

Reading Motivation: Classroom-Based Instruction and the Potential of Electronic-Text Reading

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Abstract: Based on a review of existing research, this paper provides an overview of the strategies that teachers can use in their classrooms to enhance students' reading motivation. First, we present the theoretical and empirical rationales for focusing on reading motivation and review effective classroom practices reported in the literature. We examine electronic-text (e-book) reading and its potential to promote children's reading motivation. The research suggests that electronic-text reading has positive effects on children's reading motivation. Nonetheless, electronic texts pose unique challenges. Considering these challenges, this paper outlines recommendations to teachers for making the best use of electronic-text reading to promote children's reading motivation in their classrooms.

Keywords: Reading motivation, Classroom instruction, Electronic-text reading

Introduction

Reading motivation refers to readers' goals, values, and beliefs about reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Some researchers have pointed out that teaching cognitive skills alone is not enough to increase children's reading ability: children can fail in reading if they are not sufficiently motivated to read (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Further, children who are motivated to read have an advantage over their reluctant peers in reading achievement which might lead to larger individual differences in their academic, social, and civic life (Gambrell, 2015). Due to the importance of reading motivation, many teachers have suggested that their primary concern is to motivate students to read in the classroom context (Veenman, 1984; Gambrell, 1996). This paper provides an overview of how reading motivation can be promoted in the classroom. The first section will review the effective classroom practices that enhance reading motivation and their corresponding theoretical and empirical rationales. The second section will discuss electronic texts and their implications for increasing reading motivation.

Creating a Motivating Reading Classroom

Schools play an important role in promoting children's reading development. According to a survey by Scholastic (2015), 14% of children aged 6 to 17 read for pleasure mostly in school, and nearly one third (31%) read for pleasure at both school and home. The fact that many children engage in reading in school creates educational opportunities for teachers to bolster children's reading motivation. That is, teachers can capitalize on students' enjoyment of reading at school when combining instructions on reading with reading motivation techniques. In the following section, we review motivation constructs that have been found to be associated with reading ability and instructional practices supporting reading motivation.

Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation: Making Reading Relevant

Intrinsic motivation refers to a positive disposition toward engagement in an activity because one is interested in the activity itself, not for extrinsic reasons (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Wigfield and Guthrie (1995, 1997) conceptualized intrinsic motivation of reading as having three dimensions: (a) *curiosity*, the desire to read text on a particular topic; (b) *involvement*, the extent to which a reader enjoys a reading experience; and (c) *importance*, the value of reading, as perceived by the reader. They found that intrinsic motivation was significantly correlated with the amount and breadth of children's reading. Using the same conceptualization, Baker and Wigfield (1999) also found that intrinsic motivation was associated with children's self-reported reading activities.

Guthrie and colleagues found that their Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) framework increased children's intrinsic reading motivation (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014; Guthrie, McRae, & Klauda, 2007; Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012). The instructional principle they employed was *relevance* (i.e., linking children's reading with their direct or indirect life experience or knowledge), which included activities such as linking reading materials to a hands-on activity and to children's life outside of the class. Gambrell (2011, 2015) also suggested that connecting reading to the real world was important for motivating readers. She posited that *authentic* reading experiences — reading that closely connected with children's "real life" and their needs and interests—were

effective in linking reading and children. She gave the example of a program in which children and their adult pen pals read the same book and shared their reflections with each other through letters.

Enhancing Self-Determination: Offering Choices

Some researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) have proposed that intrinsic motivation is a result of one's feelings of *self-determination*. With respect to reading, this means having control over the reading process. Many researchers consider self-determination a crucial factor in facilitating reading motivation (Gambrell, 2011; Gambrell & Morrow, 1996; Wigfield, 2000). Sweet, Guthrie, and Ng (1998), for example, found that giving children more control over their reading process can effectively improve their reading motivation. In their CORI framework, Guthrie et al. (2007) used the term "autonomy" in discussing children's self-determination of their reading and proposed that researchers needed to give children choices in order to foster their autonomy. Choices given to the children can vary, including permitting them to select books, topics, reading partners, and reading activities; choices, however, should be limited—otherwise, children may feel overwhelmed and confused. Additionally, teachers need to support children, especially struggling readers, in making choices in their reading activities (Antonio & Guthrie, 2008; Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie et al., 2007).

