

## **Analysis of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) in EFL Students' Reading Motivation**

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### **Abstract**

Motivation is a key determinant of success in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in reading, which requires sustained concentration, strategic approaches, and perseverance. However, many students struggle to maintain reading motivation, highlighting the need for a framework that explains strong and sustained motivational engagement. Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) provides such a framework, offering insights into the triggers, sustaining mechanisms, and contextual influences on motivation. This study investigates the triggers and maintenance strategies of DMC, describes students' experiences within this motivational state, analyzes the impact of contextual and instructional factors, and explores its implications for engagement and long-term reading habit formation. This study employed a mixed-methods convergent design, data were collected from 14 fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program through total sampling. The quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data underwent Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings indicate that DMC is triggered by both positive and negative experiences, social support, and tangible reading progress. Motivation is sustained through reading routines and incremental goal-setting. Students in DMC reported positive emotional engagement, a clear long-term vision, and structured behavioral patterns, though internalization levels varied. Classroom environment, teaching strategies, and peer and lecturer support were found critical in initiating and sustaining DMC.

**Keywords:** Directed Motivational Currents (DMC), EFL Students, Reading Motivation, Reading Skills

### **INTRODUCTION**

Motivation is one of the main determinants in the second language acquisition process, especially in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). As stated by Abdullah (2019), motivation is a drive from within a person that directs individuals to act in achieving certain goals. In English language learning, which requires a long and repetitive process, motivation is not only the initial trigger, but also the foundation that sustains the learning process (Zhou, 2024). Without motivation, learning tends to be passive, undirected, and prone to stagnation. Conversely, with strong motivation, students can increase perseverance, strengthen resilience to learning challenges, and encourage active engagement in the learning process. Therefore, building and maintaining learning motivation is an important aspect in supporting the overall success of English language learning.

One of the English language skills that EFL students need to master is

reading. Reading occupies a central role in higher education because it is the main basis in supporting students' academic mastery. Reading is a complex and multidimensional process that goes beyond simply deciphering written text. It involves linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural aspects, including the ability to scan codes, symbols, and other representations that contain patterns (Fatimah, 2020; Qizi, 2024). The urgency of reading skills lies not only in its function as a means of obtaining information, but also as a foundation in supporting independent learning and practicing critical thinking skills. Students who have good reading skills tend to be better able to understand various types of academic texts, such as scientific journals, research articles, and reference books, most of which are available in English. In addition, reading ability has also been shown to contribute positively to the development of other language skills, such as writing and speaking (Nguyen, 2022; Ismaili, 2024).

Despite its importance, EFL students frequently struggle to sustain engagement in reading activities. The phenomena of low motivation to read, lack of interest in the text, and superficial engagement are significant obstacles in forming productive reading habits (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2024). These problems are exacerbated by other factors such as limited reading strategies, anxiety in understanding unfamiliar texts, and the absence of meaningful personal goals (Murzakanova, 2025). In the long run, this condition not only results in low academic achievement but also hinders the overall development of English language skills. This suggests that reading motivation cannot be understood as something static, but rather as a dynamic and contextualized process (Campbell & Storch, 2011).

Along with the paradigm shift in motivation studies, conventional motivation approaches that are static and tend to focus on short-term goals are considered inadequate in explaining intense and sustainable long-term motivation processes (Steel & König, 2006). The response to this limitation gave birth to a new, more dynamic approach, known as the Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) concept. Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) was introduced by Zoltán Dörnyei in 2013 which refers to very strong, focused, and directed motivational currents, which drive individuals to achieve specific goals in the long term (Muir & Gümüş, 2020; Muir & Ibrahim, 2014). DMC is characterized by a clear vision, strong emotional engagement, and goal-directed behavioral routines (Dörnyei et al., 2016:2 in Kufić & Martinović, 2023:190). Unlike typical motivation, DMC is more focused, energetic, and able to sustain its intensity independently. Based on these characteristics, DMC is seen as relevant to explain how students' long-term engagement in reading activities can be formed and maintained, despite the various challenges faced.

