

Empowering English Foreign Language Learners through Sasak Local Wisdom: Effects on Self-Directed Learning

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Abstract

The integration of local cultural knowledge into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has received increasing attention as an approach to creating more meaningful, relevant, and learner-centered educational experiences. This study aimed to investigate the effects of integrating *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials on students' self-directed learning and to explore students' perceptions regarding how such materials influenced their engagement and learning experiences in EFL contexts. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative phase investigated the influence of *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials on students' self-directed learning through questionnaires, while the qualitative phase explored students' perceptions through semi-structured interviews. The study involved 89 second-year students from the Undergraduate Computer Science Program of Bumigora University, Mataram, selected through total sampling, with 50 students in the experimental group and 39 in the control group. Twelve students were purposively selected for the interview phase based on their questionnaire responses. The quantitative findings showed that students in the experimental group achieved a higher self-directed learning score ($M = 84.70$) compared to the control group ($M = 62.72$). The independent samples *t*-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 ($p < .05$), indicating the positive effect of *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials on students' self-directed learning. The qualitative findings further revealed that students perceived the materials as enhancing their learning autonomy, motivation, cultural identity, and engagement in independent English learning activities. These findings suggest that culturally responsive EFL materials can serve as an effective pedagogical approach to empowering learners while connecting global English competence with local cultural values.

Keywords: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy; EFL Learners; Sasak Local Wisdom; Self-Directed Learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, English language education has increasingly emphasized learner-centered approaches that promote autonomy, engagement, and meaningful learning experiences. Rather than viewing learners as passive recipients of knowledge, contemporary educational paradigms encourage students to actively construct knowledge, regulate their learning processes, and take responsibility for their academic development (Che Mat & Jamaludin, 2024; Pastini & Lilasari, 2023). Within this context, Self-Directed Learning (SDL) has emerged as a critical competency for language learners, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings where opportunities for authentic language use are often limited. SDL refers to learners' capacity to take initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying resources, implementing learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. Students who possess high levels of SDL tend to demonstrate greater motivation, persistence, and academic achievement because they are capable of managing their learning independently (Meng et al., 2019; Qian et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2022).

Despite the recognized importance of SDL, many EFL classrooms continue to rely on learning materials that are culturally distant from students' lived experiences. In many contexts, English textbooks predominantly present Western cultural content, global themes, and unfamiliar social settings. While such materials may expose students to international perspectives, they may not always resonate with learners' local identities and cultural realities. As a result, students may perceive English learning as disconnected from their everyday lives, reducing their engagement and limiting their willingness to take responsibility for learning (Bose & Gao, 2022; Marwa et al., 2021; Mostafa & Jahan, 2024). This issue is particularly relevant in Indonesia, a multicultural nation characterized by diverse local cultures, traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems. When textbooks emphasize Western cultures or generic "global" themes without tying content to learners' local lives, students may perceive English learning as disconnected from daily experience and local identity. Cross-country and cross-context reviews consistently highlight that uneven cultural representation in ELT materials can hinder learners' motivation and engagement because learners cannot see themselves reflected in the content or relate the tasks to local realities (Arta, 2022; Prihatiningsih et al., 2021).

Recent educational policies and pedagogical discussions in Indonesia have emphasized the integration of local wisdom into educational practices. Local wisdom represents the collective knowledge, values, beliefs, customs, and cultural practices developed by communities over generations. Integrating local wisdom into language learning is believed to enhance cultural relevance, strengthen learners' identities, and create more meaningful learning experiences. In the context of Lombok Island, *Sasak* local wisdom constitutes a rich cultural resource encompassing folklore, traditional ceremonies, ecological knowledge, local philosophies, social values, and indigenous practices. These cultural elements provide authentic and contextual learning materials that can potentially enrich EFL instruction while preserving local cultural heritage.