Promoting Self-Efficacy: Fostering Success by Proximal Challenges

Self-efficacy, a key aspect of Bandura's social learning theory (1977, 1997), refers to one's confidence in their ability to accomplish a specific task or activity. Such confidence varies in its strength, generalizability (in one situation or in many), and task difficulty. Individuals who believe that they are competent in doing a task tend to perform better than those who do not. Guthrie and colleagues found that children's self-efficacy in reading is related to the frequency, amount, and breadth of reading activities, and to their reading achievement (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995, 1997; Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Self-efficacy in reading is also associated with children's standardized test scores in reading comprehension and their passage comprehension results (Guthrie et al., 2004).

Studies have also indicated that success in moderately challenging tasks can promote children's self-efficacy (Gambrell, 2011, 2015; Gambrell & Morrow, 1996; Wigfield, 2000). Guthrie et al. (2007), in their CORI model, proposed that teachers can help children set appropriate reading goals and provide them with sufficient feedback in the reading class using several approaches. These include selecting reading materials at the child's reading level, offering frequent feedback on the child's understanding of the text and on reading strategies, and using other scaffolding methods to keep the reading challenge in the child's proximal zone. Further, Gambrell (2011) pointed out that taking on moderate challenges might lead to a virtuous cycle: moderately challenging tasks extend children's skills, and extension of their skills increases their self-efficacy, which eventually encourages them to take on more challenging work.

Enhancing Social Motivation: Collaborative Learning

According to McCombs (1989), social interactions can facilitate human learning. Moreover, learning in a social group may enhance children's motivation (Wigfield, 2000; Gambrell & Morrow, 1996). Further, literacy learning, including reading, is social in nature (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995; Brandt, 1990). Thus, it is possible to utilize reading-related social activities to promote reading comprehension and motivation. Guthrie and colleagues (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995, 1997; Baker & Wigfield, 1999) conceptualized social incentives that can drive a person to read as having two strands: *social reasons for reading*, the desire to share ideas obtained from reading with others, and *compliance*, the willingness to meet other people's requirements or expectations about reading. These authors found that social incentives were significantly associated with reading frequency, amount, breadth, and achievement.

In the classroom, social motivation can occur during collaborations between teacher and students and among students, and such collaborations can result in the acquisition of literacy learning and cognitive skills (Gutiérrez & Lee, 2009; Scribner & Cole, 1981). In their CORI framework, Guthrie et al. (2007) listed practices that could promote collaborative learning in the classroom, such as paired reading and organizing literacy cycles. Gambrell (2015) gave the example of the Classroom Book Tweet activity, in which children share their ideas by writing their reflections on the book they had read in 140 characters and posting them on the tweet board in the classroom. Guthrie et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of 11 CORI studies and extracted 75 effect sizes on 20 motivational

dependent variables. For studies using individual scales as measures, the mean effect size was 0.30. For studies using student self-report, the mean effect size was 1.20, and for studies using teacher ratings, the number was 1.00. These results showed that CORI, incorporating collaborative practices, had positive effects on motivation.

Enhancing Reading Value: Using Extrinsic Incentives

Reading value refers to the importance of reading as perceived by the reader, which is one dimension of intrinsic motivation (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995). As described in a previous section, linking reading with children's real life can help children sense the value of reading, which then motivates them to read more. Meanwhile, reading value can also be a dimension of *extrinsic motivation* (Gambrell, 2011), which refers to being engaged in an activity in order to get an external outcome or reward, such as prizes, grades, or praise (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Researchers have found that extrinsic rewards under certain conditions can improve motivation to learn (Marinak & Gambrell, 2009). Eccles and Wigfield (2002) pointed out that inappropriate external rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation, which may disengage children. Thus, caution is needed in using such rewards.

Gambrell (2011) suggested that reading value can be promoted by extrinsic incentives in the classroom, and that the extrinsic incentives could be tangible or nontangible. Nontangible extrinsic incentives could include teachers' praise and feedback, which have been found to relate positively to children's achievement provided the incentives are honest. Tangible extrinsic incentives, such as gold stars, points, or candy, have been reported as effective in promoting children's motivation in the short term but can undermine the intrinsic motivation in the long term. Gambrell (1996) further pointed out that intrinsic motivation can be enhanced only when incentives are linked to the desired behaviour. The undermining effect of tangible extrinsic incentives on intrinsic motivation may occur because such incentives are not as closely linked to desired reading behaviours as nontangible incentives (Gambrell, 2011).

