

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNER AUTONOMY READINESS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATES AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN BANGLADESH

Md Mokarrom Hossain
Siti Maziha Binti Mustapha

ABSTRACT

This paper explores learner autonomy readiness and its relationship with English language performance among undergraduates at the public universities in Bangladesh. A quantitative survey was conducted and questionnaires were distributed to 381 undergraduates selected at random from three public universities in Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh. The results indicate that the overall level of autonomy readiness is moderate. The level of English language performance is not highly satisfactory. Approximately 53.8% of students are below satisfactory level. The study found a significant and positive relationship between learner autonomy readiness and English language performance of students at public universities in Bangladesh. Recommendations were made so efforts could be made by teachers to promote autonomous learning to their students.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy Readiness; English Language Performance; Public Universities

INTRODUCTION

The latest National Education Policy of Bangladesh has aimed at creating self-developed learners who will be able to maintain the global standards in the future. It has been made obligatory for students to study the English language at the university level along with their respective disciplines (Nur, Short, & Ashman, 2020). Ministry of Education of the newly elected Government has launched programs to reform the higher education with the purpose of creating autonomous and skilled graduates. It also sees English as a tool for attaining international standard of higher education. Government needs to focus on imparting quality education to increase the potentiality of its population, especially youths (Rahman, Farooq, & Selim, 2021). However, until now, English is taught to learners by following traditional method of delivering lectures (Khan, Shetu, Islam, & Moudud-Ul-Huq, 2020). There are evidences from various sources that English learning and teaching is still not very desirable and the performance of the English language is overall not at a satisfactory level in Bangladesh (Rani, 2020).

Learner autonomy in higher education has become a revolutionary concept in today's language teaching world. However, the common old practices in language teaching posed a hindrance and a challenge to motivate students to be autonomous (Gach, 2020). Finding out the readiness of learner autonomy is timely and apt due to the recent COVID 19 pandemics. The increased dependence on online learning has emphasized the need for the university students to have the abilities to apply their knowledge, work autonomously or independently, become problem solvers and become self-evaluated person with higher order skills (He, B. 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner autonomy in English language learning has become a widely discussed topic in educational pedagogy in recent times. It is now variously understood, exercised, and promoted in different contextual settings (Khawlani, 2018; Benson, 2013; Reinders, 2010; Holec, 1981; Dickinson, 1987). The practice of learner autonomy is not very known to Bangladeshi teaching and learning until recent times, especially in some private universities. Public universities have yet to fully embrace the learner autonomy practice. Since, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) failed in Bangladesh to many extents, the students and teachers are looking for new ways to explore the language teaching and learning (Kabir, 2020). Sultana (2017) opines that the new curricula of Bangladesh shift from "teacher-centered" to "student-centered" and "to use the knowledge they gain" for the life enhancement "remaining as knowledge in their mind."

Holec (1981) first brought the idea of Learner Autonomy to the language field. He defined it as "potential capacity to act independently in a given learning situation where the learners will be able to determine their objectives, define the contents and progressions." He also suggests that "methods and techniques" will also be determined by the learner's. In his words, evaluation process will also be influenced by the learners. It is evident that the concept that Holec bring gives the full independence to the language learners.

Dafei (2007) tells us in terms of autonomy, the most acceptable and discussed ideas have been brought from Holec (1981), who labels it as "the ability to take charge of one's learning" and the learner himself or herself is the decision maker of his own progress. He pointed out some of the basic aspects of learner autonomy. Learners will be able to

- determine the learning objectives
- define the course contents and it's progress
- methods and technique selection that are to be applied
- monitor the development by himself
- evaluate the acquired knowledge (Holec, 1981)

Chan, Spratt & Humphreys (2002) carried out a study for the learner autonomy where they discussed responsibilities, abilities, activities and also the level of motivation. Horváthová (2014) provides evidences in philosophical, pedagogical and practical reasons for measuring the autonomy in foreign language. The philosophical insight consists of the belief that learners possess the independency in choosing for their learning. He also focusses on pedagogical justification that includes learner's feel more secured and more effective if they can actively participate in decision making. This shows their trust on ability. The practical view language learning is that one may not find his teacher always with him and one must have to continue their own learning.

