



Preschoolers' Emergent Motivations to Learn Reading: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

Early literacy skills are part of a larger set of skills, knowledge, and affective responses gained throughout childhood; however, emergent reading motivation has been neglected in research and practice. Theoretical models for reading motivation are available in the literature, but they were developed based on school-aged children and print-based reading experiences. The goal of the current study was to expand understanding of young preconventional readers' motivations to read and identify the dimensions of emergent reading motivation in the digital age. This study employed qualitative research with a grounded theory methodology. Participants included 353 preschoolers from two large suburban and two sub-province areas in Turkey. A Constant comparison method was used to analyze the interview data. Ten motivational categories were detected (avoidance, challenge, competition, curiosity, enjoyment, employment-financial, learning, recognition, scholastic, and social), which were similar to the findings of previous studies conducted with school-aged children but included two additional categories (entertainment-play, and communication) specific to preconventional readers' motivations to learn to read. An Emergent Reading Motivation Framework is proposed to organize and explain the dual associations between these categories. Young children's self-evaluation of their current reading ability and their eagerness to learn reading were not differentiated regarding gender. However, reading motivation is a complex issue, and the framework is a preliminary one to elucidate preconventional readers' multifaceted motivations to learn reading and provides comprehensive information of the constructs of motivation and the duality of relations between the constructs. Further studies will be needed to verify the tentative motivational framework.

Keywords Preconventional · Children · Emergent reading motivation · Grounded theory · Emergent reading motivation framework

Introduction

Young preconventional readers' (children who are not reading conventionally yet) are dependent readers of storybooks/texts, but they cognitively gain the autonomy to process and construct knowledge from print on their own through reading acquisition. Thus, acquisition of reading skills is a substantial milestone for both academic and daily life. The long-lasting relationship in elementary-grade reading skills and later reading and academic achievement is well-documented in the literature (Ferrer et al. 2015; Hernandez 2011; Sparks et al. 2014; Stanley et al. 2018). Therefore, the development

of reading skills is a crucial research focus. Previous studies have focused on the role of decoding (García and Cain 2014; Schaughency et al. 2017; Solari et al. 2018), vocabulary (Muter et al. 2004; Pigada and Schmitt 2006; Quinn et al. 2015), and phonological awareness (Gottardo et al. 2016; Ruan et al. 2018; Song et al. 2016) in reading fluency and comprehension. Reading is an activity that requires effort, and its multifaceted aspects are attributed to cognitive, meta-cognitive, and motivational engagements (Tarchi 2017; Wigfield et al. 2004, 2008). There is a growing body of evidence that shows the reciprocal associations between reading motivation and comprehension (Becker et al. 2010; Conradi et al. 2014; Morgan and Fuchs 2007; Taboada et al. 2009; Unrau and Schlackman 2006; Wang and Guthrie 2004), and that a child's amount of reading is linked to reading motivation (Morgan et al. 2008; Schiefele et al. 2012; Wigfield and Guthrie 1997). Children's reading habits are

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foundational for practicing their reading skills. The Matthew effect elucidates that highly motivated readers, who prefer to read more, improve their reading skills more quickly than poorly motivated readers (Stanovich 2009). Furthermore, Snow et al. (1998) emphasized that the crucial role of motivation in learning and the lack of children's initial reading motivation is an obstacle for the initial process of learning to read. The International Reading [now Literacy] Association (2000) articulated how to develop and support reading motivation for excellent reading instruction yet reading motivation has otherwise been disregarded in research of and classroom practices for school-aged children (Baker and Wigfield 1999; Barton 2018; Edmunds and Bauserman 2006; Guthrie et al. 2009; Mata 2011; Schiefele and Löweke 2018). Similarly, emergent literacy is made up of a wide range of skills, knowledge, and affective responses that are the antecedents of reading skills (Whitehurst and Lonigan 1998), but the development of reading motivation from a young age and the construction and nature of reading motivation have not been well addressed in emergent literacy research (Altun 2013; Mata 2011; Vaknin-Nusbaum et al. 2018; Walgermo et al. 2018; Zheng et al. 2016).

Reading Motivation in Children

Motivation is a pivotal topic in psychology and has multiple constructs, such as interest, attainment, and utility values (Eccles et al. 1993), that can influence an individual's choices, efforts, and persistence of the related action (Locke and Latham 2004; Ryan and Deci 2000). Theoretically, motivation is defined and studied both as domain-general (Ryan and Deci 2000; Schunk et al. 2008; Zimmerman et al. 1992) and domain-specific in the scope of reading (Baker and Wigfield 1999; Guthrie and Wigfield 2000; Mata 2011; Wigfield and Guthrie 1997; Zheng et al. 2016). Domain-general motivation is defined as “the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions” (Ryan and Deci 2000, p. 56). With respect to domain-specific reading motivation, it can be described as an “individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (Guthrie and Wigfield 2000, p. 405). According to Wigfield and Guthrie (1995), reading motivation is a multidimensional issue, and they proposed the following 11 conceptual motivational constructs with regard to school-aged children's reading: *reading efficacy*, *challenge*, *avoidance*, *curiosity*, *involvement*, *importance*, *recognition*, *grades*, *competition*, *social*, and *compliance*. They developed the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) to assess elementary school children's reading motivation. Wigfield (1997) classified the constructs under three dimensions: The first dimension involves competence beliefs and covers children's self-efficacy beliefs regarding their reading skills, the challenges of difficult texts, and avoidance of reading

activities. The second dimension is children's reading orientations regarding curiosity, involvement, importance, recognition, getting high grades, and competition with others. The social aspect is the last dimension of reading motivation, and it refers to reading as a social activity and children's compliance to read.

