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Teacher Perceptions of Reading Motivation in Children with Developmental Dyslexia and Average Readers

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Abstract

Purpose. This study assessed the teacher perceptions of reading engagement and several components of reading motivation in children with developmental dyslexia and average readers, in an attempt to more clearly understand the role of motivation in developmental dyslexia

Method. Sixty-eight children participated in this study. Thirty-three children made up the group with developmental dyslexia and thirty-five made up the group of average readers. In order to assess the reading motivation of the participants, teachers filled two instruments: (a) The Reading Engagement Index (Wigfield et al., 2008), a teacher rating of the engaged reader, and (b) Teacher questionnaire on student motivation to read (Sweet, Guthrie and Ng, 1998), that measure six constructs of reading motivation: activity, autonomy, social, topic, individual and writing.

Results. Results showed that teachers perceived average readers to be significantly higher in intrinsic reading motivation and in extrinsic reading motivation than those of developmental dyslexia group. Also, children with developmental dyslexia were shown to be less engaged in reading activities.

Conclusion. These findings suggest that teachers appear to possess an implicit theory of the association of self-determination and reading scores that is compatible with self-determination theory.

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1. Introduction

Developmental dyslexia (DD) is one of the most common learning disabilities. It can be defined as a reading disability of neurological origin (Norton, Beach, & Gabrieli, 2015). Individuals with dyslexia have difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and spelling, despite having the adequate intelligence, education, and socioeconomic background to learn to read (APA, 2014; Shaywitz, Morris, & Shaywitz, 2008; Snowling & Hulme, 2012). The most consistent and enduring core of any definition of dyslexia is probably its conception as an unexpected difficulty in reading (Shaywitz, Morris, & Shaywitz, 2008).

Much of the research on children's reading has focused on cognitive aspects such as word recognition and comprehension. Recently, researchers have shown an interest in the impact attitudes and motivation exert on reading. Yet because reading can be an effortful activity and children may choose not to do it, it also requires motivation. Children with developmental dyslexia tend to be less motivated to engage in reading tasks. Some researchers have recently proposed that poor motivation may be a defining feature of reading failure (Sideridis, Morgan, Botsas, Padeliadu, & Fuchs, 2006). For example, these children hold more negative self-concepts and avoid reading activities more frequently than their typical peers (Soriano-Ferrer, Rodríguez-Miguel, & Soriano-Ferrer, 2014). Thus, reading motivation and attitudes toward reading are central factors affecting reading performance.

Yet because reading is an effortful activity that children often can choose to do or not to do, it also requires motivation. Motivational research is broad and encompasses many theoretical constructs (Conradi, Jang & McKenna, 2013) that attempt to explain and predict aspects of behavior as it relates to why one does what one does. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a broad motivational theory that intend to explain reading motivation of students. SDT (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000) proposes that motivation is promoted through autonomy, competency and relatedness. Style of instruction can range from more controlling to autonomy supporting and these styles can have a significant influence on student motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students who perceive their teacher to support their need for autonomy are more engaged in their learning compared to students who do not believe their autonomy is supported (Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012). Further, autonomy-supportive behaviors towards students coincide with increased feelings of competence and autonomy and decreased levels of dropping out of high school (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). In addition to perceived teacher support for autonomy, relatedness in the classroom is associated with increased motivation (Danielson, Wium, Wilhelmsen, & Wold, 2010). SDT is based on the assumption that people are inherently driven to learn and grow to satisfy their inner drives and needs and focuses on the environmental factors that support or discourage that growth (Ryan & Deci, 2009). According to SDT, three needs underlies motivation: the needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The need for competence is conceptually similar to a need for feelings of self-efficacy. People need to feel competent and able to accomplish the tasks or meet the challenges presented them. According to SDT, students desire competence and will persist on tasks if they believe competence is achievable. The need for relatedness speaks to the roles teachers and peers play in student motivation. Feeling connected to others provides an important ingredient for learning and growth to flourish. Finally, students need to feel as if they have some control over the activities they engage in and how they complete tasks. SDT proposes that this feeling of autonomy is an essential component of intrinsic motivation. These needs are not independent of one another but work interactively and the ways in which these needs are satisfied (or not) in the environment will drive students' motivational behaviors in a variety of ways. As children are inherently motivated towards learning, growing, and discovering, it is not the initiation of motivation that is of interest, but what is required to sustain motivation through the inevitable demands placed on children as they become students. SDT explores both the nature of positive developmental tendencies along with the social contexts that support and retard their growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

More recent research on the reading motivation assessment has diverged in methodology (Conradi, Jang, & McKenna, 2013; Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller & Wingfield, 2012). The revision of Conradi, Jang and McKenna (2013) show that different instruments and constructs are employed to assess reading motivation: reading self-concept, attitudes, engagement.etc. However, some researchers have chosen to assess student self-reports of perceptions of motivation (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995, 2003), while other researchers feel that teachers can provide more valid assessments of student motivation (Lepola, Poskiparta, Laakkonen, & Niemi, 2005). In this context, this study assessed the teacher perceptions of reading engagement and several components of reading motivation in children with

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