

A Systematic Review of Autonomous Learning in ESL/EFL in Bangladesh: A Road to Discovery Era (2009-2022)

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Abstract

Learner autonomy has been a major focus of educational researchers in Bangladesh for more than a decade now. Studies in this area have generated significant themes in ESL/EFL pedagogy in Bangladesh, particularly during the last ten years or so, and the prospect looks promising. This article reviews the research pertaining to learner autonomy in Bangladesh during the years 2009-2022. The review revealed that studies related to learner autonomy in Bangladesh tend to focus on how autonomy facilitates English language teaching, examining teachers' and learners' attitudes, perception and readiness, factors affecting the fostering of learner autonomy, its implications, importance, and teachers' varied roles to exhilarate learner autonomy. However, research on learner autonomy in English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh seems insignificant. During the review process, it has been evident that there is a crucial need for more in-depth empirical studies in autonomy. Moreover, there is significant lack of investigations where learners' responses are included. Hence, this article examined the gaps, and suggestions for further studies are provided accordingly.

Keywords: Bangladesh, EFL/ESL, review, learner autonomy

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy, being almost a very new approach in English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh, is receiving greater attention among local researchers. This resonates with the current investigations worldwide in the same research niche. However, it is noteworthy to include that a large number of studies done in the last 12 years have focused on different aspects of learner autonomy, generating innovative theories and empirical studies. Some of the areas investigated include teachers' and learners' beliefs, theories and issues and factors involved in fostering learner autonomy in teaching ESL/EFL.

1.1 Definition of Learner Autonomy

A number of definitions of learner autonomy can be found in the literature. Henry Holec in 1981 stated that learner autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning (p. 3)." A number of scholars further refined Holec's (1981) definition and stated that learners' responsibility is all-inclusive, since it includes setting learning objectives, selecting materials and methods, taking part in evaluation and choosing the learning environment (Holmes & Ramos, 1991; Dickinson, 1994). In addition, David Little provided insights that "autonomy is essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning" (1991, p.4). However, Lewis (2008) defines autonomy as learners' 'independence' in 'controlling learning experience' and performing 'an increasingly important role' in learning. Last but not least, learner autonomy is a completely learner-centred approach, empowering the learner to the maximum extent, leaving teachers as merely facilitators (Lewis, 2008; Reinders, 2016). Considering all the definitions, it is apparent that learner autonomy is a paradigm shift in pedagogy where the emphasis is on teaching students how to learn, declaring and aiming the learners' sovereignty in all aspects of learning.

1.2 The Prospects of Learner Autonomy

The corpus of the review of literature on learner autonomy are mostly in the form of books, journal articles, reports, and chapters, authored either individually or collaboratively, focusing on diverse issues of learner autonomy. However, it is evident that recent research in this area have been more critical, subsequently changing some of the methodological stances (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda 2002, 2003; Dam, 2001; Kjisik & Nordlund,

2000; Benson & Toogood, 2002; Mackenzie & McCafferty, 2002; Vieira et al., 2002; Benson, 2006b; Lamb & Reinders, 2006; Miller, 2006; Lewis & Walker, 2003; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Little, 2000a; Benson, 2003, 2006a; Wright, 2005; Scharle & Szabó, 2000; Fernandez-Toro & Jones, 2001; Hurd & Murphy, 2005; Hedge, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Holmes & Ramos, 1991; Dewey, 1996; Dam, 1994; Little, 1991; Sinclair, 2000; McGrath & Lamb, 2000; Benson, 2001, 2007; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Cotterall, 1995; Palfreyman, 2003; Camilleri Grima, 2007; Schunk, 2005; Lamb & Reinders, 2006; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Pemberton, Toogood, & Barfield, 2009; Vieira, 2009; Barillaro, 2011). This is mainly due to the shift of focus from broad general queries to more specific and contextual ones, such as teachers' and learners' beliefs, understandings, and challenges (Benson, 2000; Riley, 1988; Pennycook, 1997; Pennycook, 2014; Benson, 2007; Xu & Zhu, 2013; Jamila, 2013).

Research in autonomy, in the context of Bangladesh, is an area that is almost untouched while put in comparison to other countries' investigations. For example, China, Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Oman, Nepal, Pakistan and several other countries, have produced significant research on learner autonomy in their local contexts. (Ozdere, 2005, Chu, 2004; Balcikanli, 2007; Balcikanli, 2010; Joshi, 2011; Liu, 2011; Satoa & Suzuki, 2012; Mayartawan, Latief, & Shuharmanto, 2013; Shahsavari, 2014; Busaidi & Al-Mamari, 2014; Nguyen, 2014; Duong, 2014; Jong et al., 2015; Arshiyani & Pishkar, 2015; Salimi & Ansari, 2015; Szocs, 2017; King & Rothman, 2017; Asiri & Shukri, 2018; Alahmad & Najeeb, 2020). Each of these countries has produced noteworthy multi-dimensional studies utilizing different research designs. Yet studies on learner autonomy are not exhaustive considering autonomy is regarded as 'culture-sensitive' since "the issue of autonomy has often been connected with the individualism and collectivism dimension in cultural difference (Holliday, 2007, p. 20)." For example, in some culture 'self-oriented' people are considered as independent or self-dependent; whereas, in the 'collective culture' autonomous people are considered as selfish (ibid). However, it is also evident that two people from a collective cultural set-up could either consider autonomy as selfishness or independence, depending on their upbringing or family values (Holliday, 2007, cited in Neupene, 2010). A recent study has explored the language learning views of six learners from six different backgrounds, to see how contexts could impact their perspectives. The research found that each of them had different views due to their varied learning environments (Ersel & Atmaca, 2016). It can be concluded that the concept of autonomy is very complex and needs to be the varying aspects need to be investigated.

Research has indicated a strong connection between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy in multiple studies (Kohonen, 1992; Little, 2000 cited in Lamb, 2008, p. 4; Little, 1995, p. 179; Sinclair, 2000). However, it is under-explored in the context of English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh (Begum, 2018). Nevertheless, several proactive researchers have shown much interest to study this new approach. In this paper, selected articles on learner autonomy in Bangladesh in the previous decade are reviewed and analysed, focusing on specific areas covered in the research.

2. A General Review of Studies on Learner Autonomy in Bangladesh

The articles for the current are mainly sourced from Google scholar by directly contacting the authors in order to acquire the papers which are otherwise unavailable for full access. In addition, the services of relevant librarians were also solicited via email and telephone calls. The articles were then sorted out and listed under different areas of interest in learner autonomy in English language teaching and learning.

