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Motivational factors, pronunciation learning strategies, and challenges in self-directed pronunciation learning of non-English majors

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate motivational factors, pronunciation learning strategies, and challenges encountered of non-English majors in self-directed pronunciation learning. A mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, was employed for the study. Data were collected through a theory-informed questionnaire developed based on Self-Determination Theory, Self-Directed Learning, and Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies, together with learning journals and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, whereas qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that non-English majors demonstrated high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with intrinsic motivation showing a slightly higher composite mean score. Within the extrinsic motivation dimension, future career was the highest-rated motivational indicator, whereas perceived progress, satisfaction, and increased confidence were the major contributors to intrinsic motivation. The results also indicate that cognitive strategies were the most frequently employed pronunciation learning strategies, including repetition, imitation, and the use of digital applications in self-directed pronunciation learning. In addition, the study found that psychological barriers constituted a major challenge affecting students' motivation and persistence in self-directed pronunciation learning. The findings provide pedagogical implications for learners, English lectures, and educational institutions to enhance the effectiveness of self-directed English pronunciation learning of non-English-majors.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, pronunciation plays a pivotal role in the development of communicative competence and is essential for effective communication in academic, professional, and social contexts (Duong & Nguyen, 2024). For non-English-major students, intelligible pronunciation serves as an essential asset for effective English communication in the context of international integration. It enables learners to convey their intended messages effectively and is widely recognized as a key component of communicative competence. (Walker et al., 2021; Pham & Pham, 2025). In Vietnamese education, English curriculum emphasizes grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension than on the development of speaking skills. Many students possess a solid foundation in grammar and vocabulary; however, they still have difficulty in communicating in English due to their insufficient mastery of English pronunciation and fundamental rules (Ha & Bao, 2023; Le & Tran, 2024). Consequently, students' pronunciation difficulties have a negative impact on their confidence and ability to communicate effectively in English. Therefore, independent pronunciation practice beyond the classroom can contribute significantly

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to improving learners' pronunciation. Given the limited pronunciation instruction in the classroom, learners need to practice independently outside class. Self-directed learning (SDL) provides learners with opportunities to take an active role in their learning process by selecting appropriate learning strategies, setting learning goals, modifying their learning strategies if necessary and monitoring as well as evaluating learning outcomes. (Damra, 2024; Nguyen & Vo, 2025). While previous studies on self-directed pronunciation learning have highlighted students' autonomy, motivation and language development, most have focused on general language learning, English-major students, or language skills such as speaking and listening (Nguyen & Habók, 2021), little has been known about the motivational factors, learning strategies, and barriers in self-directed pronunciation learning for Vietnamese non-English-majors. The present research fills this gap by investigating the motivational factors in self-directed pronunciation learning of non-English majors, identifying pronunciation learning strategies and exploring the challenges they encounter in self-directed pronunciation learning. This could facilitate the pedagogical implications for development of teaching materials, classroom pronunciation activities, strategies for pronunciation instruction as well as support insights into the motivational factors influencing in SDL.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-directed learning in language learning

SDL is defined as a process in which learners take responsibility for identifying their learning needs, setting learning goals, selecting learning resources and strategies, and evaluating their own learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975). In the field of language learning, SDL places learners at the center of the learning process and encourages them to manage their learning beyond formal classroom instruction. Garrison (1997) conceptualized SDL as the interaction among self-management, self-monitoring, and motivational engagement, emphasizing both learner autonomy and motivation. In the context of pronunciation learning, SDL enables learners to practice pronunciation independently, utilize a variety of learning resources, monitor their own progress, and evaluate their learning outcomes. In the present study, SDL is defined as learners' ability to take proactive responsibility for their pronunciation learning process through planning, practice, and self-evaluation while maintaining motivation throughout the learning journey.

Theoretical framework

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was established by Deci and Ryan (1985) and further expanded in subsequent publications (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017, 2020). It is regarded as one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in the study of human motivation. Specifically, it conceptualizes psychological processes underlying different types of motivation along a continuum ranging from controlled to autonomous forms. Informed by previous research, this study recognizes SDT as a foundational and comprehensive framework. It emphasizes the distinction among three types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation.

SDT claimed that motivation, etymologically, concerns what "moves" people to action. Conversely, motivation is not only perceived through the level of effort but more importantly the quality of learning engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Based on SDT, different types of motivation are conceptualized along the autonomy - control continuum, which ranges from amotivation (a lack of intent or interest), through various forms of extrinsic motivation (external, introjected, identified, and integrated regulation), to intrinsic motivation (engaging in learning for inherent satisfaction).

