

# Factors Affecting the Implementation of Learner Autonomy in the Teaching of English Language in Zambia

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## Abstract:

The aim of this study was to establish factors affecting the implementation of learner autonomy and measures or practices that can promote it in English Language learning in rural classrooms in Zambia. This study was purely qualitative and employed a descriptive case study design. Secondary school teachers and learners were part of the investigation who were purposively selected. Instruments used in data collection included interviews and focused group discussions. The study revealed that factors that affected learner autonomy in the learning of English Language were attributed to the school, teacher, parents and learners. In addition, the study also suggested measures or practices that can help promote autonomous learning. These included the use of appropriate teaching strategies, provision of learning resources, encouraging learners to use English language, and building and stocking the library with appropriate books. The study recommended that parents, teachers and the school should work collaboratively in order to ensure that learner autonomy is promoted and enhanced in English Language learning.

**Keywords:** Learner Autonomy, factors, implementation, English language

## 1. BACKGROUND

Learner autonomy is an effective way of engaging learners in the learning process. Benson and Lor (1998) posited that learner autonomy is a condition for effective and successful learning of students as it helps in developing students' critical thinking and learning responsibilities. Although autonomy in language learning has numerous benefits, it also has challenges especially if the language being learnt is a second one. Learning a language hinges on numerous factors that must be present in order for it to be effectively done. As a result, learner autonomy is not alienated from the factors affecting it and can be affected by both internal and external factors. Internal factors are within the scope of a learner while external ones are outside their scope. Internal factors pinpoint to the attitude and beliefs learners have about themselves that affect autonomous learning. Thanasoulas (2000: 52) advances that, "attitudes learners hold about their role in the learning process, and their capability as learners ...if learners labour under the misconception that learning is successful only within the context of the "traditional classroom," where the teacher directs, instructs, and manages the learning activity, and students must follow in the teacher's footsteps, they are likely to be impervious or resistant to learner-centered

strategies aiming at autonomy.” If learners have a negative attitude towards autonomy and believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher to only impart knowledge without them playing a part, it will hamper on them being autonomous. In addition, cognitive abilities also have an effect on learner autonomy. Cognitive abilities with reference to learning refers to mental functions a learner uses in memorising, remembering inhibiting and focusing attention; speed of information processing; and spatial and causal reasoning. Haque (2019: 207) highlighted on metacognition that, “Metacognition enables language learners to monitor and control their cognitive processes.” These processes are essential to the learner because it helps them use their prior knowledge in order to plan how best they can learn, monitor and reflect on feedback given during the learning process. Vrugt and Oort (2008) revealed that metacognition had a positive effect on strategies which involved mastery and performance in learning.

Additionally, external factors are outside the scope of the learner and may comprise the teacher, the school or the home environment. Wan and Zhang (2022: 3) pointed out that “the learning environment can be directly improved through the analysis of learners’ needs, so as to improve the autonomous learning behaviour.” Pratama and Kuswardani (2021) also identified the environment as a leading factor concerning challenges that affect learner autonomy.

In addition, learner autonomy can be promoted if certain practices or measures are adhered to. Asmari (2013:1) also acknowledged that, “A teacher should provide the students with appropriate tools and opportunities for practice in language learning. Presupposing that the teachers are willing to change and shift their roles from teaching-knowledge based to supervising students learning-based, a teacher’s responsibility is to facilitate the change.” Furthermore, Intraboonsom et al (2020) established that encouraging students to practice what they learn outside the classroom was one of the measures or practices that can promote autonomy. Additionally, providing of adequate learning strategies and tools was another autonomy practice that can done in the classroom. Sikaindo (2017) also showed in his study that applying various instructional strategies and using teaching and learning materials that supported the task-based and text-based instruction methods could promote learner autonomy in English Language learning.

Nevertheless, despite many scholars identifying factors that affect learner autonomy and measures or practices that can promote it. No study has been conducted in a rural context in Zambia to establish factors affecting the implementation of learner autonomy in the teaching of English Language as well as strategies that can be used to promote.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to establish factors affecting the implementation of learner autonomy and measures or practices that can promote it in English Language teaching in rural classrooms in Zambia.’