Baker and Wigfield (1999) used Wigfield's (1997) taxonomy to explore the constructs and reading motivation dimensions by conducting cluster analyses; their results were in line with previous studies (Wigfield and Guthrie 1995, 1997) and with the hypothesis regarding the multidimensional nature of reading motivation and the 11 constructs. Furthermore, Wang and Guthrie (2004) focused on eight constructs that formed a scale attributed to subdimensions of intrinsic (curiosity, involvement, and challenge) and extrinsic (recognition, grades, social, competition, and compliance) reading motivation.

Finally, a more recent review focuses on literature from the past two decades; this review adds clarity to a number of different dimensions of reading motivation (Schiefele et al. 2012). The review examined both qualitative and quantitative studies, which mainly focused on school-aged children, to provide a broader evidence base for the dimensions of reading motivation. The review identified seven common dimensions of reading motivation: competition, curiosity, compliance, grades, involvement, recognition, and work avoidance. Rewards, facilitating sleep, utilitarian, and filling time were found to be the least-mentioned dimensions among the research.

Evidence from these studies (Guthrie et al. 2007, 2009; Logan et al. 2011; Morgan et al. 2008; Schiefele et al. 2012; Taboada et al. 2009; Wang and Guthrie 2004) suggests that conceptualized, multidimensional reading motivation is associated with the reading engagement and achievement of school-aged children. Girls tend to have more positive reading motivations than boys (Baker and Wigfield 1999; Marinak and Gambrell 2010; Mazzoni et al. 1999; McGeown et al. 2012), and there are variations in reading motivation between cultures (Chiu and Chow 2010; Taylor and Graham 2007; Unrau and Schlackman 2006). While much of this research was conducted with school-aged children, a growing body of research suggests that there is a long-lasting relationship between children's early reading motivation and their later reading achievement (Bates et al. 2016; Chapman et al. 2000; Onatsu-Arvilommi and Nurmi 2000). The temporal interaction between early reading motivation and later reading achievement and motivation necessarily draws attention to young children's emergent reading motivation (ERM).

To date, previous studies have mainly focused on young children's reading attitudes (Kush and Watkins 1996; Saracho and Dayton 1989; Smith 1990; Sperling and Head 2002; Wagner and Spratt 1988) and interest in literacy/reading

(Chapter and Theta 1974; Frijters et al. 2000; McCormick and Mason 1984; Robinson and Weintraub 1973). Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) asserted that attitude and interest in reading comprise one's feelings about reading and that they are substantial motivational constructs (such as enjoyment); however, reading motivation has multifaceted and complex structures bound up with task value, goal orientation, self-efficacy, and outcome expectancy (Eccles and Wigfield 2002; Mata 2011). Furthermore, attitudes and interest are not, in fact, goals that lead to behaviors such as motivation (Dedeoglu and Ulusoy 2013; Guthrie and Knowles 2001). Therefore, recent studies have addressed the multifaceted structure in ERM, and instruments have been developed to broaden the scope from kindergarten to early elementary grades; these include the Motivation for Reading and Writing Profile (MRWP) (Mata 2011), the Me and My Reading Profile (MMRP) (Marinak et al. 2015), and the Emergent Reading Motivation Scale (ERMS) (Zheng et al. 2016).

The MRWP utilizes a four-point scale and includes 24 items assessing enjoyment, self-concept, and value of reading (Mata 2011). The study found no gender differences in the reading motivation of kindergarten children; they tended to have high reading motivation, and the value ($M=3.67$) aspect had the highest score, followed by self-concept ($M=3.57$) and enjoyment ($M=3.55$).

Another instrument, the MMRP, covers 20 reading motivation items regarding readers' self-concepts, the value of reading, and reading aloud activities for children from kindergarten to second grade. The items were scored from 1 to 3 points, but each of the items had varied response formats (great–okay–boring; never–sometimes–a lot; really hard–sort of hard–easy, etc.) (Marinak et al. 2015).

Lastly, the ERMS is comprised of 17 reading motivation items utilizing a 3-point scale regarding self-concept, learner goals, and performance goals. Dichotomous statements were presented to prekindergarten children about reading motivation. They were asked to select a positive statement, a negative statement, or both (Zheng et al. 2016). Zheng et al.'s (2016) study found that prekindergarten children had the highest average score for reading learning goals ($M=2.60$), closely followed by performance goals ($M=2.56$) and self-concept ($M=2.32$).

However, these findings suggest that ERM is a multidimensional issue, that young children are capable of self-response to ERM questions, and that the development of reading motivation happens early, but previous studies have some limitations that the current study seeks to expand upon. First, understanding the reading motivation of young children in a broader way in the digital age is important in several regards. Young children are labelled digital natives and their early-life exposure to information and communication technologies result in articulating functions of print in digital environments (Altun 2013; Altun et al. 2018; Guo

et al. 2008; Harrison and McTavish 2018; Kucirkova et al. 2017; Sefton-Green et al. 2016). Intriguingly, a recent accumulation of research has shown that young children enthusiastically engage in electronic stories and digital games and applications (Altun 2017; Kabali et al. 2015; Marsh et al. 2017; Neumann 2016). In addition studies demonstrated that children more interested in digital storybooks than printed ones (Altun and Ulusoy 2017; Moody 2010; Richter and Courage 2017) but previous studies on reading motivation did not account for digital literacy experiences, and the aforementioned instruments contain items that only address children's print-based reading experiences. The variation in young children's preferences for reading printed and digital forms lend support to prior studies. A second group of ERM studies developed and tested the instruments based on theoretical frameworks established for school-aged children (Marinak et al. 2015; Mata 2011; Zheng et al. 2016). In particular, paying attention to children's voices can clarify the constructs and dimensions of ERM for preconventional readers. Therefore, qualitative studies need to bring into the open preconventional readers' motivational dimensions in reading.

