

TEACHING EFL READING TO THE TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS: STUDENTS' READING EXPECTATIONS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract:

The purpose of the current paper is to find out the expectations of the tertiary level students of Bangladesh regarding EFL reading class and to what extent the expectations are met. To serve the purpose both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The qualitative data, comprised with a questionnaire tries to locate the expectations of the first year students of the university on different perspectives. The analysis reveals, the appropriate selection of texts, application of suitable reading strategies, and teachers' adaptation of the new way to behave within the class are the most significant challenges to meet for higher academic achievement. The qualitative method is used as a form of focused group discussion to determine what facts seem important to the undergrads. Thematic analysis reveals, students perceive two facts as stand points like the well maintenance of the classroom environment and appreciation of the learners' autonomy within the classroom settings which help to promote the whole EFL reading process. The running records of the current study could be proved beneficial for the teachers along with the authority of the university to carry out the undergrads' EFL reading expectations in the university life.

Keywords: EFL reading class, students' expectations, selective text, suitable reading strategies, appropriate class environment, learners' autonomy.

Introduction:

Nowadays, teaching EFL (English as a Foreign Language) reading in the classroom regarding the students' expectation appears as a great challenge to succeed to the teachers. In the context of Bangladesh, the challenge significantly focuses on diverse perspectives as undergrads' expectations are not limited to one single criterion. To fulfill the criteria some significant perspectives like, the appropriate selection of texts, application of suitable reading strategies, adaptation of the new way to behave within the class, well maintenance of the classroom environment and appreciation of the learners' autonomy within the classroom settings, may play major role to achieve higher academic excellence. Those challenges are,

likewise, required to know and fulfilled within the EFL classroom settings to carry out the undergrads' reading expectations in the university life.

The word expectation refers to the strong beliefs or hopes that something excellent will happen or some good aspects will be got according to the person's will. Research shows, this expectation as strong correlation with the students' learning process while studying in the university (Crisp et al., 2009). Expectations, similarly, make learning process better (Alvarez, 2012) which, eventually contribute to the students' higher achievement across different disciplines of the universities (Ketsman, 2012). Hence, it is important to the authority of the university along with the teachers to be aware of the students' realistic expectations to response better to their expectations (Crisp et al 2009) otherwise "...the students may fail, withdraw or not engage fully with their course of study" (Byrne et al., 2012 as cited in Crisp et al., 2009) in their university life.

It is undeniable that the place, where the students meet their learning expectations is the classroom of the university (Habibi, Sofwan, & Mukminin, 2016 as cited in Afriliani & Holandyah, 2018). It is said that "classroom is the basic fundamental entity of the educational system where teaching and learning are best guided (Mukminin, Kamil, Muazza, & Haryanto, 2017 as cited in Afriliani & Holandyah, 2018) by the teachers. Classroom, also, provide a sound environment to keep good relationship between students and teachers (William, 1997) which provides greater academic success (Bucholz & Sheffler 2009). On the other hand poor classroom environment leads to lower academic achievement (Ziegler, Cheryan, Plaut & Metzoff, 2014).

A great number of research show, this classroom, likewise, equip the students of the university with better communicative skills (Iksana et al., 2012) where reading is "... the most important of the four skills for EFL learners" (Gun.d.as cited in Earten and Karakas, 2007). It is such a comprehensible input that gives rise to competence in speaking (Pengelley, 2016) and writing (Medina, 2011). Haque (2006) considers "Reading, among four skills, has an important place in Bangladesh because of its requirement in higher education" (cited in Sultana, 2016). Hence, it is important for the teachers to assist the students and provide reading excellence in the EFL classroom accordingly. On the contrary, the aspects with regards to the teachers' rigid preconceived notions about students' achievement, (Lumsden, 1997 as cited in Alvarez) their low expectations (Hillard, 1991 as found in Ketsman, 2012) along with their resistance towards learners' autonomy in reading and selecting texts (Alvarez, 2012) seriously affect the students' academic success. Thus, teaching reading needs to be held prospectively within the classroom which will best carry out the learners' expectations to do better in English language to make them professionally and socially sound in this global era. The issue needs to be taken into consideration that, in the field of EFL, the matter concerning teaching reading has given much importance whereas,

the students' expectations regarding reading within the classroom are less evaluated. Since, to satisfy the research gap concerning the students' reading expectations in the EFL classroom among the undergrads, the current paper is the crucial demand of time.