## **3. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

This study was purely qualitative and used a descriptive case study design. 7 out of 14 secondary schools in a rural district in Zambia were sampled. 3 Grade 11 teachers of English language were purposively selected from each sampled school. A total of 21 Grade 11 teachers took part in the study and they were interviewed on the factors that affect learner autonomy as well as measures or practices that can promote it when teaching English Language. For data triangulation purposes, 140 Grade 11 learners were also purposively selected to take part in the focus group discussions from the 7 selected schools. Thematic

analysis was used to analyse data. Therefore, data was sorted, coded and themes were generated and presented as findings.

#### 4. FINDINGS

The findings will present factors that affect the implementation of learner autonomy and practices or measures that can promote it in the teaching of English Language.

##### 4.1. FACTORS THAT AFFECT LEARNER AUTONOMY WHEN LEARNING ENGLISH

This objective focused on the factors that affect the implementation of learner autonomy when teaching English Language. Both the teachers and the learners were interviewed on the factors that affected the implementation of learner autonomy in the classroom. The data presented shows both responses from the teachers and the learners.

##### 4.1.1. Teachers' Responses on Factors that Affect Learner Autonomy when learning English Language

Teachers were asked on factors that affect the implementation of learner autonomy when teaching English language. Themes that emerged are presented as follows:

##### 4.1.1.1. Perceived Learners' low English language Proficiency

Perceived learners' low English language proficiency emerged as a theme in the interview data. Teachers' responses indicate that learners experienced difficulties using the English Language in the learning process which affected their autonomy. This is shown from the following excerpts;

*When you are teaching the English language, you expect learners to get what you are saying but since most of the learners do not know how to speak English, it becomes difficult to communicate to them. At some point, one is forced to use the mother tongue in short in order to make someone understand so that they can have that confidence to do work on their own and find out variety of things learnt because when you are teaching language, you are looking at spellings, the way they are expressing themselves when they are writing maybe a composition. So you are able to tell that there is a problem here because they do not understand the language. Sometimes even when a simple question is given. For example, when they are writing a composition. You will find that a child writes something parallel to what the question is asking. Maybe learners are told to write the negative effects of paying bride price but this child is going to write something different from the topic, meaning that the child has difficulties to do with English language. Pupils do not understand the language properly. (T21)*

*Their inability to speak and understand English. If you give them a task, they fail to understand even if you try to explain, they may understand when you explain but when they go out to carry out a research on their own, it becomes difficult because they are handicapped in the language. (T10)*

##### 4.1.1.2. Inadequate teaching and learning Materials

Inadequate teaching and learning materials also emerged as a theme from the interviews with the teachers. This theme focuses on the learning materials which learners have to use such as prescribed text books, novels, magazines and other literature which can enhance their autonomy. This can be observed from the following excerpt;*I have seen that exposure to books and educational materials will develop their intellectual capabilities and their understanding in all that but then, in this side of the world, very few homes have any literature even when it comes to a basic thing like a bible. Most of them don't even own one. So they don't have books. And then as a school, we don't have a lot of books that we can give to learners. We don't have a library, it is one thing to have a library and it is also another thing to have books. We may not probably have a building but if we have books that's fine. It is very*

*hard sometimes, we have to give them personal copies which are expensive. Sometimes, they lose them (T2.)*

*The other thing that has contributed is the exposure to material that has a wide usage of English Language. Let's say in this set-up, it is not easy for learners to access materials such as magazines for them to improve on their vocabulary. So in reading those materials that have that language, they come across new vocabulary or vocabulary that they are familiar with and they get to learn on their own to practice to use it more often. So they can't access those magazines in this area. It is difficult to find a newspaper. So there is limited exposure. (T11)*

#### **4.1.1.3. Lack of Self-Confidence by the Learners**

Lack of self-confidence by the learners was another theme which emerged on the factors that affect learner autonomy. Learners lacked confidence to express themselves when learning English Language. This is shown in the teachers' narrations.

