

Increasing Student Interest in Reading

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not daily book talks and weekly book tastings would increase student interest in reading for a group of 23 second grade students. Student interest was measured using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. The study was a one-group repeated measure design. Participants were selected based on convenience sampling. Implementing daily book talks and weekly book tastings resulted in increased interest in reading and more books read, on average. The upward trend across time was statistically significant for the interest surveys but not statistically significant for the number of books read.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Reading is one of the most important skills that young children learn. In order to be successful in the world they must learn to read. The goal of reading is comprehension. Reading instruction should revolve around making students proficient readers who comprehend what they are reading. Students should be involved in enjoyable reading experiences that motivate and encourage them to read.

Teaching strategies to decode and comprehend texts is crucial for reading development. It is equally important for students to have an interest in reading. There are many important benefits for students when they are interested in the text they are reading. According to Springer et al., (2017) these benefits include, improved comprehension, deeper comprehension, reading more strategically, retaining what is read longer, and more cognitive effort into what they are reading.

When students are not interested, motivating them to read may be more difficult. The less students read the less time they have to practice their reading skills.

The researcher has observed students who show a lack of interest in reading and define it as their least enjoyable activity. The researcher also noticed that students who most often define reading as their least enjoyable activity, are students who struggle with literacy tasks. These students are also students who are labeled as performing below grade level. When students interest in reading increases so will the amount of reading students do. When students read more often, they have more opportunities to practice their reading skills and increase their vocabulary.

Statement of Problem

Students are consistently encouraged to read. Reading is assigned for homework, classwork, used during instruction, and also to complete assignments. When students are not interested in reading, it is more complicated for them to comprehend what they read. Reading is a transdisciplinary skill used across all content areas if students are struggling to read it could cause struggling in other areas.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that there will be no relationship among introducing students to reading activities of interest and increasing their exposure to a variety of texts and student interest in reading.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study the following definitions will be used.

- Dependent Variable: Student interest – Student interest in reading will be measured using a reading interest survey.
- Dependent Variable: Number of books read.
- Independent Variable: Book talk – A book talk is when the researcher presents a book to students, gives a brief synopsis, and encourages students to read it.
- Independent Variable: Book tasting – The researcher will provide students with several books and short summaries and allow students time to interact with the texts.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review explores reading motivation in students. Section one defines motivation, reviews tools for measuring motivation, and theories about motivation. Section two will discuss the relationship between reading skills and reading motivation. Section three covers factors that contribute to motivation. Section four will discuss interventions that have been used to increase motivation.

Motivation

Defining Motivation

Defining motivation is a complex task. Researchers who have studied motivation as it pertains to education have run into some issues with the terminology that surrounds motivation. There are inconsistencies in the field about the underlying constructs that comprise motivation, this has caused some to shy away from research into motivation. There is valuable information that can be gained from research into motivation if a consensus can be reached about explicitly defining the terms (Conradi et al., 2014). When thinking in the context of reading motivation the two terms that are frequently used are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. “In general, motivation can be seen as falling on a continuum that ranges from extrinsic to intrinsic reasons for performing an action” (Locher et al., 2019 p. 2). Intrinsic reading motivation can be described as a student reading a book because they enjoy the book. That student is motivated to read by their enjoyment of reading. Extrinsic motivation occurs when a student reads a book because of an outside force. For example, a student who is reading books because their teacher

has promised that the student who reads the most books will earn a reward. The student is being motivated to read because they want to earn the reward.

Ways to Measure Reading Motivation

One of the most common ways to measure motivation is a reading motivation scale. Reading motivation scales typically cater to an age range. Reading motivation scales are created with an audience in mind and are designed to be appropriate for those age ranges. There are motivation scales that can be used with students in primary grades and intermediate grades and through adulthood. Reading motivation scales should be tested for reliability and validity. Most reading motivation scales include at least some form of self-report (Davis et al., 2018). Students answer questions about their feelings regarding reading. There are reading motivation scales that also take into account a parent's input.