These articles mainly reported on studies that investigated the significance of learner autonomy, factors affecting its implementation, teachers' role in promoting autonomous learning, and teachers' and learners' perceptions and practices, at all levels of education. A summary of the scope of studies done in Bangladesh on learner autonomy is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Representing the investigations on learner autonomy in Bangladesh

| No. | Authors and Publication Years | Concepts/Themes of Research (Bangladesh Perspective) |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | Charmain Rodrigues, 2014 | Implications of learner autonomy in Bangladesh |
| 2. | Sharmin Sultana, 2017 | Promoting learner autonomy in TESL in Bangladesh |
| 3. | Sharmin Sultana, 2018 | Needs analysis for successful autonomous learning |
| 4. | Mariam Jamila and Md. Ziaul Karim, 2018 | Learners' insights on EFL teachers' responsibilities |
| 5. | Sharmin Sultana, 2016 | ESL teachers' role in fostering autonomous learning |
| 6. | Golam Jamil, 2010 | Promoting learner autonomy in teaching English for academic purpose |
| 8. | Mohammed Humayun Kabir, 2015 | Learner autonomy at secondary level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh |
| 9. | Jahanara Begum, 2018 | Teachers' perceptions and practices of learner autonomy in ESL classrooms |
| 10. | Iram Mehrin, 2017 | Learners' attitudes and perceptions of learner autonomy |
| 11. | Akhter Noor Begum and Reyhana Fatema Chowdhury, 2017 | Factors affecting learner autonomy |
| 12. | Mehnaz Tazeen Choudhury, 2018 | Perceptions and practices of teacher autonomy |
| 13. | Shaila Islam, 2020 | Challenges and strategies for fostering learner autonomy |
| 14. | Dr. Ehatasham Ul Hoque Eiten and Anta Afsana, 2021 | Natural Language Processing (NLP) in EFL |
| 15. | Tazreen Jahan Bari, 2020 | Community Language Leaching (CLL) in ELT |
| 16. | Md. Shazed Ul Hoq Khan Abir, 2020 | Using literary text to promote learner autonomy |

Considering the relatively small number of documents found in this area, the critical analysis mainly focus on the significant themes. Discussions followed by a summary are added later at the end of each section. Discussions followed by a summary are added later at the end of each section. Finally, this article highlights the scopes of conducting further studies aiming to bridge the existing gaps found from the reviews about autonomy in teaching and learning EFL/ESL in Bangladesh.

2.1 Feasibility of Learner Autonomy in Language Teaching

The issue concerning the achievability or readiness of learner autonomy in ESL/EFL has been given attention of many scholars recently, but few researchers in language pedagogy in Bangladesh have actually focused on assessing the feasibility of implementing autonomous learning. Most of these studies on learner autonomy included learners from the secondary and tertiary levels. These studies found that learner autonomy has great potential in facilitating EFL/ESL teaching in Bangladesh, provided proper procedures and necessary strategies are adopted (Jamil, 2010; Rodrigues, 2014; Sultana, 2017; Sultana, 2018; Jahan Bari, 2020; Eiten & Afsana, 2021).

One of the earliest studies on learner autonomy in Bangladesh is Jamil's (2010) investigation. The participants were master's level students as well as professionals. They were enlisted in a 66-contact-hour EAP (English for Academic Purpose) course at a private university that was designed to teach several important components of reading and writing for preparing learners for future assignments and presentations while the objectives had been preselected by the teachers. The aim of this research was to ascertain the possibility of turning learners autonomous by offering them freedom in choosing the materials and methods to achieve the objectives. Wolter's (2000) flowchart was adopted in the investigation, and the data collection procedure included a questionnaire and arranged semi-structured interviews with randomly selected learners.

The qualitative data revealed that after applying their own learning strategies, learners progressed faster. In addition, most of them found themselves more confident in choosing materials and methods for future learning. Consequently, they became self-focused too as the result exposed that independence drove them avoiding group and team work. Interestingly, the questionnaire analysis revealed that despite of learners' adult age and professional status, they requested to include grammar in the course material. Moreover, it is surprising to observe that the adult learners were still experiencing uncertainty with grammar despite having years of studying

it at the secondary and higher secondary levels. This revelation, however, indicates the failure of traditional teacher-centred teaching and learning of English language, which left learners inefficient and learners are still found struggling to earn proficiency in grammar. Apart from this, it was stimulating to notice that without any prior knowledge of the course content, learners eagerly participated with teachers in selecting materials and methods. In fact, very few of them needed guidance in selecting their own learning strategies (Jamil, 2010). It would seem that some learners felt uneasy with freedom, presumably due to the teacher-centred classes they went through at their prior education.

This investigation raised the prospect of successful implementation of learner autonomy if the situation is learner-centred. Jamil (2010) argues that autonomy is effective only when it is the continuation of what learners already know. Therefore, it is necessary to understand their educational and social background. A study by Rodriguez (2014) on the effects of 'learner autonomy' in Bangladesh found that learners' culture, language competence, class size and duration, learning situation, materials, teachers' capability, and some other factors are crucial in assessing the achievability of learner autonomy and its prospective success in Bangladesh. This study, however, did not clearly identify its aims and objectives. Furthermore, although the research design included both qualitative and quantitative measures, the implications explained in the research had short of proper narrative flow. However, Rodriguez (2014) stressed 'culture' as the key impediment to autonomous learning because in traditional method, teachers do not entertain questions from learners. Social distancing, which means female and male learners not sitting side by side in a class, has been mentioned as another cultural hindrances; avowedly the researcher termed it as the outcome of 'ignorance', 'religious bindings' or 'social restrictions' (Rodriguez, 2014). Therefore, citing Pennycook (1997), Rodriguez suggested that being aware of the 'social, political and cultural' aspects prior to promoting autonomy in any context is necessary to avoid the worst case pedagogy that may occur (p. 44). This, however, is quite a pervasive aspect in several other studies too. Learners' culture has often been observed as a dominant feature since it shapes learners' aims, inspiration, motivation and self-worth.

Another study found that tertiary level learners are struggling amidst diversified needs and autonomous learning can only be successful if those needs are fulfilled accordingly (Sultana, 2018). It is noteworthy here that the same scholar conducted another research and presented some evidence that 'successful implementation of autonomy can enhance learners' proficiency in English language (Sultana, 2017). While examining the feasibility of learner autonomy at the tertiary level of English language teaching, it was found that learners are more confident, active, independent and also finding suitable strategies for fulfilling their learning objectives (Sultana, 2017). Nonetheless, this study doesn't present a clear data analysis procedure; moreover, the results of the study failed to completely address the research questions presented in the study. Therefore, it can be summarized that the topic is underexplored and needs attention from other researchers as well. Sultana (2017) comes up with two major terms though, 'learners' commitment' and 'teachers' effective teaching', these two are marked significant for promoting learner autonomy. However, her study opened up avenues for new studies to find out more unidentified as well as invaluable sides of this approach.