However, Sakai & Takagi (2009) explains that historically autonomous learning has been appreciated in the Western educational setting whereas in the context of Asia, it has been seen to be rather contrary to the Asian culture. Ministry of Education has recently decided to continue its mandate to implement English as a compulsory subject in universities but did not outline strategies for English language teaching and learning and did not provide a clear vision for uplifting this policy (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). It is widely acknowledged that in today's language education scenario, learner autonomy and motivation have a deep impact on gaining the proficiency of English as a foreign language (Phuong & Vo, 2019). Though there have been researches on learner autonomy for the last few decades but there is a lack of consistent work on it especially from the context of a particular culture (Chen, 2020). The practice of autonomy in English learning here is not up to expectation and in tertiary education of Bangladesh, problems of teaching and learning in foreign language teaching are deep and often ignored (Rahman, Nakata, Nagashima, Rahman, Sharma & Rahman, 2019). The learner's autonomy in learning is still considered a 'western' concept in the education scenario and unfamiliar to many non-western contexts (Gómez, de Maeseener, & Gastmans, 2019). Though learner autonomy has been researched in other countries like Canada, China, Iran, Hong Kong, and many other countries but it has not been extensively done in Bangladeshi tertiary education context.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this study are:

- What are the levels of learner autonomy readiness in learning English among the students in public universities in Bangladesh?
- What are the levels of English language performance among the students in public universities in Bangladesh?
- Is there any significant relationship between learner autonomy readiness and English language performance?

METHOD

A quantitative approach was used to gather data. This study is basically a correlation study. It tries to determine the relationship between learner autonomy readiness and English language performance. The instrument to measure learner autonomy readiness has been adopted from Chan, et al. (2002). The study focusses on learner autonomy readiness based on three domains: responsibilities, abilities, and activities. There are several reasons behind the choosing descriptive correlation design under quantitative method. This study aims at understanding the present situation and also attempts to establish relationship among variables. The research by descriptive correlation design also gives credible findings.

SAMPLE

Sampling is the representation of a large population by a small amount of population. It has to be realistic and the validity of data depends mostly on the good sampling techniques. Sampling is the procedure of choosing adequate number of element from the total population (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine & Walker, 2018). The research was carried out in Rajshahi division which is situated at the northern part of Bangladesh. The population of the study is undergraduates from three universities located in Rajshahi division, Bangladesh. Stratified random sampling was used. The good side of stratified random sampling it covers all the data set in a maximum coverage. The first stratum that is used here is in the case of universities selection. So in this research, it has been stratified by categorizing male and female population. On the basis of University Grant Commission (UGC) report 2016, the total male population of these three universities is 34459 and female 15003. Based on Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula on the target population, the minimum sample size is 381. The sample comprises 265 (Male) and 116 (Female) undergraduate students.

FINDINGS

The questionnaires were distributed and collected in the field with care and accuracy. The students were given opportunities to share their answers deliberately and voluntarily. Cronbach α coefficient of reliability ranges from 0.867 to 0.926. The aggregate Cronbach α for the all the items in the instrument is 0.972.

Demographic characteristics are collected from the respondents. The summary of the information is presented in the table 1. Among the respondents, 66.9% are male and 33.1% are female students. The age from 18 to 20 is 17.1%, 21 to 25 is 82.2% and 26 to 29 is only 8.8%. It is notable that majority of the population age ranges from 21-25.

It is found the medium of instruction used in the university is English 32%, Bangla 21.8% and English and Bangla mixed instructions 46.2%. The 66.9% respondents are learning English more than 10 Years, 24.1 % respondents between 5 to 10 and 8.9 % respondents is less than 5 years.

Table 1: Summary of demographic profile of the survey respondents (n= 381)

Items	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage
Gender	Male	265	69.6	69.6
	Female	116	30.4	100
Age	18 – 20	65	17.1	17.1
	21 – 25	313	82.2	99.2
	26 – 29	3	.8	100
Medium of Instruction	English	122	32.0	32.0
	Bangla	83	21.8	53.8
	Mixed	176	46.2	100
Years of English	less than 5 years	34	8.9	8.9
	5-10 years	92	24.1	33.1
	More than 10 years	255	66.9	100
Years of University	1st year	89	23.4	23.4
	2nd year	183	48.0	71.4
	3 rd year	107	28.1	99.5
	4 th Year	2	.5	100
Name of University	A	22	5.8	5.8
	B	279	73.2	79
	C	80	21.0	100
	Total	381	100.0	100.0

DOMAIN 1: RESPONSIBILITIES (STUDENTS)

The findings of responsibilities (students) are discussed in following table 2 in a descriptive manner. There are 13 factors in this construct for the measurement. Most of the items are positively marked by the respondents. Factors like stimulating interest in learning English (*R5*) ($m = 3.74$; $SD = .97$), deciding what a learner should learn next to his English lessons (*R13*) ($m = 3.59$, $SD = .96$), choosing what activities to use to learn English in their English Lessons (*R15*) ($m = 3.57$, $SD = .97$), and evaluating their course (*R23*) ($m = 3.50$, $SD = 1.01$) are considered as most prioritized by students as the mean value is over 3.5 of them.

