The Role of Motivation for Reading in Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate the level of students' motivation, reading comprehension, and their association. The participants of this study were first-year students of Debre Markos University. Out of sixty-six participants only sixty-one were selected using a simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to examine the students' level of motivation for reading and a test was employed to determine the students' level of reading comprehension. A quantitative method was used to analyze the data. To analyze the data gathered to determine the level of students' motivation for reading, and reading comprehension, descriptive statistics were used. As motivation for reading was measured at ordinal level, Median was used. On the other hand, mean was used to describe reading comprehension as the level of measurement is continuous. To analyze the relationship between motivation for reading and reading comprehension, spearman rho was used. The data were analyzed using SPSS (version 21). The students were found to have a moderate level of motivation for reading. Furthermore, the students' level of reading comprehension was low. Moreover, the result revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between motivation for reading and reading comprehension.

Keywords: Motivation, Reading, Motivation for Reading, Reading Comprehension

Introduction

Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learners of second language learning (L2). It also stimulates learners to sustain the lengthy and often challenging learning process. Indeed, all the other factors involved in L2 presuppose motivation to some extent. Learners' remarkable abilities and appropriate curriculum and effective teaching practice can ensure learners' achievement provided that they have sufficient motivation. On the other hand, high motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies, both in one's language aptitude and learning conditions (Dörnyei, 2005). More specifically, according to Cambria and Guthrie (2010), motivation can surely be ignored if chosen.

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However, if it is done, the most important part of reading may be neglected. Reading has two sides. The skills which include *phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, and simple comprehension* are on the one side. *Motivation to read* is on the other side. An effective reader possesses both the skill and motivation. Motivation to read entails learners' delights, desires, and manners concerning reading. Skilled students cannot become effective readers if they do not have the motivation to read. However, their motivation monitors their reading breadth and depths that can help them find reading pleasurable and beneficial. Hence, as it is one side of reading, motivation has to be judiciously considered.

According to Guthrie and Wigfield (1997), motivation for reading is a *domain specific factor* (motivation may differ from skill to skill) that plays significant roles in determining students' reading comprehension. It is assumed to be particularly significant for the reason that it affects students' reading frequency and breadth which in turn, enhances their reading competence development. As Bernhardt (2011) and Grabe (2009) state, motivation is one of the aspects that influences reading comprehension. Besides, as Guthrie (2004) claims, motivated readers have the desire for learning, satisfaction in reading success, and belief in their reading abilities. Especially, they persist at the time of challenges and exert continuing effort until they achieve their aims to comprehend reading texts and finish some aspect of reading assignments. Motivation leads students to become engaged readers that predominantly paves the way for the development of proficiencies and knowledge desired for attainment. Readers need it to understand texts. Motivated students usually are capable of using *strategies* that is one of the requirements to comprehend reading texts. Similarly, according to Guthrie, Wigfield, Humenick, Perencevich,Taboada and Barbosa (2006), motivation for reading importantly contributes to students' reading attainment and academic achievement.

However, from the present researcher experience, students in higher institutions did not spend the vast majority of their time in reading various materials as they are supposed to do. For example, when the researcher asked them questions from the reference books they were recommended to read, he learned that they did not read them as they were required. In addition, when they were suggested to read books as an assignment, they were not supportive to do so.

Although a number of research have been carried out so far, a vast majority of them focused on the role of motivation in L2. This is too

general and broad to examine their role in reading skills. Besides, they could not be comprehensive and lacked domain-specificity. In addition, several researches have been done on the role of motivation for reading in L1. As the nature of language learning in L1 is different from in L2, it sounds inappropriate to generalize the findings from such studies to L2. Moreover, methodologically, motivation for reading is an ordinal variable. However, in the research carried out so far, it was analyzed using parametric techniques such as *mean* and *Pearson product-moment correlation*. It should have been analyzed using *median* and *Spearman rho* as these methods are appropriate in ordinal data. For this reason, the current study contributes new knowledge to the existing literature by filling the gaps mentioned above. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following research questions:

- What is the level of students' motivation for reading?
- What is the level of students' reading comprehension?
- What is the correlation between motivation and reading comprehensions?

