How Do Independent Language Learners Keep Going? The Role of Interest in Sustaining Motivation

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Abstract

This paper presents results of the first year of a four-year longitudinal study examining motivation for independent language learning among Japanese freshman learners of English at a university in Japan. The participants were enrolled in optional independent learning modules offered by the university's self-access centre. The aim of the modules is to introduce learners to resources and strategies for learning and to give them the opportunity to create and implement a plan of independent study in the language area of their choice. Despite a busy academic and personal schedule, 145 learners managed to successfully complete the first eight-week optional module in semester 1 and 50 of those learners went on to complete the second optional module in semester 2. The authors analysed learners' weekly reflective journals in order to investigate the factors that helped learners maintain their motivation to continue the modules. In addition, interviews were conducted with 9 participants. Findings indicate that interest played a significant role in maintaining motivation for independent study and this is discussed by drawing on a theoretical framework called the self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model (Sansone, 2008; Sansone & Thoman, 2005).

Keywords*: independent language learning, motivation, self-regulation, interest*

1. Introduction

This study aims to explore learner motivation in independent settings. The term 'independent' is used in this paper to refer to work related to language learning goals that a learner is pursuing outside of class. The authors acknowledge that it is a problematic term as there is an implication that the learner is working alone; however, throughout this paper, the assumption is that the learner is highly likely to be working with peers, teachers and other people. The term 'independent' refers to the fact that study is not part of any credit course and is an activity chosen by the learner.

The purpose of this study was to understand more about the motivations of independent language learners working on optional modules offered by their university over a one year period. From initial analysis of the data, the importance of interest became clear. Drawing on the literature related to self-regulation, motivation and interest, the authors examine the role that interest plays in maintaining motivation over time. This is done within the framework of the self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model (Sansone, 2009; Sansone & Thoman, 2005).

2. Literature review

2.1 Self-regulation and interest

Self-regulation can be defined in general terms as the changing of oneself to bring one's thinking or behaviour into line with some standard. This standard can be chosen by the self, or it can be set by others in the social environment (Forgas, Baumeister, & Tice, 2009). Self-regulation in terms of learning (self-regulated learning) is a process (or set of processes) in which learners not only activate but also sustain cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral states that are oriented toward the achievement of certain goals (Zimmerman, 2000). These processes are cyclical, with adjustments being made as a result of observation and monitoring (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). A number of characteristics of effective self-regulators have been identified, including: setting good learning goals; using effective learning strategies; monitoring progress toward their goals; seeking help when necessary; persistence; and setting new, more effective, goals after meeting previous goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2009).

As Hidi and Ainley (2009) point out, and as the characteristics of effective self-regulation listed in the previous paragraph demonstrate, models of self-regulation tend to focus on individuals' motivation in terms of goals. From this perspective, motivation depends on how much value individuals assign to particular outcomes and their expectations of achieving them (Sansone, Smith, Thoman, & MacNamara, 2012). However, recent research has gone beyond looking at how individuals monitor their progress toward goals; it has also begun to look at how they monitor their affective states, such as frustration, satisfaction,

enjoyment or interest (Sansone et al., 2012). It is within this area of research that interest is being increasingly explored.

Interest can be defined as a basic emotion, which is distinct from general positive mood (Izard, 1977, cited in Sansone et al., 2012). It is a positive emotion although it can be associated with negative feelings such as frustration (Sansone et al., 2012). It does, however, appear to consist of interacting affective and cognitive components (Hidi & Ainley, 2009), and this distinguishes it from other positive emotions like happiness (Sansone et al., 2012). The emotional experience of interest consists of cognitive appraisals of the novelty of the stimulus and of its comprehensibility (Silvia, 2005). It motivates exploration, which can lead to a broadening of experience and an increase in knowledge about the object of interest (Frederickson, 1998). Therefore, there is a sequential relationship between stages of development of interest, and what is initially a (perhaps temporary) response to a stimulus can become a well-developed interest (Sansone et al., 2012). Researchers therefore distinguish between two types of interest: *situational* interest and *individual* (or *personal)* interest (Hidi, 1990). Situational interest is a motivational process or state triggered by specific content while individual interest refers to a relatively stable, enduring disposition. In situational interest, attention is temporarily engaged and may or may not be sustained (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). It is important to note that as well as a usually positive affective reaction, another characteristic of situational interest is focused attention (Hidi & Ainley, 2009). To sum up, attentional, affective and cognitive factors constitute the psychological state of interest (Sansone et al., 2012).

