

## **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation as Predictors of Academic English Reading Performance among Multidisciplinary University Students**

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### **Abstract**

Numerous studies in the last decade have predominantly examined reading motivation among English major students, leaving limited evidence from multidisciplinary non-English majors in social sciences and humanities. This present study aims to examine the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels and their relationship with academic reading performance among 150 undergraduate students from five non-English majors at two private universities in Bukittinggi, Indonesia. This quantitative correlational research design collected the data through a reading motivation questionnaire comprising intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions, and an academic English reading test. The data were analyzed descriptively (mean and standard deviation) and inferentially using Pearson correlation analysis. The results revealed that students' academic reading ability was at a moderate-to-high level ( $M = 78.4$ ,  $SD = 7.6$ ). Students have better academic reading performance in literal comprehension than in inferential and evaluative comprehension. Additionally, the statistical analysis results show that there is a significant correlation between students' intrinsic motivation and their reading performance ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In contrast, the correlation between students' intrinsic motivation and reading performance was lower ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). These findings suggest that the most influential factor to foster students' ability in academic reading was intrinsic motivation.

**Keywords:** Academic English reading; English for academic purposes; extrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation; multidisciplinary students.

## **Introduction**

Reading is one of the essential skills for university students, especially in higher education contexts where many academic references, journals, and scientific publications are written in English. The ability to read and comprehend academic texts allows students to engage critically with scholarly sources, complete assignments, and participate in disciplinary learning (Vanguri et al., 2025). However, previous studies reported that Indonesian non-major English students often face challenges in reading English academic texts, such as limited vocabulary, unfamiliar academic discourse, insufficient reading strategies, and low language proficiency (Abiyyu et al., 2024; Dardjito et al., 2023; Rolls et al., 2017). These difficulties may hinder students' ability to comprehend academic texts critically and efficiently. In addition to linguistic and cognitive factors, motivation has been identified as a crucial affective factor influencing students' willingness, efforts, and perseverance in reading (Jarsaa et al., 2025). In other words, students who lack adequate motivation or with insufficient language competence may have difficulties reading and understanding various academic texts or reading materials effectively.

Beyond these general challenges, some scholars have reported that students in the social sciences group (e.g., Accounting, Law, Public Administration, etc.) often face additional demands related to the nature of academic texts in their fields. These challenges are likely influenced by the academic texts in the social science disciplines that contain theoretical and required analytical engagement. Consequently, learners must understand the technical terms and concepts that relate to their disciplines (Nemo et al., 2025; Prihandoko, 2024). Such texts often present abstract ideas and complex lines of reasoning that require higher-order comprehension skills. These conditions require students to have sufficient reading skills to comprehend the texts, for example, questioning, interpreting, synthesizing, and reflecting (Maab et al., 2024). Furthermore, most of the paragraphs in academic texts are longer and denser, with complex sentence structure and unfamiliar technical vocabulary (Anwar et al., 2022). These disciplinary characteristics make academic English reading more cognitively demanding and may influence students' motivation to engage with such materials. Given these cognitive and linguistic demands, understanding the factors that shape students' engagement

with academic English reading becomes essential, particularly the role of motivation as a key affective driver of reading behavior.

Cubillos and Troncoso (2025) state that one of the strongest predictors of academic English reading success is motivation. This motivation might influence 1) how students understand texts, 2) the strategies they use in reading, and 3) how they sustain attention throughout the reading process. These claims are under the categories of motivation, which are categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic types (Greenwald et al., 2023). Intrinsic motivation comes from an individual's internal (e.g., personal satisfaction, curiosity, and interest), while extrinsic motivation is influenced by external incentives (e.g., grades, recognition, and/or course requirements) (Gan et al., 2023). Both these motivation types are needed in academic English reading so that students will achieve success in academic life.

Some scholars have conducted studies on motivation in reading comprehension in the EFL context. Intrinsic motivation in reading refers to students' internal encouragement of interest in reading the text, curiosity, and personal satisfaction derived from the reading activity itself (Cubillos & Troncoso, 2025). This type of motivation encourages readers (e.g., university students) to understand the content and meaning of the text more deeply by using a variety of more complex cognitive strategies. For instance, Khreisat (2023) reported that intrinsic motivation positively influences Saudi EFL students' reading comprehension and self-efficacy. Similarly, Ma and Zhao (2025) and Kamberi (2025) found that intrinsically motivated students are more likely to use deeper cognitive strategies and demonstrate better comprehension of academic texts.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation in reading relates to students' external encouragement, including examination scores, lecturers' demands, and some rewards from others. This kind of motivation is often able to foster surface-level reading and dependence on external rewards, although it can encourage students to complete reading tasks (Schiefele et al., 2012). This view has been proven by Indrayadi's (2021) study which found that Indonesian EFL students' motivation in reading is predominantly influenced by extrinsic motivation (e.g., exam scores and teachers' encouragement). Indrayadi (2021) believes that this practice will influence the development of students' learning autonomy and motivation in reading academic texts in their disciplines.

