Investigating Learning Strategies Students Use to Learn English Autonomously

Usman Juta Aneob and Ayele Eyob Kenta*

College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature: Mizan Tapi University, Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia

*Corresponding author

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to investigate learning strategies students use to learn English autonomously at Wolaita Sodo Secondary School. Descriptive survey design was employed in this study. The sample sizes of the study were 66 students and 10 teachers in the academic year 2005 E.C. The students were selected using a random sampling while teachers were selected using purposive sampling. To collect data from the sample group, questionnaire, interview and observation were used. Data were analyzed quantitatively by percentage, mean and qualitative by description data. The findings indicated that the teachers were aware of problem identification strategies and they had positive attitudes towards autonomous learning. The majority of students were not planning or setting goals of their learning, monitoring their own progress, attempting to identify their strength and weakness. Again, lack of grammar and vocabulary knowledge and unaware of their roles effectively are found to be the reasons for the ineffectiveness of autonomous learning of English in the classroom. The study also revealed that teachers were not encouraging students to use different learning strategies. They also did not give enough technical support on how to plan for independent learning and presenting new view points and experiences on autonomous learning. In addition, teachers' lack of sufficient knowledge on subject matter and inability to give counseling are one of the recognized challenges that affect autonomous learning of English in the school. Thus, based on the above findings, and conclusions drawn, suitable recommendations have been forwarded.

Introduction

After the communicative language teaching emerged in the early 1970s, there has been a focus on the "enhancement of the role of the learner in the language learning process" (Wenden, 1991: XI). The communicative or interactive approach encourages a very active role of learners. It emphasizes greater students' initiative rather than simple teacher centered direction. Following this, language educators began to take into considerations the central role of learners in the teaching learning process.

The shift of interest to learners as a source of information for learning process led to the growth of interest in the theory and practice of autonomy in language learning and teaching (Benson, 2001). For many recent years now the concept of 'learner autonomy' has been a popular focus for discussion in language teaching (Holec, 1981; Dickinson, 1987). Coterall (2000), observes that the last 25 years have seen an increasing amount of attentions to learner autonomy, self-directed learning, self-access systems, and individualized/independent learning in language learning. Over the last two decades the concepts of learner autonomy and independence have

gained momentum, almost becoming a 'buzz word' within the context of language learning (Little, 1991). Boud (1988), reveals that the fundamental purpose of education is assumed to be to develop in individuals, the ability to make their own decisions about what they think and do. It is also supported from outside language teaching by a general educational concern to help students become more independent in how they think, learn and behave (Hammond and Collins, 1991).

The popularity learners' autonomy has been gaining increasingly is also evidenced by the great emphasis it has received in the ELT literature. As Dornyei (2001) puts it, a great many books and articles have recently emphasized the role learner independence plays in producing effective and life-long language learners, by creating in them a sense of responsibility or duty-mindedness, which helps them to take the lion's share in their language study. It is believed that involving students in decisions about learning goals, activities, materials, assignments, etc. means providing them with a share of the responsibility over their own language learning (Little 1991). However, becoming autonomous learner is not an easy ride because as scholars like Blue (1988: 100) persuasively argue, it poses added responsibilities of "planning, execution, and monitoring learning activities" on students. Students also need to have positive attitude towards learning the language in focus, possess the right level of motivation in learning it, and be able to reflect on and confidently assess their learning (Clark, 1987; Cook, 2001). These and other important learner traits can be developed through special treatment such as appropriate and persistent learner strategy training and learner counseling (Catterall and Crabbe, 1999).

This new reality of the role of learners in teaching learning process got recognition in new Ethiopian education and training policy according to the 1994 new educations and training policy of the country. The general objective of this education and training policy was to develop the physical and mental potentials and problem-solving capacity of individuals and to cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs.

The concept of learner autonomy goes with the objective of education and training policy of Ethiopia because of the adoption of student-centered approach and communicative language teaching in the new curriculum

of the country. Therefore, it seems to be an emphasis on the subject of student freedom to participate actively in language learning, rather than being coerced only to act according to the teacher's wishes and preferences. As a result of this, it is generally believed that the high school teachers of English language are aware of how to motivate and encourage their students to become independent learners of the language. In the same way, it is also believed that the students are persistently involved in taking charge of their own learning of English.

