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**Author(s):** Lerkkänen, Marja-Kristiina

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## The Influence of Instructional Practices on Reading Motivation in Finland

Marja-Kristiina Lerikkanen

University of Jyväskylä

Department of Teacher Education

e-mail: [marja-kristiina.lerikkanen@jyu.fi](mailto:marja-kristiina.lerikkanen@jyu.fi)

### Abstract

Although the differences between individuals in language and literacy skills and motivation to read start before entering school, teachers and their instructional practices play an important role in the development of reading skills and various aspects of motivation, especially children's interest in reading. Interest in reading has been reported to contribute to the reading activity and to the amount of reading which, in turn, promote students' reading performance. It has been assumed that children's previous success with learning the basics of reading has provided them with positive feedback about the learning situation, thereby strengthening their interest in reading. Teachers and their instruction provide an important environment for children's learning and motivation. Child-centered teaching practices that are sensitive to the development of children's autonomy, competence beliefs, and social interactions with peers support interest in reading. The high-quality classroom interactions described by emotionally supportive relationships in a well-organized classroom have been shown to be of particular importance for children's reading skills development and motivation, especially among children at risk for reading difficulties. The present chapter attempts to describe the development of interest in reading and how teaching practices and the quality of teacher-child interactions observed in classrooms influence children's reading interest, particularly among boys and at-risk children in the Finnish language context. According to international comparative education studies of achievement, Finland has a high-quality educational system and high performance outcomes across the school years. The results reported here are based on a longitudinal First Steps study among 2,000 children and their teachers from kindergarten to grade 4. Reading instruction is based on phonics, and a highly transparent Finnish orthography makes decoding relatively quick and easy for children to learn.

Keywords: motivation, interest, reading development, instruction

### The Influence of Instructional Practices on Reading Motivation in Finland

The differences between individuals in the development of both their reading skills and their interest in reading start before entering school. It has been assumed that children's success in learning the basics of reading has provided them with positive feedback on the learning situation at home, in kindergarten, and at school, thereby strengthening their interest and engagement in reading. Home as a literacy environment refers to parental behaviors that seek to promote their children's language and pre-reading skills development, such as shared reading, library visits, and the teaching of reading (e.g., Morrison, 2009; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). Other studies have demonstrated the effects of the classroom environment on reading skills (e.g., Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Ponitz, 2009; Lerkkanen, et al., 2016). Teachers and their instructional practices provide an important environment for children's learning and motivation. Teachers who understand the differences between students' individual skill levels upon school entry often make an effort to develop learning activities that interest and engage their students to practice and enjoy reading. For example, educational contexts that promote children's autonomy to initiate tasks and complete them, without applying strict performance criteria, have been shown to strengthen the children's interest in reading; conversely, a strict and more didactic approach, emphasizing correct answers and particular modes of learning, may lead to children's waning intrinsic motivation and interest in reading (Guay, Boggiano, & Vallerand, 2001; Guthrie, Wigfield, & von Secker, 2000; Lerkkanen, Kiuru et al., 2012). However, at school age, children's motivation in reading has been reported to contribute to students' reading activity and the amount of reading which, in turn, promote their reading performance (Stanovich, 1986).

This chapter will summarize the findings of a large-scale First Steps study on how Finnish teachers' instructional practices are associated with children's interest in reading. In particular, it will describe the extent to which teaching practices and the quality of teacher-child interactions observed in classrooms influence children's motivation in reading, particularly among boys and at-risk children in the early school years. International comparative education studies of achievement, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS; Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012) for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA; OECD, 2016) among 15 year olds, have shown that Finland has a high-quality educational system and high performance outcomes across the school years, especially in reading. Compared to many other countries, Finland has a relatively equitable socio-economic environment for families, with children starting formal education at age 7, which is rather late compared to other countries, and class sizes are typically

small (on average, 18.5 students in primary school classrooms). Moreover, reading instruction is based on grapheme-phoneme correspondence (phonics), and a highly transparent Finnish orthography makes reading acquisition relatively easy and quick for children (Soodla et al., 2015).