Other issues like making sure of progressing during lessons (*R1*) is found with $m = 3.33$; $SD = .88$, making sure of their progress outside of class (*R3*) with $m = 3.34$; $SD = 1.01$ and identifying weakness in English (*R7*), ($m = 3.44$; $SD = .97$). Likely the items *making to work harder* (*R9*) consists ($m = 3.44$; $SD = 1.07$), deciding the objectives of their English course (*R11*) ($m = 3.53$; $SD = 1.10$), deciding spending time in each activity (*R17*) ($m = 3.47$, $SD = 1.07$), choosing what materials in their English lessons? (*R19*) ($m = 3.33$, $SD = .96$), deciding the things of learning outside class? (*R25*) ($m = 3.38$, $SD = 1.04$) are perceived as medium contributor to the handling of responsibility by the students themselves. These findings are consistent with the research carried out in the foreign language learning context, the research done by (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2019). Learners are inclined to learn English and ready to find out their weaknesses and they are pretty interested to choose learning activities in their classrooms.

Table 2: Findings: Responsibilities (Students)

Description of item	Not at All	A little	Some	Mainly	Completely	Mean	Standard Deviation
Make sure your progress during lessons (R1)	0.8% (3)	17.1% (63)	39.1% (149)	35.4% (131)	8.7% (33)	3.33	.88
Make sure you progress outside class (R3)	1.8% (7)	18.4% (70)	38.8% (148)	25.2% (96)	15.7% (60)	3.34	1.01
Stimulate your interest in learning English (R5)	0.8% (3)	9.7% (37)	29.9% (114)	33.6% (128)	26.0% (99)	3.74	.97
Identify your weakness in English (R7)	2.1% (8)	11.8% (45)	38.1% (145)	37.0% (141)	12.6% (48)	3.44	.97
Make you work harder (R9)	3.7% (14)	17.6% (67)	26.2% (100)	36.0% (137)	16.5% (63)	3.44	1.07
Decide the objectives of your English course (R11)	4.5% (17)	15.0% (57)	24.1% (92)	36.0% (137)	20.5% (78)	3.53	1.10
Decide what you should learn next in your English lessons (R13)	3.1% (14)	10.8% (41)	24.1% (92)	47.8% (182)	14.2% (54)	3.59	.96
Choose what activities to use to learn English in your English lessons (R15)	2.1% (8)	15.2% (58)	25.7% (98)	37.8% (144)	19.2% (73)	3.57	.96
Decide how long to spend each activity (R17)	3.9% (15)	14.4% (55)	28.3% (108)	34.9% (133)	18.4% (70)	3.47	1.07
Choose what materials to use to learn English in your English lessons (R19)	3.1% (12)	16.5% (63)	33.9% (129)	37.0% (141)	9.4% (36)	3.33	.96
Evaluate your learning (R21)	2.6% (10)	13.6% (52)	38.6% (147)	30.2% (115)	15.0% (57)	3.41	.98
Evaluate your course (R23)	2.4% (9)	16.5% (63)	25.2% (96)	40.4% (154)	15.5% (59)	3.50	1.01
Decide what you learn outside class (R25)	3.7% (14)	16.8% (64)	32.3% (123)	32.3% (123)	15.0% (57)	3.38	1.04

RESPONSIBILITIES (TEACHERS)

The findings of responsibilities (teachers) perceived by the students are presented in table 3. Students overall showed a mean score above 3.50 on one item that is identifying weakness in English (R8) ($m = 3.51$; $SD = 1.31$). It is very consistent finding from the research work of Jamila (2016) that students often think of their teachers as identifiers of their mistakes. Making sure that they progress outside class (R4) ($m = 3.02$; $SD = 1.236$), deciding what they learn outside class (R26) ($m = 3.02$; $SD = 1.27$) are of importance among students. The mean score is above 3.00 which means, the students see their teachers as the persons responsible for the supervision of their progress even outside of the class.

