

# A Study on Motivation and Locus of Control among Male and Female EFL Learners<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' motivation and internal locus of control under the framework of self-determination theory. In addition, the study examined the relation between EFL learners' age and gender regarding their motivation and internal locus of control. To this end, a convenience sample of 115 university EFL learners both male (n=45) and female (n=70) participated in this study. The instruments applied were two questionnaires: a locus of control questionnaire (Internal Locus of Control Index) and a motivation questionnaire (Laine's Motivation Questionnaire). The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation demonstrated that there was a significant positive relationship between EFL learners' motivation and internal locus of control. Additionally, based on the data analysis, EFL learners' internal locus of control could significantly predict their motivation. Moreover, the findings showed a non-significant correlation between EFL learners' age and their motivation and internal locus of control. Finally, the findings indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation. This study also shows that motivation and internal locus of control facilitate EFL learners' sense of self-determination, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The findings of the current study can be specifically worthy of attention for EFL teachers by increasing their awareness of the importance of locus of control and motivation and their role in developing English language learning.

## Resumen

Este estudio intentó investigar la relación entre la motivación de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera y el locus de control interno en el marco de la teoría de la autodeterminación. Además, el estudio examinó la relación entre la edad y el género de los estudiantes de EFL con respecto a su motivación y locus de control interno. Con este fin, una muestra de conveniencia de 115 estudiantes universitarios de inglés como lengua extranjera, tanto hombres (n=45) como mujeres (n=70), participó en este estudio. Los instrumentos aplicados fueron dos cuestionarios: un cuestionario de locus de control (Internal Locus of Control Index) y un cuestionario de motivación (Laine's Motivation Questionnaire). Los resultados de la correlación producto-momento de Pearson demostraron que existe una relación positiva significativa entre la motivación de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera y el locus de control interno. Además, según el análisis de datos, el locus de control interno de los estudiantes de EFL podría predecir significativamente su motivación. Además, los hallazgos mostraron una correlación no significativa entre la edad de los estudiantes de EFL y su motivación y locus de control interno. Finalmente, los hallazgos indicaron que no hubo diferencias significativas entre los estudiantes de EFL masculinos y femeninos con respecto a su motivación. Este estudio también muestra que la motivación y el locus de control interno facilitan el sentido de autodeterminación, autonomía, competencia y relación de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Los hallazgos del estudio actual pueden ser especialmente dignos de atención para los profesores de EFL al aumentar su conciencia sobre la importancia del lugar de control y la motivación y su papel en el desarrollo del aprendizaje del idioma inglés.

## Introduction

Keller (2010) describes motivation as the factor that determines the direction of one's behaviors. In other words, the mechanisms that initiate and maintain goal-directed behaviors are referred to as motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Gardner (2010) pointed out that motivated people make an effort to accomplish a goal. They also express insistence, and they contribute to the activities required to achieve their goals. Dörnyei (2020) explains "motivation has specific relevance for educators, because an area where the impact of motivation – or the lack of it – is particularly salient is student learning" (p. 2). Overall, motivation plays an important role for people to achieve their goals in their life; to put it simply, it is a trump card for success. Due to the importance of motivation for language learning, scholars have applied socio-psychological models of motivation to theorize language learning motivation (Bakar et al., 2010). One of these socio-psychological theories is social determination theory (SDT) that highlights the effect of most self-determined activities on individuals' achievements in which intrinsic or autonomous motivation plays a vital role (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In this regard, the present study draws on SDT as the main theoretical background because the research variables consist of internal locus of control and motivation that share

<sup>1</sup>This is a refereed article. Received: 10 June, 2021. Accepted: 5 November, 2021. Published: 15 June, 2022.

