

Notions of Identity and Investment in Second Language Acquisition: Bangladeshi Indigenous Students' Perspectives

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Abstract

Identity and investment are closely related to second language learning in many contexts. Many studies have been done on how second language learning affects the identity and investment of second language learners. Banking on the theory of identity, this article investigates how and why Bangladeshi students, belonging to indigenous communities, invest in second language learning and how their investment in L2 is linked to their agency. The study adopted an interpretative qualitative research paradigm and more precisely, utilized narrative inquiry as a research method to explore the lived experiences situated in a particular time, space and context. The findings exhibit that Bangladeshi ethnic students have made financial, physical, psychological and academic investments to own the linguistic, cultural and symbolic capital of English as a second language and such investment seems to be impacted by factors such as generating new identities (real or imagined), agency, neoliberalism and social justice. The research findings tend to have implications for second language teachers, researchers, SLA curriculum and material designers and other stakeholders in the Bangladeshi context or elsewhere.

Keywords: *SLA, indigenous students, narrative inquiry, Bangladesh, investment, identity.*

Introduction

The connection between language learning and identity is closely intertwined and many experts observe that language learning is a process of identity formation. For example, when learners are engaged in various school practices and activities in the classrooms with a view to learning a second language, it is interesting that those activities and practices influence students' sense of self or identity and how their identities transform across time, space and contexts. Observing the intricate

and close link between identity and language learning, more precisely second language learning, many SLA scholars and researchers (Norton, 2000; Norton, 2006; Block, 2007) have become interested to explore and comprehend the link between them and as a result, many vibrant research studies have been conducted in the past to understand the relation between SLA and power, agency, investment and identity. In this article, I have made an attempt to critically explore the relationship between identity and investment and the English language learning experiences

of a group of Bangladeshi tertiary-level indigenous students living in different hilly districts of Bangladesh through the theoretical lens of identity and investment theory.

Background of the Study

English is generally stated as a second language in Bangladesh, although in the strict sense of the term, it is actually a foreign language considering its role and functionality in the context of the country. Like many other South Asian countries, Bangladesh was under British colonial rule for nearly 190 years and its institutional practices have been shaped by the notion of colonial, global and neoliberal influences. So, English is studied rigorously as a subject in various public, private, government and non-government institutions with the goal that the mastery of the language will enable the learners to increase their linguistic capital and will help them to find better opportunities related to careers, education, and to migrate in many developed countries. So, driven by both integrative and instrumental motivations (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), learners reveal a mad rush to learn English and such 'English fever' or 'English mania' is accommodated by various public and private institutions by offering courses on developing fluency in English. Therefore, with the purpose of empowering students, and equipping them with this essential skill, the government of Bangladesh made it a mandatory subject to be studied from primary level to higher secondary level. Besides, many public and private universities also offer graduate programs in English literature to cater for the needs of students. Ironically enough, although universities offer these courses to be specialized in English literature, students' predominant motivation reflects a penchant not for literature but for developing a capacity to have a strong command over English with the aim of participating in the global job market.

Status of Indigenous Students

There are about 45 distinct indigenous communities in Bangladesh living in different parts of Bangladesh and a large portion of them inhabit the districts of Hill Tracts such as Rangamati, Bandarban, and Khagrachhari. Although Bangladesh is primarily a monolingual community, these ethnic minorities are generally characterized by their own distinct languages, cultural practices and living styles. As Bangla is the medium of instruction in most schools and colleges, they use their mother tongues at home and use Bangla in educational settings. So, most students belonging to ethnic minorities complete their primary, secondary and higher secondary education in Bangla medium schools and colleges and then go for higher education at universities (Khanam, 2021). Thus, "indigenous children do not have the opportunity to study in their mother tongues, and are therefore, at risk for language loss" (Khanam, 2021, p. 201). Living far from modern civilizations and amenities, indigenous students in Bangladesh have very limited choices and opportunities as far as their education and careers are concerned. However, driven by global issues such as the commodification of English, globalization, and neoliberalism, they are also enrolling in the English departments of many universities with the objective of building their linguistic capital.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the main learning objective of enabling and equipping undergraduate students with the skills and knowledge of English poems, novels, dramas, and literary terms used in English literature, and comprehending the philosophical forces moulding the Western minds, an increasing

