



Uncovering the Autonomy Condition in terms of Attitude, Perception and Implementation among the Learners of Secondary Level of Bangladesh

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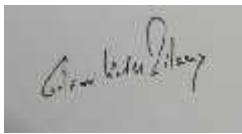
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature appears to read 'Golam Kader Zilany'.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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Abstract

With the advancement in the field of English language teaching and learning, it has become very much important to foster autonomous learning among students in the context of Bangladesh as well. Previously researchers have explored learner autonomy in the context of Bangladesh but most of the studies are on the students and teachers of tertiary level and in most of the cases they have tried to find out the opinion of the learner and teachers on this concept. So keeping all these issues in mind, this study focused on the students of secondary level of Bangladesh and along with finding out the attitude and perception of the learners, it tried to investigate the autonomous condition of the learners and also investigated; to what extent they are independent learners and how much it is helping them in learning the language contrast to those who are only depending on the teachers. To conduct the research, semi-structured interview sessions had been conducted through questionnaires among the students of secondary level of Bangladesh. The findings from the interviews indicates that though the students do not get the opportunity of practicing learners autonomy in the classroom, most of them possess the characteristics of being an independent learner and knowingly or unknowingly they practice learner autonomy outside the classroom. Also the findings indicate that those who were found to work on their own learning by following different strategies were found constantly doing well in the exam. So it found a correlation between learners being autonomous and their success in learning.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the study

Learner Autonomy implies the idea that learners will take the responsibility of their own learning and this concept has become both famous and useful in the field of language learning. With the advancement of new methodologies in the field of language teaching and learning autonomous learning has taken a strong position because it creates different dimensions towards learner centered teaching and learning. Nunan & Richards (2015) have observed the reasons for the achievement of successful language learners and found that motivation plays a great role for them, also they are well aware of their learning progress and most importantly they always look for ways through which they can learn even outside the classroom. Autonomous Learning is like empowering learners to take decisions about their own learning, monitoring their progress and evaluating their performances (Bashir, 2012). When a learner becomes habituated in the process of making their own decision about learning, it improves his learning because he knows his lacking and strength well and also understands which strategies and practices can make his learning effective. According to (Dickinson, 1995), “personal involvement in decision making leads to more effective learning” (p. 165). Overall this concept of autonomous learning is getting more focus globally in order to keep pace with the new teaching mode.

The advancement of globalization has added more value to English since it is used as a lingua franca in terms of communicating globally. So for the people of Bangladesh it has also become a necessity to learn the English language to keep pace with the competitive world. In most of the cases we can see that we the students are lagging behind from many perspectives in terms of learning the language and also using it in real life situations. There are some reasons behind it

and among them one is that the system of teaching the students has not changed even after the introduction of a communicative language based curriculum. Most of the teachers are still stuck to the old way of teaching and despite making a student centered classroom they are focusing on teacher centered classrooms and students are not being able to be independent enough in terms of choosing the process of their learning. In terms of learning a language effectively it is very much important for the learners to understand their own needs, weaknesses and strengths and also to have enough motivation to learn something with their own responsibility. To make the learners get introduced with learner autonomy and foster it at the secondary level can be an appropriate time because if they become able to grasp the idea of it and can implement it properly they will get enough time to utilize the purposefulness of being an independent learner. So to get an overall idea of the situation of the learners of secondary level this study will focus on the attitudes, perceptions of the learners and at the same time it will try to find out whether knowingly or unknowingly students are implementing any strategies of independent learner and how much it is affecting their learning. Most of the research in the context of Bangladesh has been done on the students and teachers of tertiary level and they have kind of investigated only the perceptions and attitudes of learners and teachers towards autonomy. There is a very less and almost no study on the students of secondary level which is the most crucial level to get introduced with something and also there is no study which tried to find out whether the students are implementing any strategies and whether it has any correlation with their achievement

Problem Statement

In Bangladesh there is lack of collaboration between different stakeholders which creates a huge problem in terms of launching a project and executing or implementing it in an effective way.

With the change in ELT curriculum there comes a huge change in the syllabus, in the content and

the whole function goes through a huge change. It was required to arrange sufficient trainings to make the teachers aware of the changes which had been made so as a result teachers are still following the previous teaching strategies. Sometimes teachers are aware about the methods but they cannot implement them. Begum (2019) found that the teachers are aware of the idea but the problem is in implementation because they find different challenges while implementing it like different lacking in classroom, preparation of teacher, learners unwelcoming attitude, the time limit of the class etc. So the learning environment, procedures and the inefficiency of the teachers making the opportunities of learning the language very narrow for the reader. In an EFL context there is a huge need of having different scopes so that they can choose among them get better outcome from that. Since the student of Bangladesh has limitations in terms of practicing the language, they need to be more active and well aware of their needs and they should have enough motivation to learn something independently. Independent learning does not mean that the learner will decide each and everything on their own because by doing so they can become misled and that's why teachers will be there to guide them.

Purpose of the study

To overcome the limitations in terms of learning the language effectively in the context of Bangladesh the learners need to be more autonomous and independent learners. They can practice the strategies of autonomous learning in the classroom and as well as they can practice it outside the classroom. So to make the learners practice learner autonomy we need to first understand their attitudes and perception towards it and also we need to observe whether they are already under any autonomy practices in terms of language learning and whether it is helping them or not. Once we will become aware of these facts we will be able to make better suggestions for them and also we will be able to understand that is autonomous learning really

making any difference in learning or not. So keeping these things in mind this study focused on investigating the autonomy condition of the students of secondary level in terms of attitude, perception and implementation.