Previous studies have shown that Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) play an important role in language skills, although the focus of research has not been directed much toward reading activities. To understand the complexity of this phenomenon, various studies have been conducted in diverse educational contexts outside Indonesia with differing scopes. In the realm of speaking skills, Liangyan (2023) found that clear goal orientation and positive feedback can strengthen the motivational currents of non-English major students, although the study was limited to three case study participants. Meanwhile, Oh & Kim (2024) emphasized that Korean students' DMC is influenced by personal vision and social support, but this study remains tied to a specific cultural context and does not examine

reading skills. From a quantitative perspective, Shen et al. (2025) analyzed the DMC of Chinese students preparing for a national-scale English language exam and found a significant contribution of DMC to academic performance. On the other hand, Khan et al. (2024) highlighted the role of social and cultural factors in shaping DMC pathways, with aspirations for social mobility as the primary driver.

In contrast to studies at the international level, research on DMC in Indonesia is still relatively limited. Abbas et al. (2022) even emphasize that this study in the context of Indonesian EFL students is rarely conducted and still widely open for exploration. For instance, Rasman (2018) found that teaching abroad can trigger the emergence of DMC among pre-service EFL students, although not all participants experience it intensely. Maharsi et al. (2024) also highlight the role of DMC in shaping reader identity through extensive reading programs, but the focus of the study is more on identity than reading motivation. In a different context, Wenlong et al. (2024) documented the emergence of DMC in the professional development of Mandarin language teachers in Indonesian Islamic schools, demonstrating the flexibility of this concept across various educational contexts.

Thus, although DMC has been extensively studied in various aspects and language skills, research specifically highlighting the role of DMC in EFL students' reading skills is still very limited. This gap serves as the foundation for this study to further explore the factors that trigger the emergence of DMC in reading activities, while also understanding how students describe their conceptual and instructional experiences when immersed in this motivational flow, as well as its impact on engagement and sustained reading habits. This study is expected to contribute to enriching the understanding of reading motivation in English language learning, thereby providing conceptual novelty that has not been extensively explored in previous literature.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a mixed-methods design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) in EFL students' reading motivation. Using a convergent design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and compared to generate complementary insights (R. Adhikari & Timsina, 2024; Heap & Waters, 2019). The quantitative component consisted of a descriptive survey using a Likert-scale questionnaire to identify DMC-related factors influencing students' reading motivation. This approach provided numerical patterns representing students' perceptions. The qualitative component adopted Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (RQM), a method that begins with observed outcomes and works backward to uncover the conditions that produced them (Dörnyei, 2014; Gu, 2023). This strategy is suitable for examining DMC because of its dynamic, context-dependent, and retrospective nature. The participants were 14 fourth-semester EFL students from the English Education Study Program at the University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. They were selected purposively based on the following criteria: (1) active enrollment in the program, (2) completion of foundational reading courses, and (3) willingness to maintain reading journals and participate in interviews.

Data analysis followed the logic of the mixed-methods design. Qualitative data from reading journals and semi-structured interviews were

analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2004). The analysis involved repeated reading of transcripts, identification of initial themes, clustering themes into superordinate categories, constructing a master table, and producing a narrative interpretation supported by participant quotations. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed descriptively through frequency and percentage calculations to determine the distribution of responses on each item. Percentages were computed using Sudijono (2008:43), namely:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \%$$

Note:

P = Percentage

F = Frequency of Occurrence

N = Number of Respondents

100 = Fixed Number of Percentage

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### Triggers and Maintainers of DMCs on EFL Reading Motivation

DMC arises as a result of the presence of a stimulus that is able to trigger a response in the individual. When the stimulus is activated, it can lead to intense and sustained motivation. This triggering stimulus acts as a lighter that stimulates individuals to consistently move towards achieving certain goals. The cause of the active trigger stimulus in students in reading activities can be seen through the results of the following questionnaire.

