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Atirse Awago Atumo, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia, atirseawago@gmail.com

Getachew Seyoum Woldemariam, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia,
getachews2004@gmail.com

Abbi Lemma Wedajo, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia, abbi.lemma@ju.edu.et

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Enhancing Eighth-Grade Students' Reading Motivation through Local Culture-Oriented Texts: At Two Middle Primary Schools

Atirse Awago Atumo¹, Getachew Seyoum Woldemariam², Abbi Lemma Wedajo³

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ABSTRACT

This study was planned to enhance students' reading motivation by using local culture-oriented texts. It adopted a design-based research approach involving two practitioners and 67 students from two primary schools (34 from School A and 33 from School B). The first phase involved gathering baseline data, followed by the development and validation of culturally relevant texts. Results of a baseline study from observation, interviews, and surveys indicated that students showed low motivation toward reading lessons, indicating a need for intervention. Interventions were first implemented at School A, refined, and then applied at School B. Data analysis comprised parametric descriptive and inferential statistics to assess changes in motivation after checking the normality. After the intervention at School A and B results from descriptive statistics for pre- and post-test scores showed a significant increase in motivation, with mean scores rising from 2.823 to 3.892 and 2.757 to 4.169, respectively. The paired sample t-test further showed a significant enhancement in reading motivation, with p-values of 0 at both schools after the interventions. Moreover, the qualitative findings from classroom observations interview, and feedback collected from practitioners showed significant improvements in students' motivation and engagement in reading skills after the intervention. From these findings, we can conclude that the iterative nature of design-based research contributed to understanding the effect of culturally relevant materials on students' reading motivation.

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¹Department of English Language and Literature, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia, atirseawago@gmail.com

²Department of English Language and Literature, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia, getachews2004@gmail.com

³Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Jimma Ubiverity, Jimma, Ethiopia, abbi.lemma@ju.edu.et

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Reading is widely recognized as foundation of academic success and knowledge acquisition (Ratminingsih *et al.*, 2020). However, students' ability to comprehend texts is influenced by multiple factors, such as motivation, the relevance of the material, and prior background knowledge (Karimi & Nafissi, 2017). Fajar (2009) as cited in Hidayati (2018) found that limited background knowledge and lack of motivation are key barriers to effective reading achievements. Tisa *et al.* (2021) and Yang and Wu (2023) emphasized that motivation significantly affects students language learning improvement and reading achievement. Their findings strengthen the idea that fostering motivation in reading can lead to stronger engagement and overall English language proficiency.

To better understand and enhance reading motivation, many studies have used Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a theoretical framework. For example, Namaziandost *et al.* (2020) applied SDT to explore how autonomy-supportive classroom environments influenced Iranian EFL learners' Reading motivation. Similarly, Jang *et al.* (2016) demonstrated that materials aligned with students' values and interest (i.e., fulfilling the SDT construct of relatedness) significantly improved reading engagement and learning outcomes. While these studies validate the role of SDT in language learning motivation, they often focus on general or foreign cultural texts, rather than incorporating students' own local culture. Thus, their studies are different from current study.

The previous studies indicate that applying local culture-based texts notably improves students reading motivation and comprehension through activating background knowledge and increasing engagement. Concerning this, Awago *et al.* (2025) studied a design-based study and demonstrated that statistically significant enhancements in students' reading comprehension after exposure to source culture-oriented texts. Likewise, Razavi and Gilakjani (2020) study's indicated that significant changes in reading scores were observed when local culture-based content was integrated into digital learning materials. Moreover, Sinclair (2025) study findings showed that culturally responsive reading

lesson based on students lived experiences demonstrated measurable implements in language comprehension and overall reading improvement. Similar to this, Sorongan *et al.*, (2014), Shrestha (2016), and Hadiano *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that adding local culture-oriented discourses and activities into reading instruction significantly enhanced reading skills. Furthermore, different scholars' study embedded within culturally contextualized intervention indicate that students demonstrate higher engagement, critical thinking, and sustained interest when reading materials reflect their own cultural experiences (Park *et al.*, 2024; Rahman & Fitria, 2023, as cited in Agustiana *et al.*, 2025; Han *et al.*, 2025).

Despite the acknowledged significance of cultural weight in reading lesson, most prior study has not explicitly integrated local culture-oriented texts with motivational frameworks such as Self-determination Theory (SDT). Moreover, inadequate studies have examined this integration within a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach, which emphasizes iterative, refinement of instructional practice in real classroom settings.

Thus, this study tackles these gaps by combining SDT and culturally responsive pedagogy by using local culture-oriented texts within a DBR approach. The originality of this study lies in three features: a) it integrates motivational theory (SDT) with culturally important texts; b) it presents empirical evidence from a local educational context that remains understudied; c) it applies a DBR approach to systematically examine changes in students' reading motivation, and d) it uses multiple data collection tools to insure its validity and reliability. Therefore, the study aimed to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the existing level of the students in reading motivation before the intervention?

RQ2: To what extent does the use of local culture-oriented texts in reading lessons enhance students' reading motivation after the interventions?

2. Literature Review

Motivation is the process of generating and sustaining learners' enthusiasm and commitment toward achieving language learning goals by addressing their individual needs, interests, and aspirations (Haque *et al.*, 2024). Ortega (2013) defines motivation in language learning as the desire to initiate learning and the effort required to maintain it, encompassing positive and negative, as well as tangible and intangible, influences. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) further connect motivation to learners' personal goals, values, and beliefs about reading topics, processes, and outcomes, suggesting that students with a strong interest in reading are more likely to engage deeply and persistently.