Sansone et al. (2012) suggest that learners may not be able to sustain long-term engagement with learning tasks unless they maintain two types of motivation: the motivation to attain goals and the motivation that comes from interest. Sansone (2009) distinguishes between *goals-defined* and *experience-defined* motivation. The former covers *target goals*, which reflect the *what* (task completion, high scores) and *purpose goals*, which reflect the *why* (to achieve, to enjoy) of activity engagement (Sansone, 2009). The latter stems from how interesting an experience is. The self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model (Sansone & Thoman, 2005) sees the experience of interest as crucial to successful self-regulation and tries to integrate goals-defined and experience-defined motivations within one self-regulatory process.

Goals-defined and experience-defined motivation are integrated in the SRM model, and both kinds of motivation are seen as working in complementary or opposing ways (Sansone, 2009). For example, a learner who has strong goals-defined motivation may also be interested in the tasks and activities designed to reach his/her goals, so experience-defined motivation and goals-defined motivation will be complementary. Both forms of motivation will orient the learner's actions in the same direction.

If the tasks a learner does or the resources she uses are uninteresting, however, her experience-defined motivation will lead her toward quitting unless there are other reasons to continue, such as goals, personal values, or extrinsic rewards or punishments (Sansone & Thoman, 2005). If goals-defined motivation is present, the learner will persist if it is stronger than the experience-defined motivation. Therefore, to reach a goal, it is not only the strength of the learner's goals-defined motivation by itself that is important, but its strength *relative to* experience-defined motivation (Sansone, 2009).

In the SRM model, as part of the self-regulation process, learners can regulate their goals-defined motivation and experience-defined motivation (Sansone, 2008). They can regulate goals-defined motivation by employing strategies that enhance their motivation to reach a goal. For example, they can focus on the consequences of their behaviour by administering their own rewards for completion of goals or they can engage in goal-oriented self-talk to keep themselves on track (Wolters, 2003). As a result, goals-defined motivation can be maintained, and even strengthened, despite a lack of interest. In addition, these types of strategies can have effects, both positive and negative, on experience-defined motivation. One may come to care more deeply about achieving one's goals and so become more involved and interested in activities; on the other hand, focusing on the importance of a goal such as a good grade may lead to anxiety and lower interest (Sansone, 2009).

Learners can also develop strategies to regulate experience-defined motivation, which make activities more interesting. Instead of persisting with uninteresting tasks through the enhancement of goals-defined motivation (by assigning personal value to goals, for instance), learners can change how they perform the tasks, using strategies to make performance of the task more interesting (Sansone & Thoman, 2005). For instance, learners can creatively alter some aspect of a task to make it more challenging, or they can try to make studying more like a game (Wolters, 2003). However, it should be noted that there may be a potential negative side effect, namely, that actions that make tasks more interesting may hinder the attainment of the goals that motivated initial engagement (Sansone, 2009).

2.2 Phases of interest development

As outlined in the previous section, interest can develop, going from situational interest, which may or may not be sustained, to a dispositional individual interest. Hidi and Ainley (2009) propose that individuals go through phases of interest development. They consider an individual's ability to increase interest to be an important aspect of self-regulation, in the sense that changes in the amount and the nature of interest can aid the development and maintenance of self-regulation. According to Hidi and Ainley (2009), interest development begins with external input before becoming the result of self-generated

processes. Their model of interest development has four phases, two of which can be classed as situational interest, and two as individual interest.