1.2.5. Research questions:

The present study takes place to solve the following questions:

1. What is the students' reading expectations in the EFL classroom?
2. What kind of environment do the students expect in the EFL reading classroom?
3. Do the students have any expectation concerning their autonomy to take part in EFL reading curriculum?

2. Literature review:

In the literature review section, most relevant literature reviews are placed to justify and fulfill the research gap of the current paper. This section is divided into five segments as the importance (i) to evaluate the students' expectations regarding the reading text, (ii) to consider the students' expectations concerning reading strategies, (iii) to appreciate the students' expectations to teacher, (iv) to consider the students' views concerning class environment and (v) to focus on the students' expectations regarding learners' autonomy in reading curriculum in the EFL reading class.

(i) The importance to evaluate the students' expectations regarding the reading text in the EFL reading class:

A great number of evidence have proved that students' expectations have influence on their successful learning process of EFL reading in the respective classroom. Nuttall (1982) points out that students' expectations begin by the moment they read the title of the texts (as cited in Alvarez, 2012). Since, the beginning needs to be easy and smooth as difficulties in reading hard text arouse boredom which de motivate the students in reading texts (Wutthisingchai, 2011) in the EFL classroom. Similarly, the texts belong to own cultural context have additional appellations to the students as the familiar cultural context helps them to understand the texts and integrate the new information of the texts with their prior knowledge (Wutthisingchai, 2011). These texts become more likeable when they contain authentic or nonfiction materials as the students assume, nonfiction texts not only beneficial to use the real language in real context but also motivational for further reading (Berardo, 2006). In a larger extend, these kinds of materials assist the students to judge their overall behavior as a better reader (O'Flynn, 2016). These reading materials, in students' opinion, are more suitable when these are as paper based texts as this kind of texts facilitate the process to take notes, underline or highlight, and write note in the margins of the printed texts (Podolsky & Soiferman, 2014) while reading inside or outside of the classroom.

(ii) The importance to consider the students' expectations concerning reading strategies in the EFL classroom:

The students of higher education are adult enough. Hence, they often show disinterest in using traditional reading strategies in the EFL classroom. So, to encourage the students, traditional reading strategies need to change as Badecka-Kozikowska (2006) assumes, teachers tend to avoid traditional teaching strategies and techniques to encourage learning which also helps to omit reading difficulties in the classroom. In such situation, efficient reading strategies can play a vital role to increase students' reading interest, in the EFL classroom. To Goodman (1969), the utilization of efficient reading strategies helps the readers to comprehend the printed information appropriately. On the other hand, "if readers lack reading strategies, or fail to use the strategies, they will not have the ability to surpass reading difficulties and reach comprehension" (Wutthisingchai, 2011). Scholars also presume, these kind of reading strategies are essentially needed to be collaborative to make the classroom activities concerning reading more successful. Nunan, (1993) states, reading must be held in a collaborative or communicative way just like the other form of language use. Such kind of collaborative way of reading approach eventually play a vital role to increase the communicative competence among the students and to stronger the relationship between students-students and students-teachers within and outside of the classroom.

