

**DRIVEN TO READ:
STUDENTS' SELF-DETERMINATION IN EXTENSIVE READING**

M. Sayid Wijaya ✉

English Education Department
UIN Raden Intan Lampung
Indonesia

Article Information	Abstract
<p>Received: September 28, 2025 Revised: November 18, 2025 Accepted: December 5, 2025</p>	<p>Extensive reading (ER) has been widely recognized for its role in developing students' vocabulary size and fluency in the last decade. Students' success in this reading relies on their psychological needs so that they can keep on motivated to read during the reading program. Thus, it is urged to investigate students' self-determination in terms of competence, relatedness, and autonomy during their enrolment in Extensive Reading class. This was a quantitative survey research conducted on second year students who took ER class on English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Referring to Slovin formula, with 10% margin of error, it was obtained that 65 out of 188 students became the sample of this research. The data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed descriptively. Based on the analysis, it was attained that the autonomy aspect yielded a mean score of 3.30 with a SD of 0.53. For the competence aspect, the mean score was 3.48 with an SD = 0.56). The relatedness aspect had a mean score of 3.34 and an SD of 0.53. To sum up, the findings revealed that students perceived all three elements of self-determination positively. In summary, the findings indicate that students held positive perceptions across all three elements of self-determination. Moreover, the low standard deviations observed for each aspect suggest a high degree of consistency in students' responses. This implies that when students' basic psychological needs were met during their enrolment in ER class, they were more likely to develop intrinsic motivation for reading, which would become a habit.</p> <p>Keywords: Self-determination; Extensive Reading; Survey Design</p>

Introduction

Reading is widely recognized as a basis of second and foreign language learning. It not only provides access to linguistic input but also promotes the development of cognitive and affective dimensions that contribute to overall language proficiency. In recent decades, Extensive Reading (ER) has been highlighted as a particularly effective approach to enhance language skills and promote reading engagement (Krashen, 2004; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). The ER approach emphasizes large amounts of reading, the use of interesting and comprehensible materials, and learners' freedom to select texts according to their interests and proficiency levels (Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). These characteristics distinguish ER from more traditional intensive reading practices, making it a central practice in many EFL classrooms. Despite its proven benefits in vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, and general language development (Krashen, 2004; Nakanishi, 2015; Suk, 2017), ER participation is also influenced by affective variables, particularly learner motivation, which determines the extent to which students willingly and persistently engage in reading activities (Takase, 2007; Yamashita, 2013).

Motivation in language learning has long been a major concern in English language research. Earlier studies often conceptualized motivation through socio-educational models (Gardner, 1985) or dichotomies such as intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation (Dunn & Zimmer, 2020). Following these perspectives, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has emerged as a strong framework to understand learner motivation in diverse educational contexts. According to SDT, human motivation is sustained when three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Numerous studies have applied SDT to second language acquisition, demonstrating that students are more engaged when they feel they can make choices, experience growth in their abilities, and feel connected to teachers or peers (Noels, 2003; Ushioda, 2011). In the specific context of reading, the principles of ER resonate strongly with SDT because they provide autonomy in material selection, support competence through gradual progress, and allow for relatedness through shared experiences (Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). Similarly, it was found that ER programs in EFL classrooms can positively influence motivational regulation, leading students toward more self-determined forms of engagement (Iwata, 2022a). These studies affirm the relevance of SDT as a lens to explore motivation in reading contexts.

Despite the growing body of research, important gaps remain. Previous investigations have emphasized mainly the linguistic outcomes of ER, such as vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Krashen, 2004; Yamashita, 2013), or have described the theoretical compatibility between ER and SDT without empirically measuring students' psychological experiences (Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). While studies such as (Leeming & Harris, 2022) have validated instruments to assess self-determined motivation in foreign language contexts, few have specifically examined how students perceive their autonomy, competence, and relatedness during participation in ER programs. In the Indonesian EFL context, research on reading motivation often focuses on general reading habits (Iftanti, 2012) or reading strategies, but rarely integrates the psychological constructs of SDT to analyze learners' intrinsic motivation in relation to ER. This indicates a lack of empirical evidence that directly connects the framework of SDT with students' lived experiences in ER activities at the tertiary level.