Other Practices that Enhance Reading Motivation

Other practices have been identified as effective in promoting reading motivation. First, teachers can provide a wide range of reading materials in the classroom, and these materials should include various topics and genres to support children's interests (Gambrell, 2011). Access to a rich reading environment sets the stage for building reading motivation. Second, providing sustained and adequate time for reading at school is also very important (Gambrell, 2011, 2015). Scholastic (2015) reported that only 33% of children aged 6 to 17 had assigned reading time in their class, and only 17% were encouraged to read independently. Similarly, Hiebert (2009) found that reading time is a neglected problem in the school curriculum. At the same time, the amount of reading time is associated with increase in reading motivation (Heathington, 1979; Mizelle, 1997). Thus, promoting in-school reading for pleasure (lunch time book clubs) might be a good means to build more reading time and higher reading motivation into children's lives. Third, behaviours that have negative effects on reading motivation should be avoided, such as teachers' excessive control over the reading process and assigning reading tasks that are too challenging. Guthrie and colleagues (Guthrie et al., 2007; Guthrie et al., 2012) posited that motivation-adverse behaviours not only failed to increase but even undermined reading motivation. Fourth, teachers can use multiple motivation-enhancing practices simultaneously (Guthrie et al., 2007). Reading motivation has a multidimensional nature (Gambrell, 2011) and varies greatly across individuals (Guthrie et al., 2007). Practices that are effective for some students may be ineffective for others; thus, using different practices simultaneously may have more positive effects, overall, on reading motivation.

Electronic-Text Reading and Reading Motivation

With the burgeoning development of technology products, more and more textual information appears in electronic format, and electronic-text reading becomes increasingly prevalent (Hillesund, 2010; Larson, 2010). A survey by the United Kingdom National Literacy Trust reported that 68.7% of UK primary and secondary students read on screens outside of school, and 52.4% would rather read on a screen than in print (Picton, 2014). Another survey reported that people spent almost equal time reading on screen and in print (Gartner Inc., 2013). Along with these changes, the sales of e-books have already exceeded that of print books on Amazon (Bounie, Eang, Sirbu, & Waelbroeck, 2012). Given the prevalence of electronic-text reading, it is meaningful to discuss its particular role in promoting children's reading motivation and the implications for classroom instruction.

Some studies reported that electronic-text reading was positively related to children's reading motivation (Ciampa, 2012; Glasgow, 1997; Picton, 2014; Reinking, 2001). Picton (2014), for example, found that children reading books by both print and touch-screen had greater reading enjoyment than children reading print books only. In another study, Ciampa (2012) used a qualitative approach to investigate the electronic book reading experiences of eight grade one children and found that all children were actively involved in the electronic book reading process. Some other researchers, however, found little evidence of the motivation-promoting potential of electronic-text reading (Aydemir & Ozturk, 2012; Grimshaw, Dungworth, McKnight, & Morris, 2007). Aydemir and Ozturk (2012) compared the reading motivation levels of 60 fifth-grade students in reading narrative and expository texts using either print or electronic medium. The results showed that the reading motivation level of the electronic-text reading group was significantly lower than that of their peers in the print-material group. Further, Grimshaw et al. (2007) reported that the storybook enjoyment of 9- to 10-year-old children did not differ significantly between the electronic-text and the print reading group. One possible reason for the discrepancies in these results is that the reading devices / software differed across studies. Picton (2014), for example, focused on e-book reading on various types of devices, such as computers, tablets, phones, and e-readers. Yet, in Ciampa's (2012) study, children read e-books using the same software on the lab computers. To date, the findings on this topic differ; thus, no general agreement has been reached on the association between reading medium and reading motivation.

Why might the electronic texts enhance reading motivation? Reinking's (2001) theoretical framework about how multimedia electronic texts promote children's reading engagement may answer this question. The first characteristic of multimedia text is its active orientation. Multimedia text tends to be highly responsive; thus, it keeps children active in the reading process and gives them more choices. According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), giving children more choice can increase their motivation. The second characteristic of multimedia text is that it contains a variety of symbol systems, which may make the comprehension process easier. For this reason, children feel less frustrated and have more self-efficacy in reading multimedia text than in reading conventional print text. It should also be noted that the multimedia text should still be moderately challenging in order to promote self-efficacy. Another feature of multimedia text is that it meets a variety of children's needs, including psychological and social needs. For example, it is easier to share electronic texts than print texts. From the perspective of motivational theories, such social learning could improve children's motivation (McCombs, 1989); therefore, reading electronically might provide more social learning opportunities and thereby increase children's motivation. One other characteristic of multimedia text is that it can make the reading process seem less serious because the audio and visual elements of multimedia text add playful factors. High-interest text promotes children's reading motivation (Gambrell, 2011, 2015), and playfulness makes the multimedia text inherently interesting. Because of these various characteristics of multimedia text, reading motivation might be enhanced through electronic-text reading.

