teachers expressed deep concern regarding students' existing low reading competency, which seems to begin in early grades and continue into upper classes. It has been observed that teachers only depended on textbooks in the classroom teaching to the students. Additionally, less use of teaching materials, lack of preparedness, parent unawareness, irregular attendance, and effective evaluation are factors affecting reading competency. Similarly, during interviews with Bangla teachers, they stated that they mostly face significant challenges in teaching students decoding skills, which are crucial for developing reading abilities.

The teachers expressed positive opinions about the textbooks, teaching aids, and curriculum, stating that they are well-organized and beneficial for both teachers and students. In Bangladesh, primary students' textbooks are designed on the whole language approach. According to the textbooks, students are taught to memorize rhymes and learn sentences or words before phonics, phonological awareness, and letters are taught (NCTB, 2015). In our current situation, students are struggling to learn phonological awareness and phonics through the teaching approach, which is hindering their ability to develop decoding skills and blend words. However, classroom practice depends on a suitable environment for effective learning with the proper instruction aligned with textbooks and teachers' guides.

Connor (2005) stated that teachers' instructional practices and interactions with students in the classroom have a significant impact on student outcomes (NICHD-ECCRN et al. 2002 as cited in Connor 2005). From this study, one of the teachers mentioned that there are three categories of

students in the class - sound, medium, and low categories and their understanding levels are not the same. Besides, the curriculum is designed in a one-dimensional way, and the books are not meant for three categories of students. As a result, it limits talent development in inbuilt content on textbooks and curricula in the primary context.

The foundation of reading skills largely depends on letter, word recognition, and decoding skills; these are the starting level of reading instruction and build the students' confidence. (Lehr et.al 2005). In this study, the headteacher emphasized the importance of teachers' sincerity towards their students in achieving reading skills. Regardless of the qualifications or experience of the teachers, their sincerity holds excellent value. Without sincerity towards their students, their knowledge and expertise hold little significance. Teaching students with integrity and genuineness is absolutely crucial for their success. Teacher-guided decoding instruction effectively enhances children's vocabulary and reading skills, primarily through phonological awareness practices. Even if children start with low decoding ability, they can significantly improve their skills under the guidance of teachers (Connor et al., 2004). Based on classroom observation, it was noted that the teacher taught vocabulary or words verbally without using the board. Little emphasis was given to word pronunciation by demonstrating the letter breakdown on the board. The students did not get an opportunity to read the poem fluently and accurately or practice reading with proper intonation. Moreover, teachers emphasize memorizing rather than reading the poem with comprehension while teaching the poem.

5.1.2 Factors contributing to low reading competency and assessment process

Libraries with free access and age-appropriate books are essential for children's learning and love for reading. However, primary schools lack such facilities, hindering children's access to resources that can improve their reading skills (Phillips et al., 2017). Besides, it was observed that teachers

predominantly relied on textbooks as their teaching; almost all the teachers did not additionally use supplementary materials and teaching aids such as letter charts or cards in classroom practices. A baseline survey was conducted using early-grade reading assessment tools to assess students reading fluency. The result showed low reading competency per minute in grades one and two (Shimu S.S et al., 2016). The EGRA tools effectively use early-grade reading assessment to measure the real reading problem. However, the findings illustrated that some teachers assess their students by evaluating each step, asking questions, correcting errors, and assessing the students. Besides, almost all the teachers stated that they do not use additional tools like early grade reading assessment tools for the students to improve reading assessment. That is one of the relevant tools that identifies low reading competency in students struggling with decoding.

Voinea (2018) stated that formative assessment is a continuous process of giving feedback to students on their learning progress and identifying strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, formative assessment improves learning by evaluating students using a criterion-based method. It helps students identify strengths/weaknesses and adjust learning strategies (Black & Wiliam, 1998). On the other hand, one of the respondents in the focus group discussion stated that continuous assessments are significantly more beneficial in improving reading skills than exams, which ultimately leads to enhanced student performance. However, it is unfortunate that our education system tends to prioritize summative assessments over formative assessments, even though formative assessments are crucial in strengthening students' reading competency.

5.1.3 Support from different roles

As educators, teachers hold a significant responsibility in education. They play a vital role in helping students develop personal qualities such as motivation, equipping them to pursue their aspirations, learn independently, and achieve their goals (Alderman, 2008). From this study, the

Headteachers have emphasized that Bangla teachers play a vital role in organizing extra classes for weaker students to enhance their reading skills. Additionally, they should be dedicated to teaching Bangla with accurate spelling, pronunciation, and punctuation while providing adequate student support. During the class observation, it was noted that certain teachers instructed the second-grade students to read one line of the poem at a time while following along with their fingers. Although the students attempted to read accurately, some faced difficulties while reading and did not receive adequate assistance from their teacher to read correctly.