Phase 1 of interest development is *Triggered Situational Interest*. Interest is triggered by an external stimulus (a story, a film, a puzzle) and tends to be externally supported. As mentioned earlier, this phase is a psychological state characterised by focused attention and an affective reaction that tends to be positive (excitement, pleasure).

If the initial interest is supported it can progress into Phase 2: *Maintained Situational Interest*. Like in phase 1, this phase is characterised by focused attention, which now endures for longer. Once again, interest is usually externally supported, through interaction with others for example. In order for situational interest to develop into individual interest, the affective reaction during this phase should be wholly or predominantly positive (allowing for occasional negative affect such as temporary frustration).

Phase 2 is a precursor for Phase 3, which is *Emergent Individual Interest*. This is still a psychological state but also represents the first signs of an enduring dispositional interest marked by continued efforts to seek out further engagements with a particular topic or content area. During this phase we see the beginnings of self-generated interest and also emerging self-regulation. As interest becomes more stable during this phase, knowledge accumulates and the learner assigns greater value to that knowledge.

Phase 4, *Well-Developed Individual Interest*, witnesses increased self-regulation and greater self-reflection. Knowledge and value increase beyond the levels of Phase 3. Interest is largely self-generated, although for this phase to be maintained, some external support may be necessary.

So having examined the literature in the areas of interest and self-regulation, the paper now describes the context and the study.

3. Context

The context of the study is a self-access learning centre ('the SALC') in a private university in Japan which specialises in courses on foreign languages and cultures. The SALC is a lively and busy centre and provides materials, workshops, learning spaces and an advising service to all students at the university. This institution was chosen as it offers optional (credit) courses and (non-credit) independent learning modules designed to help students to become more aware and autonomous learners. In addition, the authors had permission to conduct the research with learners at the institution. The modules will be described in the next paragraphs.

3.1 The aims of the modules

The modules offered are called Effective Learning Module 1 (ELM 1) and Effective Learning Module 2 (ELM 2). These are eight weeks long, non-credit bearing, and open to any student. At the time of the study (April 2014 to January 2015), students could earn up to 10 points for their freshman English classes by completing a module. Although these modules are taken during learners' free time and are largely done independently, students are given support throughout the process. Each module taker is assigned a personal learning advisor (LA) who is a specialist in applied linguistics and language learner autonomy, trained to give support and feedback to students throughout the module period. This support takes the form of workshops, individual face-to-face advising sessions and written advising where learners receive targeted written comments each week on their independent work.

The purpose of the modules is to introduce learners to some key areas for becoming autonomous learners. The key areas are: analyzing needs; choosing and evaluating resources; choosing and evaluating learning strategies; making a learning plan; implementing a plan; and evaluating linguistic and learning gain. These key areas are the learning outcomes which were established during an extensive curriculum evaluation and needs analysis process. ELM 1 contains some input units to introduce learners to the key areas before they make and implement a plan. ELM 2 is a continuation of ELM 1 and does not contain any input units; the learner begins by making a learning plan and implements it for the eight weeks.

201 students initially registered to take ELM 1 in May 2014 and 145 completed it. 79 of the students completing ELM 1 registered for ELM 2 in September 2014 and 50 of them completed the second module. Given that the modules are optional, that students are already very busy, and that 10 additional points is a relatively small incentive, the authors were interested in what factors helped learners to sustain their motivation to complete the modules. As learners were required to keep weekly reflective journals as part of the process, this would be a practical way to collect qualitative data from a relatively large number of students learning independently.

