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Analyzing and supporting reading and writing motivation: Outcomes of descriptive and intervention studies

Analyzing and supporting reading and writing motivation: Outcomes of descriptive and intervention studies

First Author: Prof. Roel van Steensel -- Erasmus University Rotterdam/Free University Amsterdam

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Keywords: Reading Motivation, Writing motivation, At Risk Students, Gender Differences, Intervention studies

Abstract / Summary:

Motivation is an important component of students' reading and writing development, because it ignites a positive cycle (Mol & Bus, 2011), leading to more frequent and better reading and writing. Effective support of students' motivation can thus have profound impacts on their reading and writing proficiency. This symposium combines descriptive and intervention studies on reading and writing motivation. Lepper and colleagues examine whether gender differences in interest for reading are related to text characteristics such as topic, protagonist gender and complexity. Oostdam and colleagues analyze the validity and impact of positive (affirming) and negative (undermining) motivations for school writing. Van Steensel and colleagues present the outcomes of a meta-analysis of reading motivation interventions testing effects of specific theoretical mechanisms on reading motivation and comprehension. Finally, Van Ammel and colleagues discuss design principles and outcomes of a reading motivation intervention based on Self-Determination Theory. Segers will synthesize and discuss the presentations.

Symposium Papers:

Gender-specific interplay among text-based interest, text characteristics and reading comprehension

First Author/Chair: Chantal Lepper -- Center for Research on Education and School Development (IFS), TU Dortmund, Germany

Additional authors/chairs: Justine Stang; Nele McElvany

Purpose. Students' reading motivation is vital for reading comprehension and is known to depend on student characteristics and text-related factors (Fulmer & Frijters, 2011; McGeown, 2015). Interest is one important motivational construct. Research highlighted gender differences in reading interests and reading comprehension as well as in its relation (Oakhill & Petrides, 2007). It is still unclear whether these differences can be explained by text characteristics like topic, protagonists' gender and complexity and whether boys' and girls' reading comprehension depends on interest to a similar degree. The current study deals with these desiderata.

Method. The sample consisted of fourth-graders (N = 496; 47.2% female). Students read fourteen texts, which differed with regard to topics, gender of protagonists and text difficulty. Subsequently, they reported text-specific interest and worked on one comprehension task per text. Reliabilities of all interest scales were good ($\alpha > .89$). Multigroup structural equation models were specified to examine relations between interest, text characteristics and reading comprehension.

Results. Metric measurement invariance was established for the interest scale across gender groups. Text-based interest was predicted by text topic, protagonists' gender and text complexity for boys, while girls' interest was predicted by text topic and text difficulty only. Boys and girls were more interested in texts with topics matching their own gender and with higher complexity. Neither girls' nor boys' overall interest was predictive of reading comprehension.

Conclusions. The study implies important indications for reading research and educational practice in order to promote students' interest in reading with special attention to gender differences.

Affirming and undermining motivations for writing in low-achieving adolescents

First Author/Chair: Ron Oostdam -- Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Additional authors/chairs: Amos van Gelderen; Mirjam Trapman; Roel van Steensel

Purpose. Many low achieving adolescents have difficulties with writing in school (Trapman, 2016). One important factor in students' writing success is their writing motivation (Graham & Harris, 2012). For reading, a distinction has been made between positive (affirming) and negative (undermining) motivations: undermining reading motivations appear to constitute separate constructs that play an independent role in low-achieving students' reading performance (Van Steensel, Oostdam, & Van Gelderen, 2019). In this study, we examine whether the same holds for low achieving adolescents' writing.

Method. We administered a writing test (Trapman, 2016) and a writing motivation questionnaire based on an existing instrument for reading (Coddington, 2009; Van Steensel et al., 2019) to 326 low achieving students in Dutch prevocational education (Grade 7/9). The questionnaire aimed to measure affirming motivations (intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy) and undermining motivations (avoidance, perceived difficulty) for writing in school.