However, in the Ethiopian context, there are considerable numbers of problems which have not still been solved because of different reasons to implementing learner autonomy in teaching English language. The researcher shares the above mentioned problems because of his diverse and long experience of teaching English in different government high schools. Therefore, this is the gap the researcher wants to study. Accordingly, the researcher selected the problem that is "investigating learning strategies students use to learn English autonomously.

Statement of problem

Learner autonomy is often mistakenly equated solely with independent out-of-class learning in which learners are in control of all aspects of their learning process. In this view, an autonomous learner is one who is intrinsically motivated and learns outside the classroom, alone, and with no need for support from the teacher. However, learner autonomy can also develop in the structured learning environment of the classroom and become part of the pedagogical objectives of a language course. When a syllabus is designed to promote learner autonomy, the focus of the syllabus is clearly on a student-centered approach (Gardner and Miller, 1999); the teacher is still very much involved in assisting learners with their learning (Schwienhorst, 2003); the development of learner autonomy can have strong collaborative elements (Little, 1995); learners can choose to be more or less independent at different points in their learning process (Dickinson, 1987); and learners can be encouraged to reflect on their learning and ways to improve it (Little, 1997).

However, in Ethiopian high school context, English teachers have been complaining that students always rely too much on their teachers because they do not want to take responsibility of their own learning by applying different learning strategies in and outside classroom. This has been realized true as the researcher's long

experience. According to his experience, most of the time, students come to class without doing their home works and assignments, reluctant to do participatory class activity being in pairs or groups, instead they seek their teacher's spoon feeding. Thus, the researcher is initiated to conduct the study to identify the influencing factors and give suggestive measures to both students how to use different learning strategies to be autonomous in learning English in and outside classroom, and teachers to aware learner autonomy and encourage and train their learners to use learning strategies so as to become autonomous learner.

Even though there have been few studies conducted on learner autonomy, they are not enough for providing the current problem on implementing learner autonomy in English classroom. Two studies in this area are Tekle Ferede (2010) and Mesfin Eyob (2008). Tekle Ferede (2010) conducted a study on major hindrance of developing learner autonomy in Baso general secondary school of grade nine in Debrebrehan. His finding indicates that students lack confidence to learn without teacher, and lack interest and commitment to learn English. In addition to this, Mesfin Eyob (2008) also conducted a study on the topic learner autonomy in learning English in Mekele Atse Yohannes preparatory school in focus. His finding shows that students' lack of Basic English skills and confidence, and their exam based learning technique affect learning English autonomously.

There are major differences between this study and the above mentioned two. First, the grade level and the region in which the studies conducted were different. Secondly, the findings of above mentioned studies were few and related their causality to rare challenges like lack of interest and commitment, lack of confidence and basic language skills with reference to only students and teachers. Moreover, the above mentioned two studies did not incorporate learning strategies students use to learn English autonomously. Therefore, in this particular study learning strategies students use to learn English autonomously were embodied from different directions.

Objectives of the study

- investigate what learning strategies learners use to learn English autonomously,
- assess the attitudes or beliefs teachers hold towards autonomous learning strategies,

Materials and Methods

In this section, the research design and methodology adopted for the purpose of the present study were described. Therefore, this chapter presents the research design, participants of the study, sampling techniques and sample size, data gathering instruments and methods of data analysis.

Research design

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design, which employs both quantitative and qualitative techniques. This is why because survey design is used to gather critical research information via questions and it utilizes a co relational design which searches for associations or correlations between various variables of interest to the researcher (Janet M. Ruane 2005). This method is also suitable in attempting to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomena and program (Kumar, 1996:9). This research has attempted to observe and investigate the learning strategies students use to learn English autonomously and hence, it was considered important to use a descriptive survey design because of its suitability.

