



KMC Journal

[A Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access Multidisciplinary Journal]

ISSN 2961-1709 (Print)

Published by the Research Management Cell

Kailali Multiple Campus, Dhangadhi

Far Western University, Nepal

Becoming an Autonomous Learner in Nepalese EFL Context An Autoethnographic Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/kmcj.v4i2.47727>

Abstract

This autoethnographic study explores the researcher's own perceptions on learner autonomy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context of Nepal. I collected the data from my experiences of learning English at Master's level education in a campus from Kailali district under Tribhuvan University of Nepal. Using the autoethnographic research design of qualitative research, I conducted the study. More specifically, the data consisted of seven diaries written from March 2018 to April 2021. This study substantiates Vygotsky's (1896-1934) socio-cultural theory as the main theoretical base. Furthermore, I also consulted Holec's (1981) learner autonomy and Knowles' (1975) self-directed learning to strengthen my experiences to reveal how I became an autonomous EFL learner. The findings of this study reveal that close academic connection with the professors and universities is essential for becoming an autonomous learner in learning EFL in the researched context. Moreover, the learner's personal effort and rigour in the process of learning seem to be paramount for the continuation of learner autonomy.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, autonomous EFL learner, personal diary, higher study

Introduction

An autonomous learner is a person who takes full responsibility of his/her learning. An autonomous learner does hard work and proves to be an honest person in the workplace. To be a successful professional in life, learning seems to be prerequisite for teaching profession. In fact, learning in higher level could be influenced by personal interest. When the learner is forwarded by his/her internal drive, he/she can do better in higher study. Internal drive is so crucial for those

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learners who are engaged in their profession and wanted to get further academic degrees in their subjects of interests.

In my case, I determined to continue my further study with the involvement in a private school as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher. Frequently, my internal drive forced me towards formal higher study, but my financial part appeared as a barrier on the way of learning. Slowly and gradually, I found myself able to mitigate my economic problem to some extent. Then I thought it was time for learning at Master's level taking English as a specialization subject. That is why, I admitted to Master's level in 2018 at an affiliated campus of Tribhuvan University which is located in Kailali district of Nepal.

Actually, I felt really weak in English though I taught at a private school. My students complimented that I was good at English. My fellow teachers and colleagues also appreciated my proficiency in English. However, I was not satisfied with my English proficiency. I felt, to some extent, I was weak in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar due to the lack of full-fledged knowledge. Without having content knowledge, I thought I could not get mastery over a language beyond my mother tongue. Moreover, I realized that my knowledge in ELT and learning is insufficient for my professional development.

Knowles (1975) stated that being self-directed, the learners initiate learning to fulfil their intellectual needs. In fact, autonomous learners can initiate learning for the betterment of their survival in an intellectual society. Similarly, Blidi (2017) concurred that "Autonomous learning has emerged as one response to the growing challenges and the changes that continually happen in the field of education, and has become central to teaching and learning" (p. 22). Indeed, autonomous learning is a part of learners' hard work in both formal and informal settings.

In Negi's (2019) words, "A self directed learner is one who is self motivated, one who takes the initiative, one who has a clear idea of what he wants to learn, and one who has his own plan for pursuing and achieving his goal" (p. 66). An autonomous learner can be understood as a self-directed learner in the sense that the learner gets success as he/she sets the plan himself/herself for learning a language.

Basically, the teacher learners of English in the context of Nepal can be benefitted from this autoethnographic study. In this study, I shared my lived experiences related to social, cultural and educational contexts of EFL learning. In autoethnography, a researcher uses his/her self-reflection to explore personal experiences for connecting the autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, educational and social meanings for developing good understandings about human life and activities. Besides teacher learners, learners of higher study in the context

of Nepal are also equally benefitted from the study. Furthermore, this study can inspire and motivate the learners to start and continue their EFL learning in higher study. After involving in teaching profession, teachers are found that they leave their learning. Actually, continuation in further study is essential for professional development as well. Therefore, this study seems to be paramount for the EFL learners who want to get higher degrees in their life.