Research Questions of the study

1. How do the students of secondary level view their own responsibility in language learning?
2. Do the students in the context of Bangladesh have adequate opportunities to transform them into autonomous learners?
3. Is there any correlation between learners' being autonomous and their achievement in learning?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on Piaget's theory of constructivism. Constructivism has made a great impact in the field of teaching and learning. Constructivist teaching strategies and practices are the next important step in educational reform. Constructivist teaching strategies have a great effect in the classroom both cognitively and socially for the student (Kalina and Powell, 2009, p.241).

Constructivist attitudes inspire self-directing learning as a vital point for promoting learner autonomy (Thanasoulas, 2000, p. 4). (Piaget's, 1953 as cited in Kalina and Powell, 2009) asserts "Piaget's main focus of constructivism has to do with the individual and how the individual constructs knowledge. Cognitive constructivism came directly from Piaget's work. Piaget's theory of cognitive development proposes that humans cannot be given information, which they immediately understand and use; instead, humans must construct their own knowledge" (p. 242).

Learners Autonomy:

Autonomous learning has been a very significant issue among the researcher and educationalist.

Different studies have been conducted in this field in different countries to find out its effectiveness, the preferences of learners and teachers towards it and also from many aspects.

Among the researchers, many of them also tried to explain it from a theoretical point of view as well. Masouleh and Jooneghani (2012) have tried to explain the idea from a theoretical and philosophical point of view. They have come up with some ideas like to make the learners aware of having control over their own learning, teachers play a crucial role in order to get them introduced with the strategies that the students already use or they can use to enhance their autonomous learning. The results of this paper by Masouleh and Jooneghani (2012) indicates that

though students are supposed to take the responsibility of their own learning, this is not a teacher-less learning process; rather teachers will play the role in moving the students towards autonomous learning process. Also In his paper ÇAKICI (2015) has explained the idea of learner autonomy from different perspectives. He has also provided a clear view about the development of learners' autonomy, about the characteristics of an autonomous learner and also provides an idea of the role of both the teacher and learner on enhancing learner autonomy. ÇAKICI (2015) also suggested that language teachers will be able to promote autonomy well if they were under autonomous learning in terms of their own education and if they become a facilitator more than an instructor then they will be able to help their learners to be autonomous.

There have been various studies, researches and also theories on language learning and teaching which discuss the issues regarding learning at classrooms and the role of learner and teachers to hold the process of learning inside the classroom. Nunan and Richards (2015) has come up with a different perspective through their book which is learning outside the classroom and which can be considered as an important aspect of autonomous learning. They have observed the reasons for the achievement of successful language learners and found that motivation plays a great role for them, also they are well aware of their learning progress and most importantly they always look for ways through which they can learn even outside the classroom. In his paper, Dickinson (1995) has pointed out another important aspect of learner autonomy and tried to show that there is a very crucial link between autonomy and motivation. Through different researches, it has been found that the more a learner is motivated towards learning, the more he or she is ready to take the responsibility of their own learning and they also understands that both their success and failure is the result of their own effort and they can make the learning better if they will follow different strategies which also demands the willingness of the students. Dickinson (1995)

eventually tried to emphasize that learner autonomy can be defined through the keywords like learners' independence; learners' choice; responsibility; decision making ability and all these things are highly connected with the motivation of the learner. According to Benson (2008), there is also a correlation between learner autonomy and freedom which is kind of undeniable. He thinks for the concept learner autonomy, freedom should be the central component. Since autonomous learning is associated with self-directed learning where learners will grow the capacity of making their own decision according to their own choice, all these key components strongly indicate the concept of freedom. In the case of incorporating freedom with learners' autonomy, the idea of freedom should be slightly changed. Here freedom should be interpreted as the capacity of identifying and understanding the correlation between possibility and necessity.

Characteristics of autonomous learners:

Since autonomous learning is self directed learning and learners have to take responsibility for their own learning, they have to play a very active role and also they need to possess some certain qualities which ensure that they are capable of taking the responsibility and making decisions according to different learning situations. The more we will understand the capacity and characteristics of the learners in terms of taking their own learning responsibility, the more we will understand how we can foster learner autonomy for those learners. According to Harmer (2007) an autonomous learner learn the language out of his own interest and they take the responsibility of their learning both inside and outside the classroom because to learn the language it is very much important to get the opportunity of practicing it more and more which is not possible in the classroom due the time frame. In the paper Oxford (2015), tried to bring out new ideas to the concept of autonomous language learners. She has tried to define the

characteristics of autonomous learners under two different perspectives which are psychological and sociocultural. Under the psychological perspective, Oxford (2015) included different characteristics like resilient, self regulated, emotionally intelligent, psychologically engaged, self determined, existentially free and effective. Under the sociocultural perspective, she added more characteristics of an autonomous learner like the mediated learner, socio culturally strategic learner, the cognitively apprenticed learner, the invested learner, the socio politically free learner and self efficacious learner.