Factors like making sure of their progress during lessons (R2) ($m = 2.70$; $SD = 1.18$), making you work harder (R10) ($m = 3.08$; $SD = 1.36$), deciding the objectives of English course (R12) ($m = 2.70$; $SD = 1.37$), deciding what they should learn next in their English lessons (R14) ($m = 2.74$; $SD = 1.37$), stimulating interest in learning English (R6) ($m = 2.66$; $SD = 1.17$) and choosing what activities to use to learn English in your English lessons (R16) ($m = 2.75$; $SD = 1.34$) are below than 3 which means students are not dependent on their teachers much on these issues.

Factors like deciding how long to spend each activity (R18) ($m = 2.75$; $SD = 1.34$), choosing what materials to use to learn English in your English lessons (R20) ($m = 2.69$; $SD = 1.36$), evaluating their learning (R22) ($m = 2.66$; $SD = 1.36$), evaluating their course (R24) ($m = 2.66$; $SD = 1.35$) have mean score less than 3.00 which indicates low dependency on teachers.

Table 3: Findings: Responsibilities (Teachers)

Description of item	Not at All	A little	Some	Mainly	Completely	Mean	Standard Deviation
Make sure your progress during lessons? (R2)	5.5% (21)	24.1% (92)	22.6% (86)	29.7% (113)	18.1% (61)	2.69	1.17
Make sure you progress outside class (R4)	11.0% (42)	29.7% (113)	24.1% (92)	20.7% (79)	14.4% (55)	3.02	1.236
Stimulate your interest in learning English (R6)	9.2% (35)	22.0% (84)	20.7% (79)	22.3% (85)	25.7% (98)	2.66	1.17
Identify your weakness in English (R8)	29.9% (114)	25.2% (96)	20.5% (78)	15.0% (57)	9.4% (36)	3.49	1.31
Make you work harder (R10)	17.8% (68)	23.4% (89)	24.4% (93)	16.3% (62)	18.1% (69)	3.06	1.35
Decide the objectives of your English course (R12)	10.0% (38)	23.9% (91)	18.1% (69)	20.7% (79)	27.3% (104)	2.70	1.37
Decide what you should learn next in your English lessons (R14)	11.3% (43)	24.1% (92)	18.6% (71)	19.7% (75)	26.2% (100)	2.74	1.37
Choose what activities use to learn English in your English lessons (R16)	8.1% (31)	25.7% (98)	20.2% (77)	18.1% (69)	27.8% (106)	2.75	1.34
Decide how long to spend each activity (R18)	8.1% (31)	29.1% (111)	8.1% (31)	16.3% (62)	27.0% (103)	2.75	1.34
Choose what materials use to learn English in your English lessons (R20)	9.4% (36)	24.9% (95)	19.4% (74)	17.8% (68)	28.3% (108)	2.69	1.36
Evaluate your learning (R22)	9.4% (36)	24.1% (92)	19.7% (75)	17.3% (66)	29.4% (112)	2.66	1.36
Evaluate your course (R24)	9.2% (35)	18.9% (72)	17.8% (68)	18.9% (72)	28.3% (108)	2.66	1.35
Decide what you learn outside class (R26)	12.1% (46)	27.8% (106)	25.7% (98)	17.3% (66)	17.1% (65)	3.00	1.27

The digits inside brackets represent the precise number of respondents

DOMAIN 2: ABILITIES

The findings on students' perception of their abilities are presented in table 4. Factors like choosing learning activities in class (A1) (m = 3.54; SD =.95), choosing learning objectives in the class (A3) (m =3.56; SD =.97), choosing learning material in class (A5) (m =3.53; SD =1.01), evaluating their course (A8) (m =3.56; SD =.97), and identifying own weaknesses in English (A10) (m =3.59; SD =.90) had the mean values above 3.50. This means respondents are confident in choosing learning objectives and activities. They are keen on choosing the materials used in their classrooms, identifying weaknesses, and ultimately evaluating their course.

The rest of the factors are choosing learning activities outside of the class (A2) (m =3.40; SD =1.09), choosing learning objectives outside the class? (A4) (m =3.46; SD =1.45), choosing learning material outside class (A6) (m =3.30; SD =1.01), evaluating your learning? (A7) (m =3.50; SD =.95) and deciding on how long to spend on each activity (A11) (m =3.45; SD =.96). The mean values are all below 3.50 but above 3.00 which positively affirms the learners' confidence in their own abilities. The findings show that learners are confident in their own capacity in all these aspects of English language learning.