Literacy Education in Turkey

In Turkey, preschool education covers children aged 36–66 months. Children who are 66 months old can enroll in first grade, and those aged 69–72 months must attend school to attain first grade. The Ministry of *National Education's 2023 vision makes preschool education compulsory for all children*, beginning at 60 months of age, *but this practice has not yet been implemented* (Ministry of National Education [MoNE] 2018a). *For preschool education, the schooling net ratio, which is the proportion of the age-group population enrolled in preschool, is 38.84% for all age groups overall and 67.75% for five-year-olds* (MoNE 2018b).

The MoNE's 2013 Preschool Education Program vision includes the acquisition of vocabulary, oral language skills, phonological awareness, and concepts regarding print and visual reading; however, the program does not aim to teach reading, and children are not introduced to letters in preschool education (MoNE 2013). In addition, there are variations among public and private preschools in terms of literacy education. Some private preschools introduce a small number of letters (e.g., vowels, the first letter group taught in first grade), but very few teach all 29 letters of the Turkish alphabet (Altun et al. 2018). Formal reading instruction begins in the first grade using a phonics-based reading method. In this instruction, the 29 letters are divided into five groups: (1) e, l, a, k, i, n; (2) o, m, u, t, ü, y; (3) ö, r, ı, d, s, b; (4) z, ç, g, ş, c, p; and (5) h, v, ğ, f, j. Phonics-based reading instruction begins with the “e” sound and comprises five steps: (1) listening to the sound, (2) realizing the sound,

(3) differentiating the sound, (4) preparing to write the letter using drawing and painting worksheets, and (5) writing the letter. Children begin syllable tasks after learning the second sound, “l” (MoNE 2018c).

The Turkish language has shallow (transparent) orthography and a one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes, which facilitate decoding skills (Cunningham 2006; Geva and Siegel 2000). However, international assessment surveys have demonstrated that the reading scores of Turkish children are lower than the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS] 2001; Program for International Student Assessment [PISA] 2009, 2012, 2015). These findings are redolent of the reading rope model (Scarborough 2001), in which reading comprehension depends on two main processes: automaticity in decoding and development of language-comprehension skills, including vocabulary, background knowledge, and verbal reasoning. Turkish students’ low reading-comprehension scores on international surveys suggest that the reading instruction methods applied and the extent to which vocabulary and language-comprehension skills are included should be rethought.

Furthermore, Turkish children have limited literacy experiences at home, especially regarding print-related sources and the number of books at home. Overall, parents have poor reading habits, both individually and shared with their children (Altun 2013; Altun and Tantekin-Erden 2015; Altun et al. 2018; Park 2008; PIRLS 2001). Turkish education programs from preschool to high school have goals regarding fostering the interest in and the motivation to read (MoNE 2013; 2018c), but studies show that students have poor regular reading habits (e.g., Aksaclioglu and Yilmaz 2007; Aras 2017; Altun and Tantekin-Erden 2015; Ileri 2017). Reading is a substantial way to foster students’ reading skills, comprehension, and vocabulary (Chan et al. 2016; Snow and Matthews 2016). Studies have found bidirectional relations between reading motivation and reading behavior (Morgan and Fuchs 2007; Petscher 2010; Stutz et al. 2016). Huck’s (1973) concept of “illiterate literates” elucidates that learning to read does not ensure that the reader prefers to read. Surveys indicate that the average time spent reading has declined in the last decade, while screen time has increased in the United States (Statista 2018), Australia (Roy Morgan Research 2014), and Hong Kong (Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong 2018). Prensky (2001) introduced to the literature the term “digital natives” to describe individuals born after 1980 who actively navigate information and communication technologies (ICTs) to download, upload, share, and create information via digital platforms. These findings signal the dual problems of digital natives’ reading habits and the decline in children’s reading habits overall, which have been identified as worrying

educators and parents in many countries (Owusu-Acheaw 2016; Vinterek et al. 2018). The nature and dimensions of ERM are crucial research foci for promoting children’s reading motivation from early ages. Therefore, the present study’s focus is to examine young children’s ERM and clarify its dimensions.

The Present Study

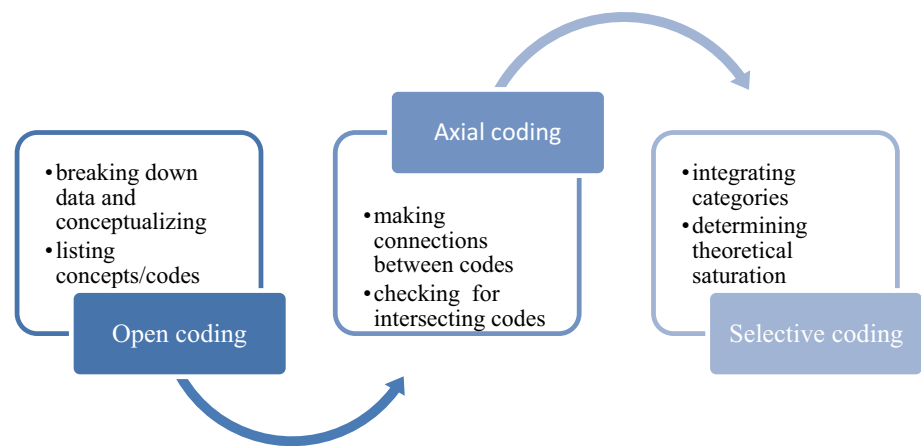
Theoretical models for reading motivation are available in the literature, but they were developed based on school-aged children. To date, the role of motivation in learning to read is emphasized in previous studies; however, the ERM of pre-conventional readers is not addressed. The goal of the current study was to expand our understanding of pre-conventional readers’ motivation for learning to read and identify ERM elements. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do girls and boys differ in reading competency beliefs?
 - 1.1 How do girls and boys differ in reading self-concept?
 - 1.2 How do girls and boys differ in their eagerness to learn to read?
2. What are the dimensions of young children’s motivation to learn to read?
3. What are the elements of the ERM framework?

