

Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation in EFL Education at Saudi Universities
through Learner Autonomy

by

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ABSTRACT

In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) education at Saudi universities, intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in the second language (L2) learning process. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this thesis investigates how learner autonomy can be enhanced to promote intrinsic motivation among Saudi EFL learners. This thesis offers a literature review to explore the significance and application of intrinsic motivation proposed by the identified empirical studies in this context. It begins by providing a general overview of motivation and the relationship between learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation based on SDT. After that, it explores the identified studies in this context by providing an in-depth analysis of each study. To comprehensively review the existing literature, a methodical search strategy was employed. The Arizona State University Library and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) were utilized. The focus was on empirical studies that emphasized intrinsic motivation in the context of EFL students in Saudi Arabian universities and how to promote it, with particular attention to the principles of SDT regarding learner autonomy. It further suggests that enhancing autonomy, as viewed through the lens of SDT, could provide the necessary conditions for intrinsic motivation to thrive in the context of EFL in Saudi Arabia. A justification for this review was the evident gap in the literature as there are only five identified studies that met the criteria of selection in this context. This thesis contends that integrating SDT's view of learner autonomy with a balanced approach to structured and choice-based learning may effectively bridge the gap identified in the current research on intrinsic motivation. Although the studies at hand present a valuable addition to intrinsic motivation within the EFL context in Saudi universities, they fall short in some respects.

Therefore, this thesis advocates for an educational model that applies SDT-based autonomous learning strategies into the curriculum to enrich the intrinsic motivation of Saudi EFL students. Several recommendations regarding how to promote intrinsic motivation are presented.

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PREFACE

In my own experience, self-learning that is internally driven through developing a keen interest in what I learn played a significant role in acquiring my English skills. Reflecting on my learning experiences, I was motivated by my personal interest in the language, my desire to understand other people's cultures, and my belief that speaking English would open new opportunities for me.

Based on my personal experiences, I remember being drawn to major in English due to its professional advantages, even though I had a natural inclination towards Arabic. The shift wasn't immediate; my appreciation for Arabic did not directly translate to English at first. In the beginning, my reasons for studying English were more career-driven than out of pure interest. However, as time went on, I realized that to truly appreciate English, I needed to approach it with sincerity, much like how I felt about Arabic. This realization came from within rather than from external pressures.

Later, as an English language teacher, I became acutely aware of the importance of fostering my students to become intrinsically motivated learners. I observed that highly motivated learners engage more proactively in the learning process and make considerable progress in acquiring the language. Nonetheless, sustaining learners' motivation poses a challenge, particularly when they encounter difficulties. With insights from both a student and teacher perspective, I was drawn to research deeper into L2 motivation. In this regard, the role of learner autonomy emerges as a significant catalyst, potentially steering learners towards heightened intrinsic motivation, as this thesis will address.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Motivation, a central concept in understanding human behavior, encapsulates the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation is seen as an essential research topic for English language teachers, and as someone who has begun the journey of studying as an EFL learner, I can attest to its importance.

However, the 1990s introduced a pivotal shift. Instead of anchoring on the broader reasons for L2 learning, researchers delved deeper into understanding the motivational factors influencing students' engagement in specific L2 classroom activities (Dörnyei, 1994). Notably, motivation isn't a monolithic entity; it evolves, reflecting its nature as both a 'state' and a 'process'. It can be influenced by situational factors and can transition over time (Dörnyei, Z., 2005). This thesis aligns with the perspective that motivation is dynamic, emphasizing its fluidity and adaptability. More specifically, it focuses on intrinsic motivation which typically refers to the drive to participate in an activity due to its inherent enjoyment and fulfillment (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Given this fluid nature of motivation, learner autonomy emerges as a powerful tool for enhancing intrinsic motivation in the EFL context of Saudi Arabia. By fostering learner autonomy, educators can potentially facilitate a shift in students' motivation — transitioning them from being predominantly extrinsically motivated towards a more intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Such a shift can empower EFL learners, enabling them to take ownership of their learning journey, driven by genuine interest and curiosity rather than mere external rewards or pressures.

Historically, Saudi Arabia's introduction of English into the educational system was influenced more by external necessities, aligning with evolving economic imperatives rather than purely for the joy of learning a foreign language. Contrary to many neighboring Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia's initial engagement with English wasn't an aftermath of colonization but a conscious choice to promote global connections. Such external motivations, pivotal in the teaching and learning of English, underscore that many Saudi students often learn English for sensible reasons, like job opportunities, rather than for the intrinsic value of learning the language itself. Al-Seghayer (2014), mentions that, in general, English language students in Saudi Arabia usually do not take learning seriously and only focus on acquiring the minimal amount of competency required to pass indicating that intrinsic motivation is the key component missing in the educational system.

From a wider viewpoint, research indicates that many EFL learners in Saudi Arabia face proficiency challenges, which may be attributed to limited motivation. Javid et al. (2012) noted that the proficiency levels often appear to be below the desired standard. A considerable proportion of Saudi learners haven't achieved even a basic proficiency level (Alrabai, 2014 p.82). Melvin (2015) believes that this lower performance can be linked to diminished student motivation. It is crucial to recognize the specific type of motivation that is predominantly absent in this context, which is intrinsic motivation, as emphasized by Alghatani (2021). Moreover, Khodadady and Khajavy (2013) suggested that unmotivated Saudi learners tend to have unfavorable opinions about their English classes. This underscores the importance of motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation has been consistently recognized as influential in students' L2 learning (Dörnyei, 1998; Noels et al., 2001). Intrinsic motivation may lead to sustained L2 study

and enhanced long-term retention (Noels et al. 2001). As such, finding ways to promote intrinsic motivation in the classroom is viable. While the current pedagogical practices implemented in the EFL Saudi Arabian education system emphasize memorization and extrinsic rewards, a shift towards promoting learner autonomy, integrating personally chosen materials, and emphasizing mastery over grades can better enhance intrinsic motivation (Aburizaizah, 2021; Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017; Cordova & Lepper, 1996).