Table 4: Findings: Abilities

Description of item	Very Poor	Poor	Ok	Good	Very Good	Mean	Standard Deviation
Choosing learning activities in class (A1)	2.4% (9)	10.2% (39)	33.6% (128)	37.8% (144)	16.0% (61)	3.54	.95
Choosing learning activities outside of the class (A2)	3.1% (12)	19.4% (74)	29.9% (114)	28.6% (109)	18.9% (73)	3.40	1.09
Choosing learning objectives in the class (A3)	1.3% (5)	12.6% (48)	32.5% (124)	34.9% (133)	18.6% (71)	3.56	.97
Choosing learning objectives outside the class (A4)	5.5% (21)	15.7% (60)	26.0% (99)	36.7% (140)	15.7% (61)	3.46	1.45
Choosing learning material in class (A5)	2.4% (9)	14.7% (56)	27.3% (104)	38.6% (147)	17.1% (65)	3.53	1.01
Choosing learning material outside class (A6)	4.2% (16)	16.8% (64)	34.9% (133)	32.5% (124)	11.5% (44)	3.30	1.01
Evaluating your learning (A7)	2.4% (9)	12.6% (48)	31.2% (119)	40.2% (153)	13.6% (52)	3.50	.95
Evaluating your course (A8)	0.8% (3)	12.9% (49)	32.5% (124)	38.1% (145)	15.5% (59)	3.56	.97
Identifying your weaknesses in English (A9)	1.3% (5)	23.4% (89)	28.9% (110)	35.7% (136)	10.8% (41)	3.31	.98
Deciding what you should learn next in your English lessons (A10)	1.8% (7)	10.0% (38)	29.1% (111)	45.4% (173)	13.6% (52)	3.59	.90
Deciding on how long to spend on each activity (A11)	2.6% (10)	15.0% (57)	27.8% (106)	43.3% (169)	11.3% (43)	3.45	.96

DOMAIN 3: ACTIVITIES

In table 5, the factors that are found above the mean value 3.50 are listening to English songs (AC 11), ($m = 3.50$; $SD = 1.01$), using internet in English (AC 18) ($m = 3.80$; $SD = 1.06$), noting down new information (AC 24) ($m = 3.72$; $SD = 1.00$), discussing learning problem with classmates (AC 27) ($m = 3.51$, $SD = 1.00$). It is important to take note that the highest mean score is the use of the internet for learning English. This is a very new trend in the perspective of students in Bangladesh. English Songs are also used in class to learn English. Note taking and discussing with friends are however still regarded highly by the learners.

Other factors like *reading grammar books by themselves* (AC1), ($m = 3.40$; $SD = .94$), asking *the teacher questions when you don't understand* (AC 23) ($m = 3.43$; $SD = 1.10$), *doing assignments which are not compulsory* (AC 2) ($m = 3.07$; $SD = 1.13$), *noting down new words and their meaning* (AC 3) ($m = 3.43$; $SD = .94$), reading English notices around them (AC 5) ($m = 3.23$; $SD = .96$), *reading Newspapers in English?* (AC 6) ($m = 3.28$; $SD = .99$), *sending emails in English* (AC 7) ($m = 3.11$; $SD = 1.19$) are found to obtain mean scores above 3.00. This implies that students have a tendency to do these activities like reading grammar books, noting down new words, reading English newspapers.

The following activities are found to obtain less than 3.00 in mean values: *writing English letters to pen pals?* (AC 4) ($m = 2.92$; $SD = 1.23$), *listening to English Radio?* (AC 10) ($m = 3.01$; $SD = 1.94$) *talking to foreigners in English?* (AC 12) ($m = 2.82$; $SD = 1.19$), *writing a diary in English?* (AC 17) ($m = 2.96$; $SD = 1.25$). This suggests that writing letters are less carried out by students with the progressive technology and mobile phones. Besides that, the use of radio for educational purposes has been less carried out and students don't feel encouraged to write diary anymore which was once a popular medium of practicing English in Bangladesh.