The modules specifically prompt learners to think about how they manage their motivation and independent study each week. As students implement their learning plans, they write responses to guided reflection questions every week. The questions were:

> *Do you think your plan and learning activities were useful for achieving your target?*
> *Did you achieve your target this week?*
> *What did you do well? Why?*
> *What didn't go well? Why?*
> *My level of satisfaction: 1 2 3 4 5*
> *How was your motivation for the module this week? Why? 1 2 3 4 5*

Did you do anything special to keep your motivation high?
What will you keep or change next week? Why?

Students were asked to rate themselves on a scale from 1 to 5 in two areas: (1) their levels of satisfaction with completing their weekly target, and (2) their motivation for the module that week.

3.2 Motivation

Although motivational and affective strategies are not explicitly taught as part of the modules, support and tips are available at any time and in ways appropriate to learners, e.g.:

- Posters in the SALC provide tips for managing motivation, anxiety and confidence when learning another language.
- Leaflets about affective factors are on display in print form in the SALC and can be downloaded via the SALC student website.
- Tips are shared via social media.
- Learning advisors address concerns of individual learners during advising sessions and through written advising.
- The SALC offers workshops on managing motivation and dealing with other affective factors.

4. Purpose of study

This paper describes the first part of a larger longitudinal study investigating a group of learners as they progress through their four years at university starting April 2014. The research question for the first year of the study, described in this paper was:
How do learners at the institution maintain their motivation for independent learning in their first year at university?

5. Methodology

The authors take a interpretative approach to the research in order to explore students' voices as they engage in learning activities, i.e. "understand the subjects' worlds and to determine how and with what they judge it" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982, p. 210). The approach also enables researchers to investigate the uniqueness of the context and be sensitive to participants' thoughts and perceptions (Ernest, 1994). The intention of the research is not to make generalisations, but to offer an interpretation of the situation within the context of independent language learners in a small university in Japan. The research is a participant observation study (Hatch, 2002) which aims to understand specific interests of a group of participants drawing on qualitative research methods.

5.1 Participants

Participants involved in this first phase of the research consisted of 57 students who completed ELM 1 in semester 1 and 32 students who completed ELM 2 in semester 2. The participants were all module takers in their freshman year who indicated at the end of each module period that they would be willing for the researchers to copy their written weekly reflections and use the data for the study. A summary of the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: **A Summary of research participants**

Semester	*Module*	*Total module takers*	*Total number of students who completed the module*	*Number of students who completed the module and agreed to participate in the study**	*Gender breakdown*
1	ELM 1	201	145	57	8 males 49 females
2	ELM 2	79	50	32 (14 were among the 57 in semester 1)	5 males 26 females

* In order to get as many participants as possible, permission was sought at the end of each semester. This meant that participant composition differed from semester 1 to semester 2.

The majority of the students were Japanese, belonging to different departments. All of the students were taking compulsory English classes, but a small number of students were majoring in languages other than English. There was a range of proficiency levels from pre-intermediate to advanced. The gender imbalance seems extreme, but two thirds of the students at the university are female and fewer males generally opt to take modules.

5.2 Data collection and analysis

Two qualitative data collection methods were used by the researchers to shed light on the research questions. These were the analysis of the students' reflective weekly journals; and semi-structured interviews which will be explained below.

5.2.1 Analysis of journals

The approach to data collection and analysis largely mirrors the qualitative research steps presented by Hatch (2002). Firstly, copies of the students' weekly reflections for the implementation portions of both modules were made at the end of the relevant

semester. The written reflections were examined separately by the two researchers (the authors of this paper) and read for a "sense of the whole" (Hatch, 2002, p. 181). Some relevant literature was explored at this point and the SRN model identified as a potential framework. After that, preliminary emergent categories were noted. Particular attention was paid to the reflective question "How was your motivation for the module this week? Why?" (1 2 3 4 5). Later, the two researchers re-read and discussed the emergent categories together until a final list of categories was agreed upon (see appendix). For example, some similar categories were combined, others were created and some of the category names were changed. Some overlap of categories is inevitable, so the final list is the researchers' interpretation of participants' motivation. Using the final agreed-upon list of categories, the researchers examined the data again together for each participant for each of the weeks they implemented their learning plans (4 weeks for ELM 1, 7 weeks for ELM 2). This method was chosen (rather than having the two researchers rating independently) due to the nature of the data. In order for categories to be assigned, a deep reading and interpretation of the text is needed which is greatly facilitated by discussion. Categories for each of the weekly student reflections related to motivation were assigned according to the final list. Cases were discussed until agreement was reached and in some cases, more than one category was assigned. The agreed-upon categories were tallied so that the researchers could see patterns indicating reasons why students were motivated or not motivated each week.