Table 1.1  
Respondents' Responses to DMC Triggers and Mechanisms

No	Statements	Number of Respondents' Answers				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	I once had an unpleasant incident that made me feel compelled to improve my reading skills in English.	-	2	6	6	-
2.	I have had significant opportunities or experiences that have fueled my passion for reading in English.	-	1	5	8	-
3.	I often get encouragement from others to continue reading in English.	-	1	5	7	1
4.	Seeing my progress in reading (e.g. understanding more	-	1	4	9	-

	difficult texts) encourages me.					
5.	I have an English reading routine that I do consistently.	-	-	8	5	1
6.	I set small targets for my reading and monitor my achievements.	-	1	8	5	-
Total		0	6	36	40	2
Percentage		0	0,42%	2,57%	2,85%	0,14%

Based on the results of the questionnaire and interviews, it is known that the emergence of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) in students' reading activities is triggered by a combination of negative experiences, positive experiences, and the social support they receive. Although negative experiences such as difficulty understanding English academic material provide initial motivation for some students, the findings show that positive experiences are more dominant in driving intense reading motivation. Participation in international seminars, ease in understanding certain texts, and encouragement from the social environment proved to be stronger motivators. In addition to triggers, the mechanism that maintains DMC appears to be through reading routines that students begin to establish, such as setting aside specific time for reading or setting small weekly goals. Although not yet fully consistent among all respondents, the existence of these routines and small achievements indicates the formation of a facilitative structure that maintains the flow of reading motivation.

### Students' Experiences of being in DMC during EFL Reading Activities

Students' experiences of being in Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) illustrate how intense and sustained motivation emerges during reading activities. The dynamic and immersive nature of DMC not only promotes consistent reading behavior but also fosters strong emotional engagement. Reflections from logbooks, interviews, and questionnaires showed that students often felt carried along by the reading process, guided by clear goals and a concrete sense of progress. These experiences highlight key characteristics of DMC, including internal emotional states, the learning strategies students employ, and the internal and external factors that help sustain their motivation for intensive reading.

Table 1.2  
*Respondents' Responses to Their Experiences with DMCs Conditions*

No	Statements	Number of Respondents' Answers				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	I feel happy and excited every time I do reading activities in English.	-	-	7	6	1
2.	The activity of reading in English feels meaningful and in line with my life goals.	-	-	6	8	-

3.	I read because I have long-term goals that I want to achieve through my English skills.	-	2	5	5	2
4.	I have a clear picture of myself in the future as someone who reads fluently in English.	-	1	8	4	1
Total		0	3	26	23	4
Percentage		0,00%	0,21%	1,85%	1,64%	0,28%

Students who reported having experienced DMC described a reading experience that was much more focused, directed, and accompanied by emotional immersion. They felt that reading became more enjoyable and meaningful, especially when the material was related to their personal interests or relevant to their academic needs. However, this experience did not occur automatically; emotional involvement and deep focus usually arose when there were certain contextual stimuli, such as interesting topics or academic demands. In addition, students began to associate reading with long-term goals, such as further study or aspirations to work abroad. However, only a small number of them truly envision themselves as proficient English readers in the future. This indicates that the "future self-vision" component, as one of the important elements of DMC, has not yet been fully formed in all students, although a tendency in that direction is beginning to emerge through logbooks and interview statements.

### **Influence of Contextual and Instructional Factors on DMC Emergence**

The presence of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) in reading is shaped not only by internal factors such as personal goals and positive emotions, but also by contextual and instructional conditions that influence students' learning experiences. Classroom climate, teaching approaches, reading tasks, and support from lecturers and peers play key roles in triggering and sustaining the intense motivational flow characteristic of DMC. The findings indicate that these external factors can function either as catalysts or barriers in students' motivational processes during EFL reading activities.