Through observation and interviews, Juhdiah (2021) has found different characteristics of an autonomous learner which includes high motivation, willingness to work, hard working, goal oriented, well organized, enthusiasm in terms of learning, asks questions and also they try to grasp all the opportunities and makes good use of those opportunities. According to the findings, highly motivated students develop a kind of responsibility in their learning process and when a student will have a certain goal; he or she will try to fulfill that goal by putting extra effort. Also the findings indicate that students initiated reading articles, watching videos by themselves without getting any instructions from the teacher and the students were more enthusiastic and active. Judiah (2021) also indicated that the autonomous learners are very well organized in terms of learning and they follow different kinds of strategies to organize it. Dickinson (1993) talked about some characteristics of autonomous learners in an interview session. He thinks that autonomous learners are very much aware and easily identify what has been taught because they find it more important to understand the objective of the lesson for their own improvement where there are many students who do not even understand most of the class and remain unaware of the things. According to Dickinson (1993), autonomous learners can set their own learning objectives by discussing it with their teacher and also they know when and what kind of

strategies need to be implemented to boost up their learning. He has given some examples of the implication of the strategies done by an autonomous learner. For example, if a teacher provides them with a piece of reading, an autonomous learner will follow different strategies rather than going straight and trying to understand it by reading it. They will look at different visuals of the heading of the text and will try to contextualize the text by incorporating information from their prior knowledge. Another very important characteristic of an effective autonomous learner is that they can do self assessment and they always remain in the process of correcting themselves for their own development (Dickinson, 1993).

Perceptions and attitudes towards learners' autonomy:

Sönmez (2016) conducted a study to understand the readiness of students of autonomous language learning in the context of Turkey. The study came up with different findings like the participants pointed towards using the metacognitive strategies while learning the language. The student's responses indicate that they think of learning outside the classroom as their own responsibility and deciding the time and activity as the teacher's responsibility. Also most of the students showed interest in doing extracurricular activities outside the classroom. Mehdiyev (2020) has tried to bring out the opinion of the students about the autonomous learning process to acquire proficiency in speaking and the finding reveals that the process varied according to individual. Different learners use different sources like technology, listening to music, watching movies, through socialization, by reading books or maybe by establishing friendships.

There had also been many studies which tried to investigate the perception, attitude of both the learners and teachers towards autonomous learning. In their paper Khotimah et al. (2019) inspected the perception of both learners and teachers on autonomous learning in language

teaching and learning from the context of Indonesia and also put a focus on the aspect of how much the teachers encourage students towards autonomous learning. They have identified a few interesting things like the teachers have a fairly good idea about the concept of autonomous learning but they somehow lack in fostering the practical implication of strategies which can encourage their learner. In the case of students the understanding of the concept was very poor and they were mostly dependent on the teacher's role to learn something. The study also suggests that by using the internet students can be encouraged to become more autonomous. Like other researchers Swatevacharkul and Boonma (2020) also emphasized on finding learners' attitude towards autonomous learning of undergrad students of ELT program in the context of Thailand. They have found a positive attitude of learners towards the learner autonomy and they find it important and see it as a motivation in terms of taking the responsibility of their own learning.

Chan (2001) conducted a research in terms of investigating the attitude and expectations of the learners about the language learning and also to understand the role of the learner and teacher and to understand their preferences and ideas about autonomous learning. The result indicates that when it comes to judging their capacity in terms of learning autonomously, they were already autonomous from various aspects. They were well aware of their learning objectives and goals and they were very much clear about those expectations and preferences. They were very much enthusiastic in terms of making good use of the opportunities. Chan (2001) indicates that learners from traditional and authoritative backgrounds also showed a very welcoming attitude towards autonomous learning. Another study was conducted to explore the perception of the students of University in terms of responsibilities related to autonomous learning. Through the research Üstünlüoğlu (2009) also tried to understand whether the motivation level of the learner and gender of the learner plays any role in terms of bringing any changes in responsibilities and

activities. The result of the study indicates that in spite of having ability, learners are not very much willing to take the responsibilities. Rather, teachers tend to take most of the responsibilities because they think that their students are not capable enough in terms of taking the responsibility of learning. Also there is another finding which says that the female students consider themselves more vocal and participatory in activities regarding autonomous learning than their male peers. Üstünlüoğlu (2009) suggests that it is important for both the teacher and students to understand the necessity of autonomous learning in terms of learning a language effectively and to ensure that administration should arrange training on learners' autonomy.

Dişlen (2011) investigated the idea and perception of the students regarding the responsibility in language learning from different departments of Turkish university. It also tried to find out the kind of activities students do inside the classroom and also outside the classroom. The findings indicate that students are partially aware of learner autonomy but the problem is that they do not have any idea of implanting it in their learning process and it is because they are habituated in conventional teaching style where teacher takes all the responsibilities and students are only the receivers. Yılmaz (2012) conducted a study to explore ESL (English as Second Language) learners' perception towards the responsibility in language learning to understand how the concept of independent learning is perceived in the Indian educational context. According to Yılmaz (2012), it is difficult to categorize the students as absolutely autonomous or absolutely non-autonomous because in some aspects of language learning almost all the students are willing to handover the responsibilities to the teachers and in some other aspects they are ready to take the responsibilities. Even the learner who does not show any characteristics or behavior of being an autonomous learner may have the potential for autonomous learning. So it depends on the teacher to facilitate opportunities and determine the potential of learners and work accordingly.

Correlation between learners' autonomy and achievement in language learning:

Most of the studies were kind of based on investigating the thought and readiness of learner and teacher and how they are accepting it but unlike others Alrabai (2017) has focused on some different aspects of learners' autonomy. His focus was to see how much the students are autonomous in terms of learning the language and whether there is any relationship between learners being autonomous and their achievement in language learning. Alrabai (2017) has found out that the learners show a very poor level of autonomy and also their performances are not so convincing. Through the study it has been found that actually there is an interconnection between learners being autonomous and their attainment in learning.

