

Motivation, Autonomy, and AI: Exploring Student' Attitudes of Intelligent Tools in the Learning Process

Motivation, Autonomie et IA : Explorer les Attitudes des Étudiants envers les Outils Intelligents dans le Processus d'Apprentissage

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Abstract: A successful learning process is significantly impacted by the presence of students' motivation and autonomy. Henceforth, teachers and learners seek methods, strategies and tools to boost students' motivation and autonomy. Students widely use artificial intelligence agents for educational purposes. Essentially, these tools present various advantages such as supporting education, simplifying learning tasks, enhancing availability, tailored learning experience, fostering interaction, and time preserving. Thus, this descriptive study investigated the significance of motivation and autonomy in EFL learning setting. Additionally, it explores the role of AI in fostering students' engagement and autonomy. A mixed method was anticipated: a questionnaire and interview with a sample of 30 EFL graduate students at the English department, Abbes Laghrour Khenchela University. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 26, while the qualitative data was analysed through content analysis to state themes. The findings unveiled that the students fully know the importance of their motivation and autonomy levels. Furthermore, they have positive attitudes towards implementing AI in their EFL classes. AI can significantly boost students' enthusiasm, confidence, and self-regulation. Using AI increases students' chances of developing their attention and interest. Finally, these outcomes suggest that AI agents can transform traditional teaching classes and revolutionise EFL teaching in Algerian universities. Hence, EFL teachers should support AI integration in their classes.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Autonomy; EFL; Motivation; Students.

Résumé : La réussite d'un apprentissage dépend fortement de la motivation et de l'autonomie des étudiants. Enseignants et apprenants recherchent donc des méthodes, des

stratégies et des outils pour stimuler la motivation et l'autonomie de leurs étudiants. Les étudiants utilisent largement les agents d'intelligence artificielle à des fins pédagogiques. Ces outils présentent divers avantages, tels que le soutien pédagogique, la simplification des tâches d'apprentissage, l'amélioration de la disponibilité, la personnalisation de l'expérience d'apprentissage, la promotion des interactions et la gestion du temps. Cette étude descriptive a donc examiné l'importance de la motivation et de l'autonomie dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais langue étrangère (ALE). Elle explore également le rôle de l'IA dans le développement de l'engagement et de l'autonomie des étudiants. Une méthode mixte a été envisagée : questionnaire et entretien auprès d'un échantillon de 30 étudiants diplômés en FLE du département d'anglais de l'Université Abbes Laghrour Khenchela. Les données quantitatives ont été analysées à l'aide de SPSS version 26, tandis que les données qualitatives ont été analysées par analyse de contenu afin de dégager des thèmes. Les résultats ont révélé que les étudiants sont pleinement conscients de l'importance de leur motivation et de leur autonomie. De plus, ils sont favorables à l'intégration de l'IA dans leurs cours d'anglais langue étrangère (ALE). L'IA peut considérablement stimuler l'enthousiasme, la confiance et l'autorégulation des étudiants. L'utilisation de l'IA augmente les chances des étudiants de développer leur attention et leur intérêt. Enfin, ces résultats suggèrent que les agents d'IA peuvent transformer les cours traditionnels et révolutionner l'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère dans les universités algériennes. Les enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère devraient donc soutenir l'intégration de l'IA dans leurs cours.

Mots-clés : Intelligence artificielle; Autonomie; ALE; Encouragement; Motivation; Étudiants.

Introduction

Using technological instruments has become part of our daily activities in this digital era. We use them for work, pleasure, communication, and study. Learners nowadays spend more than half of their daytime leveraging technological tools, more precisely, their smartphones. Shortly, we can describe them as digital natives or consumers. Accordingly, traditional learning methods and techniques cannot meet today's learners' outcomes or satisfy their needs and desires. Henceforth, incorporating new technological tools is required and supported for effective learning settings. By doing so, the students will be prepared for real world tasks; and provided by extensive and expanded information platforms.

In recent years, technology-based learning has evolved into a collaborative model that unites educators, learners, and digital tools in dynamic, student-centered environments. It is a strategy that aims to fully involve students in their educational experience, frequently via the use of technology to support pedagogy. It contrasts with passive learning tactics, such as the typical lecture, the simplified materials, and the passive role of the learner. Within this context, artificial

intelligence (AI) tools are playing an increasingly prominent role-not only in content delivery but also in shaping how students engage with knowledge. By offering tailored feedback, adaptive pacing, and real-time support, AI-powered platforms are transforming passive learning into active exploration, empowering students to take greater responsibility for their learning.

