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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LEARNER AUTONOMY AND MOTIVATION, THE COMPARATIVE PREDICTING ROLE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE IN TERTIARY EDUCATION OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

This research paper explores comparative predicting role between learner autonomy and motivation in regard to the English language performance of tertiary education in Bangladesh. It sheds some insights on the existing teaching and learning practices and the low performances of English language of tertiary students. On the basis of study design, data has been collected through survey questionnaire from three different public universities. Findings imply that there exists a strong relationship between learner autonomy, motivation and English language performance of the students. Those students that are motivated, are found to be more autonomous. The findings suggests that learner autonomy and motivation both have significant positive impact on English language performance. It is found motivation is stronger predictor for English language performance in comparison to learner autonomy in Bangladesh. Students having both autonomous behavior and motivation are found with better achievement than those who are reluctant about these aspects. Besides, this research recommends some pedagogical improvements in the existing tertiary education for teaching English.

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Introduction:-

Learner autonomy (Holec, 1979), the ability to take the charge of learning by the students themselves, can be counted as an effective measure (Chang, 2020) for gaining proficiency on English language. The learner autonomy in tertiary education depends on the culture, classroom environment, applicability, class facilities, contexts, diary writing, sharing and discussing journals, sharing feedback on journals, reflection, promoting dictionary use, introducing useful internet websites, etc. (Arfae, 2020). However, besides that, motivation as a whole, plays a determining role in those autonomous behavior and activities of the students (Hagger, Hankonen, Chatzisarantis, & Ryan, 2020). Existing major problems like extensively teacher centered classrooms and conflicts of interest in English language learning prevailing in tertiary level in Bangladesh, are affecting the students poor performances in English (Sultana, Roshid, Haider, Kabir, & Khan, 2020). Due to the lack of proper English language teaching, students are not getting sufficient skill in listening, speaking, reading and writing which are hindering the process of higher education (Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2018). Inconsistent policy of English language teaching and also lack of methodological improvements are hindering the English language performance of the students. Basically, teacher dominated or lecture based curricula rather than involving students is followed. This results a graduates often fail to speak English fluently, which raises quality of English education (Jahan, and Islam, 2013).

Studying learner autonomy and motivation together among tertiary students have many rationales. This notion can easily be related with the motive of present Bangladesh education ministry motives and activities for the betterment of its citizens with the National Education Policy 2010. Those learners who are motivated are hypothesized too be autonomous and learn foreign language comparatively earlier than following traditional approaches (Wang & Guan, 2020). Likewise, it is pertinent to explore the comparative predicating role of learner autonomy, motivation on English language performances in the universities of Bangladesh context (Khosravani, Khoshshima, & Mohamadian, 2020).

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, as a symbol of national unity and identity, Bangla was given the topmost status in education including all other aspects (Rahman, 2005). Subsequently, the status of English came to foreign language which was earlier treated as second language. But due to practical reason, English is considered as the language of being educated and skilled for both public and private sector. In recent times, it is almost in the use of second language though officially not declared (Ara, 2020). The medium of instruction in all the universities here now in the classroom is basically English. It is a big concern for the students to be proficient in English at tertiary level whereby they come from diversified background or diversified medium of instructions at their secondary level (Dafouz, 2018).

Literature Review:-

Higher Education in Bangladesh is considered as an important aspect (Rahman, Mia, Ahmed, Thongrak, & Kiatpathomchai, 2020) for the development living and economic betterment of the people. Bangladesh is a densely populated country consisting 162 million people (Rahnuma, 2020). University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh is the controlling body (Islam, & Salma, 2016) of universities in Bangladesh. In the country, the number of public universities is 45 and the private universities are 103 (Ahmed & Tariq, 2020). The first public university named Dhaka University was established in 1921 and the first private university got established on 1992 (Islam, & Salma, 2016).

Since, youth population and their education and training is a significant part for the development of the country (Hassan & Hassan, 2020), the government of Bangladesh has taken 20 year strategic plans (2006-2020) to ensure the growth of this education sector. (Rahman et. al, 2020). It plans for reaching into Middle Income Country (MIC) status in 2023 by 8% annual GDP and foresees to be a developed country by 2041 (Hassan & Hassan, 2020)

In earlier time, tertiary level of education was seen as luxury as in the society as many people were in illiteracy in Bangladesh. But nowadays, for increasing development and to remove poverty, the higher education got importance and the purpose of higher education become to create skilled manpower (Monem & Baniamin, 2010).