Dafei (2007) conducted research in terms of identifying the relationship between learner autonomy and proficiency in English. Through the research he has found that the proficiency of the learner was notably related to the learner autonomy. So the more a learner becomes autonomous, the more he or she gets proficient in that language. The study also suggests few implications for language learning and teaching. It can make the teacher aware about the fact that autonomy can work as a very impactful way of language teaching. Also it will encourage the teachers to enhance learners' autonomy to improve the proficiency level of the students (Dafei, 2007). Zimmerman (1990) also talked about self regulated learning and academic achievement in his paper. According to him, self-regulated learning puts emphasis on learners' ability to organize, selecting and building a very effective environment for learning the language by following different strategies. They should be well aware of their learning and also will build the ability to recognize their mistakes and will have that enthusiasm to correct them by taking the feedback. It has been found that the learners who show enthusiasm to work for their betterment

by taking the responsibility of their own learning, they show improvement in their academic achievement (Zimmerman, 1990).

Learners' autonomy in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms:

In the context of Bangladesh there have been different studies since after the introduction of CLT the autonomous learning has become very much important to be incorporated. From the context of Bangladesh Sultana (2018) has brought a new dimension through her study which needs analysis of the learners because she thinks that if we can understand their needs it will be much easier to foster autonomous learning among the students and at same time it will be much more effective. After analyzing the needs it became easier to choose materials, strategies and to focus on those aspects where students were lacking and thus there was an effective implementation of autonomous learning. Sultana (2018) has observed that the strategies worked so well and the students with the passage of time could understand their own shortcomings and were more confident about taking charge of their own learning. Mehrin (2017) also investigated the perception and attitudes of undergrad students about autonomous learning. She has come up with some ideas on learners' attitudes towards learners' autonomy which says that most of the students understand the fact that self study is very much impactful in terms of learning the language but then also they tend to rely on teachers to learn the language. Students are very much motivated towards exam oriented learning which eventually not letting them grow interest in self directed learning. The learners were aware of the purpose of being an autonomous learner but their experience of learning in school and colleges were kind of creating a hindrance from many perspectives. Also since they were not introduced with this at their earlier level, they lacked the necessary skill of being an independent learner. Mehrin (2017) mentioned that the

students wanted to take the responsibility of their own learning but they wanted to do it under the supervision of the teacher.

Also In her paper Begum (2019) has explored the perceptions of teachers about learner autonomy and also tried to investigate how the teachers use different strategies to encourage their learners to be autonomous in the context of Bangladesh. She has tried to bring out an intensive view of this aspect and directly interviewed the ELT teachers. Begum (2019) found that the teachers are aware of the idea but the problem is in implementation because they find different challenges while implementing it like different lacking in classroom, preparation of teacher, learners unwelcoming attitude, the time limit of the class etc. Also some issues have been found which are very much important for practical application of self directed learning in the classroom which is, setting a clear goal which is understandable to learners, encouraging the learners to use the L2 as much as possible in real life situations, making the learners aware of the learning process along with learning objectives. From the context of Bangladesh Kabir (2015) also conducted a study but his focus was on the secondary level of the school of Bangladesh and he explored the current situation of the learners regarding autonomy and along with that he has also focused on the teacher's overall condition about fostering autonomy. Kabir (2015) Found out that there is no use of autonomous learning at secondary level and even the teachers are also kind of unaware about the fact as well so there is no effort of fostering autonomous learning from the teacher's side. Also it was found that the fixed or inflexible system of language learning, and the learner's lack of knowledge about the process of communicative language teaching are creating barriers in the way of becoming independent learners.

Bashir (2014) investigated the undergraduate students' willingness and readiness to accept autonomous learning and this study was conducted in the context of Bangladesh as well. The

overall purpose of the study was to identify the condition and understanding of the learners about learners' autonomy so that some suggestions can be made in terms of implementing it in the language learning process. The findings indicate that learners have a positive attitude towards independent learning but they get very little opportunity in choosing materials or activities in their school life and most of them responded that they have got this kind of opportunity of decision making in their undergraduate level. In some cases the students were not confident enough to take the responsibilities and needed the guidance from the teacher since they got introduced with the term learner autonomy after appearing to university level. Through the investigation Onia (2016) has tried to find out the present condition of learner autonomy among the students of secondary level while using communicative activities in the English language classrooms in the context of Bangladesh. The findings show that there is very little or almost no idea about the relation between learner autonomy and communicative activities among the students and teachers. Also students understand that being an autonomous learner can help them improve their language skill but as they are habituated with the traditional teaching style, they lack the confidence and think they will not be able to do it without the help of the teachers. According to Onia (2016) the real challenge occurs to facilitate communicative activities and create an autonomous environment for the learners in the classroom.

