Making reading accessible and enjoyable for all - potential of teacher-made ebooks in supporting young English language learners who struggle to read

26th March, 2019

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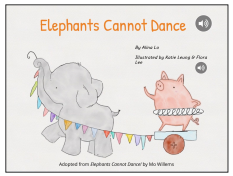
Outline

1. About my project
2. What we have learned
   - Book design
   - Use of teacher-made ebooks in the classroom
3. Q & A



About my project

- **'Hooking Struggling Readers with Books They CAN and WANT to Read: Teacher-made ebooks'**
- ***Two*** challenges in the training of pre-service English teachers:
  1. How to better prepare them to support young English learners who struggle with learning to read
  2. How to provide them with opportunities to explore new ways to enhance the teaching of fundamental reading skills with technology

Book creation tool

Book Creator for Chrome

What we like about this tool:

- Allowing text to be integrated with images, sounds, videos and hyperlinks
- Recording button to record audios directly
- 'Read to me': word-by-word highlighting in sync with the reading voice
- Easy control through swiping and touching
- Allowing sharing with a link on all devices
- Real-time collaboration
- Intuitive design and easy to use

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Implementation

1. A systematic study of children's ebooks

2. Training workshops for recruited students

3. Development of e-books and lesson plans by recruited students

4. Trial lessons in two local primary schools

5. Data analysis and generation of findings

6. Recommendations based on project findings

Suggested structure for each trial lesson

1. **Pre-, while- and post-reading to support comprehension and learning (40 mins)**
   - **Pre-reading** to activate/ build background knowledge and arouse interest
   - **While-reading** to support comprehension and model reading strategies
   - **Post-reading** to provide pupils with opportunities to respond to the story and consolidate learning
2. **Audio recording in groups (15 mins) and book selling session (10 mins)**
   - Pupils break into groups and record new narration for the book
   - Book selling session to build reading interest and encourage ss to read both ebooks and paper books outside class

Reading Log

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1uFCDrOb2wj70O_C5a_uwxumNcg5v-IUO

What we have learned

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Book design

In order to design a book that is both accessible and enjoyable for young struggling readers, first of all, we need to understand:

- What makes a book ***appealing*** to young struggling readers?
- Why do these children tend to shy away from books? What ***difficulties*** do they face when reading a book?
- How can ***added digital affordances*** of ebooks help us to address these needs?

What makes a book appealing to young struggling readers?

- ***Three main traits*** of inherently interesting texts: ***coherence, relevance and vividness*** (Springer et al., 2017)
- An ebook that is appealing to young struggling readers is not just a text with the above-mentioned traits transferred to screen. An appealing ebook is one which can **take advantage of its added digital affordances** to support and engage the readers (Cahill & Franzen, 2013; Yokota & Teale, 2014; Zipke, 2014).

Support for reading engagement

E-books' potential in supporting six key facets of reading engagement (Kucirkova *et al.*, 2017)

- ***Affective*** engagement: how does the child feel when reading the book (e.g. positive attitudes/ satisfaction such as pleasure, enjoyment and inclusion)?
- ***Interactive*** engagement: does the book encourage the child' active involvement in reading, requiring his/ her input/ contribution?
- ***Shared*** engagement: does the book facilitate opportunities for shared engagement with the child (e.g. prompt conversations with teachers/ peers)?
- ***Sustained*** engagement: does it nurture the child' sustained engagement in reading?
- ***Creative*** engagement: does it encourage the child to develop his/ her imagination or use his/ her own creativity (e.g. come up with their own stories/ characters)?
- ***Personalised*** engagement: can the book provide an individualised/ tailored reading experience to the child (e.g. opportunities to take on different characters)?

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What difficulties do struggling readers face when they read?

CIPHER ALPHABET

A = B	H = A	O = O	V = L
B = V	I = D	P = Y	W = P
C = G	J = Z	Q = F	X = U
D = Q	K = C	R = J	Y = I
E = K	L = W	S = X	Z = R
F = M	M = S	T = H	
G = N	N = E	U = T	

Figure 1

NXZNEH!=?

Eureka!

How ebooks support 'learning to read'

- Supportive features of e-books can **reduce cognitive load** needed for decoding and allows a child to focus on extracting meaning from the text.
- This **improves comprehension**, helps a child to **stay on task** & most importantly **sustains their reading interest.**
- Examples of such **supportive features** include:
  - Multimedia elements to provide audio-visual clues
  - Fluent and expressive narration to make meanings clear
  - Word-by-word highlighting that is in sync with the reading voice

What the pupils said about our ebooks and their experience in the trial lessons

Pupils' favourite books

Read the book here.

Read the book here.

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Reasons cited

The drawing is nice.

I like Peppa Pig.