So far I consulted the previous research studies regarding learner autonomy in various EFL contexts done by Al-Khawlani (2018), Almusharraf (2018), Bozkurt and Arslan (2018), Godwin-Jones (2019), Jora (2020), Negi (2019), Panta (2019) and Yuzulia (2020). Among these research studies, Al-Khawlani's (2018) study revealed that there was a significant difference between Polish and Yemeni learners in some of the learning categories. Almusharraf's (2018) study explored that adult learners' levels of autonomy are influenced by their teachers' practices. In the study of Bozkurt and Arslan (2018), the female students seem more autonomous in terms of their perceptions of the role of teachers as well as feedback. Godwin-Jones (2019) explored that learner autonomy is successfully promoted by using digital devices in learning.

Regarding learner autonomy, Jora (2020), Negi (2019) and Panta (2019) conducted research studies in the EFL context of Nepal. Basically, Jora's (2020) study revealed that learner autonomy is essential for the learners' encouragement and the opportunity of EFL learning. Similarly, Negi's (2019) study revealed that the students in Far Western University of Nepal seem to be familiar with the concept of learner autonomy. That is why, the students focus on different trainings and programmes that promote learner autonomy. Moreover, Panta's (2019) study explored the role of English language teachers in creating better language learning opportunities for the learners in the context of Nepal that promote learner autonomy.

Likewise, Yuzulia's (2020) research exposed that the experienced and the novice teacher hold the same perceptions that the learner's role is important to promote learner autonomy. However, I found no studies regarding autonomous learner of Master's level using autoethnographic research design in the EFL context of Nepal. I could not find any research study regarding experiences of Nepali autonomous EFL learner in the existing literature.

After consulting existing literature in learner autonomy, I realized that personnel experiences of learner can be significant in foreign language learning especially in EFL context of Nepal. In another way, Nepali EFL learners' lived experiences and self reflections are rare though such experiences are crucial in EFL teaching and learning. Actually, I conducted this research on learner autonomy to

find my initiation in EFL learning for my survival in teaching profession. Therefore, I attempted to explore how I became an autonomous learner of EFL in the context of Nepal.

This study explores the answers of the following questions:

1. How did I become an autonomous learner in the EFL context of Nepal?
2. Why was learner autonomy essential in my learning at Master's level?
3. What challenges did I face in the process of becoming an autonomous learner?

Theoretical Framework

Constructivism is a main philosophical thought which focuses on the human-generated and socially constructed knowledge in which meaning can be made from human experiences. As constructivism stresses that learning is a social construct, learners construct the knowledge interacting with people in society. Taking constructivism as a philosophical standpoint and Vygotsky's (1896-1934) socio-cultural theory as a main theoretical base for this autoethnography, I have used 'self-directed learning theory' (Knowles, 1975) and 'learner autonomy' (Holec, 1981) to strengthen my experiences of higher study for becoming an autonomous learner.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory advocates for socially constructed knowledge. As Vygotsky conceptualized Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) theories, I found these two theories are significant in the process of language learning. ZPD refers to the difference between the learners' own ability of getting knowledge and what they accomplish with other's support. According to Daneshfar and Moharami (2018), ZPD is considered as "the prime concept of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory" (p. 605). Learning takes place in social setting where the particular language is connected with the particular culture. Obviously, learners learn the language interacting with people in society. Similarly, MKO focuses on the learning which can be gained from more knowledgeable colleague learners. Learners' own role is important to make their active participation in social interaction for gaining knowledge. Oxford (2011) vividly contended that "the socio-cultural perspective emphasizes social interaction as a major part of cognitive and language development" (p. 85). Therefore, social interaction is significant to the EFL context of learning.

Self-directed learning theory (Knowles, 1975) highlights that learners themselves initiate the learning. This theory also advocates for independent learning. As the phrase 'self directed learning' describes that the initiation of learning is always in the hand of learners, learning is taken as a process in self directed learning theory. This theory emphasizes on self initiation in the solution of learning problems

and learning outcomes can be expected through being to becoming autonomous learner. Moreover, the learners should direct language learning by themselves to be autonomous learner of EFL so that there could be success at the hand of learners in future.