A range of research from the United States, Australia, and Ghana provides evidence that children's attendance plays a significant role in their learning and has an impact on their academic achievements (Cannon et al., 2006, as cited in Mayari, 2022). The teachers emphasized the importance of regular school attendance for struggling students, as it significantly enhances reading proficiency. Irregular attendance negatively affects student confidence and concentration in class. According to the study, some students are absent from school due to their parents' lack of awareness, disinterest in education, and poor economic conditions.

5.1.4 Challenges and overcoming strategies

First-graders who lack knowledge of letters, letter-sound correspondences, and phonological awareness require explicit and systematic instruction to effectively acquire the decoding strategies necessary (Torgesen, 2004). In the study, the teachers mentioned that first-grade students struggle with letter recognition, which causes frustration. Additionally, they face challenges with reading and writing fluency that become more pronounced in second grade. Torgesen (2004) stated that schools must focus on preventing early reading weaknesses and reading deficits by providing excellent core instruction for weaker children. Similarly, teachers need to pay attention to early graders learners to improve their decoding skills as per teacher instruction (TG).

Good teaching requires a well-informed understanding of the subject, effective teaching methods, and teachers adapting their methods to meet the needs of diverse learners, ensuring high standards across all students (Alton-Lee Citation 2003 as cited in Judy, 2008). The importance of teacher preparation was emphasized by one teacher, who stated that effective student reading competency cannot be achieved without it. The Teacher Guide (TG) was not found to be followed by most of the teachers during class observation, resulting in a disrupted class sequence and the class being completed in less than the allotted time.

Students can significantly benefit from receiving specific positive responses on their homework performance. It is important for parents and other adults to have a clear understanding of the concepts covered in the homework. Doing so makes students feel more confident and motivated in their academic pursuits (Johan M.T et al, 2004). From the studies, teachers mentioned practicing at home can significantly enhance a student's reading performance. Active parental involvement is absolutely essential for the success of elementary school students in completing their homework (Epstein, J. 1988). However, many students fail to complete their homework, and some parents do not oversee their children's homework. Additionally, some students with limited family education backgrounds struggle with reading competency and adopting learning. Therefore, active communication between parents and teachers is essential for improving students' reading skills.

An individual's ability to focus attention on language awareness includes skills that connect vocabulary and reading comprehension, such as phonemic awareness, which is crucial in early grades of reading (Stahl S.A, 2007). It is important for teachers and parents to encourage students to practice regularly both at school and at home. When delivering a lesson, using visual aids such as letter charts, cards, and pictures can significantly enhance students' comprehension and understanding. Proper instruction is crucial to ensure effective teaching and learning. Similarly,

incorporating real-life examples during class is an incredibly effective way to help students understand lessons more clearly and confidently.

To assist students in enhancing their reading skills, the headteacher can support Bangla teachers by providing motivation. Additionally, they can significantly improve students' reading skills through teacher's supportive supervision. Based on the focus group discussion, the headteachers should play a vital role, as recommended by other teachers.

Students' low reading competency is a crucial issue that needs to be tackled head-on in their continuing education. It is of utmost importance that we need to adopt effective teaching practices in the classroom to enhance students' reading proficiency and ensure their successful completion of the education cycle. Otherwise, a large percentage of students would not be able to complete the education cycle.

5.2 Conclusion

This study mainly focuses on how the teachers' teaching practices in the classroom improve students' reading competency. It also explores how these teaching practices align with the textbooks, teacher guides, and curriculum. Additionally, the study explores the way teachers involve students in the teaching process and how actively students participate in the classroom. The study also identifies the use of teaching aids and how to maintain the sequence of the lesson delivery.

The study has explored some key areas of concern. In many cases, teachers conducted classes with inadequate preparation. Teachers often focused on memorizing the poem instead of allocating enough time to blend words, form sentences, and develop decoding skills. Most teachers relied solely on textbooks rather than using the teacher guide (TG). They did not use any additional tools

to identify poor readers and develop a plan to help them. It is common for students in grades two and three to struggle with reading due to a lack of sufficient support during the learning process. Furthermore, this study also revealed the importance of proper assessment and the use of teacher guides and teaching aids in the classroom. Additionally, it emphasized the need for teachers to prioritize teaching letters and kar signs, blending words and sounds, and effectively utilizing phonological awareness and phonics from the early grades. Also, this study would enhance the researcher's understanding of the teaching approach adopted by Government Primary School teachers. The researcher could understand the reasons for low reading competency and explore solutions to this issue. Additionally, the study provides valuable factors and recommendations for practitioners and stakeholders to improve further to reduce low reading competency in government primary education.