Table 1.3  
*Respondents' Responses to Influence of Contextual and Instructional Factors on DMC Emergence*

No	Statements	Number of Respondents' Answers				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Before joining the reading activity, I already had clear personal goals regarding my English reading skills.	-	-	7	6	1
2.	The small successes I had achieved in reading	-	-	6	7	1



	made me more confident to read more.					
3.	My learning environment (e.g. class or study group) is very supportive in achieving my reading goals.	-	-	6	8	-
4.	Teachers or lecturers play an important role in maintaining my enthusiasm to continue reading in English.	-	1	5	6	2
Total		0	1	24	27	4
Percentage		0,00%	0,07%	1,71%	1,92%	0,28%

Contextual and instructional factors appear to contribute significantly to the emergence and sustainability of DMC in student reading activities. A supportive learning environment, such as an interactive classroom atmosphere and a culture of sharing reading resources among friends, creates conditions conducive to students building sustained motivation. Small successes in understanding texts, receiving appreciation from lecturers, or ease in participating in class discussions also strengthen students' sense of competence, thereby reinforcing their drive to continue reading. The role of lecturers in providing guidance, feedback, and reading recommendations is considered quite important, although students' perceptions of the intensity of this support vary. Overall, contextual and instructional factors serve as catalysts for motivation, although there is still room for optimization, especially in helping students formulate more explicit personal reading goals.

### DMC's Impact on Reading Comprehension, Learning Engagement, and Reading Habits

The experience of being in a state of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) not only impacts on momentary motivational boosts, but also has a long-term influence on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects in the process of learning to read. The findings indicate that when students experience DMC, they show deeper reading comprehension, more active and reflective learning engagement, and the emergence of more consistent and sustainable reading habits. This section will elaborate in detail how the motivational flows experienced by the students impacted on their learning outcomes and identity formation as EFL learners.

Table 1.4  
Respondents' Responses regarding DMCs Impact on Reading Comprehension, Learning Engagement, and Reading Habits

No	Statements	Number of Respondents' Answers				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	After experiencing high energy in reading, I feel that my comprehension of English texts has improved.	-	-	7	6	1

2.	I feel more engaged and focused when reading English texts than before.	-	2	5	7	-
3.	I continue to read English texts regularly even outside of classwork.	-	-	10	3	1
4.	Reading in English has become part of my daily habit or lifestyle.	-	1	8	4	1
Total		0	3	30	20	3
Percentage		0	0,21%	2,14%	1,42%	0,21%

The experience of being in a DMC environment has had a tangible impact on students' text comprehension skills, learning engagement, and the formation of reading habits. They reported an increase in their ability to comprehend texts more quickly, more critically, and with greater confidence when faced with long or complex readings. In addition, their engagement in reading activities also increased, marked by greater focus and enthusiasm for the material being read. A number of students even began to read independently outside of their coursework requirements, indicating the beginning of long-term reading habits. However, the process of internalizing these reading habits was not uniform among all respondents, as some students were still in a transitional stage where reading was beginning to be considered important but had not yet fully become part of their academic identity. Nevertheless, these findings confirm that DMC is capable of gradually encouraging changes in reading behavior through improvements in reading skills, engagement, and routines.

## Discussion

The findings of this study show that the emergence of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) in students' reading activities is primarily triggered by significant academic experiences—both positive and negative—along with social support from peers and the learning environment. These results align with the concept of triggering stimuli described in DMC theory (Dörnyei et al., 2014), which suggests that emotionally charged events, academic challenges, or opportunities linked to learners' aspirations can activate intense and sustained motivational surges. In this study, negative experiences, such as difficulty understanding English academic texts, acted as initial triggers for some students. However, positive experiences—such as attending international seminars or realizing improvements in reading ability—played a more dominant role in generating strong and lasting motivation to read. This supports Muir & Dörnyei's (2013) assertion that DMC triggers can emerge from inspirational moments that align with learners' long-term goals. Furthermore, the development of reading routines and small, manageable targets among students reflects the establishment of salient facilitative structures, an essential mechanism that maintains the continuity of DMC. These findings are consistent with Maharsi et al. (2024), who identified learning routines and social interaction as key contributors to the stability of students' reading motivation.

