

# The relationship between students' reading motivation and reading comprehension

Mohammad Reza Ahmadi (PhD candidate/Corresponding author)  
School of Educational Studies, University of Science Malaysia  
11800, Penang, Malaysia

Tel: + 60-17-527-1870 E-mail: [E-mail: mr.ahmadi2720@gmail.com](mailto:mr.ahmadi2720@gmail.com)

Associate Prof. Dr. Hairul Nizam Ismail, PhD  
School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia  
11800, Penang, Malaysia

Tel (Off): (04) 653-3760-Tel (HP): 012-4122539, E-mail: [hairul@usm.my](mailto:hairul@usm.my)

Associate Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan Abdullah, PhD  
School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia  
11800, Penang, Malaysia

Tel : (04) 6532966; 016-4364272 E-mail : [kabilan@usm.my](mailto:kabilan@usm.my)

## 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. Reading motivation is one of the most important factors, receives the special focus in foreign language teaching. This paper is going to investigate the relationship between reading motivation and reading comprehension. This lack of good reading motivation skill is exacerbated by the central role of reading motivation in higher education success and also students usually have problem in reading comprehension in this trend since their motivation. Motivation is vital in reading activities, the findings indicated that reading motivation had a significantly positive effect on the English reading comprehension.

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

## 1. Introduction

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), English language teaching is one of the important factors of international communication activities. So, students need to be trained to use language in different areas such as reading, writing,

speaking, and listening to contribute their international communication. Moreover, in foreign language learning, one of the most important factors for the learners is the method which teachers use in their teaching to facilitate learning English language learning along with the improvement of international communication activities in the world, reading motivation is becoming more important and focuses on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing but reading comprehension is most important and facilitate English language learning. Reading motivation is regarded as the most vital and necessary for learners in both a classroom context and an extracurricular environment. Reading motivation is even important for learners since they have to be motivated in the English language learning and improve their reading comprehension. So, reading motivation is vital to the learners' ability to read and comprehend texts purposefully are crucial for EFL students. Accordingly, since the need for academic success in all areas of learning, all English foreign language learners need to enhance their English reading motivation for a better understanding of written texts.

According to Seymour and Walsh (2006), motivation for learners is always a main element that affects their reading comprehension, however, it has not been yet recognized that motivation is a main factor in reading comprehension. Reading motivation is one of the main factors for foreign language students that helps learners to read more effectively. Wang (2008) pointed out that students who study a foreign language need to improve their reading ability in order to comprehend the texts (Rosenfeld, Leung, & Oltman, 2001).

According to Ahmadi and Hairul (2012), reading comprehension is a difficult process because students should be able to read the written words and decode the vocabularies and recognize the meanings of the texts. English language learning showed that reading comprehension is the main factor which should be focused on English language teaching. Therefore, Reading comprehension is one of the main important elements in English language learning for all students because it provides the basis for a substantial amount of learning in education. Reading motivation is an important element which distinguishes students' success in text recognizing and understanding Reading comprehension must be considered in university levels. in foreign language learning, one of the most important factors for the learners is the method which teachers use in their teaching to facilitate learning (Maleki & Zangani, 2007). It is an internal reference, interest, feeling, objective, and demand that activates a learner for specific activities. Reading comprehension is the construction of the meaning of texts. Such meaning emerges from the interaction between reader and text, between the knowledge, skill and motivation of the reader and the text which has a specific intention, structure and degree of difficulty.

## **2. Reading Motivation**

Reading motivation as the large amount of motivation that students have to consider their positive or negative idea about reading. For instance, students who read for pleasure and employing strategies to support their comprehension are highly motivated readers. Students of this kind usually consider reading to be an important factor in their daily activities, accept challenges in the reading process and are likely to be successful readers. Additionally, reading motivation is one's own purpose, idea and desire related to the title, action and the results of the reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

It is concluded that, additional benefits of being a motivated reader by stating that it is important to motivate students to read by providing them opportunities to select their desired materials. In other words, readers need to read more

when they are allowed to choose their reading materials because they would discover that reading is an enjoyable activity (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006).

Hairul, Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012) interpreted that reading motivation as the large amount of motivation that learners have to determine their positive or negative opinions about reading. For example, students who read for pleasure and employing strategies to support their comprehension are highly motivated readers. Students of this kind usually consider reading to be an important factor in their daily activities, accept challenges in the reading process and are likely to be successful readers. Additionally, defined reading motivation as one's own purpose, idea and desire related to the title, action and results of the reading. They agreed that there is a relationship between motivation and reading proficiency. Results of their study indicated that reading motivation is related to all aspects of motivation and is related to reading comprehension and using strategy in different conditions. They stated that learners' motivation positively affects their reading; it means that learners with stronger reading motivation can be expected to read more in wider range.

