Potential of teacher-made ebooks in supporting young English learners

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Outline

- About the project
- What we have learned: (1) book design (what research says and what the pupils said); (2) potential of teacher-made ebooks in supporting the teaching of reading to young English learners (our observations)
- Q & A
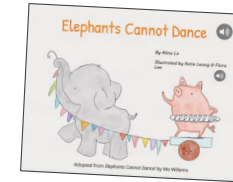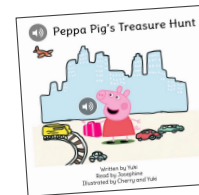
About the project

- **'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
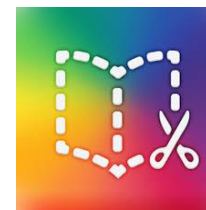
Book Creator for Chrome
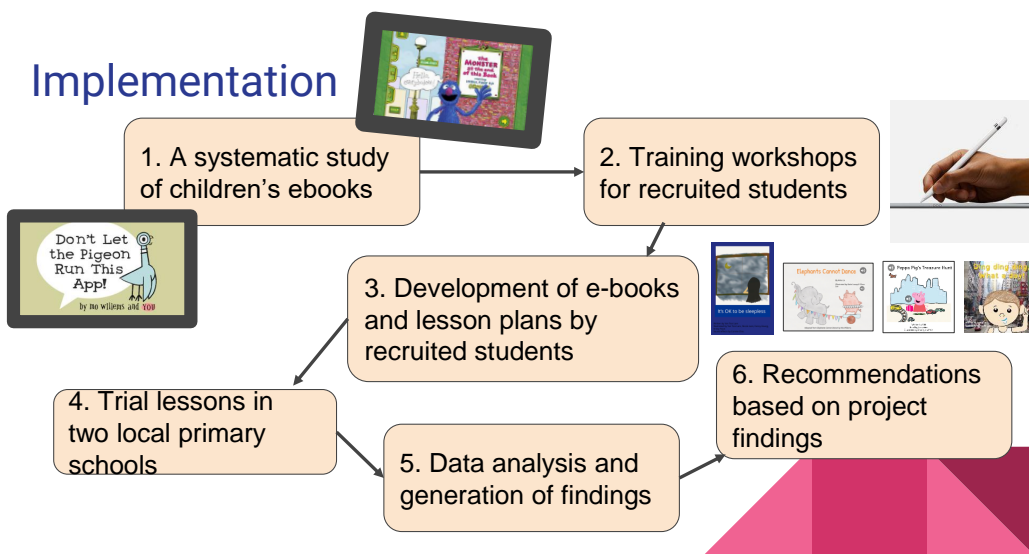
What we like about this tool:

- 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

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 language 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 engage in language-focused activities (vocabulary, phonics, etc.)
2. **Recording new narration 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

(1) Book design – what research says

What makes a book appealing to young struggling readers? What does research say?

- An appealing book should have **three common traits** of inherently interesting texts: **coherence, relevance and vividness**, be it a print book or ebook (Springer et al., 2017).
- An appealing ebook is one that 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)?

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!

Support for '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
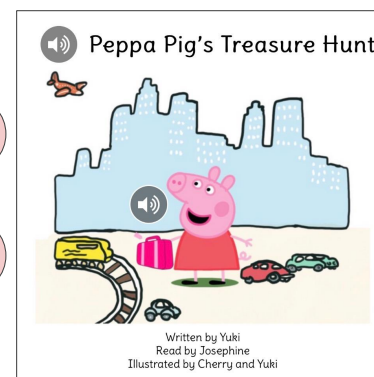
What the pupils said

Pupils' favourite books

Peppa Pig's Treasure Hunt

Written by Yuki
Read by Josephine
Illustrated by Cherry and Yuki

Read the book here.

It's OK to be sleepless

Written by Yan Tsoi Lam
Illustrated by Yan Tsoi Lam, Nicole Lam, Fanny Keung,
Sound effects by Connie Chiu

Read the book here.

Reasons cited

The drawing is nice.