On the other hand in EFL setting, fostering students' motivation and autonomy remains a problematic issue, traditional methods fail to meet students' needs and requirements leading to lower levels of students' engagement and self-regulation skills. A high number of learners employ AI platforms for their majors; EFL learners at Abbes Laghrour Khenchela University are the same. Students have been observed adopting various AI generative tools such as *Chatgpt*, *Grammarly*, *Duo lingo*, *Siri*, *Gemini*, *Canva*, *Quillbot*, etc. Although, many studies proved the significance of AI in education as they offer personalized interactive learning experiences (Guilherme, 2019; Alberth, 2023; Strzelecki, 2024). Integrating AI into the learning process improves the educational experience by offering individualized instruction tailored to each student's abilities and requirements. This integration improves learning outcomes and education quality, increasing effectiveness and engagement in interactive learning settings. However, it's unclear how these technologies will affect student motivation and self-direction, as little research has been done on that at the international level and precisely at the Algerian universities. Hence, this investigation aimed to investigate AI agents' impact on fostering third-year EFL students' at Abbes Laghrour, Khenchela university motivation and autonomy at Abbes Laghrour, Khenchela University. From this point on, the following inquiries were looked into:

- Is it necessary for EFL learners to exhibit motivation and autonomy?
- What are students' attitudes towards leveraging AI agents to foster motivation and autonomy?
- To what extent do students perceive AI agents as enhancing their learning experience?

1. Literature Review

1.1 Motivation and Autonomy in EFL learning Process

In EFL learning, "Motivation" has been widely discussed as it represents the reason behind academic success and achievements. Motivation refers to external or internal triggers that lead an individual to get started with action (How et al., 2024). Otherwise, it is classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; the first stems from individuals' aspirations and actions performed for pleasure. It is

frequently a more powerful and persistent source of inspiration. The second derives from external impulses such as seeking prizes or preventing penalties. When incentives and penalties are withdrawn, this form of motivation may evaporate. Motivation is a set of causes for exhibiting in a certain manner. It enables us to define and achieve short and long-term objectives. In education; motivation involves one's desire and trust to finish a task and to set up his/heirs rationales behind doing the task. Students with increased motivation show interest and attention to the subject matter and are positively involved in classroom tasks and practices. Motivation plays as a natural urge to perform well in certain circumstances and evaluate one's performance on to achieve academic success. Investigating motivation is crucial for both teachers and students to accomplish intellectual fulfillment in EFL classes. Learning is a living experience where the students may face difficulties or have physical or psychological problems; motivation is the invisible power that keeps them trying and progressing. It can be viewed as the relationship between desire and effort, providing energy to attain a goal (Raysharie et al., 2023). Despite the above, motivating students is a hard, complex process. It requires identifying and removing the barriers students may face in their learning process. For instance, physical demands such as sleep, time, food, health, and security. The psychological requirements are interest, focus, relationship, ability, engagement, attention, and management. When learners satisfy all the above-mentioned needs, their motivation will level up and elevate.

Understanding motivation is crucial since it is the secret ingredient in acquiring knowledge for learning success. Motivation encourages, leads, and maintains long-term learning goals. In addition, motivation shapes students' actions as it plays a vital part in the learning process. It represents students' desire or reason to accomplish learning outcomes. Thus, the student's motivation level is vital for effective learning. Learning happens only when students are willing to learn and acquire knowledge. Students need comfy physical and psychological circumstance. Engaging students in practical, interactive activities may create a better knowledge of the subject matter and boost critical thinking abilities. Students' interests and engagement are essential for their academic progress and development.

In a reference to students' autonomy; it signifies their ability to manage and direct their learning process. Henceforth, they define their learning outcomes, time, and strategies. Briefly, they positively take responsibility for their advancement. In today's learning environments, where the students participate in the learning process, increasing students' levels of autonomy is fundamental and substantial. The concept of learner autonomy allows individuals to become independent and active learners, providing them with the knowledge and

mentality essential for success and learning throughout their lives. However, autonomy is not innate. That is to say, it needs to be promoted and fostered. So learners take charge of their educational process, develop self-evaluation skills, effectively combine learning sources, and find possibilities for educational growth. A key component of autonomy is allowing students to pursue their learning objectives in a way that best suits them. Autonomy and motivation are mutually and deeply intertwined; according to self-determination theory autonomy is a key feature of students' internal motivation, if a student is autonomous he/she will be more engaged, reinforced and desired to learn. Conversely, motivated student is more likely to develop self-directed skills (Ryan and Deci, 2020)

Meanwhile, it is important to arrange the many knowledge resources that are currently available to learners so that they can easily access the content when they need it. Autonomous EFL learners engage with realistic resources and independently practice language features. Fostering students' motivation and autonomy is essential for a successful learning experience. Therefore, scholars and educators have suggested several effective tactics that support students' motivation and autonomy. For instance, they suggest stating clear goals, an adjusted learning environment, and encouragement (Mahfouz & Mohammed, 2021). Autonomous, motivated learners inclined easily grammatical structures, and vocabulary items; as a result their pronunciation and fluency will likely improve.