(iii) The importance to appreciate the students' expectations to teacher in the EFL reading class:

There is no denying of the fact that, students of undergrad level come to the EFL reading class with lots of expectations with regards to teachers. They expect their teachers would be friendly, caring and encouraging. Armağana, Bozoğlub and Güvenc (2016) reported that, teachers' pleasant nature makes the class more enjoyable and the students, "more willing to participate in in-class activities". Such kind of benevolent nature of the teachers could guide the students to meet the greater need of learning reading even to the low-ability learners or poor readers in the EFL classroom (Phakiti, 2006). By supporting the view, Taguchi, Takayasu-Mass and Gorsuch (2004) state, when the teacher could guide EFL learners with various reading activities properly, the learners will possess the opportunity to have a better and real collaboration with the reading in the classroom(as cited in Afriliani & Holandyah, 2018). The learners found this collaborative learning more motivating when they are taught through L1 besides English (Viáfara, 2010, as found in Afriliani & Holandyah, 2018) in the EFL reading class. However, the overall EFL reading proficiency gets utmost success when the students of tertiary level get the teachers' encouragements (Lynch, 1999, as cited in Afriliani & Holandyah, 2018) with regards to fulfill their overall reading expectations within the class.

(iv) The importance to consider the students' expectations concerning the class environment:

Anxiety free and motivated classroom environment has always been a great concern to the researchers as anxiety in foreign language learning cause hindrance in the students' language

learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986 as found in Armağan et al., 2016). Sometimes, such kind of anxiety create 'mental block' within the in-class activities (Horwitz, 2016 as cited in Afriliani & Holandiyah, 2018) which is responsible for the inconsistent results of the learners (Afriliani & Holandiyah, 2018). Hence, the environment needs to be relaxed (Armağana et al., 2016) to motivate the students more on EFL reading in the classes. Positive classroom environment also enrich academic success (Afriliani & Holandiyah, 2018). Haider and Akhter (2012) state, the fare free and favorable reading atmosphere in EFL classroom could bring the better outcome of the students in future.

Since, scholars advocate, students' educational success depends on the classroom environment in a greater degree (Habibi et al., 2016, as found in Afriliani & Holandiyah, 2018).

(v) The importance to focus on the students' expectations regarding learners' autonomy in reading curriculum:

Research shows, learners' autonomy in reading curriculum "leads to greater motivation and thus to better learning" (Holec 1987 & Rubin 1987, as found in Alvarez, 2012). Self-directed learning also makes the students more responsible about their own success as well as strengthens their expectations. This expectation has strong correlation with "students' academic achievement across different disciplines" (Ketsman, 2012). Self-aware learning also shorten teachers' dependency and makes the students able to "choose their reading" and "explicitly judge their teachers' choice (Alvarez, 2012).

3. Research Methodology:

To conduct the current paper both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The current research was administered at a private university named BUBT in Dhaka city. In this university, Basic English language courses for one or two semesters are offered as compulsory courses for the students of every department. Students from different departments have the availability of having any subject's books and reference books in English. Students attend the classes where most of the lectures are delivered only in English.

3.1. Participants:

A total number of 250 students participated in this study. They are in the first year of the respective university. 50 students were from the Department of CSE, 50 students were from the Department of Textile Engineering, 50 students were from the Department of Law, 50 students were from the Business Faculty and 50 students were from the Department of English took part in this study.

3.2. Instruments for data collection:

The instruments employed in this project comprised two questionnaires-

- a. Questionnaire for the students
- b. A focused group discussion with the students

3.3. Data collection and data analysis procedure

The questionnaire for the students was administered in the classes by the observation of the teachers of the respective departments and the researcher. The purpose of the questionnaire was to elicit the students' expectation concerning reading in the EFL classroom. Secondly, a focused group discussion session with the students was administered to explore the students' vision with regards to the environment of the EFL reading class. Students' expectations to establish their autonomy to take part in EFL reading curriculum were similarly revealed though that second session. The students answered the questions of their own free will without any pressure.

3.4. Research findings:

From the questionnaire consisting of 12 questions, the following categories are emerged from 250 students.