*Learners are afraid of making mistakes because their friends would laugh at them which is a demotivation on their part. This prevents them from doing activities on their own especially where they have to express themselves during learning of English language. (T8)*

*With them, they are afraid of making mistakes because they think friends would laugh at them because with them, that's how they do it. When a person makes a mistake others would laugh at them which has become part of their culture. This prevents learners from trying out on their own because they don't have that confidence to try even if they don't know much about what they want to say or express themselves on. At the end of the day, you will not see that learner contributing. (T20)*

#### **4.1.1.4. Lack of parental Support**

This was another factor that emerged from the data. The data presented indicates that the home environment affects autonomy of learners in the learning of English Language as shown from the responses of the teachers.

*Parents' participation in the learning of their children also affects learner autonomy. When you give homework, parents do not enforce that learner autonomy you are talking about. Parents should be involved. When pupils fail to find information they are looking for, parents should come in and help more especially in buying of the needed materials. Now the problem here is parents are not involved in the learning of their children. (T7)*

*The other factor is from the homes where learners are coming from. Most of the learners are coming from homes where parents are not working so they don't understand the importance of awarding enough time to their children to do their work. You find that after knocking off, they are given other tasks to do which leave them exhausted and unable to give quality work as expected. (T18)*

#### **4.1.1.5. Lack of Opportunities to Practice the English language**

Lack of opportunities to practice using the English language was another theme that was generated. Lack of practice shows that learners do not use the language in their everyday conversations both in and outside the classroom. This is observable from the following excerpts from teachers;

*They don't regularly use English Language unless you are pushing them so hard to say in the school environment, learn to use the English Language. It affects them because we say practice is what makes perfect. So there is no learning without practice. It may not be perfect but learners build on practice but there is less practice in language use. You will find that there are some teachers that would just allow the learners to speak to them in whichever language because as teachers themselves, they do not want to be stressed to say speak English because they just want to have it the easy way as well*

*because even learners' zeal is not there, so why should I punish this child? Let them speak in whichever language they would speak so that they can communicate easily. So we forget that pushing them to practice can also help enhance their autonomy and that is where they get the zeal. (T14)*

*Sometimes, even the environment contributes like a child who is coming from a home they don't use English at home because they won't practice at home, they only try to use English while in class which is not adequate for them to learn effectively since they need adequate time and situations to practice effectively. So you find out that even at home, they can't practice it because there is no one to practice with. (T20)*

#### **4.1.1.6. Large Class Sizes**

Class size as a theme centres on the number of learners in class which can affect autonomy of the learners. Teachers were able to establish this theme in their response as seen in the following excerpts:

*Over enrolment also is a challenge that affects learner autonomy here because it is almost impossible to choose an appropriate method which will help learners to exercise their autonomy and also to give chance to almost all the learners to express their views which is not possible because of the number of learners in class. In the process, the teacher will just forget about such methods and see what would work well in class. (T3)*

*I feel learner autonomy is mostly promoted in an environment where first of all, the number of learners is not so big because when you look at our classes, they are too big, certain learners may not feel that freedom to participate effectively in their learning. Class size is one factor that affects learner autonomy because it is very difficult to give activities which will support individual learning when the class size is very big. (T16)*

## **4.2. Learners' views on Factors That Affect Learner Autonomy**

For data triangulation purposes, learners were also asked on factors that affect learner autonomy when learning English language. The following themes emerged from their narrations.

### **4.2.1. Perceived Learners' low English language Proficiency**

Perceived learners' low English language proficiency was a theme that emerged from the learners' responses. This can be observed from the narrations shown;

*Failure to understand what the teacher is teaching or talking about or the discussion we have in class because of English which is difficult to understand. (L70)*

*If you don't know how to read, if you don't know how to speak that language the teacher he or she is teaching especially English. It is difficult to do the work on your own so you just stop and wait for the teacher to show you corrections (L34)*

### **4.2.2. Poor Teacher-Learner Relationship**

Poor teacher-learner relationship was another theme that emerged from the responses the learners gave during the interview. Learners cited this theme in the responses as one of the contributing factors that affect their autonomy. This can be seen from what the learners were able to say below;