Subjects of the study

The primary source of data for this research was the sample of grade 10 students who enrolled for the academic year 2017/2010 E.C. and English language teachers teaching English in the proposed school. To investigate learning strategies students use to learn English autonomously in EFL class room activities the researcher involved grade 10 male and female students and as well as their English language teachers of Wolayta Soddo secondary school.

Sample size and Sampling techniques

According to the data from record office, 315 male and 345 female, totally 660 students in 10 sections were enrolled for the year. In addition, there were 15 English language teachers who were teaching grade ten English. The researcher applied two sampling techniques which are systematic random sampling to select subjects of student population and purposive sampling to select subjects of teacher population. The desired sample sizes of the study were 66 student participants. The researcher used a table of random numbers to select first element to inclusion in the sample. The rest of elements for inclusion selected using sampling interval. Sampling

interval was calculated dividing the total population size by desired sample size. This means that 660 are divided by 66 and its result is 10. Therefore, the researcher drew each sample after ten intervals. For example, the random starting point was number 4 and the selection continued using 14, 24, 34…660. From the total number of 15 teachers based on their experience and period load, 10 were purposively selected to involve in questionnaire, and 4 in interview aiming to have more reliable and relevant information. Since the purpose of this research was to investigate learning strategies students use to learn English autonomously, the researcher hoped that relevant data were obtained from these populations.

Data gathering methods

To elicit sufficient data from the subjects, this research employed questionnaire as a principal data gathering tool and interview and observation as supplementary tools.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was first designed in English based on Cook (2001), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), but was translated into Amharic, with maximum care to maintain equivalence between the original and the translated versions, so that the respondents comprehended each item without difficulty and responded to it with ease. The questionnaire had two types of items: close-ended and open-ended, which are common in a survey study (Robson 2002). The questionnaire has seven parts. The first part dealt with students' profile. The second part contained 11 items which are intended to assess students' related factors that hindered autonomous learning. The questions were categorized into five frequencies: 'Never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always'. The third part of the questionnaire consists of 9 items that were designed to see teachers' related factors. The items were rated by 5 point lickert scales that is: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree,' 'undecided', agree' and 'strongly agree'. The fourth part of the questionnaire consists of 4 items that were designed to see school related factors. The above lickert scales were used to rate the items. The fifth part of the questionnaire consists of 8 items that were designed to see opportunities for extended activities resource related factors. The sixth part of the questionnaire consists of 8 items that were designed to see learners' effort to use learning strategies in learning English autonomously. The fifth and sixth parts of the questions were categorized into five frequencies: 'Never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always'. The eighth part of the questionnaire consists of 8 items that were designed to see students' motivation and self-esteem towards autonomous learning of English.

Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview was employed as a second data collection tool in order to gather the necessary data from both teacher and student participants in this study. The researcher used a semi-structured interview to get first hand and genuine information from both teacher and student respondents. This was because the use of interview as a data collection instrument permits a level of in-depth information, free response, and flexibility that cannot be obtained by other procedures (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989).

Classroom observation

Under this data gathering tool, the researcher needed to collect necessary information to his study, next to questionnaire and semi-structured interview, by investigating how language learning strategies were actually applied in the classrooms during the teaching/learning of four language skills. In this regard, the researcher purposively selected 4 sections from 10 sections of grade 10 at the school and observed four (4) times each. This was because each of the selected sections was held by different teachers, i.e., one of the four teachers who were teaching English at grade 10 level in the school. Thus, the researcher observed the classroom situation by preparing the observation items and then by inserting those to observation checklist.

Data collection procedures

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were generated. The data of this study was collected based on the following procedures. That is, the researcher administered the instruments one after the other to triangulate and organize the data properly. First, the data was collected from students and teachers participants through questionnaire and then the problems that presented were identified. Then, on the basis of the insights obtained from questionnaire, the researcher administered semi-structured interview and classroom observation one by one to examine factors that impeded the autonomy of learning in English classroom with regard to the students, teachers' belief and practice, school administration and the school environment. Finally, the results obtained from all data sources were comparatively triangulated and analyzed inductively.