In the following year, Sultana (2018) examined the importance of needs analysis prior to implementing learner autonomy and suggested three stages of doing this analysis, namely 'planning', 'teaching', and 're-planning' to know the needs, observing the progress during teaching, and eventually, amending the plans according to the necessities. She finds that culturally alien teaching materials could bring learners under shock, which gradually creates 'anxiety' and 'stress' in learning and eventually becomes a barrier to promoting autonomy. This specific finding concurs with some other researchers' results (Sultana, 2011; Rodrigues, 2014; Schumann, 1978c). However, she illustrates the cultural issue by denoting an example from *The New Headway Pre-Intermediate Students' book*. In the language class the teacher mentions the example of 'boys and girls are living together without getting married', or a '13 year old boy is using a credit card', leaving the entire class in utter dismay, which ultimately turns into a big shock for learners (Sultana, 2011; Sultana, 2018). Nevertheless, Rodriguez's (2014) investigation on the 'implications of learner autonomy' reported 'co-education' as a cultural barrier, and Sultana's (2018) study justifies that knowing learners' need prior to exercising learner autonomy, is a must.

Rodriguez (2014) didn't explain why teachers display reluctance to answer learners' questions, whereas Sultana's (2018) study stated that the non-congenial climate with a 'strict, reserved and rude' teacher makes autonomous learning hard, anyway. Hence, this finding needs more clarification since the proper reason behind teachers' excessive stringency is unknown. Commenting on the classroom environment, the researcher added that the class size could be a deterrent to allowing autonomy among learners. Moreover, a limited time to learn and teachers' haste for completing syllabus could be some additional potential problems to focus on autonomy.

Sultana (2018) pays some extra attention on the challenges that she included in her study for justifying the importance of needs analysis to promote autonomy. Among these are: 'the new language itself', 'teacher-centred classrooms', 'guardian-like instructors', 'inadequate materials', 'lack of modern equipment in classrooms', language assessment without adequate 'listening and speaking' tests. In addition, the study proposed some remedies to the existing problems, such as paying attention to everyone's separate needs, which is a must, since learners are prone to share how they really want to achieve their goals (Davies, 2006). The second point revealed learners' preference in learning by communicating regardless of any specific skills they would learn. It is noteworthy that each learner has a preference of learning methods to reach different goals; however, it is evident that putting "emphasis on pair or group work and problem-solving allows for these differences" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2000, p. 27, cited in Sultana, 2018).

Rodriguez's (2014) survey reports, incidentally, are identical to that of Sultana's studies, since learners' preference in learning English by implementing their own choice is apparent there. However, the most striking finding presented by the survey report shows that 71% of learners think that they can learn better autonomously, although they are deprived of 'group work, pair-work, self-learning and role-plays'. In addition, despite being aware of the learning objectives, almost half of the learners are not allowed to choose on their own. The most contradictory part of the questionnaire survey reveals that although learners hold a strong desire for autonomous learning, more than half (52%) of them still prefer teachers' orientation in the process. Nevertheless, Rodriguez proposes that making learners responsible, reducing dependency on guidebooks, and conducting interactive classrooms, are some necessary steps which the teachers' should take. Moreover, the syllabus and curriculum developers' cooperation and keen initiatives are also useful to promote learner autonomy; in addition, the educational management should be kind and careful enough to rearrange classrooms to fit the needs. Last but not the least; teachers should get all the necessary trainings and facilities to enhance their skills.

It has been observed that most of the researchers in the last decade were straightaway highlighting and examining the area 'learners' acceptability for autonomous language learning'. However, a current research trend detected is to follow indirect pathways to create autonomous atmosphere. In other words, in the years 2020 and 2021, several scholars of Bangladesh tried to utilise some methods that are found supportive to grow feasibility of autonomy in EFL/ESL. Take Jahan Bari's (2020) study as an example where she examines and claims that CLL (Community Language Learning) increases learners' readiness to take responsibility as it treats everyone as an individual entity. Hence, the researcher finds adopting CLL would eventually enhance the feasibility of autonomy for learning EFL in Bangladesh. This quantitative survey aims to focus on how the community language learning creates friendly environment to hear all the voices out there in a language class. However, the first part of the survey highlights learners' problems whereas the second part targets to find solution. Surprisingly, the results reveal that the learners face most of the challenges in speaking class and therefore, do not willingly participate in activities. Partaking only happens when learners are forced to do so; this is because they suffer from 'self-consciousness' and 'nervousness' (p. 122). Apart from this frigidity in activities, learners (84%) prefer to ask their peers if any trouble occurs, rather than communicating their teachers (p. 123). This only indicates how the communication gap between teachers and learners affects learning. Jahan Bari (2020) concludes that CLL can be a good way out for handling this clumsy climate only if it is utilised in small scale classrooms. In fact, a small-scale classroom is the pre-requisite of this process since every story is unique and learners' voice should be clearly heard. In addition, a drastic change should be brought into teachers' role to act as counsellors or guides to their learners putting their traditional roles aside. However, a similar finding is detected from Kawser Ahmed's (2020) empirical study; he was examining the feasibility of rapport building in ELT classrooms and found that teacher-learner bonding works as a catalyst for autonomous learning. To rephrase, the researcher specifically mentions that rapport building removes 'psychological gap' and fills in the 'understanding gap' that may occur between teachers and learners, and consequently this opens up the doors for autonomy (p. 109).

Eiten & Afsana (2021), following the trend of utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language learning, conducted their study to inspect the effectiveness of an application called Writing Mentor maintained by Natural Language Processing (NLP) to see how it improves learners' language skill. According to the plan, learners used it for English writing skill for four months and that too under teachers' supervision. During their investigation about the role of 'Writing mentor (Google Docs Add on application)', in improving language skills, the researchers were seeking answers for three research questions among which one was directly related to learner autonomy: "Does it promote learner autonomy (Eiten & Afsana, 2021, p. 304)?" Henceforth, participants opined through survey questionnaires, interviews, and focus group session which reported their highly positive remarks stating that writing monitor can tremendously improve learners' writing skills. In addition, this application is a

big stress reducer for language teachers since learners' active mode reduces their teacher dependency. As a result, they gradually become autonomous.

Nevertheless, Eiten & Afsana (2021) also reported a number of drawbacks that were found from some previous studies investigating the utility of NLP in ELT. For instance, the primary downside was 'unsophisticated software', failing to help learners with English conversation as well as incompetent in 'detecting and analysing errors (Atwell, 1999, cited in Eiten & Afsana, 2021).' Moreover, linguists find that machines are inappropriate to understand the 'complexity of human language' and for this reason, the feedbacks that they produce are 'unreliable' (Tschihold, 1999; Nerbonne, 2002 cited in Eiten and Afsana, 2021).