Most of the research regarding autonomous learning in the context of Bangladesh has focused on the attitude, perceptions and readiness of the teachers and the learners where they mostly emphasized on the acceptability of learners autonomy. There is very little research on finding the ways of implementing it in the language learning process. Bari (2020) has tried to add a new dimension by finding an alternative way in terms of creating an effective autonomous environment. She has pointed out that Community Language Learning boosts the learner's

willingness to work as an independent learner since it creates a sense of individuality. It has been identified that implementing CLL can be proved very much useful in terms of autonomy in the language learning process in Bangladesh. This study put emphasis on finding how CLL can create an environment where everyone can participate. According to Bari (2020) CLL can be proved very much beneficial in a small-scale classroom because every learner should get the chance to speak up and share ideas.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study has followed qualitative method in terms of collecting data. Qualitative method helps to get clear, detailed and focused information from the participants. For qualitative research, researchers mainly intend to gather information from the place or environment where the participants actually experience that issue. According to Creswell and Clark (2004) researchers in a qualitative study are more focused in understanding the explanations from the perspective of a particular context at a particular time. Also Seaman (2008) added in his paper that there is an advantage of the qualitative method which is, it makes the researcher more involved and makes them dig deep into the study and thus they can understand the complexity of the problem in a better way. The previous studies on autonomous learning in the context of Bangladesh mostly followed mixed methods in terms of collecting data. To understand students' attitude they have followed quantitative approach and to understand teachers' ideas and attitudes they have followed the qualitative approach. Akter (2017) has also followed mixed method in her study and she did surveys on students and interviewed teachers. Her focus was mainly on teachers to get an overall idea about the autonomy situation. This study is absolutely based on understanding the attitude, perception of the students and also to find out whether they are implementing any independent learning practice in learning English language or not. So In the case of this study, to understand the autonomous condition and usage of autonomous strategies, we needed to dig more and had to get an intense view so that we could actually get an overall idea about their experience, needs, desires, enthusiasm about the English language learning and by taking face-to-face interview this study tried to bring out all those ideas from the students. So for this study the qualitative approach has been followed to get an intense and in-depth view.

Setting and participants

The interview has been conducted on the students of secondary level of Bangladesh. The population for this study is the students of secondary level and the sample are 10 participants from three different schools of Dhaka. The study basically followed the convenience sampling because I have access in those three particular schools so data collection was easier. For any kind of study on students, it is also important to understand their socio-economic background. All the participants are from Dhaka city and studying in renowned schools of their areas. So, most of the students were from middle class background and also there were few who belong to upper class family background.

Data collection and analysis

The qualitative data collection had been done through conducting a semi-structured interview session where there were some open-ended questions and had room for discussion and also students had the chance to share their opinion and suggestion. Semi-structured interview session was chosen because students are not directly introduced with the term autonomous learning so to understand their understanding about independent learning it was important to know their experiences, their habits which would not be possible to get by asking only a few structured questions. So there were few structured questions and those questions created room for asking more questions. Power et al. (2010) added in his paper that in semi-structured interview sessions, the researcher can maintain the sequence of questions according to his need and also to get more in depth responses, they can lead the way of the conversations. Since there were only 10 participants for this study, the interview sessions were a bit lengthy in terms of collecting data as much as possible. The questions were arranged in such a way so that it can bring out the detailed

information from the participants about their English learning experience, their classroom experience, relation with teacher, about the activities what they perform, whether they get any scope or opportunity to take the responsibility of their own learning, what they do beyond classroom to improve their English and the intention behind asking to these questions was to identify their attitude towards independent learning and also to find out their present situation as a learner. The collected data has been analyzed under a theme-based approach. Five themes have been introduced under which the collected data from the participants has been analyzed.

According to Kiger and Varpio (2020) In the case of qualitative approach the thematic data analysis process can be proved very much effective because it allows the researchers to focus on the key issues and also creates opportunities to explain a wide range of data.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

A semi-structured interview session had been conducted where 10 participants had participated who are currently studying at the secondary level of Bengali medium schools of Bangladesh. They had been asked some open-ended questions where along with answering the questions; they had the opportunity to come up with their own experiences, opinions, and suggestions as well. So after the collection of data that were necessary for this research, it has been analyzed closely to come up with the result. The collected data has been analyzed under a theme-based approach. Five themes have been introduced under which the data collected from the participants has been analyzed.

Experience: How is their English Learning experience at their secondary level?

I have interviewed 10 students where there were students from class 6, 8 and 10. The students of class 6 were at the initial stage of secondary level where students of class 10 were almost at the end of secondary level. When they were individually asked about their English learning experience, the responses from the participants were quite similar. Most of them responded that they are taught mainly the reading and writing skills in the classroom and there is very little or no focus on speaking and listening skills. Also they are more encouraged to solve the model questions. One participant added “Our teacher suggests us to solve more model questions in order to do well in the examination”. So the teaching of the English language focuses on exams rather than improving students’ skills. One participant said, “If we spend a little time, we can understand the seen and unseen passages and also can comprehend them but there is no space for developing the English language skills and for me there is no such difference in English 1st paper and 2nd paper because both the papers tests our basic grammar senses”. Both the papers evaluate whether they can use the grammatical rules properly and to what extent they can understand the

language. Another participant said, “The passages we read are kind of newspaper cutting, reports, fables which never create any interest in me, and thus I could never make any involvement with the texts”. Most of the participants mentioned that there is very little use of textbook *English for Today* rather they have to practice the model questions. The participants from class 10 agreed on a matter that in their journey of secondary level they did not find any difference when it comes to English learning. They are being taught in the same way and in the same pattern. One of the students said, “I have studied the subject but never had the opportunity to implement it and also I could never understand what the purpose of studying the subject was”. There was a common thing all the participants knew that in our practical life there is a great importance of English and also they had the enthusiasm to learn it in an effective way but they agreed that their English learning experience is not the effective one to imply in real life contexts. Students are encouraged to focus on good grades rather than learning the language in an actual manner.

