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Reading Motivation to Promote Students' Reading Comprehension: A Review

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Abstract

Motivation is a pivotal yet often overlooked aspect of language learning and teaching, particularly in English language instruction. Within this realm, reading motivation holds particular significance, as reading is a foundational skill crucial for both academic and psychological development. However, many students struggle with reading, leading to poor comprehension and limited vocabulary. Addressing this challenge, scholars have underscored the importance of reading motivation in fostering students' reading abilities. By cultivating a genuine passion for reading and providing the necessary support and encouragement, educators cannot only improve reading proficiency but also instill a lifelong love for literature. Recent academic interest has focused on exploring the use of reading incentives to enhance reading comprehension. This paper aims to delve into this topic, defining reading motivation, exploring types of motivation, examining reading comprehension, and discussing various models of reading comprehension. Through a comprehensive literature review, it becomes evident that motivation significantly influences learners' reading comprehension.

Keywords: *Reading motivation, Types of motivation, Reading comprehension, Models of reading comprehension*

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1. Introduction

Motivation, as highlighted by Dörnyei (2001), is a multifaceted concept composed of various models and theories, making it inherently complex. In the context of reading acquisition and development, intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role. When students are intrinsically motivated, they willingly engage in reading activities and persist in tackling challenging tasks. Conversely, a lack of motivation often leads to disengagement and lower reading proficiency levels. To address this, educators must create a motivational reading environment that stimulates students' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers, as emphasized by Gambrell (1996), serve as models and motivators in this process. They can cultivate an exciting and relaxed atmosphere by incorporating diverse genres into the curriculum, making the reading experience more appealing to students. Additionally, empowering students by allowing them to select their reading materials and allocating dedicated time for independent reading further enhances motivation and reading proficiency.

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), English language instruction is integral to global communication endeavors, necessitating students' proficiency across reading, writing, speaking, and listening to contribute effectively. In this

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context, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating learning for foreign language learners. Reading motivation, particularly in the realm of reading comprehension, is increasingly vital as international communication advances, with an emphasis on the four language skills. However, reading comprehension stands out as paramount for English language acquisition. It is recognized as essential both within and beyond the classroom, as learners must be motivated to improve their reading proficiency and language skills (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). Motivation to read is critical for learners to engage purposefully with texts, especially for EFL learners, emphasizing the significance of enhancing reading motivation for a better understanding of written materials, as academic success across all disciplines relies on proficient reading skills.

According to Seymour and Walsh (2006), motivation is consistently identified as a crucial element affecting learners' reading comprehension, although it has yet to be fully recognized as a primary factor in this process. Reading motivation emerges as a significant factor for foreign language students, enhancing their effectiveness in reading, as emphasized by Namazi *et al.* (2022) and Rosenfeld *et al.* (2001). Drawing on the work of Kintsch (1998), Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), and Ahmadi *et al.* (2012), reading comprehension is defined as the process of constructing meaning from texts, focusing on understanding the text as a whole rather than individual words or sentences. Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) highlight the pivotal role of reading comprehension in language learning, serving as the foundation for substantial learning among EFL learners. However, according to Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012), reading comprehension presents challenges as students must decode vocabulary and understand the meaning of texts, making it a central focus in English language teaching. Maleki and Zangani (2007) underscore the importance of teachers' methods in facilitating learning, with internal factors such as interest and desire playing a crucial role in motivating learners. Therefore, reading comprehension, as a process of deriving meaning from texts, must be prioritized in English language education to ensure students' success and provide a basis for further learning.

2. Reading Motivation

Because of the critical importance of students' learning and their progress in language skills, a significant amount of time is dedicated to the development of reading skills. It should be noted that certain learners, particularly those lacking sufficient resources and relying heavily on their teachers, struggle to enhance their reading comprehension effectively and may not achieve satisfactory results (Em, 2022). To address this challenge, one solution is the implementation of a reading intervention program (Em, 2023; Em *et al.*, 2024).

Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) assert that reading motivation plays a pivotal role in shaping learners' attitudes towards reading, with motivated readers engaging in pleasurable reading experiences and employing effective strategies to enhance comprehension. They emphasize that motivated readers perceive reading as a meaningful activity, willingly accept reading challenges, and tend to excel in their reading endeavors. Furthermore, reading motivation encompasses one's purpose, ideas, and interests related to the content and outcomes of reading.

Pachtman and Wilson (2006) highlight the importance of motivating students to read by allowing them to choose their reading materials, as this autonomy encourages greater engagement with reading, leading to a more enjoyable experience.