This research seeks to address these gaps by investigating students' intrinsic motivation in ER class through the lens of SDT. The novelty of this research lies in its empirical exploration of the three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. They are experienced by EFL university students in Indonesia, and in examining how these motivational dimensions relate to their engagement in ER. Unlike previous research, this research emphasizes the affective foundations that sustain students' reading behaviors. By connecting SDT with ER in the Indonesian EFL context, this research not only contributes to theoretical discussions in applied linguistics but also offers practical implications for designing reading programs that are motivationally supportive and responsive to students' psychological needs.

In light of the issues outlined above, the present research aims to examine how students' intrinsic motivation, conceptualized through the three dimensions of Self-Determination Theory,

is reflected in their participation in Extensive Reading programs. More specifically, it seeks to investigate the extent to which autonomy, competence, and relatedness are experienced by students during their engagement with reading activities, and how these motivational components may relate to their overall reading involvement. Guided by these considerations, the research is driven by one research question: (1) How is students' intrinsic motivation on the lens of SDT during their involvement in ER class? By addressing that question, the research intends to provide a nuanced understanding of the motivational underpinnings of ER participation.

Methods

This research employed a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey design, which is appropriate for systematically describing phenomena and quantifying participants' responses through structured instruments (Creswell, 2013). The aim was to obtain an overview of students' intrinsic motivation in Extensive Reading as conceptualized within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The descriptive approach was believed appropriate because it allowed the researchers to systematically collect and analyze numerical data to describe the characteristics of the respondents' motivation without manipulating variables.

The population of this research consisted of 188 students enrolled in Extensive Reading class in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung. From this population, a sample of 65 students was selected using Slovin's formula with a 10% margin of error to ensure representativeness while maintaining feasibility in data collection. The sample was considered adequate to reflect the population's characteristics and to yield reliable descriptive statistics.

The instrument used was a questionnaire based on the Self-Determination Theory framework, covering the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to enhance accessibility and convenience for respondents. Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The questionnaire was piloted before distribution to check for clarity of wording and reliability.

Data collected from the responses were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. The analysis focused on calculating mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions for each of the three SDT components. The descriptive analysis enabled the researchers to identify the levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness experienced by the students in the context of Extensive Reading. The results are presented in tabular form to provide a clear overview of the students' motivational profiles.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The data were collected using a self-determination questionnaire distributed to students participating in the Extensive Reading class. The questionnaire covered three aspects of self-determination, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness, with five statements for each element. Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics to determine the scores for each aspect.

Table 1. Result of Autonomy

No.	Statement	Total	n	Mean	SD
1	I can freely choose the books I want to read in the Extensive Reading class.	230	65	3.54	0.53
2	I feel that my reading decisions reflect what I truly want to read.	214	65	3.29	0.46
3	I read because I am personally interested in the content, not just for assignments.	210	65	3.23	0.63
4	I feel in control of my reading pace and schedule.	192	65	2.95	0.45
5	I think the Extensive Reading class supports my reading freedom.	227	65	3.49	0.56
Total		1073		3.30	0.53

Table 1. indicated that the mean score for autonomy across all five statements was 3.30 (SD = 0.53). The highest mean score was found in the statement "*I can freely choose the books I want to read in the Extensive Reading class*" ($\bar{x} = 3.54$, SD = 0.53), followed closely by "*I think the Extensive Reading class supports my reading freedom*" ($\bar{x} = 3.49$, SD = 0.56). The lowest mean score was for "*I feel in control of my reading pace and schedule*" ($\bar{x} = 2.95$, SD = 0.45).

