Reading motivation and reading comprehension growth in the later elementary years ☆

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Abstract

Reading motivation has been viewed as a multifaceted construct with multiple constituents. Our investigation of motivational multiplicity expanded on previous literature by including motivation constructs (interest, perceived control, collaboration, involvement, and efficacy), text genres, specific versus general contexts, and the self-versus other evidence sources about motivation. We expected that this multiplicity would influence the identification of reading comprehension growth predictors. We obtained pre- and post-interview data, teacher ratings, motivation self-reports, and reading comprehension scores. Interviews showed motivation constructs to be semi-independent. Students' reading motivations for narrative and information texts were not highly associated; and self-reports and other motivation reports were not highly associated, but situated and general reading motivations were correlated. Interview-based coding of motivation predicted reading comprehension growth, but reading comprehension did not predict motivation growth. Situated motivation for information books predicted general motivation growth according to multiple regression analyses. Implications for an engagement model of reading development were discussed.
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1. Introduction

Teaching students how to comprehend different text genres is an important goal for the elementary school years, especially for Grade 4 students and beyond, when students are expected to read a wide range of materials to gain knowledge and literary experience (Alexander & Jetton, 2000). A substantial correlate of reading comprehension in the later elementary grades is reading motivation, according to a variety of investigators (Gottfried, 1990; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). This study examined reading motivation for its potential to explain students' reading comprehension and to predict students' growth in comprehension over time (Stipek, 2002).

The theoretical perspective for this study was Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) engagement model of reading comprehension development, which posited that reading comprehension is the consequence of an extended amount of engaged reading. Engaged reading is motivated, strategic, knowledge driven, and socially interactive; it is influenced by the kinds of classroom practices students experience (Guthrie & Cox, 2001). In previous work related to this model, we examined the nature of reading motivation, and also looked at how classroom practices influence children's reading comprehension and motivation (e.g., Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004; Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa et al., 2004; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). An important finding from this work is that reading motivation is multidimensional (see further discussion below). The present study builds on this work by both using interview methods to examine children's multidimensional motivations for reading and looking at how growth in reading motivation relates to reading comprehension growth.

The interview methodology allowed us to study reading motivation more in-depth than has occurred in most previous research that primarily relied on student questionnaires. With respect to the relations of reading motivation and reading comprehension, Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) theoretical model suggests that motivation influences reading comprehension growth. Although reading motivation and reading comprehension are correlated (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Wang & Guthrie, 2004), and laboratory studies suggest that motivational conditions can increase reading comprehension (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004), it is unknown whether reading motivation predicts reading comprehension *growth* in classroom contexts. The present study investigated this issue.

We further extended previous work on reading motivation by examining the multiplicity of children's reading motivation. This multiplicity encompasses (a) the reading of different text genres, (b) the motivation for reading specific books and students' more general reading motivation, and (c) diverse perspectives on students' motivation as viewed by students, interviewers, and teachers. The types of reading studied consisted of narrative (fiction, chapter books, and novels) and information (trade books on science or history topics) books. We focused on these genres because they have been shown to vary in attractiveness to students (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991), and the assumption is often made that narrative books are more appealing to students. We were particularly interested in how children's motivations for these different text genres relate to each other; these analyses would provide further information about the dimensionality of children's motivation.

With respect to specific and general forms of motivation, following Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000), we assessed relations of children's 'situated' reading motivation (e.g., interest in a particular book at a particular time) to their more general motivation to read. Finally, with respect to different perspectives on students' motivation, as noted earlier, most research has relied on student self-reports measured on questionnaires. We went