number of students, especially female students enrol in the English department of our university is to build up communicative competence in English. Interestingly enough, in recent times, the number of male and female students belonging to ethnic minorities living in remote areas of Hill Tracts are also on the rise. Despite their poor linguistic and educational background and their evident struggles to actively participate in classroom activities in EMI (English medium instruction) and to fulfil the assessment requirements, the trend of enrolment of indigenous students is on the rise. Such development has triggered the interest of the researcher to explore the reasons behind the interest of students of ethnic origin in the study of English language and literature programs offered by the university. To put it another way, the researcher is interested in finding out and critically examining the factors behind indigenous tertiary students' motivation behind learning English in the post-COVID context.

The Rationale of the Study

This study may provide a better and clearer picture of adult ethnic students' sense of self, identity, agency and the kind of barriers they encounter in their trajectories of second language acquisition. Also, it tends to have implications primarily for institutions such as schools, colleges and universities offering graduate programs in English language and literature. It might help them to conceptualize the new and recent trends in student enrolment and adjust their programs to cater for the needs of diverse students hailing from multiple backgrounds and ethnicities. Besides, it may also provide new insights to the designers of curriculum and syllabus, textbook writers, and material developers to update their relevant texts and documents in conformity with the findings of the study. Finally, it appears

to be a humble contribution to the broader global research hub in this area and helps to comprehend and clarify the contextual picture of the issue.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study undertaken are:

- (1) to identify the factors impacting indigenous students' choice of English as a subject of graduation,
- (2) to explore the nexus between their identities and their second language acquisition,
- (3) to reveal the practices they are engaged in to materialize their real or imagined goals,
- (4) to bring the challenges they encounter in their pursuit of second language acquisition trajectories to light.

Research Questions

- (1) How do indigenous students in Bangladesh invest in second language acquisition?
- (2) How does their investment in second language acquisition help to shape their identities and agency?

Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

In this article, the research has used a number of key terms such as identity, agency, capital, and motivation. By identity, he means a second language learner's sense of self in relation to society and its role in shaping his or her identity. And by agency, the researcher points at second language learner's exercise of power s/he holds and their capacity to make a choice and the idea of capital entails that

SLA learners get engaged in many practices at schools or other social settings by investing time, money and energy with the purpose of fulfilling their desires and materializing the plans, actual or imagined. Finally, motivation “refers to the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it ...” (Ortega, 2011, p.168). In other words, motivation is the impetus behind doing something, and in this regard, the reason behind learners’ engagement in learning a second language.

Theoretical Review

As already pointed out, the issue of identity and second language learning has been one most vibrant research ideas in the wider field of applied linguistics. According to Duff (2012), identity refers to “one’s core self (or senses of self)” (p. 415). Occasionally, it is synonymously used to mean subject positions or subjectivities. Traditionally, it is “understood in terms of one’s connection or identification with a particular social group, the emotional ties one has with that group, and the meanings that connection has for an individual” (Duff, 2012, p. 415). Identity theory postulates that identity is socially constrained and constructed or constituted. Some of the key relevant terms in the theorization of identity theory are social comparison, social distinctiveness in prevailing intergroup relationships, processes of categorization as self- and -other, realization of social identity. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), Norton (2006) and Block (2007), the three seminal contributors in identity theory, the most relevant and highly preferred lens to study identity in applied linguistics and SLA is the narratives provided by the second language learners and postmodern conceptualization of identity as fluid, dynamic, contradictory and ever-changing. They also characterize identity as socially situated and constructed. Their

theoretical postulations imply that individuals are not in a position to choose their identities freely who they aspire to be. Rather, they have to negotiate their identity positioning in the wider “economic, historic, and sociopolitical structures that they inhabit and which inhabit them” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, as cited in Ortega, 2011).