*The comments passed by the teacher when we are learning affects us participating in the lesson. When you fail to answer the question or do the work in the group, the teacher will be angry and call us dull. So we fail to participate in the lessons and we just listen to what the teacher is teaching. (L51)*

*When you hate the teacher because of the bad comments she passes in class when learning, it will be difficult for you to understand and follow instructions on what to do. So you just become quiet in class and you don't participate but only watch what others are doing. (L42)*

### 4.2.3. Fear of Classroom Bullying by Fellow Learners

Fear of classroom bullying by fellow learners was another theme that emerged from the learners' responses. Classroom bullying incorporated aspects of learners being laughed at when they make a mistake by their fellow learners. This can be observed from the excerpts shown.

*Sometimes our fellow learners laugh at us if we give wrong answers. So we fail to participate and present in class. (L16)*

*When the teacher asks the question and you know that answer in your local language and you fail to interpret it in English then when you say wrong English, the pupils will laugh at you and you will just be quiet and stop involving yourself in the lesson or presentations. (L38)*

## 4.3. WHAT MEASURES OR PRACTICES CAN PROMOTE LEARNER AUTONOMY WHEN LEARNING ENGLISH

Teachers and learners were interviewed on the measures or practices that can promote learner autonomy when learning English among Grade 11 learners. Measures or practices are the interventions that can be put in place so that autonomy is promoted in the classroom as well as among learners. The findings presents teachers' and learners' suggestions on measures or practices that can promote learner autonomy.

### 4.3.1. Teachers' Suggestions on Measures or Practices that can Promote Learner Autonomy

#### 4.3.1.1. Using appropriate teaching Strategies

Using of appropriate teaching strategies emerged as a theme on practices or measures that can promote learner autonomy. Appropriate learning strategies according to the teachers' responses focus on appropriate methods that can help learners develop confidence in their own knowledge, learning abilities and proficiency. This can be seen in the following excerpts;

*When you are teaching, encourage group discussions. There are some pupils when you are teaching, they cannot understand from the teacher but when they are exposed to their friends and their friends explains to them, they may try to understand. In class, organise some debate, give them a topic every time so that they are able to debate just to help them research and use English as they debate. (T3)*

*I will give them a topic to research on for instance, I want to come and present on argumentative writing. I will give them a topic well in advance. When they come back, then I will get answers from them on the topic I gave them. This helps them to research and present their findings, by doing so, they are able to learn on their own through what they focus on when researching. (T11)*

#### 4.3.1.2. Provide Teaching and Learning Resources to Promote Independent Learning

Providing teaching and learning resources to promote independent learning was another theme that was generated from the responses of the teachers. These materials include prescribed text books, dictionaries, novels, magazines and newspapers. This can be observed from the following narrations;

*I think there is an aspect of lack of materials, reading materials for these learners. Sometimes, we may be there busy blaming it on the learners that no these learners do not exercise their independence but how do they exercise if they do not have materials and they can only be filled with information if materials to read are made available, not only material related to their syllabus even where they read for pleasure but such materials cannot be found e.g. novels, magazines. If those things are improved on, learner independence can be enhanced. (T21)*

*To us we have bought dictionaries whereby when I come to class, I have to come with those dictionaries. If they don't know the meaning of certain words. As I was saying, some words are difficult for learners*

to understand the meaning. You just give them the dictionaries they search for the words and find the meaning on their own instead of the teacher providing meaning to them. (T7)

#### 4.3.1.3. Encourage and Motivate Learners to Speak the English language

Encouraging and motivating learners to speak English Language is another measure that was generated from the teachers' responses. This entails that learners need encouragement and motivation from the teacher to promote the development of autonomous learning in the classroom. This can be observed from the following excerpts;

*Learner autonomy can be promoted if learners are encouraged in the learning process to speak English. Learning will be taking place very well in the sense that learners will learn in a free environment with a free mind because they will know what is expected of them. Unlike a situation where learners are not encouraged, it's like they don't even know what is expected of them. Creating an environment of encouraging learners will definitely make learners realise why they are in school and why they are supposed to learn. (T10)*