The term ‘learner autonomy’ was coined by Henri Holec, who is considered as the father of learner autonomy, in 1981. Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as “to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). Likewise, Little (1991) stated that learner autonomy refers to a “capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action” (p. 4). Najeeb (2012) concurred that learners are compelled to assume responsibility for their own learning to make it deeper and better. In the existing literature, various terms have been used to refer ‘learner autonomy’ such as ‘learner independence’, ‘self-direction’, ‘autonomous learning’, and ‘independent learning’ which are similar concepts to be an autonomous learner. In the words of Wright (2005), “Independent learning is a term in common use in relation to teaching and learning in higher education” (p. 133). Thus, an autonomous learner continues his/her learning independently in the process of learning. Similarly, Ivanovska (2015) stated that autonomous learning “takes place in situations in which the teacher is expected to provide a learning environment” and learners take better initiation for their desired learning (p. 355). Actually, teachers facilitate learners providing sound environment so that they could receive the best learning outcomes.

Having reflection critically and decision making ability in the sound state of mind, learners initiate how, when, what and why to learn a foreign language. Therefore, Ganza (2008) focused on “the capacity of the teacher and the learner to develop and maintain an interrelational climate” for better learning outcomes from the side of the learner (p. 66). Connecting the characters of teachers and learners, learning becomes meaningful in the lives of learners. Learners are influenced by their teachers in the process of EFL learning.

Teacher’s role seems to be significant to make the learners autonomous as autonomy is the concept of promoting learners in the learning process. Teng (2019) highlighted that EFL learners step towards autonomy when they feel responsibility in the learning process. Furthermore, Panta (2019) vividly revealed that teachers and learners are responsible “to adapt facets of learner autonomy that fit our context” (p. 231). EFL learners can be autonomous when they initiate language learning by themselves.

An autonomous learner takes learning as a personal responsibility for gaining academic success through physical, social, and psychological ability. Learners who

do not depend upon instructors in learning and attempt to construct knowledge from own experiences are autonomous learners. Frankly speaking, autonomous learners are those who are able to reflect on their own learning through knowledge about learning and who are willing to learn in collaboration with others (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). Involving self in collaborative and interactive learning with self-initiation, autonomous learners form their networks of learning.

Realizing ‘sociocultural theory’ is a main theoretical base of this study in the sense that it focuses on the construction of knowledge in society by the learners themselves and ‘self directed learning theory’ reveals the learner’s self initiation in the process of language learning as well as learner autonomy is a shift from teaching to learning, I found these theories are highly relevant for this study, I connected each theory to strengthen my autoethnography. Depending upon previous studies on learner autonomy and finding personal experiences unexplored in the EFL context of Nepal, I attempted to explore my lived experiences as an EFL learner.

Methods and Procedures

This study employs autoethnographic research design in which the researcher attempts to explore his learner autonomy in EFL learning. In this study, documenting specific moments in the diary entries are used to analyze the required data for interpretation. Being myself as the primary data source, I used seven specific diary entries to collect data that were written in different days including my experiences of semester class from March 2018 to April 2021 during my study at Master’s level. This study attempted to explore information regarding the real life experiences of learning EFL in Nepali context.

Being myself as the only participant, I researched my lived experiences and self-reflection from seven diary entries of learning English in Nepalese EFL context. The information collection instrument consisted of self reflection and personal narrative which were as the written documents. The information was gathered through reflection and personal narrative techniques using diaries. This study employed a two-step procedure: the first was information collection and the information analysis second. In the information collection, the researcher collected seven important diary entries that were written from March 2018 to April 2021 AD. In the information analysis, the data were analyzed by meaning making process and drawing the themes through thematic approach in which themes are drawn from the data and then those themes are interpreted by making meanings of lived experiences in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Being learner autonomy as the process of lifelong learning, rigorous study is essential to be an autonomous learner. Though the EFL learning with the continuation of teaching English by myself at private school was challenging for me in the context of Nepal, it was possible to give continuity in formal higher study. The findings are described and discussed under five themes.