As already identified that researchers in second language acquisition subscribe to a poststructuralist view of identity as ever-shifting, dynamic and as a result, some recurrent terms used in the relevant studies are *fissures, fragmented, shifting, hybrid, gaps, seepage, splits, decentered, and splinterings* to encapsulate poststructuralist notion. Further, most of the research studies on the issue portray society as a setting of struggles or integrate the macro perspective of the context with the implication that society needs transformation and targets social justice for second language learners (Ortega, 2011).

Another two crucial concepts in the second language identity research are investment and agency. Investment is the main element in Norton’s (1995) crucial model of identity theory in which he asserts “If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (p.17). Such investment made by the second language learners can only be figured out by taking into consideration his or her desires, identities, and the forces that shape their fluid identities since all these factors fashion the various amounts of investment they make across time, space and context. Related to this investment are the symbolic and affective “affiliations to various communities of practice” (Ortega, 2011, p. 242) and some of them are urgent, and real, sought after by learners immediately while

others are available in the imagination, called ‘imagined communities. The last element comprising Norton’s model of identity is the conception of the right to speak, and it is held that in the context of second language learning, the agency of second language learners is not equally distributed as they, most often, are positioned as speakers sans that right (Ortega, 2011).

As already hinted in the last line of the last paragraph, an important construct of second language identity study “refers to people’s ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation” (Duff, 2012, p. 417). It is also defined as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112). It is this agency that makes people able to imagine or assume new roles of identity and perform new actions to actualize their goals. The agency is linked to power, and situated context of society as learners having the control over their choices, lives and social circumstances are highly likely to succeed in language learning. On the other hand, lack or absence of agency may turn learners passive, reluctant and unmotivated in educational contexts (Duff, 2012).

Empirical Studies

Sacklin (2015) in her PhD research explores the relationship between identity, investment and SLA in the community context of ESL classrooms. Banking on a case study of an ESL adult learner, more precisely a LESLLA (Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition), she investigates the social milieu of the student’s life, her identity, and the way classroom space in the ESL class fashions her investment. The ethnographic interviews in her research reveal that the

investment made by her in language learning is attached to her identity in contradictory and multifarious ways. For instance, in spite of her huge investment in learning English, she lacked participation in ESL classes and thus the researcher claims that non-participation cannot be identified with non-investment. The study also finds out that the main factors behind her investment in English learning were her self-advocacy and her non-participation in the ESL classes induced by her poor education and obsolete teaching techniques to teach English, her relation with the teachers, and her commitment to the family.

Likewise, Ali (2021) in her case study on the role of investment and identity in language learning of Spanish heritage speakers argues that investment in language learning is also an investment in building identity. More specifically, her research study explores the investment of ten participants’ language learning experiences, who enrolled in HL (Heritage Language) Spanish course. Employing narrative analysis as a research strategy, the study shows the differing degrees of investment in the HL and the identity related to heritage plays a crucial role in the investment. Although in a different context like China, Teng (2019) also conducted a similar research study to gain insight into the nexus between identity, investment, agency and learning of English as a second language. His findings reveal the changing patterns of identity across and within various communities. Interestingly, it shows while the investment in language learning shapes the identity of learners, learner identity also impacts investment in learning English. Furthermore, Teng’s study informs identity as a socially situated, negotiated, constructed, complex and dynamic entity integrating four factors, such as learners’ agency, the gap between the learners’ imagined community and practised community, their ideology

and cognitive awareness, and perception of capacity building of English language learning community.

Norton and Williams (2012) identify the role of digital tools and the way they shape social meanings in diverse economic and sociopolitical contexts impacting the investments of teachers and learners and find out that they take up different identities by sometimes embracing digital devices or sometimes rejecting them. Some of the remarkable research studies centring around the relationship between language and investment across diverse global contexts focus on the linguistic, social and cognitive investment made by Chinese students in EMI (English Medium Instruction), (Arkoudis & Davison, 2008), comprehending how and why Chinese language learners are interested in standard English in Singapore to be academically sound (De Costa, 2010), investments of English language teachers in South America to have imagined identities for various affordances such as virtual and face-to-face interaction with international communities (Reeves, 2009; Sanches Silva, 2013; Carazzai, 2013).