Activities: What kind of activities do they get to do in the classroom?

When students were asked about the activities they get to do in the classroom; most of them replied that most of the time they get to do reading and writing tasks. They are asked to read the passages aloud and after that they are asked to write the questions related to that passage. One of the participants said, “Most of the time the teacher asked us to read the passage and divide the passage among two or three people to read that aloud”. When they were asked about the speaking and listening skill most of them replied there are almost no or very few activities on listening and speaking skill. One participant added “Sometimes we are asked to come in front of the class and practice dialogue delivery” another participant added “We get the scope of speaking when we respond to the question asked by the teacher and also if we listen to our

classmates responses and the reading aloud of the passages it may be work like our listening practice”. Students were mostly unaware about what classroom activities meant in actual manner because they were assuming reading passages, writing questions, listening to peers and responding to teachers’ questions as activities. To understand the perspective better, they were directly asked whether they get to do any group work, pair work where they can communicate and interact with each other and complete the task through communication. The responses indicated that they never got such activities to perform in the classroom. One of the participants said, “I know about such activities because I was in the English version till class 6 but when I switched to Bengali medium, I never got to do any such activities in the classroom”. So it was pretty much clear that teachers do not arrange such communicative activities for the students to perform where they can take responsibility for their own learning. Since there were no communicative activities, when students were asked whether they get any opportunity to share their ideas, opinion while doing activities, the responses were no. They said that the teacher teaches them at a stretch and they listen to him and when he asks something they respond. The involvement from the students is very low and that’s why most of the participants said that they find the class boring and cannot hold their concentration for a long time.

Motivation: How motivated are they in terms of learning the language and what do they do beyond classroom activities to improve their learning?

When the participants were asked about their English learning experience in school, most of them responded in a same way that they did not experience much effective learning in their school and also there were same pattern of teaching which excludes communicative activities and only focus on grammar and model question. But almost all the participant showed positive enthusiasm in terms of learning English. Almost all of them said they know the importance of

English in this present world. One participant said “We should improve our speaking skill in order to match with others but our education system almost ignores this skill”. Almost all of them excluding one or two said they like the subject and rather being dependent on the class they try to improve it through applying different strategies. One said “I try to read story books and English news paper and try to enrich my vocabulary”. Another participant said “I have done phonetics courses to improve my pronunciation and also I practice speaking with my father at home and it actually improved my spoken skill”. There were few common things among participants like watching movies, playing games, taking help from Google. Moreover they showed a great amount of interest in terms of learning different aspect of language specially the speaking skill by their own effort. One or two participants said that they do not do any such activity beyond the classroom but they also agreed that what they get to learn from the classroom is not effective in terms of learning a language and they should follow different strategies for impactful learning. When they were asked that whether they get any suggestion or direction from the teachers in terms of choosing or doing outside classroom activities, only one participant said, “Generally we do not get such suggestions in regular terms from our teachers but one or two times he asked us to read English newspaper and asked us to visit his You tube channel to improve our learning”. In most of the cases students chose to do these activities out of their own interest. Also students were asked whether they work on their mistakes to avoid the mistake later. There were positive responses from the participants. Also most of the participants showed some characteristics like willingness to participate, responding to questions and asking questions to teacher, though one or two showed the characteristics of an introverted learner.

Achievement: Whether there is any connection or correlation between students’ achievement of English learning and being autonomous?

After asking about their English learning experience and about the activities that they get to do in the classroom, it was found that they never get to do such activities to learn different skills of the language. In spite of attending such a typical class where there is no interaction or involvement, most of the participants said that they like English and almost all of them said that they manage to get good grades in the examination. When they were asked that what make them grow interest in English learning, one of the participants said “there is nothing to memorize in this subject rather if we understand the basics well then we can apply that in every aspect” and when she was asked what made his basic strong, she replied “since my father was a English teacher, he assisted me to learn the basics through different strategies and with his assistance I myself tried to improve my English through practicing speaking, reading English newspaper, reading story books. She also added “I never memorized any rules or paragraphs or essays. Rather, by getting some ideas I have tried to produce my own writing and I managed to get good marks in my exams”. Also those who showed enthusiasm and fascination over English have somehow found to put their own effort in learning the language outside the classroom and also they were found doing well in the exam. There were one or two exceptions as well. For example, one of them said she does well in the exam and when she was asked what she does to do well she replied “I try to follow my teacher’s instructions and try to solve the model questions”. There was another participant who also gave this kind of response. But in a broader aspect those who were found to work on their own learning by following different strategies were found to constantly do well in the exam.

Suggestions: How would they prefer their learning and what do they think could be more effective in terms of language learning?