*Encourage learners to interact in English. When they interact in English, it will be easier for them to also write and encourage learners to read anything that they come across especially in English language, such as story books, those books for primary so that they are exposed to variety of language usage which is more than what they are exposed to in the classroom. (T18)*

#### 4.3.1.4. Building and Stocking the Library with Appropriate Books and Materials

Building and stocking the library with appropriate books and materials also emerged as a theme from the teachers' responses on practices or measures that can foster learner autonomy when learning English Language. This theme refers to a building with a collection of text books and other materials where learners can go to and research as well as to read on their own. This can be observed from the following narrations;

*If we were to have a library, it would also help because in as much as learners at any stage would be more interested in pictures, the reading pictures, there are also interested in the words to interpret the pictures that they are seeing. If we have a library, some pupils will just go there to the library not knowing what they are going there for just because their friends are going there but they will find themselves seated on a table reading books that are interesting to them and by so doing, they will slowly gain interest in learning the language through interacting with materials, they are building on the weak foundation that they have had which helps them to learn on their own. (T14)*

*To promote learner autonomy in my class, a library is needed which should have basic materials like magazines, youth books, and simple supplementary books. If we can have those books in the library, I know that learners would express interest in reading and discovering a lot about language through visiting the library, getting a book and reading without the teacher just providing these books we use when teaching reading. (T11)*

The data presented show measures or practices suggested by the teachers that can promote learner autonomy in the learning of English Language.

#### 4.3.2. Learners' Suggestions on Measures or Practices that can Promote Learner Autonomy.

Learners were also asked on the measures or practices that can promote their autonomy. Focus group discussions were used to come up with the data. The findings are presented below:

##### 4.3.2.1. Use Appropriate Teaching Strategies

Using of appropriate teaching strategies emerged as a theme and learners suggested that using appropriate strategies by the teacher can promote learner autonomy in the learning of English Language.

This can be seen from their narrations below:

*When the teacher is teaching, he or she must be using group discussions in lessons, giving assignments and homework. (L42)*

*The teacher should be putting us in groups to help us learn independently and consult each other so that we have self-confidence and interest in what the teacher teaches (L28)*

#### **4.3.2.2. Provide Learning Resources to Promote Independent Learning**

Provision of teaching and learning resources to promote independent learning is a theme which emerged from the learners' responses. Learners also identified the learning resources which must be provided in order to promote learner autonomy which include text books and dictionaries. This can be observed from their excerpts shown:

*Learners should be given a variety of books by the teacher instead of just using one type every time the teacher teaches comprehension. We need books so that we can be using them to learn on our own. (L45)*

*We need to have dictionaries so that we research on difficult words. Sometimes it's difficult to understand words but if we have dictionaries it will help us to understand the difficult words because we will be checking the meaning on our own without asking the teacher. (L23)*

#### **4.3.2.3. Encourage and Motivate Learners to Speak the English language**

Encouraging and motivating learners to speak the English language was another theme that emerged on the measures or practices that can promote autonomy. Learners were able to bring out this theme in their responses as shown below.

*The teacher is supposed to encourage us to speak English and to do work correctly so that we continue with that spirit. This encourages us to continue having interest in what we are learning even researching once a topic is given. Learner 31:*

*The teacher should be encouraging us to use English which should be spoken by learners and teacher so that we get used to speaking English. (L58)*

The presented findings suggested measures or practices that can promote learner autonomy in the learning of English language.

## **5. DISCUSSIONS**

This section discusses findings pertaining to factors that affect learner autonomy and measures or practices that can promote it in the learning of English Language.

### **5.1. FACTORS THAT AFFECT LEARNER AUTONOMY WHEN LEARNING ENGLISH**

In order to answer the question raised on factors that affect learner autonomy in the learning of English Language, interviews were conducted for both teachers and learners. The findings showed that learner autonomy was affected by various factors which emanated from the learners, the school, the teachers and the parents.