Methods of data analysis

The data for this research was organized and analyzed thematically by two categories i.e. strategies learners use, and attitude teachers hold towards learner autonomy. Accordingly, the data acquired through close-ended questionnaire items were organized and displayed in tables to be analyzed quantitatively through the application of percentage and mean value, while the data elicited through open-ended questionnaire items, interview and classroom observation was treated using qualitative descriptions. Finally, conclusions were arrived at through the combined discussion and summary of the findings from all the three data gathering methods.

Results and Discussions

This study was aimed at giving clue for students as well as teachers, how to promote learner autonomy by applying different language learning strategies inside and outside classroom. it is also hoped to indicate the role of learners and teachers in promoting autonomous learning. In this chapter, the data collected from all the subjects using questionnaire, interview and observation were analyzed. The researcher employed sequential analysis of data in this study. Therefore, the data analysis began with the results obtained both from students' and teachers' questionnaire, and went to interview and observation results in order to indicate the current problem on implementation of learner autonomy. Indicating the present research problem, data gathered through all tools in this study were analyzed together. This means that a mixed data analysis approach was made through the integration of the themes into systematic category. The main purpose of integration of the data was to give holistic picture and to achieve thematic coherence.

Strategies learners use

In this subcategory, it was aimed at indicating how effective the students were in making effort to use different language learning strategies during English skills were taught to promote autonomous learning. Therefore, the following eight items were displayed in table 1.

Item 1 aimed to investigate if learners participate in making decisions about what materials and methods to use for learning English independently. As can be observed from table 1 about half of the students, (48.49) percent were rarely making decisions and 27.29 percent of subjects never made any decision. However, some of the above respondents (19.69) percent were employing decision frequently that constitutes usually and sometimes, while only 3 respondents claimed, they do so always. Making decision for one's own learning is one of the characteristics of autonomous learners. Nevertheless, the students of the school had a limited action to make decision in language learning. In terms of teachers' response to the same item in this table, only 1 teacher responded that the students took part in making decisions sometimes. However, the majority of the teachers, 7 responded rarely and 2 of them claimed never. The students' response to the same question showed that the majority i.e. 48.49 percent and 27.29% percent of the subjects respectively replied rarely and never to the above assertion. The above results from students' and teachers' response revealed that, most of the students were not autonomous learners. Dickinson (1995) characterizes autonomous learners as those who have the capacity for being active and independent in learning process.

According to the responses to item 2 of the above table, 43.95 percent of the students articulated that they rarely negotiate with their teachers on setting time/deadline for tasks such as assignments and 37.87 percent of them responded that they never negotiate with their teachers on setting time/deadline. However, in the respective columns, 6.06, 3.03, and 9.09 percents respectively articulated that they negotiate with their teachers sometimes, usually and always. As the data above depicts, the highest proportion of the respondents that claimed rarely and never on this proposition constitute 81.81 may help us to conclude that learners were not making their own effort because they did not negotiate with their teachers on setting time/deadline for tasks such as assignments which is one of learning strategies for independent learning as mentioned in the literature part. Next, the teachers were asked if the learners were negotiating with them on setting time/deadline for tasks such as assignments. As the summary in item 2 teachers' column indicates; only 1 of the teachers reflected that her/his learners usually negotiate with her/him and also another 1of them reflected their learners to do so sometimes. However, the majority of the subjects 8(80%) responded their students were rarely negotiating with them on setting time/deadline.

Item 3 was set to see if learners were negotiating with the teacher on teaching methods to be pursued. As the data in table 1 shows, only 12.12 percent of the students responded that they were negotiating with the teacher always, while 4 and 2 of the subjects respectively were

usually and sometimes negotiating with the teacher on teaching methods to be pursued. However, the majority of the students (42.43) percent were negotiating rarely and 36.36 percent of the subjects responded never. In teachers' response column too, there were more responses that against the claim that students make efforts to negotiate with their teachers on teaching methods to be pursued. Out of 10 teacher subjects, 6 responded their students were rarely negotiating while 2 of them answered never. As the data from students responses in (table 1) to the same question showed, the majority of subjects answered they rarely negotiate with their teachers on teaching methods to be pursued. As Hedge (2000) confirms that collaborating and negotiating on tasks and teaching methods to be pursued with the teacher is one of socio- affective strategies which is used to develop autonomous learning. Nevertheless, as the above results reveal that, most of the students were not applying this strategy effectively. From this information, it is possible to say that most of the students were not making effort to learn English autonomously.