Table 2. Result of Competence

No.	Statement	Total	n	Mean	SD
1	I feel more confident in my English reading skills because of the Extensive Reading class.	210	65	3.23	0.55
2	I am able to understand more vocabulary and grammar through reading.	219	65	3.37	0.55
3	I can finish the reading targets in the program successfully.	190	65	2.92	0.62
4	I notice improvement in my reading fluency over time.	209	65	3.22	0.52
5	I feel proud when I finish a book on my own.	226	65	3.48	0.56
Total		1054		3.24	0.56

Table 2. yielded the average score for the competence component was 3.25 (SD = 0.56). The statement "*I feel proud when I finish a book on my own*" received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.48$, SD = 0.56), while the lowest was "*I can finish the reading targets in the class successfully*" ($\bar{x} = 2.92$, SD = 0.62). Other items such as confidence, vocabulary improvement, and fluency showed mean scores ranging from 3.22 to 3.37.

Table 3. Result of Relatedness

No.	Statement	Total	n	Mean	SD
1	I enjoy discussing the books I read with my classmates or teacher.	212	65	3.26	0.54
2	I feel supported by my teacher during the Extensive Reading activities.	229	65	3.52	0.53
3	I feel that my reading experience is meaningful when I can share it with others.	213	65	3.28	0.55
4	I feel connected to other students through shared reading experiences.	209	65	3.22	0.52
5	I feel encouraged when my teacher shows interest in what I read.	221	65	3.4	0.49
Total		1084		3.34	0.53

Table 3. presents the findings related to students' sense of relatedness. The overall mean score was 3.34 (SD = 0.53). The highest score was for "*I feel supported by my teacher during the Extensive Reading activities*" (\bar{x} = 3.52, SD = 0.53), while the lowest was "*I feel connected to other students through shared reading experiences*" (\bar{x} = 3.22, SD = 0.52). The other three items had mean scores ranging between 3.26 and 3.40z.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students' experiences in the Extensive Reading (ER) program reflect a moderate to high level of intrinsic motivation, as framed within the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Dunn & Zimmer, 2020). Among the three components, autonomy showed strong positive responses, especially in the items related to freedom in choosing reading materials and feeling supported by the ER structure. The highest mean score was found in the statement "I can freely choose the books I want to read," indicating that the ER program successfully accommodates students' need for self-directed learning. This supports the idea that when learners are given choice and control over their learning, they are more intrinsically motivated (Dunn & Zimmer, 2020). These results align with findings from (Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016), who argued that the principles of Extensive Reading, such as freedom to choose reading texts, are inherently compatible with SDT's principle of autonomy. Furthermore, it was also emphasized that self-selection of materials in ER fosters a sense of ownership, which is critical in promoting sustained engagement in reading (Iwata, 2022b).

In terms of competence, the results show that students generally perceive improvement in their reading skills through the ER program, particularly in vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. The highest score was for the item "I feel proud when I finish a book on my own," suggesting that the ER experience allows students to perceive their own progress and develop mastery. This reflects the SDT principle that competence is supported when learners experience effectiveness and growth in their actions. According to (Deci & Ryan, 2000), perceived competence enhances intrinsic motivation because students begin to value the activity for the satisfaction it brings. (Leeming & Harris, 2022) similarly found that students who perceived their language skills as improving through reading were more self-determined and motivated to read. However, the lowest score in the competence domain was in completing reading targets, which may suggest that rigid expectations or external pressures can reduce the feeling of competence, a finding that echoes (Krashen, 2004) view that overstructured reading programs may hinder rather than help intrinsic motivation.

Finally, the results related to relatedness revealed moderately positive responses, indicating that while students generally felt a sense of connection within the Extensive Reading (ER) classroom, this feeling was not as strongly developed as autonomy or competence. Students felt most connected when supported by their teacher and when their reading interests were acknowledged. These findings highlight the importance of social support in fostering intrinsic motivation, as posited by SDT's third pillar: relatedness. Feeling emotionally supported and connected to teachers or peers helps learners internalize the value of reading activities. This is consistent with findings, who emphasized the role of teacher encouragement in shaping students' reading habits. Furthermore, when students perceive reading as a socially shared and appreciated activity, they are more likely to develop long-term motivation (Iftanti, 2012). However, the lowest score in this domain—"I feel connected to other students through shared reading experiences"—might indicate a need for more peer-based or collaborative elements within the ER program, such as group discussions or book clubs, to strengthen the social dimension of reading.