### **Interest in Reading**

It seems that motivation combined with effort is the key to success at school. Motivation directs students' behaviors and efforts in learning situations (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2006), which then have a positive effect on achievement. Motivation to act can come from within an individual (intrinsic motivation), such as interesting, challenging, and joyful activities that provide internal satisfaction. Alternatively, it can come from something external (extrinsic motivation), such as a reward system in a classroom, which is not related to the learning of the skill itself (Deci & Ryan, 1985). While intrinsic motivation involves student's thoughts, ability beliefs, and emotions in learning situations, extrinsic motivation often works only as long as the external reward is available, although appropriate extrinsic motivation can also be beneficial and support the students' engagement in learning situations.

According to the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation (Eccles, 1983), beliefs and expectancies related to academic situations and subjective task values are central to academic outcomes (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Expectancies and ability beliefs refer to the students' beliefs concerning their competence in upcoming tasks. The value aspect of achievement motivation includes three components: attainment value, utility value, and intrinsic or interest value. Young children cannot clearly distinguish between the different dimensions of task values, except interest value, which refers to how much a child likes and enjoys performing tasks related to a particular topic. Besides interest, many other theories and conceptualizations of motivation have also been introduced in the literature, but interest has important developmental ramifications. In the learning context, interest is one of the reasons students interact with learning domains, perform certain tasks, or exhibit a particular learning behavior (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). In the present chapter, the term *interest* is used to refer to students' enjoyment of doing reading-related tasks.

Previous research has shown that students' interest in reading is typically high at the beginning of school, but often diminishes during the elementary school years (e.g., Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002). This decline concerns students with both higher and lower initial motivation (e.g., Fredrics & Eccles, 2002; Jacobs et al., 2002), but it is steeper

for students with poor reading skills in primary school (Lerkkanen, Poikkeus, & Kiuru, 2012). Different explanations have been given for this decline. One is the lack of support to encourage interest in school (Hidi & Renninger, 2004). More precisely, the decline is related to a changing school environment where too teacher-directed practices are applied, so that children get less individual attention from year to year (Fredrics & Eccles, 2002). In addition to these reasons, the meaning of interest also changes during the middle school years in that greater emphasis is placed on cognitive instead of affective dimensions of interest (Frenzel, Pekrun, Dicke, & Goetz, 2012).

Although reading skills development is affected by different cognitive antecedents, such as letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and naming speed (Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; Torppa et al., 2013), evidence also suggests that a high interest in reading promotes later reading performance and improvement in reading skills (e.g., Ecalle, Magnan, & Gibert, 2006; Wigfield, 1997). Interest in reading has also been reported to contribute to the reading activity and the amount of reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), which, in turn, promotes students' reading performance at school age (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992). Still, it is difficult to know which comes first – interest or skills. It may be that literacy-related motivation only starts to play an important role later when the focus moves towards more advanced reading performance, such as reading fluency and text comprehension skills in primary school (Viljaranta, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2009). Although interest might not always have a direct effect on reading outcomes, its effect may be mediated through the learning strategy used.

Interest strongly overlaps with a self-concept of ability from the very beginning of one's school career. A self-concept of ability indicates the student's evaluation of one's competence in the subject matter or ability to perform certain tasks (Eccles, 1983). Generally, students who have a positive self-concept of their ability and who are interested in academic tasks perform better and are more adaptively engaged in tasks than students with negative self-perceptions and a low level of interest (e.g., Eccles, 1983; Wigfield, 1997). Longitudinal studies have shown that young students' self-concept of ability is related to intrinsic motivation and that a decrease in self-concept goes hand-in-hand with a decrease in interest (Nurmi & Aunola, 2005; Spinath & Spinath, 2005). However, Viljaranta et al.'s (2016) person-oriented analyses broaden our understanding of the various associations between the self-concept of ability, interest, and reading skills by showing that the patterns of the values of these variables differ from child to child. For example, some children can have high skills, a positive self-concept of

ability, but low interest in reading, while others can have poor skills, a negative self-concept of ability, but a high interest in reading. These findings suggest that groups of students who show a similar skill level in reading can be different, particularly regarding their interest in reading. However, most children at risk for a reading disability (RD) were overrepresented in the groups typified by a low level of both skills and a self-concept of ability.