Method

This study was qualitative research with a grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory clarifies an individual’s experiences and understandings related to a phenomenon and generates progressively general explanations from the data. Its inductive process comprises a systematic series of methods to collect, code, compare, and analyze data from many participants in order to build theoretical explanations to fit the data (Charmaz 1996; Cresswell 2007; Glaser 1992, 2002). Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) constant comparison data analysis method was used in this study (see Fig. 1). The audio-recordings of the interviews were transcribed into memos (written records), and then they were triple coded. At the beginning of analyses, open coding broke the data into possible meaningful parts and identified concepts. The next stage was axial coding, where the researcher made connections between codes and developed categories for intersecting codes around the core phenomenon. The last stage was selective coding, where categories were integrated, structured, and saturated to determine if

Fig. 1 Constant comparison data analysis method in grounded theory research



there were any new properties, dimensions, or variations to emerge during the coding process. Finally, the framework was checked for gaps in logic and internal consistency to fill poorly structured categories (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Participants

The participants included 353 children attending public ($n = 178$) and private ($n = 175$) preschools from two large suburban and two sub-province areas in Turkey. Previous studies showed that gender, literacy experiences, and socioeconomic status can be related to children's reading motivation (Cunningham 2008; Wang and Guthrie 2004; Wigfield and Guthrie 1997). Therefore, theoretical samplings were used to select participants to collect data from in different preschool types, socioeconomic status, and gender so as to maximize the possibility of unveiling proper constructs and dimensions to build a theoretical framework to explain ERM (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

Table 1 presents the detailed demographic information of the children: 51% of them are girls ($n = 181$) and 49% of them boys ($n = 172$) with an average age of 67.94 months (range 64–73 months, $SD = 2.93$). All children were pre-conventional readers, spoke Turkish as their native language, and were typically developed based on parental reports. In Turkey, public preschools are free, whereas private ones are fee-paying. As seen in Table 1, there are differences between the public and private-school participants' characteristics regarding parental education and income levels. Previous studies emphasize that differences in socio-economic status between the school types also reflects children's home literacy environments and shared reading experiences (Altun 2013; Altun and Tantekin-Erden 2015; Altun et al. 2018). Therefore, this study collected data from both public and private schools, to include participant diversity in the data and to generate an ERM framework from a rich data set.

Data Collection Process

After ethical and official permissions were obtained, I visited 15 preschools (public = 8, private = 7) in two large suburban areas to share the study goals and seek permission to participate. Nine of the preschools (public = 4, private = 5) volunteered to join the study. The first wave of the data collection process lasted 4 months (February–May 2017), and 400 consent forms were sent to parents (public = 200, private = 200) through 26 teachers (public = 11, private = 15). Regarding the consent forms, 67% of them ($n = 268$) were signed and returned (public = 122, private = 146).

Appointments were arranged with classroom teachers for interviews. Prior to the interviews, time was spent by the researcher playing with the children during their free play time. The children were interviewed one-by-one in rooms in the schools separate from their own classroom. The separate rooms were away from the classroom noise and had two child-sized chairs and a desk. The interviews lasted approximately 10–15 min and responses were audio recorded. The audio recordings were transcribed as Word documents (ranging 180–417 words, $M = 312.56$, $SD = 90.17$). The data were open coded to identify concepts and then axial coded to intersect codes under related categories. At the end of the first wave of data analysis, the researcher developed 50 codes in 12 categories (avoidance, autonomy, challenge, communication, competition, curiosity, enjoyment, play, employment, learning, recognition, and social).

Children at this age are developing vocabulary and oral language skills, so their responses are shorter than older children or adults. In addition, children from sub-province areas were integrated to maximize variation in the data. To ensure theoretical saturation, the researcher collected a second wave of data by visiting five additional preschools (public = 3, private = 2) from two sub-province areas. The second wave of the data collection process began in April 2018 and lasted one month; 150 consent forms were sent to parents (public = 90, private = 60) through 12 teachers

Table 1 Demographic information of the children

	Public school		Private school		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>						
Girls	90	51	91	52	181	51
Boys	88	49	84	48	172	49
<i>Mother's education level</i>						
Elementary	26	14.61	18	10.29	44	12.46
Secondary	28	15.73	21	12.00	49	13.88
High school	52	29.21	50	28.57	102	28.90
University	61	34.27	72	41.14	133	37.68
Postgraduate	11	6.18	14	8.00	25	7.08
<i>Father's education level</i>						
Elementary	23	12.92	20	11.43	43	12.18
Secondary	30	16.86	22	12.57	52	14.73
High school	51	28.65	47	26.86	98	27.76
University	67	37.64	76	43.43	143	40.51
Postgraduate	7	3.93	10	5.71	17	4.82
<i>Household income^a</i>						
0–2.000 TRY	41	23.03	2	1.14	43	12.18
2.001–4.000 TRY	72	40.45	27	15.43	99	28.05
4.001–6.000 TRY	49	27.53	61	34.86	110	31.16
6.0001 + TRY	16	8.99	85	48.57	101	28.61
Total	178	100	175	100	353	100

^aAccording to the Ministry of Labor, Social Services, and Family (2018), the net minimum wage in Turkey is 1603 Turkish Lira (TRY), the individual poverty threshold is set at 2.136 TRY, and a living wage for a four-person family is 5.662 TRY (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions 2018)

(public = 7, private = 5). Regarding the consent forms, 57% of them ($n = 85$) were signed and returned (public = 56, private = 29). The children were interviewed using the same procedure as the first wave. The audio recordings were transcribed (ranging 134–386 words, $M = 294.72$, $SD = 97.63$). The researcher coded the second wave of the data and made comparisons with the first wave to check saturation and reach the final 14 categories (avoidance, autonomy, challenge, communication, competition, curiosity, enjoyment, entertainment, employment, grade, learning, play, recognition, and social).