Although Eiten & Afsana (2021) finds 'writing Mentor' as a helpful device for writing skill, it is also understandable that the success of NLP depends on many issues and thus might not be working same for other English skills.

However, all the above studies reflect that learner autonomy in language teaching in Bangladesh is not impossible. It seems that learner autonomy has a bright prospect if utilized with proper knowledge and strategies. Nonetheless, the focus of learner autonomy research in different contexts and levels of learning is not yet exhaustive. There seem to be a need to critically explore further areas of concerns and issues that were addressed in the different studies; for instance, including learners' opinions to investigate autonomy, conducting studies in different research sites, directing more qualitative studies to seek deeper knowledge in the field, and so on.

2.2 Fostering Learner Autonomy: Teachers' Role, Responsibilities and Other Issues

Being aware of the diversified responsibilities a teacher should obey for the successful implementation of learner autonomy, a number of researchers in recent years looked into how language teachers' roles may exhilarate autonomy in learning (Sultana, 2016; Jamila & Karim, 2018).

Jamila and Karim (2018) searched for the learners' insights on the language teachers' role for an effective classroom. Data were collected from 67 undergraduate students of Bangladesh Agricultural University, who were studying Advanced Communicative English mainly designed to make students more communicative.

The methodology adopted for the study was group discussions on the topic 'Responsibilities of the teacher and learners in an English language classroom to make it effective with a friendlier environment'. The participants were divided into 20 groups. Students were asked to comment on "teachers' knowledge, behaviour, language, personality, sincerity and punctuality (Jamila and Karim, 2018)." It is noteworthy that the study was conducted without knowing whether the learners were aware of autonomy or not; rather, their independent insights were brought out to see the gap between the actual performance of the teachers and the learners' expectations regarding it.

The study revealed that most learners want their teachers to have sufficient, up-to-date and clear knowledge on the subjects they taught. Now this indicates learners' dependency on their teachers which is harmful for learner autonomy. Simultaneously, half of the students wanted their teachers to be friendly, whereas 25% wanted teachers to be more supportive. Again, both teachers and learners believed that teachers' behaviour, either verbal or non-verbal, should redirect only positivity and motivation. Learners significantly valued teachers' high competence in language because they needed 'standard' and 'understandable' language structure with proper 'clarity'. In addition, learners expect teachers to be greatly aware of learners' 'situations' and 'cultural norms' to communicate accordingly (Jamila and Karim, 2018).

Jamila and Karim (2018) also found that there are some character traits which learners always seek from their ESL/EFL teachers. For instance, an 'impressive' personality with a 'sound morality' is highly desired. Surprisingly enough, learners want teachers to be "strict-friends". In other words, teachers should be strict whenever it is needed, but learners don't expect teachers' stringency unnecessarily. However, it is remarkable that teachers' 'punctuality' is valued much higher than 'proper teaching'. Nevertheless, this study explored some additional views from learners which the researchers didn't even look for. For instance, guidance to weak learners, collecting their feedback, and using technology with adequate knowledge are some key demands. Moreover, learners believe that teachers must speak with 'confidence' while maintaining good 'eye-contact'. Additionally, solving learners' academic and personal problems would be highly appreciated. The study illustrated learners' views about teachers' specific roles they expect, pointing to the need of knowing more on this regard since it is assumed that the modern teaching and learning is friendlier in nature to enhance learning.

On the other hand, Sultana's (2016) study revealed the crucial role of teachers to foster autonomy in language classes while inquiring "whether and to what extent dynamic roles of teachers can be more effective for students" to enhance autonomous learning. The results of this study were mainly based on the questionnaires

provided to the target group consisting of 100 students; however, the other mentioned methodologies included FGD (focus group discussion) and multiple types of document analysis. The data collection procedure went through two stages; firstly, learners' choice of materials and methods were collected through open-ended questionnaires which afterwards were analysed qualitatively. Nevertheless, after implementing autonomous learning all through the trimester, both teachers and learners had to fill up a survey by inputting the outputs of autonomous learning. This study disclosed that due to the teachers' varied roles to promote independence, learners were found remarkably 'persistent, vigorous, independent, capable of evaluation and trying effective learning strategies (Sultana, 2016).'

Sultana's (2016) study highlighted teachers' role in enhancing learner autonomy. Some theory-driven secondary sources in the field of learner autonomy were brought into discussion for clarifying the roles teachers should play for fostering autonomous learning. For instance, teacher autonomy (Little, 1995) has been measured as highly desirable for successful implementation of learner autonomy, since teachers' playing effective roles is significantly dependent on their autonomy. Moreover, it is argued by a number of researchers that 'understanding learners' perspective aids teachers a lot in determining the transferable skills for learners (Chan et al., 2002 as cited in Sultana, 2016). Specifically, the author added some characteristics which better explains teachers' roles, namely, resource and activity organizer, supervisor, communication-helper, evaluator, feedback provider, a learning investigator, need-specialist, syllabus-designer and improver, influencer, monitor and above all, a role-model (Littlewood, 2000; Paliwal, 1996, as cited in Sultana, 2016). Sultana (2016) stated that 'planning and arranging materials' (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2002) according to learners' need is a big task for teachers. Furthermore, creating meaningful and 'inviting' (Davies, 2006, p. 8) activities comes next for making learning exciting and successful. Again, teachers should be highly skilled to maintain discipline in class since it is the pre-requisite for executing autonomy (Camilleri, 1997). 'Learner-centred' communication has been reported as a measure to build 'trust' among teachers and learners (Voller, 1997). Although evaluation is a big responsibility for language teachers, Sultana's (2016) study found that 'overcorrection' should be avoided; individual correction or peer correction may take place instead. Moreover, building multiple capacities like learning about teaching with patience while being dynamic and alert about learners' progress and needs, are some other major requirements.

Finally, the study revealed that learners want to learn in a non-threatening climate where teachers are facilitators, great motivators and are friendly. Moreover, teachers should understand the pulse of the learners while being a creative instructor and knowing not only 'what' to teach but also 'why' to teach. Therefore, teachers must not target 'syllabus completion' as the main task, rather they should prepare learners for the future 'real world' (Varies and Kohlberg, 1987 as cited in Sultana, 2016). Nevertheless, the researcher concluded that all efforts paid by teachers may go in vain if the learners are not responsible since good teachers cannot ensure effective learning (Sultana, 2018).

To reiterate, Sultana's (2016) study is an excellent work to assume the implications of learner autonomy in Bangladesh. On one hand, this is a good attempt to define some major roles teachers must play to promote autonomous learning. On the other hand, there are some under-explored parts which need deeper attention. One example could be the unuttered 'learners' voice'. Moreover, this study majorly adopted the quantitative measures, which may fail to explore the reality in some places.