### **Gender Differences**

Gender is one of many factors related to a child's individual features, home environment, and previous experiences, which might affect interest, self-concept of ability, and academic performance (Eccles, 1983). Previous research has shown that girls typically have both higher levels of interest and a stronger self-concept of ability when it comes to reading (Marsh & Yeung, 1998). This is evident as early as kindergarten, whereby girls tend to have a higher reading-related interest than boys (Lerkkanen, Kiuru et al., 2012; Viljaranta et al., 2009). Girls also typically outperform boys in most literacy tasks at school (Halpern & LaMay, 2000; Logan & Johnson, 2009), which might be due to boys' lower motivation to read (e.g., Fredricks & Eccles, 2002). For example, Viljaranta et al.'s (2016) recent person-oriented analyses demonstrated that there were substantially more boys than girls in the most negative group, which exhibited low reading skills, negative self-concepts of ability, and low interest in reading through primary school. However, the results further showed that boys were overrepresented in the average group for these factors, which could suggest that the boys' situation may not be as bad as it first sounds from the previous results.

Studies on motivation that have compared genders have reached unequivocal conclusions that the differences might not be so large. For example, the review by Spinath, Eckert, and Steinmayr (2014) indicated that the relationship between motivation and achievement does not differ remarkably between boys and girls, although there is a difference favoring girls.

Overall, although the differences in reading interest between boys and girls are evident, they should not be a major concern to teachers when planning instruction. There seems to be more variance within groups of boys and within groups of girls, than there are differences between genders. Similarly, as there are girls and boys who are motivated to read (Viljaranta et al., 2016), there will be girls and boys who are unmotivated in the classroom. Most important is to meet the individual needs of each student to support his or her interest towards reading.

### **Effect of Instructional Practices**

The characteristics of teacher and teaching practices play a role in the development of various aspects of motivation (for a review, see Wigfield, Eccles, & Pintrich, 1996). For example, compared to children in more teacher-led didactic classrooms, children in more child-centered classrooms have a higher interest towards reading (e.g., Lerkkanen, Kiuru et al., 2012). Furthermore, according to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), children are most motivated to learn when teachers support their need to feel competent and autonomous as well as related to others (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2000).

The notion of child-centered practices is based on the work of both Piaget and Vygotsky, who subscribed strongly to the recognition of children as active knowledge constructors. In child-centered classrooms, teachers assist and facilitate children's learning by providing them with both guidance and opportunities to direct their own exploration of objects and academic topics, making teaching akin to a partnership between the teacher and the children. Child-centered classrooms are characterized by a shared responsibility for both management and learning, active teacher support for the children's learning efforts and social skills, and teaching practices that are sensitive to children's needs and interests (Stipek & Byler, 2004).

Conversely, the notion of teacher-directed practices is based on the premise that basic academic skills need to be mastered before more advanced learning can occur (Stipek, 2004). In this didactically oriented style of teaching, teachers emphasize the provision of information and employ structured, drill-and-practice group lessons that are fast-paced, teach discrete skills in small steps, and include praise when predetermined goals are reached. High scores in the teacher-directed dimension are typical for teacher-controlled classrooms, where the acquisition of "basic" academic skills through oral recitation and worksheets is given considerable weight, while children's interests and social skills development receive little attention, and peer interaction is not supported (Stipek & Byler, 2004). Teacher-directed practices are based on the teacher's determination to proceed with predetermined instructional content, rather than adhering to children's needs and interests, which are the priority in the more child-centered classrooms.