2.1. Motivation and Self-Determination Theory

Motivation plays a central role in language learning, as it directly influences learners' engagement, persistence, and success. In this study, motivation is defined as the process of fostering learners' internal drive and sustained effort toward achieving language learning goals by fulfilling their psychological needs through meaningful and culturally resonant texts (Haque *et al.*, 2024). Ortega (2013) describes motivation in language learning as the desire to initiate learning and the effort to sustain it, shaped by both tangible and intangible influences. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) emphasize that reading motivation is closely tied to students' personal goals, interests, and values, which shape their engagement with texts.

This study adopts Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the theoretical foundation for understanding student motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), in SDT, learners are more likely to be intrinsically motivated when three fundamental psychological needs are met:

- **Autonomy:** the sense of having control and choice in one's learning;
- **Competence:** the feeling of being effective and capable in completing learning tasks;
- **Relatedness:** the sense of emotional and social connection to the learning material or context.

Thus, SDT offers a comprehensive framework to understand how motivation can be enhanced in reading, particularly when materials are aligned with students' identities and lived experiences.

2.2. Local Culture and Language Learning

Local culture refers to the shared practices, traditions, beliefs, and expressions that define the daily life of a specific community (Ratminingsih, 2020). It shapes both personal and social identity, playing a critical role in the development of individuals in both rural and urban contexts (Adebola *et al.*, 2022). In educational settings, especially in language learning, local culture serves as a bridge between learners' backgrounds and the target language content.

Language and culture are inseparably linked. Scholars, such as Kumaravadivelu (2003) and Kramersch (2012) argue that acquiring a language means gaining access to its associated culture. Everyday language use reflects cultural values through gestures, customs, food, and social norms. For example, in the Ethiopian context, traditional foods such as *Injera with 'Wot'*, and beverages like *'Tela or Tej'*, illustrate how linguistic expressions are embedded in cultural practices. Kramersch (2012) emphasizes that language not only symbolizes culture but also mediates and interprets it.

2.3. Theoretical Connection

Local culture-oriented texts are defined as reading materials that incorporate culturally relevant content, such as traditional ceremonies, festivals, foods, or stories, which are drawn from students' own environments (Wutun *et al.*, 2018; Ahmad, 2017). These texts provide learners with familiar and meaningful contexts, helping them relate to the material emotionally and socially. As a result, they enhance the relatedness component of SDT, one of the core psychological needs required for intrinsic motivation.

Additionally, these culturally grounded texts can improve competence, as students often understand content more easily when it draws on their existing knowledge, and autonomy, as

culturally meaningful texts encourage students to take greater ownership of their learning. When learners see their identities reflected in learning materials, they are more likely to engage deeply with the content.

Thus, adding local culture into reading materials is not only culturally responsive but also theoretically justified as a way to meet learners' psychological needs and improve motivation and learning outcomes.

2.4. Pedagogical Approaches

To implement local culture in reading classroom, this study draws on Banks' (2002) additive approach, which enriches the existing curriculum by adding cultural content without changing its overall organization. Based on this framework, the researchers developed an intervention package consisting of local culture-oriented reading texts reflecting learners' socio-cultural background, including themes such as traditional food preparation, traditional games, the coffee ceremony, annual festivals, and mourning practices. These reading materials were incorporated into the existing reading lesson by supplementing convention texts while maintaining the planned language learning objectives, such as vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and engagement in group discussion.

In the intervention package, reading texts developed from cultural contents were structured in three stages of the reading lesson. In the pre-reading stage, students engaged in discussions and brainstorming activates to activate their background knowledge of the cultural contents. During the while-reading stage, they completed guided comprehension tasks, such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, and relating the text to their live experiences. In the post-reading stage, students engaged in reflective discussions, comparisons, and response activities. This approach enabled learners to draw on familiar cultural schemas, thereby facilitating comprehension and enhancing intrinsic motivation through increased relevance, autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

2.5. Implications for Material Selection

A critical pedagogical challenge lies in selecting texts that are both culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate. Not all local culture content is suitable for language teaching as some may lack pedagogical value or could present cultural conflicts (Ahmad, 2017). Therefore, texts should be chosen carefully based on their relevance to students' lives and their ability to enhance reading motivation. Using local culture-oriented texts can make unfamiliar language concepts more accessible and meaningful. They also empower teachers, enabling them to draw on familiar cultural references to clarify vocabulary and engage learners. Ultimately, applying these principles can lead to higher levels of reading motivation, especially when combined with targeted motivational strategies (Jendli & Albarakati, 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a design –based research (DBR) approach within a pragmatic paradigm to tackle a real-world educational problem while making context-sensitive insights. DBR was selected since it supports the systematic analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation or refinement of instructional interventions in authentic classroom settings, at the same time contributing to theory, as suggested by (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Hence, the study was conducted through iterative cycles of analysis, development, implementation, and evaluation of the output. In phase I, the research problem and objectives were formulated through a review of existing literature and gaining insights from the baseline survey results of the current study. Phase II involved the development of instructional materials and lesson plans in collaboration with practitioners focusing on selected cultural elements, such as traditional food and drink preparation, traditional games, mourning ceremony, annual festivals, etc. In line with this, Ibrahim (2016) and Aldoobie (2015) suggested that

creating intervention materials or tools is one of the activities of the phase II of the DBR. In phase III, implementation of these materials carried out in classrooms at Schools A and B over 8 weeks incorporating them into practitioners' schedules. During implementation, students participated in reading activities planned to enhance their motivation. Finally, Phase IV comprised a formative and summative evaluation to measure the interventions' impact, including administering pre- and post-motivation test and conducting pre- and post-classroom observations. The study was guided by the DBR model, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1
Design-Based Research Model