Participants were not happy with the English language classes and most of them found the classes very insufficient or ineffective in terms of learning a language. One of the participants from class 10 said “In all these years I did not find any purpose of doing these classes and did not find anything which could grab my attention. Rather, what I have learnt all these years was my own effort and out of my own interest”. Most of them agreed that they just attend the class and somehow pass the time of the class. When they were asked how they would prefer learning the language, almost all of them responded that they want interactive classes and want something which can make them feel interested and make them get involved in the learning process. One participant said “I have heard that in foreign countries, the English classes are more interactive and they get to do different interesting tasks and also interesting games so I think if we could get that kind of learning environment, we could learn better”. When participants were asked whether they prefer learning alone or in groups or pairs; they responded that they would rather prefer learning in groups or pairs than learning individually. One participant added “when we will learn in groups, we will learn more because we will get the opportunity of sharing our ideas and will be able to learn from each other”. Since all of them showed interest in speaking skill, some of them suggested that if teachers could arrange activities, they could improve their speaking skill. One of the participants suggested “since the class time is very limited, teachers can make pairs and can ask them to practice speaking among themselves outside the classroom”. Also another participant suggested “Teachers can assign us different activities and which we can do outside the classroom”. Moreover most of the students showed willingness to learn English in a more effective way and showed a positive attitude towards learning by making them get involved in the learning process.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussions

Findings

There is a very little use of textbook in the classroom rather teachers focuses on solving model questions so students do not get to do any communicative activities in the classroom

Most of the students showed enthusiasm and interest in learning English in a more effective way because they know the importance of English in the present world

Most of the participants said that rather being dependent on the class they try to improve their learning by applying different strategies outside the classroom

Students showed the willingness to participate in different tasks, responding to questions, asking questions, working on their mistakes to improve their learning

Students were highly motivated in terms of developing their language skill. Despite getting any suggestions from the teachers in terms of doing any outside classroom activity, most of the cases they chose to do those out of their own interest. Some of them were even found doing different courses for developing English skill

This study found a correlation between students being independent learners and their achievement in the learning process. Those who applied different strategies to learn English out of their own interest were more confident and also consistent in doing well in the exam as well.

This study has tried to investigate the overall English learning Experience of the participants of secondary level of Bangladesh. Through understanding their journey of English learning, the study has tried to bring out the actual scenarios like the opportunities the students get in the context of Bangladesh to be autonomous learner and also it tried to attitudes and willingness of learners in terms of taking the responsibility of their own learning. The findings of this research have brought out some issues which are needed to be discussed for the betterment of the English learning experience of the students at their school level.

The textbook suggested by the government has great importance since it is designed according to the curriculum but the students suggested that they did not use the textbook that much. One of the reasons behind this can be that there is no consistency between the testing system and the contents of the text book. Most of the teachers of Bengali medium schools are still following the GTM method in spite of remaining under the curriculum of CLT. They are following neither of the methods appropriately. Ali & Walker (2014) have talked about how and why after implementing the CLT curriculum the learning outcome remained almost same and also argued that the shift of ELT from GTM to CLT has been “bogged down”. The teachers are not bothered about the textbook and the activities that are suggested in the textbook as a result the students are also not getting any chance of practicing the different skills through different communicative activities in the classroom. Students are more encouraged to solve the model questions so somehow the three of the skills remained untouched and students are not getting any chance to practice learners’ autonomy in the classroom. Kabir (2015) Found out that there is no use of autonomous learning at secondary level and even the teachers are also kind of unaware about the fact as well so there is no effort of fostering autonomous learning from the teacher’s side. Also it was found that the fixed or inflexible system of language learning and the learner's lack of

knowledge about the process of communicative language teaching are creating barriers in the way of becoming independent learners.

Though the classroom environment and teaching styles could not make any impact in learning the language in an effective way, most of the participants showed enthusiasm and interest in learning English because they know the importance of English in the present world. It has been found that the learners who show enthusiasm to work for their betterment by taking the responsibility of their own learning, they show improvement in their academic achievement (Zimmerman, 1990). Also most of the participants said rather being dependent on the class, they try to improve their learning through applying different strategies outside the classroom. According to Harmer (2007) an autonomous learner learn the language out of his own interest and they take the responsibility of their learning both inside and outside the classroom because to learn the language it is very much important to get the opportunity of practicing it more and more which is not possible in the classroom due the time frame. So in this case the participants showed kind of characteristics of autonomous learner.

Students showed different characteristics like willingness to participate, responding to questions, asking questions, working on their mistakes so that they do not repeat those mistakes in future. Through observation and interviews, Juhdiah (2021) has found different characteristics of an autonomous learner which includes high motivation, willingness to work, hard working, goal oriented, well organized, enthusiasm in terms of learning, asks questions and also they try to grasp all the opportunities and makes good use of those opportunities.

Also students were highly motivated in terms of developing their language skill. In spite of not getting any suggestions or directions from the teachers in terms of choosing outside class

activities, most of the cases they chose to do outside class activities out of their own interest. Some of them were even found to do extra courses for their own development. Nunan and Richards (2015) has come up with a different perspective through their book which is learning outside the classroom and which can be considered as an important aspect of autonomous learning. They have observed the reasons for the achievement of successful language learners and found that motivation plays a great role for them, also they are well aware of their learning progress and most importantly they always look for ways through which they can learn even outside the classroom. In his paper, Dickinson (1995) has pointed out another important aspect of learner autonomy and tried to show that there is a very crucial link between autonomy and motivation. Through different researches, it has been found that the more a learner is motivated towards learning, the more he or she is ready to take the responsibility of their own learning and they also understands that both their success and failure is the result of their own effort and they can make the learning better if they will follow different strategies which also demands the willingness of the students. So motivation plays a crucial role in terms of taking the responsibility of one's own learning and that was highly visible among most of the learners of secondary level. Even when they were asked for the suggestions most of them suggested that they want interactive learning and want opportunities where they will be able to communicate with each other, will be able to share their ideas, opinions and also they showed willingness to do activities outside the classroom with the suggestion and guidance of the teacher.