#### **5.1.1. Factors Attributed to the Learners**

Factors which affected learner autonomy were attributed to the learners and affected the way they exercised autonomy in the learning of English Language and included the following:

##### **5.1.1.1. Perceived Poor Learners' English Language Proficiency.**

Perceived poor learners' English Language proficiency was one of the learner factors which emerged as a finding that affected learner autonomy in the learning of English Language. This finding implied that learners had challenges using the English language effectively because they lacked proficiency in the



English Language. This view on lack of proficiency by the learners aligns with Mwanza (2020) and Muchelemba (2019) who established that learners lacked proficiency in English in Zambian schools which hindered their participation in the class activities where the teachers exclusively used English in their lesson. Lack of proficiency in English language usage by learners would mean learners experiencing difficulties in learning independently because it would be challenging for them to take part in class activities that require them to communicate in English.

#### **5.1.1.2. Lack of Self-Confidence by the Learners.**

Lack of self-confidence by the learners was another factor that affected learner autonomy. This factor identified implied that learners did not have self-confidence where learning exclusively in English language was concerned because they did not have the ability to trust and have confidence in their learning capabilities. This perspective concurs with Basavanna (1975) who emphasised the importance of self-confidence in language learning and established that learners who have self-confidence trust their own abilities, capacities and judgement in the learning of English language in order for them to be autonomous. Additionally, Jabor et al (2017) also contrasted learners with self-confidence and those without self-confidence and established that self-confident learners are risk takers at using language even if they commit mistakes in activities which they are engaged. Therefore, confidence in language learning is key if learners have to take autonomy of their learning.

#### **5.1.1.3. Fear of Classroom Bullying By Fellow Learners.**

Fear of classroom bullying by fellow learners also emerged on factors that affect learner autonomy. The finding implied that learners were bullied in the classroom when learning English language and thus autonomy was affected. Bullying in English language affected their level of autonomy which also had an effect on their academic performance. Therefore, this position established aligns with Ombasa (2021) who showed that an increase in cases of peer bullying lowered academic and co-curricular engagement. Furthermore, classroom bullying also suggested that the teacher did not effectively manage the classroom by providing a conducive environment where learners are free to learn and make mistakes which are addressed with the view to improving autonomous learning. Pianta and Hamre (2009) supports this view and posits that providing emotional support and a predictable, consistent, and safe environment help students become more self-reliant, motivated to learn, and willing to take risks. Therefore, teachers have a mandate to ensure that the classroom environment is free from bullying and should allow learners to take autonomy of their learning.

#### **5.1.2. Factors Attributed to the School**

Factors which affect learner autonomy were also attributed to the school. This meant that the school has a role to play in ensuring that learner autonomy is promoted and if they did not perform their role, autonomy would be affected in English Language learning. Factors that pertained to the school included, inadequate teaching and learning materials as well as large class sizes. These school factors are further discussed.

#### **5.1.2.1. Inadequate Teaching and Learning Materials.**

Inadequate teaching and learning materials came as a result of the school not providing adequate teaching and learning materials. The finding entailed that schools did not have adequate teaching and learning materials which would foster autonomous learning. The view established corresponds to what Mulesu (2023) and Sakala (2013) revealed that inadequate teaching and learning materials are challenges that teachers face in the teaching and learning process in Zambian schools. For a teacher to effectively teach the English language to the learners and for the learners to take autonomy of their

learning, there was need for materials to be adequate which would be used as references for both teachers and the learners following the learning content which must be taught. The finding also correspondent to Metto and Makewa (2014) who showed that equipment, books and other materials increase the learning opportunities within the physical environment of the classroom. It affects the behaviour of learners and their attitudes towards schooling and learning.

#### **5.1.2.2. Large Class Sizes.**

Large class size also emerged as a factor which affected learner autonomy in the learning of English Language. Ministry of Education (1996) noted that the average class size is over 45 which affirms this challenge identified. Large class sizes has long been established in English language teaching and learning. Studies on large class sizes such as Mumba and Mwanza (2020), Mulesu (2023) and Sakala (2013) concurs with this finding in this study. Having large class sizes had a negative effect on learner autonomy because the teacher would find it difficult to use effective teaching strategies that would promote learner autonomy. This view is supported by Sakala (2013) who attributed the excess use of the lecture method of teaching among high school teachers to large class sizes which are in Zambian Schools. Furthermore, Mbozi (2008) also highlighted on this finding that large class sizes might be a limiting factor to the teacher in their choice of the teaching methods and they may not employ other methods hence depriving learners who could have benefitted from such strategies.