5.2.2 Interviews

In the middle of the second semester, all of the participants who were taking a second module were invited by the researchers to be interviewed about their motivation for independent study. Nine participants volunteered to be interviewed (three males, six females). The interviews were conducted in English by one researcher and recorded with the participants' permission. The interviews were semi structured and investigated the following points:

> *General attitude toward the module*
> *What factors influenced motivation*
> *How learners attempted to regulate their motivation*
> *The interviews were transcribed and the main points summarised under the categories above.*

6. Results

How motivated were the learners in general?

As one might expect, students doing an optional independent learning module are likely to be generally motivated, but the researchers were interested in the week by week experiences

as indicated in the students' reflections. The students were asked to give a numeric value to how they felt about their motivation that week. Although the responses to this question are highly subjective and therefore cannot be easily compared among learners, they at least gave the researchers an impression of how motivated the learners were. For that reason, the scores that the participants gave for their motivation were tallied and averaged. No further statistical treatment was done due to the highly subjective nature of these figures. A summary can be seen in Table 2 showing that motivation varied slightly week by week for both semesters, but remained generally positive on average.

Table 2: How participants rated their motivation each week

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
ELM 1	3.5	4.02	3.85	4.24			
ELM 2	3.72	3.5	3.72	3.73	3.71	4	3.64

6.1 Factors affecting high motivation

27 motivational factors were identified as a result of the process described in the previous section. A full list of categories, descriptions and numbers of times they were identified in the data can be found in the appendix, but for the purposes of this paper, the authors focus on the two factors that were most frequently present. The data from both semesters showed that 'interest' was the major factor in maintaining students' motivation, accounting for almost 30% of reasons mentioned in the first semester and nearly 27% in the second semester. Participants mentioned 'goals' 20 times (8%) over the four weeks in semester 1 and 32 times (13%) in semester 2 in the written reflections. Goals were also mentioned during the interviews by seven of the nine participants.

6.2 Interest

Statements categorised as 'interest' were examples where participants expressed interest and enjoyment in a resource, task or strategy The question arises as to why there are no separate categories of 'enjoyment', 'fun' or 'pleasure', in addition to that of 'interest'. As mentioned earlier in this paper, situational interest is characterised usually by positive affective reactions; these reactions could be interpreted as 'enjoyment' or 'fun'. However, interest is also characterised by focused attention, and the combination of these two elements marks interest as different from enjoyment, fun, or pleasure. In addition, interest, whether situational or individual, is content specific (Hidi & Ainley, 2009), and in the early phases of interest development especially, can be triggered by highly specific stimuli such as particular tasks or learning resources. The participants tended to use the two terms interchangeably, or at least associate the terms together in their reflections (this may be due to linguistic limitations). For these reasons, the researchers categorised

as 'interest' all items that were content specific and were characterised by a positive affective reaction and focused attention. Typical statements categorised as 'interest' from the written reflections were as follows:

> *I could enjoy studying better than last week. I think it was because I could find some very interesting video.*
>
> *(Participant 6)*

> *The text of shadowing was so enjoyable for me.*
>
> *(Participant 33)*

> *Cooking was fun. I felt I want to cook using English recipe again.*
>
> *(Participant 38)*

> *I choose interesting story every week, It kept my motivation high!*
>
> *(Participant 46)*