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commonalities with the pillars of self-determination theory including competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

SDT as a motivation-related theory in the language learning environment is comprised of the factors that increase the motivation level as a desire for learning a second or foreign language (Noels et al., 2019). One of these key factors is 'locus of control'. The term 'locus of control' was first introduced by Rotter in 1966 and developed from the theory of social learning. Locus of control is an aspect of personality that deals with the degree to which individuals perceive the events of their lives as being externally or internally controlled (Infurna & Reich, 2017), thus the notion of locus of control is divided into the two dimensions of internal and external. Modern studies have tended to position locus of control, which is an open concept that affects motivation, "as an indicator of the higher order, multidimensional construct of core self-evaluation, along with the indicators of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, and emotional stability" (Galvin et al., 2018, p. 820); it has also a significant impact on language proficiency achievement (Salmani Nodoushan, 2012). In the circle of modern psychology, locus of control deals with learners' achievement of academic goals and predicting learners' learning approaches, attitudes, and strategies, since it is the notion of locus of control that shows students' academic achievements depend on factors other than mere intelligence or IQ scores (Nowicki, 2016).

In a language motivation study, differential tendencies have been found between male and female learners (Al Harthy, 2017). According to Sunderland (2000), "motivation (including attitudes and perceptions) may be relevant to gendered achievement in foreign language learning" (p. 206). There are a number of research studies on gender motivational differences in EFL contexts (Sugimoto et al., 2006). Findings from these studies have reported higher scores on motivation and a positive attitude toward EFL in girls (Adachi, 2015), gender-related motivational differences in EFL context (Csizér & Kormos, 2014; Ryan, 2009), and differences between male and female learners regarding their levels of L2 motivation in which female learners are more motivated than male learners (Yashima et al., 2017).

Age is another factor shown to influence in the EFL context, indeed, to play a crucial role in motivation during foreign language learning (Singleton & Ryan, 2004). Kormos and Csizér (2008) stated that "little attention has been paid to the systematic investigation of age-related variations concerning attitudinal and motivational dispositions of language learners within a single-language environment" (p. 328). Considerable research has suggested that young learners have the highest motivation for learning English language while older learners have the lowest motivation for learning English language (Bećirović & Bećirović, 2017), and motivated young learners are different from motivated adult learners (Yaghoubi, 2013). Overall, then, "factors which may be important in influencing both academic motivation and observable classroom behaviour include age and gender" (Bugler et al., 2016, p. 3).

### ***Theoretical framework***

Self-determination theory is a grand theory of motivation that was initially proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000) and developed over the last twenty years as one of the major theories of motivation (Fernet & Austin, 2014). Through self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) defined basic psychological needs for the well-being of the human psyche that is vital for development and growth in social contexts. According to SDT, basic psychological needs consist of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). These three basic needs are objective values whose deprivation and satisfaction have functional effects and consequences (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As one of the major theories of motivation, SDT is pragmatically applicable to the analysis of the quality of educational contexts and academic performances since academic achievements necessitate the existence of motivation. By classifying motivation as autonomous and controlled types, the application of SDT to educational contexts reveals appropriate approaches of teachers to the learner motivation (Noels et al., 2019). Originally stemming from empirical research on intrinsic motivation, SDT prefers autonomous motivation and autonomy supportive teaching methods to externally controlled stimuli in educational contexts, since controlling motivation fostered by external regulations results in more superficial and impoverished learning that can later lead to consequences such as dropouts and lack of enthusiasm for learning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomous motivations, on the other hand, lead to behaviors that are performed out of interest and enjoyment, and can foster highly self-motivated persistence and a qualified learning process (Davis & Bowles, 2018). The theory of SDT has been applied to the study of foreign language learning contexts in previous studies for the evaluation of the perceived locus of causality in the mastery of language through considering motivation as the core concept of investigation. Therefore, the theory of SDT lays an appropriate theoretical foundation for the present study since the

variables under investigation, internal locus of control and motivation, are related to self-determination in both direct and indirect ways. SDT provides this study with a rich context in which the correlation between the internal locus of control and two indicators of self-determination including motivation and autonomy can be estimated. The correlation between autonomy and internal locus of control was estimated in previous studies (Aghayani & Hajmohammadi, 2019; Aghayani, 2021) and the findings showed that EFL learners' internal locus of control positively correlates with their level of autonomy. In the present study, the correlation between motivation, as the core concept of the self-determination theory, and the internal locus of control, will be estimated. The other subcategories of self-determination theory including the relatedness and competence can function as a lesson plan and instruction for the teachers triggering autonomy-supportive methods of teaching in the context of foreign language learning (Davis & Bowles, 2018). Finally, the analysis of the correlation between the internal locus of control and autonomous motivation, under the theory of SDT will reveal the shared commonalities and links between internal locus of control and self-determination in the context of EFL learning through comparing the results with the propositions of SDT. Therefore, the subcategories of SDT including autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be operationally defined in accordance with the purpose of the study as follow:

- **Autonomy:** Based on SDT, the intentional actions of individuals can be considered as autonomous and self-regulated actions. In the educational and language learning contexts freedom of choice will provide students with more autonomy (Davis & Bowles, 2018). In this study, autonomous motivation is taken into consideration as the motivation level of participants is not externally controlled.
- **Competence** is also associated with an autonomous motivational action. Competence is not the ability or the mastery itself in a learning context rather it is the feeling of mastery and the individuals' confidence in their accumulated knowledge (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The present research aims the correlation between internal locus of control and motivation at the indirect prediction of competence.
- **Relatedness** can be defined in the EFL learning context as feeling valued by peers and teachers (Davis & Bowles, 2018). Thus the present research aims at studying whether the external outcome of the correlation between motivation and internal locus of control can predict relatedness through being felt valued by peers and teachers.

## **Review of Literature**

Considering the contexts of EFL learning as simultaneously competitive and collaborative in which motivation actively affects the process of language learning, it is of great importance to investigate the elements that affect motivation, such as locus of control. It should be noted that within a collaborative EFL context, EFL learners interact with each other and "they enjoy working collaboratively and feel safe, they sense that the learning environment is anxiety-free, welcoming, and friendly" (Ismail & Al Allaq, 2019, p. 3). Moreover, social learning theory suggests that those who benefit from an internal locus of control are positively connected with motivation (Infurna & Reich, 2017). In the following section, the related literature studies devoted to the study of the influential factors on motivation will be discussed especially in EFL learning contexts.

### ***Motivation in an EFL context***

The foreign/second language learning process is one part of student learning. Motivation is a significant factor in the achievement of a foreign/second language (Boo et al., 2015). Ushioda (2013) believes that motivation is an important element in the foreign/second language learning process which has a significant effect on learning success for EFL/ESL learners. Numerous studies reported the effectiveness of motivation in EFL context in which it strengthens listening comprehension (Jafari, 2010), improves pronunciation achievement (Yousofi & Naderifarjad, 2015), influences English speaking ability (Yulis et al., 2016), affects EFL learners' reading comprehension skills (Ahmed, 2016), and enhances learners' writing ability (Verawati, 2019).

### ***Locus of control in an EFL context***

Locus of control is one of the key variables affecting learners' academic achievements (Nowicki, 2016; Oluseyi Akintunde & Olusegun Olujide, 2018; Yazdanpanah et al., 2010). Students with positive internal locus of control have the confidence to take charge of their own learning by initiating tasks inside and outside of academic contexts (Nowicki, 2016). Such characteristics of students with positive locus of control whether internal or external links the notion of locus of control to the social and psychological concept of motivation.

Given the definition of locus of control provided by Latha and Vijayalakshmi (2020) as “the degree of control of people over the output of events happening in the day-to-day events around them” (p. 45), a number of studies reflecting the impact of locus of control on reading and writing achievement (Ghonsooly & Elahi Shirvan, 2011), translation achievement (Keshmandi et al., 2016), and vocabulary acquisition (Soleimani et al., 2018) in the EFL context.

### ***Related studies on motivation and locus of control***

The findings from Sheikhi Fini and Yousefzadeh’s study (2011) who investigated the relationship between achievement motivation and locus of control on 211 high school students in Iran, revealed a significant relationship between achievement motivation and locus of control. They found that students with internal locus of control have high achievement motivation whereas students with external locus of control have low achievement motivation. However, the results from Karaman’s (2016) study demonstrated a negative correlation between locus of control and achievement motivation. His findings also showed that students with a high internal locus of control “believe that achievement is dependent on their capacities, behaviors, or attributes” (p. 72), while students with high external locus of control “believe that achievement is dependent on the control of powerful others, destiny, luck, or chance” (p. 72). There is thus a divergence of results with respect to the nature of the correlation between locus of control and motivation: Sheikhi Fini and Yousefzadeh (2011) stressed the positive correlation between these two variables, while Karaman (2016) found a negative correlation between locus of control and motivation.