To address this issue, the current literature review thesis is structured in the following sequence. The organization of this thesis paper starts first with providing a review of motivation orientations, intrinsic motivation, and learner autonomy which serves as a conceptual foundation for the subsequent sections of this thesis. Then, it provides an in-depth analysis of the identified studies related to the context at hand. Finally, I will present recommendations regarding how to promote intrinsic motivation by utilizing learner autonomy within the set context. The following research focuses on studies extracted from the Arizona State University Library (ASU Library) and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). These credible sources were selected due to their comprehensive collection of academic outputs, including peer-reviewed journals, periodicals, and scholarly monographs.

To ensure methodological consistency and relevance, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined. For inclusion, articles had to be empirical, centered on intrinsic motivation in L2 learning, and mainly focused on higher education contexts in Saudi Arabian universities. In terms of exclusion, studies without a peer-review process or those published in sources without established academic credibility were not included, as were those with limited empirical data or unclear methodological descriptions.

To identify literature relevant to the context of Saudi Arabia university-level EFL learners, a structured research strategy was implemented. A set of relevant keywords was determined, including "intrinsic motivation," "learner autonomy", "L2 learning," "English as a Foreign Language," "Saudi universities," and "pedagogical strategies." These terms were used in combinations to retrieve articles from the selected databases. For instance, a representative search string combined "intrinsic motivation," "L2 learning," and "Saudi universities." In addition to database searches, manual reviews of bibliographies in shortlisted articles were conducted to ensure comprehensive data retrieval.

Following the search, a systematic data extraction protocol was followed. Information extracted from each study included author details, publication year, research questions or hypotheses, methodological approach, main findings, identified limitations, and suggestions for future research. This data informed the analysis, providing insights into the role of autonomy in promoting intrinsic motivation within the EFL framework at Saudi universities.

CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTION AND CONCEPTS OF MOTIVATION: INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

This section explores the key concepts and theories related to motivation in L2 learning. Beginning with the foundational ideas of integrative and instrumental motivation, the discussion continues to examine the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, emphasizing the varied ways in which learners can be motivated. Central to this discussion is SDT, which has significantly broadened the understanding of human motivation in the context of language acquisition. By the end of this section, readers should have a layered understanding that moves from general principles to specific theoretical frameworks, offering an overview of the development and details of L2 motivational research.

Motivation Orientations

Indeed, the field of applied linguistics has seen many phases and theory developments over the last decades. Historically, the evolution of motivational constructs in applied linguistics has transitioned from initial theories that centered on the binary of integrative and instrumental motivations, as introduced by Gardner, to the sophisticated delineation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations within the framework of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Integrative and instrumental motivation were introduced by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert in the late 1950s and 1960s. Their research originated from understanding the social and psychological connections to L2 learning which indicates how interconnected the concept of motivation is with other fields. Integrative motivation has generated more attention because, evidently, of its greater impact on a language learner's ability to acquire a better outcome in terms of language acquisition (Dörnyei and Ushioda, E, 2009, p. 2). As

defined by Gardner and Lambert, (1972, p. 132) integrative motivation is "reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group." The concept of integrative motivation revolves around the learner's motive toward learning a second language. In this case, the motive to learn a second language stems from a deep interest in trying to connect with the community that speaks the target language. As a result of the learner's interest in being associated with a large part of the cultural aspects of a certain society including its native speakers, traditional norms, lifestyle, religion, and language, the outcome of learning society's language becomes more achievable.

Instrumental motivation, however, is related to a learner's need to advance from a career or an academic perspective rather than a drive toward integrating into a given community. Therefore, what drives an L2 learner in this type of motivational orientation is professional achievements, rather than personal interest, that vary from graduating from college, and having better job opportunities, to receiving a job promotion. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021, P.41), Instrumental orientation is "the utilitarian counterpart of integrative orientation in Gardner's theory, pertaining to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary."

These orientations of motivation should not be perceived as distinct categorizations; rather, they are seen as cumulative evolutionary perspectives in the field. That means that when new perspectives arise, they do so while co-existing with other theories. The emergent phases did not supplant their predecessors; instead, they represent additional perspectives (Dörnyei and Ushioda., 2021, p. 39). For instance, when a new perspective arises, it does so while not canceling its predecessor's framework such as the integrative vs instrumental orientations. Therefore, the progression of motivational orientations in

language learning is not a process of replacement but rather one of expansion and layering that fits different contexts. As the field matures, newer theories build upon and operate alongside established ones, enriching our understanding without negating prior insights. This layered approach ensures a comprehensive and evolving understanding of motivation in L2.

Most theories of motivation view motivation as a binary phenomenon; either having little motivation or having too much of it. But when examining this topic, one can recognize that motivation is not only a binary phenomenon. Therefore, the amount of motivation a student has is not the only factor but also what type of motivation a student has (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This indicates that understanding what type of motivation is needed is equally important to how much motivation is needed. The first is concerned with the orientation of motivation while the latter is focused on the level of motivation.

Given that motivation varies in terms of orientation, it is important to define what type of motivation suits the interests of EFL students who live in a country that does not have native-speaking communities which the learner might want to integrate in to achieve his or her goals of learning English. By recognizing the type of motivation utilized in such a learning process, it then can be defined and described in terms of its characteristics and what outcome can it provide.

Another dichotomy of motivational orientations that further explains the importance of the orientation type is that of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation is characterized by engaging in an activity for its inherent satisfaction, rather than for any separable outcome. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation emerges when a learner is driven primarily by external rewards or the avoidance

of punishment. For instance, intrinsically motivated learners dive into the subject of English learning out of genuine curiosity or profound interest. In their foundational work on SDT, Deci and Ryan (1985) emphasized that motivations differ based on the fundamental reasons behind one's intent to learn. They first proposed the theory in the 1980s as a framework for understanding human motivation and personality development. According to Ryan, and Deci (2017, p.4), "SDT specifically assumes that humans have evolved to be inherently curious, physically active, and deeply social beings" Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations can enhance the inclination to learn, yet they may shape the results of the learning process in unique ways because they are driven by slightly different reasons.