One example of a reading motivation scale is, Young Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory. This example was validated to be used with students that are between the ages of seven and nine. This motivation scale looks at 39 measures ranging from math, reading, general learning, and difficult things. Students respond with a Likert scale response of three choices, very true, a little true, and not true. This motivation scale needs to be administered individually and can take between 20 to 30 minutes. The validity of this scale was tested on 107 children over a three-year time period (Davis et al., 2018). This is just one example of a reading motivation scale.

There are pros and cons with using reading motivation scales. A positive about using reading motivation scales is that they can give valuable information about student feelings regarding reading, types of reading students prefer, and how they feel about themselves as

readers. Some of the negatives about reading motivation scales is that they can be time consuming to administer. In the example above the scale is to be administered individually and it takes 20-30 minutes. Depending on the number of students that will need the scale to be administered to them it could take a very long time. Then the results need to be analyzed. Another thing to consider when choosing a reading motivation scale is students experience with responding to statements or questions using a Likert scale.

Theories About Reading Motivation

Situational and habitual reading motivation is one theory used for reading motivation. “Habitual motivation is characterized by relatively stable feelings about specific activity areas, such as a general enjoyment of reading” (Locher et al., 2019 p. 2). Situational motivation can have an impact on habitual motivation. For example, if a student enjoys reading but they are in an environment that is not suitable for them to read their motivation to read may be lower at that moment. If students experience negative situational motivation regularly it can begin to diminish their habitual motivation to read. This can account for a change in motivation over time.

Another theory about reading motivation is, self-determination theory. This theory identifies three needs that need to be met to increase the likelihood of intrinsic motivation. Those three needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy occurs when children have some choice in what they are reading and they want to read. This is believed to be the reason their motivation to read for academic purposes is lower. Competence is how the student feels about their ability to read the text. Relatedness is the consideration of the task and how it relates to their social environment (Locher et al., 2019).

Reading Skills and Motivation

There is a lot of discussion about how reading motivation and reading skills are related. “Put another way, each of the reviewed studies that investigated this question reported a correlation between children’s reading skills and their concurrent motivation” (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007 p. 169). There is a weak correlation between reading motivation and reading skills. Research supports the idea that when providing instruction to students in the area of reading, the focus should be on skills and motivation. If students feel negatively about their reading abilities their motivation to read will be poorer. They need to be provided with the skills to increase their perception of their reading abilities and increase their intrinsic motivation. “When motivation increases, students participate more in reading activities, leading to increasing academic achievement” (Kusdemir & Bulut, 2018, p. 108).

Researchers also looked at the way extrinsic motivation can impact reading skills. It was found that extrinsic motivation can have a negative impact on reading comprehension. In all of the studies that were carried out, researchers also noted that there are other factors that contribute to reading motivation.

Factors That Contribute to Motivation

Through research of intrinsic reading motivation, researchers have also looked at other factors that can contribute to reading motivation. Those factors include age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, teacher, digital media, and English language learners. These different variables have been examined as they relate to reading motivation.

Teachers and Reading Motivation

Students spend a large amount of time at school and with their teachers. It is important that a supportive environment and teacher be present. Teachers play a large role in student development. According to researchers, “Reading motivation research indicates that teachers can play a critical role in persistently stimulating their students’ intrinsic reading motivation” (Naeghel et al., 2014, p. 1549).

Teachers can help students with their intrinsic reading motivation by being supportive of student needs. Self-determination theory states that students have three needs that have to be met to increase motivation. Teachers can help by teaching students how to select texts that meet those needs. Teaching students how to choose texts that they will be able to read successfully meets one of those needs. It also provides students with autonomy when choosing texts. Another way the teacher plays a role in meeting those needs is relatedness. The teacher can create a social environment that supports reading.

Other Factors That Influence Motivation

Another study looked at how digital media impacts intrinsic reading motivation. It was found that digital reading can increase reading motivation. As technology evolves, so do our students’ needs. Another way to promote intrinsic reading motivation is integrating digital media.

Researchers have also looked into the relationship between socioeconomic status and reading motivation. It was noted that the lack of materials might contribute to the low motivation of students who are economically disadvantaged.

