

STRATEGIES ASSOCIATED WITH LEARNER AUTONOMY ESPOUSED
BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE CONTEXT OF
BANGLADESH

By

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A thesis submitted to the Brac Institute of Languages in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in TESOL

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Declaration

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2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Operationalisation of some key terms

Learner: A person who is consciously and deliberately learning a language either in formal and/or informal setting.

English language learner: A person who is consciously and deliberately learning the English language either in formal and/or informal setting.

Strategies: A plan of action guided by a range of tactics utilised by any person to achieve a particular goal.

Learner autonomy: The ability of a learner to take charge of his/her own learning process.

Resource: Resources are the set of materials and assets/tools/devices utilised by a person to function properly in an activity.

Abstract

Learner autonomy has always been an extensively accepted phenomenon within the English language learning scenario. However, the recent discourse on English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh demonstrates that people are only aware of the term 'autonomous learning', but fail to understand how learners adapt to learner autonomy. The specific approaches autonomous learners employ to facilitate independent learning have yet to be fully understood. This study will focus on the strategies individuals across various age groups use to cultivate personalized learning autonomy and optimize their English language competence. The study's conceptual framework has been developed by integrating concepts including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theories, friends' reinforcement, learners' differences, and real-world learning. Set in the interpretive paradigm, the research follows the qualitative approach. A multiple case study design has been employed to examine participants' subjective responses with significant precision. Participants were chosen using the purposive sampling method. A total of six participants were selected from three distinct age categories: two secondary-level students aged fifteen to eighteen, two undergraduate-level students aged twenty to twenty-four, and two adult learners aged over thirty. The results will provide insight into the different strategies adopted by various age groups of English language learners concerning learner autonomy. This research offers significant implications for English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals, administrators, and policymakers in Bangladesh as it provides valuable insights into the effective integration of autonomous learning strategies inside the traditional education system.

Keywords: Learning autonomy, independent learning, learner strategies

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction of the chapter

The development of any language is a profound journey that involves several intricate psycholinguistic processes. Integrating theories and methodologies from psychology and linguistics is not just a focus but a crucial element that guides us through this process. The addition of emotions and communication makes the entire process more complicated, and these identical components are internally connected. As a result, learning a second language is a complex process because it requires not only learning grammar structures and acquiring vocabulary but also developing communication skills and an awareness of another culture (Barin, 2018). In the field of language learning, an age-old interest is still prevalent: the difference between first language (L1) and second language (L2). L1 is also known as the primary language and mother tongue that is expected to develop with gradual age development. The acquisition of this language starts from early childhood and develops over time. The development of L1 among kids is supernatural and magical. Even Montessori education, which fundamentally believes in human development from the educational point of view, stated that the only language people master flawlessly is acquired during their babyhood, a period when no formal training is provided (as cited in Clark & Casillas, 2015). The development of this language involves a subconscious learning process; thus, word acquisition is usually used instead of learning in the case of L1. On the other hand, the development of L2 is a conscious process and requires considerable effort to become good at. Learning a second language (L2) does not commence in childhood instead begins when kids enter school. On this note, Nor and Rashid (2018) identified that the characteristics of L2 learners, particularly their age, differ from those of L1 learners. L2 learners are typically older than those of kids who are acquiring the L1. Furthermore, L2 learners have already obtained at least one language, and their prior knowledge of the L1 may prove advantageous to them, as they already understand the function of language. The autonomous process of acquiring a language requires purposeful dedication and optimism to achieve competence. Thus, this concept is referred to as autonomous language learning instead of acquisition. Additionally, the language learning process is a unique and personal experience for every learner. While innate cognitive abilities play a significant role, other factors influence language development. Lightbown and Spada (2006) have identified several factors, including intelligence, aptitude, learning style, and personality, which vary among individuals. Speaking of learning styles, in general, there are two distinct categories of

developing the English language. The first is institutional learning, achieved through our educational institutions. The second is independent learning or autonomous learning, where a learner ensures progress in target language learning following personalized strategies and guidelines. Speaking of developing a second language, significant number of learners globally have prioritized English as their second language. One important explanation for English being the preferred language for learning because of its established status as the lingua franca of the modern world. On this note, Sari (2023) mentioned that in today's globalized world, proficiency in the English language has become a necessary skill to succeed in various personal, academic, and professional domains for any individual. This research is going to uncover these autonomous language learning strategies that learners exercise for the learning of the English language.

Mastering a language has always been an advantage in any society. With the emergence of internationalisation of business, higher education, and technological advancement, a common language for communication or lingua franca has been necessitated among the global communities. Amidst a vast range of existing languages, English has earned this position to become the most prominent language of international communication. In today's diverse and multicultural settings, the English language has unquestionably emerged as the language of choice, assuming the role of a global medium of communication (Jenkins, 2015). Thus, it has earned its title of becoming the global lingua franca. As Bacha and Kumar (2022) identified, English's status as a significant means of global communication leads to its growing impact as a lingua franca worldwide. English is also crucial in international affairs, research, tourism, print or electronic media, as well as in the case of intercultural communication. Gradually, the language has evolved into a key to many possibilities. Considering the importance of English and its various roles, different teaching-learning strategies were developed, tested, and adapted over the years. In most cases, language teaching is much more concerned with searching for practical and effective yet less intricate ways of teaching any language. On this note, Ustunloughlu (2009) claimed that within the realm of language acquisition, there is a significant focus on identifying effective strategies that educators may utilise to assist students who struggle to acquire, evaluate, and manage their learning abilities. Among them, autonomous language learning has been consistently adopted by ELT practitioners worldwide for many years. Notable scholars like Immanuel Kant addressed autonomy as the foundation of human prestige and an ideal source of modality (Hill, 1991, p. 43). In language education, learner autonomy is understood in a variety of ways. Related notions have also been referred to by terminology like "learner independence," "self-direction," and "independent learning."

A substantial amount of theoretical evidence is present that shaped the idea of learners' autonomy. John Dewey laid the foundation for the advancement of student autonomy in his book *Democracy and Education*, published in 1916. However, the concept of learner autonomy gained maximum support after Rubnin (1975) published his research work to distinguish the characteristics of an autonomous learner. These characteristics, skills, and strategies later coined the term “learner autonomy” in other words “taking control over one’s learning”. Henri Holec is a leading autonomous learning theorist. *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*, his foundational work, has influenced the conceptualisation of learner autonomy in language policies. He defines learner autonomy as the “ability to take charge of one's own learning.” Additionally, self-directed learners must take some initiatives on their own throughout the autonomous learning process: they must set goals, define the content and pace of their learning, choose methods and techniques, monitor their own learning, and evaluate their learning outcomes (Vázquez, 2016). Phill Benson, an influential scholar on the topic of autonomous learning, stated that autonomous language learning is based on constructivism, which emphasises the active participation of learners in the learning process (Benson, 2007). It is also influenced by humanistic and cognitive psychology, which focuses on supporting learners' natural motivation to reach their full potential and helping them utilise social, psychological, and behavioural resources to achieve personal growth (Lai, 2017). For a second language learner, developing optimum proficiency in that target language remains the highest priority. It is the ultimate goal every new user wants to achieve, and independent learning remains highly beneficial here as well. On this note, Oveshkova (2018) explained that learner autonomy is a crucial foundation for enhancing language proficiency. Language proficiency refers to students' substantial knowledge, skills related to this knowledge, and attitude. Thus, autonomous learning is more successful than non-autonomous learning; simply, the advancement of autonomy leads to enhanced language acquisition (Benson, 2012).

1.2 Background of the Study

Learners personalised way of retrieving information has notable importance within the field of education. As mentioned by Akhter and Ajmal (2020), Over the years, learner autonomy has been recognised as a crucial element by educators and academics. The objective of education is currently recognised as the development of learner autonomy in every individual. Autonomous learning is an essential shift in the process of acquiring a language, empowering learners to take charge of their learning experiences. Autonomy starts once the learner

acknowledges and assumes responsibility for their own learning. Subsequently, learners cultivate a positive attitude towards acquiring knowledge and an aptitude for contemplating on the subject matter and methodology of learning (Bekleyen & Selimoglu, 2016). It is completely different from the heavily teacher-oriented traditional language learning tradition. Enabling students to exercise autonomy encourages them to engage in self-directed exploration and critical thinking and motivates them to learn intrinsically. On this note, Ma (2021) asserted that the assistance of teachers in fostering autonomy is crucial for enhancing desirable results, and it is considered a powerful indicator of learners' specific capabilities, motivating patterns, and academic success. Autonomous learning discovers the innate quality of every individual. Renowned academics, such as Noe and Ellingston (2015) viewed autonomous learning as a dynamic field with evolving practical applications and innovative ideas. The intellectual quality of the learning outcome is significantly enhanced when students focus their internal thoughts, engage in critical thinking, express valuable ideas, and effectively utilise their independent abilities during the lesson. It is common to all that motivation plays a significant role in helping the learner put the first step towards their new language learning journey. Aripoba (2021) stated that each student possesses unique features that substantially influence their motivation, which in turn affects their developmental variables. The presence of such uniqueness helps ensure achievement. Thus, educators should have the capacity to elicit these attributes in students. Benson (2001) emphasised the need to create a nurturing teaching atmosphere that encourages students to continue their independent learning rather than only focusing on acquiring information and subject matter. With the modernisation of the present world, the language learning scenario is experiencing new updates every day. In a time where there are rapid updates of information and knowledge, the capacity of learners to engage in independent learning is more crucial. This skill is considered a fundamental aspect of achieving pedagogical success and lifelong learning (Zhou & Bao, 2018). That is why the existence of autonomous learning is equally important as institution-based language learning. As Little (2017) has confirmed, autonomous learning is not a distant objective that appears enticingly like an illusion in the desert; rather, it is an educational accomplishment that has been recorded in many second language (L2) schooling settings.

1.3 Learner Autonomy in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, learning English as a second or additional language has immense popularity. Here, learning English is considered an important skill set to have greater sustainability in one's

future career. As Noor (2021) has stated that teaching English as a foreign language in Bangladesh is not an uncommon trend. The idea of autonomous learning is rooted within the overall English language scenario. Over the years, learners knowingly or unknowingly try different sets of strategies to take their language performance level to a satisfactory level. The process of independent learning is automatically connected with their efforts and hard work. However, this aspect of learning has often been neglected by educators. The traditional education system of the country is primarily based on teacher-centric lecture-based language teaching sessions. Especially in pre-tertiary level education, schools and colleges are mainly based on a teacher-centered approach (Mehrin, 2017). Under the conventional educational system, classroom activities revolved around a teacher-centred approach, in which the teacher took the role of an authoritative figure who delivered lectures and conducted demonstrations. The teacher arranged their lessons, established goals, and selected materials based on a curriculum plan focused on exams. At the end of the course, the instructor would analyze and evaluate the students (Noor, 2021). Across the nation, this has been the widely adopted language-teaching strategy for ages. Here, English has always been treated as a subject to attain good marks, not a medium of communication. In the case of language learning, while learners may engage in independent learning to some extent, it is not actively promoted among students despite its potential for favourable positive consequences. Nevertheless, different levels of learners are adopting or already adopted this tactic of developing language competency. In fact, some students find it extremely comfortable to polish their language skills, capitalising on learner autonomy. Learners have different sets of strategies to maximise their language learning outcomes. Moreover, different learners have different types of strategies to adapt to their version of “learner autonomy”. Nevertheless, research work conducted on this topic has provided positive consequences. For instance, Jamil (2010) investigated a class of master's students as well as professionals from a prominent private university in Bangladesh. They were students of an English for Academic Purpose (EAP) course. The course was designed in a way that the students could exercise freedom in the case of selecting learning materials and methods. The research findings suggested that learners found themselves much more confident. Additionally, their progress was faster and better.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

As of now, autonomous language learning has remained a highly influential topic; there are several articles recognising autonomous learning as a language learning concept. These articles

focused on research examining the importance of learner autonomy, the variables that influence its implementation, the role of instructors in encouraging independent learning, and the views and practices of teachers and learners across all levels of education (Jamila & Zubairi, 2022). Additionally, the studies examining learner autonomy mostly centre around some particular aspects of learner autonomy. A lack of research is prevalent regarding the strategies associated with successful autonomous learning. Specifically, how learners utilise and implement different sets of strategies to modify their style of learning. The aspect of these techniques that vary according to different age groups has remained undiscovered as well. Furthermore, a separate set of strategies can remain applicable across male and female independent learners. Such lack of research on these particular aspects leaves a gap in conducting this particular investigation as no specific study is present to illustrate the different sets of strategies applied by learners varying in terms of age and gender. This study aims to identify the successful autonomous language learning strategies that have been utilised by different independent learners. The study will also shed light on the difference in adopting autonomous language learning strategies across a variety of age groups and gender. The research will be beneficial in exploring a wide range of effective practical and specific sets of strategies successfully implicated by multiple age groups and genders. Moreover, the study will highlight some strategies that might change the traditional ways of language teaching equally beneficial for broadscale implementations.