Item 4 was intended to see whether students were inferring the meaning of new words from contexts. As can be observed from table 1, about half (21.21), (25.77) and (4.54) percents of the respondents were inferring new words from context always, usually and sometimes respectively. Unlike the above respondents, 27.27 percent of the students were rarely inferring when they face difficult words, while the rest 21.21 percent were never inferring new words from context. The total proportions those inferred rarely and never constitute 48.48 percent are nearly half depicts that the students of this school are not good at inferring words from context. Concerning teachers' response to the same item, only 4 of the total subjects responded their students were sometimes inferring the meaning of new words from context. However, more than half, 6 of teachers answered their students were rarely inferring the meaning of new words from context. As the data from students' questionnaire of (table 1) item 4 indicates, nearly half of the subjects replied they rarely infer the meaning of new words from context. Furthermore, as the observation checklist (see Appendix I) indicated that students were not inferring new words from context effectively. When the researcher observed if the students were inferring meanings of new words from context, 2 to 3 students were trying to infer even though their guessing were not effective. When the teacher told them to read and infer the words in bold, they kept silent without responding anything except 2 or three active participants

however their guess were not effective. Many scholars like Wenden (1991) suggest that learners have to be good guessers to be autonomous learners. However, the data gathered from students' and teachers' questionnaire as well as from observation depicted that students of Wolaita Sodo secondary school were not efficiently doing so. Therefore, this information makes one to infer most of the learners are not good at applying inferring new words from context.

Item 5 of table 1 was set to see if learners were scanning a reading comprehension text to locate specific information and skimming a given passage or paragraph to find its main idea. According to the data in table 1 above, nearly half, (18.19) percent of the respondents were applying this strategy always and (27.27) percent of them claimed that they usually did so. On the other hand, more than half, (54.54) percent of the subjects were rarely scanning and skimming passage or paragraph to find its main idea. According to the teachers' responses to item 5 too, the majority of teachers responded their students rarely skimming a given passage or paragraph to find its main idea and scanning for specific information. Here, only 1 and 2 of the subjects respectively said their students usually and sometimes scan/skim reading comprehension text. However, the rest 7(70) percent replied their students were rarely scanning /skimming a reading comprehension text to locate specific information or to find its main idea. Furthermore, data from observation checklist reviled the same fact. From four classes observed, in only one class some students did this to some extent, however, it is difficult to say that they were fully obeying to the teacher's order. As Brantmeier (2002) suggest that scanning or skimming is one of cognitive strategies or specific attacks that learners employ when faced with learning or comprehension problem. However, as the data depicts on the above table, most of students were not effectively applying this specific strategy. Furthermore, data from observation checklist reviled this fact. Among the four classes which the observation was held, a few students were making effort to scan/skim the passage.

Item 6 was aimed to see if the learners were making their own efforts on writing notes or summarizing main ideas while listening or reading. According to the information from table 1, majority of the subjects claimed that they were making effort rarely and never. The two proportions constitute 75.75 percent of the total subjects. However, very few of the subjects were claiming positively to this effort, i.e., 2 claimed always, 4 usually and 10(15.15) percent of them answered sometimes.

Similarly, the teachers' responses to items 6 in the rarely and never columns of the above table show that the students in focus do not make effort to writing notes or summarizing main ideas while listening or reading because total number of respondents in two columns, i.e., rarely and never account for 90 percent. Likewise, data gathered through observation reflected this reality. When the researcher was observing four different classes, he realized except few students in one class, almost all of the students were not interested to write notes or summarize main ideas while listening or reading the text. This might be because of lack of previous class experience or lack of knowledge on writing and listening skills as well as lack of motivation by their teacher. From these evidences of students' and teachers' responses, we may infer that the students of this school were very poor at writing notes or summarizing main ideas while listening or reading.