The incorporation of local wisdom into EFL learning is consistent with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy, which advocates connecting classroom instruction with students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. According to culturally responsive learning theories, students learn more effectively when educational content reflects their identities, communities, and social realities. Cultural relevance helps learners establish meaningful connections between new knowledge and existing experiences, thereby increasing engagement and motivation. Consequently, integrating *Sasak* local wisdom into EFL materials may not only facilitate language learning but also promote stronger self-directed learning behaviors.

A growing body of research has investigated the role of local culture in EFL education. Previous studies have reported that culturally relevant materials can improve students' motivation, engagement, intercultural awareness, and language proficiency. Research conducted in various Asian contexts has demonstrated that the integration of local cultural content enhances learners' interest and participation because students feel more familiar with the topics being discussed. Similarly, studies in Indonesia have found that local wisdom-based instructional materials contribute to contextualized learning and support the preservation of cultural values within formal education.

Several scholars have specifically examined the use of local wisdom in English language teaching. Their findings indicate that local cultural narratives, folklore, traditional practices, and indigenous values can serve as effective resources for developing reading materials, speaking activities, and project-based learning tasks. Students often report higher levels of interest and confidence when learning English through content related to their own communities. Furthermore, culturally relevant materials have been shown to strengthen learners' cultural identity while simultaneously promoting global communication skills.

In addition to research on local wisdom integration, a substantial number of studies have explored SDL in EFL contexts. Previous findings suggest that learner autonomy can be enhanced through student-centered instructional approaches, technology-supported learning environments, project-based learning, and collaborative learning activities. Researchers have consistently reported positive relationships between SDL and language achievement, motivation, and lifelong learning readiness.

Although these studies have generated valuable insights, several limitations remain evident in the existing literature. First, most studies on local wisdom integration focus primarily on language achievement, cultural awareness, motivation, or attitudes toward learning (Sawita et al., 2024; Wiisahnyuy & Valentine, 2023). Comparatively little attention has been given to examining how local wisdom-based materials influence students' self-directed learning. Second, research on SDL in EFL settings has largely emphasized instructional strategies, digital learning environments, and autonomous learning practices (Razali et al., 2018; Sheerah, 2020). Few studies have investigated cultural relevance as a factor that may contribute to the development of SDL. The potential relationship between culturally meaningful content and learners' willingness to direct their own learning remains underexplored. This limitation suggests the need to examine SDL from a culturally responsive perspective rather than solely from cognitive or technological viewpoints. Third, despite the growing attention to local wisdom in Indonesian education, empirical studies focusing specifically on *Sasak* local wisdom in EFL contexts remain limited regarding SDL. Existing research has largely concentrated on material development, cultural preservation, or language learning outcomes (Cuong, 2023; Tohri et al., 2022). There is still a lack of evidence regarding how *Sasak* local wisdom-based EFL instruction affects students' self-directed learning. Consequently, the educational potential of *Sasak* cultural content for fostering learner autonomy and agency has not been adequately investigated.

Addressing these gaps is important both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on culturally responsive language teaching by extending discussions beyond language proficiency and motivation to include self-directed learning. It also provides empirical evidence regarding the relationship between cultural relevance and learner autonomy in EFL settings. Practically, the findings may offer guidance for teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers seeking to design culturally meaningful English learning experiences that support learner autonomy and independent learning. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its investigation of self-directed learning (SDL) through the integration of *Sasak* local wisdom in EFL instruction, an area that has received limited attention in previous research. Furthermore, this study extends the literature on culturally responsive language teaching by examining how culturally meaningful learning materials contribute to the development of learner autonomy and self-directed learning beyond traditional language achievement outcomes.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effects of incorporating *Sasak* local wisdom content into EFL learning on students' self-directed learning. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether culturally relevant instructional materials contribute to measurable improvements in students' SDL. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study intends to generate empirical evidence regarding the educational value of local wisdom-based EFL instruction. Based on the objectives above, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) To what extent does the incorporation of *Sasak* local wisdom content in EFL instruction significantly improve students' self-directed learning? (2) How do EFL students perceive the influence of *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials on the development of their self-directed learning and engagement in English language learning?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design as stated by Creswell (2012) to investigate the effects of integrating *Sasak* local wisdom into EFL instruction on students' self-directed learning. Mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. According to Creswell (2014), a mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate when researchers seek not only to measure outcomes quantitatively but also to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences and perspectives that help explain the quantitative results. The study was conducted in two consecutive phases. The quantitative phase aimed to determine the extent to which *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials influence students' self-directed learning through questionnaire data, while the subsequent qualitative phase explored students' perceptions and experiences to explain and enrich the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2014). This design was selected because it enables the integration of statistical evidence with in-depth qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of how culturally responsive learning materials contribute to learners' cognitive and affective development in EFL contexts.