First Semester as the Stepping Stone of my EFL Learning

First semester of my EFL learning consisted of six months as scheduled by Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University, the formal semester classes ran from the second half of February 2018 and examinations were conducted in August 2018. Nepali EFL learners have been learning English finding its widespread scope in the global market. After learning English, attractive jobs especially in teaching sector are available in the context of Nepal.

Mehdiyev (2020) contended that “The autonomous individual . . . can freely choose the information to be learned and effectively take responsibility in learning” (p. 523). Learners are free to choose the contents for learning in the subject of their desires and interests. Little (1991) stated that autonomous learners are aware of their learning activities. The initiation of the journey of learner autonomy in first semester was interesting to me as I narrated:

It was my first day at campus after sixteen years. I was at classroom. The professor who taught us English literature entered the classroom with a backpack. We, EFL learners, stood and greeted our professor in our first class. Taking attendance, he attracted our attention on a piece of text. His teaching impressed me a lot. I really got new insights in the first class of EFL learning at Master level. It is said that first impression is the last impression. I thought my heart was filled with boundless happiness. I got an opportunity to learn in semester class. I was much impressed when the professor provided me home assignment. Really, the first class was the stepping stone for my university level learning. (Personal Diary, 2018 Mar 18)

From this, I infer that I want to be rigorous like him who taught me English literature. I really felt proud to be a student of semester system when I was obliged to attend in regular class of Master’s level. According to Verenikina (2003), “The social context refers to interactions with the people who surround us” (p. 2). As the entire colleague learners were from same social context, I interacted in English with them freely. Daneshfar and Moharami (2018) stated that learning in socio-cultural theory can be taken “as a social process formed by human intelligence in the culture

or society the learner lives” (pp. 600-601). Our department Head informed us about internal exams, quiz contests, term paper writings and doing homeworks. Yuzulia (2020) focused that learner autonomy is not the “learning without the teacher or letting the students learn alone without a guide” (p. 37). As the teachers facilitate in learning, learners certainly get lots of benefits in the process of learning.

In Vygotsky’s (1978) words, ZPD refers to “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). As I got support from my professors, I shared with my colleague teachers at school and assisted them in learning. Little (1991) concurred that a university learner is also unable “to define and meet his learning targets without expert assistance” (p. 39). Therefore, facilitation from the professors is essential in EFL learning activities. From one of my diaries I cheerfully penned:

Today, I attended 1:30 hour long Second Language Acquisition (SLA) class. Our respected professor’s lecture on SLA triggered me in writing. At the very beginning of class, he conducted an objective test. Only ten questions were included in the test. One of the questions was related to name Krashen’s hypotheses. When I read the question, immediately I listed Krashen’s five hypotheses. When he saw my answer, he provided me one mark. My heart was filled with incredible joy. He also suggested me for writing diaries to improve writing. Inspiring from SLA professor, I started writing diaries. It is my pleasant experience in the process of learning. (Personal Diary, 2018 Apr 5)

From this, I knew the fruit of hard work is sweet. Gradually, I emphasized on both reading and writing English. I initiated emphasis on learning by doing. Knowles (1975) contended that learners become responsible to direct their learning with their own plans and decisions. However, Panta (2019) argued that “students need constant care and attention from teachers” (p. 229). Being a school level EFL teacher at private school, I also motivated my school level students on learning by doing activities so that they could feel that the learning was better going.

Bozkurt and Arslan (2018) state that “When learners become more aware of themselves and teachers become more aware of their students, they can commence a more efficient learning process and overall integration into a given educational system” (pp. 136-137). From this, it can be inferred that teachers’ guidance and feedback are essential to promote learner autonomy. As I initiated learning myself, professors’ facilitation assisted my EFL learning. Thus, I got supports from experienced professors in the journey of formal higher study to become an autonomous learner.