Intrinsic motivation refers to a form of motivation that drives individuals to engage in activities that are inherently interesting, enjoyable and personally satisfying. Behaviors performed out of interest and enjoyment; Curiosity, exploration and manipulation; Sense of autonomy and volition; Seeking optimal challenges; Creativity and play which are fundamental components of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Cherry, 2019).

Extrinsic motivation is not inherently interesting, enjoyable, or personally satisfying, it involves performing an action to attain an external goal, such as receiving a reward, gaining social approval, avoiding punishment, or achieving some valuable result. Based on the processes of internalization and integration, extrinsic motivation is divided into four forms ranging from completely controlled to almost completely autonomous such as external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, integrated regulation. (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Amotivation refers to the absence of motivation, intention to act, a devaluation of activities, feelings of incompetence, and pessimism regarding the attainment of desired outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 1985). According to SDT, amotivation refers to a state in which learners act without purpose and lack the motivation to engage

in an activity. This is also the condition that makes individuals become passive, feel ineffective, or perceive no purpose in a range of potential actions (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017).

Pronunciation learning strategies

Pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) have been recognized as an essential component of foreign language learning to develop pronunciation effectively through purposeful activities that go beyond grammatical accuracy and lexical proficiency to achieve clear and intelligible speech (Nijim, 2024). PLS adopted by non-English-major students have been widely documented in the literature. Based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies, PLSs are generally classified into six categories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Previous Studies

Previous studies have highlighted the important roles of learning motivation and SDL in language learning. Regarding learning motivation, they have identified both motivation as important factors encouraging learners to improve their English proficiency. Mahmood (2025) for example reported that although learners demonstrated strong career- and socially oriented motivation, they still encountered major challenges due to the lack of accurate corrective feedback in authentic learning contexts. The study also emphasized the importance of addressing psychological barriers that affect ESL learners. Similarly, Asmus (2021) found that motivation accounted for approximately 20% of the variance in academic achievement and represented a factor that teachers could directly influence. The study further indicated that highly motivated learners tended to attribute their academic success to personal effort rather than innate ability. Research has also demonstrated the effectiveness of SDL in enhancing language competence. Alaon et al. (2023) and Damra (2024) found that SDL contributed to improvements in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, speaking accuracy, and learners' confidence. Their studies also demonstrated that self-directed learning strategies effectively enhanced speaking performance and reduced language anxiety among English-major students. Similarly, Nguyen and Vo (2025) and Le (2023) reported positive attitudes toward SDL and identified a significant relationship between SDL and academic achievement among English-major university students in Vietnam. However, Nguyen and Trinh (2023) revealed that Vietnamese learners continued to encounter various barriers to self-directed English learning, particularly insufficient motivation and ineffective learning strategies during listening skill. In addition, technology has increasingly been recognized as an effective facilitator of self-directed learning. Redjeki and Muhajir (2022) found that the Cake application improved learners' pronunciation and speaking skills while fostering autonomous learning and intrinsic motivation. Meanwhile, Pham and Pham (2025) emphasized the importance of integrating AI into pronunciation learning and reported high levels of satisfaction among Vietnamese English-major students when using ELSA Speak as a self-directed pronunciation learning tool.

Overall, the previous studies have provided evidence regarding learning motivation, self-directed learning, and pronunciation development. However, most international studies have focused on English-major students or learners in ESL contexts, whereas studies conducted in Vietnam have mainly examined learning motivation or self-directed learning separately, with limited attention to self-directed pronunciation learning among non-English-major students. In addition, little research has simultaneously examined motivational factors, pronunciation learning strategies, and learning challenges within a single theoretical framework. To address these gaps, the present study investigates self-directed pronunciation learning among Vietnamese non-English-major students by integrating SDT with an analysis of learners' pronunciation learning strategies and perceived challenges, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of self-directed pronunciation learning in this underexplored context.

The current study intends to address these gaps by focusing on the specific context of non-English-majors at the Faculty of Medical Technology, HUMP. In this study, motivation is conceptualized based on SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017, 2020) and operationalized into three dimensions: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. Therefore, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do non-English majors from the Faculty of Medical Technology at Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy demonstrate intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation in self-directed pronunciation learning?

2. What self-directed pronunciation learning strategies are used by non-English majors from the Faculty of Medical Technology at Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy?

3. What challenges do non-English majors encounter in practicing self-directed pronunciation learning, and how do these challenges affect their motivation?

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. For the quantitative component, a questionnaire was administered to investigate the motivational factors influencing non-English-majors in self-directed English pronunciation learning. The qualitative approaches consisted of learning journals and semi-structured interviews, which were used to gain deeper insights into students' motivational factors, learning strategies, and challenges encountered during self-directed pronunciation learning.