3.2. Intervention Process

The study was conducted over one academic year through two iterative cycles in two selected schools. The first cycle was implemented in School A (SA) during one semester. A complex mixed-methods design was employed, in which initial qualitative data collected through observations and interviews, guided the development of the intervention. Subsequently, quantitative data, collected through pre-tests and post-tests, were used to assess the impact of the intervention on students' reading motivation. During the first iteration, the researchers closely monitored students' engagement and learning processes while administering the pre- and post-tests. Findings from this cycle revealed several challenges, including limited active engagement, low participation, and difficulties in completing activities at home among few students.

Based on these findings, the intervention was carefully refined before implementation of the second iteration. This refinement involved editing instructional materials, setting implementation method, and modifying evaluation tools to better deal with the identified problems. The revised intervention was then implemented in School B (SB) in the second semester of the similar school year. This second cycle intended to test the modified design and observe whether the modifications led to improved students' reading motivation and engagement.

Within each iteration, a single-group pre-test-post-test design was employed to examine changes in students' reading motivation over time. This design aligned with the developmental and context-specific nature of DBR, where the primary aim is iterative minor change rather than broad generalization. Ongoing collaboration with teachers and students during both cycles ensured that the intervention remained contextually relevant, practicable, and responsive to classroom setting.

3.3. Participants and Sampling Techniques

In this study, the sampling frame was limited to Grade 8 students in two primary schools in Bonga Town. A non-probability, purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who were most suitable for the study's objectives. Sections were selected in collaboration with teachers based on academic performance, classroom discipline, and willingness to participate, ensuring sustained engagement in the intervention. The final sample included Section B from Umit Primary School (SA) (18 female, 16 male) and Section D from Bandera Primary School (SB) (20 female, 13 male), as discussed in article 1 of (Awago et al., 2025). Within these groups, eight students were randomly selected for interviews using a lottery method, while two English teachers were purposively chosen based on relevance to the study. Consistent with DBR principles, the sampling prioritized contextual relevance and depth of engagement over representativeness. Therefore, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization but may offer

exchangeable insights to similar educational contexts.

3.4. Instruments

The research employed a comprehensive methodology, combining systematic classroom observations, interview, and a questionnaire to evaluate students' reading motivation. Observations took place during both conventional and intervention sessions, guided by a semi-structured checklist adapted from Teshale (2012), focusing on students' motivation and engagement during reading lessons. Interview was also employed with teachers and students to evaluate their reading interest, material appropriateness and content familiarity. On the other hand, a quantitative instrument was used: a pre- and post-intervention motivation questionnaire consisting of 15 Likert-scale items adapted from Namaziandost *et al.* (2020). This scale was selected due to its prior use in measuring L2 reading motivation among learners in a similar age range (15-16) and educational context. To ensure contextual and linguistic appropriateness, the questionnaire was translated into the participants' L1 and back-translated to English for accuracy.

Before full implementation, the questionnaire underwent a baseline study (pilot study) with a small group of students (N = 67) from a similar setting. Based on feedback, minor modifications were made to improve clarity and cultural relevance. This baseline (pilot) phase also enabled preliminary reliability and validity checks. Content and face validity were confirmed through expert review by advisers and two language education specialists.

Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in $\alpha = .877$ for School A and $\alpha = .739$ for School B, both above the acceptable level of .70 (Saidi & Siew, 2019). These reliability estimates were reassessed post-intervention to measure consistency across phases.

To assess assumptions of parametric testing, two normality tests (Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov) were used due to the small sample size (N = 67). This dual-testing approach was adopted to

ensure strength, as different tests can produce conflicting results in small samples. The appropriate parametric alternatives were considered after checking normality of them.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis involves examining collected data to identify patterns, draw conclusions, and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention (Singh, 2006). In this study, baseline qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key issues prior to the intervention. These findings were then integrated with motivation survey results, particularly the mean scores of SA and SB students, to inform the design of the intervention using culturally applicable texts.

Following the intervention, quantitative data were collected through post-test motivation surveys from both schools. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to summarize the data and paired-sample t-tests and effect sizes were conducted using SPSS version 20 to assess significant changes in students' motivation levels before and after the intervention. This enabled a clear comparison of pre- and post-intervention motivation. Next to this, qualitative data from classroom observations and post-students' reflection notes were analyzed thematically, and then all these were integrated with quantitative findings to check the effect of the intervention on students' reading motivation.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

This research was carried out based on established ethical standards for study participating people. Permission to conduct this study, the researcher received three types of letters from Jimma University Ethical Committee, head of English Language and literature, and Bonga town administration education office. In addition to this, informed consent was secured from parents/guardians of all participating students prior to gathering data. They were also informed about

the purpose of the study, and their participation was wholly voluntary.