#### **5.1.3. Factors Attributed to the Parents.**

Factors which affect learner autonomy were also attributed to the parents. This meant that parents have a role to play in ensuring that learner autonomy was promoted and if they did not perform their role, autonomy would be affected in English Language Learning of their children.

##### **5.1.3.1. Lack of Parental Support.**

Parental support is key in the promotion of learner autonomy. If parental support is not available, learners will have challenges with autonomous learning. The finding on lack of parental support meant that parents did not provide necessary support to their school going children which could be aligned to the parents not understanding the role they have to play in supporting their children in autonomous learning. The finding concurs with Sapungan (2014) who suggested that lack of support among parents may be linked to their inability to comprehend the role they have to play in the success of their children and the incapability to support the school academic undertakings. Griffin and Steen, (2010) also showed in their study that parental support, involvement, encouragement and positive reinforcement are all connected to children's learning competence, healthy social relations, a strong feeling of self-worth and fewer behavioral problems.

#### **5.1.4. Teacher Factors**

Factors which affect learner autonomy were also attributed to the teachers. This meant that teachers have an essential role to play in ensuring that learner autonomy was promoted in the classroom and if they did not perform their role, autonomy would not be fostered in the learning of English Language. These school factors are further discussed below.

##### **5.1.4.1. Lack of Opportunities to Practice the English Language.**

Lack of opportunities to practice the English language by teachers was a factor that affected learner autonomy which this study brought out. The finding correspondents with Borg and Alshumaimeri (2019) who illustrated that teachers influence the autonomous opportunities they provide to their students. This meant that learners were not availed with opportunities or situations where they can practice using the English Language by the teacher. This is also supported by Swatevacharkul (2020) who attributed

factors affecting learner autonomy to teachers and saw teachers as a two-edged sword who can be considered as both a contributor and a hindrance to learner autonomy. Learning of any language called for practice, English inclusive. If learners were not provided with opportunities to practice using the language, it would be very difficult for them to exercise autonomy in learning of English Language that called for learners to practice using the language in various contexts.

#### **5.1.4.2. Poor Teacher-Learner Relationship.**

Poor-teacher relationship was another contributing factor that affected autonomous learning. This finding showed that the relationship between the teacher and the learner was critical in promoting autonomy in the learning of English. Teacher-learner relationship was important because it supported the wellbeing, motivation, autonomy, and achievement of the learners. The finding established is supported by Kim & Lundberg, (2016) who indicated that teacher-student relationship relates positively to students' motivation, engagement, achievement, retention, and well-being. In addition, the finding is also in line with Hagenauer, et al (2023) who suggested that in teacher-student relationship, teachers are supposed to provide students with support which should be at an effective level to foster students' autonomy in learning. In addition, Krause et al (2006) also illustrated that teachers who are able to form positive student relationships and engage their students affected their learning which resulted in an enjoyable experience that takes place in a balanced classroom atmosphere.

## **6. MEASURES OR PRACTICES WHICH CAN PROMOTE LEARNER AUTONOMY WHEN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE.**

This objective focused on measures or practices which could promote learner autonomy when learning English Language. In order to answer the question raised on measures or practices which could promote learner autonomy when learning English Language, interviews were conducted for both teachers and learners. The measures or practices that could promote learner autonomy when learning English Language are further discussed.