Participants

Data was collected from 100 students from the Faculty of Medical Technology at HUMP, Hue University who were recruited through convenience sampling. All participants were at a basic to lower-intermediate level of English proficiency, approximately A2-B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). At the time of data collection, they had completed General English 1 (GE1) in semester 1 and were currently enrolled in General English 2 (GE2) in semester 2 at the time of data collection. Following the completion of the questionnaire, a sample of 10 students was selected through purposive sampling to complete four-week learning journal and participate in semi-structured interviews

Data Collection Tools

The questionnaire consisted of demographic information and 28 questionnaire items. The section of 28 questionnaire items measured on five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) organized into three parts: Part B included 17 items (Motivation for Self-Directed English Pronunciation Learning); Part C included 6 items (Self-Directed English Pronunciation Learning Strategies); and Part D included 5 items (Challenges in Self-Directed English Pronunciation Learning). All questionnaires were developed from theoretical frameworks: Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), Self-Directed Learning (Knowles, 1975; Garrison, 1997) and language learning strategies Oxford's (1990). The challenges in self-directed pronunciation learning consisted of five items. Four items measured the major challenges encountered in self-directed pronunciation learning, whereas another item examined participants' perceived impact of these challenges on their motivation to practice pronunciation. Specifically, anxiety, lack of confidence, and uncertainty about the effectiveness of pronunciation learning methods were categorized as psychological challenges. Lack of corrective feedback during independent practice was categorized as a learning support challenge, while insufficient time available for pronunciation practice was categorized as a time limitation challenge. The original questionnaire was originally written in English and translated into Vietnamese to facilitate participants' comprehension. Before collecting the main data, a pilot study was conducted with 10 students to assess the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire.

Data analysis

Through SPSS software (version 26), the overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the questionnaire for the main study was 0.866, indicating good internal consistency among all items (Taber, 2018). This suggests that the questionnaire is highly reliable in measuring the intended constructs. which is considered reliable for the main study.

Table 1. Structure and Reliability of Questionnaires

No	Subscales	Cronbach's α of Subscales
1	Motivation for self-directed pronunciation learning	α = 0.785
2	Pronunciation learning strategies	α = 0.875
3	Challenges in self-directed pronunciation learning	α = 0.715

All three subscales demonstrated satisfactory levels of reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.715 to α = 0.875. As the questionnaire comprises three distinct subscales with separate conceptual foundations, reliability was assessed individually for each subscale; Consequently, the three subscales were analyzed independently during the data analysis process. The level of internal consistency confirms that the questionnaire provides a reliable and valid assessment of the different dimensions of self-directed English pronunciation learning.

In addition, the learning journal comprised 12 open-ended questions to encourage students to reflect on their experiences of self-directed English pronunciation learning. Recording the reflections enabled participants to monitor their progress and share their learning experiences, feelings, and challenges in SDL. The semi-structured interview consisted of 13 open-ended questions focusing on pronunciation strategies, motivational factors, and challenges encountered during self-directed pronunciation learning. The interviews

provided opportunities for participants to elaborate on their learning experiences and offer deeper reflections on their pronunciation learning journey.

For qualiative analysis, the data were analyzed using a theory-informed thematic analysis. An initial coding framework was developed based on the study's conceptual framework, including Self-Determination Theory (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation), Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies), and the predefined categories of learning challenges (psychological challenges, learning support, and time limitation). The coded data were then reviewed, refined, and organized into overarching themes corresponding to the three research questions. The resulting themes included intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation; cognitive, metacognitive, and social pronunciation learning strategies; and three categories of challenges, namely psychological challenges, learning support challenges, and time limitation. These themes subsequently guided the presentation of the qualitative findings.

4. FINDINGS

The findings of the study related to motivational factors, pronunciation learning strategies, and challenges in self-directed pronunciation learning among non-English majors.

4.1. Students' motivation for self-direct pronunciation learning

Table 2. Students' Motivation for Self-Directed Pronunciation Learning

Motivational Factors	Descriptive Statistic (N=100)			
	Composite Mean (SD)	Motivational Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intrinsic motivation	3.99 (0.68)	English pronunciation improvement	3.93	0.891
		Satisfaction with pronunciation improvement	4.03	0.784
		Increase confidence and motivation through practice pronunciation	4.01	0.772
Extrinsic motivation	3.96 (0.57)	Exam-oriented pronunciation motivation	4.04	0.650
		Important for future career.	4.25	0.914
		Teacher expectations	3.58	0.997
Amotivation	2.55 (0.63)	Lack of perceived value of pronunciation practice	1.94	1.033
		Avoidance of pronunciation practice due to perceived difficulty	2.15	0.957
		Perceived inefficacy of pronunciation practice in speaking improvement	2.13	1.212
		Self-directed practice does not lead to meaningful improvement	2.57	1.200
		Discouragement due to lack of corrective pronunciation	3.13	1.051
		Lack of goal-directed pronunciation practice	2.89	1.188
		Procrastination in self-directed pronunciation practice	3.06	1.033
		Lack of purpose for independent practice pronunciation	2.50	1.096