1.2 AI in Educational Settings

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence in the world has been identified as a turning point in many industries, including education. The integration of AI in educational settings has captured the attention and concern of many researchers and educators across the globe. Many studies have suggested that these technological agents expand upon learning algorithms and carry out complex tasks associated with human intelligence. To put it another way, AI typifies a wide number of computer-based platforms that replicate being's cognitive abilities as reasoning, learning, acquiring, problem-solving, and creativity (Nguyen et al., 2023) However, implementing AI in learning experience refers to the leverage of machines, specifically "robots", capable of executing activities that would normally need human intellect to improve the quality of education, reduce management processes, and assist both teachers and learners. Artificial intelligence technologies such as automated learning, natural language processing, and robots can customize learning by tailoring both the material and the time to the specific requirements of each learner.

According to constructivist theory, learning is most effective when students actively construct their own knowledge through experience and reflection. In this context, learner motivation and autonomy are not only beneficial but essential. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools and applications play a supportive role in this process by fostering self-regulation and enhancing students' motivation, offering personalized feedback, adaptive learning paths, and opportunities for independent inquiry. Several investigations have examined the impact of AI on students' educational development. However, an overview of the literature showed great acceptance and optimism about AI's positive upsides on education, mainly EFL learning. Szabó & Szoke (2024) found that GenAI instruments help students become more independent learners by promoting accountability in their study habits, creating objectives, developing analytic abilities, and implementing assessment systems to improve learning gains. Moreover, technologies powered by AI reinforce students' intrinsic motivation as they offer personalized feedback combined with game-based instruction and interactive settings (Mohamed et al., 2024). Counting the wide number of AI benefits on education lends credence to the idea that AI is crucial for language instruction; artificial intelligence constantly offers novel language teaching methods, materials and platforms. Additionally, AI supports learning a new language more expediently and successfully by providing tailored instruction, instant responses, flexibility, resource access, and cost-effectiveness (Cantos et al., 2023). Yet, the incorporation of AI in education raises number of ethical issues that should be carefully tackled. Data privacy, as AI tools collect students personal information, prompting concerns over permission, transparency, and data security. Another issue, academic integrity, AI-generated material can obscure the distinction between authentic student effort and machine aid. These concerns strongly highlight the need of ethical and digital literacy to maximize the AI use benefits. All in all, implementing artificial intelligence (AI) in educational settings has a revolutionary potential to improve students' ability to study independently and equip them with the abilities essential for learning throughout their lives (Namjoo et al., 2023).

2. Methodology

This investigation sought to clarify how far availing use of AI can transform English as foreign language (EFL) students into interactive ones and explain how these agents can play a significant role in empowering EFL students to become more motivated and autonomous. In light of this, a mixed method descriptive design was employed to afford a deep understanding of students' involvement with AI to increase their engagement and self-learning process.

2.1 Participants and Setting

The case study entails 30 EFL Third year students in the English department at Abbes Laghrour, Khenchela University. The researchers opted for convenience sampling, as this technique enables them to get data from the participants according to how accessible it is for the researchers to reach them and their willingness to be involved. The participants were the researchers' students, which enabled them to arrange the interview sessions, as interviewing other students seemed hard and impossible due to students' time constraints and willingness. Accordingly, the researchers used this sampling technique because of its ease of use.

2.2 Instruments

However, the researchers employed two data collection tools: a questionnaire and an interview. The first one mainly aimed to address students' attitudes towards the use of AI to level up their motivation level besides their autonomy, which divided primarily into two sections; the first one was for gathering participants' demographic information. The second one, a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=), is devoted to assessing students' attitudes towards AI use to enhance their motivation and autonomy of learning English as a major. The researchers also used an interview to provide a more profound and nuanced comprehension of students' perceptions and experiences regarding the use of AI tools for motivation and autonomy. The interviews enabled participants to clarify their experiences, preferences, difficulties, and views, yielding useful insights that enriched the quantitative outcomes. The interviews took place in person in the English department at Khenchela University. The six-question interview was relatively simple regarding vocabulary use and comprehension.

2.3 Procedure

The present investigation was held during the academic year 2024/2025, and the procedure is divided into four phases. Initially, the researchers conducted the questionnaire and interview and sent it to professionals to check the validity of the tools' content. The researchers piloted the research' instruments; seven candidates from the same population the pilot study led the researchers make few changes for more clarity and comprehension. Afterwards, the investigators explained the procedures to the participants as their answers would be anonymous and used only for the sake of this present investigation. Then, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants. Upon collection of all questionnaires, the responses to the primary part were examined for internal consistency, resulting in $\alpha = .88$ for attitudes towards AI' tools to foster students' autonomy and motivation, signifying a good degree of reliability.