According to Hairul *et al.* (2012), reading motivation significantly influences reading comprehension and impacts various aspects of motivation and reading comprehension strategies across different contexts. They emphasize that students' motivation directly affects their reading behaviors, suggesting that students with higher levels of reading motivation are more likely to engage in extensive reading.

Furthermore, Hairul *et al.* (2012) stress the crucial role of reading motivation in increasing reading comprehension among language learners, underscoring its significance in target language learning. They note the existence of various types of motivation, which are further elaborated in subsequent sections.

3. Different Types of Motivation

The concept of motivation encompasses four distinct types: integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation. Integrative motivation refers to the desire to engage in a behavior to adopt the culture or identity associated with that behavior (Gardner, 1985). Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, involves pursuing a behavior for the sake of achieving a specific outcome or goal (Dörnyei, 1994). Intrinsic motivation arises from internal factors such as personal enjoyment or satisfaction derived from the activity itself (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Extrinsic motivation, conversely, stems from external factors such as rewards or punishments (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Each type of motivation plays a distinct role in shaping individuals' behaviors and attitudes toward tasks and goals.

3.1. Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation, as articulated by Arnold (2000), entails learning for its own sake, driven by an internal desire to acquire knowledge or skills without the need for external rewards. Lightbown and Spada (1999) suggest that teachers' influence on students' intrinsic motivation may be limited due to the diverse backgrounds of learners, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment. Building upon this, Dörnyei (1990), Pourhosien Gilakjani *et al.* (2012), as well as Alizadeh (2016), define intrinsic motivation as the enjoyment derived from engaging in an activity, emphasizing self-concept, self-confidence, and emotional needs as driving forces. Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) expand on this, linking intrinsic motivation to internal abilities that propel individuals to act or learn. Ryan and Deci (2000) further elucidate intrinsic motivation as the inner desire to pursue activities for their inherent satisfaction, suggesting that learners will exert greater effort and go beyond minimum requirements when driven by intrinsic motivation. Hairul *et al.* (2012) clarify that intrinsic motivation arises from internal rewards, contrasting with extrinsic motivation which relies on external incentives. Usher (2012) underscores intrinsic motivation as the drive to engage in activities for their inherent value or satisfaction. When students are intrinsically motivated to read, they do so for enjoyment, discovery, or personal interest, leading to increased reading time and, consequently, enhanced reading comprehension (Marinak and Gambrell, 2008). However, the reliance on external factors to motivate students may undermine intrinsic motivation, as noted by researchers contrasting intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci *et al.*, 1999). Gottfried (1990) defines intrinsic motivation for reading as deriving pleasure from reading activities, aligning with self-determination theory. This enjoyment of reading has been correlated with reading development, as evidenced by standardized tests for elementary school students (Baker and Wigfield, 1999).

3.2. Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation, as defined by Arnold (2000), involves the desire to attain rewards or avoid punishments, thereby emphasizing external factors that drive participation in learning activities such as assignments or grades. Harmer (1991) categorizes both integrative and instrumental motivation under the umbrella of extrinsic motivation. However, Harmer (1991) also notes that extrinsic motivation can be detrimental to learners, as it may lead them to focus more on rewards or punishments rather than on genuine learning intentions. When learners are primarily motivated by external rewards, their motivation to engage in learning activities may diminish if these rewards are removed. Ahmadi *et al.* (2012) further illustrate extrinsic motivation as stemming from external sources that influence individuals to act or learn, such as rewards or punishments. Dörnyei (1990), Ahmadi *et al.* (2012), and Alizadeh (2016) define extrinsic motivation as actions performed to achieve instrumental objectives, such as obtaining rewards or avoiding punishments. Deci and Ryan (1985) describe extrinsic motivation as deriving from external benefits, such as money or grades, rather than from inherent interest or satisfaction with the activity itself. Hairul *et al.* (2012) elaborate on extrinsic motivation, highlighting that it involves doing something solely for the sake of external rewards or outcomes, rather than for its inherent value or enjoyment. They also note that extrinsic motivation can vary in autonomy, with some behaviors being more personally endorsed or chosen than others. Extrinsically motivated behavior in reading can be influenced by external factors such as accolades, praise, or a desire to outperform others, as described by McGeown *et al.* (2012). Extrinsic motivation is characterized by its focus on obtaining a distinct outcome, as highlighted by Deci and Ryan (1985), and is often viewed as inferior to intrinsic motivation, as it relies on external incentives rather than internal satisfaction with the activity. Baker and Wigfield (1999) emphasize the goal-oriented nature of extrinsic motivation, wherein students strive to achieve specific objectives.