One of the key factors in providing quality education is ensuring that students are proficient readers. However, many students are unable to achieve this level of competency even after completing early grades. To address this issue, it is necessary to rethink the current approach to teaching and learning.

5.3 Recommendation

After carefully completing all the necessary steps, this study provides the following recommendations that could be useful in improving the teachers' teaching effectiveness.

- Teachers need to be mindful of their approach when teaching pronunciation, letters, conjunct letters, vocabulary, blending words, and sentence construction to help students learn effectively in first and second grade.

- Teachers need to use teaching aids like letters and conjunct letters cards in the classroom regularly and teach the students following the teacher's guided instruction to maintain the class flow.

- To enhance reading competency and alleviate monotony, it is necessary to provide students with grade-appropriate supplementary reading materials and conduct weekly supplementary reading materials (SRM) classes.

- To enhance reading competency, it is essential to apply alternative assessments, such as early-grade reading assessment tools. These tools can help improve reading skills and identify the problem behind low reading competency.

- Arranging parent meetings to increase parents' awareness and inform their children's reading progress.

The headteacher could create a positive learning environment for the Bangla reading practices and ensure necessary teaching aids for effective class conduction.

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Appendices 1

Consent Letter for interview

Respected Participants

Greeting!!

To complete the master's in education from BRAC University, a research study is a part of the master's. I am Md. Atoar Hosen is seeking your cooperation in conducting the research titled "Practices and problems of Bangla reading competency in early grade students at primary schools.". Among the chosen GPS, I would prefer to collect some information and gather data with you through an interview process. Participants will provide some information regarding teaching-learning initiatives and share the reason for low reading competency from their own perceptions and experience with the relevant textbook and teaching method.

It is only voluntary support for the research.

The participant's identity and schools name would be kept confidential by only the interviewer.

You have the right to withdraw your participation and review your provide data at any time.

The interview will be conducted in person. If further queries or questions about the research study, please communicate with me.

Your valuable time will be highly appreciated in this regard.

This is notified that _____ on date _____allows the interview by Atoar Hosen.

Name of the Interviewee: --

Name of the Interviewer: --

সাক্ষাৎকারের জন্য সম্মতিপত্র,

সম্মানিত অংশগ্রহণকারীরা

শুভেচ্ছা!!

ব্র্যাক ইউনিভার্সিটি থেকে শিক্ষা বিষয়ে স্নাতকোত্তর সম্পন্ন করার জন্য একটি গবেষণা স্নাতকোত্তর অধ্যায়নের একটি অংশ। আমি মোঃ আতোয়ার হোসেন, " প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ে প্রারম্ভিক-গ্রেডে শিক্ষার্থীদের বাংলা পড়ার দক্ষতার সাথে শিক্ষাদানের অনুশীলন এবং সমস্যা" শীর্ষক গবেষণা পরিচালনা করার জন্য আপনার সহযোগিতা কামনা করছি। নির্বাচিত প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের মধ্যে থেকে, আমি একটি ইন্টারভিউ, ক্লাস অবজারভেশন ও ফোকাস গ্রুপ ডিসকাশন প্রক্রিয়ার মাধ্যমে আপনার/আপনাদের সম্মতিতে কিছু তথ্য সংগ্রহ করতে সদয় সহযোগিতা কামনা করছি। অংশগ্রহণকারীরা শিক্ষণ- শেখানো উদ্যোগের বিষয়ে কিছু তথ্য প্রদান করবে এবং তাদের নিজস্ব উপলব্ধি এবং অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে পাঠ্যপুস্তক এবং শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতির সাথে সাবলীল পড়ার যোগ্যতা পুরাপুরি অর্জন না করার কারণ শেয়ার করবেন।

অংশগ্রহণকারীর নাম/পরিচয় ও বিদ্যালয়ের নাম সাক্ষাতকার গ্রহণকারী গোপন রাখবেন।

আপনার অংশগ্রহণ প্রত্যাহার করার এবং যে কোনো সময় আপনার সরবরাহ করা- তথ্য পর্যালোচনা করার অধিকার রয়েছে।

সাক্ষাৎকারটি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে/দলে নেয়া/ হবে। গবেষণা অধ্যয়ন সম্পর্কে আরও জানার থাকলে, অনুগ্রহ করে আমার সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন। এই বিষয়ে আপনার মূল্যবান সময় অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। এই মর্মে ঘোষনা করা হলো যে ------------------------ তারিখে-
-----------জনাব মো. আতোয়ার হোসেনের সাক্ষাতকারের জন্য অনুমতি প্রদান করা হলো।

সাক্ষাৎকারগ্রহীতার নাম: -- স্বাক্ষর: ----------------------------

সম্মতি গ্রহণকারী:

সাক্ষাৎকারগ্রহণকারীর নাম: -- স্বাক্ষর: ----------------------------

তারিখ: -- স্থান:

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

Bangla Teacher's interview form

Teaching experience in Bangla Subject ------------- Years Months

Type of training received on the Bangla subject--

1. How many years have you been teaching Bangla subjects in the classroom?

   (আপনি কত বছর যাবৎ শ্রেণিকক্ষে বাংলা বিযয়ে পাঠদান করেন?)