Methodology

Design of the Study

In this research, a survey research design was employed. More specifically, a cross-sectional survey design was used as the researcher collected the data at one point in time. As Muijs (2004) and Creswell (2012) point out, this design is perhaps the most practically used research design in the social sciences.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were first-year students of Debre Markos University. The students at this university studied English for at least 12 years. All of them are supposed to have relatively similar socio-economic and educational backgrounds. More specifically, they were students learning in the College of Social Science and Humanities. This college was selected because this researcher observed relatively deteriorating reading problems in this college. There were 139 males (59.15%) and 96 females (40.85 %) in the population. A total of 235 students in the college were included..

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was determined based on Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) that recommend the following formula taking into account the number of

independent variables that are used in research. Here is the formula: N > 50 + 8m (where m = number of independent variables). Therefore, N>50+8×2 is 66. However, five students quit participating at the start of the data-gathering process.

From the sampling frame (a list of all elements in the target population) in particular, the samples were selected using the lottery method. The total number of students who were learning across departments in the college (235) was taken from the registrar. Then, each student's name was written on a separate piece of paper. After that, each paper was folded. Then, 66 pieces of paper containing each student's name were drawn. However, out of this number, five of them quit participating at the start of the data-gathering process. Therefore, 61 participants were included in the study.

Instruments

A questionnaire was employed to measure motivation for reading. As Dörnyei (2005) explains, questionnaire is efficient in terms of researchers' time, effort, and financial resources. Researchers can collect a huge amount of data in less than an hour by administering a questionnaire to a group of participants.

More specifically, in this study, close-ended questions were used. According to Dörnyei (2005), closed-ended questions are advantageous to objectively code, organize the data, and minimize the subjectivity of raters.

Accordingly, to assess the construct of 'motivation for reading' motivation for the reading questionnaire (MRQ) developed by Wigfield, Guthrie and McGough (1996) was employed. In MRQ students rate and assess the extent to which they are motivated to read. It was originally developed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1995) to assess different aspects of students' reading motivation. The original scale contained 82 items (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995), but was revised by Wigfield, Guthrie and McGough (1996) and now contains only 54 items.

The MRQ contains 54 items intended to reflect 11 constructs of reading motivation. These are Reading Efficacy (4 items), Reading Challenge (5 items), Reading Curiosity (6 items), Reading Involvement (6 items), Importance of Reading (2 items), Reading Work Avoidance (4 items), Competition in Reading (6 items), Recognition for Reading (5 items), Reading for Grades (4 items), Social Reasons for Reading (7 items) and Compliance (5 items).

Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

A quantitative method was used to analyze the data gathered. To analyze the data gathered about the level of students' motivation for reading, and reading comprehension, descriptive statistics were used. As motivation for reading was measured at *ordinal l*evel, *Median* was used. The median is the middle category of the distribution data. On the other hand, *Mean* was used to describe the level of students' reading comprehension as the level of measurement is *continuous*.

As Pallant (2010) and Kenny (1987) point out, raw data should be transformed into a standard score to investigate relationships between variables. Transformations have three purposes: *interpretability* (increase clarity of interpreting numbers), *comparability* (to compare results with other samples studied anywhere), and *symmetry* (symmetric distribution of scores) (Kenny, 1987). Inferential statistical techniques also assume these purposes (Pallant, 2010; Kenny, 1987). Accordingly, in this study, after analyzing the descriptive data, the raw scores were transformed into the standard. Percentile rank (Kenny, 1987) was done to analyze the relationship between motivation for reading, and reading comprehension. The percentile rank was measured using the following formula: 100 (R-.5)/n where *n* is the sample size and *R* is the rank order of the score (Keny, 1987).