Results. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that the questionnaire was adequate for measuring affirming motivations and undermining motivations for writing in school: all hypothesized types of motivation could be empirically distinguished. When analyzed separately, intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy were positively related to writing performance and avoidance was negatively related to writing performance. When combined, however, undermining motivations did not contribute to explaining

differences in writing performance.

Conclusions. Undermining motivations for writing appear to work differently than undermining motivations for reading. In the presentation, we discuss possible explanations, and possible consequences for motivation theory and for writing education to low achievers.

Theory-driven reading motivation interventions: Results of a meta-analysis

First Author/Chair:Roel van Steensel -- Erasmus University Rotterdam; Free University Amsterdam

Additional authors/chairs: Lisa van der Sande; Suzanne Fikrat-Wevers; Lidia Arends

Purpose. Reading motivation plays an important role in reading development (Schiefele, 2012). A positive reading cycle is hypothesized: motivation leads to frequent reading, frequent reading results in better skills, and better skills lead to more self-efficacy and stronger motivation (Mol, 2011). Investing in reading motivation can thus be expected to support both motivation and skills. In the current meta-analysis, we made an inventory of reading motivation interventions and analyzed their effects on reading motivation and comprehension.

Method. A search in scientific databases resulted in 5,815 hits, which were screened by two researchers. This resulted in a set of 33 studies, which were then (double) coded. We are currently analyzing the data using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis 2.0. In addition to computing weighted mean effect sizes for motivation and comprehension, we conduct moderator analyses to test effects of various program, sample, and study characteristics.

Results. This is an update of a previous meta-analysis in which a broad range of interventions was analyzed and that showed positive effects on both motivation and comprehension. In the current meta-analysis, we focus on theory-driven interventions to test the effects of specific motivational mechanisms: starting from well-known theoretical frameworks (Ames, 1992; Bandura, 1986; Ryan, 2000; Schiefele, 1991; Wigfield, 2000), we examine the impact of supporting student autonomy, feelings of competence, social relatedness, individual and situational interest, values, and goal orientations.

Conclusion. Outcomes will contribute to our understanding of how motivation supports reading skills and will result in recommendations for teachers on how to promote students' reading motivation.

ProjectExpert: Enhancing vocational students' reading motivation and comprehension

First Author/Chair:Kim Van Ammel -- Department of Educational Studies, Ghent University

Additional authors/chairs: Koen Aesaert; Hilde Van Keer

Purpose. The number of students acquiring a basic level in reading comprehension is significantly lower for students enrolled in the vocational track in comparison with students in the academic and technical track (De Meyer et al., 2010). Additionally, these students are less intrinsically motivated to read (Mol & Jolles, 2014). Given the significance of proficient reading, the research literature calls for studies aiming at fostering vocational students' reading expertise. More particularly, both stimulating reading motivation and comprehension is put central.

Method. A quasi-experimental intervention study in authentic classes with switching replication design (Abbuhl et al., 2013) is applied. The intervention theoretically departs from Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991), aiming at fostering students' psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, relatedness and competence). Approximately 400 9th-grade students from 29 classes participate. Multiple aspects of treatment fidelity (Fogarty et al., 2014) are investigated by means of teacher logbooks and regular classroom observations.

Results. The presentation will focus on (1) presenting the intervention design guidelines and the underlying theoretical and empirical rationale and (2) presenting the impact of the intervention. At present data collection is ongoing. Students' evolution in autonomous and controlled reading motivation and reading comprehension performance will be analyzed using piecewise multilevel growth modelling, taking into account the nested data structure (i.e. students into classes) (Hox, 1994).

Conclusion. Implications (1) for theory on reading motivation and comprehension and (2) for educational literacy practice in vocational tracks will be discussed.

Discussant

First Author/Chair:DISCUSSANT Eliane Segers -- Behavioural Science Institute, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

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