As well as being the main motivating factor indicated in the written reflections, interest also featured prominently in the interviews, with six out of the nine participants mentioning the importance of interest in learning. Two extracts from interviews where participants commented on interest can be seen below:

> *I choose new interesting topics every week.*
>
> *(Participant 54)*

> *I choose a movie, something I have been interested in since I was a child … It's fun to shadow the main character*
>
> *(Participant 53)*

6.3 Goals

Examples of target goals and purpose goals were given by participants. Examples of target goals mentioned in the reflective diaries and interviews were to get a specific score on a test. Examples of purpose goals were to prepare for a trip abroad, to prepare for an outing with exchange students, to study abroad, or to become a teacher. Some examples from the reflective journals were:

> *I am going to take TOEIC test this summer, so I want to study harder than last week to improve my English skills and extend TOEIC score.*
>
> *(Participant 4)*

> *I have plan to go out with international students about 3 weeks later, so I need to improve my English skills.*
>
> *(Participant 47)*

The following two excerpts are from the interview data and show an example of a goal defined by purpose (studying abroad, Participant 44) and a target-defined goal (TOEIC, Participant 39).

> *I'd like to study abroad and I'd like to improve my speaking and my English level, so I want to learn ability to..how to improve my English…. It's difficult to keep motivation high… in my case, [if] my motivation is low I will do something interesting or I think about my dreams and my motivation is high.*
>
> *(Participant 44)*

> *My big goal is TOEIC and I have a specific target for a score so I can study hard for my specific target.*
>
> *(Participant 39)*

Out of the nine participants interviewed, three were strongly experience-defined by focusing on particular resources or activities in order to maintain motivation. Six were mainly goals defined with three focusing on a target (an exam) and three focusing on a purpose (reading improvement, to become a teacher and to study abroad). However, four of the six 'goals defined' students also kept motivated by doing enjoyable tasks or using interesting resources.

All of the participants who were interviewed demonstrated ways in which they had changed and become more aware of the learning process over time. One case study will be presented below to give an illustration of the kind of information learned during the interviews, but each participant was unique in the way he/she managed independent learning. There was evidence to suggest that all nine participants were developing self-regulation skills, but in different ways.

6.4 Case study: Participant 39 (F)

In Semester 1, Participant 39 decided to register for the module as a way to earn extra points for her English grade. She continued with the module and completed eight weeks. The main reason she was able to continue was due to an obligation she felt towards her learning advisor "I have to study for her..for her job..for her kindness" (extract from the interview in November, 2014). Participant 39's goal at the time was quite vague; to improve her speaking in an enjoyable way. She enjoyed listening to music, but did not necessarily connect the activity with her speaking goal. In semester 2, she developed a goals-defined orientation. Her goal was to achieve a score of 700 on the TOEIC test. She decided to take a second module in order to be strict on herself to make sure that she actually studied. The way she viewed the module experience changed at this point as the following extract from the interview indicates:

> *My feeling for studying has changed. I used to think I have to study and now I think I want to because I see my progress...Module 2 is better than Module 1 because the goal is more specific. The first module, I kept going for [my learning advisor], but the second module is mostly for me*

Overall, Participant 39 is mainly motivated to achieve a high test score and she is able to do this by regulating her motivation through her choice of activity as this additional extract from the interview suggests:

> *Sometimes the textbook is boring and I want to enjoy studying so I use fun resources such as TED talks for listening practice. If I feel I don't want to study for TOEIC, I use TED or another resource*

Generally participant 39 felt that her TOEIC-related activities were not particularly enjoyable, but her target kept her going. Also, she was able to draw upon more interesting activities when her motivation dropped.

7. Discussion

If we look at the results of the study within the framework of the self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model (Sansone & Thoman, 2005), it is clear that experience of interest and goals are important for sustaining motivation. Research indicates that learners learn more quickly when they are interested, choose interesting activities more frequently when they are offered a choice, and show greater persistence once they start (Sansone, 2009). Consequently, when talking about maintaining motivation for a longer period, motivation that comes from interested engagement is crucial.