To analyze the relationship between motivation for reading and reading comprehension, *spearman rho* was used because the variables are *ordinal* and *continuous respectively*. The data were analyzed using SPSS (version 21).

Results

Students' Level of Motivation for Reading

To investigate students' level of motivation for reading, a questionnaire was employed. The results obtained from the analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaire are shown first.

The motivation for Reading questionnaire consisted of 11 sub-constructs and 54 items. All the items were analyzed to find out the composite score as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Total Motivation for Reading

Respondents' total motivation for reading		
N	Valid	61
	Missing	1
Median		128.0000
Std. Deviation		26.08919
Minimum		.00
Maximum		183.00

Table 1 shows the composite score of the data gathered through questionnaire from the participants. The questionnaire consisted of 54 items, each on four scales. The minimum composite score was 54 and maximum composite score is 216, the middle value was 108. As can be seen in table 1, it was found out that the median value for the scale was (*Mdn*=128) and the standard deviation was (*SD= 26.1*). As the median value is slightly higher than half of the total composite score (126 greater than 108), respondents' level of motivation for reading could be regarded as medium or moderate.

Students' Level of Reading Comprehension

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Level of Reading Comprehension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading Comprehension	61	.00	13.00	2.6885	3.15458
Valid N (listwise)	61				

The students' reading comprehension was measured using the reading proficiency test aspect of the TOEFL exam. As shown in table 2, respondents' mean value of their reading comprehension was (*M=2.68*).

The standard deviation was (*SD=3.15*). This mean value was out of 30. There is huge gap between 2.68 and 30.

The Relationship between Students' Motivation for Reading and Reading Comprehension

Table 3

Correlations between Respondents' Motivation for Reading and Reading Comprehension

Correlations

			Respondents' motivation for reading	Respondents reading comprehension
Spearman's rho	Respondents' motivation for reading	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.428**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	61	61
	Respondents' reading comprehension	Correlation Coefficient	.428**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	61	61

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's rho was employed to investigate the relationship between students' motivation for reading and their reading comprehension. As shown in table 3, the relationship between students' motivation for reading and reading comprehension was investigated using spearman's rho correlation. It was found out that there was a significant relationship between the two variables, r=.43, n=61, P, =.001<0.05. The relationship was positive r=.43. Moreover, the strength of the relationship was moderate (r=.43).

Discussion

Motivation for Reading

The results gained from the analysis of the data indicate, the students' motivation for reading was moderate. This result was in line with Tercanlioglu's (2001) in the sense that students have medium motivation for reading. In addition, this was also supportive of Su's (2012) conclusion in the sense that students have a moderate level of motivation for reading.

Students' level of Reading Comprehension

One of the research questions was what the students' level of reading comprehension is. The finding showed that the respondents' level of reading comprehension was low. As it is suggested in ETS (2009), if students score from 0-14, it is considered low.

This would suggest that although the students who receive a score at the low level typically understand some of the information presented in academic texts in English that require a wide range of reading abilities, their understanding is limited. As stated in ETS (2009), students who receive a score at the *low* level typically have a command of basic academic vocabulary, but their understanding of less common vocabulary is inconsistent. Moreover, they have limited ability to understand and connect information, have difficulty recognizing paraphrases of text information, and often rely on particular words and phrases rather than a complete understanding of the text. In addition, they have difficulty identifying the author's purpose, except when that purpose is explicitly stated in the text or easy to infer from the text. Furthermore, they can sometimes recognize major ideas from a text when the information is clearly presented, memorable or illustrated by examples, but have difficulty doing so when the text is more demanding.

Therefore, it is possible to understand that the students' reading comprehension is enormously impeded. This is to mean that their understanding of low frequent words is unpredictable. They also have restricted capabilities to comprehend and link information. They have difficulty identifying rewordings of text information, and are often dependent on specific words and expressions instead of a comprehensive understanding of the text. Besides, they have difficulty recognizing the author's purpose which is one aspect of text comprehension. Especially when the text is challenging, they have this difficulty.