4. Results

4.1. Results of the Iteration I

Phase I: Integrated Findings of the Baseline Study

The preliminary study was conducted to determine the current existing position of students in reading motivation by answering the research question below:

RQ1: What is the existing level of the students in reading motivation before the intervention?

The baseline findings from classroom observations, interviews, and the motivation survey consistently indicate that students in both School A (SA) and School B (SB) show low levels of reading motivation. The integration of these data sources provides a coherent understanding of both the extent of the problem and its underlying issues.

Classroom observation results reveal clear behavioral evidence of low motivation. Across the six observed sessions, student participation in pre-, while-, and post-reading activities was minimal. For instance, only 2 out of 34 students in SA and 4 out of 33 students in SB participated in pre-reading activities during the first observation. Similarly, in the post-reading stage, only one student in SA attempted to share the message of the text, while no students in SB participated. Students were generally reluctant to predict content, respond to teachers' prompts, or summarize texts, indicating low engagement and limited intrinsic motivation toward reading tasks before intervention.

These observed patterns are strongly supported and explained by the interview findings. Both practitioners reported that students lack interest and motivation in reading. As one practitioner stated, *"Students lack the interest and motivation to engage with the texts. None of the students demonstrate a high level of performance in continuous assessments because they are careless and uninterested in reading."* Students' responses further confirm this lack of

motivation. For example, Student 1 stated, *"I have very low reading interest,"* while Student 3 noted, *"I do not give attention for reading."*

In addition, students identified several factors contributing to their disengagement. Students 4, 5, 7, and 8 indicated that passages in their English textbooks, such as *"History of Calendar"* and *"Computer Technology,"* are difficult to understand. Practitioners also emphasized that the textbooks contain complex vocabulary and unfamiliar concepts, mentioning terms such as *"ecclesiastical," "Februa,"* and *"civil year,"* as well as topics like *traffic rules and technology,* which many students are not familiar with. Students supported this concern, stating, *"Sometimes we face difficulties of vocabularies found in English textbook"* and *"Some topics confuse me, especially things we don't see in our daily life."*

Furthermore, both practitioners and students highlighted the lack of familiarity between textbook content and students' lived experiences. Students reported, *"We face unfamiliar contents like technology and traffic rules. I haven't seen many things mentioned in the book."* This lack of contextual relevance reduces students' interest and engagement in reading activities.

Affective factors also emerged as significant barriers. Some students expressed anxiety related to reading aloud, with Student 2 stating, *"I fear reading in front of my classmates,"* and Student 6 similarly noting, *"I fear reading in front of others."* Students also reported difficulty completing reading tasks, explaining, *"We feel fear and confusion while reading in front of others... I feel nervous reading aloud"* and *"I have difficulty completing some tasks in the textbook."* Practitioners linked these challenges to both low motivation and teacher-centred instructional approaches. These qualitative and observational findings are further confirmed by the motivation survey results, as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Analysis of Reading Motivation Survey Questionnaire

Items	Local culture-oriented text:	School Codes	Mean	St. Deviation
1	Helps me to comprehend a complex text	SA	2.53	1.376
		SB	2.67	1.534
2	Makes me feel happy to read the text in the classroom.	SA	2.85	1.500
		SB	2.79	1.576
3	Makes me more interested in reading texts.	SA	2.68	1.093
		SB	2.91	1.528
4	Makes me aware of my culture.	SA	2.94	1.324
		SB	2.55	1.603
5	Builds my confidence.	SA	2.29	1.142
		SB	2.73	1.376
6	Helps me to do comprehension questions without a problem.	SA	2.50	1.331
		SB	2.79	1.474
7	Avoids the fear of expressing ideas from the texts in English.	SA	2.74	1.286
		SB	2.91	1.569
8	Allows me to be more at ease with English reading.	SA	2.82	1.466
		SB	3.27	1.506
9	Helps me to know my culture very well.	SA	3.00	1.518
		SB	2.64	1.578
10	Makes my learning of English easier than the foreign culture-oriented texts.	SA	2.71	1.194
		SB	2.48	1.503
11	Facilitates my learning in the English language reading classroom	SA	3.06	1.476
		SB	2.73	1.567
12	Motivates me to pay more attention to reading	SA	2.56	1.353
		SB	2.48	1.564
13	Encourages me to learn reading skills	SA	3.12	1.431
		SB	2.64	1.597
14	Helps me be proud of my culture besides its benefits in my language learning.	SA	3.09	1.422
		SB	2.91	1.684
15	Increases my participation rate in the reading classroom.	SA	3.47	1.398
		SB	2.88	1.728
Average Mean and STD. Scores		SA	2.824	1.354
		SB	2.759	1.444

Note. SA-school, SB-school B.

The mean scores for School A ($M = 2.824$, $SD = 1.354$) and School B ($M = 2.759$, $SD = 1.444$) fall below the midpoint of the scale, indicating generally low levels of reading motivation. In particular, low scores on items such as comprehension support, confidence building, attention to reading, and participation correspond closely with the observed lack of classroom engagement and the difficulties reported in interviews. For example, low ratings on items related to confidence and fear reduction align with students' expressed anxiety about reading aloud, while low scores on comprehension-related

items reflect their reported difficulties with complex vocabulary and unfamiliar content.