Reading motivation is an important factor which supports students to read more, and it has a significant relationship with reading and understanding texts. Accordingly, many researchers have been well aware of the importance of motivation in target language learning and how motivation improves comprehension among language learners. Motivation benefits of being a motivated reader by stating that it is important to motivate students to read by providing them opportunities to select their desired materials. In other words, students would likely to read more when they are allowed to choose their reading materials because they would discover that reading is an enjoyable activity ( Hairul, Ahmadi, & Pourhossein, 2012).

### *2.1. Different Kinds of Motivation*

Motivation was divided into four kinds which are namely, intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative and instrumental motivation. The following sections explain motivation in more details.

#### *2.1.1 Intrinsic Motivation*

Intrinsic motivation is defined as inner desire and internal needs. For instance, learners would study more if they have a individual interest in what they are learning about and are allowed to choose their own courses of actions. Furthermore, the freedom to choose the courses of actions improves learning abilities and intrinsic motivation; as explained by the psychologists, that at the beginning of their development, children are very active, curious, playful and always be motivated for a long period of time in some different circumstances without any reward because they are allowed to do the actions they desired to do over and over. Intrinsic motivation has more impact than other factors to positively affect human because it elaborates inner interests, abilities, adaptations, and indications that are fundamental to the social and cognitive development (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation refers to behavior that is driven by internal rewards. In other words, the motivation to engage in a behavior arises from within the individual because it is intrinsically rewarding. This contrasts with extrinsic motivation, which involves engaging in a behavior in order to earn external rewards or avoid punishments. this article. If you are reading it because you have an interest in psychology and simply want to know more about the topic of motivation, then you are acting based upon intrinsic motivation. "Intrinsic motivation occurs when we act without any obvious external rewards. We simply enjoy an activity or see it as an opportunity to explore, learn, and

actualize our potentials." "Intrinsic motivation refers to the reason why we perform certain activities for inherent satisfaction or pleasure; you might say performing one of these activities in reinforcing in-and-of itself" (Hairul, Ahmadi, & Pourhossein, 2012).

### *2.1.2. Extrinsic Motivation*

Extrinsic motivation is related to the reward an individual will get as a result of any instrumental actions. Thus it does not basically refer to the determination in the activities or behavior. The extrinsic motivational factors need to be categorized in the area of their interest. Refers to the motivation that comes from outside rewards, such as money or grades. The motivation comes from the pleasure one gets from the task itself or from the sense of satisfaction in completing or even working on a task. Hopefully the results and suggestions of this research will help the relevant parties take several actions to improve the situations. Therefore, extrinsic motivation is the answer to help the students to feel more confident in answering mathematics examinations or quizzes (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Hairul, Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012) stated that extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value. However, unlike some perspectives that view extrinsically motivated behavior as invariably nonautonomous, proposes that extrinsic motivation can vary greatly in the degree to which it is autonomous. For example, a student who does his/her homework only because he/she fears parental sanctions for not doing it is extrinsically motivated because he/she is doing the work in order to attain the separable outcome of avoiding sanctions. Similarly, a student who does the work because he/she personally believes it is valuable for her chosen career is also extrinsically motivated because he/she too is doing it for its instrumental value rather than because she finds it interesting. Both examples involve instrumentalities, yet the latter case entails personal endorsement and a feeling of choice, whereas the former involves mere compliance with an external control. Both represent intentional behavior, but the two types of extrinsic motivation vary in their relative autonomy.

### *2.1.3 Integrative Motivation*

When students want to learn a language to become part of a speech community (integrate). People who immigrate to new countries are some examples of people who may want to identify with the community around them. An important aspect of this form of language learning is using language for social interaction. So, Integrative motivation is an integrating oneself within a culture to become a part of it. It was discussed that students who are willing to communicate with the native speakers of the target language would likely to have a stronger desire to learn the language, and studies showed that students of this kind achieve better success in their language learning. Some learners have a personal affinity for the people who speak a particular language. This is the second type of language learning motivation described by Gardner and Lambert and is called integrative motivation. Learners who are integratively motivated want to learn the language because they want to get to know the people who speak that language.