Dörnyei, (2005, p. 71) mentioned that "it [SDT] has been one of the most influential approaches in motivational psychology, and several attempts have been made to the L2 field to incorporate certain elements from the theory to explain L2 motivation." While integrative and instrumental motivations provided insights into the social and psychological connections to L2 learning, they were not without limitations. The integrative motivation, though influential in its time, was centered on a learner's acceptance and liking for the culture and people of the target language. However, in the context of EFL students in Saudi Arabia's university-level education, this integrative aspect is not required. This is primarily because EFL focuses on learning English in regions where it is not the dominant language, unlike ESL where English is immersed within the native community (Dingfang, 1994).

Although SDT was originally developed in the psychological research field, it has been applied to a variety of other research fields. Noels and colleagues (2003) conducted an

empirical study that found some useful applications of STD in education, specifically second language learning. Their study was one of the first examinations of (SDT) in the language learning context. The authors quite clearly argue that compared to other L2 motivation orientations, the SDT framework presents many benefits. Precisely, SDT can provide, in a more comprehensive manner, an internally consistent framework for studying motivational orientations. For instance, SDT uses learner autonomy to explain why certain motivational orientations, like intrinsic motivation, are present in some learners and absent in others. This is also the case for why I chose this theoretical framework SDT for this thesis after reviewing other frameworks.

The relationship between intrinsic motivation and learner Autonomy

Although it is not the only definition of autonomy today, a pioneer in establishing the term autonomy, Holec (1981, p. 3), describes autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning”. According to Holec (1981), learner autonomy includes a variety of responsibilities taken by L2 learners such as determining their learning objectives, defining the content and progression of their learning, selecting, and implementing learning methods and techniques, monitoring and evaluating their learning progress, and assessing the effectiveness of the chosen methods and techniques. Autonomy is largely associated with a sense of control individuals have over their actions and the ability to make choices that align with their interests.

To illustrate the relationship between learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation, SDT mainly suggests that learner autonomy is considered one of the three basic psychological needs that underlie human motivation such as intrinsic motivation as described by Deci and Ryan (1985). According to Deci and Ryan (1985), the link between learner autonomy

and intrinsic motivation is highlighted in SDT by suggesting that when learners become autonomous by taking charge of their own learning, it sparks their intrinsic motivation. SDT suggests that the fulfillment of fundamental psychological needs, including autonomy, helps maintain intrinsic motivation. Autonomy is characterized by the sense of volition and reflective endorsement of one's actions. For instance, students demonstrate autonomy when they choose to engage with their studies willingly and invest effort into their learning. Ever since it was published, SDT has been the focus of many researchers in a variety of fields, as SDT can provide a theoretical framework for understanding motivation in language learning and more specifically it draws on the learner autonomy vs lack of autonomy spectrum by expressing them as an autonomy–control continuum rather than a spectrum to showcase the seamless and gradual transition between the two poles. While a spectrum might suggest distinct categories or phases of motivation, the continuum model embraced by SDT underscores the fluid and nuanced gradations between autonomy and control, without rigid categorizations. Ryan and Deci (2017, p. 14) stated that "A central dimension used within SDT to differentiate types of motivation is the autonomy–control continuum." Therefore, the autonomy-control continuum refers to the degree to which individuals perceive that their actions are self-determined or controlled by external factors, or not. At one end of the continuum, individuals feel that they are acting autonomously. That means that they are driven by motives that are based on their own interests, values, and preferences. On the other end, individuals feel that their actions are being controlled by external factors such as rewards, punishments, or social pressure. The relationship between intrinsic motivation and autonomy stems from the idea presented by SDT that when learners actively steer their learning process, their drive often originates

from within, making them intrinsically motivated. In contrast, when they feel directed by external forces, their motivation tends to be extrinsic. Importantly, while autonomy influences motivation, it is not synonymous with intrinsic motivation. Rather, in the context of SDT, it shapes the quality and type of motivation experienced, for instance, intrinsic motivation.

It appears that the autonomy–control continuum, according to Ryan and Deci (2017), indicates that EFL students can be driven by intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation. The link between the first motivation type, intrinsic motivation, and learner autonomy is that autonomous learners could use their inner drive toward influencing their motivation to be more intrinsically driven so that they achieve success in learning English as a foreign language.

Several empirical studies about the role of learner autonomy in intrinsic motivation show the potential of utilizing autonomy to enhance intrinsic motivation in the context of EFL. They found that intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy have some level of interconnectedness. The correlation between the two indicates that when L2 learners apply autonomous learning practices, that may lead to the development of intrinsic motivation. Early studies For instance, A study conducted by Noels and colleagues (2000) aimed to understand the concept of learner motivation in the context of L2 acquisition. Employing a comprehensive questionnaire method, it surveyed participants who were English-speaking students enrolled in English psychology classes at a French-English bilingual university. Out of the initial participants, only those whose mother tongue and most frequently used language was English and who were learning French as an L2 were selected for analyses, resulting in a final sample of 159 participants, 70% of whom were

women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 50 years, with a mean age of 22 years. The participants were examined in terms of their motivational orientations, specifically focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in relation to language learning. A connection was identified between learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation. The study highlighted that students who learn a language in an autonomy-supportive environment, wherein feedback enhances their learning experience, are more likely to learn because it is pleasurable or aligns with their self-concept. It suggests that sustained learning in the EFL context is not just about making language learning enjoyable, but also about convincing learners of its personal importance, implying that autonomy may play a crucial role in leading to enhanced intrinsic motivation.

Tsai et al. (2008) evaluated the interest levels of seventh-grade students in German public schools across three academic subjects. The research involved 261 seventh-grade students. The study began with a survey to assess each student's unique interests and other personal traits, followed by repeated, lesson-specific evaluations of the student's interest and perceived autonomy support and control over a three-week timeframe. The findings from multilevel modeling indicated a positive correlation between students' interests and lessons where teachers provided support for autonomy. Conversely, in lessons where teachers exhibited controlling behaviors, there was a corresponding decrease in students' interest levels.