Finally, for more comprehension, the researchers interviewed seven (7) participants from the sample to perform the interview sessions, each lasting 35 to 55 min. The quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 26 version). Alternatively, conceptual content analysis employed for the qualitative data as it provides a deeper comprehension of students’ opinions regarding using AI to foster motivation and autonomy.

3. Data Analysis and Results

3.1 Students’ Attitude Scale

3.1.1 General Attitudes towards the Importance of Motivation and Autonomy

The analysis of the table below revealed that the participants generally perceive motivation and autonomy as essential components of their learning process. The items 1 and 2 received a high mean score respectively (M=3.63, M=3.33) indicating agreement among students. Similarly, the statement “When I am motivated, I learn better” yielded a mean of (M=4.44), suggesting that students value motivation in enhancing their learning process. The last item “I like to assume responsibility for organizing and regulating my own learning experiences.” received a high mean score of (M=3.61), reflecting positive attitude toward autonomous learning. As a whole, the high average scores put forward that students recognize and support the importance of motivation and autonomy in achieving meaningful learning outcomes.

Items	Mean	Sd. deviation	Interpretation
1.I believe that motivation is essential in EFL classes	3.63	1.15	Positive
2.I believe that autonomy is essential in EFL classes	3.33	1.15	Positive
When I am motivated, I learn better.	4.44	0.96	Very Positive
3.I like to assume responsibility for organizing and regulating my own learning experiences.	3.61	1.35	Positive

Table 1: Students’ Attitudes towards the Importance of Motivation and Autonomy

3.1.2 General Attitudes towards Using AI in Education

Across the table, all items scored above the midpoint, reflecting a consistently positive perception toward the use of (AI) in educational experiences, as reflected consistently high mean scores among the statements. Item 1 “I believe that AI tools can improve my learning experience” received mean value of

(M=4.23), highlighting that the students' strong agreement of AI' utility in improving the learning. Additionally, in item 3 students reported very positive attitude (M=4.43) toward the importance of integrating AI tools in their EFL classes. However, a high mean score for the item 2 "I see AI as a helpful supplement, not a replacement, for traditional learning methods" (M=3.56) indicates a degree of caution, suggesting while students believe and welcome AI integration and efficiency, they are aware of its role as a complement to traditional teaching methods. These results reveal that students are open to use AI platforms but also with a balanced perspective, appraising both new technological advanced materials, and the essential human presence and touch.

Items	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Interpretation
1.I believe that AI tools can improve my learning experience	4.23	0.98	Very Positive
2. I see AI as a helpful supplement, not a replacement, for traditional learning methods.	3.56	1.27	Positive
3. I believe that AI' tools should be integrated in EFL classes	4.43	0.89	Very Positive

Table2: General Attitudes towards Using AI in Education

3.1.3 Students' Attitudes towards using AI to promote their Motivation

The analysis of the students' responses reveals an overall positive attitude toward the use of AI tools to promote their motivation. The statement "Using AI tools minimizes my anxiety" received a high mean score (M=3.70). This suggests that a majority of students perceive AI as a motivating factor in their learning journey. Similar, the item "Using AI tools increases my focus and interest during learning" had a mean of (M=4.26), indicating a generally very positive perception of AI's role in enhancing focus in learning. In the entire table, most statements received high mean scores, recommend that students value the role of AI tools to boost their motivation. Yet, statement 6 yielded mean score of (M=3.66), purposing that students had concerns about losing natural communicative exchange, which mainly hint at nuanced view, whereby AI is regarded as a supplement rather than an alternative for intrinsic drive. In summary, students' attitudes show an increasing confidence in AI as a motivational tool, dependent upon its deliberate and ethical application within an appropriate learning environment.

Items	Mean	Sd. deviation	Interpretation
1.Using AI tools minimizes my anxiety	3.70	1.17	Positive

Motivation, Autonomy, and AI: Exploring Student' Attitudes of Intelligent Tools in the Learning Process

2.Using AI tools increases my focus and interest during learning	4.26	.90	Very Positive
3.Using AI tools makes me more engaged in the learning process	3.33	1.17	Positive
4.Using AI tools increases my self-confidence	3.44	0.89	Positive
5.AI tools create a learning atmosphere that feels comfortable and encouraging	3.36	0.99	Positive
6.Using AI extensively can disconnect me from human interaction.	3.66	0.88	Positive
7.Using AI makes me feel more motivated	3.50	1.35	Positive