2. Is it important to ensure students' Bengali reading skills in the early grades of primary schools? Why do you think so? (প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ে প্রাথমিক গ্রেডে শিক্ষার্থীদের বাংলা পড়ার দক্ষতা নিশ্চিত করা কি গুরুত্বপূর্ন? আপনি কেন সেটা মনে করেন?)

3. What skills do you think students need to enhance to improve their reading skills? Please briefly explain. (শিক্ষার্থীর পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের জন্য কোন কোন দক্ষতা অর্জন করা প্রয়োজন বলে আপনি মনে করেন, সংক্ষেপে ব্যাখ্যা করুন)

4. How do you usually conduct Bangla classes? Please briefly explain. (আপনি সাধারণত কিভাবে বাংলা ক্লাস পরিচালনা (পাঠ উপস্থাপন) করেন? সংক্ষেপে ব্যাখ্যা করুন)

5. What materials and strategies do you use in the classroom to improve students' reading skills? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে জন্য আপনি শ্রেণিকক্ষে কী কী উপকরণ ও কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন?)

6. What problem do you face while giving instructions to read words to students blending letters and conjunct letters? (শিক্ষার্থীদের বর্ণ এবং যুক্ত বর্ণ একসাথে মিলিয়ে শব্দ পড়ার নির্দেশ দেয়ার সময় আপনি কোন ধরণের সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হন?)

7. What are the main problems of students decoding and understanding sentences or reading text at the primary level? (প্রাথমিক গ্রেডে শিক্ষার্থীদের পাঠোদ্ধার এবং বাক্য বা পাঠ্য বোঝার ক্ষেত্রে প্রধান সমস্যাগুলি কী কী?)

8. Do you find any gaps between teaching methods and textbooks? Please be specific about your experience. (আপনি কি পাঠদান পদ্ধতি এবং পাঠ্যপুস্তকের মধ্যে কোন সমন্বয়হীনতা খুঁজে পান? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় সুনির্দিস্ট করে বলুন)

9. To what extent do you think the existing curriculum/Bangla Textbook support students to achieve reading skills? (বাংলা বিষয়ে বর্তমান কারিকুলাম/শিক্ষাক্রম শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক বলে আপনি মনে করেন?)

10. What are the advantages to teach students following the teacher's instruction guide? Please briefly explain. (শিক্ষক নির্দেশিকা অনুসরণ করে শিক্ষার্থীদের শেখানোর সুবিধাগুলো কী কী? সংক্ষেপে বলুন?)

11. What problems do the students have in keeping up with the reading book during the teacher's aloud reading as per the teacher's instruction guide? Please briefly explain. (শিক্ষক নির্দেশিকা অনুযায়ী শিক্ষকের সরব পাঠের সময় শিক্ষার্থীদের বইয়ের সাথে আঙুল মিলিয়ে পড়তে কী কী সমস্যায় পড়ে? সংক্ষেপে বলুন)

12. what are your recommendations for improving students' reading skills, considering your experience as a Bengali teacher? Please be specific about your experience (বাংলা শিক্ষক হিসেবে শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা বাড়াতে আপনার অভিজ্ঞতার আলোকে সুপারিশগুলো কী কী? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় সুনির্দিস্ট করে বলুন)

Appendix 3

Interview Questions

Head Teacher's interview form

Teaching experience -----------------------------------Years Months

Type of training received -------------------------------------

1. As a head teacher, do you think ensuring students' reading fluency in early grade is essential? Why do you think so? (একজন প্রধান শিক্ষক হিসেবে আপনি কি মনে করেন প্রাথমিক গ্রেডে শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়ার সাবলীলতা নিশ্চিত করা অপরিহার্য? আপনি কেন সেটা মনে করেন?)

2. To achieve students' reading skills, what types of abilities need to acquire in specific areas of reading? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের জন্য সুনির্দিষ্টভাবে পঠন সংক্রান্ত কোন কোন দিকসমূহে শিক্ষার্থীকে দক্ষতা অর্জন করা প্রয়োজন)

3. What methods and strategies do you use or think should be used to help students acquire reading skills? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে সহায়তা করার জন্য আপনি কী কী পদ্ধতি ও কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন অথবা করা উচিত বলে মনে করেন?)