Trustworthiness

After the data analysis process, a second blind analyst, who is a faculty member and university research in elementary literacy education, coded 50 of the memos (14%) and then reviewed the codes and categories to establish the trustworthiness of the study. He has published on reading motivation and has 20 years of qualitative research experience. He was also one of the experts who gave feedback on my interview questions. Thus, he has comprehensive knowledge of reading motivation and this research. The researcher and the second coder discussed the categories by revisiting the data and

previous reading motivation theoretical frameworks. After discussion, several changes were made; the autonomy category overlapped some other categories (communication, learning, entertainment, play, etc.), thus it was dropped. The entertainment and play categories were unified. Some of the children gave responses related to gaining admission to a good school and/or university, broadening the category beyond the attainment of high grades. Thus, the grade category was renamed as a scholastic category. Last, 47 of the children gave responses regarding making money and owning a house/car. Therefore, the employment category was renamed as employment and financial.

Data Source

The data source for this study consists of parental information forms and individual interviews with young children. Interview questions are the preferred data source to record young children's points of view for analyzing and understanding their motivation for reading. Questionnaires can lead children to select predetermined choices in the pre-established scope of a variable rather than provide rich and in-depth information regarding the related phenomenon (Patten 2014). Furthermore, most of the

reading motivation questionnaires have been developed using school-aged reading motivation frameworks (Marinak et al. 2015; Zheng et al. 2016). In contrast, this study uses open-ended questions and probing to give children the opportunity to express their own ideas, experiences, and expectations about learning to read, and ERMs are generated based on the children's responses. Three questions were developed with the goal of illuminating the following areas: young children's self-concepts of reading (Can you read?), eagerness to learn to read (Do you want to learn to read?), and motivation for learning to read (Why do you want to learn to read? or Why don't you want to learn to read?), followed by the probing questions (What will you do when you are able to read? What else?). Before piloting the interview questions, I described the aim of the study to, and sought opinions from, two faculty staff with PhDs, one of whom specializes in early childhood education and one who specializes in language and literacy. After considering the experts' opinions, I conducted pilot interviews with four preschoolers (two girls and two boys) to check the clarity of the questions for young children. I conducted all 353 interviews personally due to a limited research budget and for more active involvement with this study, particularly in terms of time spent with the children in their natural preschool environment and the ability to be immersed in the data. I have previously interviewed over 500 children through my graduate thesis work, and I have certificates in interviewing children and conducting early literacy tests. The data collection for this study took approximately five months, between February 2017 and April 2018. During each weekly preschool visit, I interviewed 16 to 18 children.

Findings

The first two research questions relate to the scope of children's competency beliefs, and the last question relates to their motivation to learn to read. Therefore, the study findings are organized under the broader ideas of competency beliefs, dimensions of learning to read, and generating an ERM based on the interview findings.

Competency Beliefs

Reading Self-Concept

Reading self-concept is one of the reading motivation constructs (Chapman and Tummer 1995). With respect to reader self-concept, the pre-conventional readers were asked to evaluate their current reading ability (Can you read?). Their self-perceptions of their current reading ability ranged from no to partial to yes. Most of the children ($n = 239$) said that they could not read yet, while 79 of them indicated that they could read some things, such as their name, parents' names, some friends' names, and some letters, numbers, and words. In response to the leading statement, "I can read a little/some/partial," 35 children stated that they could read.

Table 2 presents the distribution of the children's self-evaluation of current reading ability responses regarding gender. A Chi square test for independence indicated no significant association between children's gender and self-evaluation of current reading ability: $\chi^2(2, n = 353) = 0.60$, $p = 0.73$, $\phi = 0.04$.

Eagerness to Learn to Read

When asked about their eagerness to learn to read, the majority of the children stated that they wanted to learn; 27 of them said that they wanted to learn to read a little, and 17 of them indicated that they did not want to learn at all. As seen in Table 3, the children's responses were analyzed by gender. A Chi square test for independence indicated no significant association between gender and eagerness to learn to read: $\chi^2(2, n = 353) = 0.78$, $p = 0.70$, $\phi = 0.04$.

Dimensions of Motivations

When children's responses were examined, 12 categories emerged as the dimensions of ERM. The grounded study using an inductive approach enabled me to detect new dimensions that emerged from the data. Thus, I do not begin with using categories pre-established previously in the literature to code the data set. After I completed the data analysis, I compared my categories with prior studies. As seen in Table 4, seven categories (avoidance, challenge, competition, curiosity, enjoyment, recognition, and social) addressed

Table 2 Children's self-evaluation of current reading ability

	Girls		Boys		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
No	120	66.3	119	69.2	239	67.7
Partial	41	27.7	38	22.1	79	22.4
Yes	20	11.0	15	8.7	35	9.9
<i>Total</i>	181	100	172	100	353	100

Table 3 Children's eagerness to learn to read

	Girls		Boys		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
No	8	4.4	9	5.2	17	4.8
Partial	12	6.6	15	8.7	27	7.6
Yes	161	89	148	86.00	309	87.5
<i>Total</i>	181	100	172	100	353	100

previous reading motivation frameworks, and three categories renamed (learning, scholastic, and employment and financial); however, the preconventional readers gave different explanations and examples than school-aged children. Therefore, the preexisting categories were explained, and children's responses were shared under each category. In addition, the following novel two categories emerged in the present study: communication, entertainment and play.