1.5 Central research objective

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the range of strategies associated with autonomous language learning among individuals of different ages and genders outside of traditional educational settings. Furthermore, it will explore how these learners obtain their independent language learning resources. Finally, it will consider incorporating these strategies into established language learning programs if they are involved in any formal learning setting.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions have been investigated to achieve the objectives of the study.

1. What strategies do English language learners adopt for their autonomous learning outside the classroom?
2. How do they access and improvise different resources for autonomous learning?

3. How do they incorporate their strategies into the existing English language learning curricula/programs if they are involved in any formal learning setting?

1.7 Rationale of the Study

This study aims to identify the effective out-of-the-classroom strategies used by autonomous language learners from different age groups and genders to facilitate their English language learning. Some particular research has been carried out to understand the concept of autonomous language learning, its importance, and the attitude of students (Mehrin, 2017; Jamia, 2022; Sultana, 2018; Begum, 2018). However, insufficient studies are prevalent in exploring associated strategies used by independent learners that are successfully integrated with autonomous language learning. On top of that, very few studies have examined the different strategies employed across genders and ages to promote autonomous language learning in Bangladesh. Research on this topic has been conducted in other Asian countries, such as India (Badrinathan, 2015), Pakistan (Yasmin, 2018), Sri Lanka (Dayananda, 2020), Myanmar (Win, 2022), China (Gao, 2010), and Turkey (Yildirim, 2012), but research on this perspective in Bangladesh is missing.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Following the traditional teaching method, English has always been difficult for many students to master and communicate. The lack of studies regarding associated strategies to execute autonomous language learning in the Bangladeshi scenario has kept many stress-free and successful ways of learning English in darkness. This study addresses the knowledge gap by referencing effective strategies successfully employed by the participants to enhance their autonomous language learning journey. The research also emphasises various technological resources that can be intelligently integrated to support independent learning. The study is valuable in independently learning the English language as it covers the mindsets of a wide range of participants from different educational levels regarding applying autonomous language learning strategies. The study also investigates the different sets of strategies compared to males and females. The study sets clear examples of the potential benefits of presenting effective techniques for English language learning through autonomous learning approach. Additionally, this particular research can benefit teachers and policy-makers as it pinpoints strategies from self-directed learning that can be incorporated into Bangladesh's traditional English language classrooms with logical reasoning.

1.9 Limitations

Certain limitations needed to be mentioned before proceeding to further analysis. Firstly, the research was conducted on a short scale, containing only six participants. If I had been able to incorporate more participants, more indifferent autonomous language learning strategies would have come to light. As part of the learning strategy, the participants explored a great variety of technological provisions through different strategies; still, a lot remained unexplored in this study. Further research should be conducted to explore more strategies among the autonomous language learners of Bangladesh. Additionally, there were two participants whose interviews were taken through Zoom. A live interview session would have delivered more authentic data for the study's findings. Finally

Chapter 2

Review of the relevant literature and research

2.1 Introduction of the chapter

This chapter includes the relevant theories and literature related to autonomous language learning. The current study aims to answer the research questions mentioned below that are aligned with this study.

1. What strategies do English language learners adopt for their autonomous learning outside the classroom?
2. How do they access and improvise different resources for autonomous learning?
3. How do they incorporate their strategies into the existing English language learning curriculum/programs if they are involved in any formal learning setting?

Based on these research questions, this chapter has been divided into three parts for the convenience of reading.

Part one: What is Autonomous Learning?

Part two: Strategies of Autonomous Learning

Part three: Connection of autonomous learning with motivation and engagement.

2.2. Part one: What is Autonomous Learning?

Autonomous learning has always been the first and foremost strategy for developing skills for learners across the world. Setting different strategies to comprehend knowledge regarding a particular topic is a common strategy for maximum learners. Prominent philosopher Immanuel Kant believed that autonomy is the foundation of human dignity and a source of modality (Hill, 1991). In a traditional classroom setting, after the completion of the teacher's lecture on a topic, students' primary role is to ensure further progression through autonomous learning. According to Xie (2020), autonomous learning refers to a learner's particular design of absorbing class content in textbooks to achieve the purpose of education. The flexibility of acquiring the learning materials benefits students, eliminating time and space restrictions. The word autonomy holds the idea of doing something within a human's own realm of capability. As Bekleyen (2016) has mentioned, autonomy means taking charge of one's learning. For years, autonomous learning has held a consistent position among learners as a timeless strategy, primarily because of the characteristics of providing learning freedom. On this note, Evenhard and Murphy (2015) have illustrated that learning autonomy includes the course of action to reach individual targets through self-learning and decision-making that can be retrieved from internal and external sources. It makes the learner confident and well aware of exploring personal capability and reaching new milestones. Pushpita and Amelia (2020) have illustrated the concept of independence further by mentioning that learners' autonomy begins with reducing dependence on external factors and cultivating the growth of self-awareness generated from internal factors. Gradually, the learner gains full dependence on internal factors. To become successful in independent learning, autonomous learners assemble learning resources containing different technologies, tools, materials, and individuals that facilitate learning. The materials can be divided into educational purposes, focusing on books and online coursework. On the other hand, non-educational purposes include electronic encyclopedias, electronic newspapers, software platforms, audio-visual materials, etc. According to Benson (2012), autonomous learning is not a language learning method but an attribute of the learner's approach to the learning process. Thus, learners devoted to autonomous learning possess a set of characteristics such as recognising their needs, setting goals, formulating plans to achieve goals, managing resources, allocating time, and taking responsibility for their learning (Utami, 2007). Moreover, autonomous learners remain conscious of the purpose of a specific learning program and explicitly accept responsibility for their learning (Sultana, 2018). They can decide, manage, and choose their learning (Horváthová, 2016). A study conducted at Sheffield Hallam

University highlighted the quality of an autonomous learner (Yagcioglu, 2015). According to the study, the autonomous learner takes the responsibility by doing the following activities:

- They set their learning goals along with the learning process
- They evaluate and use their learning
- Seek a well-founded conception of learning
- Tries a variety of learning approaches and skills
- Organises their learning
- Possess a good information processing skill
- Well-motivated to learn

2.2.1 Importance of Autonomous Learning

In the current world, there are different disciplines based on different subjects around the globe. Numerous pre-existing and newly invented learning strategies are present to have proficiency in new knowledge. However, autonomous learning strategy has rightfully been an important strategy for mastering skills among learners of every age in various disciplines. Like its name, it is an automatic process that needs no formal introduction in the learning and/or training context. According to Avazmatova (2022), learners' present autonomy is considered a crucial foundation for continuous success. Implementing autonomy in learning helps the learners to apply the knowledge in the real world. Thus, autonomous learning is important for wielding learners' way of mastering educational concepts. Such quality involves awareness, the ability to reflect, and activating skills like self-management. Moreover, learner autonomy evokes learners' innate cognitive functions of utilising a combination of independence and interdependence (Jones, 2019). Such cognitive qualities can be nurtured over the years. On this note, Researcher Henri Holec is considered one of the pioneer figures in describing the concept of autonomous learning. His definition entails autonomous learning as a lifelong process constantly evolving with developing awareness. Autonomous learners polish their skills outside the immediate context of learning (Najeeb, 2012).

Teachers play a big role in shaping the realm of knowledge for students. In the traditional system of education, a teacher stays at the centre of preaching educational content. From the primary level of education to the undergraduate level, teachers remain the primary resource for introducing and nurturing educational content among students. However, teachers often remain occupied with a tight schedule. Considering the fact a teacher might not remain available every time according to a student's needs. In situations like this, autonomous learning

helps students to keep on exploring knowledge depending on the requirements. Practising autonomous learning can lessen learners' dependency on teachers to acquire new knowledge. Autonomous learners actively seek out learning opportunities and are willing to try new things instead of expecting teachers to direct everything to learn (Robertson, 2013). Learning depends on the set of initiatives the learner takes more than the inputs he/she undergoes through teachers and textbooks. Such ideology upholds personalising knowledge and experience and creates a sense of identity outside the classroom (Little & Dam, 2017). The new generation of teachers has started accepting this fact, considering its importance, and has started promoting autonomous learning as an effective technique for students' betterment. On this note, Wami and Aziz (2018) have illustrated that today's education system prioritises students' independence in adjusting to the curriculum. Teachers should welcome this trend and ensure student-centred learning. Additionally, ÇAKICI (2015) suggested that teachers should assist learners in developing a conscious awareness of their language learning strategies and beliefs about the language learning process through independent learning. Besides, research works have also upheld the priority of autonomous learning in different stages and degrees of education. A study conducted by Chirkov and Ryan (2001) focusing on Russian and US high school students found that facilitating internalisation through autonomous learning made the learning activity more beneficial and valuable. Khanoum's (2007) research on autonomous learning studied 68 Algerian students from the English Department. The survey findings of this study showed that students were intrinsically motivated to invest time and energy in language learning.

2.2.2 Autonomy in language learning

It has been proven that language learning is more than just a practice-based task. A person who is learning a new language cannot rely only on an instructor and classroom-based language learning. On this note, Richards (2015) mentioned that the most critical dimensions of successful second language learning were what happens inside a classroom and what goes outside. Both uphold the same importance, and learners should always try to maintain an unquestionable balance. A perfect balance ensures better language performance. Najeeb (2013) has illustrated that autonomous and independent learning are sometimes interlinked and have to play an increasingly important role in language education. Thus, autonomy in language learning helps the learner explore and adapt to the language independently. As Benson (2012) has asserted, autonomy in language learning dictates learners locate their own directions for learning that

will lead to different outcomes. The fundamental objective of acquiring a foreign language is not just sharing a body of knowledge but rather the ability to perform in that language. Successful language learners blend organisational learning with autonomous learning to generate the maximum outcome in mastering a new language.

In the case of learning English as a foreign language, the scenario remains the same. A positive synergy is evident in determining a learner's learning strategy and autonomy in the case of foreign language learning. A wide range of studies in the EFL context also confirms the importance of learners' autonomy (Daflizar & Kamil, 2022). Additionally, Avazmatova (2022) mentioned that student autonomy should be prioritised and portrayed as one of the primary goals of teaching English as a foreign language, keeping students at the core. There are different components a learner must value before acquiring a language. Grammatical competence is considered an analytical skill that helps users understand English. Generally, for language learners, the motto of learning grammar should focus on the ability to communicate effectively with a particular language (Steel, 2012). Understanding grammar, in most cases, depends on the learner's independent effort. Thus, Pawlak (2017) mentioned that learner autonomy had a decisive role to play in a learner's grammatical competence.