Table 3: Students' Attitudes towards using AI to promote their Motivation

3.1.4 Students' Attitudes toward using AI to promote their Motivation Autonomy

The students' responses to the Likert-scale items indicated a broadly favorable view of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a means of enhancing autonomous learning. The item "Using AI gives me the opportunity to make learning decisions" recorded a mean score of ($M=3.8$), this indicates that the majority of the students recognized AI's potential in supporting independent learning through decision making. Likewise, the statement "I feel more independent when learning with AI tools" yielded a mean of ($M=3.72$), suggesting that students widely accepting that AI' tools offer unlimited platform and space encourages self-independence. Within the same regard, items ($M=3.7$); the students widely reported very positive attitudes ($M=4, 53$; $M=4, 36$ respectively), implying that they AI' tools support their autonomy tailored to individual needs, preferences, and self-directed learning. However, item 10, the students were more neutral mean score of ($M=3.23$), showing mixed views on the efficacy of AI' tools to boost their autonomy. Overall, it appears that many students are aware of AI's capabilities to provide personalized learning plans that take into account each student's unique needs and pace. Henceforth, this indicates the importance of using AI' tools to boost students' genuine self-regulation and autonomy.

Items	Mean	Std Deviation	Interpretation
1.Using AI gives me the opportunity to make learning decisions	3.8	0.88	Positive
2.I feel more independent when learning with AI tools.	3.72	0.98	Positive

3.Using AI enables me to decide what I learn according to my needs and styles	4.53	0.73	Very Positive
4.AI tools help me define my own learning goals	3.52	0.97	Positive
5.Using AI tools makes me feel more responsible for my learning	3.4	1.03	Positive
6.Using AI tools enables me to decide time and content	3.26	1.14	Neutral
7.Using AI tools enables me to monitor my learning	4,36	0.89	Very Positive
8.Using AI tools allows me to choose the pace of my learning	3.36	1.32	Positive
9.AI gives me immediate feedback that helps me reflect on my progress	3.36	1.21	Positive
10.I am concerned with the over reliance on AI tools	3. 23	1.16	Neutral

Table 4: Students' Attitudes toward using AI to promote their Motivation Autonomy

3.1.4 Students' Attitudes towards AI' Use Challenges

The responses to the challenges section reflected a more cautious position. As the majority of the students acknowledge the potential of AI tools to boost their motivation and autonomy, many also states some concerns, and challenges regarding over use, data privacy, and academic integrity. A large proportion of participants advocated that they have concerns towards their overuse that may hinder their critical thinking abilities. This suggests the importance of maintaining a balanced integration of AI tools in educational activities. Another concern, data privacy, expressed apprehension about the security of their personal information when using AI tools.

Items	Mean	SD. Deviation	Interpretation
1.I am concerned that the over use of AI may hinder my critical thinking abilities	3.53	1.10	Positive
2.I worry about my personal data	3.56	1.38	Positive
3.I believe that AI' tools are supplements, not replacements.	3.41	0.93	Positive
4.I recognize that AI tools may exhibit biases in the information they produce.	3.43	1.19	Positive

Table 5: Students' Attitudes towards AI' Use Challenges

3.2 Students' Interview

The interview analysis brought results that conceptually clustered into students' *outcomes settings and personalization, Decision Making and control, Boost Motivation and Reduce Anxiety, Creativity and self-exploration; and Challenges, Limitations and Misuse*. The themes are explored in detail below; the researchers labeled numbers to the participants to sustain the rhythm of the analysis.

Outcomes settings/Personalization

The participants expressed their enthusiasm for using Artificial intelligence instruments, citing their simplicity, accessibility, customization and efficiency in developing their educational levels. Also, the students recognize the tailored learning experience these platforms offer as one of the major advantages. Moreover, the participants noted their improvement in speaking and writing skills. One interviewee said, "I used *Duo lingo, LLAMA2* and *TalkPal* to develop my accent, pronunciation, and vocabulary knowledge". Another participant claimed, "Using ChatGPT helped me to overcome my issues with studying civilization and history, as it summarized each historical event, war, and period. Also it helped me to conduct a critical analysis of each historical incident". Equivalent perspective, other students stated that "AI agents didn't only help them to develop their speaking skills but also their grammar". Other students said that "reading and analyzing literature is so hard and time consuming, ChatGPT visualize the text, novel or poem in interactive manner as if I'm with the writer. This allowed me to develop my understanding and comprehension of the literary texts". The responses of the students suggest that the AI tools helped them to plan their goals.

Another central theme appeared from the interviews is personalization. Participants highlighted that AI systems enabled participants to tailor their learning journeys according to their own demands, styles, and objectives. Participant 2 stated that "The most advantageous aspect of employing AI in my academic pursuits is its individualized approach to each user. I receive inquiries that are precisely aligned with my proficiency, either simplistic or excessively challenging". Within the same vein, respondent 7 answered, "The artificial intelligence is able to recall what I've done in the past and improve upon it. There are moments when it seems as though it understands me better than my teacher". These results are consistent with the ideas of learner-centered education, which means that students are given the authority to make decisions regarding what they study and how they gain knowledge. Through the provision of this degree of personalization, and goal settings, artificial intelligence plays a significant role in

improving student motivation and generating an atmosphere that is more conducive to independent learning.