Across all three data sources, a consistent pattern appeared. Classroom observations demonstrate limited participation; interviews explain this disengagement through factors such as lack of interest, unfamiliar content, vocabulary difficulty, and anxiety, and survey results quantitatively confirm low motivation levels across key dimensions.

Overall, the convergence of these findings suggests that improving reading motivation requires targeted interventions focusing on

culturally relevant content, simplified materials, and interactive learning approaches. Supporting research indicates that linking reading materials to students' cultural contexts enhances engagement, activates prior knowledge, and improves comprehension and learning outcomes (Ulaywi & Khairi, 2008; Yang, 2017; Estuarso et al., 2017).

After the preliminary/baseline study, researchers reflected results of the preliminary study before engaging in the intervention and instructional model development. This process creates an opportunity to communicate the findings of the study to practitioners and students, and to decide what should be done to address issues identified. During the presentation of baseline data analysis to practitioners in November 2023, both practitioner 1 and 2 highlighted that integrating local culture into English language instruction will significantly benefit students by making learning more enjoyable. Overall, the feedback underlines the necessity of developing intervention materials that incorporate local cultural elements to enhance reading motivation.

Phase II: Development

In Phase II of the Design-Based Research (DBR), culturally relevant reading materials were developed to enhance students' motivation and engagement by reflecting their local culture, including topics like traditional foods, drinks, coffee ceremonies, festivals, and games. The developed texts use simplified vocabulary and sentence structures within descriptive and narrative genres to support reading comprehension and vocabulary growth. The teaching objectives aimed to connect content to students' experiences to improve reading motivation. A validation workshop with language experts on November 26, 2023, led to refinements such as shorter activities and simpler texts to increase effectiveness.

Developing Intervention Model

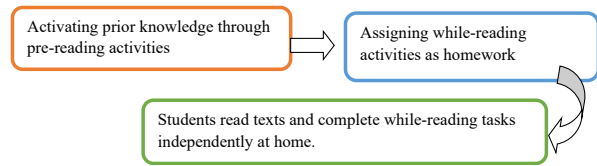


Figure 2
The Implementation Model for the First Session of the Intervention

The teaching model shown in Figure 2 focuses on the first session, where students activate prior knowledge through pre-reading tasks centered on local culture. Students work in small groups to discuss and present their ideas, promoting cooperative learning and engagement. They then complete assigned reading activities at home. Teachers facilitate the process by guiding discussions and encouraging student participation, moving away from traditional teacher-centered methods toward a more interactive approach.

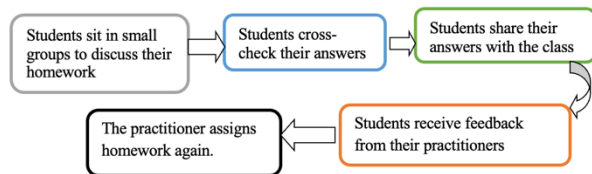


Figure 3
Implementation Model for the Second Session of the Intervention

Figure 3 outlines the second session, where students review and compare their homework answers in groups, present findings, and receive feedback from teachers. Additional activities are assigned for home practice. The model is grounded in constructivist and socio-cultural theories, emphasizing the link between learning and cultural context, collaborative interaction, and scaffolding. It differs from common classroom practices by adding local cultural content and using ongoing monitoring and iterative feedback to adapt teaching strategies, enhancing motivation and learning outcomes.

Phase III: Implementation

Current researchers trained the practitioners on the implementation model, lesson preparation, engagement systems, assessment methods, and reflection processes. Following the training, intervention materials were prepared and duplicated for the first iteration at SA beginning from December 11, 2023 to February 1, 2024. This phase included 16 sessions over 8 weeks focusing on culturally relevant reading texts, with each week allocating 2 sessions. Throughout the intervention, both researchers and practitioners evaluated and reflected on each session's effectiveness making adjustments as needed. After every lesson and researchers' observations, researchers and practitioners conducted reflections focusing on the strengths of the participants in performing reading tasks, the limitations observed, and proposed

solutions to address issues identified during intervention.

Results of Post-Survey Tests

Post-test was measured based on the research question two as follows:

RQ2: To what extent does the use of local culture-oriented texts in reading lessons enhance students' motivation towards reading after interventions?

According to Kozak (2023), checking normality before applying a paired sample t-test, which compares mean within the same group, conducted test normality, is crucial. Hence, the test normality was checked before statistical analysis as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
School A's Tests of Normality of Motivation Survey

School A	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Motivation	.949	34	.112
Post-Motivation	.971	34	.498

Table 2 shows that Shapiro–Wilk tests for pre- and post-motivation have p-values greater than 0.05, indicating that the data do not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. This suggests that the assumption of normality is satisfied for

dataset, meaning that parametric statistical tests are appropriate for further analysis and the results derived from them can be considered statistically valid and reliable.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Pre-and Post-Tests Results of SA's Reading Motivation

School A	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Motivation	34	2.823	.8243	.14138
Post-Motivation	34	3.892	.2676	.04591

Table 3 shows that pre- and post-motivation survey results indicate a remarkable increase in reading motivation. The mean of the pre-motivation score is 2.823, with a higher standard deviation of

0.8243, indicating greater variability in responses. After the intervention, the mean of the post-motivation score rises to 3.892 with a smaller standard deviation of 0.2676 suggesting more

consistency in responses. The smaller standard error for the post-motivation survey indicates a precise

estimation of the mean, which showed a significant improvement in reading motivation.