2.2 Part two: Strategies for Autonomous learning

For every learner, there is some personalised plan of action to strategise autonomous learning. For the convenience of this study, such strategies have been divided into two segments. The first one is autonomous learning strategies without using technology, and the other one is using technology. In the case of language learning, autonomous learning could be linked with getting additional language input by being exposed to the target language outside the formal learning environment. For example, learners of English as a foreign or second language often are suggested to begin by reading English newspapers, making notes on a particular lesson, using library resources, attending seminars, conversing with target language users, etc. Among them, note-taking remains the most prevalent one (Küçükler, 2018). Reading English storybooks was on the list of strategies as well. Gillandres and Castro (2011) referred to reading story books aloud as a strategy which can “maximise the opportunities for the children to understand the text” and “develop their vocabulary and listening comprehension” (p. 91). Only academic reading can become dull for the participants, but some mind-numbing storybooks written in target language will definitely improve students' eagerness to explore more about the language. As Neeraj (2014) has identified, when students 'get hooked on books' and read for pleasure,

they acquire nearly all of the 'language skills' that many people are concerned about unconsciously. Reading English newspapers has always been an easily accessible and beneficial strategy to promote autonomous language learning strategy. On this note, Rahul (2016) stated that newspaper materials could be employed to enhance one's grammar skills, specifically grammatical structures, as well as to employ authentic idioms, phrases, and numerous innovative constructions. He also emphasised that the reading of newspapers offered a plethora of new opportunities for discussion and discourse in the classroom, as well as the acquisition of a more comprehensive understanding of various aspects of life and science. The same author also stated that autonomous learning using technology in English language learning included audio-visual materials, recording personal voices while conversing with friends, and targeting language speakers to evaluate verbal mistakes later on (Rahul, 2016). Listening to language-related programs via television and other media, especially watching news channels like BBC, watching movies, listening to songs, and sports commentary are popular ways of autonomous learning. Apart from these, social media, especially Facebook and YouTube, have recently become the new hub of independent language learning. As Rajendran and Din (2021) have stated, "YouTube is an online video streaming platform from Google that gained vast popularity in this modern age that provides unlimited benefits to students as it serves as the pre-eminent method for learner autonomy, especially in mastering spoken and written English." A qualitative study was conducted by Kim and Kim (2021) to investigate the impact of YouTube videos on educational objectives. The participants were recruited randomly from a pool of Asian foreign students. The research was conducted in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, specifically in composition writing classes. Students were assigned essays and instructed to collaborate in small groups of three or four. They were also encouraged to utilise appropriate internet resources to enhance their writing abilities. The researchers determine that YouTube plays a significant role in offering students' essential intercultural materials that are advantageous for language learners to understand the importance of cultural diversity and inclusiveness required in the current academic and social environment. A study conducted by Khan (2022) among 140 different language learners indicated that social media enabled them to engage in conversations with individuals from different nations. Moreover, social media enabled students to utilise English as a tool to achieve specific goals, such as connecting with others worldwide and expressing their thoughts and feelings. At least 56.1% of the participants in the poll confirmed they were members of a language learning community on social media. The group members possess diverse interests and mutual objectives. For example, in an online English practice WhatsApp group, learners

exchange study materials and connect with others who have similar interests. Such approaches help the members to attain new skills and polish existing ones.

2.2.1 Use of technology in autonomous learning

There is a profound connection between learner autonomy and the use of technology in the context of a learning an additional language. In this modern era, resources offered by information and communications technologies are considered as one of the most important options in allocating knowledge. Also, technology has a prolific effect on the educational sector. Due to the advancement of technology in recent years, educational content from different disciplines is now a click away for the students. On this note, Ahmadi (2018) mentioned that developing learners' knowledge and skills relevant to computer technology provided equity of opportunity in language learning regardless of learners' backgrounds. Developed countries of the West have already modernised their education system by infusing technology into it. Additionally, with the trend of technology-based education, affluent countries prioritise the affordances of mobile technology and other types of technology to access the Internet in out-of-class settings to promote learner autonomy (Sayram, 2019). In general, to seek out any information, we take help from technology to get guidance to source the data. Moreover, in today's era, learning a language is not merely an institutional activity but rather an enjoyable pastime also. It happened because there are now more chances for meaningful and genuine language usage outside the classroom because of the Internet, and various computer and mobile technologies, especially social media (Richards, 2015). Moreover, the application of technology helps learners learn on the basis of their interests. It also satisfies both the visual and auditory senses of the learners (Pourhosein & Gilakjani, 2017).

From this notion, language learners across the world also find technology and the Internet as useful tools to exercise their autonomy and freedom. Technology became instrumental for language learners to polish their skills. Learners could autonomously go through activities such as independent study in the library, learning outside the classroom, independent work in a self-access center, and out-of-class tasks involving use of the Internet to elevate their expertise in a target language. Undoubtedly, the use of technology has a remarkable position in autonomous learning (Lengkanawati, 2017). The wide range of language learning resources available on the Internet is considered the primary step for independent learning. Research suggests that the integration of technology generates productive outcomes in acquiring language skills like vocabulary, reading, and writing.

Improvements have been reported in having better proficiency in grammatical rules, especially in translation activities, verb conjugation, and identifying sentence types (Morgana, 2015). Additionally, using technology, many authentic materials can be provided to learners, and they can be motivated to learn the language (Sabir & Hammad, 2022). Studies have proven that different mobile applications have prolific outcomes within language learning scenarios. Rosell-Aguilar and Kan (2015) conducted a study consisting of 137 students who used mobile applications to teach the Chinese language. Almost all participants agreed that the mobile application they used for language learning has improved their ability to understand and comprehend Chinese language characters. Chen and Kessler (2013) have mentioned the use of mobile applications in language learning has fostered learners' autonomy and engagement. Item (2018) has conducted a study using a mobile application to teach language consisting of 4095 unique responses that show the effect of technology in comprehending a language statistically. The findings of the study showed that at least 27.7% of the participants observed improvement in 'vocabulary' followed by some 16.2 % of the participants claimed improvement in 'speaking,' 12.9 % in 'listening,' 11.1% in 'grammar,' 8.6% in 'reading,' 7.6% in 'writing,' 6.8% in 'pronunciation,' and 6.8% in 'translation.' Some specific games are designed to add a new dimension in language learning. With these initiatives, language learning has become much more entertaining and enjoyable than before. Research studies in foreign language areas for young learners indicate that technological development is very important and influential in learning a new language. Technology, the internet, and some computer games could positively promote language learning if used correctly (İlter, 2015). Nowadays, language instructors also prioritize using technology to facilitate language learning. On this note, İlter (2015) mentioned that language instructors should facilitate learners to discover appropriate activities using computer technology for successful language learning. Artificial intelligence (AI) the recent advancement of modern computing technology, can be utilised to promote independent language learning as it offers a great number of facilities under one platform. Zhang (2022) has illustrated that AI in English language learning is new and underexplored. Successful AI use can open unlimited possibilities. AI can allow language learners to access resources and receive feedback at any time and place, increasing learner autonomy. AI may also create individualised learning pathways based on learners' learning styles, preferences, and progress. Incorporating AI into language learning environments can help English language learners overcome issues including restricted access to native speakers, delayed feedback, and tailored attention.

2.3 Part three: Connection of autonomous learning with motivation and engagement.

A skillful acquisition of any language considerably depends on the learner's intrinsic motivation. As in attribution theory, the relationship between learner control and motivation entails the chance of learners altering their motivations. For instance, learners may be capable of changing self-determined extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation (Benson, 2013). Spratt and colleagues (2002) argued that motivation precedes autonomy. High level of motivation improves the dedication level of language learning. As autonomous learning refers to responsibly taking control over individual learning, meaning a learners planning the way of learning a new language, monitor the success as well as mistakes, and self-evaluation. In these cases, intrinsic motivation works not only as a requirement but also as an asset (Gandhimathi & Devi, 2016). According to Seven (2020), motivation is an internal feeling that arises from personal needs and wants. It is a mental scenario that determines the course of actions taken by any individual to complete certain goals. Motivation is a continuous process, as human needs are never completely fulfilled. It works like a mental strength that paves a successful way of language learning. The relationship between establishing self-autonomy and developing ways to learn a language is interconnected. As Lamb (2001) has mentioned, studies have found that the connection between motivation and learner autonomy is complicated since several distinct factors influence and strengthen each other. A survey conducted by Loima and Vibulphol (2016) showed that learners who had the autonomy to select activities that aligned with their self-determined learning goals had high levels of motivation, resulting better proficiency in the language.

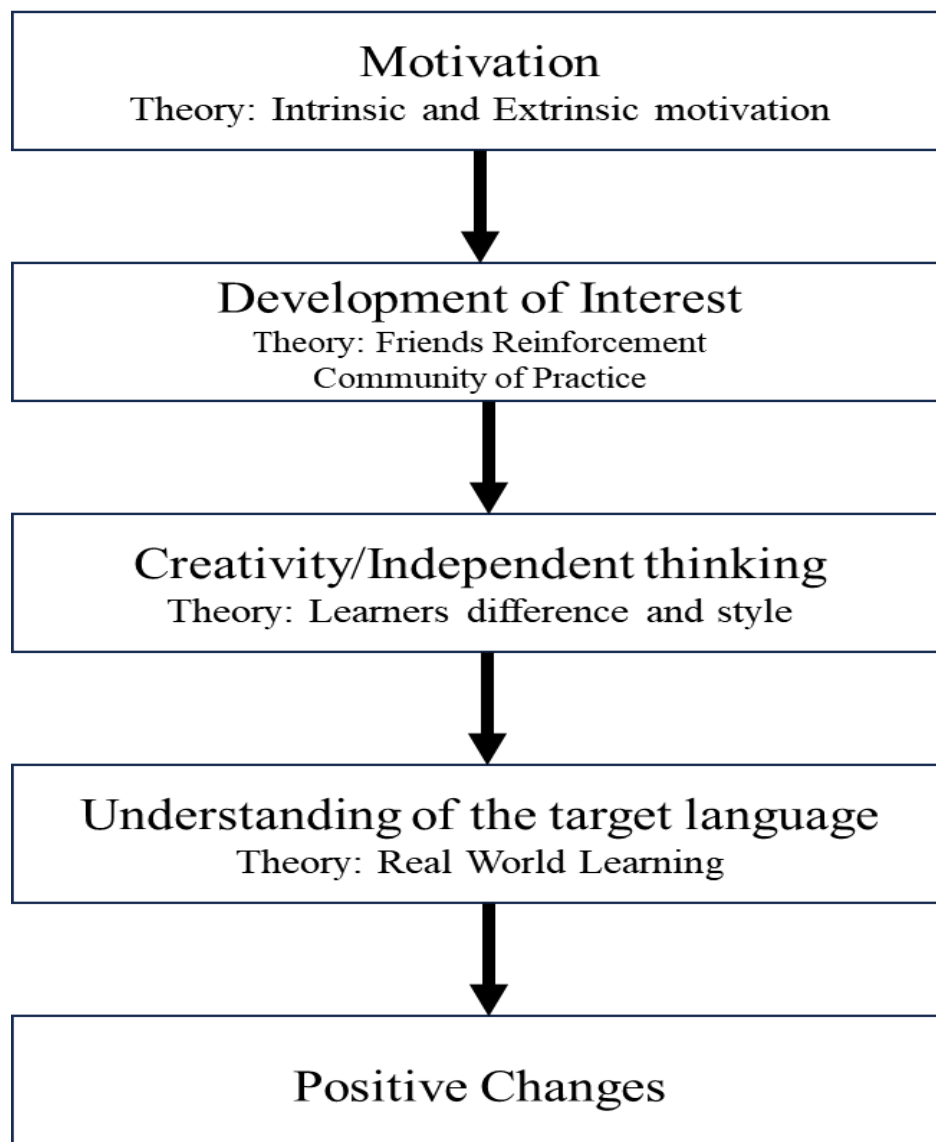
In fact, Gardner (2007) asserted that the absence of motivating factors might hinder learners from initiating the learning process. For those who start learning a language, a lack of desire can make the learning process challenging, gradually making it difficult to sustain their momentum. Chilingaryan (2017) described that a motivated individual would want to learn the language, strive to learn the language and enjoy learning the language. Definitely, It will increase the determination level and learners' ability to take new risks in language learning. Hence, motivation undeniably plays a pivotal role in determining the success rate of acquiring a second language (Hussein & Bajalani, 2019). A study conducted with 150 university students portrayed that learners' desire to learn a new language and attitude toward learning a language significantly contributed to designing learners' autonomy. The study also implies that motivation is imperative in affecting the learner's autonomy while learning a language (Liu,

2015).

One fascinating aspect of autonomous learning is the concept of giving liberty to make errors and learn from them. In a traditional English language classroom, students often keep their mouths shut without understanding the class topic. In light of this, Dicheva (2014) pointed out that advantages like the freedom to fail provide learners another opportunity to improve without fear of repercussions. Students will have the courage to learn new content and skills if encouraged to participate. These scenarios are still prevalent in most traditional English language learning classrooms in Bangladesh. However, in autonomous learning, the storyline is completely different. Here, making errors is an inevitable aspect and a crucial landmark for ensuring growth. While steering on their language learning journey, every mistake serves as valuable feedback towards better proficiency. The independent learning process has infinite chances of rectifying mistakes while guiding learners toward deeper and better understandings. Regarding that, Denis Waitley, an American motivational speaker inducted into the International Speaker's Hall of Fame, has said that failure is a necessary part of the learning process, but if you have never failed in life, you haven't really changed or progressed. Accepting failure will help us grow and realize that it's not a setback but rather a chance to learn and develop so we can get better (Pajarillo, 2024). Learners' thought process gets enriched with the help of their critical thinking ability to find a way out for their encountered problems. Such problem-solving skills enable individuals to create new boundaries of knowledge during their self-directed language learning process.