Avoidance

Avoidance refers to a child's idea that learning to read is a hassle. A total of 36 responses reflect ideas that learning to read is a troublesome process (e.g., homework, writing letters, and reading books) that keeps children from wanting to undertake the task. One of the children said:

I know [how to learn to read]. My older brother goes to the big school (first grade). He draws some shapes and lines, such as (shows some irregular shapes with her fingers) on his notebook. He has many books. It is too difficult to do (write letters). My arm (shows her right hand) has ache. When I grow up and go to the very big schools, I may learn. (G180)

Challenge

Challenge is the children's desire to read books without pictures and more complex texts. Among the children, 87 wanted to be able to read texts more difficult than picture books. One of them said:

Hmm, because I read pictures [with] the book (pretend reading). I cannot understand my father's book[s]. I want to learn reading. I wonder [about] his books. I want to read them. (G23)

Communication

The category comprises the children's desire to learn to read for contact with others. The majority of them (n = 298) gave responses related to communication. Table 4 shows that the children indicated both traditional (n = 71) and digital (n = 197) ways of communication. Here are two response examples:

I want to learn reading so much because I can write birthday cards to my friends. (G122)

If I can read, my mother will buy a smartphone for me, and I can text my grandfather and call him whenever I want. (B71)

Competition

Competition refers to children's comparison of their reading ability with other children and older brothers/sisters and their desire to do better than others. A total of 144 children gave responses related to competition; 72 of them desired to outperform their friends, 67 wanted to outclass their older brothers/sisters, and 5 children wanted their reading to be superior to their cousins. Three responses are shared below:

I will. Because Hira (one of her classmates) can read and write some things. I want to write and read more things than Hira. (G161)

Because I want to write better than my older brother. He has beautiful books. He does not let me read them.

I will [have better] books than him. (B19)

At first grade, everybody writes by looking [at the] board. I want to write in my mind. I want to complete writing homework as the first [student]. (G93)

Curiosity

Curiosity represents the children's interest and wonder about how they feel when reading by themselves. In addition, it comprises children's curiosity about how they can learn reading and writing. As seen Table 4, 57 children wondered about how it would feel to be an independent reader, and 32 children were fascinated by the process of learning to read and write. One of the children said:

I'm wondering how to write some things (letters) because I'm wondering what [it would feel like] to read [a] book alone. (B113)

Enjoyment

This category refers to the pleasure children receive from shared reading activities and looking at books by themselves. Out of 124 children, 83 of them said they enjoy

Table 4 Dimensions of emergent reading motivation in learning to read

Category	Codes	Total number of responses ^a	
1. Avoidance	Difficult	16	36
	Boring	11	
	Effortful	9	
2. Challenge	To be able to read books without pictures	41	87
	Thick/big books	27	
	My father/mother/sister/brothers' books	14	
	Newspaper	3	
	TV subtitles	2	
3. Communication	Phone/tablet using/calling	73	268
	Writing/reading text-messages	62	
	Using social media	53	
	Writing/reading e-mails	9	
	Writing/reading letters	38	
	Writing/reading cards	21	
	Writing/reading notes	12	
4. Competition	Friends	72	144
	Older sister/brother	67	
	Cousins	5	
5. Curiosity	Wonder how they feel reading alone	57	89
	Wonder how they learn reading/writing	32	
6. Enjoyment	Fun/enjoy/like/happy/pleasure/feel good/excitement Reading/listening to stories/books	83	124
	Looking/examining picture books themselves	41	
7. Entertainment and Play	To play digital games	141	298
	To play traditional games (card games, board games)	23	
	Watch videos/YouTube channels	89	
	Listen to music	34	
	Cinema (read film names and subtitles)	11	
8. Employment and financial	To be a doctor/teacher/pilot/policeman/nurse/fireman/singer/soldier/astronaut/president/truck driver/get job	48	95
	Make money	32	
	Have a house/car	15	
9. Learning	New things/information	42	76
	Writing (stories, books)	25	
	Foreign language (English)	7	
	Cooking (by reading recipe)	2	
10. Recognition	Mother/father will be happy/proud of me	152	412
	Teachers will be happy/proud of me	64	
	Friends will congratulate/be amazed by me	21	
	To be older/grown children	97	
	To be school-aged children	43	
	To be smart/clever/intelligent children	35	
11. Scholastic	High/good grades	97	229
	Complete homework/activities	51	
	Pass exams	43	
	Go/win good schools/university	38	

Table 4 (continued)

Category	Codes	Total number of responses ^a
12. Social	Read to parents	53
	Read to sister/brother	34
	Read to son/daughter	29
	Help my younger sister/brother/son/daughter with homework	23
	Read prayers	3

^aThe majority of the children articulated more than one dimension for motivation in learning to read

shared reading activities, while 43 children liked examining books on their own. One child responded:

Because I love reading books. We read books with my mom. I have a lot of books at home related to dinosaurs, bears, dogs, and various animals. A dinosaur has very big teeth, but I am not afraid. It is my favorite story. We read with my mom. (B53)

Entertainment and Play

This category relates to the children's desire to be an independent reader, to play digital and traditional games alone, to select their own games, to progress levels and characters by reading game directions, and to set up collaboration in online platforms with friends. Furthermore, children desire to be literate in order to watch videos, listen to music, and watch films at the cinema (read subtitles and film names to select films and purchase tickets). Two responses are shared below:

I can turn on the computer, and I open games to whatever I want. English writings come out while I play [the] game. [If] I can read them, I will win the game. (B72)

I love watching Elsa (a fictional cartoon character). My mother sometimes does not allow me to watch Elsa. I will write and watch Elsa's videos. (G84)

Employment and Financial

“Employment and financial” refers to the children's wishes and ideas about learning to read in order to get a job and acquire possessions in their future lives. Greaney and Neuman (1990) used the category “goals” to explain 8–13-year-old children's reading intentions to get jobs and to help others. As can be seen from Table 4, 48 children stated that they wanted to learn to read in order to have an occupation. On the other hand, 32 children indicated that they wanted to be literate to earn money, and 15 children wished to have a house and/or car. Thus, the category “employment and

financial” much better represents the children's responses. *Examples of the children's responses in this category are:*

Because I want to be a doctor. If I cannot read, I will not write medicine (prescription). (B29)