Item 7 was intended to see whether students were exercising the four stages of writing, i.e. thinking, planning, writing and checking when they write paragraphs or essays. As it can be observed from table 1, only 5 of the subjects were always exercising this strategy, while 7 of them claimed that they were usually exercising and 4 of the respondents were sometimes exercising. Unlike the above respondents, 27.29 percent of the students were rarely exercising and the majority, (48.49) percent were never exercising this strategy. The total proportions those were exercising rarely and never constitute 75.75 percent which were majority number depicted that the students of this school were not exercising the four stages of writing, i.e. thinking, planning, writing and checking when they write paragraphs or essays. According to the response from teachers' column, 8 of the total subjects replied that they were exercising the four stages of writing rarely and never.

As we can observe from table 1 item eight (8) regarding pair and group work, the majority of the students, (42.43) percent were rarely doing activities in pairs and groups independently, while 19.69 percent of them claimed that they never do activities in pairs and groups independently. On the other hand, 4, 6, and 15(22.73) percents of the respondents claimed that they were doing this activity always, usually and sometimes respectively. From this, it is possible to say students were not making effort on pair and group work activities independently because the total proportion in rarely and never column constitute 62.12 percent. Similarly, according to the response from teachers' column, out of the total ten (10),

seven (7) teachers responded their learners were rarely doing activities in pairs and groups independently.

Likewise, the information obtained from teachers' and students' interview showed that most of learners were not confident at doing activities in pairs and groups independently. In this regard, four of the teachers noted that:

Few numbers of students are participating in pair and group work activities however they are not confident enough. Most of students in my class are passive participants. They always need all things should be done by their teacher (T1). Most of the time, my students are not confident enough doing their pair and group works because they perceive that everything from the teacher is right (T2). When I give pair and group work activities, most of the students in my class want to be dependent on few front coming students. What I always observe during pair and group work time is that few students in the groups do the activities (T3). I always observed that students were not using the target language effectively when they were given group works. They rather chat by using their first language something else (T4).

From the above reflections, one may understand four key points. The first one is that number of students who participate in pair and group work are very few and secondly, students are not confident enough during pair and group work activities. The third point could be most of the students are dependent of their teacher and another active student. Finally students use Amhric ignoring the target language during group work activities.

All six students were also asked and provided nearly the same replies as that of teachers except for a few differences they mentioned as the reason for not confidently participating in pair and group work activities. Some of them expressed fear of committing mistake and being laughed at by other students, being demoralized by the teacher, lack of effective support from teacher when they get confused, and shortage of time as the problems that hinder them from participating confidently in pair and group work activities. For example, three of them said the following:

I am not always participating in pair and group work activities confidently because I become shy hopping that other students will laugh at me if I make any mistake (S1). I have will to participate in group work activities but our teacher does not make it clear how to do, so it is sometimes difficult for us and we become silent. During

this time, our teacher insults us, so we are demoralized and become hopeless to participate (S2). Because our teacher does not give us enough group work to practice independently, most of the time we are confused during *group work. When we ask our teacher for clarity, he is not able to give us sufficient help rather, he demoralize us in the class (S5).*

Table.1 Learners' effort to use learning strategies

N	Items	R	Always (5)		Usually (4)		Sometimes (3)		Rarely (2)		Never (1)		Total	
			No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Taking part in making decisions	S	3	4.57	6	9.09	7	10.06	32	48.49	18	27.29	66	100
		T					1	10	7	70	2	20	10	100
2	Negotiating with my teacher on setting deadline for assignment	S	6	9.09	2	3.03	4	6.06	29	43.95	25	37.87	66	100
		T			1	10	1	10	5	50	3	30	10	100
3	Negotiating with the teacher on teaching methods to be pursued,	S	8	12.12	4	6.06	2	3.03	28	42.43	24	36.36	66	100
		T					2	20	6	60	2	20	10	100
	Inferring words from context	S	14	21.21	17	25.77	3	4.54	18	27.27	14	21.21	66	100
		T					4	40	4	40	2	20	10	100
	Scan and skim a passage for its specific or main idea,	S	12	18.19	18	27.27			20	30.30	16	24.25	66	100
		T			1	10	2	20	3	30	4	40	10	100
	writing notes or summarizing main ideas	S	2	3.03	4	6.06	10	15.1	32	48.48	18	27.27	66	100
		T					1	10	6	60	3	30	10	100
7	exercising the four stages of writing,	S	5	7.59	7	10.06	4	6.06	18	27.29	32	48.49	66	100
		T					2	20	4	40	4	40	10	100
8	Do activities in pair and group	S	4	6.06	6	9.09	15	22.7	28	42.43	13	19.69	66	100
		T			2	20	1	10	7	70			10	100