Decision Making and Control

Another recurring theme that emerged from the interviews was decision making and control. Many students explained that artificial intelligence enables them to control what, how, and when they learn. Participant 7 shared, “I feel more independent, and I can decide the topic and how much I want to learn”. This highlights how AI tools encourage students’ independence and self-control, enabling students to make decisions, take charge, and show responsibility towards their learning journey. Furthermore, the respondents highlighted those AI agents offering personalized situations, progress analysis and immediate feedback allows them to enhance their decision-making abilities.

“The AI tools provide choices for subsequent study topics based on my areas of weakness. I no longer await direction from others; I just pursue the road that resonates with me”. Participant 1

Nevertheless, some respondents expressed worry over excessive dependence on AI recommendations, which might ultimately constrain their critical thinking abilities.

“Several occasions, I perceive that I am only following instructions without engaging in critical thought. I fear I am losing my capacity for independent decision-making”. Participant 4

The findings indicate that AI technologies can enhance educational decision-making skills; however they may necessitate purposeful support to ensure students maintain reflection and self-awareness in their decisions.

Boost Motivation and Reduce Anxiety

Participant 3 states, “AI devices offer novelty and interactive learning experience that stimulates my senses and promotes my understanding and willingness”. Student 1 described his experience mentioning “Before using Falou, I had problems in speaking English, especially in front of my teachers and colleagues, I felt shy and anxious, Falou boosted my self-confidence and trust, consequently my motivation boosted and I become more interactive neither with my teachers my colleagues”.

In the same vein, Participant 2 stated, “Duo Lingo among other AI applications offers tasks in a manner of fun games that loosen my worries and foster my engagement and problem-solving skills”. From this, we can say that a game-based approach helps to increase students’ attention, focus and efficiency.

Similarly, another student added that the Chatbots provide a comfy environment, so she can be involved in discussions without fearing making mistakes or failing. It develops my confidence and helps me to overcome my issues. These two participants clarified the efficiency of using Chabots to promote their enthusiasm levels. Also, participant 5 said that "I use AI every day because it makes me feel more excited to learn"

Participants said that AI-powered resources allowed them to access unique and distinctive course materials anytime, anywhere which boosted their curiosity and interest. Participant 4 claimed that "Even when I'm up late, I can use my phone to study and ChatGPT without needing a teacher." Moreover, participants 5 and 7 also summarized that AI-tuned programs are always available and provide immediate convenient feedback. Particularly, this can develop their metacognitive and self-assessment skills. The students expressed that gamified elements, immediate feedback, and visible progress monitoring sustained their motivation. These aspects provided a sense of accomplishment and ongoing enhancement, which maintained their engagement with the subject matter.

In contrast, participant 3 noted that sometimes the AI tools lack personalization or offer repetitive feedback; it could lead to frustration or decreased motivation.

"Occasionally, the feedback is excessively ambiguous or states information I am already aware of. That significantly diminishes my interest."

Creativity and self-exploration

The theme of creativity and exploration emerged as another key theme of students' experience towards using AI tools to foster their motivation and autonomy. The majority of the interviewees described that the AI platforms inspired them to move beyond passively absorbing of information, so enabling open-ended interaction, idea development, and learning based on discovery. Others emphasized that AI tools serve as safe atmosphere in which they could experiment with new subjects or techniques without the fear of failing, which in turn encouraged intellectual curiosity and creative thinking.

Participant 1 answered "Through the use of the AI technology, I discovered subjects that I would not ordinarily research. My eyes were opened to perspectives that went beyond the curriculum. I feel free".

The intrinsic motivation of the learners and their sense of autonomy were intimately connected to this sense of exploratory freedom inside the learners. Students said that artificial intelligence (AI) supported a fun, learner-centered approach that created room for experimentation, self-expression, and the pursuit

of particular interests. This is in accordance with constructivist learning theories, which stress the active role of the learner in the construction of knowledge.

Challenges, Limitations and Misuse

Another important concept is students' challenges and misuse. The analysis's results dictated that even though using AI is beneficial, all the participants faced challenges and improper use in employing AI agents for educational purposes. The participants revealed their moral concerns about data privacy, cost, and expertise of the AI agents.

Starting with moral concerns, participant 1 equates, "I do not know if this considered cheating, I use ChatGPT to do my homework and assignments to receive well marks" Participant 2 has a different opinion: "...I feel like my writing skills are not advanced, so I use ChatGPT to help me in my assignment since it presents the information with advanced analysis and writing style. First, I write my assignment on my own, and then I ask ChatGPT to underline and identify my mistakes. After that I rewrite my assignment based on the provided feedback, this encourages practice. I don't consider this cheating". Abusing AI aids can jeopardize academic integrity and lead to educational discrimination. According to the students' statements, we cannot say AI encourages cheating; cheating is a human choice.

