

Reading Motivation: A Key Component To Reading Comprehension

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Abstract - Research shows that motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing a student's reading comprehension. It is aptly associated with learner's academic performance and success in school. However, reading motivation remains a gap in literacy instruction. The purpose of this paper is to present a brief review on the concept of reading motivation, its aspects and dimensions, the different instruments used to assess student's reading motivation, and how reading motivation affects learner's reading comprehension. Significantly, this paper discusses several strategies, approaches, and instructional materials educators could utilize to improve their students' reading motivation.

Keywords - Reading Comprehension, Academic Performance, Instructional Materials, Reading Motivation, Literacy Instruction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Motivation entails the tendency to take action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Pintrich, 2003). Some scholars (e.g., Goodman et al., 2011) stressed that it is a force or a drive to fulfill a need or achieve ambition in life. It could also be a cause "that underlie behavior that is characterized by willingness and volition" (Lai, 2011, p. 2). Significantly, reading motivation is characterized as learner's goals, values, and beliefs which, one way or the other, give weight to the reading process (Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). However, research shows that improving students' motivation to read remains a primary concern of many studies (e.g., Cequena, 2008; Edmunds & Tancock, 2003; Pitcher et al., 2007; Uygulamada & Bilimliri, 2011), especially for struggling students (Peebles, 2007).

II. MOTIVATION AS A PRECURSOR TO READING COMPREHENSION

Many researchers agreed that motivation is an indispensable aspect in the reading process (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010; Haycock, 2005; Johnson & Blaire, 2003; Sturtevant & Kim, 2010; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). This cause Wang and Guthrie (2004) to assert that reading comprehension does not depend solely on cognitive ability but also on one's level of motivation to read. Therefore, motivation is vital to reading comprehension (McLaughlin, 2012).

This idea that motivation plays a crucial role in reading comprehension is clearly manifested in the study of Guthrie and Wigfield (2005) in which they found that motivation influences students' performance on assessments of reading comprehension. This is also consistent in the study of Solheim (2011) in which it was pointed out that motivation is fundamental in improving reading comprehension, and

that the dichotomy of motivation and reading comprehension could be linked with the kind of pedagogy used in the classroom. In addition, Fraser and Killen (2005) indicated that learner's motivational level is one of the factors that give currency to academic performance, especially in the higher levels where many readings are assigned to students and are complicated/high-leveled texts.

III. INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Many researchers and educators believe that motivation is affected by two aspects: intrinsic and extrinsic (e.g., Goodman et al., 2011); or in some cases, a combination of the two (Maslow, 1954). Intrinsic motivation refers to the inner force (e.g., personal enjoyment) that drives individual to do something, while extrinsic is more on external forces like punishment and rewards which might be tangible and intangible (Gest, Rulison, Davidson, & Welsh, 2008; Lai, 2011). These two might converge to reinforce the motivational level of a learner (Davis, Winsler, & Middleton, 2006; Muller & Louw, 2004). It is also an established notion that intrinsic motivators are more valuable than extrinsic.

Goodman et al. (2011) emphasized that learners who are "intrinsically motivated have an inclination to apply effort and thus perform well academically" (p. 381). Though they found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation elicit student's effort to do well academically, however, the result of their study showed that intrinsic motivation is a stronger predictor than the latter.

Further, Wilson and Kelly (2010) emphasized that learners intrinsically motivated to read are most likely "to be successful in school and to do especially well on reading achievement measures" (p. 100). They also emphasized that intrinsically motivated learners like to read materials that are not entirely related to school, especially avid adolescent readers.

Reynolds and Miller (2003) identified three components of intrinsic motivation: (a) expectancy which refers to "beliefs about one's ability to control, perform, or accomplish a task; (b) value which pertains "to goal orientation or cognitive representations of the purpose of a task, one's interest in a task and one's idea about the ultimate utility of a task"; and (c) the affect which relates to "general feelings of self and one's emotional reactions to a task that affect cognitive resources and performance" (p. 8).

IV. ASSESSMENT OF READING MOTIVATION

Measuring and assessing students' motivation to read is vital in the teaching and learning process (Henk, Marinak, &

Melnick, 2012). Hence, educators and researchers developed various motivational tools (Mckenna & Stahl, 2009); each tool measures certain motivational construct/s or dimension/s (e.g., self-concept, attitude, value of reading).

Tullock-Rhody and Alexander (1980) developed a Rhody Secondary Reading Assessment tool which is valid and reliable. Its aim is to measure a student's attitude toward reading. Items are grouped into positive and negative with numeral values for each option. These aid teachers to understand their learners' feeling, especially in the different areas of reading, for example, reading in the library, reading in the home, etc.

