

English Language Learners' Reading Motivation

Summary: Students are motivated to read for different reasons. In an article for *The Reading Teacher*, a Western Michigan University instructor conducted an interview study of upper elementary English Language Learners (ELLs) to uncover specific motivations for reading and uncover instructional best practices to keep ELLs motivated to read.

Practical Applications

Acknowledging that every student is different and cultural differences must be taken into account, the author concluded the following major reasons behind ELLs' reading motivation:

- **Sociocultural environment** – students' motivation to read tracks closely with that of their parents and their friends; if they see role models reading or promoting reading, they too will want to read.
- **Integrative orientation** – “ELs use reading as a way to form bonds with their American peers and learn more about their new culture.” Interestingly, the students interviewed discussed books they were reading solely with their American peers and not with friends from their own country.
- **Instrumental motivation** – students may have a utilitarian desire to learn more or improve their English skills by reading books in English.
- **Perceived competence** – students' perception of how good their English skills are correlates with their desire to read (there are other studies which back up this finding).
- **Reading materials** – like many students, ELLs are more likely to want to read in English when they have access to books which are at their level and interesting

Conclusion and Citation

While some aspects of reading motivation are true across all students – e.g. having right-level, interesting texts – English Language Learners have particular aspects to their motivation which should be taken into account. Teachers should especially make sure there are opportunities for social interaction around books, that the value of reading is made explicit, and that students feel comfortable and competent with their current level of English (and understand it will continue to grow).

Protacio, M. “Reading Motivation: A Focus on English Learners” *The Reading Teacher* 66.1 (Jan. 2013), pp. 69-77. <http://bit.ly/UZNm14> (free).