2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Autonomous Language Learning



In this conceptual framework of Autonomous learning, I have divided the learning process in 5 different steps. The theoretical model has been collected from Qurishi, and Bhatt's (2019) model of ideas fostering autonomous learning. The first step begins with motivation. Motivation plays a pivotal role in learning new skills. It is grouped with concepts like the extent to which a person wants to learn a particular skill and the need and necessity. Thus, learning a new language autonomously requires a lot of self-driven motivation. According to Mantiri (2015) and Kazantseva (2016), motivation plays an essential part in shaping attitudes towards the target language and determining the learning process results. The concept of motivation is commonly referred to as Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The approach highlights the integration and regulation of strong personal impulses inside an individual, enabling them to make improved decisions and achieve optimal performance. On this note, Patall (2019) has stated that Motivation is a complex process actively involving concepts like psychosocial, cognitive, neurological, and sociocultural perspectives. These dimensions have drastic effects on a person's decision-making as well. Additionally, Motivation is essential within concepts like autonomous learning. According to Lamb (2007), motivation is essential for achieving favorable outcomes in language acquisition, especially in educational settings with contextual limitations. A study involving 862 college students from ten distinct occupational training programs revealed a significant correlation between the student's attitudes toward learning and their ability to participate independently in English learning activities. The study confirms that higher motivation can bring positive results while learning a new language autonomously (Bravo, Intriago et al., 2017). Positive reinforcements and a supportive language learning environment also lower the learners' affective filters while keeping their spirits high. It also encourages learners to try new things. A research study carried out in Bangladesh involving 8 English language instructors examined the notion that employing positive reinforcement assists in stimulating students to participate in their tasks. Conversely, negative reinforcement reduces their motivation to exert effort and acquire new knowledge (Uddin & Sharmin, 2017)

The next step is developing an interest in target language learning, where the idea of reinforcement comes to light. Reinforcements remain at the center of successfully executing any new activity, and autonomous language learning is no different. Motivation is required to provide a solid start to learning a new language, and positive reinforcement comes in maintaining consistent growth in that language. This means a supportive and friendly language practice environment opens new possibilities and helps build confidence among new language learners. Multiple scholars have observed improvement in oral language skills for both native

and non-native speakers through positive influence from friends (Gàmez et al., 2019; Yeomans-Maldonado et al., 2019). The concept of reinforcement revolves explicitly around the learner's friend zone. A supportive friend zone has proven beneficial for greater language enhancement. On this note, Vu and Locke (2014) have explained that friendships have an advantageous effect on the holistic development of children. They provide emotional stability, affirmation, closeness, and affection. Moreover, friendships play a significant role in the growth of social competence, covering advanced communication abilities that foster connection and facilitate both verbal and non-verbal engagement (Borner et al., 2015). Therefore, a strong relationship between oral language development and the maintenance of friendships can be expected. Today's learners are not only confined by the real-life verbal communication. Rather they have indulged themselves in an even greater virtual world through different social media platforms, where they are connected with a vast number of people. As Carnoy and Castells (2001) mentioned, Modern learners are part of several community networks in their immediate surroundings and virtual communities that are spread out geographically. Their interactions within various social networks influence individuals' learning and development. Thus, the significance of social networking in the context of self-directed learning outside the traditional classroom setting is particularly noteworthy, and its influence deserves specific consideration. Furthermore, several communities or groups are formed among the users of these platforms. Essentially, these groups are made up of a particular number of individuals who aim to acquire proficiency in a certain language autonomously. A research carried out over 150 university students from Bangladesh portrayed that, typically, students utilize various social media platforms to access blogs, articles, and other resources related to the language they are interested in learning. Their active participation in social media, encompassing activities such as exchanging text messages and engaging in audio chats, significantly influences the development of their reading, writing, and listening abilities. The constant use of diverse language-learning applications and websites also enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of their language-acquisition process. This demonstrates a direct relationship between the use of social media and the development of linguistic skills. Therefore, a strong relationship between oral language development and the maintenance of friendships can be expected.

Within the step of creativity development and independent thinking, learners enjoy the aspect of freedom like nothing else. In the traditional learning style, a learner might not want to exercise immense pressure from most commonly educational institutions to learn a new

language. Such forceful conditions generate unwillingness among learners to explore a new language. However, In the autonomous style of learning, autonomous learners can decide their way of learning. Benson (2011) identified autonomy as a multidimensional capacity that can vary from person to person. Even for the same person, the autonomous learning process and strategy might change depending on the concept. Thus, skepticism does not become a regular phenomenon during independent learning. Learners from different age groups adopt identical language learning strategies according to their preferences. Autonomous learning highlights the utilization of different sets of strategies to control learners' cognition, motivation, behavior, and emotions in order to achieve various learning, performance, and avoidance goals (Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2014). For example, middle-aged learners prefer developing language skills by using books. Also, reading English newspapers to increase reading skills, using dictionaries to build vocabulary, and note-taking are some of the most established tactics. However, in recent times, technology and the Internet have completely driven autonomous learning regardless of age. Independent learning begins with using resources available on the internet. Notably, using platforms like YouTube and Facebook has redefined the language learning scenario. Additionally, Duolingo, as a sole language learning-based application, has also established its reputation. On this note, a study conducted among lower-secondary-school EFL learners in China showed that students spent at least an average of 2.21 hours per week discovering technological platforms and tools to explore English Language learning opportunities and resources. Not only school students but undergraduate students also use internet-sourced language resources as well. Lai and Gu (2011) studied Hong Kong undergraduate foreign-language students' self-initiated and self-directed use of technology for learning. They noted that 54 percent of the participants reported spending more than four hours a week using technologies for language learning outside the classroom. A complete understanding of the target language tends to happen when a learner tries to exercise his/her knowledge in a real-world situation. Such a try to implement real-world knowledge leads them to truly understand the needs of learning their chosen language. To serve various purposes, autonomous learners undergo different real-world experiences to develop practical knowledge and become more competent in the language. For instance, in academic institutions, office work, and even the form of exchanging words, autonomous learners engage themselves in practical forms of communication. The language learning process that is initiated with motivation and the gradual development of interest, followed by designing one's own strategies to learn, reaches its final step, where the learner can meet the challenge of using the target language in the required scenario. These practical experiences help learners find their flaws, work on those mistakes, and acquire the necessary skills to improve. Gradually, learners start to witness

positive changes within their language-learning journey

Chapter Summary

The entire literature review chapter is divided into three parts. Part, one presents a brief explanation of the concept of autonomous learning. Part two mentions the strategies associated with autonomous language learning. The sub-sections of part two mention the incorporation of technology to strategies autonomous language learning. Part three explicitly mentions the positive motivational factors while pursuing self-dependent language learning. The chapter ends with the conceptual framework adopted for this study.

Chapter: 3

Method of the Study

3.1 Introduction of the chapter

This chapter elaborately discusses the adopted methodology for this research, which is intricately aligned with the research questions formulated for the study. The study follows the qualitative case study design, aiming at three different age groups consisting of six participants. A semi-structured interview was conducted to collect the data. The collected data was examined through multiple case study analyses to address all six individuals' opinions particularly. This chapter further discusses the rationale behind selecting a qualitative multiple-case study approach, the conceptual framework of the study, the data collection process, research design and the details of each participant who became a part of this research.

3.2 The qualitative paradigm of the study

The concept of a paradigm primarily refers to the framework through which a research problem is viewed; it also influences the way the researcher thinks about the problem (Huges,2020). An ideal synonym for the word "Paradigm" is "Worldview," which stands for a way of thinking and making sense of the complexities of the real world (Cresswell & Clark, 2017). This particular research has been conducted using the pragmatist approach. It is described as a flexible paradigm that believes research methods should be chosen based on what fits best for addressing the research questions. On this note, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009) described pragmatism as a research paradigm that is simply finding the most effective philosophical and methodological approach a researcher should follow suited for the problem under inquiry. According to Cresswell and Clark (2017), pragmatism is a set of philosophical tools of value to address any particular inquiry. From the point of view of the research paradigm, pragmatism is identified as solving practical problems in the real world. Thus, it has established its position within the paradigm for practical-minded researchers.

Ontology refers to the question, "What is the nature of reality?" in other words ", What can be known from this research? This is the procedure for the researcher to discover new information to pursue the study. As Rahman and Alharthi (2016) illustrated, researchers have assumptions (sometimes implicit) regarding reality, its existence, and what can be discovered. The ontological query motivates a researcher to investigate the nature of reality. For this investigation, a closer observation of the participants while interviewing them and listening to the recorded version helped me gather necessary new information to conduct the research. In

some cases, the transcribed version of those interviews also assisted in having a better understanding of the narratives. A stress and anxiety-free environment was maintained so participants could express themselves fully. Moreover, other research on autonomous learning has helped to gather relevant evidence that I need to support my research.

Epistemology incorporates the validity, parameters, and methods of acquiring knowledge (Pretorius, 2020). It manifests the process I, as a researcher, followed to obtain the data required for the study. For this research, I have taken hour-long interview sessions to find out different strategies for prompting autonomous learning strategy among six individuals. The difference in strategy between males and females helped me to discover a wide range of successful strategies, focusing on the primary research objective of this study. According to David (2017), epistemology deals with sufficient and valid kinds of knowledge. The relationship between what we know and what we see. As philosophical assumptions, Axiology is referred to as the necessary bias principle. Biasness is strictly prohibited when conducting any kind of qualitative and quantitative research. Following this guideline, as a researcher, I have conducted this research from a completely neutral and unbiased point of view. In this investigation, I sought different effective and practical strategies to promote autonomous language learning. Additionally, the incorporation of technological provision in independent learning and to what extent this strategy can be incorporated within Bangladesh's contemporary English language learning classroom. The collected data is presented impartially. Following that, the data analysis was done through systemic thematic formation to explore the proper findings of this study. An inductive data analysis was used for the methodological approach to present the study's final findings. The inductive research style commences with a collection of observations and subsequently extends bigger generalisations from those experiences. In other words, they shift from particular to general (Kim, 2021). This investigation begins with the interview phase of all the six participants. Later, data collected from the interview was examined through supportive theory and literature to present the findings. Moreover, During the data analysis process, the researcher maintained a proper synchronisation between the collected data and aligned research questions generated based on the research topic.

The philosophical assumptions used in this paper are presented in the following table

Paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Axiology	Methodology
Pragmatism	Observing the participants while interviewing them. Listening to the recorded version of the interview and reading the interview narratives while keeping the subjective interest of each participant intact.	One hour-long interview session with the participants ensuring a stress-free free-environment. Gathering a wide range of information about different set of strategies used by the male and female participants	The researcher has shown a neutral and unbiased position to execute the research. The main objective was to discover useful strategies related to autonomous language learning.	Qualitative Multiple Case Study Analysis Inductive approach to analyse the data.

3.2 Selecting the Participants

To ensure a diverse range of information for the research, I selected six participants – three males and three females – from three different age groups. The participants were divided into different sets to facilitate the interviews and maintain data presentation synchronization. Each set comprised one male and one female from the same age group, and their educational levels were also similar. The first set of participants I approached consisted of one male and one female student from the secondary level of education, aged between 17 and 19. The second set included first to third-year university students aged between 22 and 25, with one male and one female participant in this group. Similarly, the third group also comprised a male and a female participant who were working in different multinational companies and were between 28 and 30 years old. The choice of participants from various age groups aimed to understand the efficacy of autonomous language learning among different age demographics. The participants were selected using the purposive sampling technique to highlight valuable findings for the study. The term 'purposeful sampling' refers to the process of selecting respondents who are likely to provide relevant and appropriate information (Kelly, 2010). Before the interviews, it was ensured that each participant used multiple independent learning strategies to support their English language learning. As Palinkas (2015) noted, when conducting a qualitative study, it is possible to work with a relatively small, purposefully chosen sample to achieve a deeper level of comprehension. A detailed participant profile divided into three sets is presented below.

3.3 Participants Profile

Set 1: Participants from secondary and higher secondary

Participant E	Participant F
Gender: Female	Gender: Male
Age: 18 years	Age: 19 years
Education: 10th-grade school student	Education: First-year college students
Institution: Viqarunessa High School and College, Dhaka	Institution: Cantonment Public School and College, Mymensingh.

Set 2: University-going students

Participant C	Participant D
Gender: Femlae	Gender: Male
Age: 23 years	Age: 24 years
Education: First-year university student	Education: 4th-year university students
Institution: Brac University, Dhaka	Institution: Mymensingh Engineering College, Khagdor, Rahamatpur.

Set 3: Working personalities

Participant B	Participant A
Gender: Female	Gender: Male
Age: 26 years	Age: 29 years
Designation: School teacher	Designation: Senior Executive
School name: Wisdom International School	Company: Fashion Globe Group.