Although child-centered practices have often been regarded as being the "best practices" in early education, a wide consensus on the most beneficial mix of instruction for advancing children's development and motivation has not yet been achieved. However, a recent study by Tang et al. (2016) showed that in grade 1, children who were in classrooms characterized by the *child-centered style* showed the highest performance in reading, whereas in grade 3, children whose teachers deployed either the *child-centered style* or a *mixed teaching*

*style of child-centered and teacher-directed practices* performed better in reading fluency and reading comprehension than children in other classrooms. Also, a study by Lerkkanen, Kiuru et al. (2012) showed that children were more interested in reading in more child-centered kindergarten classrooms; in addition, their reading skills developed faster in more child-centered classrooms in grade 1 (Lerkkanen et al., 2016).

The quality of classroom interactions has been linked with children's language and pre-literacy skills in several studies as well (Curby et al., 2009; Mashburn et al., 2008). For example, Hamre et al. (2013) showed that children who had responsive teachers made the most gains in early literacy and language skills. Previous studies have also shown that high-quality teacher-child interactions in the classroom contribute to children's motivation (Pakarinen et al., 2010). Moreover, it is of particular importance for children at risk for RD (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Lerkkanen et al., 2016) and boys' motivation toward reading (Lerkkanen, Kiuru et al., 2012; Stipek & Byler, 2004).

### **Introduction to the First Steps Study**

The studies reported here are part of the longitudinal First Steps study (Lerkkanen et al., 2006–2016), which examines student learning and motivation in the interpersonal contexts of kindergarten, comprehensive school, and the home environment in Finland. The population-based sample of children (born in 2000) from four municipalities involved approximately 2,000 children with their parents and teachers. The children's family backgrounds were representative of the general Finnish population. The First Steps study comprises a rich database of assessments of students' academic performance, motivation, social skills, and wellbeing on a yearly basis. At each measurement point, parents and teachers filled in questionnaires concerning their parenting/teaching styles, stress, pedagogical goals and practices, and background information. Teachers also provided ratings on a subsample of students concerning their motivation, behavior, the teacher-child relationship, and partnership with parents. This subsample contained both students at risk for RD ( $n = 277$ ) and students not at risk ( $n = 321$ ). Children's risk for RD was determined at the end of the kindergarten year on the basis of four criteria: children's phonological skills, letter knowledge, rapid automatized naming, and parental report of their own learning disabilities (Lerkkanen, Ahonen, & Poikkeus, 2011).

A subsample of the teachers (49 at kindergarten, 32 at primary school) also participated in classroom observations on a voluntary basis. Two days' observations were coded using the Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure (ECCOM; Stipek & Byler, 2004) which

assesses the nature and quality of the instructional practices, and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) concerning the quality of teacher-child interactions.

The ECCOM instrument (Stipek & Byler, 2004) focuses on child-centered and teacher-directed teaching practices. It measures key characteristics of teaching practices that have been suggested as important in promoting students' interest in academic situations. Such dimensions include autonomy-granting, encouragement, positive affection, and the teacher-child relationship, all of which are typical of child-centered practices. In contrast, in a teacher-directed learning environment, the emphasis is typically placed on the quality of performance and academic content, as well as on a didactic approach to teaching.

In turn, the CLASS (Pianta et al., 2008) focuses on the patterns of interactions between teachers and students as central drivers for student learning and motivation. It has operationalized classroom interactions in several specific dimensions involving emotional, organizational, and instructional features of the classroom. The emotional support domain focuses on the positive tone and respectful interactions in the classroom; that is, the teachers' abilities to support the social and emotional functioning in the classroom. The classroom organization domain focuses on classroom processes related to the organization and management of the students' behavior, time, and attention in the classroom. Instructional support focuses on how teachers establish conversations and give feedback in order to promote children's cognitive and language development.