A common trend of highlighting teachers' role is detected from the above studies. Also, a little exploration is done to know how learners want their teachers to perform in English language classes. However, Abir (2020), in his study brings literature major students in focus where the aim is to inspect about the tertiary learners' preferred genre of literary texts. In addition, it inspects how teachers' role can utilize learners' preference to enhance autonomy. It has been discussed earlier that many scholars believe that 'planning and arranging materials' following learners' choice is a massive task and thus occupies a major part of teachers' role (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2002).

Nevertheless, the data of this study is majorly quantitative; also, the qualitative part of the data was not satisfactory due to participants' unwillingness, this is how the researcher reported it as a demerit. Hence, a clear perspective or in-depth views are absent from this distinctive investigation. Even so, the data reveals that the participants of this study are mostly (89%) from traditional background, coming from Bangla medium. This study too, echoes to several other researches while revealing that students (55%) treat English as 'nothing more than a subject to pass' (S.H.K. Abir, 2020, p. 111). Moreover, 53% students think that the book (English for Today) they read for years, is not helpful for learning English skills, while 30% of them are doubtful about the effectiveness of the text. Now this is a matter of concern and perhaps the reason behind learners treating English

not as a skill. However, this phenomenon strongly re-establishes the significance of ‘planning and arranging materials (ibid).’

Nevertheless, as the study was aimed to find out students’ preferred genre of literary work for learning English language, a significant percentage of participants found claiming that ‘short fictions’ is the best type of literature that helps in building ‘vocabulary’, ‘basic sentence structure’, ‘grammar’ with ‘expressions’, proper ‘use’ and ‘balance’ without losing interest (S.H.K. Abir, 2020). In addition, the research reveals that their past study experience didn’t indicate any proper leaning experience regarding listening and speaking. Hence, some of the students claimed that efforts from their parents as well as their own learning strategies helped them a lot to build confidence in learning English. Nevertheless, the researcher assumes that following the short fiction trail and sharing own stories to peers may help enhancing listening and speaking skills. Simultaneously, teachers picking a story and bringing it to the class for students’ reading practice would improve that skill. However, it seems that if students write about their own stories, it would be helpful for their writing skills. The researcher eventually suggests connecting other branches of literature to teaching and learning English, and this commendation draws a closure to the study. Perhaps following this recommendation with adopting altered methods and approaches for further studies would unfold constructive knowledge for enhancing learner autonomy in ESL/EFL learning.

2.3 Fostering Learner Autonomy: Concerns and Challenges

In spite of researchers’ growing interest in fostering learner autonomy for EFL/ESL classes, the actual task of implementation is found quite challenging, that is what a number of studies reported in the recent years. While on the one hand the factors enhancing the autonomous learning process are exposed, the other hand occupies with a number of obstacles. However, these studies are examining learner autonomy from different perspectives and involving different types of learners, revealed a number of factors worthy of critical review (Rodriguez 2014; Nur and Fatema, 2016; Jamil, 2010; Jamila and Karim 2017; Sultana, 2016; Sultana 2018; Shaila Islam, 2020).

Nur and Fatema (2016) examined the extent of autonomy among tertiary level learners. Their study showed both the factors positively influencing learner autonomy, as well as those having a negative impact on it. The sample taken for the study included 50 undergraduate students from different disciplines (English, Business Administration, Electric and Textile Engineering, Pharmacy and Banking) studying in five different universities in Bangladesh. Completing the English courses was a prerequisite for their graduation. A random and unbiased procedure was adopted in selecting the participants for this research. The quantitative approach was preferred as this method is less time-consuming and more economical, and data can be analysed using software. Using a five point Likert Scale to collect the data, the results revealed that the factors influencing learner autonomy were teacher-dependency and learners’ capacity to be independent (Nur and Fatema, 2016). It was found that 30% of the students were incapable of learning without a teacher, and 18% did not even know what learning was like without teachers.

Nur and Fatema (2016), however, also clarified that dependence on teachers requires learners to be present on campus. Considering this fact, it is quite surprising to notice that the majority of the students (58%) agree that learning English should not be confined to institutions, which means that learners believe that self-learning is a must to mastering English. However, this condition too seems quite impossible to occur, since a large number of participants (42%) argue that they cannot learn English outside the classroom, as previously mentioned, because it requires the teachers’ effort and initiative to stimulate autonomy among learners. Again, besides the above 42% of students, it is also evident that teachers’ absence makes the other 24% of students confused about effective learning. That means, learning English without a teacher is a big issue for 66% of students. However, apart from students’ teacher-oriented inclination and their incapability of learning independently, 42% among the learners confessed that independent learning is necessary. However, 32% still believe that teacher-dependency is a must. Therefore, it is clear from the study that learners’ dependence on teachers is a massive factor which cannot be denied.

Similarly, in the same year, another study confirmed that teachers’ role is vital to enhance learner autonomy; in fact, some ‘dynamic roles’ performed by teachers are found remarkably exhilarating for learner autonomy (Sultana, 2016). Again, the same researcher conducted another study to investigate the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of implementing learner autonomy, and it revealed that encouraging learner autonomy makes learners more responsible and active in planning and working on their plans; furthermore, the researcher argued that the success of effective autonomous learning depends on ‘committed learners’ and ‘qualified teachers’ (Sultana, 2017). Even so, it is quite interesting to note that the author suggested that ‘qualified teachers’ should impose planned activities on the ‘committed learners’ to make students autonomous, nearly by force. However,

Rodriguez (2014) suggested that the most important skill a language teacher needs is ‘communicative skill’ since it “can expedite learner autonomy.”

Shaila Islam (2020) conducted an almost similar study like that of Sultana’s (2017) that aims to find out the clear reasons behind using learner autonomy. Her investigation adopted a mixed-method approach followed by questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. However, it ended up finding major challenges towards autonomous learning that is labelled in the study in two parts; learner-oriented challenges include their ignorance about autonomy and role of an autonomous learner, reluctance to ‘know new things’ and ‘share’, associated to ‘passing exam’ rather than achieving ‘goal’, and prefer teacher-dependence. Again, teacher-associated challenges unfold their preference over traditional methods, lack of proper training, and indifference about learners’ opinion (pp. 147-148). Hence, this study came up with a number of strategies for both the teachers and learners that echoed and extended Sultana’s (2017) suggestions termed as ‘qualified teachers’ and ‘committed learners’; in other words, teachers have been recommended to improve their roles by keeping learners well-informed about strategies, motivated, and involved with technology. In addition, learners were advised to grow independence for building their own future by taking part in different learning activities inside and outside classroom. However, the researcher argues that bringing change to the belief system is the most important matter for building autonomous environment (Shaila Islam, 2020, p. 150).