The study was conducted at the Undergraduate Computer Science Program of Universitas Bumigora, Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, involving second-year students divided into an experimental class and a control class. The total population consisted of 89 students, comprising 50 students from the experimental group and 39 students from the control group. Following Arikunto (2017)'s recommendation that when the population size is fewer than 100 individuals, all members of the population should be included as the research sample, this study employed a total sampling technique. Consequently, all 89 students were involved as respondents in the quantitative phase of the study. The respondents represented varying levels of English proficiency, including Elementary (A1), Intermediate (B1), and Upper-Intermediate (B2), thereby providing a comprehensive representation of the target population. For the qualitative phase, twelve students were purposively selected from the survey participants based on the principle of data saturation because no new substantive information emerged during the subsequent interviews (Benítez & Padilla, 2014). The demographic information about the research participants and subjects is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of the respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Class	Experiment class	50	56.2
	Control class	39	43.8
Academic level	Second-year students	89	100
English proficiency level	Elementary (A1)	35	39.3
	Intermediate (B1)	37	41.6
	Upper-Intermediate (B2)	17	19.1
Total		89	100

Note:

The distribution of English proficiency levels was determined based on students' placement records and English course performance at the time of data collection.

The study utilized two instruments: a Self-Directed Learning (SDL) questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The SDL questionnaire was designed to measure students' learning autonomy, initiative, goal-setting, self-monitoring, and responsibility in learning English. The questionnaire employed a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4), allowing respondents to express their level of agreement with each statement without selecting a neutral response.

Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability testing using Pearson Product-Moment correlation and Cronbach's Alpha analysis. The reliability results indicated satisfactory internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.781 for the SDL questionnaire exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold ($0.78 > 0.61$). These results demonstrate that the instruments were sufficiently reliable

for measuring the intended constructs. Table 2 presents representative items from the SDL questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide used in this study. The questionnaire measured key SDL dimensions, including learning initiative, goal-setting and self-monitoring, and learning responsibility, while the interview questions explored students' perceptions of how *Sasak* local wisdom-based materials influenced their SDL and engagement in EFL learning. These instruments were designed to provide complementary quantitative and qualitative data to support a comprehensive understanding of the research findings.

Table 2. Representative items of the questionnaires and semi-structured interview guide

No	Instrument	Dimension/Category	Representative Item
1	Self-Directed	Learning initiative	I actively seek additional information about English topics related to Sasak culture beyond classroom activities.
	Learning questionnaire	Goal setting and self-	I set personal learning goals and evaluate my progress when studying English through Sasak local wisdom-based materials.
		monitoring Learning	I complete English learning tasks independently even when direct guidance from the lecturer is limited.
2	Semi-structured	Perception of using	How does the inclusion of Sasak local wisdom in English learning materials influence your ability to learn independently and take responsibility for your own learning?
	interview guide	SDL	In what ways do Sasak local wisdom-based learning materials affect your motivation and engagement in learning English?