According to McGeown et al., (2015), when examining how gender contributes to intrinsic motivation, girls had consistently higher reading motivation. They also found that girls tended to read fiction books more often than boys did. Considering all of the factors that contribute to motivation the next step is to look at ways to increase intrinsic motivation.

Increasing Intrinsic Motivation

There are strategies and interventions that can be put in place to help increase student motivation to read. In a study carried out focused on multiple intelligences, researchers found that using multiple intelligences was a way to promote intrinsic reading motivation. “The students have developed the ability to choose activities and texts that suit their dominant intelligence, therefore becoming more engaged in silent reading” (Buschick et al., 2007, p. 78). Students were taught how to choose books that were aligned with their dominant intelligence. This study found that when students were reading books aligned with their dominant intelligence it increased their engagement and improved their motivation to read.

Another study used a fluency-oriented intervention with students who struggled to read. The results showed that improving students’ skills led to improving their self-efficacy, and that led to improved motivation to read. Studies find that through intentional instruction, intrinsic motivation to read can be improved.

Next Steps

In the future researchers may want to look at defining motivation in a more concrete way that allows everyone to operate under the same definition of motivation. It is important to have a universal definition of motivation to increase everyone’s understanding of motivation.

Researchers might also want to look into ways to provide training for teachers to help them understand their role in intrinsic motivation.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This study uses an action research approach with a one-group repeated measures design. A reading interest survey was administered three times to students to collect data about their level of interest in academic reading and recreational reading. The researcher presented students with a book talk each day. During the book talk the researcher provided a brief summary of the book to students and then explained where students could locate the book to read. Once a week, for six weeks, students participated in a book tasting. During this time the researcher provided students with a variety of texts. The texts were various genres and levels. The researcher asked students to read a small snippet of the book and asked them to choose one book from the tasting they think they would like to read. The number of books read were tallied five times.

In this study the dependent variable is the student interest in both academic reading and recreational reading, and the number of books read. The independent variables are going to be daily book talks and weekly book tastings.

A constraint involved in this study is everyone received the treatment and there was not a control group to compare results with. The current global pandemic also posed several constraints on the study. The first constraint was that students were using digital books instead of physical copies of books. Another constraint for this study was that 65% of the participants were learning virtually 100% of the time. Many of these students only had access to a limited digital library.

Participants

The participants included in this study were chosen by convenience sampling. There are twenty-three participants. Participants are students in a second-grade classroom at a title one school. There are 15 boys and 8 girls. There are seven students identified as having a disability and receive special education services. Fifteen of the students qualify for free and reduced meals. Five of the students participate in the English Learner program. Twelve of the participants receive a reading intervention, four days a week.

Instrument

The instrument used to gauge student interest in reading is called, “Elementary Reading Attitude Survey”. This survey asks the students twenty questions and students circle a picture indicating how they feel about the question. To create norms for the instrument a large-scale study was conducted in 1989. The instrument was administered to 18,138 students in grades one to six. The students involved came from thirty-eight states and ninety-five districts in the United States. Ethnic and gender distribution were similar to that of the population in the United States.

To determine reliability for this instrument, Cronbach’s alpha, was calculated at each grade level for the subscales and the composite score. These coefficients ranged from .74 to .89.

Procedure

At the beginning of the study the researcher administered the Reading Attitude Survey to all participants. The participants were told that they were going to be taking a survey to find out how they feel about reading. The researcher emphasized that they were not taking a test. After administering the survey, the scores were calculated. The interest survey was administered three

times at the beginning, during, and at the end of the study. The number of books read was tallied five times, at the beginning, during, and at the end of the study.

Students were exposed to a daily book talk and a weekly book tasting for six weeks.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study looked at student interest in reading and whether or not it could be increased. Data collected on reading interest and number of books students read each week. The study included a single group of 23 students in the second grade. Throughout the study students participated in a daily book talk and a weekly book tasting.

Below are the graphs and data tables showing the data from the three successive reading surveys, five successive tallies of books read, paired t-tests for mean percentile differences across interest surveys, and paired t-tests for mean percentile differences across books read for 23 students.