3.6 A brief discussion about conducting the research

The entire research was solely based on interviews with the selected participants. All six of these participants were interviewed in person, ensuring adequate time to discuss their autonomous learning strategies. The research was conducted based on multiple case study design in order to depict each participant's personalised experience of independent learning.

As Merriam (1998) mentioned, multiple case study has been proven beneficial for gaining better understanding of complex systems that cannot be easily isolated from their context. This particular design (Multiple case study) of research following a qualitative approach allows a researcher to separately yet perfectly examine identical participants' data in an organized and strategic manner. It also allows researcher to compare-contrast between individual cases, present a diverse range of data with adequate depth and clarity. On this note Baxter and Jack (2008) and Thomas (2011) state that multiple case study research enables researchers to contrast individual cases, represent a range of characteristics and extremes to add depth, and comprehend a wide phenomenon without sacrificing the uniqueness of the individual case studies. Additionally, Creswell (2013) has mentioned that the multiple case study design investigates a real-life, existing bounded system (a case) or numerous bounded systems (cases) throughout time, using exhaustive, in-depth data collected from various information sources. and presents a case description along with case themes. A semi-structured style of interviewing was selected for the interviews. Semi-structured interviews, as opposed to unstructured ones, involve an interview guide that contains questions designed to address the aim of the research. The guided questionnaire provides a structure and focus to the organic flow of conversation for each individual interview, not to be read exactly in the same order with every interview. The interview questions mostly include open-ended questions and follow-up probe questions that allows the interviewer to collect necessary verbal data during the session (Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The challenges of executing multiple case study design revolves around assigning significant amount of time for each of the participants, properly utilising the researcher's energy and managing the resource (Adams, 2019). Keeping this in mind, all six of these interviews were taken on different days and with their written and verbal permission, as those were recorded. The reason behind arranging every interview on a separate day is to collect the data with adequate caution and care. A quiet, calm, and stress-free environment was ensured before interviewing all the participants so that they could incorporate all their thoughts while answering the questions. The questionnaire was developed with a mixture of questions centering on the four research questions and other filler questions for gathering other relevant data associated with several aspects of the English language scenario of Bangladesh. Systemic thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) helped discover themes based on the information acquired from the responses obtained during the interview. The generated themes were based on the research questions designed for this study. The data collected from each participant was separately analyzed during the analysis phase maintaining the aspect of multiple case study analysis. Besides, the research findings were presented, maintaining the inductive approach

based on the themes generated from the interview session. For the analysis part, data from each participant was separately analysed based on the dominant themes generated from the interview. Later on, the discussion was written following the inductive approach of qualitative research. The style of inductive analysis starts from making meaningful themes produced by the raw findings of the study. Then, representative data needed to mention to support the findings. Finally, the process ends with explaining the theories from relevant theories and literature (Bingham, 2022).

3.4 Semi-Structured Interview

Detailed and open-ended data was necessary to implement the qualitative methodology of the data collection process for this study. A thorough investigation of the participants' thoughts, understanding, emotions, and opinions was essential for addressing the research questions provided. Thus, A semi-structured interview seemed most appropriate for gathering accurate yet vital information. The semi-structured interview format facilitated an extensive understanding of my research problem for my participants. Based on that belief, I structured my interview sessions to be as brief as possible while addressing all necessary areas for the research. Wholey (2015) argues that Semi-structured interviews are highly beneficial when researchers seek open-ended responses that provide in-depth insights from individuals. Furthermore, the customizable nature of semi-structured interviews allows for their implementation in both individual and group settings, hence reducing the overall complexity of the interview sessions and process.

3.5 Interview Protocol

This particular research was dominantly dependent on the information collected through the interview session for the data collection process. As the study follows an inductive approach to analysing the data, primary data collection has immense importance. A systemic interview protocol was followed to make the interview experience pleasant for the participants and to gather relevant information for the study. The Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework was adopted to organise the interview questions better and formulate structured data. As Montoya (2016) illustrated, the IPR framework is considered the most suitable guideline for semi-structured interviews. According to Castillo-Montoya (2016), the framework has four

different steps to follow.

Step 1: Aligning interview questions with research questions

Step 2: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation

Step 3: Receiving feedback on the overall interview process

Step 4: Piloting the interview protocol

The primary step of exercising the IPR framework was to align the interview questions with the research questions designed to construct this research. As (Montoya, 2016) stated, the initial phase emphasises the link between interview questions and research questions. This alignment can enhance the efficacy of interview questions in the research process by confirming their aim and assuring their relevance by excluding unnecessary ones. A detailed list is given in the appendix to ensure the alignment between the research and interview questions. (See appendix B). For executing step 2, the ideal plan was to make the interview sessions more like a storytelling session for the participants. Thus, a day-to-day conversation style was followed for each interview session. A stress-free environment was ensured throughout, and for some participants, the interview was conducted in Bengali and then transcribed into English. On this note, Brinkmann and Kvale (2009) asserted that researcher questions are typically expressed in a theoretical and academic dialect, while interview questions have to be conveyed in the conversational style of daily conversation. Step 3 involves verifying the questions and collecting specialist feedback regarding the interview questions. According to Montoya (2016), this feedback enhances the dependability and trustworthiness of the questions as a research instrument. I have reached out to two faculty members from my institute, to receive feedback on the interview questions. After getting constructive feedback from the reviewers, a mock interview was conducted with two of my male and female classmates for the fourth and last step to ensure a smoother application of the process. This pilot study aimed to assess the validity and reliability of the questions and gain a more detailed understanding of the functionality of the final interviews. Multiple researchers have confirmed the necessity of the piloting process by stating that it is necessary to identify flaws and shortcomings in the final interview process (Watson, Atkinson & Rose, 2007). This part immensely helped me in determining the appropriate sequence for my interview questions and identifying additional questions to maintain a genuine conversational flow.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussions

4.1 Introduction of the chapter

This chapter was particularly developed to present the findings of this study. The findings of this study were elicited through a semi-structured interview done with six different participants, including three males and three females. It had three specific sections, each uncovering unidentical data from the interviews based on four different research questions. Section 1 of this chapter discussed the strategies participants of different age groups applied to carry forward their autonomous language learning journey. It was essential for this study to find out the strategy associated with the participants and how they utilised their personalised tactics in independent learning. The answer to RQ1 will be guided by the dominant themes generated on this particular issue. The first section also provided an explanation of participants' overall understanding of the fundamental aspect of this study, which is autonomous language learning. Section 2 addressed RQ2. In this part, the study examined the different resources that participants have utilised or are presently being exposed to enhance their independent language acquisition. The prevailing themes that emerged after the thematic analysis of relevant interview data on this specific matter determined the response to RQ2. Section 03 sheds light on the aspects introduced in RQ3. The section comprises the strategies participants want to incorporate into the existing traditional English language learning curricula. The potential and intricacies of incorporating such a strategy will also be examined. For this section, along with thematic coding, all six participants' suggestions will be discussed and analysed.

This entire chapter was designed using data collected from the interview that aligns with this study's research questions. Additionally, relevant literature from previous studies on this research topic will be used to validate the findings. The findings of the study were presented and discussed, focusing on the following research questions.

1. What strategies do English language learners adopt for their autonomous learning outside the classroom?
2. How do they access and improvise different resources for autonomous learning?
3. How do they incorporate their strategies into the existing English language learning curriculum/programs if they are involved in any formal learning setting?

Section 1

4.1 Strategies to adopt autonomous language learning

The first research question investigated the strategies used to promote autonomous learning for six participants. Each participant's interview was considered an identical case to generate the findings, and a wide range of learning strategies was discovered. This section presented all the relevant data connected with research question 01 based on dominant themes gathered from thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006).

4.1.1 Watching English movies and TV series

During my investigation, I discovered that enjoyment during learning was prevalent. All six of my participants incorporated different strategies that helped them enjoy their independent language learning phase. Believing in this learning while enjoying, most participants discussed learning English while watching movies and TV series in their target language. The idea came to their mind from planning to use the entertainment hours for productive use. From this notion, they started prioritising English language-based entertainment content over movies and TV series made in other languages. Five out of six participants in this study tried to use movies and TV series to develop their English language performance. Besides, they complained about the boring and monotonous way of traditional English language teaching scenarios. According to these participants, language teaching should be fun and engaging so that they can keep their concentration at a maximum level.

Humans have multiple facets of bringing entertainment into their lives. Recently, watching TV and movie series has become very popular. In the entertainment world, English movies and TV series dominate. People worldwide love watching this content, and the craze among people for some of this content is unmatched. Thus, one of the participants' most notable and celebrated strategies to develop their English language competency was watching TV series and movies made in English. Movies and TV shows are efficient and durable materials for providing authentic English input to EFL learners. They are excellent for inspiring learners in independent situations without a formal instructional structure or school obligations (Kobayashi & Tanaka, 2013). The learning attitudes and outcomes of students can be substantially influenced by the enjoyment they experience while learning a new language. The same is true for students who must cope with the dual challenge of adjusting to a new cultural and educational environment while simultaneously learning a new language (Liu et al., 2021). While learning English through watching content, subtitles benefitted each learner. It was the

stepping stone for these participants to maximise their language learning outcome while enjoying their favourite content. Entertainment has always been important in leading a happy and balanced life. Life requires entertainment to relax, get excited, and take a break from everything that makes life boring, stressful, and just plain annoying. It is reasonable to believe that learning a foreign language depends on the learning environment, provided that positive achievement-related emotions can ensure a better synergy between the language and the learner. It correlates with a high achievement and proficiency rate (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Hagenauer & Hascher, 2014).

4.1.2 Learning from YouTube

Among six participants, five of them found YouTube as an effective tool for strategising their autonomous learning. Generally, these YouTube channels were created by one or multiple English-speaking personalities from different countries. Without following the traditional teaching method, they try to present aspects related to the English language interestingly and interactively. However, most of these concepts had already been covered during their secondary and higher secondary level of studies. The presentation of language-related ideas, including grammatical concepts with real-life examples and use case scenarios, provoked learners to take advantage of these platforms. Answering a question about the reason for its vast popularity, the participants pointed out the platform's accessibility across every age and gender. Additionally, users do not need to pay anything extra without the charge of the internet to watch English language-related content. In comparison to other sources for developing English language skills, YouTube was fairly affordable and easy for them to access. As Trang (2022) mentioned, Language learners have previously used several Web 2.0 tools for various real-life reasons. Thus emphasising digital media and technology, including YouTube videos, is an excellent idea. Moreover, learning English from YouTube could be possible only by using a smartphone, a common technological device for most participants. In their study, Roddt and Peier (2013) discovered a novel way to teach using YouTube videos. Their study subjects were students from the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The videos offered "a new approach to teaching, and it is believed that the use of YouTube as a teaching tool could affect student engagement" (p. 474). The study's planned YouTube videos were able to increase overall student engagement by 64%.

4.1.3 Communicating with English-speaking friend group

Establishing meaningful communication for the target language user group has been tactically proven beneficial for enthusiastic learners. Within the realm of autonomous language learning, such an established technique has a profound reputation. During this study, half of the participants admired the idea of speaking with target language speakers. Both virtual and practical aspects were mentioned to make arrangements for communication. Such as participants A and B utilised their working environment to interact with native English-speaking citizens. During the interview, both noted that they used their existing language knowledge to initiate the conversation, and gradually, they forced themselves to become good friends. They were determined to use their native English colleagues as a strategy to improve their English. Eventually, they succeeded in improving their choice of words and fluency. They also talked about the increased confidence they exercised after incorporating this strategy. Another participant named D implemented this tactic using a communication platform called “Discord”. He used this computer and mobile-based software to converse with dozens of English-speaking people from different countries. They used to talk about interesting topics such as movies, sports, celebrities, daily life experiences, social events, etc. He ensured significant improvement in his speech deliveries and showed confidence while communicating. Borner (2015) mentioned that a keen relationship and a supportive environment greatly influence the learning procedures of an autonomous learner. It develops advanced communication skills that enhance connection and verbal and non-verbal interaction. Apart from real-life communication, the current learning community of the English language has a dominant virtual world appearance through different social media platforms. A study conducted by Chowdhury (2021) reveals that Bangladeshi students use social media to find language-related blogs, articles, and other resources. Active social media use, including texting and audio chats, affects their reading, writing, and listening skills.