Table 5: Findings: Activities

Description of item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Regularly	Mean	Standard Deviation
Read grammar books on your own (AC1)	2.6% (10)	11.3%(43)	40.2%(153)	33.6%(128)	12.3% (47)	3.40	.94
Done assignments which are not compulsory (AC 2)	11.5% (44)	18.9%(72)	25.5% (97)	37.0% (141)	7.1% (27)	3.07	1.13
Noted down new words and their meaning (AC1.6% (6) 3)	13.9%(53)	37.5%(143)	33.3%(127)	13.6%(52)		3.43	.94
Written English letters to pen pals (AC 4)	17.1% (65)	20.2%(77)	25.5% (97)	28.1% (107)	9.2% (35)	2.92	1.23
Read English notices around you (AC 5)	3.7% (14)	18.1%(69)	38.1%(145)	31.5%(120)	8.7%(33)	3.24	.96
Read Newspaper in English (AC 6)	4.2% (16)	16.3%(62)	36.7%(140)	32.5% (124)	10.2% (39)	3.28	.99
Sent emails in English (AC 7)	10.8% (41)	21.8%(83)	24.7% (94)	30.7% (117)	12.1%(46)	3.11	1.19
Read books or Magazines in English (AC 8)	5.0% (19)	16.8%(64)	32.5%(124)	31.8% (121)	13.9%(53)	3.32	1.06
Watched TV Programs in English (AC 9)	3.9% (15)	16.0%(61)	30.2%(115)	37.8%(144)	12.1%(46)	3.38	1.01
Listened to English Radio (AC 10)	16.0% (61)	18.1%(69)	28.1%(107)	31.0%(118)	6.6% (25)	3.01	1.94
Listened to English songs (AC 11)	3.9%(15)	12.1%(46)	28.9%(110)	39.6% (151)	15.5%(59)	3.50	1.01
Talked to foreigners in English (AC 12)	19.7% (75)	22.8%(87)	23.1% (88)	31.2% (119)	5.5% (21)	2.82	1.19
Practiced Using English with friends (AC 13)	4.5% (17)	19.7%(75)	36.5%(139)	32.3% (123)	7.1% (27)	3.17	.97
Done English self-studying group (AC 14)	12.9% (49)	18.6%(71)	27.8%(106)	33.3 % (127)	7.3% (28)	3.03	1.15
Done grammar exercises (AC 15)	5.2% (20)	12.9%(49)	32.8%(125)	37.8 % (144)	11.3% (43)	3.37	1.01
Watched English Movies? (AC 16)	6.3% (24)	16.3%(62)	26.8%(102)	34.9% (133)	15.5% (59)	3.45	1.92
Written a diary in English (AC 17)	17.3% (66)	18.6%(71)	24.1%(92)	29.9% (114)	10.0 % (38)	2.96	1.25
Used internet in English (AC 18)	2.9% (11)	8.4% (32)	24.1% (92)	32.8% (125)	31.8%(121)	3.82	1.06
Done revision not required by teacher (AC 19)	7.9%(30)	15.7%(60)	32.3%(123)	32.8% (125)	11.3% (43)	3.23	1.09
Attended a self-study center (AC 20)	10.8% (41)	15% (57)	33.3%(127)	30.4% (116)	10.2%(39)	3.19	1.52
Collected texts in English (e.g. articles, brochures, labels etc) (AC 21)	8.1% (31)	11.3%(43)	32.5%(124)	34.4%(131)	13.9% (53)	3.34	1.10
Gone to see your teacher about your work? (AC 22)	7.1% (27)	18.9%(72)	32.5%(124)	34.1% (130)	13.9% (53)	3.23	1.08
Asked the teacher questions when you don't understand (AC 23)	3.4% (13)	17.3%(66)	27.6%(105)	36.5 % (139)	10.0%(64)	3.43	1.06
Noted down new information (AC 24)	1.8% (7)	11.8%(45)	22.8% (87)	40.2% (153)	23.4% (89)	3.71	1.01
Made suggestions to the teacher (AC 25)	10.8% (41)	12.1%(46)	26.5%(101)	32.5% (124)	18.1% (69)	3.35	1.21
Taken opportunities to speak English (AC 26)	3.1% (12)	13.9%(53)	39.1%(149)	28.1% (107)	15.7% (60)	3.39	1.01
Discussed learning problem with classmates (AC 27)	1.8% (7)	14.2%(54)	33.1%(126)	32.5 % (124)	18.4% (70)	3.51	1.00

RQ 1: LEVELS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

The levels of learner autonomy readiness in learning English among the students of public universities are analysed using descriptive statistics. Mean and standard deviation are used. Three categories- low, moderate and high are according to table 6. The mean from 1 to 2.33 (1+1.33) is categorized as the low and the mean from 2.34 to 3.67 (2.34+1.33) is categorized as moderate and finally the mean score from 3.68 to 5 is categorized high (Leong, Chua, & Kannan, 2016).