4. What tools does your school use to assess students' reading skills? How and when do you use these tools? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা বিষয় মূল্যায়ন করার জন্য আপনার বিদ্যালয়ে কী কী টুল্স ব্যবহার করে থাকেন? কীভাবে এবং কখন টুল্স ব্যবহার করেন?)

5. How much do you give importance to the student's problem areas in reading skills? (পঠন দক্ষতায় শিক্ষার্থীর সমস্যার দিকটিকে আপনি কীভাবে গুরুত্ব দিয়ে থাকেন?)

6. In your experience, what types of reading problems do students generally face in acquiring reading skills? Could you please give specific examples? (আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে পঠন সংক্রান্ত সাধারণত কোন ধরনের সমস্যা শিক্ষার্থীদের বেশী সম্মুখীন হতে হয়? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন)

7. Why do students usually have problems related to reading skills? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা সাধারণত কেন হয়ে থাকে?)

8. As a head teacher, what steps or strategies do you take in your school to address reading proficiency issues? Could you please give some specific examples? (পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরসনে প্রধান শিক্ষক হিসেবে আপনি কী কী পদক্ষেপ অথবা কৌশল আপনার বিদ্যালয়ে নিয়ে থাকেন? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরন দিন)

9. How helpful do you think the current curriculum in Bengali is for a teacher to improve students' reading skills? (বাংলা বিষয়ে বর্তমান কারিকুলাম/শিক্ষাক্রম শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে একজন শিক্ষকের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক বলে আপনি মনে করেন?)

10. How helpful are the various lessons and lesson exercises included in the Bengali subject textbook for students to acquire reading skills? Please be specific about your experience. (বাংলা বিষয়ের পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় সুনির্দিস্ট করে বলুন)

11. What are the main challenges to improving reading skills? Could you please give some specific examples? (পড়ার দক্ষতা উন্নতি করার ক্ষেত্রে প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলি কী কী? । কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরন দিন?)

12. What are your suggestions to overcome the challenging issues and improve students' reading skills? (চ্যালেঞ্জিং সমস্যাগুলি কাটিয়ে উঠতে এবং শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়ার দক্ষতা উন্নত করতে অভিজ্ঞতার ভিত্তিতে আপনার পরামর্শগুলো কী কী?)

Appendix 4

Class observation guideline

a) **Teaching-learning activities (শিক্ষণ-শেখানো কার্যক্রম)**

1. How do the teachers introduce new Bangla vocabulary to students? (শিক্ষকরা কীভাবে শিক্ষার্থীদের কাছে নতুন বাংলা শব্দ ও শব্দভান্ডার পরিচয় করিয়ে দিয়েছেন?)

2. How does the teacher help the student to pronounce blending letters/words? (শিক্ষক কীভাবে শিক্ষার্থীদের বর্ণ যোগে শব্দ উচ্চারণ করতে সহযোগিতা করেন?)

3. How does the teacher teach correct words in reading blended with conjunct letters and letters? (শিক্ষক কিভাবে সঠিক শব্দ পড়তে সহায়তা করেন যেখানে বর্ণ ও যুক্ত বর্ণ মিলিয়ে পড়তে হয়?)

8. How do teachers teach students to read with fluency and correct pronunciation with accuracy? (শিক্ষকরা কীভাবে শিক্ষার্থীদের সাবলীলতার সাথে এবং সঠিক উচ্চারণে সঠিকভাবে পড়তে শেখান?)

৫. How do the teachers teach reading comprehension strategies? (শিক্ষকরা কীভাবে পড়া বোঝার দক্ষতার কৌশল শেখান?)

b) **Instructional strategies (নির্দেশনামূলক কৌশল)**

1. How does the teacher instruct students to read the sentence/text and comprehend the text (As per textbook, teachers' instruction guide). (শিক্ষক কীভাবে শিক্ষার্থীদের বাক্য পড়তে এবং পাঠ্যটি বুঝতে নির্দেশনা দিয়েছেন (পাঠ্যপুস্তক ও শিক্ষকদের নির্দেশিকার নির্দেশনা অনুযায়ী)

2. How do teachers use teaching material in the classroom (letter chart, conjunct letter chart, textbook, teacher instruction guide) (শিক্ষকরা কীভাবে শ্রেণিকক্ষে পাঠদানের উপকরণ ব্যবহার করেন। (বর্ণের চার্ট, সংযুক্ত বর্ণের চার্ট, পাঠ্যপুস্তক, শিক্ষক নির্দেশিকা)

3. How does the teacher evaluate all the students in the classroom while conducting class? (ক্লাস পরিচালনা (পাঠ উপস্থাপন) করার সময় শিক্ষক কীভাবে শ্রেণিকক্ষে সমস্ত শিক্ষার্থীদের মূল্যায়ন করেন?)

c) **Interaction between students and teachers (ছাত্র এবং শিক্ষক মধ্যে পারস্পরিক সম্পর্ক)**

১. How does a teacher interact with students to make a child-friendly environment in the classroom? (শ্রেণিকক্ষে শিশু-বান্ধব পরিবেশ তৈরি করার জন্য একজন শিক্ষক কীভাবে শিক্ষার্থীদের সাথে পারস্পরিক যোগাযোগ তৈরী করেন?)