Finally, Afreen and Norton (2022) investigate the investment and identity of teacher of Bangla as a heritage language in the context of Canada and find out the subject's identity and investment is closely linked with her ideological perception "in the importance of HL maintenance for cultural continuity" between Bangla and English (p.152). The study also reveals that HL teachers may function as cultural collaborators, mentors, community members and innovators.

Thus, the relationship between learning English as a second language and learners' investment and agency is impacted by a plethora of crucial factors such as learners'

improved images in the communities they belong to, their negotiation of identity in the greater social, economic and socio-political realities, the increase of capital in the real or imagined communities, their transformation in the context of fluid identities, and the diverse affordances the investment in SLA yields against the backdrop of a virtual culture of the globalized world. In other words, the studies conducted on the nexus between second language learning and learners' investment, agency and identity show that SLA learners have a variety of reasons such as acquiring material and symbolic resources shaped by learners' desires and dreams, self-regulation, self-advocacy, building identity and linguistic, social and cognitive capacity building.

In spite of identity being a crucial concern in second language learning, like many other settings, research on language learner identity and investment in Bangladesh has received very little attention and the researcher could not find any research conducted in the context of indigenous language learners living in the Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. Thus, a research gap has been sighted and through this study, he had attempted to fulfil this gap.

Methodology

The constructivist paradigm has aligned better with my research topic. Social constructivism is an approach to qualitative research and is often linked with the interpretivist paradigm. In this paradigm, people or individuals try to explore and figure out the world in which they work and live and the subjective meanings they or the researchers dig out are often varied and multiple. Here the objective of the research is to understand the complex and situated surroundings and the views of the participants about the situation are to be studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In my endeavour to set up the nexus between the constructivist paradigm and my research topic, I constructed meanings as I have interacted with indigenous students studying at my university and have come to know their perceptions and observations about second language learning experiences, their motivating factors, their fluid identities, the kind of future they envision, and the challenges they encounter while going through studies and the initiatives they have taken to address them. Through the narration of their lived experiences and the use of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, I have made attempts to delve into their perspectives, systems of beliefs, and observations which are constructed culturally, socially, intellectually and historically. The inductive and interpretive nature of my research has enabled me to generate meanings out of the data culled in the field. The socially situated and negotiated perspectives coming out of the meaningful interaction have helped me to perceive the varied, multiple, value-loaded contextual realities underlying the dialogues between the participants and me, the researcher.

Narrative Inquiry as my Method of Inquiry

In this study on the identity and investment of second language learners, I have utilized narrative inquiry as a research method because it allowed me to elicit the lived experiences of minoritized students, their struggles and challenges related to language learning, and their language learning practices as a form of investment. Similarly, the stories narrated by students from one particular ethnicity have provided me with another perspective to triangulate the validity and credibility of stories narrated by another student belonging to a different ethnicity. Webster and Mertova

(2007) argue that “narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (p.1). Further, they reiterate that it is suitable for capturing the subtleties and complexities of human experiences in learning and teaching.

The argument in support of using narrative inquiry as a research method in the discipline of education is also echoed by Chase (2018) as she contends that the idea of narrative entails the study of the narratives of institutions, which contain many materials and discourse generated by many diverse organizations and entities. She observes:

...when official speeches, reports, websites, or everyday talk in schools, courtrooms, workplaces, social media, and political hearings express who “we” are (e.g., as an organization, profession, or nation), what we’re doing, where we’ve been, where we’re going, and why, we can explore the institutional narratives they express. (p. 948)

Therefore, the socially or institutionally situated narrative texts of indigenous students representing social or institutional performance have supplied ample foundation to delve into the practice of the second language acquisition process in the various layers of tertiary educational institutions in Bangladesh and have allowed me to know the stories so far unheard of.