The sample of the present chapter is Finnish children in the early years of their school careers: kindergarten (6 year olds) and from grades 1 to 4 (7–10 year olds). The goal of Finnish kindergarten education is to arouse children's interest in reading and to support emerging pre-reading skills, instead of a systematic instruction of decoding. In grade 1, reading and spelling are taught simultaneously, with an emphasis on the systematic use of phonics and grapheme-phoneme connections, while later, the focus is more on reading fluency and comprehension (Lerkkanen, 2007). Largely due to the consistent nature of the highly transparent orthography of Finnish language, reading accuracy hits a ceiling after a few months of formal reading instruction in grade 1 (e.g., Lerkkanen et al., 2004), and basically all children can read accurately by the end of grade 1 (Soodla et al., 2015). However, even a highly consistent orthography does not guarantee efficient reading acquisition for all children. Reading difficulties are typically identified for approximately 5–20% of children in either reading fluency or comprehension, depending on the criteria.

## The Results from the First Steps Study

**The association between reading and motivation.** When investigating the changes in reading interest from kindergarten to grade 4, we recognized a trend of declining interest (Figure 1). Although the decline is slight, the result is in line with previous studies showing that students' reading interest is highest at the beginning of school, but begins to diminish during the primary grades (Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001; Jacobs et al., 2002).

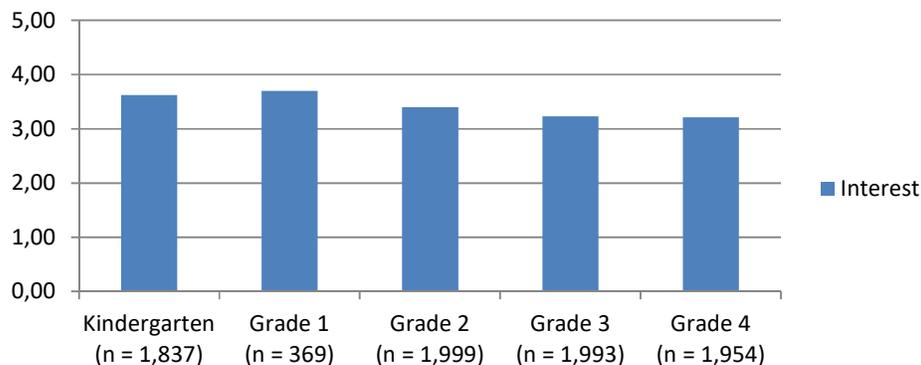


Figure 1. Reading interest from kindergarten to grade 4.

As a next step, we analyzed the differences between girls and boys in their interest towards Finnish language and literacy from grades 1 to 4. The results showed clear gender differences, which were also statistically significant at every time point, favoring girls who were more interested in literacy learning than boys. The differences in a subsample of the data between poor readers (the lowest, 15.7%, in reading fluency at grade 2) and other readers were also evident, but only after grade 1 (Table 1). Both of these results are in line with previous studies concerning gender differences and differences between poor readers and other children.

Table 1

*The Differences between Poor Readers and Other Readers in Their Interest in Finnish Language and Literacy as a Subject from Grades 1 to 4*

Interest in Literacy	Poor readers		Other readers		t (df)
	n	M (SD)	n	M (SD)	
Grade 1	92	3.5 (1.4)	493	3.7 (1.2)	-1.4 (118.3)
Grade 2	92	2.9 (1.5)	474	3.3 (1.2)	-2.3 (115)**
Grade 3	88	2.8 (1.3)	470	3.2 (1.2)	-2.9 (556)***
Grade 4	83	2.8 (1.3)	451	3.1 (1.1)	-2.1 (103)*