২. What technique does the teacher use to make the class interactive and participatory? (ক্লাসকে ইন্টারেক্টিভ এবং অংশগ্রহণমূলক করতে শিক্ষক কোন কৌশল ব্যবহার করেছেন?)

৩. How does a teacher help the students struggling with reading? (একজন শিক্ষক পড়তে সমস্যা হচ্ছে এমন শিক্ষার্থীদের কীভাবে সহায়তা করেন?)

৪. How does the teacher help students in group work and pair work? (শিক্ষক কীভাবে শিক্ষার্থীদের দলগত কাজ এবং জুটিতে কাজ করতে সাহায্য করেন?)

d) Classroom environment (শ্রেণিকক্ষের পরিবেশ)

1. How does the teacher ensure discipline among the students in the classroom? (শিক্ষক কীভাবে শ্রেণিকক্ষে শিক্ষার্থীদের মধ্যে শৃঙ্খলা নিশ্চিত করেন?)

2. How does the teacher make sure classroom management (time management, pair work/group work, clear instruction). (শিক্ষক কীভাবে শ্রেণিকক্ষ ব্যবস্থাপনা নিশ্চিত করেন (সময় ব্যবস্থাপনা, জুটি/দলগত কাজ, নির্দেশনা)

3. How does the teacher give the student the opportunity to ask questions (encourage them to ask questions, listen actively, and provide the correct answers)? (শিক্ষক কীভাবে শিক্ষার্থীকে প্রশ্ন করার সুযোগ দিয়েছেন (প্রশ্ন জিজ্ঞাসা করতে, সক্রিয়ভাবে শুনতে এবং সঠিক উত্তর দিতে উৎসাহিত করতে)

4. What technique does apply the teacher use to complete the lesson consistently within the stipulated time? (নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে ধারাবাহিকভাবে পাঠ শেষ করতে শিক্ষক কোন কৌশল প্রয়োগ করেছেন?)

Appendix 5

Focus group discussion for Teacher.

Teacher's level:

Time:

Date of interview:

1. What are the main problems of students in acquiring reading skills? How do you explain the issue? (পড়ার দক্ষতা অর্জনে শিক্ষার্থীদের মুল সমস্যাগুলো কী কী? বিষয়টিকে আপনি কিভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করবেন?)

2. What are the main barriers to students becoming fluent readers? Please briefly explain (শিক্ষার্থীদের সাবলীল পাঠক হতে প্রধান বাধাসমূহ কী কী? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতার আলোকে বলুন।)

3. How helpful is the existing assessment process in improving students' reading skills? Please explain your experience. (বিদ্যমান মূল্যায়ন পদ্ধতি শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা বাড়ানোর জন্য কতটুকু সহায়ক? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতার আলোকে বলুন।)

4. Is it important to use separate tools for the students to improve their reading skills? Why do you think so? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়ার দক্ষতা উন্নত করার জন্য আলাদা টুলস ব্যবহার করা কি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ? আপনি কেন সেটা মনে করেন?)

5. How is assessment usually done in the classroom to improve students' reading skills? Please briefly explain. (শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়ার দক্ষতা উন্নত করার জন্য শ্রেণিকক্ষে সাধারনত কীভাবে মূল্যায়ন করে থাকেন? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতার আলোকে বলুন।)

6. What common problems have you faced during conducting a class in improving students' reading skills? Please explain your experience. (শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়ার দক্ষতার উন্নতিতে আপনি সাধারণ কোন কোন সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হয়েছেন? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতার আলোকে বলুন।)

7. What are your suggestions based on your experience in identifying reading problems and challenges in improving students' reading skills? (শিক্ষার্থীর পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা ও চ্যালেঞ্জগুলো চিহ্নিতকরণ এবং উন্নয়নে আপনার অভিজ্ঞতার আলোকে পরামর্শ কী?)

Appendix 6: Sample of Interview Transcript

Interviewee: Head Teacher

Interviewer: Md. Atoar Hosen

Date of interview: July 15, 2023

Year of Experience: 30 Years

Q1. As a head teacher, do you think ensuring students' reading fluency in early grade is essential? Why do you think so? (একজন প্রধান শিক্ষক হিসেবে আপনি কি মনে করেন প্রাথমিক গ্রেডে শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়ার সাবলীলতা নিশ্চিত করা অপরিহার্য? আপনি কেন সেটা মনে করেন?)