Research Tools

For data collection, the researcher obtained written reflections of eleven indigenous students (S1-S11) studying at a private university of Chittagong as this way of data

elicitation enabled the research participants to “record (primarily by writing or typing, but potentially also by audio or video recording) their experiences or views in relation to a series of questions or prompts” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 134). The participants were selected purposively based on their availability, their uniqueness as a member of a particular ethnicity, and their willingness to participate in the research. Then the data were analyzed for coding and development of themes in conformity with the thematic analysis guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Findings

A number of themes have appeared from the data culled from the research participants and keeping the theoretical postulations and literature reviewed in the earlier sections, the findings have been organized into their sections, viz. investment, identity and agency.

Investment

The collected data show that the indigenous students have invested their time, money, energy and merit in using a number of resources for learning English as a second language. To begin with, the institution in which they study is far from their original habitat and many of them have to leave their parents and near and dear ones and live in the city in which their university is located. Further, the institution in which they have studied is relatively expensive since it is a private university and they have to pay for each semester as a tuition fee. Also, to build up their linguistic capital in English, they were engaged in many diverse learning activities with the aim of improving their skills in the second language. For example, S11 articulates his investment in this way:

Secondly, in my Secondary and Higher Secondary study life, I went through many grammatical errors. Later, I improved my grammatical errors through a lot of practice. The last one is my pronunciation and still struggling with it. I hope I will solve this problem immediately.

Similarly, S7, who is doing a BA (Hons) in English at a private university in Chittagong, observes that accomplishing his studies is his highest priority. He is paying his own tuition fee by tutoring students privately. He is also planning to invest in his society by writing a book on language teaching and setting up a school in his area to empower his community. He maintains that “*also apart from all this, there are barely some English teachers out there in the villages. I would like to be one of those who would make countless efforts for all those people*”.

Further, S6 shares her thoughts about the practical necessity of learning English and justifies the investment in learning English. She reiterates that without knowing English, it is not possible to communicate with the global world and to be successful in her career, which is why she wants to work hard to have an excellent command of the language. She states, “*I think that it’s very necessary to learn in English or everyone in the digital or Dynamic era. Personally, I like to learn in English very sincerely and cordially from my breach of heart*”. To participate in global communication, she is ready to invest more as she adds, “*I am now trying to improve myself by reading more English books, movies, newspapers and have improved a lot*”. S1 echoes almost similar opinion stating that she has enrolled in the English department as the command of the English language will enable her to communicate with a global audience. She also shares that she has a love for the English language and literature and she wants

to share these thoughts with her community. Furthermore, S5 reports that she had engaged herself in building her linguistic capital since her childhood by reading fables, and novels, and watching English series and movies in the classrooms, she was involved in reading, writing, discussing with her classmates textbooks, participating in class lectures, critical and close reading of many books.

Identity

Most of the reflection write-ups by students belonging to the minoritized communities exhibit that learning English is connected to their formation of new identities, real or imagined. For instance, S5 says that she wants to be a polyglot and observes that the acquisition of English is her dream because it will enable her to create a new identity. She shares that it will help her to travel abroad and communicate with people from diverse cultures and know about their customs and traditions. She is also planning to go abroad for higher education and her English skills will enable her to actualize her plan. More importantly, she articulates her excellent command of English will enable her a new social identity because she will be able to contribute to society by teaching English to youngsters. She shares:

I am determined to continue learning English, and now this is my goal: to graduate from this subject so that I could be a qualified person to help the youngsters and motivate them to learn more about the outside world. This way, I will develop my identity in my society and country.

Likewise, S4 thinks that learning English will empower her and bring career opportunities for her. Besides, it will add to her prestige in society and she will be considered as a property for the society and the country. She

states, “*There is a saying, that language is power, and as English is our international language it becomes a more demanding and more acceptable language to every country*”. She also observes that knowing English guarantees a job and “if a student like me can get a good job, the family members will be proud, the society people will also show respect to that family, that person will be considered a property to the country”. Furthermore, S1 relates her identity to her community and is interested in bringing about changes in her society by teaching English language and English literature.