3.3. Integrative Motivation

Integrative motivation, as described by Gardner and Lambert (1959), involves a desire to learn a language to become part of a speech community or to connect with the people who speak that language. This form of motivation emphasizes social interaction and cultural integration, as learners seek to engage with native speakers of the target language. Saville-Troike (2006) expands on this concept, noting that learners who are integratively motivated may have significant others, such as family members or romantic partners, who speak the language, further reinforcing their desire to learn. Heritage language learners, in particular, often exhibit strong integrative motivation due to their connections to the language and culture. Research has shown that learners who are integratively motivated tend to be more successful in language learning compared to those who are instrumentally motivated, as their motivation stems from a deeper personal interest in the language and its associated culture (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Pourhosein Gilakjani *et al.*, 2012; Alizadeh, 2016). Hairul *et al.* (2012) support this notion, highlighting that learners motivated by integrative factors are more likely to achieve success in language learning, driven by their desire to communicate with native speakers and become part of the target language community. Saville-Troike (2005) adds that integratively motivated learners also

demonstrate an interest in the culture associated with the language they are learning. Despite the stronger motivation exhibited by integratively motivated learners, they outperform instrumentally motivated learners, further emphasizing the importance of integrative motivation in language learning.

3.4. Instrumental Motivation

Instrumental motivation, as described by Gardner and Lambert (1972), revolves around the desire to learn a language for practical purposes, such as improving job prospects, achieving academic goals, or accessing scientific information. This form of motivation is driven by tangible benefits and outcomes, with individuals viewing language learning as a means to achieve larger rewards, often related to financial or career advancement. Saville-Troike (2006) further elucidates instrumental motivation, highlighting its association with enhancing business opportunities, gaining prestige, or meeting specific academic requirements. Gardner and Lambert (1959), Pourhosein Gilakjani *et al.* (2012), and Alizadeh (2016) all underscore the multifaceted nature of instrumental motivation, which can stem from various practical needs and objectives. Learners with instrumental motivation typically have clear, concrete goals for language learning, such as obtaining a job promotion, earning a salary bonus, or fulfilling university admission requirements (Hairul *et al.*, 2012). This pragmatic approach to language learning is prevalent among many EFL learners who prioritize the attainment of practical skills and qualifications.

4. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension involves the intricate coordination of multiple processes, including language comprehension, word reading, word knowledge, and fluency, to construct meaning from text (Cain *et al.*, 2004; Paris, 2005). At various levels, text comprehension entails the formation of semantic networks as readers endeavor to grasp the meaning conveyed within the text (Kintsch and Rawson, 2005; Joffe *et al.*, 2007; McGrew and Wendling, 2010). This process entails decoding words, integrating language and visual skills, and establishing syntactic connections to maintain coherence and construct meaning. Kintsch and Rawson (2005) emphasize that comprehension involves the holistic coordination of these processes rather than their sum. Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) highlight the cooperative mental engagement between a reader's linguistic knowledge and their background knowledge of the subject matter during the reading comprehension process. Additionally, Rahmani and Sadeghi (2011) define reading comprehension as the ability to recognize and interpret text through the activation of prior knowledge and rapid word understanding. Learners must learn to evaluate texts before comprehending them fully, as word difficulty can impede comprehension by taxing processing abilities. Both Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) and Rahmani and Sadeghi (2011) emphasize the importance of learners' active engagement in comprehension tasks, such as responding to questions and writing their interpretations, in classroom instruction.

5. Different Models Of Reading Comprehension

Three models of reading methods are commonly recognized: the bottom-up method, the top-down method, and the interactive method (Smith, 1994; Goodman, 1967; Rumelhart, 1977).

The bottom-up method focuses on the decoding of individual words and their meanings, with comprehension building from the smallest units of language to larger constructs (Goodman, 1967).

Conversely, the top-down method emphasizes the reader's use of prior knowledge, context, and expectations to comprehend the text, with comprehension driven by higher-level cognitive processes (Smith, 1994).

The interactive method integrates elements of both bottom-up and top-down processing, positing that reading comprehension emerges from the dynamic interaction between decoding skills and background knowledge (Rumelhart, 1977).

5.1. Bottom-up Method

According to Carrell (1989), the bottom-up strategy involves decoding the simplest language components, such as phonemes, graphemes, and words, and gradually constructing meaning from these smaller units to larger constructs. This approach also incorporates students' prior knowledge as they engage with the text. Bottom-up reading, also referred to as data-driven reading or text-based reading, emphasizes analyzing the smallest textual elements, including letters, words, phrases, and sentences.

Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) corroborate Carrell's (1989) assertion, highlighting that the bottom-up strategy necessitates students' accurate decoding of linguistic elements and comprehension of the relationships between words for successful reading. Given the vast amount of vocabulary encountered in texts, it can be challenging for students to retain the meaning of every word and effectively connect one word to the next.