Second Semester as the Developing Stage of my EFL Learning

My EFL learning at second semester began after the completion of first semester examination. The second semester classes began from October, 2018. When learners are motivated, they keep on practice in EFL learning in their track of learning. Later on learning becomes automatic. To be an autonomous learner, one should be motivated to reach in the desired destination of learning. In second semester, the professor who taught me Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) impressed me in learning. Here, I reflected my experience as:

Today, I attended in CDA class in time. Sometimes, I would be late to take the class. His lectures on ideologies and theories of Marx and Foucault were thoroughly outstanding. I practiced more to learn CDA. I found the ideas were full of complexities. I think the contents are tough. Thus, I have to manage time to develop my understanding about learning CDA by revising, rewriting and reading the texts many times. Oh! Man, be courageous. Read and write many more times. I reminded myself. I said to me, "Happy learning and reading English!" (Personal Diary, 2018 Nov 26)

From consciousness raising thought of CDA professor pulled me towards critical learning. When critical learning takes place, a critical learner goes beyond the status quo situation of learning. A critical learner himself/herself takes initiation for his/her learning. Knowles (1975) highlighted in self directed learning theory that the learners take the initiative without others' support. I thought I took initiation for my learning.

Morris (2019) contended that formal education gives opportunity to learners to develop self-directed learning competence. Actually, learning critically in EFL context helps to empower learners to make them autonomous learners. Similarly, Negi (2019) contended that learner autonomy at larger extent reveals "various skills like critical thinking, decision making, independent action, and collaboration" (p. 60). My critical thinking has assisted to fulfil my desires of learning English which ultimately supported me to become an autonomous learner.

Third Semester as the Turning Point of my EFL Learning

During my Master's level EFL learning, I argued that third semester seemed to be turning point in the process of EFL learning. An EFL learner who becomes a lifelong learner can be an autonomous learner. The third semester is memorable in the sense that I was able to write a full length research article. Here, I forwarded my experience as:

It was a great opportunity for me in my academic life. The inspiring and motivating professor's fluent lectures on ELT research and Language Testing, and Research Methodology really pushed me towards learning research articles. Actually, I heard discussions among learners about the textbook written by him while I was in B. Ed. before 2006 AD. Then, I became interested in research writing. I wrote a research article. I got boundless satisfaction when my first research article was published in a multidisciplinary journal published by Scholars' Association of Nepal. Really, it is my turning point in EFL learning. I said to me, "Happy research article reading and writing!" (Personal Diary, 2019 Dec 12)

From this, I found crystal clear fact about autonomous learning on the way of academic and research writing. Abdipoor and Gholami (2016) stated that autonomous learners involve in "more productive activities such as composing emails, writing articles, chatting with native speakers and their friends" (p. 107). Research writing really indicates real learning which is self initiated. Similarly, Phan (2012) stated that "Language teachers have a crucial role in developing autonomy in their learners" (p. 468). Without teachers' guidance, learning does not become social and meaningful. I think learning is meaningless without writing, recording, reflecting and updating as per the advice of professors in higher study.

Moreover, Blidi (2017) stated that "the learning process involves, and actually consists of, engaging the learners in recycling their experiences at deeper levels of understanding and interpretation" (p. 9). Therefore, third semester emerged as the turning point in EFL learning for me. Likewise, I remembered the professor's lectures on ELT Materials and Pedagogy that made me familiar with teaching principles, learning strategies and innovative methods of ELT and learning. I could not forget the time on which he introduced post method pedagogy. Therefore, I heartily inserted my experience as:

I knew about post method pedagogy in today's class. His code-mixing in classroom lectures while teaching was motivational in learning. He explained about post method pedagogy in detail. While learning about post method pedagogy, I came to know that no method is perfect in itself. Before this, I didn't have much idea about this method. I learnt how we make teaching and learning context sensitive. I talked with my colleagues about fruitful and funny learning. (Personal Diary, 2019 Dec 27)

From this, I inferred that postmethod pedagogy assists a learner to be a postmethod learner which also assists to make one to be an autonomous learner. As postmethod pedagogy insists on content and context sensitive interaction, ZPD also

emphasizes on interaction with experienced learners for better learning. Similarly, Verenikina (2003) stressed that “Learning in the ZPD awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when people are interacting with more experienced people” (p. 4). Interaction with experienced learners is necessary for fruitful learning. Furthermore, Negi and Laudari (2022) stated that learner autonomy can be a fruitful strategy “for quality learning outcomes” (p. 74). In fact, self initiation is a must in the process of learning for clear outcomes in future.