One aspect of self-regulation is *self-control*. In the SRM model, self-control covers regulation of both goals-defined motivation and experience-defined motivation. When both can be regulated in ways that allow for acceptable trade-offs, there is effective self-control (Sansone, 2009). Examples of this can be seen in the case of Participant 39. She has a target goal of getting a high score in a standardised test (TOEIC), but she is aware that at times she finds the study materials boring, so she switches to something more interesting and enjoyable (a TED talk video).

In the above example, listening to a TED talk can be seen by the learner as an activity that is complementary to her goal as she is getting listening practice. On other occasions, the interesting activity may not be complementary to the learner's goal. For example, in the words of another interviewee: *"Sometimes my motivation is low, so I change something. Do something fun like drawing pictures or watching movies"* (Participant 45, F).

In terms of the phases of development of interest, the written reflections and the interviews indicate that students are in the situational phases (phases 1 and 2). Their interest tends to be triggered by particular resources and activities, which involve focused attention

(e.g., shadowing, following reciped in English). Their experiences produce positive affective states. There is evidence from the interviews that some students are demonstrating phase 2 characteristics, repeating engagement with interesting activities or resources. Participant 39 is in the habit of using TED talks when her study materials become too boring. In other words she actively seeks out certain types of materials that she finds interesting, a strategy that helps her stay motivated when her goal alone cannot do so. She finds the TED talks 'fun', but the fact that she is choosing specific resources for focused listening activities suggests this is fun as a characteristic of interest. She even has a particular place where she does such activities: "On the train I enjoy listening to TED and other things". One could argue that such students are on the verge of phase 3, beginning to show signs of emergent individual interest, though perhaps not to the extent of exhibiting much self-regulation of, and self-reflection on, their interest.

8. Conclusions

One main limitation of this study is that categorising the weekly written reflections over a one year period is only likely to reveal just part of the learners' stories and only general patterns can be gleaned from this kind of document analysis. However, the interviews provided greater depth and three more years of data collection is likely to shed further light on the complex issue of self-regulation in independent language learning. In addition, more detailed case studies can provide further information about phases of interest development.

One key implication for practice is the need for learning advisors and teachers to be aware of individual differences in motivation regulation when advising learners in independent settings. As Sansone (2009) says, interest leads to a long-term increase in cognitive abilities and personal knowledge as well as short-term exploration. Although enhancing experience-defined motivation might delay short-term goals, it can enhance long-term interest, engagement and achievement. An awareness of this among learners and educators would have implications for learner training; it would be useful if teachers and learning advisors working with learners in independent settings were aware of the significance of interest in sustaining motivation. Awareness of individual differences in goal-defined motivation and experience-defined motivation among learners is crucial for helping learners to adopt strategies for regulating both types of motivation and achieving effective self-control over their motivation.

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Appendix:

Emergent categories from the weekly written reflections

Category	Description	Example	Frequency of the category in the data (ELM 1)	Frequency of the category in the data (ELM 2)
Challenge	Overcame a difficult task / Recognition of a weakness to overcome	"Because I wanted to overcome that grammer. My feeling was high when I got it" (Participant 20)	9 (3.8%)	11 (4.6%
Choice	Being able to choose how to study	"Because I could choose songs and I can take it easy" (Participant 39)	2 (0.8%)	3 (1.3%)
Comparisons	Making comparisons with others (including peers and role models)	"When I was talking with friends who are good at speaking English, my motivation is higher" (Participant 23)	4 (1.7%)	3 (1.3%)
Completion	Felt good about completing the module	"My motivation was high! because this week was last week of module. So I decided to enjoy "last week". (Participant 2)	9 (3.8%)	3 (1.3%)
Contentment	Non-specific / general feeling of well-being	"I went to a party of my senior this weekend. It was fun and I talked many new people" (Participant 22)	6 (2.4%)	9 (3.8%)
Control	A feeling of control over motivation	"I guess I can control my motivation. If my motivation were low, I'll listen the music with big sound" (Participant 21)	1 (0.4%)	0