Another study conducted by Ceylan (2021) included participants who were randomly chosen from 100 A1-level EFL students in a state university prep school in Turkey in a non-native context. The study deployed a motivational beliefs questionnaire method to examine a variety of factors including learner autonomy. The study explains that the

participants expressed their enjoyment of classroom tasks and activities and learning for the sake of learning, an inherent characteristic of intrinsic motivation. The findings indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between motivational beliefs and sections of autonomy indicating that students who possess stronger motivational beliefs are also likely to exhibit higher levels of autonomy in their learning. The findings support the idea that one way to achieve intrinsic motivation is for learners to benefit from using learner autonomy by taking responsibility for their learning which means that "giving students more autonomy yields intrinsic motivation" Ceylan (2021, p.157).

Dincer and Yesilyurt (2017) also based their study on SDT. Their study aimed to explore the connections between EFL learners' motivation to speak, their self-regulation in learning, the support for autonomy provided by their teachers, and their engagement in the classroom, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research utilized a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative designs. Initially, a correlational research design was applied to assess relationships among study variables, followed by a case study for an in-depth understanding. The study's participants comprised 142 EFL undergraduate students, primarily females, from a Turkish state university majoring in English Language Teaching. Data analysis involved statistical tools, and the qualitative responses underwent rigorous review, translation, and back-translation to ensure accuracy. One of the questions in this study considered the relationships between motivational orientations and autonomous self-regulation, teacher autonomy support, and classroom engagement. The results show that the autonomy-supportive behaviors of teachers, which may include providing choices or creating a supportive environment for speaking, increase student achievement, engagement, and positive self-evaluation

regarding speaking. The overarching conclusion suggests that a classroom context where EFL teachers adopt an autonomy-supportive motivation style is closely related to learners showing more intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and engagement in speaking English.

Responding to questions about the universal relevance of SDT, Jang et al (2009) investigated its applicability to high school students within the context of South Korea by conducting four studies. The first study indicated that experiences involving a high degree of autonomy were central to Korean students' most rewarding learning moments. Conversely, their least rewarding experiences involved a diminished sense of autonomy. The second study established a connection between the fulfillment of the need for autonomy and favorable educational outcomes, including achievement, engagement, and intrinsic motivation, along with a decreased incidence of negative emotions. In the third study, structural equation modeling demonstrated that these outcomes could be predicted by the need for autonomy, even when accounting for broader cultural and familial influences such as collectivist values. The fourth study supported these findings over an extended period through a three-wave longitudinal design. The researchers conclude that the evidence supports the validity of SDT's focus on autonomy by demonstrating that public school students in South Korea exhibited higher levels of intrinsic motivation when they encountered autonomy.

These studies on learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation lead to measured conclusions. First, a learning environment that supports autonomy, through both the teaching approach and task design, appears to positively influence students' intrinsic motivation. In contrast, a learning environment characterized by excessive control may inhibit this motivation. Second, the way teachers present learning tasks seems to affect

students' autonomy needs, potentially encouraging or impeding motivation and depth of learning. These insights highlight the role of learner autonomy in enhancing intrinsic motivation, which in turn is linked to effective learning outcomes in various educational settings.

After reviewing the historical development of motivation orientations and examining the intrinsic motivation relationship with learner autonomy, it becomes important to focus on its specific application within a narrower context. The following section seeks to address how to promote intrinsic motivation by promoting learner autonomy based on the identified studies that were found and met the criteria of inclusivity and exclusivity mentioned earlier in the introduction. By analyzing these identified studies, we can gather insights specific to Saudi learners and teachers, highlighting the distinct factors that characterize this context.

CHAPTER 3

TARGETED REVIEW: IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF IDENTIFIED STUDIES ON SAUDI EFL INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

In the process of researching intrinsic motivation and how to promote it, particularly via learner autonomy, in L2 learning at Saudi Arabian universities, a few studies distinctly met the set methodological criteria for this thesis. As indicated in Table 1, the identified studies, namely, Alqahtani (2021), Alghonaim (2021), Aljumah (2020), Shoeib (2022), and Almusharraf (2018) are those that matched the established criteria most closely. In this focused review, specific details are explored, including the design of the studies, the participants involved, and the pedagogical approaches related to intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy. Furthermore, a critical evaluation of these studies is presented, highlighting their strengths and areas of improvement. This section provides a detailed review of these studies, offering insights into their findings and relevance in the context of Saudi Arabian higher education and intrinsic motivation in L2 learning.

Alqahtani (2021), Alghonaim (2021), Aljumah (2020), Shoeib (2022), and Almusharraf (2018) each conducted research on various aspects of intrinsic motivation among university-level EFL learners in Saudi Arabia. Their studies, respectively, focused on assessing intrinsic motivation levels, exploring factors influencing them, examining demotivation issues, and enhancing vocabulary acquisition through learner autonomy. While these studies add value to the field by addressing these significant topics, they exhibit certain limitations. For instance, some of the studies do not clearly link learner autonomy with intrinsic motivation, others focus exclusively on intrinsic motivation

without offering detailed practical solutions that leverage learner autonomy to enhance intrinsic motivation. These research gaps underscore the need for this thesis paper.

Table 1: The identified studies:

Study (author, year)	Research Question	Research Design	Main Finding	Main Practical Implication
Alqahtani (2021)	Investigating the type of motivation EFL Chinese and Saudi learners have for learning English.	A Study of 25 EFL students, from China and Saudi Arabia	Intrinsic motivation is the least type of motivation found among Saudi students. Saudi females have a higher motivation than their male counterparts	Consideration of cultural aspects for specific solutions to increase intrinsic motivation; teachers might provide native conversation partners for Saudi students
Aljumah (2020)	Investigated gender variances in the usage of motivating strategies in Saudi Tertiary EFL Classrooms.	Qualitative survey on 40 university EFL teachers (20 male and 20 female)	Promoting learner autonomy is crucial. There are subtle differences between male and female teachers in valuing it.	Teachers should align their teaching methods with the student's objectives and consider promoting learner autonomy.
Alghonaim (2021)	Understanding the effects of pre-lecture preparation on intrinsic motivation and speech production among Saudi university students.	Experimental with a control group and experimental group (208 college students, 60 in the control, 148 in the experimental)	Intrinsic motivation can be influenced by pre-lecture preparations	Teachers should assign preparatory readings, short video lectures, or vocabulary lists before the actual classroom lecture
Shoeib (2022)	What factors lead to	Mixed-method design using	Male students find learning	Update and revise course

	demotivation in EFL learning among third-year university students in Saudi Arabia?	the modified DQELL questionnaire	contents and materials demotivating, whereas female students are less discouraged by such elements and pedagogical techniques.	contents; foster innovative EFL teaching methods; establish a dedicated learning and development center; focus on enjoyable learning experiences.
Almusharraf (2018)	How does learner autonomy in vocabulary development affect the intrinsic motivation of female EFL students at the university level in Saudi Arabia?	Cross-sectional collective case study with interviews and observations	Teachers vary in their beliefs on learner autonomy, and its role in autonomous vocabulary learning is influenced by teaching methods.	Recognize the advantage of learners autonomously exploring vocabulary; explore alternative pedagogical methods in future research to assess EFL students' intrinsic motivation and autonomy.