Interviewee: Of course, it is essential because we teach the students at the primary level as if they could be acquired this Bengali skill. They need to study on their way; when they will go to the higher class, they have to read more.

If he can't read fluently, he cannot do much. He will not be able to read other subjects. If he can read Bengali fluently, he will be able to read in Math and advance in English as well. Social science and religion can move towards everything if he can read fluently.

Q2,To achieve students' reading skills, what types of abilities need to acquire in specific areas of reading? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের জন্য সুনির্দিষ্টভাবে পঠন সংক্রান্ত কোন কোন দিকসমূহে শিক্ষার্থীকে দক্ষতা অর্জন করা প্রয়োজন)

Interviewee: Mainly they have to hear letter pronunciation correctly and as if they can be able to speak. To learn the phonemes of the letter first. Even if I go to first grade, I have to hear phoneme pronunciations first and ensure they speak. And if he can say he can read and also if write, then he can read. One of the most important things that I think about reading skills is that they have to

practice again and again. It is very important that what the teacher did today, they must do in their school and practice at home.

Q3. What methods and strategies do you use or think should be used to help students acquire reading skills? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে সহায়তা করার জন্য আপনি কী কী পদ্ধতি ও কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন অথবা করা উচিত বলে মনে করেন?)

Interviewee: For reading skills, we already teach reading in the classroom as usual. As soon as that was taught, we often told stories and started a story in class. As I used to take classes in class four, I started a story, and then I said to another person you tell, and you tell, in such a way we're telling stories continuously from link with one after another.

There is another when we use SRM: we let the students read the related storybooks of that level and teach them in groups. We have many students who are lagging behind, and some are good students; Because of this, I try to improve the lagging students with good students.

Q4. What tools does your school use to assess students' reading skills? How and when do you use these tools? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা বিষয় মূল্যায়ন করার জন্য আপনার বিদ্যালয়ে কী কী টুল্স ব্যবহার করে থাকেন? কীভাবে এবং কখন টুল্স ব্যবহার করেন?)

Interviewee: Lesson-related pictures, story books, letter cards, and word cards.

Sub question: Do you use separate tools to improve your reading skills?

Do it - we choose a specific text; Give them to read it one by one reading the text and try to find out, does he have a weakness or not? I do it a lot. We take a specific text, then let the students read the readings one by one. That means reading to the students alone.

Q5. How much do you give importance to the student's problem areas in reading skills? (পঠন দক্ষতায় শিক্ষার্থীর সমস্যার দিকটিকে আপনি কীভাবে গুরুত্ব দিয়ে থাকেন?)

Interviewee: Of course, important if my child can't read correctly. Earlier, I told you that if you can't read properly, you will be weak in other subjects. That's why it's so important to me. When we started school after Corona, I saw many of our children were so weak that I always came to school early in the morning. It is my practice. I used to cooperate a little, and so did my teachers. If you can't read the reading, it's a problem in every subject.

Q6. In your experience, what types of reading problems do students generally face in acquiring reading skills? Could you please give specific examples? (আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে পঠন সংক্রান্ত সাধারণত কোন ধরনের সমস্যা শিক্ষার্থীদের বেশী সম্মুখীন হতে হয়? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন)

Interviewee: If our students have a problem in the first grade with letters that they do not know the letter, it is very painful when they cannot say the sound of the word. They face problems in recognizing letters. There is also a lack of practice here. In my opinion, out of 50 children, 40 have learned letters and words, but ten children have problems recognizing letters, words, and writing issues. This child has the same problem even when he comes to class two. For them, different cures are required, or else they will not advance—

 Lack of practice that will have to do at home, practice that will have to do at school, lack of practice is seen.

Writing is also a subject, but the students are correct, but we also have to follow the seven streams to teach how to learn letters and the writing practice of students in our school. Many times I see some students come here from other schools; when they come from other schools,- we find that they are not habituated to our school writing practice. Sometimes they write in other ways. I see a

lot of kids write 9 upside down. It means that their consistency in writing is also not accepted. Due to this, students have a little problem in writing. But not all students in my school; they come to our school from other schools. Another thing is that the parents are very unaware of the rules that we have here. It is also a problem that you will not find conscious guardians here.

Here we want to say one thing, although many of us and teachers may lack sincerity. Sometimes we lack   sincerity.

Q7. Why do students usually have problems related to reading skills? (শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা সাধারণত কেন হয়ে থাকে?)

Interviewee:

- Students are really erratic. I have seen that if a child attends school regularly, he will progress in reading skills.
- Lack of practice, lack of regular handwriting,
- lack of awareness of parents.