Citizens of the country can now understand the importance of education and more importantly global education and they are motivated in different levels. To make it international standard, in Bangladesh the medium of instruction in higher education is English. So, students need to learn the English properly though their mother tongue is Bangla. The challenges of making the EFL learners autonomous at the tertiary level in Bangladesh are one of the main concerns of the today's language teachers (Sultana, 2018). In teacher centered classroom, students do not develop the fluency of English in an expected manner because it does not focus on the use of language in the classroom. Learner centered classroom is a collaborative effort (Nunan, 1999) between teacher and learner and in the process learners also participate in decision making for the selection of content learning

He has brought the structural issues with the language teaching. Structural issues include syllabus and curriculum designing. In Bangladesh, students have little active part in content selection process, rather it is mostly still teacher oriented. The problems arise when the language syllabus and curriculum fail to determine the needs of the students. Learner autonomy paves the ways to analyze and consider learner's needs and inspirations. English language learning is deeply connected with learner autonomy and motivation. To be a competent user of language, students of this time have to focus developing themselves. It is not only Bangladesh but the whole of the world is changing the dimensions of teaching and learning the English language (Alam, 2016).

Salehi and Vaez (2017) states Gardener and Lambert (1972) studied L2 in Canadian context who wanted to learn French. The learners who have the intention to become the part of the French community, become better learner of the French, their performance was better. Motivation of learning a language does not come from any vacuum place, rather it develops gradually by the combination of many life events through interaction. A learner's history of earlier

life and present life has a deep impact on it. The persistence of learner does basically depend on the experiences that he has got throughout his life (Al-Hoorie, 2017).

Khodadady and Ashrafborji (2013) cite Benson (1991) who operated his research in Japan followed a questionnaire for motivation. This study aimed to justify why the students are learning English where they found a significant relationship of performance and integrative motivation. According to Alaga (2016) affirms motivation contribute an important aspect by reassuring the learner's process of acquisition. Without motivation, even in the tertiary level of education, students face problems. Tahamineh and Daana (2013) conducted research on Jordanian English language learner where he found instrumental motivation to be more influential for increasing academic success. The cultures of the L2 have very little impact on motivating them.

Okay and Balcikanli (2017) how student's decision making is influenced, Pearson correlations has been carried out. There is a positive relation between student's abilities and level of motivation. Autonomous learners are better learners than the non-autonomous learners. The learners who follow autonomous strategies they learn English quickly. Due to the target orientation in language proficiency, researchers are launching programs to see how learner autonomy influences the performance and how motivation is related with it (Dafei, 2007). The researchers are looking at the relationship between learner autonomy and performance because it itself is critical issue (Ezzi, 2018). If the learner is more motivated, he participates in effective learning. It depends on the intensity of motivation. Therefore, it is pertinent to determine the learners' motivation to justify how autonomous they will be in their behavior (Kabir, 2015). Motivation level generally refers to an inside practice that activates, guides, and maintains behavior over time (Redzuan, Buda & Abdullah 2014).

There only handful researchers (Jianfen, Raj & Ai, 2018) followed the research that between learner autonomy and motivation that significantly contribute to the development of English performance. Similarly, Ezzi (2018) observes autonomous learning is prior to the non-autonomous learning and motivation is needed to improve the English language performance through the increase of the capacity of the learners.

Research Questions and Hypotheses of the study

The following is the research question determined for this study:

1. Is there any relationship between learner autonomy and motivation among the tertiary students of Bangladesh?
2. Which variable between learner autonomy or motivation that influence learners' English language performance the most?

Based on the literature discussed above and the research questions, the null hypotheses of the study determined as:

Ho1: There is no relationship between learner autonomy and motivation at the tertiary students of Bangladesh

Ho2a: Learner autonomy does not predict students' English language performance the most.

Ho2b: Motivation does not predict students' English language performance the most

Method:-

This is a quantitative research where a survey questionnaire has been implemented. The study was carried out among the public universities with undergraduate students of Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh. Sampling procedure is followed by stratified random sampling with the population of N=381 from public universities Rajshahi . Students aged 18- 25 are selected as respondents because they have the information of the study. Outside of Dhaka, in the less explored the universities on Rajshahi Division are chosen as the field of the study. The learner autonomy instrument has been adopted from Chan, Spratt, & Humphreys, (2002) and motivation instrument from Vaezi (2008) who designed on the basis of Gardner (2006) motivation measuring scales.

Findings:-

Before running the actual analyses, data reliability has been checked by SPSS 24 and the aggregate cronbach α alpha for the all the variables is found 0.973. This suggests the data is reliable. Then data is checked with normality test. The skewness is found in learner autonomy = .386, motivation =-.586, and performance = -1.53 and the kurtosis as learner autonomy = -.135, motivation = -.308 and performance =.386. With all the test measures, the skewness and kurtosis are between the ranges of -1.0 to 1.0, thus the data are normally distributed.