One critical perspective on the effects of electronic texts on reading skills and reading motivation is the effect of novelty in electronic reading—that children's increased reading achievement and motivation might result from their reaction to the novelty of technological gadgets and not reading itself (Krendl & Clark, 1994). Ciampa (2012) further pointed out that most existing studies of electronic reading have been short-term and small-scale, and these do not exclude novelty as a confounding effect. To investigate this issue, Ciampa conducted a nine-month study to examine the effects of electronic reading on children's reading motivation. The implicit idea behind Ciampa's study was that the novelty effect would diminish as time goes by, and a long-term study (nine months in her case) can exclude the confounding effect of novelty. The result of the study showed that electronic reading has promise in facilitating children's reading motivation. Ciampa's (2012) study was conducted on a small-scale and employed qualitative methods only. In the future, more long-term, large-scale studies with various methodologies are needed to exclude the novelty effect in the examination of electronic reading. Another critical perspective is that some features of electronic text may distract children's attention; for example, games embedded in the reading text (de Jong & Bus, 2002; Lawrence, Hong, Donnantuono, & Mongillo, 2015). For example, de Jong and Bus (2002) found that print books were more supportive of children's learning of story content and phrasing. One possible explanation was that the games embedded in the e-books distracted children from the text. These authors suggested that teachers should be careful in selecting electronic materials for classroom instruction. Regarding the implications for classroom instruction, teachers could use electronic text to enhance children's reading motivation in the classroom, but they should select electronic materials with care. That is, if the absorbing features in the electronic materials are text-focused, reading electronically can promote children's reading development as well as reading motivation; otherwise, it will distract children's attention to other fancy features of the software's devices, thus failing to promote reading progress.

Future Directions

In the field of research on reading motivation, only some constructs of the broader field of motivation research have been considered and applied to reading motivation research. Researchers can apply other theories or new findings from motivation research to reading motivation research. Many researchers, for example, focused on the effects of students' social goals in the school on their learning outcomes (Jones, 2019), the knowledge of which can be applied in the reading motivation area. In the future, researchers can investigate how the social side of school life impact students' reading behaviours and performance. Further, many studies of reading motivation focus on typically-developing first-language readers. Further studies could explore how to increase the reading motivation of different groups, such as reluctant readers, students with reading difficulties, or second language readers. Additionally, some researchers have pointed out that there are too few studies on electronic-text reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2012; NICHD, 2000). More studies are needed in the future to examine the relationships between electronic-text reading and reading motivation, especially long-term, large-scale studies. Future studies should explore the impact of the "novelty" features of electronic text on children's reading motivation and reading achievement. In addition, more attention should be paid to the phenomenon of distraction, as associated with electronic reading materials, and the mechanisms behind it.

Conclusion

Reading motivation — one's goals, values, and beliefs about reading — plays an important role in children's reading development. Some classroom practices have been identified as effective in promoting children's reading motivation. Linking reading with children's experiences and knowledge can enhance readers' intrinsic motivation. Giving children more choices in the reading process can promote feelings of self-determination; thus, their intrinsic motivation might increase. Supporting successful reading experiences by assigning moderately challenging tasks can also enhance self-efficacy in reading. Providing collaborative learning opportunities responds to the social nature of reading activities and increases social motivation. Both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives can promote the value of reading; yet, certain extrinsic incentives might undermine intrinsic motivation. In addition, researchers suggest that giving children adequate time, providing a wide range of reading materials, avoiding adverse motivation behaviours, and combining multiple practices are effective in promoting reading motivation.

In practice, students require a wide range of moderately-challenging reading materials, including texts closely connected to their personal lives. Moreover, students' reading activities should not be excessively controlled, and whenever possible, students should be allowed to select books, topics, reading partners, or reading activities. The use of collaborative reading activities, such as paired reading and literacy cycles, can also promote reading motivation. Finally, the judicious use of extrinsic incentives, such as prizes, grades, or praise, can promote reading motivation.

With regard to the increasingly prevalent electronic-texts, this format seems to have a positive effect on children's reading motivation due to its active orientation, assistance with comprehension, ability to meet a variety of needs, and playfulness; however, this positive impact may be confounded by the novelty effect. Further, some features of electronic materials may distract children's attention and undermine their reading ability. Thus, when selecting electronic reading materials, teachers can choose materials developed with a text-focus instead of those with text-irrelevant novelty functions.

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