The review of the previous studies indicates that linguists have commonly paid attention to studying students' reading motivation in English language education and English language studies, where students are trained to read academic texts as part of their major discipline (see Bismayanti et al., 2024; Hasanudin et al., 2024; Mae et al., 2020; Yasin et al., 2025). Their attention to exploring reading motivation among non-English majors or multidisciplinary students is very limited. Moreover, the investigation on English reading is often limited to specific academic purposes, such as reading textbooks, research papers, or scientific articles related to their fields. The students with those characteristics typically learn English as a general requirement rather than as a central component of their study program. Consequently, their motivation to read academic English texts may differ significantly from that of English majors, as both linguistic ability and disciplinary relevance shape it.

Addressing this research gap, the study contributes new insights into academic readings and reading motivation among multidisciplinary students in social sciences and humanities. The findings are expected to inform English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers in developing appropriate reading materials and effective teaching strategies with students' intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation when teaching reading and English courses for non-English major students at the university level. Therefore, to address the problems, this study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. What are the levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of non-major students toward academic English reading?
2. How do intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relate to students' academic reading performance?

## **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a correlational design with a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their academic English reading performance. The correlational design will allow researchers to identify the degree of association between motivational factors and reading outcomes without manipulating any variables (Ary et al., 2010). This design was under the quantitative approach, as all data were in the form of numerical data taken from a closed-ended questionnaire and a reading test.

This study employed a convenience sampling technique to select the participants of this study, following Cresswell (2017). This is because the students involved in this study were those who had enrolled in classes where academic reading in English was a core learning component. Moreover, they had taken a General English course and passed this course with a minimum mark of B. As a result, a total of participants involved in this study was 150 undergraduate students from two private universities in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia. They come from social sciences and humanities disciplines, which consist of Public Administration, Law, Islamic Business Management, and Early Childhood Education. Table 1 provides the demographic distribution of the participants, including gender, age, and English learning background across the five study programs.

**Table 1.** The Students' Demographics Information

No	Categories	Sub-categories	Disciplines					Total
			Accounting	Public Administration	Law	Islamic Business Management	Early Childhood Education	
1	Gender	Male	10	12	8	6	2	38
		Female	20	25	15	18	34	112
2	Age	17-18	8	10	7	5	15	45
		19-20	22	27	16	19	21	105
3	English Learning Background	Taken General English I	30	37	23	24	36	150
Total			30	37	23	24	36	150

As shown in Table 1, the overall sample consisted predominantly of female students (112 out of 150), reflecting typical enrolment patterns in social science-related programs in Indonesian higher education. Most of the participants were aged between 19-20 years old (70%), while the others were aged 17-18 (30%). All participants had taken a General English course during one semester. It aimed to ensure that the participants had a foundation for engaging in academic English reading activities. The distribution of the participants across disciplines was also balanced, with each discipline consisting of between 23 and 37 students. This

distribution allowed for adequate representation of multidisciplinary non-English majors in this study.

In collecting the data, researchers used two instruments: a motivation questionnaire and an academic reading test. First, the questionnaire was used to examine students' motivation levels. Some modifications were made in this questionnaire, which was previously built by the Academic Motivation Scale (MAS) (Vallerand et al., 1992) and previous studies in the context of EFL motivation (Indrayadi, 2021; J. H.-Y. Wang & Guthrie, 2004). This questionnaire was designed using a Likert Scale (ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree") and consisted of 16 items, divided into 8 items for each type of motivation. The intrinsic motivation items measured students' interest, enjoyment, and personal satisfaction in reading texts, while the extrinsic motivation measured students' motivation in the contexts of grades, recognition, or academic requirements. A pilot study was conducted on 30 participants. The results of the reliability test were 0.84 (for the intrinsic scale) and 0.80 (for the extrinsic scale). This indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire was high.

Second, a set of academic reading comprehension tests was designed and used to assess students' academic English reading skills. The number of questions in this test was 10, which included 4 literal, 4 inferential, and 2 evaluative questions. The score for each correct answer was 1 point, and the total score was ten. Then, the correct answers were converted into a 100-point scale. This test consisted of one passage, but the length of the passage was 700 words. This passage was adapted from an open-access educational article on general topics.