Table 6: Learner Autonomy Levels (Leong, Chua, & Kannan, 2016)

Mean Score Value	Level of Autonomy
3.68 to 5	High
2.34 to 3.67	Moderate
1 to 2.33	Low

Hereby, according to his table, the mean score values are used to identify the different levels. If the mean score of learner autonomy is above 3.68, the level can be considered as high, but if the mean score is less than 2.33, then the level is low. Concurrently, if the mean value is between 2.34 to 3.67 is considered moderate. If the standard deviation is high in expressing the data, it implies the level of disagreement in the issue is less. In contrast, if the standard deviation is low, the level of agreement on particular perception or item is high.

Table 7: Level of Autonomy

Level of Autonomy	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
High Autonomy	45	11.81	3.68 to 5	
Moderate Autonomy	325	85.30	2.34 to 3.67	
Low Autonomy	11	2.88	1 to 2.33	
Full Sample (N= 381) Moderate			3.2641	.618

By referring to the results in table 7, it can be seen that 11.81% (45) of students are highly autonomous whereas 85.30% (325) are moderately autonomous and 2.88% (11) are in lowly autonomous. The learner autonomy overall mean value is 3.2641 which indicates a moderate level of autonomy readiness. There are three dimensions under learner autonomy readiness and table 8 exhibits the levels of the three dimensions.

Table 8: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Learner Autonomy Readiness

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Learner autonomy readiness	3.2641	.61858	Moderate
Dimensions			
1a. Responsibilities (Students)	3.4662	.62584	Moderate
1b. Responsibilities (Teachers)	2.8336	.99987	Moderate
2. Abilities	3.4772	.71778	Moderate
3. Activities	3.2872	.70348	Moderate

Note: Mean 0 to 2.39 as Low; 2.40 to 3.69 as Moderate; more than 3.70 as High (Leong, Chua, & Kannan, 2016)

Largely, the level learner autonomy readiness among undergraduates in Bangladesh is moderate. This is based on the mean value which is between 2.40 and 3.69 that is considered moderate.

Considering dimensions of learner autonomy, the highest mean value is for the domain of Activities. This shows that students are autonomous in activities they carry out to learn English. The second highest is Responsibilities (students). This indicates students' preference of taking responsibilities by themselves rather than depending on teachers.

RQ 2: LEVELS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE

Table 9 shows the English language performance among the students. The English language performance is based on the results of the English language course that students take in their university while studying in their respective disciplines. In the exam, the students are evaluated from various aspects of English competencies. The students' performance of English language are as follows: 6.3 % is excellent, 2.4% outstanding, 10.2% very good, 12.1% good, 15.2 % satisfactory and other 17.3% below satisfactory, 9.4% average, 5.0% pass, 14.2% poor and fail 7.9%. Overall, approximately 53.8% of students are below satisfactory level. 46.2% of students obtained satisfactory grade and above in the English language course.

Table 9: Level of Performance

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage
Fail	30	7.9	7.9
Poor	54	14.2	22.0
Pass	19	5.0	27.0
Average	36	9.4	36.5
Below Satisfactory	66	17.3	53.8
Satisfactory	58	15.2	69.0
Good	46	12.1	81.1
Very Good	39	10.2	91.3
Excellent	24	6.3	97.6
Outstanding	9	2.4	100.0

Total	381	100
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RQ 3: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNER AUTONOMY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE

To get the answer to this research question, the relationship between learner autonomy readiness and English language performance was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Table 10 shows the relationship between them:

Table 10 : Correlations of Learner Autonomy Readiness & Performance

		Learner Autonomy	GPA
Learner Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	381	381
GPA	Pearson Correlation	.702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	381	381

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From table 10, the results showed that there was a significant strong positive correlation between learner autonomy readiness and English language performance, $r=.702$, $n=381$, $p=.000<.05$. Pearson correlation r between learner autonomy and English language performance is $r =0.702$ which is between 0.50 and 0.70 that indicates a high correlation (Cohen, 1988), thus the strength of association between the variables is high. This indicates that 70% (0.702) of the variation in English language performance is explained by learner autonomy readiness.