In the similar manner, S10 and S11 reflect how they struggled while she enrolled in the English department, in terms of understanding lectures while writing and speaking grammatically correct sentences and pronunciation. And she had to work hard to overcome those challenges and ultimately, her hard work has paid off and now she has a changed identity as she states, “*In my opinion, this achievement boosts my personality and capability. Now it makes me sure I can do anything staying here or in a foreign country*”. Another student (S7) belonging to a different ethnicity envisions another identity for him as an English teacher, setting up a school in his locality and making enormous efforts to teach English to the community children. Not unlike S7, S3 also shares that she has harboured the dream of becoming an English teacher since her childhood and she is desirous of improving her skills in English to materialize her dream and ensure proper learning opportunities for the community children.

In addition, S8 also points out that his investment in the English language and literature is related to his imagined identity as regarded as an educated and respectable man in his community. He imagines that as an educated person, he will reform his society

by increasing the literacy rate and providing counselling or mentoring services. He shares his imagined identity in the following way:

They know me in society as a great person So, it is a great identity to me, getting enough love and respect from the general people in society. They like me to attend any important functions and allow me to deliver speeches in society programmes, and culture programmes.

Then, S9 also acknowledges the contribution of the English language and literature in shaping her identity as a globally informed individual as she states, “*the study of English literature helps us understand the world in all its social, political, economic, and cultural aspects through stories, novels, poems, and plays*”.

Agency

Some of the students in their reflection have expressed that being engaged in the learning of English language and literature has empowered them and now they are able to exercise their agency while making decisions on their careers and other important issues of life. For example, S2 shares how learning English and doing an MA in English helped her in her decision-making about her future career:

Since it is an important language having a Master’s degree in (ELT) has benefited me in many ways. It has helped me to decide my profession and also gave me the opportunity to learn about teaching. In future, I want to become a professor so it has definitely boosted my career opportunities.

Knowing English as a global skill has given her an opportunity to communicate with

foreigners improved her socialization skills and confidence and widened her opportunities in the job market. She further adds that her degree in English language and literature provided her with many learning opportunities and supplied a kind agency for setting her goals and getting stronger both mentally and professionally. Next, another male student (S8) from a different ethnic community thinks that having English at his disposal will give him a sort of agentive power to expand his knowledge and life internationally, and also to contribute to the intellectual growth of his society as he maintains, “*It is impossible to expand our life internationally, besides I want to be higher educated. To be highly educated, English knowledge must be needed in real life. So, i enrolled in BA (Hons) English*”

The agentive role played by English can also be traced in the reflection write-up by another indigenous student (S3) as she transfers her English skills in her job preparation and enjoys an added advantage in PowerPoint presentation, free handwriting, and spoken English. Reflecting in the same vein, S5 also talks about the empowering role of English in helping her to make decisions:

... determined to continue learning English, and now this is my goal: to graduate from this subject so that I could be a qualified person to help youngsters and motivate them to learn more about the outside world. This way, I will develop my identity in my society and country.

It is obvious the nexus between the development of her agentive power, decision-making capacity and her command over English as a second language.

Discussion and Implications

The data analysis of Bangladeshi indigenous students appears to disclose that their second language learning experiences seem to have been influenced by a number of factors related to identity, investment, agency and the idea of social justice.

The first factor that surfaces in the data reveals that minoritized students' motivation for second language learning is closely linked to their changing or fluid identity and they want to take advantage of second language learning to reshape their identities. Such penchants for taking up new identities with a view to effectively participate in global communication and grab global career opportunities have been evident in the reflection of S4 and S5. Such findings tend to corroborate the theoretical postulations of Norton (2006), Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) and Block (2007) as they term identity as dynamic, fluid and always in the process of transformation across place and time.