Table 2 presents the composite descriptive statistics of the three motivational dimensions based on SDT in self-directed English pronunciation learning. Overall, intrinsic motivation obtained the highest mean score (M = 3.99, SD = .679), followed closely by extrinsic motivation (M = 3.96, SD = .567), whereas amotivation considerably lower score (M = 2.55, SD = .632). The small difference between the composite mean scores of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations indicate that both motivational dimensions were similarly high ratings from the participants. Meanwhile, the lowest composite means for amotivation (M = 2.55, SD = .632) indicates that most participants generally maintained positive motivation and rarely experienced a complete lack of motivation in self-directed pronunciation learning. The detailed findings for each motivational dimension are presented below.

Intrinsic motivation

Table 2 illustrates the students' intrinsic motivation the mean scores of the variables ranged from 3.93 to 4.03 in self-directed pronunciation learning of non - English majors. Among the three motivational factors, satisfaction with pronunciation improvement received the highest mean score (M = 4.03, SD = 0.78), followed by increased confidence and motivation through pronunciation practice (M = 4.01, SD = 0.77) and English pronunciation improvement (M = 3.93, SD = 0.89). The findings suggest that students perceived noticeable progress through independent practice and enjoyment and confidence from their learning experiences.

Besides the questionaries, the qualitative data collected from the learning journals further supports the quantitative findings regarding the satisfaction with pronunciation improvement in learners' intrinsic motivation.

Eight out of the ten interviewed students reported that perceiving progress in pronunciation learning increased their satisfaction and motivated them to continue practicing independently. For example, Student 2 reported: *"My motivation depends on whether I am making progress or not. If I notice improvement, I become more focused and continue practicing pronunciation"* (Journal – S2). Similarly, Student 5 stated that,

"*Today, I feel motivated to practice English pronunciation because I can see that I have improved compared to before, especially in terms of fluency and naturalness. Daily progress is certainly a great source of motivation because I hope that one day I will be able to speak this language fluently. This makes me feel more confident and encourages me to continue practicing day by day"* (Journal – S5).

In brief, the quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated that students' intrinsic motivation was reflected in their perceived progress and satisfaction with pronunciation improvement in self-directed pronunciation learning.

Extrinsic motivation

For extrinsic motivation, future career emerged as the strongest motivational fators (M = 4.25, SD = 0.91), followed by exam-oriented pronunciation motivation (M = 4.04, SD = 0.65), whereas teacher expectations received the lowest mean score within this dimension (M = 3.58, SD = 0.99). These findings indicate that students' pronunciation learning was largely driven by long-term academic and professional aspirations rather than by immediate instructional demands. Specifically, they viewed pronunciation competence as an important asset for future employment while also recognizing its contribution to academic performance.

Furthermore, in the learning journal, students reported on students' pronunciation learning, particularly in relation to future careers, academic requirements, lecturer expectations. For instance, S8 stated: *"I want to improve my pronunciation because it will help me communicate effectively in my future job."* (Journal – S8). Similarly, S 9 shared that, *"Good English pronunciation will make it easier for me to find a job after graduation.""* (Journal – S9). Likewise, S3 commented, *"I try to practice pronunciation every day because improving my pronunciation will give me more employment opportunities in the future"* (Journal – S3). Student 5 noted that, *"I often practice pronunciation on my own before exams in order to prepare well for speaking tests."* (Journal - S5). Meanwhile, S 1 reported that, *"My lecturer often assigns pronunciation exercises in class."* (Journal – S1).

Taken together, the qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative results, highlighting future career prospects as the strongest source of extrinsic motivation, while academic requirements and lecturer influence function as additional factors that support students' engagement in self-directed pronunciation learning.