Data collection was conducted sequentially in accordance with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. During the quantitative phase, the SDL questionnaire was administered to 89 respondents after they had participated in EFL learning activities incorporating *Sasak* local wisdom content. The survey data were collected to examine the extent to which culturally relevant instructional materials contributed to students' learning autonomy in English learning.

Following the quantitative analysis, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve purposively selected participants representing diverse levels of self-directed learning and engagement. The interviews explored students' perceptions of the relevance, meaningfulness, and influence of *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials on their engagement and learning experiences. The qualitative findings were subsequently integrated with the quantitative results during the interpretation stage to provide a deeper explanation of the statistical outcomes and enhance the overall comprehensiveness of the study.

The quantitative data were analyzed using the independent samples *t*-test to determine whether significant differences existed in students' self-directed learning after participating in *Sasak* local wisdom-based EFL instruction. Prior to the main analysis, prerequisite tests were conducted to verify the assumptions of parametric statistics. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the significance value for the questionnaire was greater than 0.05, confirming normal data distribution, while Levene's test also yielded a significance value greater than 0.05 ($p > .05$), indicating homogeneity of variance. Since all assumptions were satisfied, the independent samples *t*-test was deemed appropriate for further analysis.

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure analytical rigor, a qualitative codebook containing operational definitions and examples for categories such as perceived learning gains, cultural awareness, engagement, motivation, and peer interaction was developed prior to coding. Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's κ coefficient, yielding a value of 0.87, which indicates almost perfect agreement and confirms the reliability and trustworthiness of the qualitative coding process. The qualitative findings were then integrated with the quantitative results to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the influence of *Sasak* local wisdom-based EFL instruction on students' self-directed learning.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Effect of Sasak Local Wisdom-Based EFL Instruction on Students' Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

To answer whether the incorporation of *Sasak* local wisdom content in EFL instruction significantly improves students' self-directed learning, quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent samples *t*-test. The analysis aimed to compare the self-directed learning scores of students who participated in *Sasak* local wisdom-based EFL instruction (experimental class) and those who received conventional EFL instruction (control class).

A. Differences in SDL between the Experimental and Control Groups

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of students' self-directed learning scores in both the experimental and control classes.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Self-Directed Learning Scores

	Class	Group Statistics			
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Learning scores	Control class	39	62.7179	4.28552	.68623
	Experiment class	50	84.7000	4.81600	.68109

As shown in Table 1, students in the experimental class obtained a considerably higher mean score ($M = 84.70$, $SD = 4.82$) than those in the control class ($M = 62.72$, $SD = 4.29$). The difference between the two groups reached approximately 21.98 points, indicating a substantial improvement in self-directed learning among students who learned through *Sasak* local wisdom-based EFL materials.

Furthermore, the standard deviation values for both groups were relatively similar, suggesting a consistent distribution of scores within each class. The higher mean score achieved by the experimental group provides preliminary evidence that integrating culturally relevant learning materials into EFL instruction positively contributes to the development of students' self-directed learning. Students who were exposed to local wisdom-based content appeared to demonstrate greater autonomy, responsibility, and initiative in managing their learning processes compared to those who received conventional instruction.

B. The Impact of Sasak Local Wisdom-Based EFL Instruction on Students' SDL

To determine whether the observed difference between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent Samples *t*-Test Results for Self-Directed Learning Scores

		Independent Samples Test								
		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
Learning scores	Equal variances assumed	.451	.504	-22.408	87	.000	-21.98205	.98099	-23.93188	-20.03223
	Equal variances not assumed			-22.736	85.442	.000	-21.98205	.96685	-23.90426	-20.05984

Based on Table 4, the independent samples *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference in students' learning scores between the two groups, with a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 ($p < .05$), indicating that the observed difference was statistically meaningful. In addition, the assumption of variance equality was examined through Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, which produced an *F* value of 0.450 with a significance value

of 0.504. Since the significance value of Levene's test exceeded 0.05, the variance between the two groups was considered homogeneous, allowing the interpretation of the *t*-test results under the assumption of equal variances.