Table: 1: Students' expectations towards reading text in the EFL reading class:

Item No	Items	Response in number		Response in percentage	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Do you like to read easy text?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		200	50	80	20
2.	Do you expect reading English text/ comprehension in the EFL class will express your own cultural context?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		225	25	90	10
3.	Do you expect to read fiction as a text in your EFL reading class?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		45	205	18	82
4.	Do you feel more comfortable to read paper based text in the EFL classroom?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		230	20	92	8

N=250

Item no.2 from table 1 displays a very common nature of the students that maximum students representing 80% like to read easy text. The opposition is fewer in number as 20% who rejected the view. For item no.2, 225 students representing 90% accepted that they like to read text that represents their own cultural contexts whereas 25 students representing 10% rejected it. So, statistically there is a significant difference between them. However, item no. 3 proves, majority of the students (82% of the total number of the sample) prefer to read non-

fiction as text in their EFL reading classes. Only 45 students constituting 18% like to have fiction as their reading text which doesn't possess much value. Item no. 4 from table 1, clearly states, EFL reading texts are needed to be in paper based forms. The view is agreed by 230 (representing 92%) students against 20 students (constituting 8%).

Table: 2: Students' expectations towards reading strategies:

Item no	Items	Response in number		Response in percentage	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
5.	Do you think the way you read text/ comprehension needs change?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		200	50	80	20
6.	Do you like to learn the effective way of reading text?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		237	13	94.8	5.2
7.	Do you think EFL reading should be modeled in a collaborative way?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		236	14	94.5	5.6%

N=250

For item no.5, when the students were questioned, whether they need any change in their reading method or not then the number of those who accepted is (200students constituting 80%) seen greater than the number of students who rejected it (50 constituted 20%). So, noteworthy difference is observed here. Moreover, Item no.6 from table 2 exhibits, 237 students are eager to learn the effective way of reading texts. On the other hand, 13students representing 5.2% disagreed with the fact. Another important view has come out from item no. 7 that, 94.5% students constituted of 236 accepted that the EFL reading should be modeled in a collaborative way. Whereas some introvert students (14 representing 5.6%) rejected the opinion.

Table:3: Students' expectation towards teacher in the EFL reading class

8.	Do you think teachers need to be friendly to motivate the students in EFL reading classes?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		243	7	97.2	2.8
9.	Do you think your teachers can properly guide you to read effectively?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		200	50	80	20
10.	Do you think teachers need to	Yes	No	Yes	No

	pay more attention to poor students to improve their EFL reading?	242	8	96.8	3.2
11.	Do you expect your teacher to conduct the EFL reading class only in English?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		32	218	12.8	87.2
12.	Do you think teachers' encouragement is essential to carry out your expectation?	Yes	No	Yes	No
		244	6	97.6	2.4

N=250

Item no. 8 shows, 243 students constituting 97.2% support teachers' friendly attitude in the language classes to motivate the students for better learning. Only 7 students consider the fact wrong. Item no.9, from table 3, explores the fact that 80% students think, they are guided properly by the teachers but 20% are not supporting the statement. For that reason, item no. 9 focuses on the teachers' guidance to read effectively. The answer of the item no. 10 displays, almost every students (242 students representing 96.8%) appreciate teachers' kind consideration towards the poor students while just 8 students were against the consideration. It is also seen from item no. 11 that except very few students (32students representing 12.8%) , majority as 87.2% (consists of 218 students) assume, their EFL reading classes need to conduct with both English and their native language, (Bangla) to understand and to do better in EFL reading classes. In addition, 97.6% students (constituted of 244)from item no. 12, likewise state that, they felt the need of teachers' encouragement to carry out their reading expectations.

4.2. Results and discussion of the findings from qualitative data:

A focused group discussion had conducted by the researcher with twenty students selected from the participants of the current study where they participated in a spontaneous discussion in the interview. To collect the detail data, the researcher worked as a "facilitator" and asked interviewees various types of questions. The focused group interview was recorded and transcribed in full form. By going through the data carefully; the researcher identified the key issues in them and organized these issues in the two following sections:

4.2.1. Students' expectation towards the environment with regards to EFL reading classroom:

It was clearly observed from the interview that all interviewees prefer anxiety free or fare free classes where they wouldn't feel to fail to carry out their reading expectations regarding do

better in EFL classes. The participants assumed, if they would be able to share and satisfy their problems with the teachers freely, their learning would internally facilitate the whole language learning process.