In answering research question 1, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used (Table 1) that shows the results of relationship of motivation and learner autonomy among the students of tertiary level of Bangladesh. It demonstrates that there is a significant strong positive correlation between learner autonomy and motivation, $r=.720$, $n=381$, $p=.000<.05$. Pearson correlation r between learner autonomy and motivation is $r =0.720$ that is between 0.70 and .90 that signposts a strong positive linear relationship (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, the strength of relationship between the variables is high. This indicates that 72% (0.720) of the variation in learner autonomy is expounded by motivation. So the null hypothesis: H_02 . There is no relationship between motivation and learner autonomy at tertiary students of Bangladesh is rejected as there a significant relationship between motivation and learner autonomy.

In the research question 2, there are two independent variables which are learner autonomy and motivation and the researcher wanted to see which one is playing greater role among students for improving performances. Through the checking of variables of learner autonomy and motivation and as the assumptions were fulfilled, multiple regression was used to see the predicating roles of these variables. To answer the research question (i) that tells which variable between learner autonomy and motivation influence most to the English language performance and also to test hypotheses H_01a , H_01b , multiple regression was used .

Table 1:- Correlation of Learner autonomy and Motivation.

		Learner Autonomy	Motivation
Learner Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	381	381
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.720**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	381	381

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2:- Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.772 ^a	.597	.594	.59824

- Predictors: (constant), Motivation
- Dependent variable : Performance

The model summary (Table 2) indicates the R (.714), R square (.584) and Adjusted R2 (.578). It indicates that 58% of the variance in English language performance of universities was jointly explained by learner autonomy and motivation. It can be stated that the measures were reflected strong predictors of English language performance including practical significance with statistical significance. On the basis of findings of Cohen (1988), an R square value that is greater than .26, must have a large effect. In this regard, with the model value of R square (.534), it can be understood learner autonomy and motivation as having a large effect on the public universities of Bangladesh.

Table 3:- ANOVA.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	199.995	2	99.997	98	.000 ^b
	Residual	135.285	378	.358		
	Total	335.280	380			

In the above Table 3, it is found ($F=98$; $P < 0.05$) that indicates there is a significant role of learner autonomy and motivation on English language performance. In Table 4 exhibits the coefficients of learner autonomy with the dimensions in relation to English language performance. It was found that ($\beta = .552$; $P < 0.05$) which indicates a significant role of learner autonomy in predicting the English language performance. It indicates 55.2 % from the variance of performance relates to the variables of learner autonomy.

Table 4:- Coefficientsof Learner Autonomy and Motivation.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.315	.172		-7.649	.000		
	Learner Autonomy	.559	.072	.559	7.806	.000	.481	2.079
	Motivation	.559	.060	.592	9.849	.000	.481	2.079

DependetVariable : English language Performance

As presented in Table 4 above, for the independent variable (learner autonomy), the probability of the t statistic (7.806), $p = .000$ which is lower than 0.05 or for the b coefficient is .000 which is equal to the level of significance of 0.05. It can be determined that there is a statistically significant relationship between learner autonomy and English language performance of public universities of Bangladesh. The results of the analyses showed that learner autonomy is significantly correlated to English language performance of public universities. The results display that learner autonomy completed a statistically significant contribution with a $\beta = .559$. Another the independent variable (Motivation), the probability of the t statistic (9.849) for the b coefficient is .000 which is equal to the level of significance of 0.05. It can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between motivation and English language performance of public universities. In addition, when teachers' instructional practices go up by 1 standard deviation, English language performance of public universities goes up by 0.481 standard deviation.

The results of the analyses showed that both independent variables, learner autonomy and motivation are significantly correlated to performance of public universities of Bangladesh. The results show that motivation completed a statistically significant contribution (beta = .592). In addition, the results show that motivation contributes the most significant relationship towards English language performance ($\beta = 0.592$; $t = 9.849$; $p < 0.05$). This is followed by learner autonomy which contributed ($\beta = .559$; $t = 7.806$; $p < 0.05$). In amount, all the two dimensions made a statistically significant contribution to English language performance. Accordingly, the corresponding hypotheses that emerged from Research Questions 2 are as follows: Hypothesis Ho2a: Learner autonomy does not predict students' English language performance the most is accepted. The results show that motivation contribute the most significant and the strongest predictor of the English language performance of rural public secondary schools ($\beta = 0.592$; $t = 9.849$; $p < 0.05$).