5.2. Top-down Method

Nuttall (1996) and Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) conceptualized the top-down technique as a psycholinguistic prediction game in which readers engage with a text, making inferences and anticipating new or unexpected content encountered therein. In this approach, emphasis is placed on verbal guessing rather than relying solely on textual cues. Readers employing the top-down approach do not aim to read every word of a text; instead, they focus on predicting the upcoming sequence of words based on contextual clues. As they read, they formulate hypotheses about the author's intended message and adjust their assumptions based on textual evidence.

According to Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012), comprehension initiates at higher levels of processing and gradually incorporates lower-level processing. They further assert that the top-down method involves a systematic breakdown or decomposition of a system to gain insights into its constituent subsystems.

5.3. Interactive Method

Carrell (1989) and Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) highlighted the interactive method as an approach that integrates both bottom-up and top-down methods. This strategy utilizes data from various sources, including orthographic, lexical, syntactic, semantic knowledge, and schemata. Readers with strong bottom-up skills may struggle to comprehend texts if they read word for word; hence, they need to leverage their background knowledge, leading to the interactive model.

Nunan (1990) and Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) noted that language learners often employ top-down reading to compensate for deficiencies in bottom-up reading. By utilizing their schemata, learners can derive meaning even in the absence of complete bottom-up knowledge.

Stanovich (1980) suggested that learners relying on the top-down method utilize textual clues to predict meaning and compensate for deficits such as weak word recognition and ineffective bottom-up processing. The interactive method, incorporating both bottom-up and top-down processes, facilitates the most effective text processing.

Furthermore, Stanovich (1980) emphasized the importance of teachers providing reading instructions to enhance their readers' abilities, acknowledging that while the interactive method supports successful reading, targeted instructional interventions are necessary for improvement.

5.4. Critical Reasons for Motivation to Promote Reading Comprehension

From the reviews, it could be syntheses that motivation plays a critical role in promoting reading comprehension for several reasons:

- a. **Engagement:** Motivated students are more likely to actively engage with reading materials, investing time and effort to understand the text thoroughly. This engagement leads to deeper comprehension as students interact with the content, ask questions, and make connections to their prior knowledge.
- b. **Persistence:** Motivated readers demonstrate greater persistence in challenging reading tasks. When faced with difficulties or complex texts, motivated students are more likely to persevere, utilizing various strategies to overcome obstacles and achieve comprehension.
- c. **Interest and Enthusiasm:** Intrinsic motivation fosters a genuine interest and enthusiasm for reading. When students are intrinsically motivated, they are more likely to select reading materials aligned with their interests, leading to increased engagement and comprehension.
- d. **Metacognitive Strategies:** Motivated readers often employ metacognitive strategies to monitor and regulate their comprehension processes. They reflect on their understanding, identify areas of difficulty, and adjust their reading strategies accordingly, which enhances comprehension.
- e. **Sense of Purpose:** Motivation provides students with a sense of purpose and value in reading. When students understand the relevance of reading to their academic success, personal interests, or future goals, they are more likely to invest effort in comprehending texts effectively.

Overall, motivation serves as a driving force that influences students' engagement, persistence, interest, metacognitive strategies, and sense of purpose, all of which are critical factors in promoting reading comprehension.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research reviewed underscores the significant impact of reading motivation on students' reading comprehension abilities. Motivated students exhibit a range of positive outcomes, including making educated guesses,

achieving better results, overcoming challenges, and reducing comprehension anxiety. Therefore, integrating reading motivation into teaching curricula consistently can be highly beneficial for students. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate strategies to enhance reading motivation in their English classes, fostering an environment where students are motivated to engage with reading materials.

The findings suggest that students with higher levels of motivation tend to demonstrate greater improvement in reading comprehension compared to their less motivated peers. As reading comprehension is a fundamental skill for language learners, it is imperative for schools and universities to actively promote reading motivation among all students. Research consistently highlights the positive correlation between reading motivation and comprehension proficiency, emphasizing the importance of explicit instruction in reading motivation to enhance students' reading abilities.

While implementing traditional reading motivation strategies may pose challenges for instructors, the benefits outweigh the difficulties, as such strategies are highly effective. Ultimately, the goal is to empower students to become self-regulated readers who can effectively utilize reading strategies independently. In summary, the results of this study underscore the necessity for students at all levels to be motivated to improve their reading comprehension skills, as motivation serves as a cornerstone for language learning success. Therefore, it is incumbent upon reading teachers to create opportunities for students to enhance their motivation and proficiency in reading comprehension.

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