4.1.4 Academic Curriculum and Working Environment

During my data collection, most participants complained about the existing education system not complementing beneficial English language learning outcomes. In multiple interviews, participants discussed the minimum practicality features of existing English language teaching scenarios. According to their opinions, most of their classmates felt the same, and English was not intriguing or interesting. Most of the interviewed people for this study highlighted that they were immensely motivated, and a sense of engrossment was instilled among them as they

started building skills in English, an international language. Generally, it came from the urge to grasp the most dominant lingua franca of the present world. Additionally, mastering the English language provides a significant career boost within the South Asian region. Knowing better English can secure a good job for the career enthusiast community. Such hype about the English language inspires a lot of students to grow their skills in the English language, but they cannot manage to do so. According to the participants, English did not come to them as a language but as a subject. As Participant A mentioned

“Till my higher secondary level, English was just a subject for me to have good marks in the examination. I have memorised a lot of grammatical rules and I did well in the exams. But afterwards, when I tried to use English to communicate, I was introduced to my lacking.”

On the other hand, these same participants experienced progress in their English language competence when they entered their graduation and post-graduation life. The academic curriculum across different disciplines uses books written in English, and to pursue education, students need to make themselves educated with the English language. Such a scenario helped my university-going participants to become comfortable with this language. Additionally, diverse assessment systems during their undergraduate level, primarily presentation tasks and public speaking, assisted them in diversifying and practically implementing their learning. Participants' writing skills drastically improved because of the in-course final examinations. On this note, Abdelrady and Akram (2022) mentioned that a positive attitude toward learning could benefit students by increasing their self-esteem, reducing anxiety, and promoting mental health. They are significantly more likely to experience a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and fulfilment when they approach their academic pursuits with optimism. Additionally, both working personality and university-level students mentioned the importance of staying in a supportive environment to foster English language acquisition. As Participant A mentioned in his interview, the environment was a key element after starting his autonomous language learning. The strategies I implemented heavily depend on a supporting English learning environment. During this interview phase, he explicitly talked about the supportive environment and positive reinforcement from his classmates to increase his learning efficiency. According to him,

“During my school days, there was no room for practising English inside the classroom. There was no practical usage of it as well. As a result, without a basic

introduction about myself, I was unable to speak anything in English.”

Two female participants from the research mentioned similar experiences. In this regard, participant C talked about the difference between acquiring English during her school and university days. She discussed,

“Bangla medium schools only focus on Grammatical English they didn’t teach us how to communicate in English, so basically, I only learned grammar in my school and college, but I started learning the English language after I was admitted into Brac University. Because I got so my opportunity here, everyone is inspiring me to communicate in English. The classroom environment, education curriculum, everything helped me to develop my language understanding.”

The English-speaking culture within her university also helped her to improve her determination. A study conducted by Getie (2020) has demonstrated that communication between classmates in English is of significant value in the development of students' attitudes towards greater English proficiency. She also mentioned that it developed their language proficiency to receive additional attention from the friend group. As Participant F mentioned,

“Speaking fluent English helped me to get extra attention from my friendzone.”

She also mentioned the English-speaking culture within her university also helped her to improve her determination.

4.1.5 Self–Evaluation Practice

Half of the participants in this research admitted that self-evaluation remained at the core of independent learning as it directed the path of improvement. Research was conducted by Morales and Mena (2016) among university students in Costa Rica to investigate the importance of evaluation among autonomous learners. For a period of eight weeks, two strategies for self-evaluation were implemented and assessed. The findings of this preliminary investigation indicated that learners' autonomy may be improved through the implementation of self-evaluation strategies. One well-established strategy for the participants was to find out and calculate the mistakes. In that regard, self-evaluation was proven beneficial. To understand their growth, practising in front of the mirror remained a popular tactic for multiple participants. As participant C mentioned,

“Then I start asking questions to myself so that I can get a clear concept and after that, I start practising in front of a mirror for achieving self-confidence.”

The mirror tactics usually included self-talking or giving a speech about any particular matter. Practising in front of the mirror was highly impactful before attending academic assessments, such as giving presentations and public speaking on particular topics. Some participants incorporated technology to evaluate themselves, as participant Participant A mentioned

“I use WhatsApp to record my speeches and listen to seek out my mistakes. Practising in front of the mirror did not work well for me because I think simultaneously focusing on speaking and finding out the mistakes is complicated. So, I record myself and then listen to my recording to ensure better progression.”

Similarly, participant D carried out his self-evaluation process incorporating technology slightly differently. He used this tactic to strengthen his self-confidence and eradicate speaking anxiety. As he said,

“I have recorded myself using laptops and listened to them to get rid of shyness and anxiety while speaking and to correct my mistakes.”

The self-evaluation strategy enabled these learners to instil several risk-taking mentalities in a completely anxiety-free environment. Risk-taking is a well-established procedure that promotes learners' language growth. During these self-learning processes, students can make mistakes without any fear or hesitation, and on the next attempt, they have the opportunity to rectify them. According to Parjarillo (2024), accepting failure and learning from it works like another opportunity to do better than before. The negative energy among the students triggers emotions like fear and anxiety that stop them from asking questions and sometimes even participating. Additionally, a considerable number of students do not want to participate in any in-class activities because of the panic of feeling humiliated. As Dicheva (2014) has mentioned, the freedom of making mistakes provides a second chance for the learners to learn and correct their mistakes without the tension of any penalties. Such quality improves students' participation and instils courage to take on new challenges. One thing to notice here is that every participant had to focus separately on four aspects of developing the English language: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Their strategies also blended all these four aspects to make them competent enough to use the English language fluently.

Section 2

4.2 Language learning resources in promoting autonomy

This section will discuss this study's second research question: how participants access and improvise different resources for their autonomous language learning journey. During the semi-structured interview, multiple questions were guided to find information supporting the particular thesis questions. This research question aimed to seek out to what extent the open sources played an influential part in assisting these participants' autonomous language learning journey. Additionally, it aimed at exploring the branches of technology that helped to sustain this journey successfully. The investigation also highlights the exact technological devices, web-based software, mobile-based applications, and educational materials available on the Internet. This section also revealed a fifty-fifty blending between strategies fostered by the use of technology and without it. The findings also suggested that these learners had strategised their autonomous language learning based on the four core skills of the English language: reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

4.2.1 Autonomous language learning with traditional resources

The traditional way of autonomous learning strategies without any inclusion of technology was fundamentally dominated by academic textbooks and English storybooks. This strategy worked for some participants as the stepping stone to starting an autonomous language journey. On this, participant A mentioned,

“During my school days, I focused on reading my English subject-related textbooks perfectly to improve my English skills. However, in my university days my course books helped me to immensely develop my reading and understanding skills of the language. Giving presentations on different academic topics was another activity that helped me to speak correct English.”

Reading storybooks creates a sense of interest among these learners as it allows them to practice their autonomy in choosing reading materials. Moreover, successful utilisation of the reading story books strategy can be optimised to foster masteries in students' listening, comprehension, and vocabulary knowledge (Gillandres & Castro 2011).

Apart from reading story books, participant B mentioned the inclusion of news and print media to support her autonomous language journey. She mentioned,

“From my ninth grade, my English language teacher insisted on reading a page of an

English newspaper every day. I used to read one paper in a week as a strategy to develop my English language proficiency.”

On this note, Küçükler (2018) mentioned that learners of English as a foreign or second language were frequently advised to begin their learning process by reading English newspapers, taking notes on a specific lesson, utilising library resources, participating in seminars, conversing with target language users, and so forth. Reading the newspaper is a beneficial habit for independent learners that can offer significant educational value. According to Rahul (2016), newspaper materials can be utilised to improve one's grammar skills, particularly grammatical structures, as well as to employ authentic idioms, phrases, and numerous innovative constructions. He also underscores that the reading of newspapers provides a more holistic comprehension of various aspects of life and science and a plethora of new opportunities for discussion and discourse in the classroom.

For these participants, the influence of English language teachers was significant and palpable. As participant F mentioned

“At first, I was advised by one of my language teachers to practice by myself. That is how I got to know about the Self-talking practice.”

Learning depends on the set of initiatives the learner takes more than the inputs he/she undergoes through teachers and textbooks. Such ideology upholds personalising the knowledge experience and creating a sense of identity outside the classroom (Little & Dam, 2017).

The successful language acquisition process is a blend of knowledge acquired inside the classroom and initiatives the learner takes outside the classroom to understand that knowledge concretely. Heavy dependency on classroom-based English teaching might result in reluctance among students. The students might remain in the dark in discovering their true potential.

Thus, the current generation of educators has begun to acknowledge this reality, recognise its significance, and promote autonomous learning as an effective approach to enhancing students' academic performance (Little & Dam, 2017).

Besides, some participants talked about club activities like debate and English language clubs from their designated institutions. According to Sun (2014), in debates, students get to promote their research, analysis, and evaluation skills to stimulate instantly scripted spontaneous interactional competence aligned with developing English language skills. Burek and Losos (2014) explained the required skills to perform in debate activities actively. As they mentioned, Debaters are required to listen attentively and take notes, a process known as "flowing" in debating. In the study conducted by Zare and Othman (2015), it was demonstrated that debate can enhance one's speaking and reasoning abilities.

A majority of participants discussed the importance of communicating with friend group to exercise English language practically. During the interview session participants disclosed that the traditional English language teaching curriculum did not incorporate the practical implementation of this language. So, they created their space to improve speaking skills. As participant E said,

“Speaking to senior relatives and friends in English gave me a way to test if I was fluent in English or not.”

There was no opportunity and environment for these learners until joining university to practically utilise their learned knowledge. Thus, for them making a friend group and conversing with them was the best option to exercise their speaking skills. In an answer to a question regarding developing speaking skills, participant C mentioned

“My university curriculum medium and environment forced me to start speaking in the English language. At first, I was a little nervous but soon I adapted myself with the culture I used this as a strategy to improve my English communication skills.”

A language practice environment that is supportive and welcoming can help new language learners develop confidence and explore new opportunities. The positive influence of friends has been observed to enhance the oral language skills of both native and non-native speakers by numerous scholars (e.g., Gàmez et al., 2019; Yeomans-Maldonado et al., 2019). The learner's friend zone is the central component of the reinforcement concept. A friendzone that is supportive has been shown to be advantageous for the improvement of language skills. On this note, Vu and Locke (2014) have clarified that friendships have a beneficial impact on the holistic development of youngsters. They offer emotional stability, affirmation, affection, and proximity.

Self-talking or speaking in front of the mirror was the most used strategy among these participants without the usage of technology. Speaking in front of the mirror was kind of a self-evaluation for these learners. They figured out their mistakes, lackings and made a plan to rectify their mistakes. Thus, this strategy was even popular among these learners even after using technology to promote self-learning. As C mentioned,

“At first, I started to strategies my learning through practicing all by myself. Mirror practice helped me a lot in it. Then gradually when I got introduced to technology, I have started utilising technology.”

Among scholars self-talking strategy has been accepted as one of the most highly beneficial autonomous language learning strategies that can be exercised through almost everyone. Besides, self-talking strategy is the easiest way of practicing speaking skills without

triggering negative factors like anxiety, shyness, etc. The minimum complexity and zero necessity of supporting items made this strategy easier to execute by millions of independent learners around the world. Research conducted by Humairoh and Harmayanthi (2021) showed that the self-talking strategy immensely improved students' overall speaking skills. Moreover, the process improved teacher-student communication inside the classroom, and students seemed confident while speaking.

4.2.2 Autonomous language learning with technology

Technology played an influential role in steering the human lifestyle for the last couple of decades. Humans have been dependent on several aspects of technology, and this fact is not unrecognisable. The exact same outcome was generated during the data collection process for this study. All the participants selected for this study had sheer dominance of technology in their independent language learning journey. The level of dependency varies because of the availability of technology for different age groups of participants. For example, students from secondary and higher-secondary levels had less exposure to technological devices, whereas senior participants were almost completely dependent on technology to continue their autonomous language learning procedures.

4.2.2.1 Incorporation of technological devices

Technological devices were necessary to aid technology centered autonomous learning. Along with technological devices internet was at the heart of it. Devices such as personal computers, laptops and mobile phones remain equally impactful to execute all the technology-based strategies for these autonomous learners. On this note, E mentioned,

“The Internet was the core of it all. Using the internet through computers, mobile phones, laptops etc., was highly beneficial for me to develop new techniques to improve my English skills.”