The data of this study were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage). This statistical analysis was processed using the SPSS package version 25. The mean score of the participants' response from the questionnaire was categorized in the ranges of 1.00–2.33 (Low), 2.34–3.66 (Moderate), and 3.67–5.00 (High) (Sugiyono, 2017). Moreover, the researcher used a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test to examine the degree of the relationship between students' motivation and their academic English reading comprehension test. The level of the significance test was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Additionally, scatter plots were generated to visualize the strength and direction of the correlations. Results

were interpreted following Cohen et al's. (2018) criteria:  $r = 0.10$  (small), 0.30 (moderate), and 0.50 (strong).

This study obeyed and employed the basic ethical principles in educational research. In collecting the data, the researchers explained the rationale of conducting this study to the participants. They participated without any coercion so that there was no conflict of interest between researchers and participants. In addition to being a researcher, the researcher was also a lecturer teaching English in all the classes studied. Participants' responses did not affect their grades or academic standing. All data was collected anonymously and used solely for research purposes.

## Findings and Discussion,

### Findings

This section presents the results of the study based on the research questions addressed in the introduction section. The results will provide a better understanding of which type of motivation dominantly influenced non-English major students in academic reading and which type of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations correlate with the academic reading performance.

### Levels of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the overall levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among the 150 non-major multidisciplinary students. Table 2 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and motivational levels for each subscale.

**Table 2.** Levels of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation Types	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Intrinsic Motivation	150	4.13	0.26	High
Extrinsic Motivation	150	3.50	0.19	Moderate

Table 2 shows that the level of students' motivation in academic reading was different between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The motivation level in intrinsic motivation was higher than in extrinsic motivation. This indicates that students' internal willingness to read academic texts came from their personal interest, curiosity, and satisfaction in comprehending academic texts that related to their

disciplines. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation did not significantly influence students to read academic texts. This motivation was still in the context of grades, lecturer demands, or academic obligations. Thus, internal motivation is considered to be more dominant in motivating students to engage in English academic reading activities.

### **The Relationship between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation and Academic Reading Skills**

The results of the Pearson correlation test show that students' reading performance across three dimensions: literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension, was in the range of moderate to moderate to high. The results are summarized in Table 3 below.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics of Students' Academic Reading Skills

<b>Types of Questions</b>	<b>No of Questions</b>	<b>Minimum Score</b>	<b>Maximum Score</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Literal Comprehension	4	2	4	3.45	0.48	Moderate to High
Inferential Comprehension	4	1	4	3.15	0.52	Moderate
Evaluative Comprehension	2	1	2	1.65	0.31	Moderate to High
Total Reading (Score 0-100)	10	62	96	78.4	7.6	Moderate to High

Table 3 shows that non-majors' academic reading ability in English texts is in the moderate to high category ( $M = 78.4$ ,  $SD = 7.6$ ). Among the three types of reading skills, the highest score was in literal comprehension ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ), indicating that most students can recognize explicit information in academic texts. Meanwhile, inferential comprehension has a lower average ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), indicating that the ability to draw conclusions and understand implied meanings still needs to be developed. In evaluative comprehension, the average score of 1.65 ( $SD = 0.31$ ) shows that some students are beginning to be able to critically assess and evaluate the content of reading, but this ability is not yet evenly distributed among all respondents. In general, these findings confirm that non-majors have good literal comprehension, but still need pedagogical support to strengthen their inferential and evaluative skills in academic reading in English.



**Table 4.** The Correlation between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation and Academic Reading Skills

Variable	1	2	3	Mean	SD
1. Intrinsic Motivation	-			4.13	0.26
2. Extrinsic Motivation	0.36**	-		3.50	0.19
3. Academic Reading Skills	0.47**	0.21*	-	78.4	7.6

Notes: **Notes:**  $p < .05$  (\*),  $p < .01$  (\*\*),  $N = 150$ .

Table 4 shows that there was a positive relationship between students' intrinsic motivation and their academic reading ability ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Meanwhile, the correlation between students' extrinsic motivation and their academic reading ability was slightly lower ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, both motivation types were interrelated and worked together to influence non-English major students to read various academic texts based on their disciplines.

## Discussion

This study revealed that the level of students' motivation in academic reading was in the moderate to high category. Intrinsic motivation is higher than extrinsic motivation. This finding indicates that both these motivations influence them in academic reading activities, although their motivation is significantly in the intrinsic category. This shows that students have adequate reading motivation to read various English texts in their disciplines. With these motivations, they seem to have the willingness to understand both the content of English text comprehensively, for example, explicit and implicit meanings, and to evaluate information critically (Dirgantari & Susantiningdyah, 2020; Saadatnia et al., 2017).