DISCUSSION

The first research question investigated the current levels of learner autonomy of public universities of Bangladesh. It was found that the learner autonomy level is moderate. This result is similar to Ghobain, E. (2020) & Alrabai (2018). They carried out researches on learner autonomy where English is learned as a foreign language in similar situations like in Bangladesh and found that the students have a moderate level of autonomy.

Li & Kim (2020) have found positive impact of learner autonomy on competence level of English language in a foreign language learning situation of China. Their study affirms the increase of learner autonomy results the development of communicative competence of English. Hermagustiana, & Anggriyani (2020) have found the similar result in Indonesia that learner autonomy benefits the learners with higher confidence level where students learn English by themselves and not guided by teachers much. In his study, the learners also want to evaluate by themselves which has much similarities with this study where students express the interests of evaluating themselves.

In Turkey, Kuluşaklı & Yumru (2020) have found that proper implementation of learner autonomy is related with higher proficiency of English language and therefore emphasized on the development of autonomy. Likewise, as found in this research, there was a significant relationship with learner autonomy readiness and performance. This could pave the way towards the implementation of learner autonomy initiatives in Bangladeshi higher education.

Şakrak-Ekin, Gülnihal and Balcikanli, Cem (2019) carried out a research in Turkey on level of autonomy of EFL learners with academic success in in English language learning at undergraduate level. They also found a positive correlation with learner autonomy and performance. They considered it is as one of the major factors for determining the level of proficiency achieved in students' undergraduate programme. They found that academic success is often largely dependent on the autonomous behavior of the learners that this also has much similarities with the present study. In this study, those who have higher mean scores in autonomy are having better results in their English language performance. This provides an evidence of how important learner autonomy is in a foreign language learning specifically the English language.

Ying (2019) found that students who are autonomous employ many strategies to learn the language whereas those who are less autonomous use less strategies. In this study, similarly, it was found that students who are autonomous involve themselves in many language learning activities which help them to achieve the English language proficiency and autonomous learners tend to involve themselves in more activities rather than less autonomous ones.

Sultana (2016) opined in her learner autonomy research in Bangladesh that the teachers need to come forward to develop more autonomy among the learners which is very much consistent with the present research. The analysis on the dimensions of the learner autonomy showed that the mean value of responsibilities (teachers) was the lowest in comparison to other dimensions. So, this indicates that to increase the autonomy level of Bangladeshi learners, the teachers need to step up and improve their teaching strategies in the classroom by allowing students to be autonomous. This study has shown that learner autonomy has a positive and significant relationship with English language performance.

CONCLUSION

The study has explored learner autonomy readiness in university level education in Rajshahi division, Bangladesh. As a whole, it can be stated that learner autonomy in Bangladesh is an emerging trend and can be said to be at a moderate stage at the public universities in Bangladesh. The university students exhibit a moderate level of autonomous behavior which is an indication that there is advancement in the teaching and learning pedagogy. But the problems of teacher dominated classrooms still hamper students' autonomy. The universities of Rajshahi division are recommended to put in more efforts and strategize towards effectively reducing teacher centered classrooms and gearing teachers to promote learner autonomy in English language classes. The findings from this study have shown that there is still a good portion of students who lack the required level of performance in the English Language. There is a significant relationship between learner autonomy and performance which indicates that highly autonomous students are doing better in English rather than the less autonomous students. It further emphasizes the need for carryout learner autonomy training among teacher and learners.

In Bangladesh, if learner autonomy is encouraged, it can bring a positive outcome to the students' English language performance. Inside and outside of classrooms, students must get enough opportunities to practice English language more. Policies and strategies need to be more student centered where learners are encouraged to be involved in their learning activities. This study has provided evidences that more efforts need to be put into making learners more autonomous. Then only, the level of the English language performance will improve. It becomes a necessity for the educators in Bangladesh to promote learner autonomy in higher education institutions so that aims of the National Education Policy of Bangladesh to create self-developed learners who will be able to maintain the global standards in the future can be made a reality.

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Md Mokarrom Hossain
Centre for Post Graduate Studies and Reserach
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur, 43000 Kajang, Malaysia.
Email: mokarromh@gmail.com

Siti Maziha Binti Mustapha
Faculty of Business, Information and Human Sciences
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur, 43000 Kajang, Malaysia.
Email: maziha@iukl.edu.my