They are also interested in the culture associated with that language. Integratively motivated learners may have significant others such as a boyfriend or girlfriend or family members who speak the language, and heritage language learners typically have a particularly strong integrative motivation for language learning. Several studies have found

that language learners who are integratively motivated are more successful than those who are instrumentally motivated; it is likely that integratively motivated language learners are more successful because their motivation is stronger than that of instrumentally motivated students. In other words, integrative motivation is the attitude and interest towards learning a target language and to be associated with that environment (Saville-Troike, 2005).

#### *2.1.4 Instrumental Motivation*

Instrumental motivation is defined as wanting to learn a language for the purpose of obtaining some concrete goals such as a job, graduation, or the ability to read academic materials. Gardner and Lambert (1972) explained that instrumental motivation is related to the desire and interest for improving the opportunities of job or occupation, and is a desire for prestige. In other words, individuals who are instrumentally motivated commit a particular action because they see the activity as an instrument that leads them to achieve bigger rewards (which is usually related to financial situations).

According to Hairul, Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012), explained that People have many different reasons for studying a foreign language; sometimes people study a language for practical reasons while other times people have a special affinity for the particular language and its people. Language teachers are often very aware of the career advantages that language proficiency can bring, but to many language learners, studying the language is only an abstract undertaking required for an academic degree. Since the seminal work of Gardner and Lambert in 1972, language teachers and researchers have recognized the important role that motivation plays in language learning. Gardner and Lambert are responsible for proposing the most commonly used framework for understanding the different motivations that language learners typically have. They distinguish two types of language learning motivation: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation.

They agreed that Learners with an instrumental motivation want to learn a language because of a practical reason such as getting a salary bonus or getting into college. Many college language learners have a clear instrumental motivation for language learning: They want to fulfill a college language requirement! Integratively motivated learners want to learn the language so that they can better understand and get to know the people who speak that language (Hairul, Ahmadi, & Pourhossein, 2012).

### **3. Reading Comprehension**

According to Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012), Rahmani and Sadeghi, (2011), Reading comprehension is defined to get the correct message from a text/written language. Reading comprehension is an interactive mental process between a reader's linguistic knowledge, knowledge of the world, and knowledge about a given topic. Reading comprehension as an interactive process, in which readers interact with the text as their prior experience is activated. Moreover, readers construct meaning from the text by relying on prior experience to parallel, contrast or affirm what the author suggested in the text. Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message. Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read.

Many educators believe that students need to learn to analyze text (comprehend it) even before they can read it on their own, and comprehension instruction. But other educators consider this reading approach to be completely backward for very young children, arguing that the children must learn how to decode the words in a story through phonics before they can analyze the story itself.

During the last century comprehension lessons usually consisted of students answering teachers' questions, writing responses to questions on their own, or both. The whole group version of this practice also often included "Round-robin reading", wherein teachers called on individual students to read a portion of the text (and sometimes following a set order). In the last quarter of the 20th century, evidence accumulated that the read-test methods assessed comprehension more than they taught it. The associated practice of "round robin" reading has also been questioned and eliminated by many educators (Ahmadi & Pourhossein; 2012, Rahmani & Sadeghi, 2011).

### **3.1 Different Models of Reading Comprehension**

Reading is a cognitive process that consists of a reader, a text, and the interaction between the reader and the text. There are three models of reading process: the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model.

#### *3.1.1. Bottom-up Model*

The bottom-up model begins with decoding the smallest linguistic units, especially phonemes, graphemes, and words, and ultimately constructs meaning from the smallest to the largest units. While doing this, the readers apply their background knowledge to the information they find in the texts. This bottom-up method is also called data-driven and text-based reading (Carrell, 1989). This reading model focuses on the smaller units of a text such as its letters, words, phrases and sentences. Then, a syntactic and semantic processing occurs during which reading reaches the final meaning. In this model, the reader reads all of the words in a phrase, or a sentence before being able to understand.

The bottom-up reading process begins with decoding the smallest linguistic units, especially phonemes, graphemes, and words, and ultimately constructs meaning from the smallest to the largest units. While doing this, the readers apply their background knowledge to the information they find in the texts. This bottom-up method is also called data-driven and text-based reading (Carrell, 1989). The disadvantage of this model is that the readers will only be successful in reading if they accurately decode the linguistic units and recognize the relationship between words. It is impossible for the readers to store in their memory the meaning of every word in a passage. It is also difficult to relate one word to the other words. It can be concluded that there are some arguments against the bottom-up model. In the reading process, the readers understand that what they have read is the result of their own constructions, not the result of the transmission of graphic symbols to their understanding, and that without their background knowledge, they cannot comprehend the texts (Ahmadi & Pourhossein, 2012).