I need to know reading in order to give homework to my students and read books to them. When I become a teacher. (G7)

When I grow up to be a father, I should know reading and writing. (B157)

Learning

This category refers to the children's desire to learn to read as a vehicle to learn new information and gain new skills. Similarly, Greaney and Neuman (1990) used the category “general learning” to refer to school-aged children's reading intentions of to read better and to learn. A total of 76 children gave responses related to the category. Some of the children said:

I will read and learn something. I will learn [about] crocodiles, fish, birds, and various things. I will be a knowledgeable person. (B54)

I want to learn reading because I will read English writings and I can learn English. (G19)

Because when I can read, I can learn cooking. I can make a cake by looking at recipes from [a] phone (smartphone). (G143)

Recognition

Recognition refers to the fulfillment of expectations and gaining appreciation from others. As seen in Table 4, the majority of the children gave responses related to this category; 154 wanted to learn reading to gain their parents' appreciation, while 64 wanted to win their teacher's approval and 21 wanted their friends to praise them. Furthermore, 94 children indicated that they wanted to learn to read because it demonstrates that they have become an older/grown child; 43 children stated that it shows they have become

school-aged children. Finally, 35 children expressed that reading acquisition means that they are a smart child. Two of them said:

Because if I can learn reading, my mother will be happy, and she will say, “Well done!” (G85)
I want to learn reading because it shows that I am an older child. Because little boys cannot read. (B156)

Scholastic

Previous studies used different names for this category, such as grades (to get better grades), investment (to attend college) (Guthrie et al. 1996), and school task (to accomplish homework and school tasks) (Schiefele and Schaffner 2013). The present study uses “scholastic” to express the children’s desire to learn to read in order to get high grades, do homework, pass exams, and go to good schools and universities. A total of 229 children had motivation to learn to read related to the category “scholastic:”

I would like to attend classes at big school (first grade) and to do my homework very well. (B44)
Because I want to be very successful. I will pass my exams, and I will win a school medal. (G105)
We should know reading in order to be an achieved person. Otherwise we cannot go to the university. My older sister read a lot of books and she won the university. (G91)

Social

Finally, social refers to the children’s desire to share reading-related activities with their family members and friends; 142 of them articulated responses related to social goal orientations. Here are some examples:

When I grow up like [my] mother and when I become a mother, I will help my kids [with their] homework. So, I should know [reading]. (G71)
Because I want to read book [to] my father. (B116)
If I cannot read, who will read books to my child? Mothers and fathers should know reading. (G15)

Emergent Reading Motivation Framework

The purpose of the present study was to detect the dimensions of preconventional readers’ motivation to learn to read and develop a framework to organize the dimensions in order to explain ERMs in broader perspectives. After a deep discernment of the 12 dimensions that emerged and pondering the possible relations among the dimensions, the researcher recognized a series of dualities. The preconventional readers gave a wide range of responses related to their motivation in learning to read. Their responses had interplay between two sides rather than polarizations. As seen Fig. 2, the Emergent Reading Motivation framework explains the dualities following five categories: environment, activity, time, subject, and attainment.

The first is the duality of environment; the children shared rich print experiences and expressed a desire to read and to do activities in both print and digital environments. They indicated motivations regarding both printed (e.g., books, cards, letters) and digital (e-mail, videos, social media, games) literacy environments. This supports the duality of a printed and digital literacy environment in children’s ERM.

Second, the duality of activity refers to children’s motivations to learn to read for daily life activities and for academic life tasks and achievement. For example, children wanted to learn to read in order to communicate with others and play games in their daily lives, but they also desired high scores and to pass exams and therefore be a successful student and person. The inseparability of different aspects of human life is integrated in children’s responses.

The third is the duality of time; the children had desires and ideas about the present and future. The children gave responses about their current lives (e.g., to be read book myself, to write my parents’ names) and at the same time, they articulated answers related to future roles (e.g., I will be a mother, and I should read to my kid. I want to be a pilot, and I will need to read to fly a plane).

The fourth is the duality of subject; children wanted to be literate both in order to gain autonomy and, conversely, to communicate with others and socialize by reading. Finally, target and instrumentality make up the attainment duality. Some of the children wanted to learn to read and become



Fig. 2 Emergent reading motivation framework

independent readers as a main goal orientation; on the other hand, they wanted to learn to read as a vehicle to reach their desires.

Discussion

The goal in the grounded theory study was to examine pre-conventional readers' motivations in learning to read and attempt to generate the dimensions of their ERM from the interviews. This study has several strengths worth addressing. First, it is an initial step in the investigation of pre-conventional readers' motivations in learning to read and is distinct from previous studies that only focused on children's preferences of engaging in reading-related activities (Marinak et al. 2015; McGeown et al. 2012; Sonnenschein and Munsterman 2002; Wigfield et al. 2008; Zheng et al. 2016). Furthermore, this study was qualitative and used inductive data analysis. Children were interviewed and the constructs of ERMs emerged from the data rather than from predetermined items rated by children (Bates et al. 2016; Marinak et al. 2015; Mata 2011; McGeown et al. 2016; Zheng et al. 2016). Last, the theoretical sampling of the grounded theory research with many participants facilitated the detection of other possible dimensions (Corbin and Strauss 2008), as well as connections between the dimensions. After the constant comparison data analysis process, 12 emergent reading motivation categories emerged. Among the 12 categories, seven (avoidance, challenge, competition, curiosity, enjoyment, recognition, and social) were detected that were similar to previous studies conducted with school-aged children (Baker and Wigfield 1999; Mata et al. 2009; Schiefele et al. 2012; Wang and Guthrie 2004; Wigfield and Guthrie 1997). Furthermore, three of the categories (employment and financial, scholastic, and learning) were renamed to represent the children's responses more accurately, but they are parallel with previous studies (Greaney and Neuman 1990; Guthrie et al. 1996; Schiefele and Schaffner 2013). On the other hand, two additional categories (entertainment-play, and communication) specific to the pre-conventional readers' motivations to learn to read. The findings present evidence that there are common reading motivation dimensions for school-aged and pre-conventional readers. In addition, the two additional categories were identified (entertainment and play, and communication) that are specific to pre-conventional readers' motivations in learning to read. In the scope of early childhood education, it is expected that young children have motivations related to play because it is the leading activity of their early years (Johnson et al. 1999; Wood and Attfield 2005). Furthermore, recent studies have consistently shown that young children spend time in a digital environment for entertainment (e.g., playing games and watching videos) (Altun et al. 2018; Kabali et al. 2015; Kervin et al. 2018;