Amotivation

Table 2 showed the mean scores of the eight amotivation factors, ranging from 1.94 to 3.13, indicating generally low levels of amotivation. The item discouragement due to the lack of corrective pronunciation feedback received the highest mean score (M = 3.13, SD = 1.051), procrastination in self-directed pronunciation practice (M = 3.06, SD = 1.033) and lack of goal-directed pronunciation practice (M = 2.89, SD = 1.188). In contrast, lack of perceived value of pronunciation practice recorded the lowest mean score (M = 1.94, SD = 1.033), avoidance of pronunciation practice due to perceived difficulty (M = 2.15, SD = 0.957), and perceived inefficacy of pronunciation practice in improving speaking ability (M = 2.13, SD = 1.212). These findings suggest that although students were generally motivated to engage in pronunciation learning, they still encountered practical and psychological barriers that occasionally reduced their persistence in self-directed learning pronunciation.

The qualitative findings from the learning journals were consistent with the questionnaire results. Nine out of ten participants mentioned future career as an important reason for practicing pronunciation, while five participants referred to examination requirements and four mentioned lecturer expectations. Student 9 reported: *"When practicing English pronunciation, the factors that affect my learning are the difficulty of the task, feelings of discouragement, and the lack of guidance in the learning process." (Journal – S9). Similarly, Student 10 stated, "I often postpone pronunciation practice when I encounter words that I am unsure how to pronounce or cannot pronounce correctly. In such situations, I even feel frustrated and lose motivation to continue practicing (Journal – S10).* These reflections illustrate that some students experienced discouragement, procrastination, uncertainty about pronunciation accuracy, and insufficient learning support during self-directed pronunciation learning, which correspond to the higher-rated amotivation indicators identified in the questionnaire.

Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate relatively low levels of amotivation among the participants. Nevertheless, some students reported experiencing discouragement, procrastination, and uncertainty while practicing pronunciation independently.

4.2. Self-directed pronunciation learning strategies used by non-English majors

Table 3. Classification of self-directed pronunciation learning strategies

Strategy category	Descriptive Statistic (N=100)			
	Composite Mean (SD)	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cognitive strategies	3.55 (0.83)	I repeat English words or sentences to improve my pronunciation.	3.64	0.882
		I use pronunciation apps or videos to practice English sounds.	3.45	0.914
Metacognitive strategies	3.45 (0.89)	I set goals for improving my English pronunciation.	3.51	0.948
		I monitor my English pronunciation progress over time.	3.38	1.003
Social strategies	3.27 (0.96)	I ask teachers or friends for feedback on my English pronunciation.	3.41	0.975
		I practice English pronunciation with others when possible.	3.13	1.143

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the strategies of self-directed pronunciation (Oxford, 1990) adopted by the participants. The composite mean scores ranged from 3.27 to 3.55. Overall, cognitive strategies obtained the highest composite mean score (M = 3.55, SD = 0.83), followed by metacognitive strategies (M = 3.45, SD = 0.89). Social strategies recorded the lowest composite mean score (M = 3.27, SD = 0.96). The detailed findings for each strategy category are presented below.

Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies are the most frequently used strategies among students with the mean scores ranged from 3.45 to 3.64. Repetition strategies recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.64, SD = .882), while the use of video-based applications also showed a relatively high mean (M = 3.45, SD = .914). Overall, the results indicate that cognitive strategies were the most frequently employed strategy category among the participants.

The qualitative findings from the learning journals and interviews were consistent with the questionnaire results. Nine out of the ten participants reported frequently using repetition, imitation, or digital applications when practicing pronunciation independently. For example, S1 reported: *"Today, I let the device play the pronunciation and repeated the words many times. I also imitated the pronunciation and intonation of American speakers, especially how they stress words in sentences"* (Journal - S1). In the interview, S2 answered, *"I usually repeat words many times until I can pronounce them correctly."*

To sum up, data collected from questionnaire, learning journals, and interviews enabled a consistent triangulation of findings, particularly in relation to cognitive strategies, with a strong emphasis on repetition.

Metacognitive strategies

For metacognitive strategies, the mean scores ranged from 3.38 to 3.51. Setting goals for improving English pronunciation received the highest mean score (M = 3.51, SD = 0.95), while monitoring pronunciation progress over time recorded a slightly lower mean score (M = 3.38, SD = 1.00). These findings indicate that participants reported a moderate use of metacognitive strategies in planning and monitoring their self-directed pronunciation learning.

Besides data from the questionnaires, the ten student journals provide further support for these findings related to metacognitive strategies in self-directed learning such as learning goals, monitor their learning progress of their learning experiences. For example, S5 wrote: *"My plan is quite specific. I set a goal to master at least two new sounds each day. I spend 20 minutes every evening after finishing my major assignments. I schedule my study regularly for five days a week. My pronunciation practice starts with warming up my mouth muscles, practicing individual sounds, and finally applying them in short dialogues"* (Journal - S5).