The Relationship between students' Motivation for Reading and Reading Comprehension

The other objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the students' motivation for reading and reading comprehension. Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was used. Accordingly, the finding showed that there was a significant relationship between the two variables P, =.001<0.05. According to Muijs (2004), to say that the relationship is statistically significant, the p-value has to be as small as possible. The default value that is usually used to say that a relationship is statistically significant (i.e. that we can be reasonably (but not 100 per cent!) confident that the values we have found are very unlikely to occur if there is no relationship in the population) is *less than* 0.05 (this corresponds to a confidence level of 95 per cent). Therefore, as Muijs (2004) describes that whether or not the relationship is statistically significant (unlikely to exist in the sample if it does not exist in the population), the standard cut-off point is <0.05. As the *significance level* or *probability value* (p-value) in this research is .001, the relationship is significant.

The relationship between the students' motivation for reading and their reading comprehension is positive, r=.43. As Muijs (2004) suggests that a positive sign indicates a positive direction, a negative sign indicates a negative direction. Therefore, the result in the current research is positive as there is a positive sign in the figure. As Pallant (2010) also describes, Spearman correlation is used when we want to explore the strength of the relationship between two variables (ordinal independent and continuous dependent variables). This gives an indication the direction (positive or negative) of the relationship. A positive correlation indicates that as one variable increases, so does the other. A negative correlation indicates that as one variable increases, the other decreases. When both are correlated, it was found out that they have significant, moderate positive relationship.

Concerning the *strength* of the relationship, Muijs (2004) states that the closer to 1 (+ or –), the stronger the relationship is. Similarly, according to Muijs (2004), as for the strength of the relationship, the closer to +/–1 the stronger, the closer to 0 the weaker, some rules of thumb on effect size are:<0.+/–1 weak, <0.+/–3 modest, <0.+/–5 moderate, <0.+/–8 strong and ≥=+/–0.8 very strong. Accordingly, the strength of the relationship in the current research is moderate (r=.43).

As Pallant (2010) contends, in relationship studies, correlation coefficients can be 'significant'. With large samples, even quite small

correlation coefficients (e.g. r=.2) can reach statistical significance. Although statistically significance can be found out, the practical significance of a correlation should be examined. Therefore, the actual size of Pearson's r and the amount of shared variance between the two variables should be focused on. To get an idea of how much variance two variables share, the *coefficient of determination* can also be calculated. All needs to be done is *r* value is squared (multiply it by itself). To convert this to 'percentage of variance', just this is multiplied by 100 (the decimal place shifted two columns to the right). For example, two variables that correlate r=.2 share only .2 × .2 = .04 = 4 per cent of their variance. There is not much overlap between the two variables.

Accordingly, in the current study, the size of Spearman's rho is .43. To find out their shared variance, this value is squared, (.43X.43=0.1849=18.5%). Thus, the shared variance of the relationship between motivation for reading and reading comprehension is 18.5 %, which demonstrates that the practical significance is acceptable. Students' motivation for reading helps to explain 18.3 percent of their reading comprehension. This can be considered as a respectable amount of variance explained.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to investigate students' level of motivation for reading, and its association with reading comprehension. Based on the results, the following conclusions could be drawn. The students had a moderate level of motivation for reading. Furthermore, their level of reading comprehension was low. This may indicate that they did not develop their reading comprehension skill to the required level. They were required to develop an advanced level of reading comprehension at this stage. Moreover, the result revealed that there was significant relationship between motivation for reading and reading comprehension. The relationship was found to be positive. The strength of the relationship was moderate. This could imply that paying attention to students' motivation helps improve their reading comprehension level.

Recommendation

On the basis of the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were suggested:

- Teachers should motivate the students using different motivational strategies as it was found to be one of the key determinants of their reading comprehension.

- This study did not determine whether motivation is directly playing a role in reading comprehension or through mediating variable that directly influences students' reading comprehension. Hence, a further study is needed to determine the role of motivation on reading comprehension.

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