Apart from measuring students’ acceptance of independent learning, Nur and Fatema (2016) found that students’ ability to plan for independent learning is another crucial factor. For instance, while investigating students’ capacity for arranging and managing learning materials, it was found that 40% of learners could not do that job without their instructors’ assistance. Similarly, 90% of the students were incapable of selecting what to study further. Despite all these downsides, 70% of the students were found to be able to put effort for planning their studies, which is a reflection of their metacognitive ability (Nur and Fatema, 2016).

Some studies found the opposite situation where learners were hampered in their ability to utilise their metacognitive aptitude. For instance, Kabir (2015), a University English professor, conducted a study to investigate the state of learner autonomy among high school learners. While looking into the extent of teachers’ use of learner autonomy, the quantitative part of the study revealed that teachers don’t encourage learners’ sovereignty, which is a hindrance in trying to ascertain learners’ metacognitive talent. Clearly, 97.15% of students concur regarding teachers not allowing them to implement their own learning techniques. Again, the same number of students agreed that teachers are not supportive in providing useful materials for learning, which is much desired by students. Consequently, these students observe a big mismatch between their goals and needs, since 85.70% of them experience exclusion from ‘planning class schedule’, 94.28% are deprived of ‘choosing any language task’, and 97% are not a part of the ‘decision making’ (Kabir, 2015). The author identified that the most dominant factor behind this deprivation is the absence of leverage, both for the teachers as well as learners, to exercise some degree of autonomy, due largely to an inordinate emphasis on covering the curriculum first, and additionally, by the institutional boundaries. However, one possible cause behind the absence of learner autonomy found in this research could be students’ efficaciousness, since high school students are assumed to be incapable of managing autonomy. Furthermore, both the syllabus and the institution are reported as unsympathetic to this kind of learner-centred approach.

Several obstacles to implement learner autonomy in the language classrooms of Bangladesh were probably caused due to the cultural issues, and have been drawn in light by many researchers. Learners fearing asking questions to their teachers could be an example. However, a probable reason behind this state is ‘teachers’ guardianship’, which is more like a cultural ‘mental block’ preventing learners from ‘asking many questions’ as well as ‘engaging in arguments’ (Rodriguez, 2014). However, these boundaries might have other explanations which should be explored further, including both teachers’ and learners’ views from different contexts. It is noteworthy that, there’s significant lack of relative data.

Rodriguez (2014) also reports that the co-mingling of males and females in class or the workplace is frowned upon, which hampers autonomy. According to the researcher, removing this barrier will make learner autonomy easier to implement. This is just one point of view which needs more investigation. Like other studies discussed above, this study too doesn’t include the learners’ views on this matter. It is really hard to generalise that removing barriers between boys and girls would exhilarate learner autonomy; the opposite may well be true. Sultana’s (2018) study reveals that understanding the ambiguous cultural norms of a society is a major part of ‘needs analysis’, which should be done before implementing learner autonomy. Her study reveals that teachers trying to discuss a textbook item ‘living in relationships between a ‘boy and girl’ (or cohabitation) create awkwardness among learners, since this phenomenon is literally shocking to them; likewise, ‘thirteen-year-old Tent having a credit card’ would elicit a similar reaction. Therefore, it is clear that cultural beliefs hold a very

strong place in society, which cannot be changed overnight. Again, the assumption that the success of any particular approach depends on changing the cultural and social beliefs, to adapt and adopt the concepts of an imported teaching approach, might be mistaken, and hence needs further investigation.

Regarding the above issue, a number of researchers have argued that cultural concerns are instantaneously complex and arbitrary. A large number of empirical evidences are confirming that autonomy is not similarly viewed or understood everywhere, rather the attitudes toward autonomy has different shapes in different contexts and thus need more exploration to know the reality associated to each setting (Pierson, 1996; Little, 2000; Beamer and Verner, 2001; Ahmad and Majid, 2010; Dang, 2010).

However, considering the multiple issues discussed above, it can be seen that the dominant factors found from the above studies are contradictory, since on the one hand, learners are capable of 'planning their learning', yet they massively 'depend on teachers' and 'teachers' dynamic roles' excellently exhilarates learning (Nur and Fatema, 2016; Sultana, 2016). On the other hand, some studies question learners' 'metacognitive ability' and state that learners are inefficacious to take responsibility, since they don't have 'basic minimum competence to express ideas' (Rodriguez, 2014; Nur and Fatema, 2016). Consequently, as students have some basic deficiencies, teachers don't allow learners' to participate in the major domains of learning, such as setting objectives, materials, selecting methods, taking part in evaluation and necessary arguments, asking question, and after all, having a proper and preferable learning atmosphere (Rodriguez, 2014). Last but not the least, from several studies, cultural factors are found to have multiple dimensions, which are yet to be properly understood (Rodrigues, 2014; Sultana, 2018). Hence, it is apparent that different contexts hold dissimilar realities which cannot be generalised.

2.4 Perceptions on Learner Autonomy

Perceptions of learner autonomy held by the language teachers and learners have not gained sufficient attention, since it is seen as a non-urgent issue. However, recently two native Bangladesh scholars, namely Iram Mehrin (2017) and Jahanara Begum (2018) discretely conducted research to explore some teachers' and learners' insights on learner autonomy.

By conducting questionnaire surveys and focus group interviews among 80 students of the English department, Mehrin (2017) found learners were significantly dependent on teachers. This study included students from a leading public university in Bangladesh, and the aim was to find out their 'readiness' and 'attitude' towards autonomy. In other words, their perceptions were assessed focusing on whether learners were ready to take responsibility as the way it is depicted in the theories of learner autonomy. Moreover, if they were ready, then how would they interpret their teachers' role in language learning? The results are quite unexpected, since learners' preference for self-directed learning run concomitant with their dependency on teachers. For example, 64% of the students believed they are responsible for their own learning, whereas 53% of them preferred their teachers' to instruct them. However, in addition to feeling responsible for their learning, 88% of the learners also admit that self-study is important. Interestingly, although 59% of the students acknowledge their ability to 'learn outside the classroom', 67% and 55% among them are respectively found dependent to highly dependent on the teachers input, which again reflected learners' teacher-centric proclivity.

However, this study reveals that learners' perception of autonomy is conversely related to teacher-dependency. On the one hand, learners show interest and readiness for autonomous learning, whereas, on the other hand, they show a significant lack of confidence to learn independently. However, the qualitative data of the study elicited from the focus group interviews revealed that teachers are frustrated with students' language competency, which hampers learners from being autonomous. Similarly, another study found that teachers believe that learners are incompetent in sharing ideas and taking responsibility (Jamila, 2013). Mehrin's (2017) study also revealed that learners' major source of extrinsic motivation is the 'exam', since doing well in exams is crucial. Hence, it is apparent that there is dissonance between learners' intrinsic perception of autonomy and their ensuing behaviour. Therefore, discovering the reasons behind this contradictory attitude signals the emergence of further inquiry. However, this finding is reminiscent of the results of the studies by Nur and Fatema (2016) and Sultana (2016), which found that learners' autonomy was significantly enhanced when teachers played active roles.