R (Respondents), S (Students), T (Teachers)

Table.2 Teachers' belief about learner autonomy

NO	Items	SA(5)		A(4)		UD(3)		DA(2)		SDA(1)		Total		Mean
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
1	Students should learn a lot without much support from their teacher	4	40	3	30	3	30					10	100	4.1
2	Learners should create sense of responsibility for finding their own ways of practicing the language	5	50	4	40			1	10			10	100	4.3
3	Learners have to identify their strengths and weaknesses.	3	30	4	40	1	10	2	20			10	100	3.4
4	Learners should be responsible for planning their own language learning	6	60	2	20	2	20					10	100	4.4
5	Learners have to set goals for their learning English independently	4	40	4	40	2	20					10	100	4.2
6	Learners should monitor their own progress	6	60	4	40							10	100	4.6
	Average mean													4.16

Based on the above interview reflections of teachers and students as well as responses from students' and teachers' questionnaire, it is possible to conclude that students of Wolaita Sodo secondary school were not confidently participating in pair and group work activities independently because of the above mentioned problems. Regarding this scholars like Harmer (2000) believe that learning in pairs or groups can encourage mutual support and stimulate a sense of relatedness through interacting with significant others. However, in general, the students were not aware of working together (cooperation) with peers can help to learn English, i.e. the socio-affective strategies in literature section of this study.

Teachers' attitudes towards learner autonomy

This section presents what attitudes or beliefs teachers hold towards autonomous learning of English in terms of students' performance.

The responses to item 1 in Table 2 showed that the students in focus should learn a lot without much support from the teacher because 4 and 3subjects that totally account for 70 percent respectively forwarded their strong agreement and agreement except 3 teachers that were unable to decide. The above results reveal that, the teachers of Wolaita Sodo secondary school have positive attitude towards autonomous learning. Dickinson (1995) characterizes autonomous learners as those who have the

capacity for being active and independent in learning process. Next, the teachers were asked in item 2 whether learners should create sense of responsibility for finding their own ways of practicing the language. As it was summarized in above table, only 1 of the subjects disagreed but the rest 5 and 4 of the teachers respectively that totally account for 90 percent indicated their strong agreement and agreement on the given proposition. As it has been mentioned in review of related literature, the development of learner autonomy depends on the exercise of that responsibility in a never-ending effort (Cotterall and Crabbe 1999). Therefore, based on the above data, we can say that the teachers of this school were in favor of learner autonomy.

In item 3, the teachers were asked whether the students had to identify their strength and weakness. As it was indicated in Table 1 above, the majority, (3) and (4) of the subjects respectively responded their strong agreement and agreement on the above proposition. This indicates that the majority of teachers (70) percent believe that students should identify their strength and weakness. However, only 2 of the total subjects responded that learners have not to identify their strength and weakness except 1 teacher who was unable to decide. From the above result, one may conclude that the teachers are aware of problem identification strategy which is meta-cognitive. Likewise, if we consider the responses to item 4, the majority (6) and (2) of the subjects respectively expressed their strong agreement and agreement on the idea that whether learners should be responsible for planning their own language learning. However, the rest 2 of them were unable to decide. As it was described in literature part of this research, being responsible for planning once own learning is one feature of autonomous learner. Therefore, from the above data we can prove that teachers are positive towards being responsible for planning once own learning.