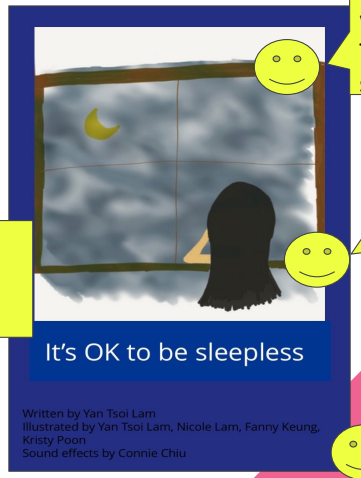
The story is fun.

Reasons cited

The snoring sound is fun.

I like sleeping.

I sleep and snore too.



The book is simple. The words repeat. This book is suitable for me.

I like the hamster. I have a hamster at home.

The story is good.

Pupils' perceptions of the teacher-made ebooks

Do you like recording audios for these e-books?	Yes, very much (63.6%); quite like (22.7%); like a little (0%); neutral (4.5%); no, not at all (4.5%)
How often do you re-read these ebooks at home?	Always (40.9%); often (22.7%); sometimes (18.2%); never (18.2%)
Do you like listening to books read by the teachers or books read by yourselves more?	Teachers (36.4%); pupils themselves (54.5%); no preference (9.1%)
In general, do you like these ebooks?	Yes, very much (81.88%); quite like (9.1%); like a little (9.1%); neutral (0%); no, not at all (0%)

Pupils' perceptions of ebooks in general

Do you think ebooks are easier to read than paper books?	Strongly agree (72.7%); agree (4.5%), slightly agree (4.5%); disagree (18.2%), strongly disagree (0%)
Do you think ebooks are more fun to read than paper books?	Strongly agree (68.2%); agree (9.1%); slightly agree (9.1%); disagree (13.6%), strongly disagree (0%)
Do you like learning English through ebooks?	Yes, very much (77.3%); quite like (9.1%), like a little (9.1%); neutral (0%); No, not at all (4.5%)

'Scanning QR codes is troublesome'

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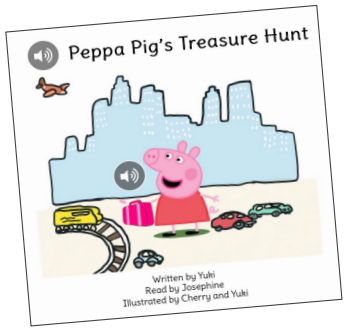
Do you like learning English through ebooks? Students who said yes.

- I can listen to the audios. Paper books do not have audios for you to listen to.'
- 'I can listen to the read-aloud. I don't have to read aloud by myself. It's **easier**'.
- 'It reads for me.'
- 'I hope learning English in P.2 will be less laborious. Using ebooks is **less laborious**.'
- 'I can listen to the teacher's read aloud. If I read by myself, I will fall asleep. I won't take a book and read. It's more **fun**.'
- 'I can listen to the audios; I can play an audio **by myself.**'
- 'It's **playful**. It's fun'.
- 'Because you can **record audios**.'
- '(These books) can **motivate** me to learn English.'

Affective engagement and reading enjoyment



- Children are generally engaged by their **favourite characters** and topics that are **interesting or familiar or relevant** to their lives.
- Additionally, many pupils commented they liked the **quirky drawing** and the **snoring sounds** in the books.

Ebook's potential in promoting Interactive engagement

How the book encouraged students' active involvement in the reading process

Ebooks' potential in promoting shared engagement

- How the book prompted conversation with the teacher and peers

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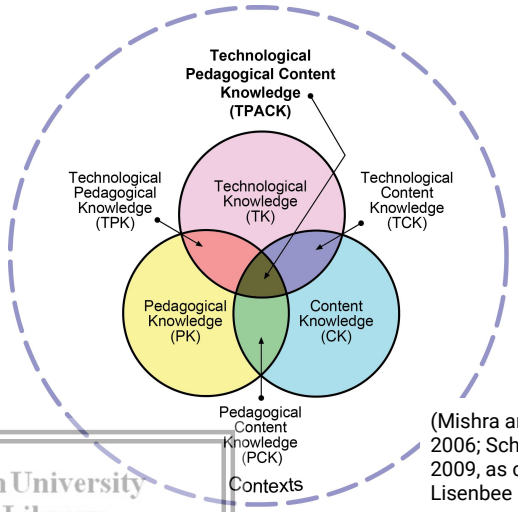
Ebooks' potential in promoting personalised engagement

How the pupils made the book their own:

https://read.bookcreator.com/6WzGMg93DjU5c23x90H7GkqTDfm2/d2-dbp-WQfyhclQuVSWd_w

Potential of teacher-made ebooks in the classroom

The TPACK Model is a useful model to help teachers consider the interplay among their **content knowledge**, **pedagogy knowledge** and **technological knowledge** while incorporating IT into their teaching.



(Mishra and Koehler 2006; Schmidt *et al*. 2009, as cited in Lisenbee & Ford, 2018)

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CK and PK needed by teachers of reading (Moats 2009)

Language structure + Reading development + Pedagogy of reading

CK (Content Knowledge)

PK (Pedagogical Knowledge)

TPACK needed by teachers of reading

- In the context of reading instruction, **TPACK** (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) refers to a teacher's ability to consider the role of technology in fostering students' literacy development.
- In our case → how can we ebooks to support learning to read?