Olaoye and Olaoye (2018) conducted a study among 480 students in Nigeria in order to examine locus of control and achievement motivation. The findings revealed that internal locus of control significantly predicted the achievement motivation of students.

### ***Related studies on correlation among age, motivation, and locus of control***

With respect to the possible correlation between age and motivation, in a study of the motivational pattern in relation to the age among 60 EFL learners in Iran, Yaghoubi (2013) found a significant difference between young and older learners. With respect to this correlation between locus of control and age, a study by Chalak and Nasri (2015) on 100 EFL learners in Iran, found a non-significant relationship between age and internal locus of control. Similarly, Aydoğan (2016) in his study on psychometric properties of ‘Trice Academic Locus of Control Scale’ among 402 EFL learners in Europe, found no significant correlation between EFL learners’ age and their internal locus of control. More recently, Aghayani and Hajmohammadi (2019) in their study on 132 Iranian EFL learners, similarly came to the conclusion that there was no significant relationship between EFL learners’ internal locus of control and their age.

### ***Self-determination theory and language learning contexts***

In an article titled ‘empowerment and intrinsic motivation: a self-determination theory approach to language teaching’ Davis and Bowles (2018), indicated that relatedness in the context of language learning is students’ internalization of knowledge and practices due to their basic need of forming a closer connection to the environment filled with these practices. Although relatedness in the EFL learning context is defined as feeling valued by peers and teachers, they found that the accumulation of knowledge through an autonomous initiation is not just for the sake of a caring and respectful teacher. In this study, freedom of activity choice and freedom of expression were considered as the autonomy supportive learning environment. On the other hand, authentic language experiences, constructive teacher feedback, and focusing on meaning over form were introduced as strategies for competence support. More importantly, it was indicated that some teachers manipulated their instruction for the sake of encouraging intrinsic motivation through redefining the purpose of language learning as a tool of empowerment (Davis & Bowles, 2018).

In another study titled ‘the development of self-determination across the language course’, Noels et al. (2019) observed 162 students (73.5% female) registered in first (20%) and second year French language courses at a Canadian university in Alberta, for a full course to study the modifications of the pillars of self-determination. They found that the more students’ needs for autonomy are met, the more students internalize their learning activities and processes. Moreover, stronger self-determined and intrinsic motivation predicts self-perceived autonomy. It was indicated that greater intrinsic motivation results in greater competence and that motivation encourages students’ autonomy and competence (Noels et al., 2019).

### ***Related studies on gender and motivation***

Investigating the gender-based link between motivation and English proficiency of 80 16-25-year-old Iranian EFL learners, Jannati and Marzban (2014) found that there was no significant difference between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation. In contrast, Bećirović (2017) investigated the relationship between gender and motivation among 185 EFL students with an age span from 10 to 18 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He found that female students were more motivated than male students.

Considering the divergence of results especially with respect to the correlation between locus of control and motivation, and between gender and motivation level, the present study aimed at examining the relation between EFL learners' age and gender regarding their motivation and internal locus of control through addressing the following research questions:

RQ 1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between EFL learners' motivation and their internal locus of control?

RQ 2. Does EFL learners' internal locus of control significantly predict their motivation for learning EFL?

RQ 3. Is there a significant correlation between EFL learners' age and their motivation?

RQ 4. Is there a significant correlation between EFL learners' age and their internal locus of control?

RQ 5. Is there any difference between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation?

### **Methodology**

#### ***Participants and setting***

The study was carried out in an EFL setting at the Department of Linguistics and Foreign Languages at Payame Noor University, Iran. One hundred and fifteen university EFL learners majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019, were selected based on convenience sampling. The participants included both male (n=45) and female (n=70) native speakers of Persian and their ages varied from 25 to 35 years old. In addition, their English language learning experience varied, with a low of five years and a high of ten.

#### ***Instruments***

##### Internal Locus of Control Index

To assess EFL learners' locus of control, Duttweiler's (1984) *Internal Locus of Control Index* (ICI) was used (see Appendix 1). It consisted of 28 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *rarely* to *usually*. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, an internal reliability test (Cronbach alpha) was conducted by Duttweiler and the results indicated a coefficient of 0.84. A Cronbach's  $\alpha$  calculated for the questionnaire in this study revealed an acceptable reliability of 0.80.