Assessing Intrinsic Motivation Levels among EFL Saudi learners

In a review of extant literature, it becomes evident that there is a limited amount of research primarily addressing the role of learner autonomy in promoting intrinsic motivation among Saudi university students. Therefore, understanding context is key in addressing cultural differences where each context has its own unique characteristics. In this regard, Alqahtani (2021), as shown in Table 1, conducted a study on 25 ESL students, balanced in gender with 13 females and 12 males. The participants' origins, being from either China or Saudi Arabia, offer an interesting finding relevant to the context of EFL in

Saudi Arabia. The study aimed to investigate the type of motivation EFL Chinese and Saudi learners have for learning English. Some of the results of the study by Alqahtani (2021) indicate that intrinsic motivation is the least type of motivation found among Saudi students compared to extrinsic motivation, as can be seen in Figure 1, indicating that the method of teaching English impacts students' motivation. This leads to the conclusion that there remains significant room for intrinsic motivation enhancement in English education, as many students enter universities with a limited English foundation, leading to decreased motivation.

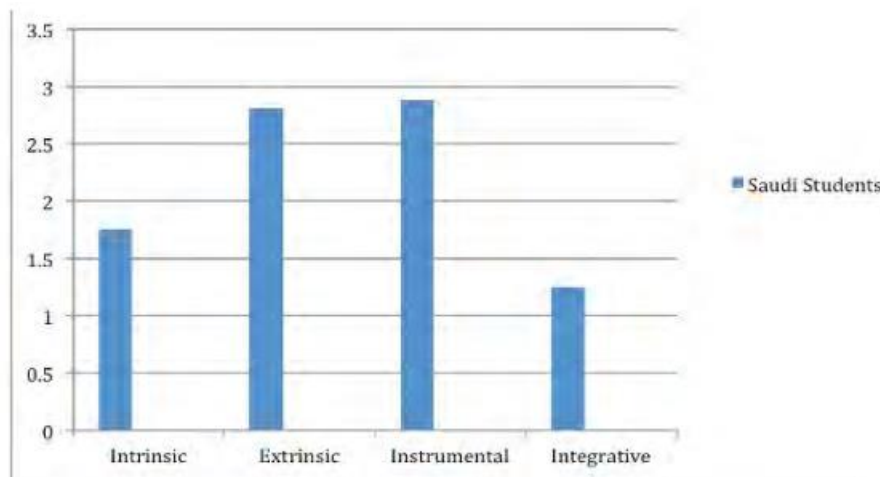


Figure 1: Mean Average: Saudi Learners Motivation Types (Alqahtani 2021)

According to Alqahtani (2021), the education system in Saudi Arabia affects their motivation type by making EFL Saudi learners tend to be more goal-driven and extrinsic rather than intrinsic. Thus, EFL Saudi students are directed by external rewards rather than internal reasons, which makes their learning of English less effective.

Addressing the motivational dynamics among Saudi EFL learners, Alqahtani (2021) offers significant insights that have implications for pedagogical strategies, teacher-student roles, and language program design aimed at enhancing intrinsic motivation for language

acquisition. Alqahtani (2021) reveals that the study suggests that considering cultural aspects calls for a specific solution that increases intrinsic motivation among Saudi students. The study also notes the impact of understanding cultural elements, which adds relevance and context, making the learning experience more encouraging towards developing intrinsic motivation for students.

However, while Alqahtani (2021) investigated the pedagogical implications and the extrinsic motivators that are found among Saudi students, it seems that direct classroom observations to reach the study conclusions were absent. Such firsthand insights could provide tangible evidence of how these motivational theories translate into practical learning scenarios. This would paint a more comprehensive picture of the unique challenges and aspirations each student faces. More importantly, investigating learner autonomy practices could potentially inform the solutions for such a lack of intrinsic motivation. Therefore, while Alqahtani (2021) provides an excellent foundation for understanding the motivational landscapes of Saudi EFL learners, a multi-faceted approach that considers individual narratives, learner autonomy, and direct classroom observations could possibly enhance the study further.

Moreover, while a detailed analysis is presented by Alqahtani (2021) to provide an understanding of the different types of motivations these learners might have, the research does not bridge its findings with practical pedagogical implications based on empirically tested methods regarding the role of teachers and learners in promoting intrinsic motivation through autonomous practices. However, it does provide suggestions that can help teachers with improving the learning experience among EFL Saudi students. These suggestions include, for instance, teachers providing Saudi students with native conversation partners

or providing Saudi students with online native conversation partners. This might help the learners be more integrated into the target community, but it does not mention how this might help them develop intrinsic motivation through learner autonomy.

Investigating Factors Influencing Intrinsic Motivation

As indicated in Table 1, Alghonaim (2021) conducted a study aimed at understanding the effects of several variables, mainly pre-lecture preparation, on intrinsic motivation and speech production among college students at a Saudi university. The sample consisted of 208 college students, of which 60 were in the control group and 148 in the experimental group. Participants in the experimental group, all EFL students from the Department of English Language and Translation at Qassim University were aged between 18 and 20 years and had three years of high-school-level education in English. The study's control and experimental groups have differences in size (60 versus 148). In the study, Alghonaim (2021) acknowledges that intrinsic motivation can be influenced by various factors; however, it does not build on the established link that learner autonomy leads to intrinsic motivation, as established in Chapter 2, by not including learner autonomy as a contributing variable in enhancing intrinsic motivation.