After getting all the ideas about their learning experience and learning process they were asked about their academic achievement and it was found that who worked on their basic from the very early stages by putting their own effort were more consistent in doing well in the exams. Alrabai (2017) has focused on some different aspects of learners' autonomy. His focus was to see how

much the students are autonomous in terms of learning the language and whether there is any relationship between learners being autonomous and their achievement in language learning. Alrabai (2017) has found out that the learners show a very poor level of autonomy and also their performances are not so convincing. Through the study it has been found that actually there is an interconnection between learners being autonomous and their attainment in learning. Dafei (2007) conducted research in terms of identifying the relationship between learner autonomy and proficiency in English. Through the research he has found that the proficiency of the learner was notably related to the learner autonomy. So the more a learner becomes autonomous, the more he or she gets proficient in that language.

The overall findings indicates that the students of secondary level are highly interested in taking the responsibility of their own learning and in fact knowingly or unknowingly they are already doing autonomy practices. In terms of learning the different aspect of language, they are highly motivated, interested and also enthusiastic. They want their teachers to guide them to develop different skills and for that they are ready to take assignments outside the classroom. The students are ready to take responsibilities but the education system or teachers are not providing them such opportunities or scopes. Since students show characteristics of autonomous learner, it will be easier to implement those in the classroom and if time limitation is the hindrance, teachers can create opportunities by assigning them different outside class activities.

Chapter Six: Limitations of the study

- The sample which has been represented in this research is not so big. It would be better if more participants could be added for the interview since this research is only based on qualitative data.
- A big sample size means a wide range of data but here because of the small sample size, maybe the data which have been collected are not enough to strengthen the main argument of this research.
- For any research, the variation of the data is very important. It would be better if it could also add the point of view of students of English medium schools and schools from rural areas.
- I have only brought out the point of view of students but it would be stronger if the point of view of teachers on this matter could be addressed as well.
- It would be better if the study could focus on both qualitative and quantitative method because through survey it was possible to reach as many as respondents in a short period of time and interview could give in depth understanding and by making a comparison the study could provide more clear results.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and recommendation

The language teaching and learning techniques have evolved drastically around the world with the advancement of new methodologies and new ideas. Among them, learner autonomy is one which is making the learners more responsible and aware of their own learning and helping them to learn the language more effectively. In the context of Bangladesh it is very much important for the learners to be autonomous because there are so many limitations in the case of language learning. Previous studies in the context of Bangladesh tried to investigate the autonomy situations of teachers and students. In most of the cases researchers focused mostly on teachers and also the focus was the tertiary level. So they have found that teachers of tertiary level are well aware of learners' autonomy and they try to implement that in the classroom but mostly the students do not feel confident enough to take the responsibility since they get introduced with independent learning for the very first time at their university level. Also there are few studies conducted on secondary level and here in most studies the main focus was teachers and they were interviewed with more depth. Few studies also tried to see student's attitude, perception of autonomous learning but there were some surveys to get an overall idea. In most of the cases students showed a positive attitude towards independent learning. So there was not much in depth data from the perspective of learners of secondary level from the previous studies.

To make the learners get introduced with something new, the secondary level can be considered as the appropriate level because in this level the learners are mature enough to grasp

the idea of something as well as if they can start practicing something from this level, it will help them in their further studies. Keeping all these things in mind this study has explored the overall learning situations of secondary level of Bengali medium schools of Bangladesh in terms of implementing learner autonomy and also tried to focus on the students to understand their ideas, perception and willingness to take their own learning responsibility. The findings of the study provides the idea that still in our schools (Bengali medium) there are no opportunities or scope for the learners to participate actively and also there are no such communicative activities arranged for the learners where they can interact with each other and through communicating with each other they can perform the task. Students were found highly motivated in terms of developing their language skill. Despite getting any suggestions from the teachers in terms of doing any outside classroom activity, most of the cases they chose to do those out of their own interest. Some of them were even found doing different courses for developing English skills. In spite of not having any opportunities in the classroom, students possess characteristics of an autonomous learner and they are trying to develop their learning out of their own interest and responsibility which indicates a huge possibility in terms of implementing independent learning strategies in the classrooms because students show a positive attitude towards it. Also those who are enthusiastic and took the responsibility of making their English learning better by going beyond the classroom teaching, they are consistently doing well and their basics are actually strong. Surprisingly the students were even suggesting ways of implementing learners' autonomy in their language learning process.

So it is high time to take initiatives of implementing autonomous learning in education system while teaching English. If the class time is a hindrance, then teachers can look for other ways. Even the students suggested that they will prefer assignments and suggestions from the

teachers to do outside classroom activities and if teacher will choose those for them then they will take those seriously and will try to follow those with importance. It would be better if this study could collect data from the students of secondary level of English medium schools to understand how they get scopes to be autonomous learner and how do they view their own responsibility in language learning. By doing a compare contrast between to mediums we could make more effective suggestions in the field of implementing learners' autonomy in the classroom of Bangladesh. So these issues can be taken into consideration while doing further studies in this field.

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Appendix

Open-ended questions which had been asked to the participants while taking their interviews:

1. Among the subjects you are studying, which particular subject is your favourite one?
2. Since English is the compulsory subject for all, how is your English learning experience?
3. Do you enjoy your English language class? What kind of activities do you get to do in the classroom?
4. Do you get the opportunities to share your opinion, ideas, while doing the activities?
Which things make you most excited in terms of learning the language?
5. What do you do beyond your classroom activities to improve your English? How do you make such choice? Do you get any suggestions/ recommendation from your teacher in this regard?