Participant 5 said, "The initial challenge I faced with using AI agents is lack of experience. Some aids, like, as example, Canva, require specific AI skills. I devote a lot of energy and time to designing creative presentations. Roughly, participant 3 reported that "...what was considered a challenge for me is my lack of AI use experience; for instance, ChatGPT require a specific and precise ability for specific inquiries to minimize errors and the possibility of providing inaccurate information". Analyzing these statements unveils a critical need for AI training to maximize the potential advantages.

Accompanying technological issues, few participants articulated unease over the deficiency of human presence, emphasizing a perceived lack of emotional support or encouragement.

"I long for the sensation of being comprehended by someone. The AI merely provides feedback; it lacks reliability" Participant 1.

The majority of participants expressed concern about the financial cost of using automated learning platforms. Participant 3 advocate that "The cost AI-powered tool like Grammarly Premium, ChatGPT Plus, and others is not affordable on my budget". Another representative, participant 7 asserted that "There is a lack of institutional access to sophisticated AI platforms at my

university; I use my personal account, which adds a financial burden.” Another student claimed

“I wish there was a free AI alternative for writing assistance, but the most effective tools cost an expensive price.” Participant 3

Another central issue is students' data privacy; participant 2 asserted that “as the AI applications acquire a number of personal information such as gender, age, etc., this can be considered challengeable since the leakages of this data harm my confidentiality.” This data collection of personal information plays a significant concern among participants, participant 5 noted that “It makes me anxious since I have no idea what information it is gathering or who has access to it”. These findings indicated that the data privacy affects students' confidence in and engagement with technology. Accordingly it may be essential to spell out data regulations clearly and give students agency over their digital footprints

Data privacy affects pupil confidence in and engagement with technology; this is a problem that affects them on several levels, including the technological, legal, educational, and ethical. To create a safer and more powerful classroom, it may be essential to spell out data regulations clearly and give students agency over their digital footprints. In spite of these drawbacks, the findings as a whole imply that artificial intelligence tools, when developed with flexibility and openness, have the potential to function as accelerators for creative inquiry. These tools can encourage both motivation and autonomy by allowing for self-guided discovery and customized intellectual engagement.

Over reliance

A key concern experienced by the students was the risk of over-relying on AI agents for educational purposes. Many interviewees acknowledged the over dependency on using AI in solving problems related to their learning process. Respondent 2 revealed, “Occasionally, I accept all the information that AI tools offered; without checking. Honestly, this make me feel passive”. Although, participant 4 asserted that “I see a decline in my capacity to independently resolve issues. I consistently consult the AI”. These answers indicated a significant over reliance risk, within which the students prefer utilizing AI support over depending their own critical thinking. Thus, the students' should be aware of balancing the AI tools use with pedagogical instruction that foster autonomy, and reflection.

Student 1 compared the use of AI in learning to driving a car, where the learner acts as the driver, fully in control of the journey. In this metaphor, AI functions as a supportive tool, enabling decision-making and offering guidance to achieve specific learning goals. From the analysis of participant responses, it

became evident that AI tools contributed to the development of students' self-confidence and autonomy. Several participants expressed feeling more active, independent, and free to explore their own learning pathways, suggesting that the presence of AI facilitated greater self-discovery and motivation. As one student noted, the technology created "space for me to think and choose; it didn't just tell me what to do." These findings support the view that AI-powered learning environments can play a critical role in fostering learners' autonomous skills, particularly when the systems are designed to empower rather than replace student agency.

4. Discussion

The present inquiry aimed to assess EFL students' views towards the potential impact of AI on their motivation and autonomy. Henceforth, the findings show that using AI platforms is important among Algerian EFL university students. The questionnaire and interview results draw a clear picture of the situation. Initially, the answer to the first question, "Are students' motivation and autonomy important for learning?" students acknowledge that they need to increase their engagement and self-reliance levels to boost their interactive learning skills such as collaboration and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, they supported blending their EFL classes with AI-powered applications and platforms. This finding aligns with constructivist and self-determination theories, suggesting that technology can support key dimensions of student-centered education.

Concerning the second and the third questions, the students' views show that they interact positively with the AI applications in terms of their motivation and autonomy. Regarding student engagement, the respondents indicated that AI tools help create a positive atmosphere that enhances their sense of value and encourages proactive learning behavior. Chatbots are also viewed as enjoyable tools that encourage satisfaction and attention. Moreover, most of the participants asserted that these applications aimed to promote actions that can become routines. Their continuous pattern of use is often a result of their promotion of a daily habit. Learners are guaranteed to keep up with this daily exercise with the crucial features of notifications and reminders. A crucial point is the ease of use; learners may often begin the day using these specialized tools. Additionally, the use of games fosters students' focus and curiosity. It makes it easy for them and increases their sense of competition and fulfillment.