On the other hand, the interview data revealed students' ability for self-regulated learning in self-directed pronunciation. Specifically, S2 stated: *"I make a pronunciation learning plan. For example, on Monday during my break, I focus on word stress, and on tuesday I study phonetic transcription."* (interview - S2).

Social strategies

Social strategies are the strategy which obtained the lowest composite mean score (M = 3.27, SD = 0.96). The mean scores of the two items ranged from 3.13 to 3.41. Asking teachers or friends for pronunciation feedback received a higher mean score (M = 3.41, SD = 0.98) than practicing pronunciation with others whenever possible (M = 3.13, SD = 1.14).

The qualitative data show that only four participants regularly sought feedback from teachers or peers, whereas most participants preferred practicing independently. In the in-depth qualitative findings from the interviews, S2 and S3 stated: *"I find that feedback from teachers, such as correcting stress and sentence*

intonation, helps me recognize my mispronunciations and refine my pronunciation, enabling me to speak more accurately" (Interview - S2, S3). Another example is provided by S9, who stated: *"During class, I ask for feedback from the lecturer in speaking sessions so that I can receive the most objective and accurate comments. However, feedback sometimes makes me feel slightly discouraged, as it leads me to reflect on my self-study process and realize that it has not been as effective or progressive as I expected"* (Interview - S9). While S1 and S4 reported: *"I mainly study independently. I usually go on YouTube to watch, listen, and learn pronunciation. I find that this feedback helps me make progress in my self-directed English pronunciation learning"* (Interview - S1, S4).

Hences, the findings from questionnaire, journal and interview indicate that opportunities for seeking feedback and practising pronunciation with others were reported less frequently than independent learning.

4.3. Challenges in practicing self-directed pronunciation learning

Table 4 . Challenges in Self-Directed Pronunciation Learning

No.	Statement	M	SD
1	I do not have enough time to practice pronunciation	2.89	.952
2	I lack feedback when practicing pronunciation on my own	3.17	.922
3	I feel anxious or lack confidence when practicing pronunciation	3.78	.786
4	These difficulties reduce my motivation to practice pronunciation	3.43	.935
5	I feel uncertain about whether my pronunciation practice methods are effective.	3.65	.845

Table 4 shows the challenges based on the conceptual classification described in the methodology into three categories: psychological challenges, learning support challenges, and time limitation. As shown in Table 4, feeling anxious or lacking confidence when practicing pronunciation received the highest mean score (M = 3.78, SD = .786), followed by uncertainty about whether pronunciation learning methods were effective (M = 3.65, SD = .845).

The learning journals and interviews indicated that psychological challenges negatively affect students' confidence in self-directed pronunciation. For example, S1 stated, *"Sometimes I feel lack of confidence when speaking because I am afraid of mispronouncing words*." (Journal – S2). Moreover, S10 wrote, *"When I encounter difficulties in pronunciation, I lose confidence and motivation to continue practicing English pronunciation. I have even skipped parts where I made mistakes because I was not patient enough."* (Journal -10).

In the interview data, interview data reveal that 9 out of 10 students perceived psychological challenges as negatively affecting their confidence in pronunciation learning. For instance,

"When I encounter a word that I cannot pronounce, I feel confused. I become discouraged and tend to spend less time practicing pronunciation. These difficulties affect me by causing feelings of boredom, dissatisfaction, and a loss of confidence in communication. They also make me feel insecure and reluctant to communicate due to fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, these challenges reduce my confidence when communicating with others, as I worry that they may not understand me if I pronounce words incorrectly. As a result, I often hesitate when speaking English because I am not sure whether my pronunciation is correct. Consequently, I tend to skip the parts I find difficult, which leads to delays in my pronunciation practice" (Interview - S1, S3, S6, S7, S8, and S9).

Learning supports challenges

Lack of corrective feedback during independent pronunciation practice was reported at a moderate level (M = 3.17, SD = .922). Also, learning journals supports the finding revealed from the questionnaire. For instance, S4 wrote: *"My biggest difficulty is not knowing whether my pronunciation is correct or not and having no one to correct my mistakes"* (Journal – S4). This issue is even more strongly reflected in the interview data. Four out of the ten participants (S2, S4, S7, and S10) explicitly reported that the lack of corrective feedback reduced their confidence and motivation to practice pronunciation. Specifically, participants S2, S4, S7, and S10 reported difficulties due to the absence of interaction and corrective feedback. The evidence is "*I believe that support from teachers, peers, people in one's surroundings, and native speakers is necessary to enhance my motivation for improving pronunciation. I need someone to guide me and correct my pronunciation errors* (Interview - S2, S4)