4.2.2. Students' expectation towards reading curriculum:

Another important aspect came out from the interviewees' opinions that they were very much eager to take part in EFL reading curriculum. By getting involved in selecting their reading texts and in-class reading activities, the participants assumed, they would eventually become autonomous readers. This kind of learners' autonomy, to them, would help them to improve their reading skills, intensively and extensively which would promote their communication abilities too.

5. Conclusion:

In Bangladesh, the alignment between teaching EFL reading and students' expectation towards EFL reading within the class appears as a great challenge for the overall success. Therefore, the current study has shed light on the diverse factors concerning undergrads' expectations and teachers' deeds to carry out those expectations in the EFL classroom which will help to make better workforce in the international job markets.

The first significant factor that came out from the quantitative data of the current study reveal that, the students of higher education feel comfortable with the easy texts. The reading texts prove more beneficial when the reading material represent their own cultures. Students also prefer to read authentic or nonfiction texts on printed paper than read electronically.

Secondly, the students expect a change in reading strategies which will be better fulfilled by the effective reading strategies within the class. The learners, similarly, prefer collaborative learning process while teaching reading in the EFL classroom.

The third most important factor proved that, the students expect their teachers to be more friendly and caring even to the poor students in the class which made them more motivated in reading. For the better understanding of the reading in the foreign language classroom they also expected their class to be held in both their L1 (Bangla) and L2 (English) languages. The students also expected their teachers' encouragement to facilitate best their academic achievements.

The important issue that revealed through the quantitative data are also taken into the consideration for the betterment of the students' expectations within the foreign language classes concerning reading. The students initially expected that their classroom environments were needed to be pleasant where they could share their problems without any anxiety and meet their expectations freely with regards to EFL reading. The undergrads of Bangladesh, correspondingly, expected the teachers' along with the educational institutions' kind considerations to satisfy learners' autonomy concerning reading by taking part in choosing text to study in class which would internally make them autonomous readers.

However, the author of the current paper tries to locate some important factors concerning students' expected EFL reading classroom while a great number of issues are yet to discuss to examine the overall situation of the undergrads' reading expectations within the EFL classroom in Bangladesh which could focus on the further research.

Finally it could be said that, the objective of the current paper is to find out the expectations of the tertiary level students of Bangladesh in the EFL reading class to remove the gap between their expectations and real situation of the classroom concerning EFL reading for better academic achievement. To best serve the purpose, the researcher thinks, the running records of the current study would be proved beneficial for the policy-makers, practitioners and researchers in the field of EFL.

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Appendix**Survey questionnaire**

Name:

Institution:

Age:

Year:

Gender:

Department:

Educational Background:

Please feel free to give tick mark on the basis of your preference. You are cordially requested to be serious about choosing your answer:

Nowadays, teaching EFL (English as a Foreign Language) reading in the classroom regarding the students' expectation appears as a great challenge to succeed to the teachers. Hence, the current paper tries to locate the challenges to remove the gap between their expectations and real situation of the classroom concerning EFL reading for better academic achievement.

1. Do you like to read easy text?
i) Yes ii) No
2. Do you expect reading English text/ comprehension in the EFL class will express your own cultural context?
i) Yes ii) No
3. Do you expect to read fiction as a text in your EFL reading class?
i) Yes ii) No
4. Do you feel more comfortable to read paper based text in the EFL classroom?
i) Yes ii) No
5. Do you think the way you read text/ comprehension needs change?
i) Yes ii) No
6. Do you like to learn the effective way of reading text?
i) Yes ii) No
7. Do you think EFL reading should be modeled in a collaborative way?
i) Yes ii) No
8. Do you think teachers need to be friendly to motivate the students in EFL reading classes?
i) Yes ii) No
9. Do you think your teachers can properly guide you to read effectively?
i) Yes ii) No
10. Do you think teachers need to pay more attention to poor students to improve their EFL reading?
i) Yes ii) No
11. Do you expect your teacher to conduct the EFL reading class only in English?
i) Yes ii) No

12. Do you think teachers' encouragement is essential to carry out your expectation?

i) Yes

ii) No

Thank you for your participation.