#### *3.1.2 Top-down Model*

This model was defined as the idea of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game in which the reader uses his/her background knowledge or textual schemata to connect with a text and to relate these to new or unexpected information found in the text in order to understand it. Top down model focuses on linguistic guesswork rather than graphic textual information. The readers do not need to read every word of a text, but rather, they concentrate on

predicting the next group of words. Readers might start predicting from the title of the reading text, something that allows them to limit the scope of their reading. While reading, they may hypothesize the message the writer wants to convey and modify their hypotheses according to what they read in the text. Comprehension begins with higher levels of processing (making hypotheses), and proceeds to the use of the lower levels. Top-down and bottom-up are both strategies of information processing and knowledge ordering, used in a variety of fields including software, humanistic and scientific theories, and management and organization. In practice, they can be seen as a style of thinking and teaching (Ahmadi & Pourhossein, 2012; Nuttall, 1996).

A top-down approach (also known as stepwise design or deductive reasoning, and in many cases used as a synonym of *analysis* or *decomposition*) is essentially the breaking down of a system to gain insight into its compositional subsystems. In a top-down approach an overview of the system is formulated, specifying but not detailing any first-level subsystems. Each subsystem is then refined in yet greater detail, sometimes in many additional subsystem levels, until the entire specification is reduced to base elements. A top-down model is often specified with the assistance of "black boxes", these make it easier to manipulate. However, black boxes may fail to elucidate elementary mechanisms or be detailed enough to realistically validate the model. Top down approach starts with the big picture. It breaks down from there into smaller segments (Ahmadi & Pourhossein, 2012; Nuttall, 1996).

### 3.1.3 Interactive Model

Interactive model is based on the interaction between the bottom-up and top-down models. The interactive model is a process based on information from several sources such as orthographic, lexical, syntactic, semantic knowledge, and schemata. While reading, decoding processes can support one another in a compensatory way. If, when reading word by word, readers with good bottom-up skills do not comprehend the texts, they need to use their prior knowledge (schemata) to assist them which is called interactive model (Stanovich, 1980). This model is built on the interaction of the bottom-up and top-down models.

Nunan (1990) argued that efficient and effective reading requires both top-down and bottom-up decoding. L2 readers, for example, may use top-down reading to compensate for deficiencies in bottom-up reading. To achieve meaning, they use their schemata to compensate for the lack of bottom-up knowledge. It is the interactive model which is a process based on information from several sources such as orthographic, lexical, syntactic, semantic knowledge, and schemata. While reading, decoding processes can support one another in a compensatory way. If, when reading word by word, readers with good bottom-up skills do not comprehend the texts, they need to use their prior knowledge (schemata) to assist them.

Readers who rely on the top-down model use textual clues and guess wildly at the meaning, but they need to compensate for deficits such as weaknesses in word recognition and lack of effective bottom-up processing. The interactive model, which is the combination of the bottom-up and top-down processes, leads to the most efficient processing of texts. Knowing that the interactive model can help L2 readers in achieving successful reading, teachers should find reading instructions based on this model to promote L2 readers' abilities. The reciprocal teaching approach is a type of reading instruction that is based on the interactive model. It covers four main reading strategies (Stanovich, 1980).

## 4. Related Studies between Reading Motivation and Reading Comprehension

Morgan and Fuchs (2007) explained in their study that there is a strong relationship between motivation and reading comprehension proficiency. The results of their study indicated that reading motivation relates to all aspects of motivation and is related to reading comprehension and facilitated reading in different levels of students. Cox and Guthrie (2001) pointed out that students' motivation positively affects their readings; it means that students with stronger reading motivation can be expected to read more in a wider range. Accordingly, Schutte and Malouff (2007) discovered in their research that motivation is an important factor which supports students to read more, and it has a significant relationship with reading and understanding texts. Similarly, many researchers have been well aware of the importance of motivation in target language learning and how motivation improves comprehension among language learners (Ahmadi & Hairul, 2012; Dornyei, 2006; Grabe, 2009).

Pachtman and Wilson (2006) explained additional benefits of being a motivated reader by stating that it is important to motivate students to read by providing them opportunities to select their desired materials. In other words, students would likely to read more when they are allowed to choose their reading materials because they would discover that reading is an enjoyable activity. So, it can be concluded that students with high motivation would read more than students with lower motivation.

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, it became clear that reading motivation could have a positive impact on students' reading comprehension. Motivating students can encourage them to make educated guesses, better achievement, solve problems or difficulties while reading the text and also reduce comprehending anxiety. Thus, it can be concluded that considering such reading motivation in teaching curriculum as to be instructed on the regular and disciplined basis could be profitable for the students. In this case, teachers are also encouraged to consider reading motivation in their regular English classes so that their students might become motivated in a reading comprehension situation. The findings of this study indicated that students with higher motivation and desire in reading comprehension would improve rather than other students with lower motivation and could benefit in many ways in English reading comprehension proficiency.