Time limitation

The theme was the least frequently reported challenge (M = 2.89, SD = .952). In the learning journals, only two out of the ten participants identified time limitation as a major challenge, supporting the relatively low mean score obtained in the questionnaire. One student noted: *"Due to my heavy major-related schedule, I must make use of short breaks to practice, and I cannot focus deeply. I feel that I lack both energy and time for*

pronunciation practice because I have classes all day." (Journal - S5 and S8)

In summary, non-English majors encounter several challenges in self-directed pronunciation learning, particularly psychological barriers and uncertainty about learning effectiveness. Lack of feedback also contributes to these difficulties, while time limitation appears to be less significant. Taken together, both the questionnaire and qualitative findings demonstrate that psychological barriers, lack of corrective feedback, and uncertainty about learning effectiveness negatively affected students' motivation to continue self-directed pronunciation practice. Students frequently reported that these challenges reduced their confidence, discouraged sustained practice, and occasionally led to procrastination or avoidance of pronunciation learning, thereby explaining the relatively high rating for the item "These difficulties reduce my motivation to practice pronunciation" (M = 3.43, SD = .935).

5. DISCUSSION

This study explored the motivations, strategies, and challenges in self – directed learning pronunciation among non-English majors at HUMP. Based on the results above, the study's findings are discussed with reference to the theoretical framework, notably SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and Oxford's (1990) pronunciation learning strategies in self-directed learning framework, while also integrating the challenges encountered that influence self-directed pronunciation learning.

Intrinsic motivation is the highest score which indicates that learners were motivated by the personal satisfaction improvement in practicing pronunciation and by the confidence developed through continuous practice. This finding supports Self-Determination Theory, which argues that learners are more likely to sustain learning behaviors when they perceive competence and experience enjoyment during the learning process (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The results also consistent with Mahmood (2025), who emphasized the importance of psychological factors, particularly self-confidence, in supporting learners' engagement in self-directed language learning. In addition, extrinsic motivation also remains an important motivation with future career and academic requirements. The results received the highest ratings, indicating that students perceived English pronunciation as an essential competence for both academic success and future employment. This finding is understandable given that the participants were non-English-major students studying in a medical university where English is increasingly required for professional development. Therefore, pronunciation learning was merged not only as a language-learning objective but also in future career opportunities. In contrast, amotivation recorded the lowest composite mean score, suggesting that most participants recognized the value of self-directed pronunciation learning. Nevertheless, the relatively higher ratings for discouragement caused by insufficient corrective feedback and procrastination indicate that maintaining motivation throughout independent learning remains challenging for some students. This finding is consistent with Nguyen and Trinh (2023), who reported that Vietnamese learners encountered motivational and strategic barriers during self-directed English learning.

Regarding self-directed pronunciation learning strategies, the composite mean scores indicate that students relied most heavily on cognitive strategies, particularly repetition and the use of technology-based resources. Metacognitive strategies obtained the second highest composite mean score, whereas social strategies received the lowest composite mean score. The relatively low use of social strategies may be explained by the Vietnamese EFL context, where opportunities to communicate in English outside the classroom are limited. As non-English-major students have fewer opportunities to interact with proficient English speakers or receive regular pronunciation feedback, they tend to rely more on self-study and technology-assisted resources. In addition, fear of making pronunciation mistakes and being negatively evaluated may discourage them from practicing pronunciation with peers or teachers. These contextual factors may partly explain the relatively low use of social strategies in the present study (Oxford, 1990; Nguyen & Habók, 2020; Graham, 2022). These findings suggest that learners prefer independent pronunciation practice supported by repetition, imitation, and technology-assisted learning rather than collaborative learning. These findings are also consistent with Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies, which suggests that cognitive strategies are commonly employed in self-directed language learning because they enable learners to actively process, practice, and internalize language independently. By contrast, social strategies depend on opportunities for interaction and corrective feedback, which may be less available in self-directed pronunciation learning. The results reiterate with the findings by Redjeki and Muhajir (2022), who found that technology-enhanced learning promoted self-directed learning and engagement in pronunciation practice.