Without the help of the internet, some participants had only utilised technological devices to improve their language performance. As participant D stated,

“I had recorded myself using laptops and listened to them to get rid of shyness and anxiety while speaking and to correct my mistakes,”

As mentioned above, these learners have already started their autonomous language learning journey in a non-technological manner mostly through reading academic books, story books, various extra-curricular activities and through self-speaking in front of the mirror. However, the incorporation of technology paved the path of advancement for their autonomous language learning journey. Ahmadi (2018) stated that the development of learners' knowledge and skills in computer technology ensures equity of opportunity in language learning, irrespective of the learners' academic backgrounds. Developed countries started to promote technology-based language teaching for different age groups and genders. The western countries maintained high standards of education by the integration of technology inside their curriculum. On this note, Sayram (2019) mentioned that economically powerful countries prioritised the advantages of different tools of technology to access the Internet in out-of-class settings in order to foster learner autonomy, in accordance with the trend of technology-based education. It helped learners to equip themselves with a new set of strategies to support their learning endeavours in different situations. As Richards (2015) has identified, the internet, as well as a variety of computers and mobile technologies have increased the opportunities for meaningful and authentic language use outside of the classroom. During this learning period, the above-mentioned technological devices were supportive, almost like human friends for these participants, to ensure all the help they needed. Technological devices were the primary resources for these learners to realise their dream of becoming competent users of the English language.

4.2.2.2 YouTube supremacy in English language learning

Because of easier accessibility and massive popularity, YouTube played an Influential role to strategies the autonomous language learning sessions of these learners. Different participants took advantage of this free-to-access platform according to their wishes. Learners could choose English language-related tutorials according to their preferences from many available lessons teaching the English language. Participant A followed a YouTube channel named “Technical English Learning Home.” In this channel, he got the opportunity to start learning English from scratch. As he mentioned his shortcomings in understanding the basics of the English language, he started from the basics, and this YouTube channel moderately helped him.

“For example, I have used a YouTube channel called “Technical English Learning Home” by Mr. Wadud. I have used this website and Wadud sir’s YouTube channel to

strengthen my independent language learning journey. I am very fond of his teaching.”

Participants followed several YouTube channels from different countries to improve their English language competence. For example, participant D used to follow internationally renowned English language-related YouTube channels namely “BBC English” and “English with Lucy,” to learn English, without following the widespread traditional teaching style. Strategising his independent language learning with the help of YouTube generated positive outcome as he mentioned,

“Till date I think YouTube is the best platforms to learn English and different YouTube channels with quality instructors do teach English in an effective and practical manner.”

YouTube is an online video streaming site that has achieved significant popularity in modern teaching and learning, offering numerous advantages to students by serving as a primary resource for learner autonomy, particularly in the mastery of spoken and written English (Rajendran & Din, 2021). The access of personalising materials according to choice motivated users to adopt language-related YouTube content immensely. Apart from showing language learning-related videos. YouTube originally held its reputation as a platform to showcase content from the entertainment world. The participants of this study already recognised content watching as an accepted strategy to polish their English skills; thus, YouTube automatically became an ideal option for them to use for their autonomous language learning. Some participants said they even benefited from YouTube’s subtitles while enjoying content which were not related to English language. The subtitle technology of YouTube was acute as well as accurate which helped them to learn new words. Contents falling under entertainment genres supported participants. The qualitative study of Kim and Kim (2021) uplifts the same explanations like these participants discussed in their interviews. Ideally the research was to examine the influence of YouTube videos on educational objectives. The participants were randomly selected and assigned to complete writing an essay in groups. The interesting part was they can take help from the internet to shape their essay ideas. The result showed that the maximum number of students took help from YouTube to complete their essays. The researchers conclude that YouTube is a significant resource for providing students with essential intercultural materials that are beneficial for language learners to comprehend the significance of cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the current academic and social environment.

4.2.2.3 Learning through movies and TV series

Technology has dominated every sphere of human life. It has been more than a decade since cinemas and TV series became easier for people to experience hands-on because of the advancement of technology. Additionally, generation after generation, people have enjoyed watching English television programs, watching big-screen content, and listening to English music. Thus, such enjoyment became a source of learning strategy for autonomous learners. Participants access these contents through streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. Besides, they can download English movies available on the Internet or watch designated TV channels that broadcast different English movies. The ease of access, wide variety and large numbers of content facilitated these participants to include watching English movies and TV series as one of the maiden strategies to begin their autonomous language journey. On this note participant F mentioned,

“Some specific content-watching applications, like Netflix and Amazon Prime, gave me access to a large number of English movies and TV series.”

According to the learners, they had overcome multiple stages while implementing this strategy. They began by reading the subtitles at first. In this process, thoroughly following the conversation's flow was the primary intention of determining whether they understood the content. At this stage, learners mostly tried to guess the main theme of the content. Gradually, the understanding level improved quickly, and participants could follow the subtitles better than before. The final stage was to enjoy the movie without looking at the subtitles. Arriving at this point was considered a sense of achievement for the participants. Successful incorporation of four core skills, which are reading, listening, writing, and speaking, improves a learner's overall English language acquisition. From this point of view, learning while seeing any English language-speaking content covers two dominant aspects chronologically listening, reading and acquiring the target language. As participant E mentioned,

“Watching English movies helped me get better at listening and speaking.”

In the present day, the acquisition of a language is not solely an institutional matter rather, it is a delightful pastime ensuring the joy of learning. That is why one potential approach to ensuring that adult EFL learners by being exposed to the target language outside of the

classroom. It is to connect their process of English learning to their curiosity, major field of study, and/or professional requirements by offering them academic and professional benefits in addition to linguistic ones (Kobayashi, 2017). Enjoying movies and TV series stays at the peak among current generation of learners. While watching these visual contents, learners earnestly follow target language users' way of speech delivery. As mastering great pronunciation was necessary for the learners, they tried to understand the feelings as well. Participants greatly developed a sense of real-life communication from watching these movies and TV series. Content watching also aided these participants to understand the content properly and exposed them to new words that they can use in their everyday communication.

4.2.2.4 Skill development through Social-media platforms

Typically, we criticise social media platforms for abusive usage of language and for hampering our productivity. During this research, some participants used these social media platforms as a medium to improve their language. Sending text messages in Messenger improved their writing skills. Participants could make friends and communicate with them through internationally acknowledged messaging platforms like Messenger, Whatsapp, Discord, Viber, Telegram, and IMO. Participant D discussed

“I use different online platforms to speak, such as Discord, where I have talked with many of my friends. I have also spoken to some of my foreign friends through Discord.”

Additionally, creating groups of three or four and communicating in between was a popular tactic among these contributors to enhance their speaking skills and reduce anxiety while speaking. Public speaking and speaking while maintaining the eye-contact was a troublesome activity for most of these learners. But they had to master this skill, considering its real-world necessity. The video calling feature available in the mentioned social media platforms helped these learners gradually improve in this area. As participants could easily call their friends or family members to have a conversation on any particular issue virtually while maintaining eye contact. This strategy notably changed the speaking anxiety and also aided them in improving fluency and punctuation. Research on the implication of social media on autonomous language learning reveals social media lets users to communicate with different parts of the world. English being the language understood by citizens from most of countries. thus, they got to nurture their accumulated English language skills through these conversations. Majority of the

research participants were members of a social media language-learning community. In those like-minded people's English practice WhatsApp group, group members constantly practised English and improved.

4.2.2.5 Artificial Intelligence (AI) supported English language learning

Some participants also mentioned getting help from artificial intelligence (AI) to improve their skills and knowledge. Participant C utilised Gemini, the artificially intelligent chatbot from Google to improve her writing. A lot of mistakes used to occur during her writing. To improve this situation, she started chatting with Gemini, the AI, and it automatically corrected her mistakes with logical explanations. Similarly, participant D improved his speaking performance using a mobile AI-based application called Fondi. He improved his anxiety of speaking while speaking to this application. As he confirmed,

“Mobile applications like FONDI that help me to improve my speaking over time.”

The concept of Artificial Intelligence is a fairly new phenomenon and not very much exposed in the English language learning scenario. Though successful use of AI can open new doors to infinite possibilities, integrating AI into language instruction can enhance learner autonomy by enabling learners to independently access resources and receive feedback at any time and in any location. AI can also allow the creation of personalised learning pathways tailored to learners' learning styles, preferences, and progress. AI can assist in addressing the diverse requirements and challenges that English language learners encounter, such as limited access to native speakers, a lack of immediate feedback, and individualised attention, by incorporating it into language learning environments (Zhang, 2022).

4.2.2.6 Video games to facilitate English language learning.

The way of implementing technological tools varies within different age groups and genders. For instance, two male participants of this study from secondary and higher secondary levels mentioned playing multiplayer video games as a strategy to improve their English language competence. They have played these games both on the computer and mobile phones. These games are played between real-life players connecting multiple language speakers from around the world. Players need to communicate between themselves to play these games, and this

communication helped the participants improve their fluency and shyness in speaking. As a part of the entertainment, they regularly played these video games and witnessed their progress in breaking the fear of speaking. Video gaming has been considered as an activity enjoyed mostly by males, but for this research, the findings did not support that argument. Two of the female participants had regularly played vocabulary-based mobile games to improve their vocabularies. Speaking of vocabulary games, participants played vocabulary-building mobile games like WORDSCAPE, WORDS WITH FRIENDS to learn new words. Participants had to progress in these games by completing different activities labelled as levels. Each level comes with new learning ideas that improve a person's overall English language acquisition. The concept of game-based teaching and learning is a well-accepted phenomenon across the world. In this regard, Lynch and Garber (2020) explored the high rate of acceptance of gamification and the creation of a gamified classroom in today's world. The increased popularity of video games has made teachers abandon traditional teaching and establish gamified classrooms. In multiplayer gaming, a player needs constant communication to play better. For the sake of better gaming, players have no other option without communication. On this note, Shatz (2015) asserted that in video games, players were bound to communicate in some particular language. Especially in multiplayer gaming, a player needs to listen as well as communicate while playing the game. While gaming, most people remain stress-free, anxiety-free in this environment. Video games can help students take risks in case of learning a new language. Thus, players engage themselves in taking risks and try to communicate with teammates which helps them to be more competent with that particular language.

4.2.2.7 Language learning courses, website, applications, and webinars

Participants from undergraduate levels to working personalities also educated themselves with online language learning courses from national and international platforms. They paid very little money to enrol on the course, and some courses were completely free of cost. As participants B mentioned a wide range of virtual English language learning platforms that she used to foster her autonomous language learning journey.

“I have completed English language-based courses from Coursera, Udemy, Khan Academy and 10-minute school. Besides, applications like Quilt, Paddle, Twinkl, YouTube, Todoist, Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, Teams, and Kahoot have supported me in enjoying my language learning process.

4.2.3 Differences in strategies based on gender, age, and urbanity

The study's findings also revealed gender-based disparities in the individual autonomous language learning strategy process. For instance, male participants had a greater tendency towards socializing and were more receptive to discussion-oriented techniques. For example, within set 3 participant A and in set 2 participant D have mentioned about practicing English speaking by making real life and virtual social media-based friend groups. This strategy was proven beneficial for both male participants and it has reduced their spoken anxiety. Conversely, female participants exhibited limited interest in engaging in group conversations via social media or in person. In general, the idea of video games strongly represents the male community from the society. But surprisingly the findings showed that females were also interested to video games and using that as a strategy to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. Participant E and participant F, both from the higher secondary level and aged 18 to 19, indicate that male participant F had a greater interest in video gaming. He was significantly more committed to online multiplayer video games and enhancing his language abilities. A significant dependency on technology was observed among participants from urban locations. A reliable internet connection was an essential component that increased participants' reliance on platforms requiring constant connectivity, such as YouTube, Netflix, various online courses from Coursera and Udemy, and webinars. Conversely, participant A did not encounter any form of technology throughout the initial phase of his autonomous learning language process. It primarily relied on reading English literature and scholarly texts. Additionally, he had received private coaching to enhance his English language proficiency. Subsequently, upon his admission to a prestigious university in a major city, he began to engage with technology devices, websites, and software that significantly enhanced his skills. He required to allocate a considerable amount of effort to initially grasp the fundamentals of these technological provisions. Participant D, who is similarly pursuing his autonomous language journey from a small-town area, experienced difficulties with internet access and technological resources. For example, his speaking skills development process was heavily dependent over communicating with friends in real life and recording himself using mobile phone and listening to that recording to rectify mistakes. In contrast, individuals B, C, and F residing in urban regions were exposed to these technological facilities from a young age. In contrast to participant D, they have employed video and audio calling functionalities from social media platforms and online multiplayer video games to enhance their speaking skills.