Q8. As a head teacher, what steps or strategies do you take in your school to address reading proficiency issues? Could you please give some specific examples? (পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরসনে প্রধান শিক্ষক হিসেবে আপনি কী কী পদক্ষেপ অথবা কৌশল আপনার বিদ্যালয়ে নিয়ে থাকেন? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরন দিন)

Interviewee: During Corona, I have taken separate classes for them only for reading skills. It is still taken in the class if students are found to be very weak, and emphasis is given to those students. Allow good students to work in groups of lagging students.

Q9. How helpful do you think the current curriculum in Bengali is for a teacher to improve students' reading skills? (বাংলা বিষয়ে বর্তমান কারিকুলাম/শিক্ষাক্রম শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে একজন শিক্ষকের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক বলে আপনি মনে করেন?)

Interviewee: Of course, Supportive.

If our students can achieve learning this with the curriculum and textbooks that we have, then I think, inshallah, it means that he will advance in whatever he studies in the future. He will do well in the next class if the learning outcomes are achieved.

Q10. How helpful are the various lessons and lesson exercises included in the Bengali subject textbook for students to acquire reading skills? Please be specific about your experience. (বাংলা বিষয়ের পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় সুনির্দিস্ট করে বলুন)

Interviewee: Of course, supportive, the teaching method and textbooks have been developed to maintain a correlation with reality and life oriented. The things that he will do on the way in life students from here can master them. If he goes to the market, he learns the calculation from here.

Q.11 What are the main challenges to improving reading skills? Could you please give some specific examples? (পড়ার দক্ষতা উন্নতি করার ক্ষেত্রে প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলি কী কী? । কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরন দিন?)

Interviewee:

- Using punctuation is a problem that I sometimes feel in my school.
- Weakness of previous class, writing of many students is such a problem that the writing weakness is so much that he cannot understand what he is writing.

- Conjunct word problems, also problems in pronunciation.Q12. What are your suggestions to overcome the challenging issues and improve students' reading skills? (চ্যালেঞ্জিং সমস্যাগুলি কাটিয়ে উঠতে এবং শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়ার দক্ষতা উন্নত করতে অভিজ্ঞতার ভিত্তিতে আপনার পরামর্শগুলো কী কী?)

Interviewee:

- the first thing I would say is that we have to teach our letters correctly, pronounce and write

- Proper writing should be taught. To be practiced at school and home.

- Both teachers and parents should be sincere and aware.

- We want them to read story books at home or books that match the textbooks; if those books are read regularly at home, text reading helpful books.

Appendix 7. Sample of extract code and theme

Method (interview, FGD and Observation)	Type of question	Respondent answer	Extracted code	Theme/ sub-theme
HT interview questions	As a head teacher, do you think ensuring students' reading fluency in early grades is essential? Why do you think so?	Shakina: of course, it is essential because we teach the students at the primary level as if they could be acquired this Bengali skill. They need to study on their way; when they will go to the higher class, they have to read more.	Shakila: Fluent reading skills in Bengali are crucial for students to excel. Without it, they may struggle to comprehend other subjects. With fluency, students will excel in all subjects of study in the future.	
Focus group discussion	How helpful is the existing assessment process in improving students' reading skills? Please explain your experience.	FGD 2: Answer 1: I think so Answer 2: Formative Assessment is good for improving reading skills. It is happening; we need to do it regularly. We are doing it every day; if we assess how much they have read, then the reading skill increases. I taught the students the poem line ""সুখী hw`, সুখী যদি নাহি হই আর কারো দুঃখে,"I read half the line and let someone else read the other half that is today's assessment today. Let's see if he can read the other half. If I do the daily assessment every day, I read one line to see if they can read the rest of the line. It is a continuous assessment; it will be appropriate. And after three and six months, anyone will hold the exam. There is no substitute for continuous assessment to improve reading skills. Marginal assessment is three months to six months later. Answer 3: Weekly assessment, monthly assessment	# Regular formative assessment improves reading skills. We teach students to be mindful while reading, ask them to write, and correct their work. There is no substitute for continuous assessment to improve reading skills.	Lack of decoding skills in the earlier grades

Class room observation	How does the teacher help the student to pronounce blending letters/words?	Obser 1: The teacher has done little work on word pronunciation, where how letters and letters make sounds. During this, the teacher taught the students the words meaning selvage (পাড়ি), Cry (হাঁক) that he has pronounced verbally. He did not use the board while taught how to pronounce the word with the breakdown in letters.	Observation 1: The teacher verbally taught *selvage, cry*, and *slope* words without using the board. Little time was given to word pronunciation and breakdown. When taught how to pronounce the word, he did not use the board to break it down into letters.	