AI can generate realistic classrooms via virtual reality, which has fascinating learning potential. Learners will connect with topics in ways not feasible in regular classrooms as they can travel virtually across different cultures, historical events, and other interesting settings. For instance, when students study history or an old literary text using Virtual Reality Intelligence VRI, it enables

them to visualize and comprehend the context and the importance of the events in an interactive manner. Additionally, students have different learning styles; AI creates interactive settings that cope with each learning unique style. AI's flexibility permits unique learning styles and the ability to provide individualized assistance to help address each student's distinct needs, ultimately increasing the quality of their educational experience. AI tools offer a relaxed and pleasant environment necessary for developing their motivation (Artemova, 2024).

The study also investigates AI's role in students' autonomy; most participants agree that AI tools enable them to independently choose the content, task type, and format. The participants concur that these tools help them manage their learning needs, materials, and levels. The students refer to *Duo Lingo*, *Canva*, *ChatGPT 4*, *Quillbot*, etc. The mentioned applications work to manage students' time and facilitate independent access to learning sources. Additionally, the use of games fosters students' focus and curiosity. Developing students' critical thinking and problem-based skills that foster their independence and self-learning. The intelligent and immediate feedback helps students' sense of self-reliance; teachers cannot check each student's work instantly, and this may cause students' frustrations. AI platforms facilitate access to education anytime and anywhere; learners must have access to learning materials on their preferred devices at their convenience and at the precise moment that matters to them. Shortly, AI digital tools favor learners' centeredness and autonomy (Wang & Li, 2024; Hidayat-ur-Rehman, 2024). Besides all the pointed-out benefits, students confront some challenges based on their misuse and moral constraints. Some students employ AI improperly, and others do not. It remains their choice, as AI is just an agent programmed to afford help whenever needed. Cheating, plagiarizing, or stealing other people's ideas or words are traditionally human behaviors. Consequently, students should raise their awareness about academic ethics and integrity.

Another concern, a considerable proportion of students stated that the overuse or the extensive use of AI based platforms potentially diminish their critical thinking and reduce their capacity for authentic human interaction. This suggest that the students are aware of using AI as a supplement teaching tool, not fully replace the collaborative human dimensions of education. Furthermore, doubts about data privacy were evident, Students express concern over the collection, storage, and use of their personal information by AI-driven systems.

These findings suggest a need for balanced integration of AI in EFL settings that maximizes technological benefits while valuing the humanistic foundations of learning. Overall, reviewing students' answers reveals their

positive attitudes towards the use of AI, which is important to strengthen their readiness to study.

5.Conclusion

Hosting AI in EFL learning contexts is ultimately necessary, measuring the potential and benefits that AI can afford to transform and generate the field. It opened the door for many investigations and research to examine its benefits, practical applications, methods, innovative materials, challenges, and interactive settings despite the increasing number of research studies on how AI could be implemented for educational purposes globally. This paper delved into the opportunities of AI applications to promote students' engagement and autonomy on the Algerian scale. The findings reveal that AI technologies are designed to customize and alter learning experiences depending on students' needs, preferences, and progress, providing immediate feedback. All these features boost and elevate students' motivation and autonomy. The participants appeared satisfied with using AI to improve their EFL learning process. The conclusions drawn from this study have important educational implications. The AI tools help EFL students to establish their learning outcomes according to their needs and deficiencies. Providing learners with the confidence to take charge of their learning and make a significant contribution to their learning process, AI advocates a learner-centered approach. Effective learning requires meeting students' basic competence, autonomy, motivation, and social integration expectations.

The limitation of the current study is that the sample size couldn't be totally reflective; accordingly, we cannot generalize outcomes. The materials used may not fully represent students' real experiences. Future researches are suggested to extend the sample size, data gathering tools of this study, and different universities. In addition, further studies will explore teachers' usage, perceptions, and practical applications. Finalizing motivation and autonomy are crucial for learning; AI agents offer a favorable atmosphere for fostering students' engagement and responsibility. EFL teachers should Hosting AI in EFL learning a context is ultimately necessary, measuring the potential and benefits that AI can afford to transform and generate the field. It opened the door for many investigations and research to examine its benefits, practical applications, methods, innovative materials, challenges, and interactive settings despite the increasing number of research studies on how AI could be implemented for educational purposes globally. This paper delved into the opportunities of AI applications to promote students' engagement and autonomy on the Algerian scale. The findings reveal that AI technologies are designed to customize and alter learning experiences depending on students' needs, preferences, and progress,

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