Section 3

4.3 Integrate participant's strategies into English language learning programs

The last sections of this study's findings and analysis chapter discussed incorporating some effective strategies into traditional English language learning scorpion that had been a part of these participants' autonomous language learning journey. During the interview session, a particular open-ended question was asked to the participants to suggest ways to use their independent learning strategies to improve the existing English language teaching scene. Before asking the questions, the interviewer discretely talked about existing classroom-related issues, such as large class sizes, lack of teacher training, proper technological support, etc, to guide the participants in formulating realistic opinions. The findings brought some interesting ideas that can be proven beneficial to make English language learning more practical, effective, and interesting than the existing way of teaching.

4.3.1 Broadcasting videos to assist language learning

The majority of the participants insisted on integrating classroom-friendly videos into lesson plans. According to them, the English language classroom in Bangladesh failed to grab students' attention because the learning materials were not interesting enough in the first place. Only using textbooks as materials and a teacher's lecture session might have remained beneficial for completing the assigned syllabus, but that was a tedious classroom experience for most participants. Additionally, this same process was repetitively used across multiple generations. The participants suggested a change in this monotonous teaching style, and the most suggested one was showing various types of education-friendly videos to improve students' engagement toward acquiring this language. By getting educated under the same teaching methods, students could not understand the importance and necessity of learning English. The participants also mentioned the lack of connectivity among the teachers and students inside the classroom. It was because the only teaching strategies English teachers followed were reading out the text loud and, in the best-case scenario, pointing out the unknown vocabulary and providing its meaning. The entire process depended heavily on memorisation, and the goal remained to get good marks, not acquire a new language. Despite knowing limited technological support and lack of infrastructure, four out of six participants commented on using videos made in the English language to facilitate learners. Most of the learners had experienced an English language classroom that could not aid them in properly using the

language. Thus, they desperately wanted to change this teaching style and to add education-friendly video materials as a new technique to the curriculum. Supporting this Participant C said,

“Our school and college curriculums are also monotonous and boring. We can make them interesting by showing some short films in English. At first, teachers should select easier movies for better understanding, and gradually, the language difficulty will rise. It can be done weekly.”

Using video materials inside an English language classroom has been a popular and celebrated tactic to facilitate learning for academicians. As Abbas (2018) stated, the significance of video materials as a pedagogical strategy for improving a variety of language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading comprehension, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, had been pointed out in multiple studies from this field. Traditional teaching is textbook-oriented, mainly needing more practical knowledge. Moreover, student participation is considerably low, and students feel reluctant to participate in decision-making and class activities. Turning traditional learning scenarios into a multimedia-facilitated classroom can alleviate adverse effects. As Richards (2007) has mentioned, video materials are highly engaging due to their ability to incorporate authenticity, reality, flexibility, and variety into the EFL classroom and curriculum development, in contrast to textbooks and other conventional materials that might not be able to accommodate students' interests and requirements. Additionally, using multimedia materials in a lesson plays a great role in improving English language proficiency. Thus, video materials have been widely used in EFL classrooms because of their association with communicative language teaching and their role in facilitating language learning and stimulating the students (Kurniawan, 2015). Researcher Noha Halwani conducted a survey among higher secondary level of students and it shows that 90% of the students liked to learn by using visual aids. In addition, visual aids improved their self-confidence, comprehension, and concentration (Halwani, 2017). So, this particular strategy of associating video materials with English language teaching can significantly change the current teaching method. Besides, for educators, the arrangement to utilise this strategy could be made easily only by searching appropriate videos online. On this note, Ishihara and Chi (2004) mentioned that educators and course designers must prioritize integrating video materials into the classroom learning experience. Students are provided with "multi-sensory input that is close to real-life communication" by integrating films into classroom instruction. The objective is to expose students to the spontaneous use of language from an educational standpoint.

4.3.2 Increasing in-class speaking activity

During the interview session, some participants highlighted the lack of practical usage of the English language in the existing curriculum. According to these participants, different kinds of interaction-based speaking activities can be easily assigned to the existing curriculum that fosters the practical usage of the English language. Additionally, they mentioned that, among the four core skills of English language learning, speaking stays in hibernation until joining universities. Although speaking related activities were present in the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) prescribed English books. However, the English teachers often overlooked those activities as they were less important to attain good marks in the examination. As a result, participant A highlighted,

“I believe schools and colleges should initiatives to make English classes more practical by introducing different speaking activities. Such as presenting an act on a particular topic within a group of students. Just as I did within my English-speaking friend groups.”

Additionally, participants addressed the importance of using the English language inside the English language learning classrooms because teachers and students were reluctant to use the target language. Realising its importance, participant D stated that,

“Whenever we are learning English in an English class, the language has to be English, and teachers should promote conversation in English in class.”

These misleading techniques and the lack of guidance prevented these participants from acquiring standard English-speaking skills and for communicating using this language. Additionally, they developed speaking anxiety, which was a complicated hurdle to cross during their self-learning process. As a consequence, participants prioritised maintaining communication through English language inside the classroom for increasing its practicality and remove speaking anxiety from the students. The investigation also highlighted the necessity of including speaking-friendly activities inside classrooms that will benefit students and improve their communication skills.

The findings mentioned above of this investigation portray a completely teacher-dominated English language classroom culture. Regarding this particular scenario, Zohrabi (2012) mentioned that in the teacher-centric classroom, the main focus was getting the students to perform well on state-mandated tests rather than prioritising their needs. Writing and reading were given almost all the priority as they were necessary to attain good marks. Thus, students might get the opportunity to improve their reading and writing skills, but their speaking remains

at an amateur stage. We are all aware that English is a critical language in commerce and education. Given that, nearly half of the global population is familiar with that language and employs it daily to communicate with their business partners. Therefore, knowing English must include decent speaking ability for its users. Renowned authors Brown and Yuke from the book “Teaching the Spoken Language” said, “Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations” (Brown & Yuke, 1983). Besides, in their higher studies and professional lives, there is no alternative to adequate knowledge of English. Speaking skills are the most fundamental abilities for all learners who aspire to improve their careers and ensure job opportunities. The skills are also essential for public speaking, debates, group discussions, presentations, interviews, etc (Rao, 2021).

Among the four core skills of any language, the most practical one is mastering speaking skills. Ideally, language exists for communication, and using a language for communication makes a user adequately skilled in that language. On this note, Rao (2019) again has stated that proficiency in communication skills is essential in modern society, and one must attain mastery of these skills to succeed in their respective domains. Thus, speaking is an essential skill of the four languages in order to communicate effectively in the global community. However, in our curriculum, this English language feature has been completely ignored. So, considering its importance, English language classrooms inside the country must incorporate separate lessons that prioritise speaking skills and practical usage of the target language. According to neurocognitive development theories, young humans undergo a period of enhanced sensitivity to language acquisition (Johnson & Newport, 1989; Lenneberg, 1967; Mayberry, 2009; Oyama, 1979). The precise ending point of this time-limited sensitivity is unknown; however, the results of studies on second-language acquisition suggest a progressive decline with gradual age development (Szagun & Stumper, 2012).

4.3.3 Technology-based teaching through games and Apps

In today's age, every classroom should have access to the internet. Considering this availability of the Internet, multiple participants voted to integrate technology-focused teaching to increase students' participation in language development. Using game mechanics improves the ability to learn new skills by 40% (as cited in Gabe & Zichermann 2016). As mentioned earlier, the traditional English teaching process could have been more interesting. Thus, participants proposed to improve such conditions by using technological support. They mentioned using free-to-play vocabulary games inside the classroom and designing engaging lesson plans with

the help of software like Kahoot! Participant E mentioned,

"I think teachers can use educational content-based videos inside the classroom, and they can use vocabulary games as we have internet inside our classroom."

Studying and gaming are contradictory concepts. Nonetheless, the idea of a game-based application is to provide education inside a game-oriented context. This notion has led to developing a universally accessible language learning program via the internet. All these programs and software function similarly to a game and are also beneficial for education. Prathyusha (2020) examined the Internet world and acquired applications that facilitated language acquisition. These applications can be accessed through both mobile and computers to provide lesson plans for each student, encompassing activities such as listening, speaking, writing, vocabulary assessment, and additional tasks. Her mentioned internet-based language tools included Duolingo, Kahoot, Language-nut, Mindsnacks, Class Dojo, and Zondle. Here, Duolingo is the most popular mobile-based language-learning application, Kahoot, Class Dojo, Zondle are listed to make interesting lesson plans for the students and Language-nut as well as Mindsnack are two popular vocabulary games that can be played within the classroom. Byl and Hopper (2017) stated that an effective educational environment shared similar vital attributes relating to video games. Bringing games into education comes from the notion that games are fun, but education is not. Adopting new technologies and modernity is a gradual process for today's generation. So, innovation and executing new ideas in the education sector is necessary.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction of the chapter

The study aimed to evaluate the acceptance of autonomous language learning among English language learners of different age groups and genders. It defines various efficacious ways for attaining favourable results in autonomous language acquisition. The results demonstrate considerable interest in this approach within the English language learning community. Furthermore, it showcases how participants have leveraged various resources to enhance their independent language learning experiences. The innovative and meticulous usage of technology fostered self-directed learning, which was one of the major discoveries of the current research, empowering learners to take control of their learning. Different learning styles followed by identical participants have been formulated from easily accessible platforms such as YouTube, along with the latest integration of the latest-generation technology like AI. Participants implemented identical styles of language learning strategy according to their needs, necessity, and affordability. Furthermore, the study identified methods to foster independent language learning without relying on technology. In this framework, elements such as academic prerequisites, social engagement in English, and the study of English literature were considered vital. Self-assessment and a supportive learning environment were emphasised as essential for attaining improved language proficiency. Furthermore, the research uncovered several significant challenges in the English language teaching domain, such as inadequate technological integration, uninspired lesson plans, a less conducive learning environment, and conventional lecture-based instruction that needs to include the practical applications of the language. The report provides recommendations for educators to undertake essential reforms to enhance the preparation of future learners.

5.2 Recommendation of the research

The study's findings pointed out the following recommendations for policymakers and educators regarding possible improvement in the educational sector.

1. This study calls upon policymakers and experts in the field of English language teaching to swiftly adopt autonomous language learning strategies among students. In today's modern era

of learning, the existence and importance of independent learning cannot be ignored. Benson (2013) emphasised that “student autonomy is now a prerequisite for effective language learning. The significance of guiding students towards becoming more self-reliant learners has gained increased attention in modern teaching”. Therefore, educators should inspire students to implement various strategies to maximise their learning potential. As Getie (2020) demonstrated, “one of the most important variables that influence the learners’ attitudes towards learning a language is the teacher.” By promoting autonomous learning, educators can significantly assist students in identifying successful strategies to become proficient language users.

2. It is imperative That policymakers reframe English as a communication medium rather than just a subject to pass and score well in. This shift in perception will pave the way for better opportunities in the future. Instead of rote learning grammatical rules without understanding, educators should motivate students to develop the necessary reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to master this language.

3. The lesson designed to teach English should concentrate properly on the four skills of the English language: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The teaching should be aligned with practical needs and necessity. Speaking gets the least attention, considering the current traditional classroom conditions, among the four skills. As Rao (2020) highlighted, speaking is one skill that students will be evaluated on the most in real-world scenarios. Teaching speaking skills has received little attention despite its significance, and most EFL/ESL teachers have continued to teach speaking skills only as drill memorisation or dialogue memorisation. Thus, secondary and higher secondary teachers should put more effort into developing students' speaking skills. Additionally, maximum English language usage inside English classes should be mandatory for teachers and students.

4. The current generation of students is technologically advanced. With the help of the Internet, they have a current worldview. Technology-supported teaching has become a basic norm for this generation of students. To get a grip on students' concentration and engagement level, language lessons should include technological supports like using videos inside class lectures, promoting game-based learning, etc. Considering its immense popularity, teachers should utilise several English teaching YouTube channels and recommend that students get help. The recommendation list could include several movies and TV series as well.

5. Inside any English language classroom, the students should be free to make mistakes and

not get criticised for that. Making mistakes and learning from them is an inevitable part of language acquisition. But, if a student is mocked by classmates or scolded by the teachers, their affective filters get triggered. On this note, Yulan and Yuewu (2020) illustrated that, Generally, learners could pass through the filter and absorb more information at a low filter if they are in a favourable condition to develop a new language. Learners who exercise a negative impression while learning language usually process Information slowly and with a high filter. Therefore, in addition to focusing on student's knowledge and learning skills, teachers should also be aware of their affective filters and make an effort to help them develop a positive attitude toward studying English.

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