Livingstone et al. 2018). These findings show that pre-conventional readers' ERMs have developmentally appropriate specific constructs that differ from school-aged children's. In addition, these findings suggest that not only children's print-based literacy experiences, but also digital literacy experiences are related to their motivations. Previous studies focused on young children's digital literacy experiences contribution to their story comprehension, print awareness or phonological awareness skills (Bus et al. 2015; Moody 2010; Neumann 2016; Rvachew et al. 2017). Thus, children digital literacy experiences should take ERM research into account.

Although pre-conventional readers are not able to read, they are aware of the role of reading skills in communication and gaining new information and skills. Print awareness is one of the substantial emergent literacy skills (Sulzby and Teale 1991; Whitehurst and Lonigan 1998), and the Downing (1979) Cognitive Clarity Theory asserted that children understand that print is a precursor for the mastery of reading skills.

Importantly, though, the preschoolers had not been exposed to exams yet. But they articulated orientations regarding exams and grades. In Turkey, centralized examinations are administered to select and place students in high schools and universities. Children observed and shared their older brothers', sisters', or cousins' exam preparation processes in the interviews. The findings can be interpreted to mean that children may develop exam anxiety on academic performance through social learning (Bandura 1989); therefore, they feel obligated to learn reading to achieve their own or their parents' educational expectations. Similarly, previous studies have emphasized that students feel academic pressure in national exams elsewhere, such as in Asian societies (Davey et al. 2007; Lee and Larson 2000; Lowe and Ang 2012; Yildirim et al. 2006).

Furthermore, the children also vocalized goal orientations regarding future employment and financial goals. The findings help make an argument for imaginative thinking and play in a child's early years. Children pretend occupations and social roles (e.g., mother, father, doctor) in their play (Bretherton 1984; Erikson 1959; Howes and Matheson 1992; Leong and Bodrova 2012; Vygotsky 1967). The children were conscious that reading skills are necessary for getting jobs and earning money. Therefore, they could articulate these kinds of goal orientations.

The interview findings reveal that the majority of the children's responses related to recognition ($n=412$), entertainment and play ($n=298$), and communication ($n=268$). The findings are line with Erikson's (1959, 1993) psychosocial development theories. According to Erikson, children between 3 and 6 years of age face an initiative versus guilt crisis. Children try to gain autonomy and to master adult behaviors. Erikson stated that children want to be

their parents, who to them appear powerful and influential (Erikson 1959). Ideal prototypes are important for children; therefore, they desire recognition and approval in this developmental stage. In addition, children expand their interpersonal skills and social environments; thus, it can be said that children can perceive reading as a social agent (Berk 2009; Erikson 1993; Green and Piel 2002). Similarly, children's play boosts their language development and their psychomotor, cognitive, social, and creative imagination skills (Miller 2011). Thus, children's learning to read goal orientations are distributed predominantly under recognition, entertainment and play, and communication.

The children also expressed the least goal orientations regarding avoidance. The findings are supported by previous studies that showed preconventional readers have higher reading motivation because they have not struggled with reading problems yet (Baker and Scher 2002; Edmunds and Bauserman 2006). Studies also found a motivational decline in reading as children age (Cartwright et al. 2016; Guthrie et al. 2000; Lau 2009; Unrau and Schlackman 2006).

Furthermore, this study found that young children's self-evaluations of their current reading ability and eagerness to learn to read were not differentiated regarding gender. It is consistent with previous research (Baker and Wigfield 1999; Marinak and Gambrell 2010; Hochweber and Vieluf 2018; Mazzone et al. 1999; McGeown et al. 2012), which demonstrated gender differences in school-aged children's reading motivation in a favor of girls, but this study found that young children's reading motivations are gender neutral. These findings suggest that young children have high motivation to learn to read, but their reading motivation decreases, and gender differences occur gradually by age. The gender difference can be explained by gender socialization. Reading activities have been largely labelled as feminine activities in the past (Hill and Lynch 1983; McGeown et al. 2012). Consequently, fostering children's reading motivation from an early age and reinforcing gender-neutral messages can increase reading motivation and equity at the same time.

Finally, a noteworthy finding is the duality of features in children's goal orientations. Therefore, this study proposes the Emergent Reading Motivation Framework to organize and explain the dual associations between the categories. However, reading motivation is a complex issue, and the framework is a preliminary one to elucidate preconventional readers' multifaceted motivations to learn reading. It provides comprehensive information about the constructs of motivation and the duality between the constructs regarding environment, activity, time, subject, and attainment. Further studies need to verify this tentative motivational framework. Within this context, the preliminary findings can be used to develop scales for assessing preconventional readers' emergent motivations and additional data can test and establish the factorial structure of these categories. In

addition, cultural differences may alter children's responses and influence the predominant categories. Previous studies have pointed out that cultural differences (Baker and Wigfield 1999; Taylor and Graham 2007; Unrau and Schlackman 2006) give rise to variations in the scores of reading motivation constructs (e.g., importance, challenge, recognition). Cross-cultural studies should be conducted to determine the generalization power of the framework.

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