Table 4
Paired Sample T-Test Results of SA’s Pre-and Post-Tests of Reading Motivation

School A	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect Size (d)
Pre-Motivation	-1.068	.9018	-6.909	33	.000	-1.8
Post-Motivation						

Table 4 indicates that the intervention had a statistically significant and practically meaningful effect on students’ reading motivation in School A. The significant t-test result ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the observed improvement between pre- and post-test scores is unlikely to be due to chance, providing strong evidence of intervention effectiveness. The large effect size (Cohen’s $d = -1.8$) further suggests that this improvement is not only statistically significant but also educationally substantial. This implies that the intervention had a strong and meaningful impact on enhancing students’ motivation toward reading, rather than producing a minor or temporary change.

Phase IV: Evaluation

Iteration I is evaluated through formative and summative forms of assessments. Classroom observation, journal reflection and researchers field notes were formative evaluations while pre-and post-tests of the motivation surveys were summative evaluations carried out in this study. The implications for iteration two of the intervention are focused on building the strengths of the first iteration while addressing the observed weaknesses at School A such as disturbances, weak participation, length of the texts, lack of visual aids, struggling to complete homework and eagerness to read. By implementing these targeted recommendations, the intervention aims to foster a more engaging, effective, and comprehensive reading instruction experience for students.

4.2. Findings of the Iteration II

Phase I

In the first phase of the study, participants from SA included 14 male and 20 female students, alongside experienced practitioners participated in the study. A baseline study employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods including classroom observations, and practitioners’ interviews, and surveys on reading motivation. The study highlighted key issues affecting reading skill achievement, emphasizing the critical role of motivation. Factors like content relevance, text difficulty, and content unfamiliarity were identified as impacting student engagement. Addressing these challenges requires improved teaching methods, diverse reading materials, and a supportive learning environment. Hence, by aligning reading materials with students’ cultural backgrounds, researchers planned to improve motivation. The initial studies at SA and SB provided a baseline for evaluating this culturally responsive pedagogy. The iterative development of intervention models, informed by ongoing evaluations, reflects a responsive research design committed to refining strategies for the best educational outcomes. This approach not only supports academic development but also strengthens students’ cultural identity and motivation offering a valuable model for similar educational settings.

Phase II: Refining Intervention Materials

In the second iteration, the intervention was refined based on feedback from classroom observations and practitioners’ notes of iteration I. The focus shifted to improving students’

participation rate, motivation to read, task completion, etc. that were identified as weak in the initial phase. The updated model emphasized incorporating local culture-oriented texts to make learning more significant and motivating. This model encouraged independent reading at home, and group discussions in class, and provided structured feedback to foster student accountability and confidence.

Phase III: Implementation of Second Iteration

The second iteration of intervention followed the same procedures as the first maintaining consistency to assess the effectiveness of the culture-based reading materials to improve motivation to read texts. By using similar materials and conducting while- and post-reading activities, the intervention reinforced motivation towards reading. The formative evaluation through an observation checklist provided valuable insights into participants' progress in summarizing and narrating key ideas.

The intervention schedule for Iteration Two at SB is systematically outlined, with sessions planned every Wednesday from March 26, 2024, to May 15, 2024. Each session includes specific texts and associated activities ranging from activities 1 through 5, to be carried out at selected times by both the practitioners and researchers.

Table 5
Result of SB's Tests of Normality of Motivation Survey

School B	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test	.093	33	.200*	.983	33	.881
Post-Test	.130	33	.174	.969	33	.440

Table 5 presents the Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality applied to the motivation survey data for School B (SB). The Shapiro-Wilk statistic is 0.983 with a significance of 0.881 confirming that pre-motivation scores are normally distributed. For post-motivation, the Shapiro-Wilk statistic is 0.969 with a significance of 0.440 also indicating normality. Overall, the confirmation of normality

The results of iteration II at SB indicated improvements in students' motivation and performance comparing to SA. From the first week, students demonstrated engagement in culturally relevant texts, which enhanced their reading interest. In the second weeks, participation levels, group work involvement and homework completion improved, with students becoming more confident in sharing answers and collaborating with friends. Even if a few problems like misbehavior and forgotten worksheets happened, they were effectively addressed by active classroom management and encouragement. By last 8 weeks, significant changes in reading motivation and participation were evident, and these improvements were checked by summative assessment results, demonstrating the success of the intervention at school B.

Results of Pre-and Post-Reading Motivation Survey Tests

Reading motivation survey questionnaires were administered before and after the intervention of the study to determine the degree to which local culture-oriented texts improved students' reading motivation.

has methodological implications for the study. It justifies the use of parametric statistical tests, such as the paired samples t-test, ensuring that subsequent inferential results are valid and reliable. In this sense, the normality assumption strengthens the credibility of the findings on intervention effectiveness, as it supports that the observed differences are appropriately analyzed using robust

statistical procedures rather than non-parametric alternatives.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics of Pre-and Post-Motivation Survey

School B	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Motivation	2.757	33	.72319	.12589
Post-Motivation	4.169	33	.28484	.04959

In Table 6, the results indicate that the intervention had a strong positive effect on students' motivation in School B. The significant increase in the post-motivation mean suggests not only an improvement in motivational levels but also that the intervention was likely effective in enhancing students' engagement and attitudes toward learning. The relatively large difference between pre- and post-scores implies a meaningful educational change rather than a trivial variation. Furthermore, the reduction in standard deviation

and standard error in the post-motivation results suggests that students became more consistent in their responses after the intervention. This decreased variability implies that the intervention did not only benefit a few students but had a more uniform effect across the group, strengthening the argument for its overall effectiveness. Taken together, these patterns suggest that the intervention contributed to both an increase and stabilization of student motivation, indicating a broad and reliable impact.