Reading comprehension can be one of the most important parts for a language learner to master and one of the least favorite topics for teachers to address in the classroom. But most of the students have difficulty with constructing meaning from the written texts and also they do not have motivation to read any texts. So, as researchers conducted studies in the field of reading motivation, they found that reading motivation is one of the main important factors to facilitate students' reading comprehension. It can be concluded that universities and schools need to be actively improve reading motivation among all students. Research indicates that reading motivation promotes both performance and understanding of one's reading comprehension. Research further supports the claim that reading motivation facilitates students' reading comprehension.

This study corroborates the view that explicit instruction of reading motivation is a feasible tool to enhance students' reading comprehension and benefited most from explicit reading instruction supplemented by practice in reading motivation activities. However, it may be challenging for instructors to practice reading motivation in the conventional way, it is worthwhile because this form of motivation in reading was the most effective. Above all, it is important to say that after a relatively short time of reading comprehension instruction, students become self-regulated readers and they can be a proficient reader after finishing this instruction learning. So, then they know

when and how to utilize reading. The general results of this study can be summarized as: students in all level of study need to be motivated to improve their reading comprehension and become proficient readers.

The findings based on this study all learners should be motivated in learning and then they can develop their learning through reading comprehension. This study has mostly dealt with the roles of reading motivation and various kinds of motivation in comprehending a reading text. On the whole, most of the above mentioned studies described that reading motivation leads to improvement in language learning performance, particularly reading comprehension process, for different leveled students regardless of what learning context they are in. Furthermore, reading teachers need to go beyond their traditional roles by providing opportunities for their students to become motivated and develop their reading comprehension proficiency.

## References

- Ahmadi, M. R., & Hairul, N. I. (2012). Reciprocal teaching as an important factor of improving reading comprehension. *Journal of studies in education*, 2(4),153-173.
- Ahmadi, M. R., & pourhossein, A. G. (2012). Reciprocal Teaching Strategies and Their Impacts on English Reading Comprehension. *theory and Practice in language studies*, 2(10), (pp. 2053-2060).
- Carrell, P. L. (1989). Metacognitive awareness and second language reading. *Modern Language Journal*, 73, 120–133.
- Cox, K. E., & Guthrie, J. T. (2001). Motivational and cognitive contributions to students' amount of reading. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 26, 116-131.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Dornyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA Review*,19, 42-68.
- Falk, J. (1978). *Linguistics and language: A survey of basic concepts and implications* (Eds.). *John Wiley and Sons*.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language; Moving from theory to practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In M.L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, and R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research*. (Vol. III, pp. 403-22). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Hairul, N. I., Ahmadi, M. R., & Pourhossein, A. G. (2012). The role of reciprocal teaching strategy as an important factor of improving reading motivation. *Elixir educational technology*, 53(3)2229-712X
- Maleki, A., & Zangani, E. (2007). A survey on the relationship between English language proficiency and the academic achievement of Iranian EFL students. *Asian EFL Journal*, 9, 86-96.
- Morgan, R., & Fuchs, D. (2007). Is there a bidirectional relationship between children's reading skills and reading motivation? *Exceptional Children*, 73, 165-183.
- Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Heinemann.
- Pachtman, A. B., & Wilson, K. A. (2006). What do the kids think? *The Reading Teacher*, 59, 680-684.
- Rahmani, M., & Sadeghi, K. (2011). Effects of note-taking training on reading comprehension and recall. *Reading*, 11(2), 116-128.
- Rosenfield, M., Leung, S., & Oilman, P. K. (2001). The reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks important for academic success at the undergraduate and graduate levels (TOEFL Monograph Series, No. 21). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Saville-Troike, M. (2005). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schutte, N. S., & Malouff, J. M. (2007). Dimensions of reading motivation: Development of an adult reading motivation scale. *Reading Psychology*, 28, 469-489.
- Seymour, S., & Walsh, L. (2006). *Essentials of teaching academic reading*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Stanovich, K. E. (1980). Toward an interactive- compensatory model of individual differences in the development of reading fluency. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 16, 32-71.
- Wang, T. H. (2008). The effects of modified collaborative strategic reading on EFL learners' reading comprehension. Unpublished MA dissertation, National Changhua University of Education, Changhua, Taiwan.