Students' experiences during DMC conditions reveal high emotional and cognitive engagement in reading. They reported deep concentration,



enjoyment, and a sense of being carried along by the reading activity, especially when the material was relevant to their personal interests or academic needs. This emotional immersion is characteristic of positive emotionality, a central feature of DMC (Ibrahim, 2016). From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), such experiences indicate fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy and competence. However, not all students demonstrated a fully developed ideal L2 self as a proficient English reader. Many struggled to clearly envision how reading skills would contribute to their future academic or professional identity. This mirrors findings within the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009), suggesting that the "vision" component is not yet strongly internalized. As a result, the intensity of DMC that emerges tends to be episodic and dependent on situational triggers. This interpretation is strengthened by He et al. (2022), who emphasize that the sustainability of motivational currents largely depends on learners' ability to link present learning activities to a meaningful future self-image.

Contextual and instructional factors also play a crucial role in supporting the emergence and maintenance of DMC. A supportive learning environment characterized by active classroom discussions, collaborative reading practices, and peer encouragement, creates conditions that facilitate motivational flow during reading. Small academic successes, such as understanding difficult texts, provide positive reinforcement that enhances students' sense of competence, consistent with Self-Determination Theory's emphasis on mastery experiences (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Additionally, instructors' feedback, reading guidance, and encouragement contribute to sustaining students' motivation, although students perceived the intensity of this support differently. These findings align with Shen et al. (2025), who found that perceived progress is one of the strongest predictors of DMC in academic settings. However, the study also shows that not all students can fully benefit from contextual and instructional support, indicating the need for more personalized and reflective pedagogical approaches to enhance DMC emergence across diverse learners.

The impact of DMC on students' reading comprehension, engagement, and reading habits is substantial. During periods of high motivational flow, students reported improved comprehension, faster reading speed, and greater ability to critically analyze text structure and authors' arguments. Their engagement also increased, with students expressing higher levels of focus, interest, and willingness to read beyond assigned coursework. This indicates a process of motivational internalization, in which reading becomes personally meaningful rather than merely task-driven. However, the development of long-term reading habits remains uneven. Although several students now read independently and regularly, others are still transitioning toward integrating reading as part of their academic lifestyle. These findings support DMC theory's assertion that motivational currents can promote long-term behavioral transformation, but the extent of change depends on the interplay between personal aspirations, contextual support, and instructional influence.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study shows that the emergence of Directed Motivational Currents

(DMCs) in EFL students' reading motivation is triggered by meaningful experiences connected to visions of the future, both negative pressures and positive opportunities. Factors such as academic success, social support and involvement in international activities proved to be the dominant triggers that encouraged students to read in a more focused, purposeful and sustained manner. In addition, students begin to build DMC support mechanisms such as reading routines, target setting, and progress monitoring systems, although the level of consistency still varies.

The experience of being in a DMC state is characterized by increased emotional engagement, awareness of long-term goals, and transformation of motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic. Perhaps not all students are able to maintain the motivational flow consistently, however, due to the situational nature of DMC and the need for re-triggering. Contextual and instructional factors, such as the role of the lecturer, classroom atmosphere, and peer support, were shown to play an important role in sustaining DMC. Meanwhile, the long-term impact of DMC is seen in increased reading comprehension, active engagement, and the formation of reading habits as part of an academic lifestyle. Therefore, DMC does not only serve as a momentary boost, but also has transformational potential in shaping students' academic identity and sustainability of learning English.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

Future research is recommended to broaden the scope of the population by involving participants from diverse universities, as well as varied social, academic, and educational backgrounds, in order to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Such diversity is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) in the context of language learning. Furthermore, future studies should extend the investigation of DMC to other English language skills, including speaking, writing, and listening, to achieve a more holistic understanding of its role in overall English language acquisition. This broader approach is expected not only to enrich the theoretical framework of DMC, but also to offer practical implications for the development of motivation-based learning strategies across different language skill domains.

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