### **6.1. Use of Appropriate Teaching Strategies**

The use of appropriate teaching strategies was one of the key measures or practices that the teacher must incorporate in their teaching so as to promote autonomy in the classroom. This finding meant that for learner autonomy to be promoted in the classroom, the teacher must use teaching strategies which engaged learners in the lesson and which would help them learn independently. This finding is affirmed by what Huynh, (2019) established that teachers had a mandate of being involved in a variety of activities. They have a responsibility of communicating learning expectations such as objectives or tasks and give students appropriate learning activities, allow them to have a choice in arranging work so that they are able to attain both previously assigned goals, and their personal goal. This raises their awareness of all the necessary components of the learning process through initiating and encouraging discussions among themselves as well as between the teacher and them. Furthermore, Nguyen (2012) also supported the finding and suggested that the teacher has a role to play of implementing teaching approaches which will encourage learners to be autonomous. Additionally, the Zambian Senior Secondary English Syllabus requires a teacher to provide effective experiences as well as activities which enables learners to achieve the planned results (CDC, 2013). Provision of appropriate teaching strategies can only come about if the teacher is aware of the responsibility they have over the choice of strategies to use in the teaching and learning of English language as well as the importance those teaching strategies will have on the promotion of learner autonomy.

### **6.2. Provide Teaching and Learning Resources to promote Independent Learning**

Provision of teaching and learning resources to promote independent learning was another measure or practices that promote learner autonomy in the classroom. This finding showed that in the teaching and learning process of English Language, the school has the responsibility of planning and providing teaching and learning resources that must be used in order for the successful presentation of the lesson to the learners and for learner autonomy to be fostered in the classroom. The finding correlates with Esu et al (2004) who affirmed that instructional materials facilitate learning of abstract concepts by helping learners formulate representational ideas and also help to stimulate the imagination of the learners. Cotterall and Crabbe (1992) also showed that usual reference books should not be the only instructional materials. Inclusion is needed on other key materials such as newspapers and radio broadcast among others in language resources. Therefore, teachers need to be creative in incorporating such resources by drawing on what they know about language learning.

### **6.3. Encourage and Motivate Learners to Speak English Language**

Encouraging and motivating learners to speak English Language was another practice or measure suggested that teachers must do in the classroom in order to promote learner autonomy. The finding rested on the premise that English language learning focuses on the aspect of practice because it helps learners to improve their proficiency in English. This finding is in line with what Rao (2019) revealed that teachers should encourage the learners to get involved in discussions that take place in the classroom because such activities help learners improve their speaking skills massively. Learners themselves are enabled to create situations to speak not only in the classroom but also extends outside the classroom. He also suggested activities that can help learners practice using the English language such as in games, role plays and pair or group work.

Additionally, Najeeb (2013) also supported this notion on learner autonomy and suggested the use of the target language as the preferred medium of teaching and learning from the inception. It is therefore important that learners are encouraged to use English Language to enhance the speaking skill. Therefore, the teacher must encourage and motivate learners to constantly practice speaking English language.

### **6.4. Building and Stocking the Library with Appropriate Books and Materials**

Building and stocking the library with appropriate books and materials was another measure or practice suggested that could help foster learner autonomy in the learning of English Language. This finding meant that for learner autonomy to be enhanced, schools should have libraries that were stocked with appropriate books so that learners could have access to such materials which they could use in their learning and thus would improve learner autonomy in the learning of English Language. The finding is also emphasised by Arko-Cobbah (2004) who validated that there is a need to create the infrastructure necessary to foster contacts for learners to access learning materials which helps in the mastery of subject contents. Building and stocking the library with books could help learners be expose to variety of reading materials which would allow them to discover a lot about language through reading on their own.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The study reported variety of factors that affected learner autonomy. The factors ascribed to the school, teacher, learners and the parents. All the three stakeholders in the teaching and learning process contributed to the factors which affected autonomous learning of English Language. From what the study reported, it can be concluded that factors which affected learner autonomy was as a result of the

combination of the four key stakeholders in secondary school education. Therefore, autonomous learning is a consolidated effort which requires the school, teachers, learners and parents to play their part. If the identified stakeholders do not perform their roles, learner autonomy will be affected. It is recommended that the teacher, school, learners and parents work collaboratively in ensuring that autonomy in English language learning is not affected. The study also suggested measures or practices that can help promote autonomous learning. The study suggested practices or measures which teachers and learners came up with and included the use of appropriate teaching strategies, providing teaching and learning resources to promote independent learning, encouraging and motivating learners to speak English Language and building and restocking the library with appropriate books and materials. It can be concluded that measures or practices that can promote learner autonomy in the learning of English Language depended on the practices by the teacher and the school in ensuring that their respective responsibilities are made.

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