Concerning item 5, only 2 of the teachers were unable to decide on idea that the learners have to set goals for their learning English independently. On the other hand, the majority that totally accounts about 80 percent of the total respondents put their claims on the strong agreement and agreement column. In item 6 of Table 2 above, the teachers were asked whether the students should monitor their own progress so as to improve their independent language learning. According to their responses, 6 and 4 of the subjects respectively that account for 100% claimed that they were strongly agree and agree on the given assertion. The fact that the mean of the responses to each item i.e., (M=4.1, 4.3, 3.4, 4.4, 4.2, 4.6) are more than the average mean 3 also strengthens that the English teachers of Wolaita Sodo secondary school positive attitude towards autonomous learning.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate what learning strategies students use to implement autonomous learning of English and to identify their attempts to overcome the problems. The participants of the study were 66 students randomly selected from grade 10 and six students were purposively selected to reflect in interview. In addition, ten teachers purposively selected only from grade 10 and out of them only 4 were involved in interview. The data collected from these subjects by using questionnaire from student and teacher participants, observation checklist when teaching-learning process was taking place and interview for teachers and students. After collecting the data by using the mentioned tools, both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods were employed to arrive at the results. The data that was gathered through questionnaire, interview and observation were first integrated by bringing the interview and observational results to questionnaire data and then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively together so as to create the holistic picture of the study.

The students were not seen using the following learning strategies that help to learn English autonomously like: planning or setting goals of their learning, monitoring their own progress, attempting to identify their strength and weakness. Additionally, students' lack of grammar and vocabulary knowledge and unaware of their roles effectively are found to be the constraints that affected the implementation of autonomous learning in English classroom. The study also revealed that teachers are not encouraging students to use different learning strategies, not giving enough technical support how to plan and not presenting new view points and experiences about autonomous learning. In addition, lack of sufficient knowledge on subject matter and unable to play role of counselor effectively are also one of the recognized challenges to implementing autonomous learning of English. In addition, lack of confidence, not taking responsibility for their learning, motivating instrumentally and not using different language learning strategies effectively in English classroom were also the key findings in this study

Recommendations

Based on the major findings of the study the researcher suggested the following recommendations, which might be helpful to use learning strategies to promoting autonomous learning:

Teachers have to encourage learners to reflect up on classroom learning through training students different strategies such as using diaries and evaluation sheet to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, identify problems and solve it by discussing with friends and teachers. In addition, teachers have to transfer their roles by involving students in various tasks that come up in any teaching-learning situation. For instance, allocating small tasks in the classroom, sharing ideas about learning outside the classroom, allowing learners to talk to the class and make class contract.

In order to help students become autonomous learners of English, English language teachers must have knowledge and awareness about the advantage of learner autonomy. Therefore, the Department of English at the target school should organize regular awareness-raising workshops to enable English language teachers to be aware of independent learning.

It is necessary that English language teachers at Wolaita Sodo Secondary School be committed to offer explicit training in which inputs can be given on how students learn English independently. In addition, it can be useful to counsel students to develop confidence to take full responsibility and increase commitment for their learning, and to believe that they can learn much English without a teacher.

The school administration should provide the school with sufficient access that are helpful in promoting independent learning of English such as: internet service, authentic listening and reading materials, references, fictions, stories, magazines and newspapers by allocating some amount of money. Teachers are also expected to recommend materials that are valuable for the course.

In addition to learning English for instrumental benefits of passing examinations, gaining knowledge and getting good jobs, it is useful for students to develop integrative motivation, i.e. learning this language in order to be able to interact with speakers of this language. To this end, English language teachers need to make their students engage in interactive tasks such as interviewing people,

English club activities, correspondence with pen friends, etc. Additionally, since seeing other people use English for communication motivates students to follow suit, it is essential that teachers of this language, taking all risks, try to use it for interaction outside the classroom with people including students.

In order to conceive autonomous learning effectively, the learners should play the roles of planning, executing and monitoring their learning. Therefore, English language teachers need to delegate to their students tasks such as setting goals for learning, selecting materials to be used in the classroom, reflecting on their learning success or difficulties, developing action plans of how to improve learning, evaluating their learning progress, choosing tasks to be done, setting timetables for activities, choosing teaching methods to be pursued, etc.

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