Another scholar carried out a research investigating teachers' perception of learner autonomy at a private university in Bangladesh, which reported that teachers are familiar with the concept, but they face a couple of challenges to implement it. Still, teachers of this particular study came up with a number of strategies which they believed would be helpful to foster autonomy in language classes (Jahanara, 2018). In this research, data was collected using a semi-structured interview, a FGD (Focus Group Discussion) session, and a couple of individual interviews with six English language teachers. According to the researcher, issues like clarifying the pedagogical

goals to learners, motivating learners to maximise their use of L2 outside the classroom, and learners knowing the curriculum along with materials and suitable strategies, should be fixed before implementing any techniques in-class (Jahanara, 2018).

Jahanara's (2018) study is significant since it highlighted a number of strategies which teachers consider as fruitful for exhilarating autonomy in a setting like Bangladesh:

- Arranging for groups of students to give brief small talks and rewarding them with points upon speaking successfully
- Keeping a journal to record all the activities learners undertake inside and outside the classroom, which must include the encountered challenges for further rectification from either their peers or teachers
- Using Facebook for 'sharing and constructing knowledge', 'discussing', 'understanding', 'learning', and 'problem solving'
- Exploiting technology to the fullest for language learning which may include 'downloading useful programs and learning accents', enhancing 'language abilities by different voice chat apps', 'reading online blogs', 'solving quizzes', and 'downloading podcasts for listening'
- Learning vocabulary by solving crossword puzzles in a pair or group for improving 'pronunciation, spelling and interactions'
- Forming groups or pairs to solve jigsaw puzzles focusing on different types of content to improve learners' social interactions and language competence
- Establishing groups to investigate specific topics, to research and share ideas, and speaking and presenting in class
- Creating five groups in class selecting different 'debate motions' where the groups will be focussing on either 'discussing and researching over particular aspects', 'learning evaluation element', 'designing assessment criteria', 'taking part in debate' or 'giving constructive feedbacks'
- Completion of 'double entry journal' to share thoughts and learning process with peers
- Producing class newspapers to work collaboratively on 'designing, drafting, reading, editing, and then analysing and presenting the editions in class'
- Arranging individual teacher-student consultations with a proper agenda where students should discuss the issues

However, the study has some structural discrepancies which needed the researchers' proper attention. First of all, the title of the article is somewhat misleading, since it claimed that the main focus of the research was 'perceptions and practices', but the study did not clearly explain teachers' views on learner autonomy. In addition, readers were not informed about actual practices, but merely some helpful strategies were enlisted to enhance learner autonomy.

Secondly, although the abstract of the study mentioned that 'teachers' perception, learners' reluctant attitude, learners of different disciplines, and classroom timing (Jahanara, 2018)' are the challenges confronting the realization of learner autonomy in a class, there's scant evidence in the article to support these findings.

Next, the research questions lack clarity, and the research design is not congruent with other components of the study: such as the sampling and data collection measures seem inappropriate for either of a qualitative or a quantitative inquiry. Although Jahanara's (2018) study asserts 'data was analysed qualitatively', the data analysis section didn't clearly mention the complete procedure for establishing credibility and trustworthiness required for a qualitative research. Moreover, the depth essential in a qualitative research was missing in the study. Last but not the least, the discussion section didn't inform readers about how the teachers understood autonomy; rather, it merely discussed a collection of strategies thought to be helpful in fostering autonomy in ESL/EFL learning.

It has been stated in a couple of studies that 'learner autonomy is essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning', which entails 'a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action'. Moreover, independent learners are presumably able to make significant decisions about what, how, and when to learn (Little, 1991; Van Lier, 1996 as cited in Jahanara, 2018, p. 97). Considering learners' significant roles in autonomous learning, one clear omission in this article was the failure to discuss learners' views regarding autonomy. Again, as the research was suggesting helpful strategies for tertiary level adult learners, their input in the interviews could contribute valuable insights on the

‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘when’ of autonomy. It is pertinent to mention here that although Mehrin’s (2017) investigation revealed learners’ insights, teachers’ views and perceptions could further enhance the study. Conversely, Jahanara’s (2018) research introduced the teachers’ suggestions on facilitating strategies to the approach. In both the cases, the investigations are halfway done and cannot complement each other, as both have dissimilar contexts as well as different sets of participants with varied views. It is noteworthy here that S.H.K. Abir’s (2020) study examining ‘students’ preferences of literary genre for learning English language’ included an interview question asking students for the meaning of learner autonomy. The result reveals students’ massive ignorance about the term since 41% has never heard the term whereas 43% of the total number confided that despite of only hearing of the term, they don’t know the meaning (ibid). Conversely, 16% of the total number of the undergraduate students of that major public university of Bangladesh claim they know the term with its function. In addition, teachers’ voice is unsung in this particular study that turns it into a half-baked one. Nevertheless, considering a number of demerits, such as taking insufficient number of students as participants and not providing a detailed curriculum design followed by intensive material development, which was the main aim of the study, the researcher recommended further studies in the area those must be more focused in nature. Thus, it is re-established that a proper investigation enquires into views, understandings, beliefs or perceptions, and should include both teachers and learners. For the reason that autonomy is integral to every individual’s psychology, it is fair and just to appreciate everyone’s choice of learning modality.

In general, Bangladeshi ESL/EFL teachers’ and learners’ views on learner autonomy on multidimensional aspects are still under-explored and the very few studies conducted on the topic so far are rather mediocre. Therefore, before fostering learner autonomy, it is essential to ascertain ESL/EFL teachers’ and learners’ views in terms of language teaching/learning objectives, materials, methods, evaluation and learning climate.

3. Discussion

The available researches on learner autonomy in Bangladesh from 2009 to 2022 have been discussed in this article. The review reveals that the local researchers’ major areas of interest include both positive and negative factors influencing learner autonomy, suggested strategies for its successful application, and perceptions garnered from ESL/EFL learners or teachers.

3.1 The Research Norms

There seem to be a gradual incline in toward conducting empirical studies in learner autonomy in Bangladesh. Most of the early research in this area seem to find out how the approach is compatible and accepted in the native tradition of education. Initially, these experimental studies were mostly carried out by the language teachers (Rodriguez, 2014; Mehrin, 2017; Jahanara, 2018; Jamila & Karim, 2018), who eventually could notice the benefits. Subsequently; moreover, some researchers were involved in finding out effective ways for successful implementation (Jamil, 2010; Sultana, 2016; Sultana, 2017; Sultana, 2018; Kabir, 2015; Bari, 2020; Abir, 2020). As a result, two other central research trends have been noticed in the last couple of years; one of them is ‘teachers’ role’ and the other one is ‘innovative strategies’ to foster learner autonomy. In both the cases, researchers applied a number of methodologies (qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method) along with different research instruments (semi-structured interviews, formal and informal interviews, Focus Group Discussions, observations, questionnaires, telephone interviews, secondary data sources, keeping journals, and so on) to get a better perspective on their areas of focus.