Table 1. Three Successive Surveys of Reading Interest

Dates	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
surv1 3/15	23	29.95	21.29	0	74
surv2 4/6	23	35.78	22.38	1	84
surv3 4/26	23	48.78	26.41	3	90

The data from Table 1 shows a mean increase of 18.83 from the first survey to the third survey. Indicating that interest in reading increased.

Table 2. Five Successive Tallies of Books Read

Dates	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
book1 3/19	23	1.87	1.84	0	5
book2 3/26	23	1.96	2.14	0	8
book3 4/9	23	2.17	2.01	0	6
book4 4/16	23	2.09	1.90	0	5
book5 4/26	23	2.74	2.30	0	6

In Table 2 there is a mean increase of .87 of the number of books read over the five tallies of books read.

Table 3. Paired t-tests for Mean Percentile Differences Across Interest Surveys for 23 Students

Compare Surveys	Mean Difference	Std Dev Difference	t	p-value
Surveys 1, 2	5.8	18.1	1.54	.137
Surveys 2, 3	13.0	9.3	6.74	<.001
Surveys 1, 3	18.8	21.9	4.13	<.001

In Table 3 the paired t-test for the mean percentile differences for survey 2 to survey 3, and for survey 1 to survey 3 shows a p-value of <.001 indicating that the null hypothesis should be rejected at the $\alpha=.05$.

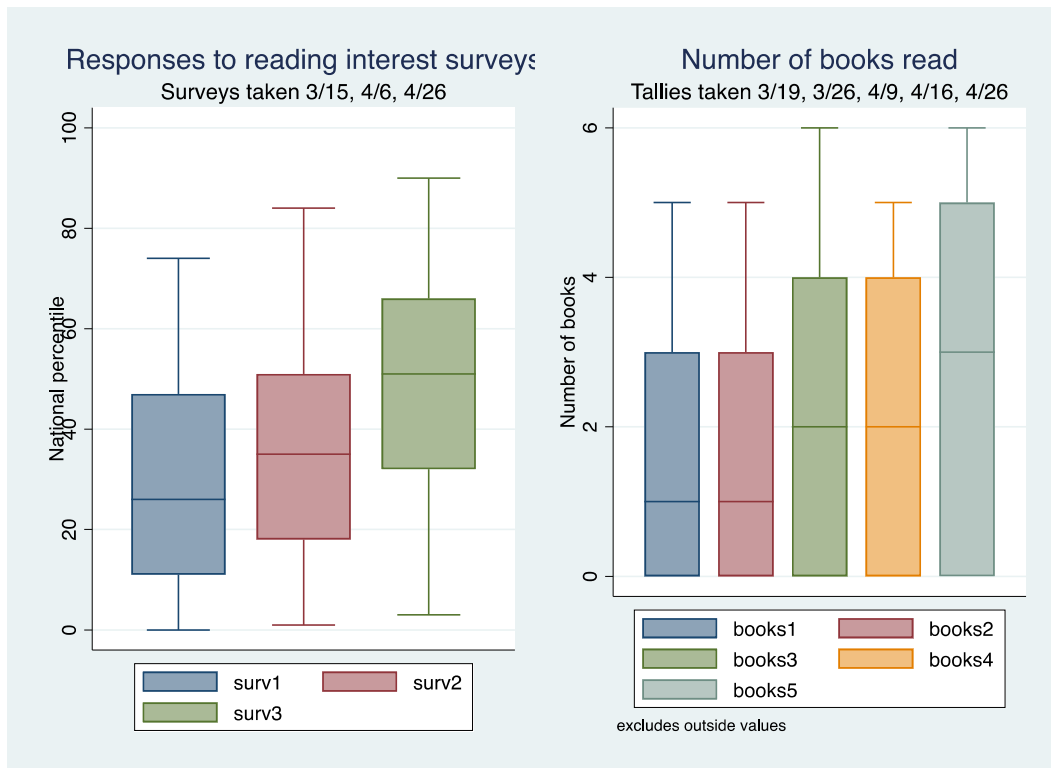
Table 4. Paired t-tests for Number of Books Read for 23 Students

Compare Book Tallies	Mean Difference	St Dev Difference	t	p-value
Books 1, 2	.09	1.68	.249	.806
Books 2, 3	.22	1.51	.692	.496
Books 3,4	.09	1.56	.267	.792
Books 4, 5	.65	1.43	2.18	.040
Books 1,5	.87	1.84	2.26	.034

Table 4 shows the paired t-test for mean percentiles differences across books read. There is a mean difference of .87 between tally 1 and tally 5 that is statistically significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level ($p=.034$). Also, the difference between tally 4 and tally 5 is statistically significant ($p=.04$). The differences in books between the other adjacent tallies were not statistically significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level.