Based on the independent samples *t*-test results, the obtained Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 demonstrates that the observed difference in learning scores was unlikely to have occurred by chance. Therefore, the statistical analysis provides strong evidence that the two groups showed significantly different performance outcomes. The magnitude of the statistical significance suggests that the treatment or different learning conditions applied to the groups were associated with measurable differences in students' learning achievement. These findings confirm that the comparison between the groups resulted in a meaningful statistical distinction, supporting the interpretation that the implemented learning condition had a significant effect on students' performance.

3.2. Perceptions of Sasak Local Wisdom-Based Learning Materials on Their SDL and Engagement

The qualitative findings revealed that students perceived *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials as positively influencing their self-directed learning and engagement in English language learning. Four major themes emerged from the interview data: (1) increased learning autonomy through meaningful contextualization, (2) enhanced motivation and emotional engagement, (3) strengthened cultural identity and learning relevance, and (4) greater willingness to explore English learning resources independently.

A. Increased Learning Autonomy through Meaningful Contextualization

One of the most frequently reported perceptions among participants was that the incorporation of *Sasak* local wisdom into English learning materials made learning activities more meaningful and understandable. Students explained that the familiarity of cultural topics reduced learning barriers and enabled them to focus more effectively on language acquisition. Since the content reflected their daily experiences, traditions, and local environment, they felt more confident in interpreting texts, completing assignments, and developing their own understanding without relying excessively on teacher explanations.

Several participants indicated that culturally familiar materials encouraged them to take greater responsibility for their learning process. Rather than waiting for direct instruction, they actively attempted to infer meanings, connect new vocabulary with prior knowledge, and seek additional information independently. This process appeared to foster a greater sense of ownership over learning and strengthened their confidence in managing learning tasks autonomously. Evidence of this perception can be seen in the following excerpt from students as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Interview data excerpt 1

(1).	“When the reading materials discussed Sasak traditions and local culture, I could understand the content more easily. Because I already knew the topic, I felt more confident learning by myself and did not always need to ask the lecturer for explanations.” (Student - 01)
(2).	“The local wisdom materials helped me learn independently because I could connect the English lesson with things that I already knew from my community. It made learning feel less difficult and more manageable.” (Student - 04)

The students' responses in Table 5 suggest that contextualized learning materials can play a significant role in fostering self-directed learning among EFL students. By integrating familiar cultural content into the learning process, the materials help reduce cognitive overload, enabling students to focus more effectively on language acquisition rather than simultaneously struggling to understand unfamiliar contexts. The findings further indicate that learners are able to draw upon their existing cultural knowledge and personal experiences as a foundation for constructing new linguistic knowledge. As a result, students become more confident in interpreting learning materials, making connections between prior and new knowledge, and engaging in independent learning activities. This process appears to support greater learner autonomy, as students are encouraged to take a more active role in managing and directing their own learning experiences.

B. Enhanced Motivation and Emotional Engagement in Learning

Another prominent theme that emerged from the semi-structured interviews was the positive influence of *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials on students' motivation and emotional engagement in English language learning. Most participants reported that learning activities became more enjoyable, meaningful, and personally relevant when local cultural content was incorporated into classroom instruction. Unlike conventional English learning materials, which frequently present foreign contexts, traditions, and social situations that may be unfamiliar to learners, the *Sasak* local wisdom-based materials enabled students to interact with content that reflected their own cultural experiences and social realities. This familiarity appeared to increase students' interest in learning and helped create a more comfortable and engaging learning environment.