Effective integration of technology: 3 questions to ask ourselves

In order to design an ebook-based lesson which can meet our teaching and learning goals, we asked ourselves the following questions:

1. Can the teacher choose suitable e-books and technological tools to model and guide the use of a literary skill?
2. To what extent can the teacher capitalise on the affordances of the chosen text/ tool to enhance his/ her instruction (e.g. Are the e-books used in a way that can support comprehension and engagement? Are students being encouraged to practise decoding and reading strategies)?
3. Can the teacher model and guide how to use the digital affordances of the chosen text/ tool?

(Schugar, Smith & Schugar 2013; Baxa and Christ, 2017)

Using ebooks to guide and model key reading strategies—our observations

- One of our observation foci was comprehension--***understanding what one reads***—as it is the essence of reading, no matter you're reading a paper book or an ebook.
- We found the medium has **little impact on the way we guided and modelled the use of key reading strategies**. The way reading strategies were guided and modelled through paper books were guided and modelled in a similar way through ebooks.
- Reading strategies which use knowledge of text types, promote higher order thinking and use audio-visual clues generally received less attention. However, most of these issues **did not appear to be specific to classrooms using ebooks**.

	Pig 1	Pig 2	Ele 1	Ele 2	Sleep 1	Sleep 2	Ding 1	Ding 2
Using prior knowledge or building background knowledge/ vocabulary	✓ (sound clip from cartoon)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Establishing a purpose for reading	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Asking questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inferring	✗	✓ (done by T)	✗	✓ (done by T)	✓ (not followed up by T)	✓	✓	✓
Promoting reader response	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Recognising story structure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Examining title and illustrations on book cover (to recognise the setting/ characters)	✗	✓ (title only)	✓ (title only)	✓ (title only)	✓ (title only)	✓	✓	✓

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Another observation focus: using ebooks to support reading fluency

- The ability to read most words in context ***quickly, accurately, automatically*** **and with *appropriate expression and phrasing***. (Cunningham, 2009).
- Reading fluency is **critical to successful reading comprehension**
- "If text is read in a laborious and inefficient manner, it will be difficult for the child to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his/ her background knowledge." (The National Reading Panel, 2000, p.11)

Ways to support reading fluency

- **Three core principles:**
  - Model expressive reading.
  - Emphasize appropriate phrasing
  - Provide sufficient support and ***a great deal of practice***.
- **Three ways to support reading fluency:**
  - Echo reading: A teacher chooses a section of a text to read aloud. Students' role is to listen and follow along when it's their turn to read.
  - Choral reading: T and Ss simultaneously read a text aloud. Students' role is to mimic you.
  - Partner/ Paired reading: Ss work in pairs to read aloud and provide feedback/ encouragement to each other.

(See Kuhn 2009)

(See Kuhn 2009)

What we found – a lack of emphasis on reading fluency

- Despite the importance of reading fluency, out of the eight lessons we analysed, there was only **ONE** lesson where students were required to do echo reading and choral reading.
- The main reasons for this lack of emphasis on reading fluency could be (1) the **tight curriculum** in HK and (2) **lack of reading materials** which are both **accessible and appealing enough** to be re-read by struggling readers on their initiative.

Suggested structure fo

1. **Pre-, while- and post-reading to s**
   mins)
   - **Pre-reading** to activate/ build
   - **While-reading** to support com
   - **Post-reading** to provide pupil
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Do you like recording audios for these e-books?	Yes, very much (63.6%); quite like (22.7%); like a little (0%); neutral (4.5%); no, not at all (4.5%)
How often do you re-read these ebooks at home?	Always (40.9%); often (22.7%); sometimes (18.2%); never (18.2%)

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Summing up

- In order to design an ebook that is accessible and enjoyable for all, we need to consider how well the book can support **'reading enjoyment'** and **'learning to read'** with its **added digital affordances**.
- In our experience, ebooks with **supportive features** did help to make reading less laborious, therefore improving the pupils' reading enjoyment as well as their sense of agency.
- We also found ebooks did have rich potential in promoting **some key facets of reading engagement** (e.g. interactive and personalised engagement). When appropriate technology was used to support these key facets of reading engagement, their appeal to young struggling readers also increased.

Summing up (cont.)

- In order for ebooks to support reading to learn effectively, a teacher must consider ways technology can be used to **enhance the teaching of reading**.
- In our experience, our ebooks **did not make much difference** to the way **reading strategies** were taught.
- However, we found ebooks did have the potential to **encourage more practice on reading fluency** in an **enjoyable** way.

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Q & A

For improvement/ suggestions

- Pre-service teachers' knowledge of children's literature
- Narrative that's didactic may reduce readers' agency and not encouraging ss to think and reflect
- Closer analysis of good and bad features in the book
- Teacher talk (too didactic too)
- Introduce types of ebooks (which type is better for struggling readers?)

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