The study by Lerkkanen, Poikkeus, et al. (2010) examined the literacy and motivational development of three groups of children from kindergarten to grade 2: a group of children at risk for RD ( $n = 162$ ), a group of precocious readers who had learned to decode at kindergarten ( $n = 460$ ), and a group of children in the follow-up ( $n = 1,205$ ). In addition, within groups, gender differences were analyzed, and the three groups were compared in terms of children's self-rated motivation, parental achievement expectations and ability beliefs concerning their child, and the amount of parental teaching of reading at home. The results showed that groups differed in their pre-reading skills, reading achievement, and their motivation across all time points (Table 2). Also, some group differences in literacy skills and motivation favoring girls were found. Differences were also found between the groups, indicating that parents' expectations and beliefs were most positive among the group of precocious readers, and lowest among the group of children at risk for RD, with the latter group of children also receiving the least amount of parental teaching of reading at home.

Table 2

*The Differences between At-Risk RD Group, Precursor Readers, and Other Children in Reading Skills and Motivation (Lerkkanen, Poikkeus et al., 2010)*

Reading skills and motivation	At risk for RD ( $n = 121-162$ )		Other children ( $n = 1,087-1,205$ )		Precursor readers ( $n = 418-460$ )		F <sup>a</sup>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Reading fluency <sup>1</sup>							
Grade 1, spring	10.4	5.8	17.0	7.5	25.1	9.1	244.0***
Grade 2, spring	18.6	6.6	23.5	6.8	28.9	7.8	137.0***
Reading comprehension <sup>2</sup>							
Grade 1, spring	2.9	2.6	5.0	2.9	8.0	2.6	243.8***
Grade 2, spring	6.2	2.9	8.2	2.6	10.2	1.8	164.5***
Interest <sup>3</sup>							
Kindergarten, spring	3.2	1.6	3.6	1.4	3.8	1.3	10.7***
Grade 2, spring	3.0	1.4	3.4	1.2	3.6	1.1	9.6***
Self-concept of ability <sup>4</sup>							
Kindergarten, spring	6.4	3.0	7.6	2.3	8.2	1.9	36.9***

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Notes. <sup>a</sup>All groups differed from each other statistically significantly at least level .01; <sup>1</sup>ALLU reading test (Lindeman, 1998, 2 min, max 80 p.); <sup>2</sup>ALLU reading test (max 12 p.); <sup>3</sup>Interest (*How much you like reading*, 5-point scale); <sup>4</sup>Self-Concept of Ability (Nicholls, 1978, 10-point scale).

**The role of child-centered teaching in motivation.** The study by Lerkkanen, Kiuru et al. (2012) examined the extent to which teaching practices observed in kindergarten classrooms contributed to children's subsequent interest in reading. The results showed that teaching practices make a difference; in the kindergarten classrooms where teachers predominantly applied child-centered teaching practices, the children showed more interest in reading than in

classrooms characterized by predominantly teacher-directed teaching practices. This result suggests that child-centered practices promote the positive development of children's interest in reading.

Also, Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, and Milburn (1995) found that children were more highly motivated in child-centered programs compared to children in more teacher-directed classrooms. When teachers allowed children a lot of freedom to choose tasks and complete them without the pressure of getting the right answer, the children selected more challenging tasks, were less dependent on the teacher, and showed more pride in their performance. The results by Lerkkanen, Kiuru et al. (2012) and Stipek et al. (1995) are in accordance with motivation theories, which emphasize the importance of encouraging individual choices and creating opportunities to feel competent (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Children seem to want to read more often when they are able to choose what to read, have the opportunity to interact with others, can discuss what they have read, and feel successful about reading (Gambrell, Palmer, & Coding, 1993).

In child-centered classrooms, teachers support and facilitate children's learning by providing them with both guidance and opportunities to direct their own exploration of academic topics. Therefore, child-centered practices are characterized by a shared responsibility for learning between the teacher and students, as well as teachers' active and sensitive scaffolding for children's learning. It has also been recently suggested (Kikas, Peets, & Hodges, 2014; Tang et al., 2016) that it is essential to strike a balance between constructivist, child-centered practices and didactic, teacher-directed practices to positively affect both children's academic learning and motivation. In such balanced practices, teachers simultaneously use active constructive instruction and scaffolding of children's basic skills, according to each child's individual needs, without engaging them too much in repetitious basic skills tasks.