Drive	Expressed internal drive to succeed	"I comparatively can keep motivation. Because my feeling that I want to improve in my English skill makes me motive!!" (Participant 7)	6 (2.5%)	0
Ease	The task/text was easy to understand/do	"I thought Level 4 (the Elllo) was easy, so I felt my listening skills level up"	4 (1.7%)	2 (0.8%)
Efficiency	e.g. good use of time, efficient methods, or good organizational skills	"Because I planned my studying schedule. I was excited" (Participant 51)	13 (5.4%)	14 (5.9%)
General	General sense of motivation. Reason unclear	"I have no reason, but I had motivation for this week. The harder I study, the more I can get my English skills. It interests me!" (Participant 42)	9 (3.8%)	10 (4.2%)
Goal	Mention of a specific target/ goal	"I think I have good motivation. Because I will take the TOEIC next week." (Participant 3)	20 (8.3%)	32 (13.4%)
Habit	Study is becoming a good habit	"Because I felt that studying new words is becoming my habit and interest" (Participant 26)	2 (0.8%)	2 (0.8%)
Interest	Interest in / enjoyment of a resource and/ or task e.g. movie, website, book or music	"I think I keep motivation because story of FRIENDS is very funny." (Participant 7)	71 (29.6%)	64 (26.8%)

Novelty	Doing something new e.g. using new materials or strategies / Novelty / Initial excitement	"Because I bought a NEW book! I was happy and felt motivation" (Participant 16)	4 (1.7%)	6 (2.5%)
Obligation	Sense of obligation to finish the module	"My motivation is that "this is my homework". This thinking makes me feel "I have to do it" " (Participant 9)	3 (1.3%)	1 (0.4%)
Performance	Motivated by poor performance or behaviour	"I submitted it too late last week, so I study this week's module only 3 days" (Participant 5)	1 (0.4%)	13 (5.4%)
Positivity	Positive attitude towards learning English	"I always have high motivation because I like English and I want to be a good English speaker" (Participant 57)	7 (2.9%)	5 (2.1%)
Reflection	Self-regulation prompted by reflection	"I am very sad because I was not good at managing own time, so actually I couldn't keep my motivation. However, I was able to know how to study and make study plans…." (Participant 51)	3 (1.3%)	0
Reward	Rewarding oneself as a motivator	"I thought if I finish read Chapter 3, I'll eat cookies. So I thought I needs a reward." (Participant 55)	0	1 (0.4%)

Satisfaction	Sense of satisfaction, achievement, and/or completion,	"Because I have many time this week so I studied until I was satisfied" (Participant 16)	25 (10.4)	20 (8.4%)
Social	Worked with friends/others / Was not alone	"Because I felt better than before, that I talked to others and it made me more confident" (Participant 26)	15 (6.3%)	21 (8.8%)
Starting	Excitement expressed at the start of a module	"I could keep my motivation high because this was the first week" (Participant 37)	4 (1.7%)	3 (0.8%)
Stress	Positive effects of stress	"I feel motivated. Maybe because of stress or others, it just push me to go ahead" (Participant 19)	1 (0.4%)	0
Teacher	Talking with a teacher or a foreigner	"Because I could talk with a foreigner and I think good opportunity to speak English". (Participant 2)	13 (5.4%)	15 (6.3%)
Understanding	Expressed a deep(er) understanding about something	"It is a little troublesome to write the things I did, but I noticed it is important to write down" (Participant 23)	4 (1.7%)	0
Useful	Discovery of a useful task/ text	"I found writing a letter is good practice for me" (Participant 10)	4 (1.7%)	2 (4.6%)