This finding further suggests that non-English major students tend to engage in autonomous learning, which has a significant impact on their reading comprehension achievement (Rahmasari et al., 2025). The relevant and well-selected reading materials provided by teachers can be learned independently by students, as they have self-control and genuine interest driven by the intrinsic motivation factor (Printer, 2021; C. Wang et al., 2022). These conditions are likely to enhance students' cognitive and affective engagement in reading activities, leading to more involvement and deeper processing of academic texts (Johansen & Jeno, 2023). Additionally, this finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan &

Deci, 2020), which asserts that the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs supports the emergence of sustained intrinsic motivation.

The present study is consistent with those of Khreisat (2023), who reported that intrinsic motivation significantly improves reading comprehension and self-efficacy among EFL students in Saudi Arabia. Gan et al. (2023) and Ma and Zhao (2025) also found that intrinsically motivated readers are more likely to use higher-order cognitive strategies. However, the results of this study differ slightly from those of Indrayadi (2021), who found that Indonesian EFL students are still more influenced by extrinsic factors. This difference is likely due to the context of the research participants—the non-majors in this study read academic texts directly related to their fields, so their interest and relevance to the reading material was higher than that of students in English language education programs.

Moreover, intrinsic motivation shows a significant relationship to reading performance ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), whereas extrinsic motivation demonstrated a weaker relationship ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This adds the validity of Reading Engagement Theory, as proposed by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), which posits that reading achievement results from the interactions between motivational and cognitive factors. The intrinsic motivation that readers have will lead to more effective cognitive strategies to comprehend academic texts. This claim aligns with previous research conducted by Wang, Jia et al. (2020), which found that intrinsic motivation could positively enhance students' reading skills, although it is implemented in diverse reading strategies. These strategies include making inferences, analyzing discourse structure, and relating the content of the reading to prior knowledge or experience. Conversely, instrumental extrinsic motivation is more often associated with surface learning, which is reading merely to fulfil task requirements or obtain grades, as also expressed by Schiefele et al. (2012).

As a concrete example, students who are interested in topics relevant to their majors tend to read more actively, mark important ideas, and interpret their contextual meaning. For example, articles on public policy for public administration students (Sodoy & Apostol, 2024), or on early childhood education for early childhood education students (Adlis, 2022). Such activities are rarely done by students who only read out of obligation or to obtain certain grades. Therefore, the relevance of reading material to students' fields of study can be considered one of

the main causes of differences in reading engagement and performance between groups with high and low motivation (Gandari & Jaya, 2024).

The findings of this study add to the body of literature on the relationship between motivation and academic reading in the ESP contexts in various disciplines, particularly intrinsic motivation. This finding strengthens the argument of Cubillos and Troncoso (2025) which states that the most important predictor of student academic English reading success is intrinsic motivation. This predictor is not only proven in English major students but also in non-English major students. In other words, this type of motivation makes a strong contribution to enhancing students' knowledge through various academic texts.

Additionally, the findings of this study provide some pedagogical implications for teaching English in the ESP contexts. Teachers who teach English to non-English majors should employ more reading strategies to foster students' intrinsic motivation. Also, the teachers may be more focused on designing English reading materials or selecting English passages that are relevant to their disciplines, so their reading skills are improved significantly (Gufron & Azmin, 2022). These relevant materials can be designed in attractive activities to enhance students' reading interest, for example, collaborative learning (Karimi & Dastgoshadeh, 2018). Teachers may also ask their students to access Open Educational Resources (OER) to increase their autonomy and engagement in embracing reading. Thus, by integrating those principles, the improvement is not only for reading skills but also for other aspects that contribute to it, such as attitudes, autonomous learning, and learning engagement.

## **Conclusion and Suggestion**

Students' motivation makes a significant contribution to the success of reading academic texts during their academic journey. This study highlights that the most important factor influencing non-English students in social sciences and humanities in academic reading is intrinsic motivation. Students who have internal drives, such as interest in the reading topic, curiosity, and personal satisfaction in understanding the text, demonstrate better reading performance, especially in terms of literal and inferential comprehension. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation, such as academic demands and grades, still contributes, but its influence is relatively limited and situational. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening a learning

orientation that focuses on meaning and autonomy in the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) learning.

Although this study makes a significant contribution to the literature and pedagogical practices, it also has some limitations that should be addressed. This study only captured some of the complex affective and cognitive dimensions of the academic reading process using the motivation and reading test instruments. Therefore, the future study is recommended to use a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data to reveal the psychological mechanisms behind the relationship between motivation and reading skills. Interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research is also needed to explore how the relevance of the field of study and the type of academic reading affect the dynamics of student motivation. In addition, pedagogical experiments that integrate discipline-based reading materials and open technologies such as Open Educational Resources (OER) can be a strategic step to test the effectiveness of interventions that foster intrinsic motivation and sustainably improve academic reading skills

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