A main practical implication suggested by Alghonaim (2021) is that teachers should assign preparatory readings, short video lectures, or vocabulary lists before the actual classroom lecture. This would allow students to come to class with prior knowledge, ready to engage more deeply in the topic. When students prepare ahead of the actual class whether through reading or watching a short lecture, it sets the stage for them to be more involved in the classroom. This prep work not only gives them a head start on the topic but also increases their confidence. As indicated by the study, having a sense of control over how

they prepare can also increase their enthusiasm for the subject. However, Alghonaim (2021), doesn't emphasize whether EFL learners in this context have the freedom to select materials based on their interests. So, the link between preparing before class and a student's motivation is more complex than it first appears.

Despite that Alghonaim (2021) highlights the positive effects of several variables that can contribute to enhancing intrinsic motivation in L2 learning, it does not provide a detailed plan of how exactly teachers and learners themselves should take in this process. The emphasis is more on the observations of the outcomes rather than the methods to achieve them. This not only undermines the practical application of the study's findings but also poses challenges for educators who seek applicable insights into developing intrinsic motivation. In essence, while the study offers valuable observations regarding the importance of many variables that enhance intrinsic motivation, it lacks a detailed plan about the role of learners and teachers in the process of promoting intrinsic motivation through learner autonomy.

Furthermore, Alghonaim (2021) research has a limitation that lies in the research's narrow focus on intrinsic motivation, with the predominant concentration being on pre-lecture preparations and their immediate effects. It successfully links pre-lecture activities to intrinsic motivation but does not dive deeper into understanding the nuances of intrinsic motivation itself or how it can be fostered outside the context of pre-lecture preparations.

Teachers' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy as a Motivational Strategy in EFL

As Saudi universities implement a policy of separation based on gender where males and females are taught in separate classrooms under the name of each university, it is crucial to analyze the different approaches used in utilizing motivation strategies by female

and male EFL teachers. Table 1 shows that Aljumah (2020) conducted a qualitative survey on a total of forty university EFL teachers chosen randomly (twenty male instructors and twenty female instructors) that aims to investigate gender variances in the usage of motivating strategies in Saudi Tertiary EFL Classrooms. Prior studies mentioned by the study have emphasized the importance of using various teaching strategies to enhance students' cognitive abilities and interpersonal skills. Such studies advocate for approaches that foster intercultural awareness, boost learners' self-confidence, promote autonomy, and align with students' end goals and aspirations. Through the qualitative survey, the study investigated the motivating strategies used by tertiary EFL instructors. It is evident that promoting learners' autonomy is seen as an important motivating strategy by Saudi tertiary EFL instructors, with a mean score of 4.22 on the scale. However, it is important to notice that the strategy of promoting learners' autonomy doesn't rank the highest compared to other motivating strategies. The aspect of gender variations in employing these strategies, however, adds another layer to the discussion. According to Aljumah (2020), there are subtle but noticeable differences between how male and female teachers view the importance of learner autonomy in Saudi tertiary EFL classrooms. For example, according to Aljumah (2020), male instructors rated the importance of promoting learners' autonomy at 4.26 on the scale, while female instructors rated it at 4.12. The mean difference between them is 0.14, which is not statistically significant but provides a nuanced look at teacher's perceptions. The findings of Aljumah (2020), as shown in Table 1, highlight the need to find a path toward promoting learner autonomy as a motivating strategy. Such insights could be important for education leaders and policymakers in Saudi Arabia, offering guidelines for incorporating effective motivating strategies into the EFL curriculum.

According to Aljumah (2020), the role of teachers is multi-dimensional. Teachers are not just facilitators of language but also the architects of a classroom environment that stimulates intrinsic motivation. Gender differences noted in the study imply that male and female teachers may have different approaches, although insignificant in terms of promoting autonomy, to motivating strategies; however, the end goal remains the same: to create a motivating learning environment. While the study discusses various motivating strategies used by EFL instructors to enhance motivation, it particularly focuses on fostering learners' autonomy, noting the significant role instructors play in promoting motivation. The study notes that teachers need to align their teaching methods with the student's objectives.

Exploring Demotivation in EFL Learning Among Saudi University Students

Although it did not explicitly mention intrinsic motivation, another study conducted by Shoeib (2022), as shown in Table 1, closely examined the opposite of motivation: the demotivation experienced by L2 learners in Saudi Arabia. This study employed a mixed-method design, using the modified Demotivation of English Language Learners (DQELL) questionnaire, formulated by Sakai and Kikuchi, as its main instrument. Surveying a sample size of 60 third-year students (30 males and 30 females) from the Foreign Languages Department at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Albaha University, KSA, the research aimed to identify the factors leading to demotivation in EFL learning. It became clear from the findings that Saudi university-level male students primarily identify the learning contents and materials as one of their top demotivating elements in EFL acquisition. Conversely, female students, seem less discouraged by elements like learning contents and materials and pedagogical techniques of teachers. Building on these findings,

the study further dived into various recommendations to tackle these demotivating factors. For instance, it emphasized the need to update and revise course contents and foster innovative EFL teaching methods by establishing a dedicated learning and development center. Focusing on enjoyable learning experiences was also underscored, all serving to increase the intrinsic motivation of the learners.

Enabling EFL Learners in Vocabulary Acquisition Through Learner Autonomy

Almusharif (2018) offers a pioneering examination into the autonomy levels of female university-level EFL students in Saudi Arabia. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, the research specifically focused on learner autonomy in vocabulary development. Despite that SDT established that learner autonomy is considered a very important factor that contributes to intrinsic motivation as mentioned in Chapter 2, this is the only identified study that places an emphasis on learner autonomy, but it does not link the two directly. By adopting a cross-sectional collective case study research design, the study took place in a public university in Riyadh, within two classes from the same grade level and English program. These classes were chosen for their contrasting teaching methods; one being teacher-controlled and the other more student-centered. The participants consisted of six students (three from each classroom) and four teachers, as seen in Table 1. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews of both students and teachers and classroom observations. A significant finding was that while teachers were aware of learner autonomy, they weren't uniformly sure of its benefits, particularly in autonomous vocabulary learning. Learning vocabulary autonomously was notably influenced by the teaching methods their teachers employed. The study highlights the value of allowing students to select their preferred learning methods autonomously, which significantly

enhances vocabulary development. A key insight is the advantage learners gain when they autonomously explore vocabulary: they can better practice the pronunciation and spelling of words without a teacher's interference. However, the study doesn't explicitly link learner autonomy to the enhancement of intrinsic motivation. It merely recognizes this in its practical implications, proposing that subsequent research might explore alternative pedagogical methods to assess EFL students' intrinsic motivation and autonomy.

In conclusion, there is a need to elevate the emphasis on enhancing intrinsic motivation, particularly through learner autonomy in a practical way. Analysis of the identified studies selected by the structured research strategy shows that university-level EFL learners in Saudi Arabia lack intrinsic motivation as indicated by Alqahtani (2021). The measurement of female and male teachers' awareness of the importance of learner autonomy by Aljumah (2020) indicates that while learner autonomy is considered an important motivating strategy, it is not on the top list of motivating strategies by EFL instructors. Differences between female and male teachers' awareness of learner autonomy are insignificant. Alghonaim (2021) emphasized the role of several factors in improving intrinsic motivation but lacked any practical practices supporting learner autonomy in this process. Similarly, Shoeib's 2022 study explored demotivation in EFL learning among Saudi university students, revealing that students are primarily demotivated by learning content and materials, female EFL learners are less so, recommending revising content and materials to be more interesting but it also lacks including learner autonomy as a tool to enhance intrinsic motivation. Almusharif (2018) appears to be the sole study that effectively tackles the practical aspect of learner autonomy in enhancing a specific area of learning, namely vocabulary. This is evident in its emphasis on empowering EFL learners to manage their

own learning processes. Yet, the study does not directly connect learner autonomy with the augmentation of intrinsic motivation. Instead, it only acknowledges this in its practical implications, by suggesting that future research could focus on other pedagogical approaches that could be utilized to measure EFL students' intrinsic motivation and autonomy. Therefore, the following pedagogical recommendations in Chapter 4 are in light of the points raised by the in-depth analysis of the identified studies, especially the recommendation for future research indicated by Almusharif (2018).

CHAPTER 4

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In Saudi universities, there is a clear need for a substantive shift in educational strategies and approaches. Recent research addresses this necessity, emphasizing that creating and finding a tool to promote intrinsic motivation may enhance the quality of education. Aburizaizah (2021) highlights this need for a pedagogical shift by emphasizing that the current pedagogical practices, which often emphasize memorization and extrinsic rewards, may unintentionally suppress students' natural curiosity and passion for learning in their English classes. By reorienting the system to prioritize student autonomy, relevance of material, and mastery over grades, Saudi universities can promote intrinsic motivation.

In the context of EFL, a nuanced pedagogical strategy that encompasses both teacher-supportive practices and choice-based learning has emerged from the literature as a significant contributor to enhancing intrinsic motivation among learners. This approach, while innovative in the Saudi Arabian educational landscape, where it remains largely unexplored, draws on the foundational work of researchers such as Noels et al. (2000) who establish the importance of learner autonomy. Empirical studies by Dincer and Yesilyurt (2017) further substantiate that teacher behaviors supporting autonomy, including the provision of choices, are positively correlated with student's motivation and engagement in language acquisition. The findings of Tsai et al. (2008) reveal that student interest in academic subjects increases in environments where teacher autonomy support is present, whereas controlling teacher behaviors has the opposite effect. In a similar way, Standage et al. (2006) found that autonomy support in physical education contexts correlates with enhanced self-regulation and persistence among students. Cordova and Lepper (1996)

provide additional support by demonstrating the motivational benefits of task personalization and choice. It is critical to recognize, however, that while this pedagogical approach, which encompasses both teacher-supportive practices and choice-based learning, presents a promising direction for addressing motivational deficits in EFL settings within Saudi Arabia, it represents one potential pathway among many. It is not an ultimate solution, and its efficacy would likely be augmented by a broader strategy that considers cultural, linguistic, and individual learner variables to comprehensively address the complex nature of language learning motivation.

A blend of structured and choice-based learning

Based on the relevant literature above, I suggest an emphasis on a blend of structured and choice-based learning, as highlighted in Table 2, which can generate genuine interest. By integrating personally chosen materials into classroom activities, educators can craft a learning environment that is both structured and personalized.

The environment of language learning offers various opportunities for teachers to create an enriching experience for their students. One avenue through which this is achievable is by designing teaching methods that resonate with students' unique interests and passions, as suggested by the types of content introduced in Table 2. By doing so, educators not only make the learning process more engaging but also enhance intrinsic motivation, an essential component in sustaining the level of language acquisition.

To transform English from a mere academic subject into a vivid, living experience, educators and learners alike need to shift their perceptions. The experience of English language learning should expand beyond the classroom walls, reaching out to the personal experiences and interests that students engage with daily. Whether it's the excitement of a

football match commentary, the intrigue of global news, or the vast world of English entertainment, every moment presents an opportunity for immersion and learning.

Table 2: A blend of structured and choice-based learning

Aspect	Details/Examples
Content Selection	- Based on student hobbies & interests - Example: Football content for enthusiasts
Types of Content Introduced	- Live match commentaries - Post-match analyses by football pundits - Articles about ongoing football leagues
Evaluative Tools	- Written or oral summaries of matches - Emphasis on terminology, key events, and capturing the essence of content
Skills Assessed	- Vocabulary - Grammar - Retention of content - Fluency in speech - Pronunciation - Confidence in speaking English
Feedback Mechanism	- Constructive feedback post-submission/presentation - Highlight errors and areas of improvement - Acknowledge well-articulated points
Pedagogical Impact	- Blurring lines between leisure and education - Making English learning more enjoyable and effective

Understanding a student's hobbies and interests of student by educators is important, providing them with valuable hints about the kind of English content that would be most attract the attention of the learner, as indicated by the content selection process in Table 2. This can be achieved by evaluating the students' various interests through various tools such as a questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire should be used as a guide towards implementing various methods of teaching materials that give students autonomy in terms of the type of learning materials. Football, for example, is more than just a game for many,

it's a passion, especially in Saudi Arabia. The excitement with which students discuss matches, analyze strategies, and talk about iconic moments is evident. Capitalizing on this, educators can introduce these students who show football enthusiasm to a world of English content that is directed to their interest, using the evaluative tools specified in Table 2. This might include listening to live match commentaries by English-speaking commentators, delving into post-match analysis by football pundits, or reading articles and editorials about ongoing leagues and transfers.

However, merely exposing students to such content represents one aspect of this blend of structured and choice-based learning. The real challenge, and opportunity, lies in drawing EFL learning value out of this exposure. In this context, evaluative tools become important, as Table 2 outlines, by requiring students to produce summaries that demand an understanding of terminologies used during the match. For instance, after listening to a commentary or watching a post-match analysis, students could be tasked with producing summaries, either written or oral, detailing the match's significant events. While this might seem like a simple task, it demands an understanding of terminologies used during the match. By focusing on these details, educators can assess students' ability to retain information, reproduce terminologies, and most importantly, capture the essence of the game using English.

Such assignments are not just about providing a space for them to enjoy their interest. They are a way for students to show their capability to communicate effectively in English, reflected in the skills assessed section of Table 2. This is especially true when students present their summaries or analyses by practicing their speaking skills, such as in a class

discussion or a presentation. Here, not only are their vocabulary and grammar evaluated, but also their fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking.

Additionally, feedback becomes crucial in this process, as the feedback mechanism in Table 2 emphasizes. After students submit their written pieces or give their presentations, educators need to provide constructive feedback, highlighting areas of improvement and acknowledging well-articulated points. This feedback is not meant to be about pointing out errors only but also instills confidence in students, assuring them that their efforts are recognized and that their passion has an educational value in their EFL learning experience.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The methodology employed in this research does have a few areas of constraint that should be taken into consideration as a limitation for this literature review thesis. To begin with, the exclusive use of the Arizona State University Library and ERIC as primary sources might limit the scope. There's a possibility that significant research from other sources with different perspectives might be overlooked. The limitations of this literature review methodology include language bias, as studies not written in English may be excluded, and potential publication bias. The research's keyword-driven search strategy, though systematic, might exclude studies that employ different but relevant terminologies. A particular point of focus is the emphasis on higher education within Saudi Arabian universities. This focus might limit the broader applications of our understanding of motivation at other educational levels. The in-depth analysis of identified studies might still have blind spots due to subjectivity. Finally, the exclusion criteria, while upholding research integrity, might exclude unconventional yet insightful studies. While these limitations provide context for the research's scope, clarity about them should be maintained.

Previous research has identified several types of motivation that drive EFL learners, including intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, integrative motivation, and instrumental motivation. These motivation types have been extensively discussed in theoretical frameworks such as SDT and Gardner's socio-educational model.

Understanding the motivation orientations of EFL learners, especially those from different cultural and social backgrounds like Saudi Arabia, is crucial for both educators and policymakers. This nuanced understanding can help design more effective curricula and teaching methodologies, thereby enhancing the overall EFL learning experience.

The identified studies have explored various factors affecting EFL intrinsic motivation, such as cultural background, educational system, social environment, and individual preference. However, this literature review reveals a scarcity of understanding of intrinsic motivation among Saudi Arabian EFL students, particularly in terms of pedagogical application. After an in-depth analysis of the identified studies addressing intrinsic motivation in EFL learning within Saudi Arabian universities, there is a clear need to elevate the emphasis on enhancing intrinsic motivation. This paper has investigated the pedagogical interventions that can promote learner autonomy to enhance intrinsic motivation among EFL students. The identified studies show a consensus that, in comparison to other international EFL students, Saudi students lean towards extrinsic factors due to later exposure to English and cultural norms.

To promote intrinsic motivation through the implementation of more autonomy-supportive approaches, Saudi universities should consider re-evaluating and adapting their pedagogical strategies to be more aligned with student's unique interests and passions. Traditional teaching methods, which often lean towards memorization, might hinder intrinsic motivation. A balance between structured and choice-based learning is recommended, where educational experiences can be tailored yet maintain a structured framework. For example, leveraging widely popular interests, such as football, can be beneficial for English language instruction. Students could engage with content like live

match commentaries or analyses, offering them a more relatable and engaging learning platform. Utilizing evaluative tools, such as summaries or discussions, can help assess their grasp of the language and their ability to convey intricate ideas. Furthermore, it's essential to provide constructive feedback, reinforcing their confidence and underscoring the relevance of their personal interests in their academic journey. By merging personal passions with academic objectives, educators can craft a pedagogical approach that not only sustains interest but also enhances intrinsic motivation among learners.

In conclusion, the discussion of intrinsic motivation in the context of EFL in Saudi Arabian universities, the research efforts of Alghonaim (2021), Alqahtani (2021), Aljumah (2020), Almusharraf (2018), and Shoeib (2022), have been insightful. They represent a look at the current educational model that can be used to further investigate how to potentially drive students' internal desire to learn. Analysis of the identified studies selected by the structured research strategy indicates that while these studies provide insight, there is an observed lack of practical application of learner autonomy in motivating students. Yet, these studies, as insightful as they are, also hint at a need for further exploration, particularly when considering the context of EFL in Saudi Arabia. However, to truly promote learner autonomy and thereby enhance intrinsic motivation, we must look beyond existing pedagogies and investigate tailored approaches that resonate with the cultural and linguistic nuances of Saudi EFL learners. Still, to paint a complete picture, especially within the Saudi EFL context, a more inclusive investigation is essential. Therefore, the pedagogical recommendations mentioned in Chapter 4, consider the points raised by the in-depth analysis of the identified studies. The conclusion from these studies, which represent the identified studies of academic literature in this specific context serves as an

indication that while the research provides some insight and recommendations for teachers and curriculum designers regarding how to promote intrinsic motivation, they lack applicable strategies that fit the concerned context, particularly through learner autonomy.

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