Furthermore, students explained that the integration of local cultural values, traditions, folklore, and community practices generated a stronger emotional connection to the learning process. Many participants indicated that they felt more motivated to participate in classroom discussions because they possessed prior knowledge of the topics being discussed and could contribute their own experiences and perspectives. This sense of personal connection appeared to enhance students' curiosity and willingness to engage with learning tasks, resulting in more active classroom participation and sustained attention throughout the learning process. Several students also noted that discussing aspects of their own culture in English gave them a sense of pride and accomplishment, which further strengthened their motivation to improve their language skills. Therefore, the excerpts from students' interviews presented in Table 6 illustrate these findings:

Table 6. Interview data excerpt 2

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- | | |
|------|--|
| (1). | “I became more interested in learning English because the materials talked about our own culture. Usually, English lessons discuss places or traditions from other countries, but these materials felt closer to my life.”
(Student - 07) |
| (2). | “I enjoyed the class more because I could share my experiences related to Sasak culture. It made me want to participate in discussions and learn more vocabulary to express my ideas.” (Student - 11) |
-

The interview data suggest that the incorporation of culturally relevant content can substantially enhance students' emotional engagement and intrinsic motivation in learning English. When learners perceive instructional materials as personally meaningful and closely connected to their lived experiences, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward learning and participate actively in classroom activities. The findings further indicate that emotional relevance serves as an important catalyst for learner engagement, encouraging students not only to pay greater attention during instruction but also to invest more effort in communicating their ideas and expanding their language proficiency. Consequently, *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials appear to create a learning environment that supports both cognitive involvement and emotional investment, thereby contributing to a more engaging and meaningful EFL learning experience.

3.3. Strengthened Cultural Identity and Perceived Relevance of English Learning

Learning materials contributed to strengthening students' cultural identity while simultaneously increasing the perceived relevance of English language learning. Many participants reported that exposure to culturally familiar content helped them view English not merely as a foreign language associated with Western cultures, but also as a medium through which local cultural knowledge could be communicated to broader audiences. This perspective appeared to transform students' understanding of the role and purpose of English learning, making it more personally meaningful and socially relevant.

Students frequently expressed a sense of pride when discussing local traditions, cultural values, folklore, and community practices in English. They indicated that the learning materials provided opportunities to reflect on their own cultural heritage while developing their language skills. Moreover, several participants believed that English proficiency could enable them to introduce *Sasak* culture to international visitors, researchers, tourists, and global

communities. As a result, learning English was no longer perceived solely as an academic requirement or a means of achieving educational success; rather, it became a valuable tool for cultural representation, preservation, and promotion. This perception appeared to strengthen students' emotional attachment to both their cultural identity and the learning process itself. This theme was evident in the response of students, as follows:

Table 7. Interview data excerpt 3

(1).	“The materials made me realize that English is not only about foreign cultures. We can also use English to explain Sasak traditions and introduce our culture to people from other countries.” (Student - 05)
(2).	“I felt proud when I learned how to describe our local wisdom in English. It gave me a sense that English can help preserve and promote our culture internationally.” (Student - 12)

Based on the excerpts from students' interviews in Table 7, the data suggest that culturally grounded learning materials can foster a stronger sense of cultural identity affirmation among EFL learners. By positioning local culture as a legitimate and valuable source of learning content, the materials encourage students to recognize the significance of their own cultural heritage within the context of global communication. Furthermore, the findings indicate that students increasingly perceived English as a practical tool for sharing local knowledge and cultural values with international audiences. In this regard, the integration of *Sasak* local wisdom appears to bridge the relationship between global language competence and local cultural preservation, creating a learning experience that is both academically meaningful and culturally empowering.

A. Greater Willingness to Explore English Learning Resources Independently

A final theme emerging from the interview data was students' increased willingness to seek and utilize English learning resources independently beyond the formal classroom environment. Participants consistently reported that the incorporation of *Sasak* local wisdom into learning materials stimulated their curiosity and encouraged them to engage in self-initiated learning activities. Many students indicated that the cultural topics introduced during classroom instruction inspired them to search for additional information through various sources, including online articles, educational websites, videos, social media platforms, and community discussions. Such behaviors reflect an important dimension of self-directed learning, namely learners' ability to take initiative in identifying and pursuing their own learning opportunities.