Implementing the daily book talks and weekly book “tastings” resulted in more interest in reading and more books read, on average.

Figure 1.



The trend across time can be measured by a repeated measures ANOVA, which is an extension of the paired t-test. Figure 1 tracks the distributions of surveys and books read. Box plots show medians and the four quartiles. The upward trend of the reading interest surveys national percentile scores was statistically significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level ($p\text{-value}<.001$). The upward trend of the number of books read was not statistically significant at the $\alpha=.05$ level ($p\text{-value}=.186$). There were, however, increases in the sample number median books read between tallies 3/26 and 4/9, as well as between 4/16 and 4/26. Twenty-three 2nd graders participated in the one-group study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not student interest in reading can be increased through book talks and book tastings. The null hypothesis that there is no effect of book talks and book tastings on interest in reading was rejected at the customary alpha level of 0.05. A second null hypothesis that there is no effect of interest in reading on the number of books read could not be rejected at the $\alpha = .05$, although there was an upward trend.

Implications

There was an increase in the mean scores of 18.8 over the three administrations of the reading survey. This indicated that student interest in reading can be increased through book talks and book tastings. The mean number of books students read over the course of the study also showed an increase of .87. The results show that someone wanting to increase their student's interest in reading could implement book talks and book tastings. There was no direct link, however, between higher interest in reading and more books read. The results of the study also indicated there is a difference in reading interest between male and female students. On average female students had higher means of interest on the reading surveys.

Theoretical Consequences

The idea that if a student is more interested in reading then they will be intrinsically motivated to read more books did not hold true in this study. Using a repeated measures ANOVA to analyze the interest survey scores and the number of books read each week throughout the study, indicated the upward trend of books read each week was not statistically significant while the mean score of the interest surveys was statistically significant.

Threats to Validity

In this study there was an external threat to validity because of the sample size and age. The participants were all second-grade students. The sample did not include students across grade levels or use a large sample size. These factors created a sampling bias. Another threat to validity in this study was an internal threat. All participants were learning in a virtual setting when the study began. Over the course of the study some participants returned to the classroom for hybrid instruction. When the study began every student took the survey at their home. When it was time to administer the second survey, four of the students were back in the school building while everyone else was at home. Another threat to validity was the lack of a control group. While it is true that with series data, subjects act as their own controls, a separate sample of similar students that did not receive the treatment would be an even stronger design.

Connections to Previous Studies

In contrast to the study conducted by Kasper et al., (2018) this study focused on whether or not student interest in reading could be increased and if the increased interest would motivate more reading. The work that was done by Kasper et al., (2018) focused on the impact of different language strategies as they relate to reading outcomes and reading interest. This study examined three hypotheses. The strongest relationship found in this study was that reading interest as a strategy had positive impacts on reading outcomes.

Similar to the study conducted by Guthrie et al., (2006) this study focused on reading interest as it pertains to motivation. The researchers found that when students increased their situated interest in an information book over time their general reading motivation increased. An

interesting find in this study is that children who chose narrative books as their favorite showed a decrease in extrinsic motivation throughout the study.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this research suggest that reading interest can be increased in second grade students. For future research it would be interesting to use a larger sample size and to include a broader range of participants from various grade levels also to include a control group. In this study, there was a difference in mean scores between the male and female participants. Future research around which strategies were most effective for boys and girls could provide interesting insights.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a student's interest in reading could be increased. The results of the study showed that student interest in reading can be increased, although there was no direct link between increased interest and more books read. It would be beneficial for future research to continue studying whether or not reading interest can increase the amount of reading students do and the change in reading interest over time.

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