3.2 Cultural Aspects

One prominent aspect of research in this area that is given attention is the contribution or role of culture in the implementation of learner autonomy. These studies seem to relate how intimately social constructions, religious beliefs, traditional learning practices and backgrounds of teacher and learner, shape their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and self-confidence. These factors may either exhilarate autonomous learning, or even are hindrances to it. However, like all other sectors, cultural aspect which is always given significant attention in language teaching and learning, is also given emphasis in learner autonomy. Many researchers seem to concur that ESL/EFL teachers’ as well as learners’ cultures and beliefs play significant roles in either promoting learner autonomy or creating obstacles in language learning (Benson and Voller, 1997; Pierson, 1996, cited in Aoki 2000; Bandura, 1989; Wenden, 1998; Lamb, 2008; Little, 2002). Hence, many empirical studies have found evidence of the impacts of cultural values on autonomy regarding ‘readiness (Ahmad and Abdul Majid, 2010, pp. 262-263)’, ‘teachers’ perspectives (Konings et al., 2007)’, ‘teachers’ beliefs and attitudes (Borg, 2013)’, ‘learners’ educational background (Carter, 2000), ‘learners’ attitude (Aoki, 2000), ‘students’ perspectives’ (Konings, 2007) and ‘teachers’ role (Little, 1995; T. Lamb, 2008; Reinders & Lazo 2011; Fumin & Li, 2012). At the same time, it is evident that Bangladesh has not explored much regarding these cultural issues. Therefore, it is imperative

that scholars in Bangladesh embark upon further explorations into the unknown dimensions of the cultural influences impinging upon learner autonomy.

3.3 Detected Research Gaps and Recommendations

Most of the existing studies are associated with fostering learner autonomy and sorting out its benefits in the ESL/EFL pedagogy. Simultaneously, there is an increasing trend in research focusing on teachers' roles and responsibilities in finding innovative strategies to foster autonomy. Some research areas of focus are found to be missing after reviewing the abovementioned studies. Some research gaps detected from the studies include:

- From teachers' point of views, learners' inefficiencies have been identified as a major barrier, but the actual types and reasons behind the incompetence are still unfathomed. Meaning, as most of the studies followed statistical measurements, patterns of challenge or inefficiencies are underexplored and thus hastily shallow-explained. Therefore, more inductive research targeting to find out the reasons in details is a dire need.
- Few research works include learners' feedback, their beliefs and understandings on the issues raised regarding autonomy, which are still unidentified. Perhaps researchers' over-zealousness pertaining to learner autonomy is holding them back from scrutinizing every aspect of the approach; this may be pushing them further into disparate directions, while following the usual research trends. Hence, forming clearer aims and objectives while adopting more comprehensive and innovative research measures would contribute deeper understanding. It is heartening to see as many unsung voices as possible to move forward with learner autonomy and exploit this approach to its maximum.
- Some major issues that may enhance autonomous teaching and learning are unde explored, for instance, enquiring about suitable ESL/EFL learning climate, strategies to learn outside the classroom, injecting technology-assisted learning, exploring cultural affiliations and finding suitable training programs for teachers and learners could be some meaningful 'critical examination' areas for learner autonomy (Benson, 2007). Hence, examining these areas is a fundamental need for the successful implementation of learner autonomy in Bangladesh.
- More studies are needed to provide best practices for successful learner autonomy. There is a need for a framework to success implementation and therefore, it is very important to individually examine teachers' application of independence prior to probing autonomy among learners.
- Another interesting research area might be to find out the teachers and learners' distinct views or perceptions of learner autonomy associated with each specific skill naming listening, speaking, reading and writing (Ou, C., 2017, p. 81). Since every skill is unique, it's quite obvious that the skills are differently understood or perceived; hence, those understandings must be inspected, attended and utilised through the glass of learner autonomy.
- In near future, assessing learner autonomy using the most effective tools will be inevitably necessary as a significant number of researchers and academicians are already investigating and adopting this approach in teaching language. Hence, assessing is an integral part of teaching and learning and without assessing "how well students learn, the degree to which they achieve the objectives and goals of instruction, and how they perform in their content areas" will be unknown and thus applying anything new and promising could be futile (Zubairi, A. M., Sarudin, I. H., Nordin, M. S., 2008, p. 2; Tunku Ahmad, T. B., & Zubairi, A. M. et al., 2014, p. 14).
- Last but not least, learner autonomy is differently interpreted worldwide due to the huge cultural differences people hold; therefore, building a suitable theory for any particular context will definitely enrich the existing body of knowledge in this field. In this regard, there is a significant gap of knowledge noticed in contributing to the present theory of learner autonomy that may suit Bangladeshi as well as similar contexts.

To summarize, based on the above-mentioned issues researchers could undertake small but in-depth investigations in future and may involve themselves into action researches. This is due to the significant lack of in-depth enquiries and analysis in the field of learner autonomy in Bangladesh, that were found from the articles reviewed in the earlier sections, and also the outcome of blindly following any theory. Nevertheless, following any theory or approach without relevant inquiry might be disastrous. Therefore, taking the cultural matters under consideration, more interrogations should be done to find out the comfort zones for both the ESL/EFL teachers and learners to enjoy autonomy at its best. Again, finding solutions for the existing problems by including all necessary resources could bring sustainable changes in the language teaching and learning in Bangladesh. In this

regard, paying close attention to the recommendations given by the researchers so far can be some excellent start-ups for further investigations.

4. Conclusion

There is no doubt that learner autonomy has tremendous positive impacts on learning ESL/EFL. In conclusion, the review has indicated that there is a need to systematically explore the areas of research that need to be taken in the context of Bangladesh. The existing studies have revealed some directions to proceed further with their excellent outputs and illustrations. Moreover, Bangladeshi researchers are significantly interested in extracting the benefits of learner autonomy, since the studies reveal how they are experimenting upon it to get some sustainable effects. Similarly, these analyses also signify the trial of being liberated from the long-adopted teacher-centred classrooms and traditional GTM method. However, researchers need to pay close attention to every individual and should conduct more studies on seeking and solving issues related to learner autonomy. Starting inquiries with the scholars' given suggestions, mastering effective research skills and conducting credible studies will definitely broaden the scopes to move forward.

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