Another trait that appears to be visible in write-ups of students of ethnic origin is that their identities are socially situated or socially constructed. Rather than choosing their identity positionings freely, these students tend to negotiate them in the larger economic, sociopolitical and historical contexts in which they find themselves. Despite their upbringings in the remote rural hilly areas of Chittagong, the students came into contact with English as a second language, realized its potentialities, negotiated their identities in the context of the new milieu of the classroom and ended up taking up new identities in real or imagined spaces. Consequently, some of them aspired to be English language teachers and decided to contribute to the social development of the communities while others imbibed the spirit of neoliberalism and have

planned to go abroad to harness more skills or for better career opportunities. Therefore, their transformed identities, fashioned by the experiences of learning English as a second language, are likely to conform to the tenets of identity theory by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004).

A further feature that has come up from the data analysis is that the minoritized students have all invested in second language acquisition by leaving their usual dwelling places in Hill Tracts and staying in cities, spending money for university tuition fees, getting engaged in discussion and critical thinking on various academic topics, participating in classes, making efforts in improving their grammatical and lexical skills, the receptive and the productive skills. Clearly, such investment made by them reveals their desire to acquire a range of skills related to their linguistic and cultural capital. In other words, their increased confidence, ambition and other psychological factors, as well as their desire to be successful professionals and members of imagined communities or changing societies, all have determined their degree of investment in L2 learning. Thus, such investment made by these students lends support to the implications of identity.

Finally, the other two key findings in this study are agency and the concept of social justice. Some students (S2, S5, S8) have expressed that having participated in English classes, achieving fluency in English empowered them, improved their mental capabilities and as a result, they were able to make a choice or decision with regard to their future career plan. In conformity with the concept of Duff (2012) and Ahearn (2001), some indigenous students, equipped with the global skill of English, have shown agency to take control of their goals assume new identity roles and pursue actions to materialize their dreams.

Last but not least, some of the students' ambition to become English teachers and then contribute to their communities for literacy and social development is linked to the idea of social justice. It appears that these indigenous students want to use their education for moral development and social transformation of their communities and this imagined aspiration echoes the idea of Dewey (1963) who asserts that education is a kind of preparation for life and "education is essentially a social process" (p. 58). At the same time, Freire's concept of social justice tends to be reflected in the dreams of these minoritized students since they tend to believe in "emancipatory and liberatory education" and initiate "social transformation through education" (Freire as cited in Troudi & Riyami, 2020, p. 264). It is likely that they regard teaching as a calling and want to utilize their English education as a means of making a difference in the world in which they live.

This article may have significant implications for SLA researchers, educators, policy makers at the policy level and more importantly for TESOL or ELT teachers and educators at the practice level. The concerned stakeholders are likely to derive some pieces of evidence regarding the factors influencing the investment of indigenous students in second language learning and thus design and develop materials, resources, syllabi and curriculum addressing and accommodating some findings in this article. Thus, the results of the study might help design and develop more focused materials and books catering for the global and local needs of students keeping their investment, capital and agency in focus. Further, the research issues addressed in this article might benefit global researchers by providing the contextual picture of second language learning and its impact on investment, identity and agency. Finally, the study may influence the language education policy in Bangladesh and help to plan and

streamline the policies to make them more relevant, updated, and inclusive.

Conclusion

This research critically explored the nexus between Bangladeshi indigenous students' second language learning and the concepts of identity, investment and agency. In other words, it has attempted to investigate how and why ethnic students invested their time, money, and energy and become engaged in diverse intellectual and academic activities to develop their proficiency in English. To accomplish this purpose, the article has made use of the theory of identity and its relevant constructs such as identity, investment and agency.

The findings of the study communicate that Bangladeshi students belonging to minoritized groups have invested in the learning of L2 for the construction of new identities which will enable them to respond to local and global challenges. It further manifests their desires and ambition to master English as a symbol of linguistic and cultural capital to take part and access global and local career opportunities and knowledge hubs.

This study investigated the investment and identity issue of indigenous students living in the Hill Tracts of Chittagong and studying only at a certain private university of Chittagong and thus provides a limited picture of the issue. In other words, the limitation of the study lies in the fact that it does not give a representative picture as there are many other indigenous communities and students living in other parts of Bangladesh. Future researchers may focus on how and why the ethnic students living in other parts of Bangladesh get engaged in learning English as L2 and what is the role of investment, identity and agency in it.

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