Table 7
Paired Samples t-Test Statistics of Pre-and Post-Motivation Survey

SB	Mean	Std. D.	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size (d)
Pre-test	-1.412	.840	.146	-	32	.000	-1.6
Post-test				9.247			

Table 7 presents the paired samples t-test for School B's pre- and post-motivation surveys. The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test is -1.41212 with a standard deviation of 0.840. The t-value is -9.247, and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the change is statistically significant. The effect size (Cohen's $d = -1.6$) suggesting that the intervention effectively increased motivation.

Practitioners evaluated the educational materials' strengths and weaknesses focusing on how well the culturally oriented texts influenced students' reading motivation. They also considered the challenges faced during the integration of the intervention with the regular curriculum.

Results of Practitioners' Feedback after Interventions at Both Schools

4.3.4. Phase IV: Evaluation and Reflection

Evaluating a project involves analyzing its outcomes and reflecting on its implementation to gauge effectiveness and identify areas for improvement (Zhang & Qu, 2013). The current researcher assessed the project's success by gathering data from both students and practitioners using checklists and a reflective approach.

Practitioners were requested to provide feedback on the overall intervention process and the materials used in the classroom in addition to the conventional materials. To collect this data, an open-ended checklist containing 5 basic questions was developed. Practitioners recorded their responses on paper as instructed. Their feedback was scholarly presented as follow:

Practitioners provided reflective feedback on the intervention process and the use of culture based texts in reading lessons. Both practitioners evaluated the intervention positively, indicating that it was effective and well received by students. As Practitioner 1 noted, *"The intervention is good; students like it,"* while Practitioner 2 similarly stated, *"It helped students."* Practitioner 1 further emphasized that *"Cultural texts aid understanding,"* highlighting the role of contextually relevant materials in facilitating comprehension.

Regarding the benefits of local culture-based texts, practitioner 1 stated: *"Students were motivated and happy,"* whereas Practitioner 2 added: *"Materials facilitated reading lessons."*

In terms of improving reading comprehension and motivation, practitioner 1 stated: *"Students showed motivation despite initial knowledge gaps"* and also noted that *"Comprehension improved."* Similarly, Practitioner 2 reported: *"Students enjoyed reading activities,"* reflecting enhanced engagement during the lessons.

However, practitioners also identified some challenges encountered during the implementation. Practitioner 1 explained: *"Initial resistance; students questioned text relevance,"* while Practitioner 2 pointed out that *"Some texts were too long."* Both practitioners also highlighted *"Time constraints"* as a common issue affecting lesson delivery.

Despite these challenges, practitioners expressed positive overall perceptions of the new reading texts. Practitioner 1 stated: *"Texts motivated students; important for engagement,"* and Practitioner 2 suggested that *"Such kind of familiar texts should be incorporated in the curriculum during the revision."*

Overall, practitioners were satisfied with the intervention and the use of culture-based texts, noting their positive impact on student engagement, cultural understanding, and language learning. Although challenges such as initial resistance, text length, and time constraints were reported, these were managed during implementation. The findings also indicate that incorporating familiar and relevant texts in the curriculum can further enhance students' motivation and engagement.

5. Discussion

RQ1: What is the existing level of the students in reading motivation before the intervention?

The main objective of this study was to enhance 8th-Grade students' reading motivation through local culture-based texts. The study was conducted using a design-based educational research approach to find practical solutions for the problems identified during the baseline study. Preliminary study is one of the steps in design-based research to identify pre-existing problems (Karsten & van Zyl, 2022; Bakker & van Eerde, 2015). Hence, in the current study, a preliminary assessment identified reading motivation challenges among students and evaluated the proposed intervention's appropriateness. Data were collected through questionnaires, practitioners and students' interviews, and classroom observations. Scholars suggest that classroom observations can effectively assess learning behaviours and teaching effectiveness in specific contexts (Hertz *et al.*, 2019; Halim *et al.*, 2018). Hence, observation results revealed that students struggled to connect prior knowledge with current lessons, often waiting for teachers to provide answers rather than engaging in reading tasks independently.

Moreover, interview results revealed issues such as a general lack of interest and engagement with texts, the failure of texts to reflect students' cultural contexts, and a predominantly teacher-centered approach, all contributing to disengagement. Nervousness and a lack of confidence also hinder participation, as does the challenge of unfamiliar content. These findings suggest that educational strategies that integrate local culture into English language instruction would enhance student motivation and learning outcomes. Research supports the idea that connecting students with familiar cultural contexts boosts engagement, activates prior knowledge, and deepens understanding, ultimately benefiting reading skills and academic achievement (Syam, 2014; Ulaywi & Khairi, 2008; Estuarso *et al.*, 2017).