##### Laine's motivation questionnaire.

To evaluate the participants' motivation, the researchers employed a motivation questionnaire adapted by Salimi (2000) based on Laine's (1988) model that was taken from Rahimi et al. (2008) (see Appendix 2). The questionnaire consisted of 36 items with a 5-point Likert scale format that ranges from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The internal consistency reliability index for the questionnaire was calculated by Rahimi et al. (2008), and the results revealed a coefficient of 0.80 that is acceptable indices of reliability. In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire was determined by means of Cronbach's alpha, and it was found to have a high level of reliability ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ).

#### ***Procedure***

Before any data collection could start, the researchers sought permission from the professors at Payame Noor University to distribute the questionnaires via email among their students. So, the process of collecting data started with the distribution of two questionnaires sent through email to 160 EFL learners. The respondents were also notified that their responses would remain confidential. In addition, in order to motivate the participants to cooperate with researchers, they were told that they would be told their individual results via email. After two weeks, from 160 questionnaires that were sent to the participants, 115 questionnaires were received. The obtained data were then analyzed by means of SPSS version 21.

**Results**

**RQ 1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between EFL learners’ motivation and their internal locus of control?**

The Pearson product moment correlation was run to address this question.

	Internal Locus of Control	Motivation
Internal Locus of Control	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.198*
	N	115
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.198*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034
	N	115

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1: Correlation between internal locus of control and motivation

Based on the findings shown in Table 1, the value of the correlation between the participants’ motivation and their internal locus of control is 0.198 and the *p* value of 0.034 < 0.05, indicating a weak but positive significant correlation between the two variables. Accordingly, the relationship between EFL learners’ motivation and their internal locus of control was significant.

**RQ 2. Does EFL learners’ internal locus of control significantly predict their motivation for learning EFL?**

To examine this question, the researchers conducted a regression analysis. Table 2 refers to the first stage that is used to determine how well a regression model fits the data. Table 3 tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data, and Table 4 shows how much the dependent variable varies with an independent variable.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.198 <sup>a</sup>	.039	.031	17.22613

a. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Locus of Control

Table 2: Model summary of regression output

As displayed in Table 2, the *R* value indicates the simple correlation coefficient between the two variables, came out to 0.198 and *R Square* was 0.039. It can be inferred that EFL learners’ internal locus of control (independent variable) can predict 3.9 percent of the total variance in motivation (dependent variable).

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1368.237	1	1368.237	4.611	.034 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	33531.554	113	296.739		
Total	34899.791	114			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Locos of Control

b. Dependent Variable: Motivation

Table 3: ANOVA<sup>b</sup> of regression output

As demonstrated by the above table, the results of the ANOVA were significant ( $F(1, 113) = 4.611, p = 0.034 < 0.05$ ) and indicate the internal locus of control significantly predicts EFL learners’ motivation.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	128.281	4.887		26.250	.000
Internal Locus of Control	.183	.085	.198	2.147	.034

a. Dependent Variable: Motivation

Table 4: Coefficients<sup>a</sup> of regression output

According to Table 4, the standardized Beta coefficient is significant ( $B = 0.198, t = 2.147, p = 0.034$ ) and it means that internal locus of control is a significant predictor of motivation.

**RQ 3. Is there a significant correlation between EFL learners’ age and their motivation?**

A Pearson product moment correlation was applied to address the third research question.

		Motivation	Age
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.112
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.231
	N	115	115
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.112	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.231	
	N	115	115

Table 5: Correlation between age and motivation

According to the findings shown in Table 5, correlation between EFL learners' age and their motivation turned out to be non-significant ( $r = -0.112, p = 0.231 > 0.05$ ).

**RQ 4. Is there a significant correlation between EFL learners' age and their internal locus of control?**

In order to address this research question, the Pearson product moment correlation was run.

		Internal Locus of Control	Age
Internal Locus of Control	Pearson Correlation	1	.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.051
	N	115	115
Age	Pearson Correlation	.183	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.051	
	N	115	115

Table 6: Correlation between age and internal locus of control

As depicted in the above table, the Sig. (2-Tailed) value is greater than the  $p$  value ( $0.051 > 0.05$ ) and it implies that there was no statistically significant correlation between EFL learners' age and their internal locus of control.

**RQ 5. Is there any difference between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation?**

In order to examine this research question, an independent sample T-test was performed and the findings are presented in the following tables:

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Motivation	Male	45	138.4222	17.86247	2.66278
	Female	70	138.0429	17.38601	2.07803

Table 7: Group statistics

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
Motivation	Equal variances assumed	.088	.767	.113	113	.910	.37937	3.35770	-6.27284	7.03157
	Equal variances not assumed			.112	92.124	.911	.37937	3.37766	-6.32884	7.08757

Table 8: Independent samples test

As can be seen in Table 8, the results showed that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation ( $t = 0.113, p = 0.767 > 0.05$ ).

**Discussion**

It can be inferred that the participants of this study have high motivation in the EFL context that can be related to internal locus of control. It means that decreased/increased sense of internal locus of control in EFL learners could contribute to lower/upper levels of motivation. It further means that if EFL teachers can

encourage EFL learners to believe they have more control over their learning, then, according to Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), motivated learners tend to take responsibility for their learning successes and failures.

Moreover, the evidence of a non-significant relationship between age and both internal locus of control and motivation of EFL learners, could increase the EFL teachers' awareness of this factor; that is, they can consider it as a factor that has no influence on both internal locus of control and motivation in EFL context. In addition, EFL teachers can conclude that motivation and internal locus of control seem to play an important facilitative role for these learners' English learning process regardless of gender.

From the two questionnaires used to examine the relationship between EFL learners' motivation and their internal locus of control, the findings showed that there was a significant relationship between EFL learners' motivation and their internal locus of control. This finding is consistent with the SDT proposition that the more internally motivated individuals are the more self-regulated ones. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Noels et al. (2019) study in which stronger self-determination and intrinsic motivation predict self-perceived autonomy. These findings are in agreement with Sheikhi Fini and Yousefzadeh (2011), whose study revealed a positive significant correlation between achievement motivation and internal locus of control. Even though the questionnaires they used were different from this study and the participants in their study were selected based on multistage cluster sampling, the findings were similar in terms of the correlation between motivation and internal locus of control. In addition, their findings obtained from high school students' responses to the questionnaires while the findings of the present study were obtained from university EFL learners. The findings of the study are also consistent with Olaoye and Olaoye (2018). The participants in their study were female students while participants in the present study were both male and female.

Concerning the third research question, the correlation between EFL learners' age and their motivation was non-significant. These findings are in contrast with the results from Yaghoubi (2013) who found a difference between young and older learners; that is, there was a significant correlation between age and motivation. The participants in his study were only female EFL learners from a private language institute, while in the present study participants were both male and female EFL learners from a university. The findings from Yaghoubi's study (2013) also showed that older EFL learners look at the English language as a means to fulfill their needs.

Another issue this research aimed at was investigating the correlation between EFL learners' age and their internal locus of control. According to the findings related to the fourth research question, there was a non-significant correlation between EFL learners' age and their internal locus of control. This is in agreement with Aydođan (2016), who concluded that there was no significant correlation between EFL learners' age and their internal locus of control. Besides, the findings obtained are in line with Chalak and Nasri (2015) and Aghayani and Hajmohammadi (2019), who found a non-significant relationship between EFL learners' internal locus of control and their age.

The last research question examined differences between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation. The findings demonstrated that there was no significant difference between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation. This corroborates with Jannati and Marzban (2014), even though they used a different questionnaire in order to collect data. They found a non-significant difference between male and female EFL learners regarding their motivation. These findings are not in the line with the findings of Bećirović (2017), whose study showed a significant difference between male and female students concerning their motivation in which female students were more motivated than male students. He concluded that "gender is an important factor influencing motivation ... and males and females are not equal in terms of motivation" (Bećirović, 2017, p. 217). However, the participants' age in his study ranged from 10 to 18, which is very different from the current study.

The consistency of the findings of the study with the propositions of SDT through the discovery of a positive correlation between motivation and internal locus of control raises some learning strategy suggestions for language learners. This study shows that motivation and internal locus of control facilitates learners' sense of self-determination, autonomy, competence and relatedness. The more students become internally motivated and intrinsically self-regulated, the greater they become competent in terms of "the feeling of mastery" and as a consequence, they become more related in terms of being valued by peers and teachers.



## Conclusion

This study attempted to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' motivation and internal locus of control. Five research questions were addressed in the present study, and the principal findings within the framework of SDT results in the proposition of some instructional suggestions for teachers for developing autonomy-supportive learning contexts, lesson plans, and the manipulation of their instruction for increasing the intrinsic motivation of EFL learners to help their competence and relatedness. With this respect, the considerations of the following strategies are suggested:

- Focusing on self-correction and peer-correction of mistakes and errors to increase the relatedness in the latter and the competence in the former.
- Giving learners freedom of choosing peers, learning activities, and proper strategies of learning instead of prescribing the most suitable ones for an autonomy-supportive teaching method.
- Focusing on the fluency and learners' initiation of language production through speaking rather than the constant correction of mistakes (errors must be self or peer-corrected) to facilitate learner's relatedness support, and enhance competence for increasing the intrinsic motivation.
- For facilitating EFL learners' competence and relatedness, instructors can draw on the learners' native language when the comprehension of the foreign language is blocked.

On the whole, it can be concluded that motivation and internal locus of control seem to play an important facilitative role for these learners' English learning process regardless of both age and gender.

The findings of the current study can be specifically worthy of attention for teachers by increasing their awareness of the importance of locus of control and motivation and their role in developing English language learning. Accordingly, they can encourage EFL learners to believe they have more control over their learning and achievement on the one side; on the other hand, they can design classroom tasks (e.g., cooperative learning (Ismail & Al Allaq, 2019), game-based learning (Chou, 2014) to boost EFL learners' motivation during the language learning process. Besides, as Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) confirmed, teachers' enthusiasm and commitment are crucial factors that affect learners' motivation to learn. Due to the key role of motivation and locus of control on EFL learners' achievement, this study should assist teachers by making them more aware of the relationship between EFL learners' motivation and internal locus of control.

It is also recommended that teachers should use strategies to focus on topics (e.g., topics related to the use of different forms of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Lamb & Arisandy, 2020) that suit EFL learners' interest to enhance locus of control and motivation. Two strategies are recommended for teachers: a) they can use Dörnyei's (2001) framework of motivational strategies for teaching that "refer to those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect" (p. 28), for instance, students can be asked to use their learnt vocabularies through applying them to the description of their celebrity crushes, the art that they like the most, or the activities that fascinate them, and b) they can promote learners' locus of control by attributing learners' achievements to their abilities in a way that they can perceive the outcome of learning and possess stable factors such as abilities and aptitude to improve their performance in the EFL learning through peer correction or self-correction of both errors and mistakes, and the initiation of tasks or their own learning processes. In the light of the findings of the study, further research can explore how other contexts (e.g., the educational area and the context in which the learning takes place) activate EFL learners' both motivation and locus of control to facilitate and accelerate the learning process.

In this study the participants' ages ranged from 25 to 35 years old, further research could replicate the study among child EFL learners. Admittedly, the limitations of this study need to be pointed out. First, the present study is limited by its sample size that could be expanded by including EFL learners from more universities across the country to gain more data on the topic. Second, this study was conducted only with university EFL learners while younger EFL learners may respond differently. Last, this study was conducted in a university setting; therefore, generalization of the results to a private English language school setting and other tertiary institutions may not be appropriate.

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## Appendix 1

### Internal Locus of Control Index (Duttweiler, 1984)

#### INTERNAL CONTROL INDEX (ICI)

##### INDEX INSTRUCTIONS

Please read each statement. Where there is a blank \_\_\_\_\_, decide what your normal or usual attitude, feeling, or behavior would be:

A = RARELY (less than 10%) of the time)

B = OCCASIONALLY (about 30% of the time)

C = SOMETIMES (about half the time)

D = FREQUENTLY (about 70% of the time)

E = USUALLY (more than 90% of the time)

Of course, there are always unusual situations, in which this would not be the case, but think of what you would do or feel in most normal situations.