The findings also revealed that students' independent exploration was driven by both linguistic and cultural interests. Several participants explained that after being introduced to topics related to *Sasak* traditions, local tourism, folklore, and cultural practices, they became interested in discovering how these topics were represented and discussed in English-language sources. This process encouraged students to engage with authentic English materials outside class while simultaneously deepening their understanding of their own cultural heritage. The familiarity and personal relevance of the topics appeared to increase students' intrinsic motivation to continue learning, even in the absence of direct teacher guidance or classroom requirements. Furthermore, interview data indicated that students frequently searched for additional information through online articles, videos, and social media platforms to expand their knowledge of both English and *Sasak* culture. As a result, the learning process extended beyond the classroom context, fostering greater learner autonomy and sustained engagement with English language learning. This finding is further evidenced by the following interview excerpts, which demonstrate students' self-initiated efforts to explore English-language materials related to *Sasak* culture outside formal classroom activities, as presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Interview data excerpt 4

(1)	“After studying local wisdom topics in class, I searched for English articles and videos about Lombok tourism and Sasak traditions. I wanted to know how these topics were explained to international audiences.” (Student - 09)
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Table 8 – Lanjutan dari halaman sebelumnya

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- (2) “The lessons encouraged me to learn outside the classroom. I often looked for additional information online because I was curious about how our culture could be presented in English.” (Student - 10)
-

These findings indicate that *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials can promote a more proactive and autonomous approach to language learning. The integration of culturally meaningful content appears to stimulate learners’ intrinsic curiosity, encouraging them to independently seek new information, explore authentic English resources, and expand their learning beyond formal instructional settings. Such behaviors are closely associated with the characteristics of self-directed learners, who actively take responsibility for managing and extending their own learning processes. Therefore, the findings suggest that culturally responsive materials not only enhance classroom engagement but also contribute to the development of sustainable self-directed learning practices among EFL students.

3.4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials make a meaningful contribution to enhancing EFL students’ self-directed learning and engagement in English language learning. The quantitative results demonstrated a statistically significant difference in students’ learning outcomes between the two groups, while the qualitative findings provided deeper insights into how students experienced and interpreted the learning process. The integration of local cultural content appeared to transform English learning from a purely linguistic activity into a more meaningful and personally relevant experience. Students perceived that the materials increased their autonomy, motivation, cultural awareness, and willingness to engage in independent learning activities (Setiawan, 2023; Shadiev et al., 2024). These findings suggest that culturally responsive learning materials can function not only as instructional resources but also as mediating tools that empower learners to become more active participants in constructing their own learning experiences.

The emergence of these findings can be explained by the role of contextualized learning in reducing the psychological and cognitive distance between learners and instructional content. When English learning materials incorporate familiar cultural elements, students are able to activate their prior knowledge and connect new linguistic information with their existing experiences (Agusta, 2023; Maulidya et al., 2023; Monica et al., 2021). This connection facilitates comprehension, increases confidence, and encourages learners to take greater responsibility for their learning processes. In the present study, students’ positive perceptions toward *Sasak* local wisdom-based materials were largely associated with the familiarity and relevance of the topics presented. Rather than encountering abstract or culturally distant materials, students engaged with content that reflected their own traditions, social environment, and cultural identity. Such meaningful engagement likely stimulated intrinsic motivation, which subsequently encouraged students to participate more actively in classroom activities and explore additional learning resources independently.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in language education. The principles of culturally responsive teaching suggest that learners’ cultural backgrounds should be recognized as valuable resources for knowledge construction rather than being separated from academic learning. Previous research in EFL contexts has demonstrated that locally grounded materials can improve learner motivation, classroom participation, and language learning outcomes because they provide meaningful contexts for communication (Marwa et al., 2021; Patanduk et al., 2025; Safitri et al., 2025; Shufa & Adji, 2024). The current findings extend these perspectives by showing that local wisdom-based materials can also contribute to the development of self-directed learning behaviors. In particular, the findings support the argument that learner autonomy is not developed solely through individual learning strategies but can also be facilitated through instructional environments that provide meaningful, relevant, and identity-affirming learning experiences. This study also aligns with constructivist perspectives, which emphasize that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction between new information and their previous experiences.