Another measurement tool, which is commonly used by educators and researchers, is the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP): Reading Survey designed by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996). Its goal is to assess specific dimensions of reading: self-concept of a reader and value of reading.

Mckenna and Stahl (2009) enumerated and described affective instruments. Some of these are the Adolescent Reading Attitudes Survey (ARAS) which is a new instrument and consists of four subscales: recreational reading in print settings, academic reading in print settings, recreational reading in digital settings, and academic reading in digital settings. For easy interpretation of the results, the ARAS Guide to Interpreting Scores was also developed. The guide ranges from negative to positive and each of the four subscales has its own corresponding range of scores. Attitude profile that will be generated might provide bases on how to reach older students, especially struggling readers.

Another is the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) developed by Mckenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) which was anchored on the cartoon character Garfield and aims to assess the reading attitude of elementary learners.

While the Reader Self-Perception Scale was designed by Henk, Marinak, and Melnick (2012). Specifically, this provides information on how students see themselves as readers. Further, they also mentioned ways of gathering data in knowing students reading motivation like classroom observation, students' reading journals, conducting open-ended questionnaires and interest inventories. One example is "Tell Me What You Like" developed by McKenna and Stahl (2009), which could be duplicated and revised. It asks students to evaluate various topics (e.g., sports, animals, love, etc.) employing the following criteria: A if you really

like it, B if you like it pretty well, C if it's just OK, D if you don't like it, and F if you can't stand it.

V. ENHANCING MOTIVATION TO READ

After assessing learners' motivation to read, the next thing to do is to apply instructional strategies and approaches, including instructional materials relative to the data gathered.

5.1 Instructional Strategies and Approaches

Conley (2008) recommended the use of a variety of discussion practices and diverse groupings like a small group, pairs, and individual. Specifically, several scholars (e.g., Kim, 2011; McKenna & Stahl, 2009) suggested Cross-Age Tutoring (placing together older and younger students or low and high performing ones in a reading activity), Literature Circles (students interact with other members about materials they've read, mostly fiction), Idea Circle (makes use of nonfiction for discussion).

Other researchers and educators recommended using Systematic Reinforcement like providing feedback and timely praise (Conley, 2008; Zentall & Lee, 2012). They also stressed the conduct of interviews and surveys, mentioned previously, in order to determine what materials to use which are consistent to students' interest and schemata. To develop intrinsic motivation, Wilson and Kelly (2010) advised educators to make their instructions relevant to learners' motivation and schemata, and choose materials that aim to foster a personal connection to their students' everyday lives and have life-long value.

Further, reading instruction should be sensitive to the learners' style of learning, experiences, and life circumstances (Conley, 2008). Specifically, using engaging activities could capture learners' interest like the use of interesting projects (Cobb, 2012). Some of these are posters, collages, movie productions, etc.

Other scholars suggested pre-reading activities such as previewing and predicting (Armstrong & Newman, 2011), activating prior knowledge using anticipation guide questions and connecting the known to the new (i.e., utilizing graphic organizers) (Conley, 2008), setting output or outcome (Guthrie et al., 2013). A good way to do this is to set meaningful purposes in reading (Gambrell et al., 1996; Wanzek & Kent, 2012).

5.2 Motivational Resources

Ruddell and Unrau (2013) emphasized the importance of integrating "multiple motivational resources" (p. 1021) in instruction, for example, multiple texts including texts

outside of school like newspaper, magazines, videos, downloaded images and documents, music, trade books, etc. These could enhance or improve motivation to read (Armstrong & Newman, 2011; Conley, 2008; Kim, 2011), especially low performing students. Other resources like e-books (Chen et al., 2013), digital media, movies (Detmering, 2010; Williams, 2007), graphic novels (Chun, 2009), and anime (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003; Fukunaga, 2006) or comic books like Manga series (Wilson & Kelly, 2010) were found to be beneficial as well.

VI. CONCLUSION

Reading motivation is a vital component in enhancing learners' reading comprehension (Henk, Marinak, & Melnick, 2012). It is, therefore, imperative for educators to improve their students' reading motivation; and there are several strategies and approaches that they could apply in their classroom instruction. However, assessing their students' motivation to read is of paramount importance before applying any of these approaches and strategies. Further, instructional materials should be relative to students' interest, schemata (Wilson & Kelly, 2010), and learning styles (Conley, 2008). In addition, it should also cultivate a personal connection to their students' everyday lives and have life-long value.

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