Thus, the hypothesis Ho2b: Motivation does not predict students' English language performance the most is rejected. In sum, all the two dimensions made a statistically significant contribution to English language performance, which means that all two dimensions are predictors of public universities of Bangladesh but motivation predicts more than the learner autonomy.

Discussions:-

Firstly, the study has been carried out with the valid and reliable tool for assessing learner autonomy. The questionnaire tool developed by Chan et al. (2002) is checked properly with Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) and Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) for justification of measuring on Bangladeshi tertiary students. Based on Gardner' theory (Gardner, 2020) of Socio Educational model theory (Gardner, 1988) that is widely accepted and practiced, motivation instrument followed in this study contained strong theoretical background of measuring motivation level of students.

The relationships between leaner autonomy and motivation have been affirmed in a number of studies (Tılfarlıođlu&Çiftçi, 2011, Alkan and Arslan, 2019). This findings are confirmed with the present study. In the study, it is found there are significant relationship among learner autonomy and motivation. It suggests, if the students are motivated and given the opportunity of autonomous behavior, they can perform better. This results paves the way towards the pedagogical improvement in only teacher directed teaching methodologies. Rather, it suggests that learner friendly teaching and learning style can promote motivation and learner autonomy and overall performance of the students.

On the basis of findings, it can be stated that if motivation level of the students can be increased the level of learner autonomy can also be accelerated. As the students of Bangladesh tertiary education needs to develop their performance more, it is particularly important to see the ways out. Supportive teaching and learning environment can foster motivation that results the increase of learner autonomy. The researcher recommends the higher educational institution should look at the system of learning of English language teaching and also to increase motivation for fostering learner autonomy among students.

Similar to this study, Hashemian and Soureshjani (2011) found the relationship among learner autonomy, motivation and performance among the learners of L2 in Iran. The study exposed that there is a significant relationship between GPA score and Autonomy. Their findings indicate a positive relationship between learner autonomy and performance. Those who are autonomous in language learning are basically motivated by its own features. Education has been transforming in the direction to a more learner-centered focus for decades (Kessler, 2018). As these studies supports the present findings, naturally the importance of focusing on these two variables increase in the learning condition of Bangladesh.

In between the two independent variable of learner autonomy and motivation and the researcher found motivation is playing greater role among students for improving performances. In a research of Zainuddin, (2018), he found students those who are pre motivated before a technique of gamified flipped classes, performed better and it actually made the learner to perform better with autonomy .In his research , one thing clear that motivation play bigger role in early stage than the learner autonomy.

Chan, et al. (2002) found that higher motivation led to higher frequency of engagement in the autonomous practices outside the classroom. The ‘motivated’ students were more with activities than their less motivated peers. Even the language major students who had chosen to study English revealed insufficient motivation for carrying out the outside-class activities. When we compared these language major students’ responses with those of the non-language major students, the data revealed little difference between the autonomous language behavior patterns of the two groups. So, the hypothesis that is rejected is learner autonomy does not influence learners’ English language performance the most, rather motivation influences learners’ English language performance the most. Like wisely, Chan at el. (2002) asks that motivation takes priority to autonomy in Hong Kong that our findings also suggests in the case of tertiary students of Bangladesh.

Conclusion:-

The study is significant in many ways. It studies the universities foreign language learner autonomy and motivation in one platform which has not been done earlier in Bangladesh. This study identifies the relation between learner autonomy and motivation among the students of tertiary level of Bangladesh. The results affirm that there exists a significant positive relationship between learner autonomy and motivation. To improve pedagogical scenario of tertiary education, it shows the light on existing concepts and the current practices in English learning at university level. It suggests, there should be enough procedures to increase the motivation of the students so that the learner become involved in autonomous activities to increase the performance level. The study findings also very suggests that motivation plays a bigger role in predicating the English language performance than the learner autonomy though leaner autonomy also predicts in significant manner to the English language performance. Therefore, the teachers and educators of tertiary level can utilize the research findings into the development of the students’ English performance. The students can be encouraged to many independent activities for learning the language by themselves. Proper planning and also the useful strategy can bring the development of the English teaching style and learning in the tertiary level of Bangladesh. The learning issues that are related with comparative role of learner autonomy and motivation are brought forward to suggest in the development of the teaching pedagogy through a systematic and comprehensible model. The study has provided new insights and understanding towards the development of English language learning. The researcher expects the Bangladesh Universities authorities will reshuffle the methods, techniques and motivation towards the learners for the improvement of better performance in the English language. The stakeholders need to come forward to improve the condition of the learners with the light of the insights and knowledge which will make the research fruitful and effective.

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