To address issues identified during preliminary study, culturally relevant reading materials for

intervention developed. Researchers and practitioners collaborated to select and develop texts that reflect local cultural practices, such as traditional drinks, ceremonies, and festivals to improve students' engagement and interest in reading. Language experts edited the intervention materials, and recommended texts to be simple to enhance readability and alignment with educational goals. An instructional model was also developed to guide the implementation of the intervention in two schools, ensuring the materials effectively supported students' reading lesson.

During the implementation of the developed prototypes, the researcher trained practitioners on lesson delivery, engagement systems, and assessment methods on December 28, 2023. The first intervention at SA ran from December 11, 2023 to February 1, 2024 consisting of 16 sessions over 8 weeks. This phase included initial discussions, participant orientation, and classroom setup, followed by continuous evaluation and reflection to adjust teaching methods as needed. After refining the approach, the second iteration of the intervention was conducted at SB from March 26, 2024 to May 15, 2024 following the same procedures to ensure consistency. This iteration maintained a structured schedule of sessions with specific texts and activities that aimed at reinforcing reading motivation and evaluating participants' progress through formative assessments.

The assessment phase or semi-summative evaluation is crucial for determining if an intervention achieves its objectives (Barab & Squire, 2004). Hence, formative evaluations included lesson observations and expert reviews, which monitored student progress and engagement allowing for timely adjustments to the intervention. The summative evaluation involved analyzing post-test results to measure improvements in reading motivation alongside collecting feedback from practitioners and students regarding their satisfaction with the materials.

RQ2: To what extent did the use of local culture-oriented texts in English language reading lessons enhance students' motivation toward reading after the intervention?

To assess the extent to which local culture-oriented texts improved students' reading motivation, a pre- and post-intervention motivation surveys were administered. The results revealed that the intervention significantly increased students' motivation in both schools. In SA, the mean score increased from 2.823 to 3.892 (mean difference of -1.068, $p = 0.000$ and the effect size is 1.8). Similarly, School B showed improvement with scores rising from a mean of 2.757 to 4.169 post-intervention with a significant mean difference of -1.412 ($p = 0.000$ and the effect size is 1.6). For School B's improvement, some issues identified during the first iteration in School A were addressed. For example, the length of the texts was reduced, visual aids were included, and continuous advice was given to pay attention and complete homework.

These quantitative improvements represent a clear shift from the baseline findings, where classroom observations showed minimal participation, interviews revealed low interest and anxiety, and survey results indicated overall low motivation (means below 3). The increase in post-test mean scores therefore reflects a measurable change from students' earlier disengagement and reluctance to participate in reading activities.

Practitioners' feedback provides important explanatory support for these statistical changes. Both practitioners evaluated the intervention positively, noting that it was effective and well received by students. As Practitioner 1 stated, "*The intervention is good; students like it,*" and Practitioner 2 confirmed, "*It helped students.*" These perceptions align with the increased motivation scores observed in the post-survey results. This is consistent with the findings of Nambiar *et al.* (2020), Rashidi (2011), and Firmanto *et al.* (2018), whose studies indicated that the use of culturally sensitive materials can increase students' participation and build confidence. Moreover, the employment of cultural sensitive material can help students to learn English language more effectively (Namaziandost *et al.*, 2020; Rahman, 2018; Nazarova, 2020). Similarly, Campo and Carolina (2016) found that when students participate in culturally-based activities in their English Language classes, they show advanced

motivation and greater involvement in English language lessons.

6. Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to enhance students' reading motivation by applying local culture-oriented texts as additional resources in English language reading classrooms. The findings suggest that the use of culturally familiar reading materials was associated with an increase in students' reading motivation in both School A and School B. The statistical results from the pre- and post-intervention comparisons indicate significant improvements in motivation scores, which imply that the intervention was effective within the context of this study.

The results further suggest that integrating local cultural content into reading lessons may help make learning more engaging and meaningful for students by connecting classroom materials with their lived experiences. This contextual relevance appears to have contributed to increased motivation and engagement observed in the study participants.

However, these findings should be interpreted within the scope of the two schools involved in the study. While the results are promising, they cannot be generalized to all educational contexts without caution. Feedback from students and practitioners also supports the positive role of culturally relevant materials, but further research is needed to confirm these effects in different settings.

Future studies could explore how different types of local cultural content influence reading motivation and whether the observed effects are sustained over time. Investigating these aspects in a wider range of schools and contexts would help strengthen understanding of how culturally responsive reading materials can be effectively implemented.

Limitations

Though the findings of the study have promising results, it has many gaps. First, the sample size included in the study may not completely describe the wider population of the participants in the study

region despite it was adequate enough for this study findings. Second, even though the intervention lasted several weeks, it may not be adequate to uphold long-term improvements in students' reading motivation and engagement in reading classroom.

Statement of Declaration

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Authors' Contributions

The first author identified the study framework, developed data collection tools, and created intervention materials. The second and third authors assisted by providing resources, redesigned tools, and offered editorial feedback. The first author collected and analyzed the data, while the second and third authors verified data accuracy and coherence. All authors have reviewed and verbally consented to the publication of this manuscript.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

The research received ethical clearance from the Ethics Review Board, under the supervision of Jira Mekonnin (PhD) at Jimma University, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature. The study was carried out in compliance with the ethical standards governing research involving human subjects, as established by the Ethics Committee of Jimma University.

AI Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that no online language tools, such as AI was used irresponsibly during the preparation of this manuscript.

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