Although the positive influence of *Sasak* local wisdom-based materials was evident, several other factors

may have contributed to the observed outcomes. Students' previous exposure to English, their individual motivation levels, teacher instructional strategies, classroom interaction patterns, and access to digital learning resources may have also influenced their engagement and self-directed learning behaviors. In addition, the students' familiarity with *Sasak* cultural content may have created an advantage because they already possessed background knowledge related to the topics discussed. Therefore, the improvement in learning engagement should not be interpreted as being caused exclusively by the learning materials themselves, but rather as the result of an interaction between culturally relevant materials, instructional implementation, learner characteristics, and the broader learning environment.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative findings were obtained from semi-structured interviews with a limited number of participants; therefore, students' perceptions may not fully represent the experiences of all EFL learners in different educational contexts. Second, the study was conducted within a specific cultural setting, namely the *Sasak* community in Lombok, which may influence the transferability of the findings to other regions with different cultural backgrounds. Third, although the mixed-methods design provided comprehensive insights by combining statistical and qualitative evidence, the study did not examine the long-term sustainability of students' self-directed learning behaviors after the intervention. Future studies may address these limitations by involving larger samples, implementing longitudinal research designs, and exploring the application of local wisdom-based materials across diverse cultural contexts.

The findings of this study imply that integrating *Sasak* local wisdom into EFL learning materials can create more meaningful learning experiences while enhancing learners' language development, autonomy, motivation, and cultural awareness. These results also support culturally responsive EFL pedagogy by demonstrating that local cultural knowledge can serve as an effective foundation for promoting self-directed learning. Furthermore, the study highlights that successful English learning can be achieved by connecting global language competence with local cultural identity. Therefore, the integration of local wisdom in EFL education should be viewed not only as a strategy to improve language learning outcomes but also as an approach to fostering autonomous, culturally aware, and socially connected learners.

Ultimately, the findings of this study corroborate previous research highlighting the pedagogical value of culturally relevant materials in enhancing learners' motivation, engagement, and meaningful learning experiences (Cuong, 2023; Prihatiningsih et al., 2021; Tohri et al., 2022; Wiysahnyuy & Valentine, 2023). Nevertheless, this study extends the existing body of literature by moving beyond the predominant focus on language achievement, cultural awareness, and affective outcomes to examine the role of local wisdom-based instruction in fostering students' self-directed learning in EFL contexts. By providing empirical evidence on the relationship between culturally grounded learning materials and learners' autonomy, this study complements previous scholarship and contributes a broader understanding of how local cultural resources can function as pedagogical mediators in promoting independent and sustainable language learning.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that *Sasak* local wisdom-based learning materials significantly contributed to improving EFL students' learning experiences by enhancing their self-directed learning and engagement in English language learning. The quantitative findings demonstrated a significant difference in students' learning outcomes, while the qualitative findings revealed that students perceived the materials as meaningful, motivating, culturally relevant, and supportive of independent learning practices. By integrating local cultural knowledge into English instruction, the learning materials enabled students to connect linguistic development with their personal experiences and cultural identities, thereby creating a more engaging and empowering learning environment.

The findings imply that culturally responsive materials can serve as an effective approach for developing learner autonomy while maintaining students' connection with their cultural heritage. This study highlights the importance of incorporating local wisdom into EFL curricula as a way to promote meaningful language learning that is relevant to learners' social and cultural contexts. Future studies are recommended to investigate the long-term effects of local wisdom-based learning materials on learner autonomy, explore their implementation in different

educational levels and cultural settings, and examine how digital technologies can be integrated to expand access to culturally grounded English learning resources.

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