According to Al-Khawlani (2018), “To cope with the highly modern, progressive, and global learning environments, we need to consistently develop and improve skills and abilities of the learners as well as learning styles” (p. 109). For upgrading overall knowledge of EFL with full content knowledge in the EFL contexts, teachers need to teach innovative skills and learners need to be autonomous learners. Keeping myself in reading and writing research articles, I took initiation of my learning with the assistance of my professors. Thus, I stated that I was able to become autonomous learner by involving myself in research writing and reading.

Fourth Semester as the Full-fledged Semester of my EFL Learning

For me, fourth semester was a full-fledged semester in the course of EFL learning in the sense that I had full control of my EFL learning. Benson (2008) stated that autonomy in the context of language learning is basically referred “as a radically learner-centred idea” (p. 16). Shifting teaching from teacher centered to learner centered, learner autonomy can be enhanced in a greater extent. Likewise, Neupane (2010) argued that learner autonomy never frees “teachers from their responsibility” (p. 120). Regarding my study in the fourth semester, from one of my diaries I narrated my experience as:

Today, I wanted to reflect my classroom learning which was paused. Almost one month I took physical class in fourth semester. Due to lockdown, I stayed at home. However, I took online class to continue my learning. I found that one of my articles was also published in ‘ELT Choutari’. It was about my reflection after watching ‘The Ramayana’ movie in Hindi language broadcast from ‘Door Darshan’ channel. The happiness triggered my mind. Lockdown provided me time to reflect my experiences in writing. After writing some articles and publishing them in journals, I think I gain full-fledged understanding of research writing. I said to me, “Hello! Man, write, write and write.” (Personal Diary, 2020 Apr 20)

From this, I took out the crux that my passion in EFL learning and research writing was increasing day by day. Verenikina (2003) stated that “the higher mental functions in humans originate only in the interaction of people with people” (p. 1). Learners need to be connected with experienced people whether they are

university professors or experienced colleagues. Moreover, Blidi (2017) stressed that autonomous learning is “deliberate and purposeful learning that is pursued individually” (p. 101). I continued my EFL learning by using the learning materials available in Internet. Similarly, Little (1991) also stressed that learners become autonomous “to fulfil some personal or professional need” (p. 38). Therefore, learner’s personal endeavours are crucial to be an independent learner.

Godwin-Jones (2019) concurred that learner autonomy can promote the learners “to see the learner or user in the full interdependence of individual and social context” (p.18). In this sense, learner autonomy facilitates learners’ interaction in personal as well as social context to achieve the goal of learning. I also focused on writing personal reflections on learning and teaching English. Therefore, writing reflections and active involvement in online class help me to become an autonomous learner.

Professors’ Motivation as Building Blocks of my EFL Learning

While learning in the semester system with English education specialization, professors including visiting one’s lecture motivated me a lot in the path of EFL learning. Trebbi (2008) opined that learner autonomy is concerned “with the idea of freedom as a central component of the concept” (p. 33). It is the freedom for learning independently with or without the help of teachers. According to Oates (2019), “The teacher’s role is viewed as paramount in the development of self-regulated learning” (p. 1). Thus, teachers should assist the learners to take responsibility of their own learning so that the learners become autonomous in their learning.

Likewise, Liu (2015) highlighted that inspiration and motivation “from teachers and more task-based activities inside or outside the classroom are necessary for students to become more autonomous learners” (p. 1172). Most importantly, learners’ internal drive play pivotal role to be an autonomous learner. Similarly, Stroupe, Rundle and Tomita (2016) concurred that “Assisting with the development of the learner autonomy of students is a challenging process” (p. 57). How teachers or professors present the teaching items is focal to me rather than what they present in the classroom. Dhami (2019) stressed that the pace of learning depends upon our context of learning where “our internal drive matters” (p. 152). An autonomous learner must consider context of the content in EFL learning. Here, from my diary I reflected my experience as:

Today is the day of April fool. However, I didn’t make others fool. I think we celebrate each day to make self and others wise. In today’s diary, I am writing on my lived experience. My frequent contact with professor who taught Research Methodology inspired me in learning formally as well as informally. His lectures

on research and ELT in different seminars motivated not only me but also other EFL learners a lot as well. I think close academic connection with professors after the completion of formal study also enhances and flourishes learning. Professors' lectures and motivation are the building blocks in the process of my learning. Really, I felt I was born to learn new thing in each and every step of my life. I have to walk to learn and learn to walk. I am thankful to my professors who spent time to make me wise. (Personal Diary, 2021 Apr 1)

From this entry of diary, I inferred that frequent connection with professors assists to move forward in the path of EFL learning and research writing. In the words of Verenikina (2003), "To instruct in the ZPD is to be responsive to the learner's current goals and stage of development and to provide assistance that enables them to achieve those goals and to increase their potential for future participation" (p. 6). More importantly, teachers' support is essential to foster learner autonomy in learners. Similarly, Panta (2019) asserted that "EFL teachers perceive learner autonomy as simply giving freedom to learners" (p. 229). An EFL learner can be an autonomous when he/she becomes learner for intellectual and professional growth.

Likewise, Little (1999) contended that "the effect of learner autonomy is to remove the barriers that so easily erect themselves between formal learning and the wider environment in which the learner lives" (p. 11). From this view, learner autonomy can be taken as own responsibility of learners in the formal setting of education.

Moreover, Kamali (2021) contended that in Nepalese context of EFL teaching and learning, "local realities should be highly considered" (p. 33). When our teachers show the directions, we need to walk to reach in our destination. Similarly, Eberle (2013) stressed that "self-determined learning encourages students to become active participants in what they are learning" (p. 145). Being autonomous especially in EFL learning, we gain knowledge and quintessentially success follows us. According to Han (2021), "A learner who regularly credits a positive relationship with his/her educator in a class understands the material more quickly and acts well in the class" (p. 5). To be autonomous, learners focus on rapport building with their teachers so that there can be good relation between teachers and learners. In my case, I made close connection and relation with my professors. I followed their feedbacks, comments and suggestions and then I was able to become an autonomous learner.

My Reflections on Challenges of Becoming an Autonomous EFL Learner

In the process of becoming an autonomous learner of English in Nepalese EFL context, I faced various challenges such as challenge of time management,

family burden, economic problem and lack of knowledge on ICT and Internet. Negi (2019) highlighted the challenges in the path of promoting learner autonomy which are “lack of resources in the classroom and outside of it, low motivation on students, no proper guidance from teachers and poor economic background of the students” (p. 63). I think time management is crucial to become an autonomous learner. Similarly, family burden is also one of the constraints in the process of developing learner autonomy. I also opine that family support in EFL learning seems to be crucial. Similarly, economic problem is also one of the hindrances in the process of developing autonomous learning.

Eventually, lack of knowledge on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet can be seen as a barrier to foster learner autonomy. Though I had an android cell phone, I didn't know how to prepare power point slides for presentation at the beginning. As Honarзад and Rassae (2019) stated that “Autonomy opens an outstanding window of opportunity for avid learners to pursue their learning goals in today's technology-driven world” (p. 27). Learners should be aware in the use of ICT tools to foster their learning. Thus, autonomous learner needs to be familiar with ICT and internet to enhance his/her learning.

Conclusion

From this autoethnography, as the research questions set, the findings of this study reveal that close academic connection with the professors and universities is essential for becoming an autonomous learner in the context of Nepal. The findings of the study also highlight that a learner can be able to become an autonomous learner by interacting and collaborating with colleagues inside and outside the classroom setting, initiating EFL learning motivated by professors, learning ICT and the Internet related matters for collecting reading materials and involving in academic writing. Being the semester class innovative, favourable for learning and research-based, learners can be able to give continuity in learning which ultimately direct towards learner autonomy. On the basis of findings, it can be concluded that motivation, inspiration, feedback and constructive suggestions from professors are pivotal to foster learner autonomy among EFL learners. Self initiation along with regular activities for learning authentic books, research articles and journals plays a great role in the process of making the learners autonomous. Additionally, time management for work and study seems to be significant for those learners who are involved in teaching professions. Experiences of EFL autonomous learners without involving in teaching profession can be an area of further autoethnographic exploration in the context of Nepal.

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