I like Peppa Pig.
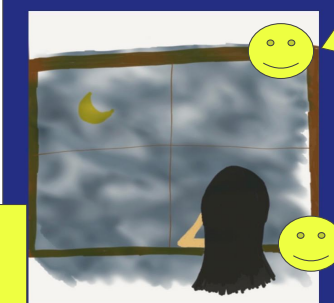
Peppa Pig's Treasure Hunt

Written by Yuki
Read by Josephine
Illustrated by Cherry and Yuki

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.

It's OK to be sleepless

Written by Yan Tsoi Lam
Illustrated by Yan Tsoi Lam, Nicole Lam, Fanny Keung, Kristy Poon
Sound effects by Connie Chiu

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'

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

1. I can listen to the audios. Paper books do not have audios for you to listen to.'
2. 'I can listen to the read-aloud. I don't have to read aloud by myself. It's **easier**'.
3. 'It reads for me.'
4. 'I hope learning English in P.2 will be less laborious. Using ebooks is **less laborious**.'
5. '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**.'
6. 'I can listen to the audios; I can play an audio **by myself.**'
7. 'It's **playful**. It's fun'.
8. Because you can **record audios**.'
9. '(These books) can **motivate** me to learn English.'

Affective engagement did contribute significantly to reading enjoyment

Peppa Pig's Treasure Hunt
Written by Yuki
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Illustrated by Cherry and Yuki
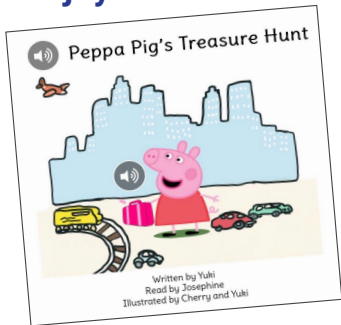
- Children are generally engaged by their **favourite characters** and topics that are **interesting or familiar or relevant** to their lives.
- Additionally, many pupils commented they liked the **quirky drawing** and the **snoring sounds** in the books.

It's OK to be sleepless
Written By Yan Tsoi Lam
Illustrated by Yan Tsoi Lam, Nicole Lam, Fanny Keung, Kristy Poon,
Sound effects by Connie Chiu

Ebook's potential in promoting Interactive engagement

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

Ebooks' potential in promoting personalised engagement

How the pupils **made a book their own**:

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

(2) Potential of teacher-made ebooks in supporting the teaching of reading to young English learners – our observations

How do ebooks support the teaching of key reading strategies? Our observations

- One of our observation foci was the teaching of **comprehension**-- ***understanding what one reads***—which is the essence of reading, no matter you're reading a paper book or an ebook.
- We found the digital medium has <mark>little impact on the way we guided and modelled the use of key reading strategies to support comprehension</mark>. 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 <mark>did not appear to be specific to classrooms using ebooks</mark>.

	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	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Asking questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inferring	X	✓ (done by T)	X	✓ (done by T)	✓ (not followed up by T)	✓	✓	✓
Promoting reader response	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X
Recognising story structure	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Examining title and illustrations on book cover (to recognise the setting/ characters)	X	✓ (title only)	✓ (title only)	✓ (title only)	✓ (title only)	✓	✓	✓

Another observation focus: how do ebooks support the development of reading fluency?

- What is 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 – principles and strategies (Kuhn 2009)

- **Three core principles:**
  - Model expressive reading.
  - Emphasize appropriate phrasing
  - Provide sufficient support and ***a great deal of practice***.
- **Three ways to support reading fluency:**
  - <mark>Echo reading</mark>: 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.
  - <mark>Choral reading:</mark> T and Ss simultaneously read a text aloud. Students' role is to mimic you.
  - <mark>Partner/ Paired reading:</mark> Ss work in pairs to read aloud and provide feedback/ encouragement to each other.

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 comfortably and enjoyably.

Suggested structure fo...

1. **Pre-, while- and post-reading to s... mins)**
   - **Pre-reading** to activate/ build...
   - **While-reading** to support con...
   - **Post-reading** to provide pupil... 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 outside class

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%)

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

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Thank you!