Conclusion

This research examined students' intrinsic motivation in Extensive Reading (ER) through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and found that students demonstrated moderate to high levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, suggesting that the ER class effectively supported their psychological needs. Autonomy emerged as the strongest component, as students

valued their freedom to select reading materials and manage their reading pace, while competence was reflected in their growing confidence and sense of achievement, and relatedness was primarily nurtured through teacher support. These findings confirm that fulfilling the three SDT needs enhances intrinsic motivation and supports engagement in reading activities, contributing empirical evidence to the intersection of SDT and ER in the Indonesian EFL context.

Pedagogically, the results imply that teachers should promote autonomy through flexible book selection and self-paced reading, strengthen competence by setting attainable reading goals and providing constructive, formative feedback, and foster relatedness through collaborative reading practices such as group discussions and book-sharing sessions. Educational institutions are encouraged to support ER programs by providing diverse, level-appropriate reading resources and creating a supportive learning environment that values student-centered approaches. Curriculum designers should integrate SDT-based principles into ER syllabi by embedding opportunities for choice, self-reflection, and peer interaction. Additionally, students are encouraged to take greater ownership of their reading development by actively setting personal reading targets and engaging in reflective practices to monitor their progress. For future researchers, further studies may explore longitudinal impacts of SDT-informed ER instruction or examine motivational differences across proficiency levels and institutional contexts.

Integrating SDT principles into ER pedagogy thus creates a more motivating, learner-centered environment that supports both language development and the cultivation of lifelong reading habits.

References

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. <https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104>
- Dunn, J. C., & Zimmer, C. (2020). Self-determination Theory. *Routledge Handbook of Adapted Physical Education*, 55(1), 296–312. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429052675-23>
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. Edward Arnold.
- Iftanti, E. (2012). A Survey of the English Reading Habits of EFL Students in Indonesia. *TEFLIN Journal*, 23(2), 149–164.
- Iwata, A. (2022a). An Extensive Reading Program as an Educational Intervention in an EFL Classroom. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 34(2), 208–231.
- Iwata, A. (2022b). An Extensive Reading Program as an Educational Intervention in an EFL Classroom. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 34(2), 208–231.
- Krashen, D. S. (2004). *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research (2nd ed.)*. Heinemann, and Libraries Unlimited.
- Leeming, P., & Harris, J. (2022). Measuring Foreign Language Students' Self-Determination: A Rasch Validation Study. *Language Learning*, 72(3), 646–694. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12496>
- Nakanishi, T. (2015). A Meta-Analysis of Extensive Reading Research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 49(1), 6–37. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.157>
- Noels, K. A. (2003). Learning Spanish as a second language: Learners' orientations and perceptions of their teachers' communication style. *Language Learning*, 53(SUPPL. 1), 97–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.53225>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61(xxxx), 101860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>

- Suk, N. (2017). The Effects of Extensive Reading on Reading Comprehension, Reading Rate, and Vocabulary Acquisition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 52(1), 73–89. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.152>
- Takase, A. (2007). Japanese High School Students' Motivation for Extensive L2 Reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 19(1), 1–18.
- Turkdogan, G., & Sivell, J. (2016). Self-Determination Theory and Day and Bamford's Principles For Extensive Reading. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 10(2), 159–179.
- Ushioda, E. (2011). Motivating learners to speak as themselves. In G. Murray, X. Gao, & T. Lamb (Eds.), *Identity, Motivation and Autonomy in Language Learning* (pp. 11–24). Multilingual Matters.
- Yamashita, J. (2013). Effects of extensive reading on reading attitudes in a foreign language. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 25(2), 248–263. <https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/66872>