**The role of teacher-child interactions in motivation.** The study by Pakarinen et al. (2010) investigated the role of the quality of teacher-student interactions and teacher stress in children's motivation and phonological skills in kindergarten classrooms. The results of multilevel modeling indicated that the higher the quality of classroom organization, as observed by the CLASS, the higher the children's motivation in that particular classroom. The quality of the teacher's emotional and instructional support also correlated with the children's motivation, and the children's motivation correlated with phonological skills. The results showed further that teacher stress was associated with the children's motivation: the more stress a teacher reported the lower the children's motivation. Teacher stress also had an indirect effect

on phonological skills via children's motivation: high teacher stress was related to children's low motivation, which further predicted their low level of phonological skills.

These results suggest that teachers setting clear rules and providing inherently interesting tasks in the classroom are associated with children's motivation and engagement in learning activities as early as kindergarten. Our results also suggest that children's motivation is an important mediator of the impact of teacher-related variables on children's pre-reading skills. This result is in line with Guay et al. (2001), indicating that the teachers' provision of both autonomy support and an optimal structure predict children's motivation.

The study by Pakarinen et al. (2010) also indicated that in addition to teachers' instructional practices, their wellbeing is important in promoting children's motivation. Teachers who exhibit a greater amount of enthusiasm are effective in promoting students' interest, excitement, and curiosity (Patrick, Hisley, Kempler, & College, 2000), while emotional exhaustion may lead to avoiding interactions with students and lowered sensitivity. Therefore, the teachers' wellbeing may affect children's academic skills by promoting children's enthusiasm and engagement in learning.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has presented some concepts of motivation regarding reading skills development along with classroom practices, which facilitate children's interest towards reading. It is obvious that teaching practices that are sensitive to the development of children's autonomy, self-efficacy, and social interactions with peers can support their interest in reading (Deci & Ryan, 2001). Therefore, teachers first need to *support children's sense of autonomy* in their reading goals and behavior. One of the most effective ways to support students to sustain their interest in a task or activity is to raise their curiosity by giving them choices and to support their autonomy to make choices by themselves. When they have some degree of choice, such as which book or text they would like to read and why, or in which order they will do the tasks and with whom, students will be more likely to experience sustained interest in reading. Students' sense of autonomy in their goals and behavior will develop in classrooms where teachers emphasize child-centered practices that support each child's intrinsic motivation, and not by controlling learning by external rewards only.

Second, teachers need to *support children's competence* beliefs with tasks and classroom work. The teacher's positive verbal reinforcement when it is deserved toward a child's effort, rather than toward his or her intelligence, may increase intrinsic motivation. The

message from the teacher is that errors and misunderstandings are also learning opportunities, instead of showing the child that he or she is incompetent. For students with reading difficulties, selecting a single task or focus area for improvement helps them to successfully proceed, rather than being overwhelmed, which could be detrimental to their self-efficacy and competence beliefs.

Finally, teachers need to *support children's connection with others* in the classroom, where learning is influenced by interactions with the teacher and peers. The social relationships and climate of the classroom affect motivation. Students need to be given opportunities to work and talk with their classmates, but they also need to feel competent among their peers. High-quality classroom interactions are emotionally supportive, caring, and respectful (Hamre & Pianta, 2007). This is possible in well-organized classrooms with management of students' behavior and attention, supportive instructional activities, and sustained shared thinking.

Children come to school to learn new skills, engage in interesting activities, and work with other children. Although teachers need to develop activities with the students' interests in mind, they also need to think about how to raise the students' curiosity about new things of which they are not yet aware, and how to keep their attention on the tasks to practice, because only an avid reader will develop as a good reader.

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