Write the letter that describes your usual attitude or behavior *in the space provided on the response sheet*.

1. When faced with a problem I \_\_\_\_\_ try to forget it.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ need frequent encouragement from others for me to keep working at a difficult task.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ like jobs where I can make decisions and be responsible for my own work.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ change my opinion when someone I admire disagrees with me.
5. If I want something I \_\_\_\_\_ work hard to get it.
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ prefer to learn the facts about something from someone else rather than having to dig them out for myself.
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ will accept jobs that require me to supervise others.
8. I \_\_\_\_\_ have a hard time saying "no" when someone tries to sell me something.
9. I \_\_\_\_\_ like to have a say in any decisions made by any group I'm in.
10. I \_\_\_\_\_ consider the different sides of an issue before making any decisions.
11. What other people think \_\_\_\_\_ has a great influence on my behavior.
12. Whenever something good happens to me I \_\_\_\_\_ feel it is because I've earned it.
13. I \_\_\_\_\_ enjoy being in a position of leadership.
14. I \_\_\_\_\_ need someone else to praise my work before I am satisfied with what I've done.
15. I \_\_\_\_\_ am sure enough of my opinions to try and influence others.
16. When something is going to affect me I \_\_\_\_\_ learn as much about it as I can.
17. I \_\_\_\_\_ decide to do things on the spur of the moment.
18. For me, knowing I've done something well is \_\_\_\_\_ more important than being praised by someone else.
19. I \_\_\_\_\_ let other peoples' demands keep me from doing things I want to do.
20. I \_\_\_\_\_ stick to my opinions when someone disagrees with me.
21. I \_\_\_\_\_ do what I feel like doing not what other people think I ought to do.
22. I \_\_\_\_\_ get discouraged when doing something that takes a long time to achieve results.
23. When part of a group I \_\_\_\_\_ prefer to let other people make all the decisions.
24. When I have a problem I \_\_\_\_\_ follow the advice of friends or relatives.
25. I \_\_\_\_\_ enjoy trying to do difficult tasks more than I enjoy trying to do easy tasks.
26. I \_\_\_\_\_ prefer situations where I can depend on someone else's ability rather than just my own.
27. Having someone important tell me I did a good job is \_\_\_\_\_ more important to me than feeling I've done a good job.
28. When I'm involved in something I \_\_\_\_\_ try to find out all I can about what is going on even when someone else is in charge.

## Appendix 2

### Motivation Questionnaire (Laine, 1988)

The following questions ask about your motivation in and attitude toward learning the English language. Please take a moment to respond to these questions. **Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible.** Use the scale below to answer the questions.

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Undecided
- 4 = Disagree
- 5 = Strongly disagree

1. I like English more than other subjects.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would like to have more personal practice in my English course.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If I saw a tourist on the street, I would like to speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would like to have more English spoken.	1	2	3	4	5
5. In my English study, I get through hard work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Doing my homework, I carry on till I really know it.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I work more with my English studies than with other subjects.	1	2	3	4	5
8. If there is a panel discussion on the radio in English, I just do my best to understand it.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Learning English is more important to me just because I want to get a good job.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Other people think more highly of me if I know a foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Learning a foreign language makes me a more knowledgeable person.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I would like to learn English because I would like to teach it.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Learning English is important to me because I can then get in contact with English-speaking people.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would like to learn English because I would like to be like a native speaker.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I learn English because I would like to join the English people.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I learn English because I would like to get familiar with English culture.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I would like to learn English perfectly.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I am curious about English.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I would choose to learn English even if it weren't compulsory.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I feel learning a foreign language truly helps me to develop my real self.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I think academic learning is pleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I think that the number of academic years should be increased.	1	2	3	4	5
23. If I could choose, I would take more courses in English.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I think English courses in university should be increased.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I love English/American music.	1	2	3	4	5
26. It is important to know life in the English-speaking world.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I found the English way of life exciting.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I think one should know English history and culture.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I love the sound of English.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I think English is an exciting language.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I think it's useful to know the inner structure of English.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I would really like to understand how the English language works.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I love the way English is taught to us.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I feel I can express myself in the English lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I find our English teaching methods useful.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I find our English teaching methods boring.	1	2	3	4	5