The study also identified several challenges affecting self-directed pronunciation learning The study also identified several challenges affecting self-directed pronunciation learning by learning support, whereas time limitation was perceived as the least significant challenge. Psychological challenges, particularly anxiety, lack

of confidence, and uncertainty about the effectiveness of learning methods, emerged as the greatest obstacles to self-directed pronunciation learning. The qualitative findings further demonstrated that these difficulties often reduced learners' willingness to practice pronunciation and communicate in English. This finding is consistent with Mahmood (2025), who reported that psychological factors and the absence of appropriate learning support could reduce learners' engagement in self-directed language learning. Similarly, Nguyen and Trinh (2023) found that Vietnamese learners experienced motivational and strategic barriers during self-directed English learning. Learning support challenges represent the lack of corrective feedback in self-directed learning. The interview findings suggest that students valued feedback from teachers and peers because it helped them identify pronunciation errors and maintain motivation. The findings demonstrate that learners perceived corrective feedback as an important resource for improving pronunciation accuracy in self-directed learning. In contrast, time limitation received the lowest mean score, indicating that although academic workload occasionally restricted pronunciation practice, it was not perceived as the primary obstacle. Overall, the findings suggest that psychological barriers and insufficient learning support were the major challenges affecting self-directed pronunciation learning among Vietnamese non-English-major students.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated self-directed English pronunciation learning among first-year non-English-major students at the Faculty of Medical Technology, Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy, based on the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the findings indicate that participants demonstrated high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, whereas amotivation remained considerably lower. The comparison of the composite mean scores suggests that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were similarly high, with only a marginal difference between the two dimensions. The findings suggest that students were motivated not only by personal satisfaction, perceived learning progress, and increased self-confidence but also by future career and academic requirements. In addition, the study confirmed that cognitive strategies were the most frequently employed, whereas social strategies were used least often in self-directed pronunciation learning. Furthermore, the findings revealed that psychological barriers and insufficient learning support, particularly the lack of corrective feedback, were the major challenges affecting self-directed pronunciation learning. In contrast, time limitations were perceived as a comparatively less significant obstacle to learners' self-directed learning pronunciation.

The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on self-directed English pronunciation learning among non-English-major students at a health sciences university in Vietnam, a context that has received limited attention in previous research. Furthermore, the study integrates three key dimensions such as motivation, learning strategies, and learning challenges, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of self-directed pronunciation learning in the context of non-English-major students.

Despite its contributions, the study still has several limitations. First, the participants were selected from only one faculty within a health sciences university; therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other educational contexts. Second, the study relied primarily on self-reported data and did not include objective measures of learners' pronunciation ability. Consequently, the relationship between self-directed pronunciation learning and actual pronunciation outcomes could not be empirically verified during the learning process. Furthermore, the study examined learners' motivation, learning strategies, and perceived challenges at a single point in time during data collection. As these factors may change over time, the study was unable to capture their development or variation throughout the process of self-directed pronunciation learning.

Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, including students from different academic disciplines and universities to improve the generalizability of the findings. Based on the findings of the present study, future studies may also evaluate the effectiveness of specific pronunciation learning strategies and further investigate the role of corrective feedback and technology-assisted learning in promoting learners' self-directed pronunciation development.

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Các yếu tố động lực, chiến lược học phát âm và những khó khăn trong hoạt động tự học phát âm của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm tìm hiểu các yếu tố động lực, các chiến lược học phát âm và những khó khăn mà sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh gặp phải trong quá trình tự học phát âm. Nghiên cứu áp dụng thiết kế hỗn hợp, kết hợp cả phương pháp định lượng và định tính. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua bảng hỏi được xây dựng dựa trên các khung lý thuyết, bao gồm Thuyết Tự quyết (Self-Determination Theory), Học tập tự định hướng (Self-Directed Learning) và các chiến lược học ngôn ngữ của Oxford (1990), kết hợp với nhật ký học tập và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Dữ liệu định lượng được phân tích bằng thống kê mô tả, trong khi dữ liệu định tính được phân tích bằng phân tích chủ đề. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh thể hiện mức độ cao của cả động lực nội tại và động lực ngoại tại, trong đó động lực nội tại có điểm trung bình tổng hợp khá cao hơn. Trong nhóm động lực ngoại tại, cơ hội nghề nghiệp trong tương lai là yếu tố động lực được đánh giá cao nhất, trong khi sự tiến bộ được nhận thức, cảm giác hài lòng và sự gia tăng tự tin là những yếu tố đóng góp quan trọng nhất vào động lực nội tại. Kết quả cũng cho thấy các chiến lược nhận thức là nhóm chiến lược học phát âm được sử dụng thường xuyên nhất, bao gồm luyện tập lặp lại, bắt chước và sử dụng các ứng dụng số trong quá trình tự học phát âm. Bên cạnh đó, nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng những rào cản tâm lý là thách thức lớn ảnh hưởng đến động lực và sự kiên trì của sinh viên trong hoạt động tự học phát âm. Các kết quả nghiên cứu mang lại những hàm ý sư phạm đối với người học, giảng viên tiếng Anh và các cơ sở giáo dục nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả tự học phát âm tiếng Anh của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh.