



Press Release

Stories of Seven 300s - Enhance students' reading comprehension skills with Reading Battle (RB)

A 3-million-dollar Quality Education Fund project titled “Strengthening students’ reading comprehension ability (both Chinese and English) through developing children’s literature e-quiz bank on cloud”
Dissemination of Research Findings

Reading is the basis for learning. However, many students have not developed an interest and ability in reading. As a result, they suffer in courses and assignments that require good comprehension ability. Through applying various game mechanics (points, e-badges, levels) into the design of an e-quiz platform called “Reading Battle”, Dr Samuel Chu, the principal investigator (and his team) for the project, have effectively motivated many primary and kindergarten students in Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China and the US to read a lot and to take many e-quizzes about the books they have read. Many of these students have improved their reading abilities quickly with ease. The top 7 students have read and answered about or over 300 books (with one read over 400 books) and achieved an average score of 82-97 out of 100. The e-quiz system has essentially helped produce many “young scholars”. They, together with their parents, shared what they have learned from reading so many books and the drivers of their motivation at a seminar held at HKU on July 4, 2016.

This award-winning gamification project “Reading Battle” was released in February 2014. More than 5,000 students in over 50 schools/libraries have used it. Those who have used it a lot have improved not only in their Chinese/English reading ability, but also in their Chinese/English writing ability. Some also improved in other subjects including General Studies and even Mathematics.

A student said “My Chinese reading improved a lot. I used to get grades around C and B range but now it’s always A!” Another student commented “My English and General Studies have improved. In the past, I got around 10 marks (out of 100). But now, I get around 90 marks!”

One study shows 38% and 32% of the students improved in their reading ability in Chinese and English respectively. 46% and 32% of the students also improved in their writing ability in Chinese and English respectively. 11% of the students indicated an improvement in General Studies. Most of these students attributed their academic improvement to the use of Reading Battle in the past year though some also offered other reasons for their improvement.

A student said “I reckon my improvement in academic studies is due to the use of the Reading Battle. Books in the Reading Battle are harder, so usually I would not be interested in reading them. But the moment when I saw the ranking list, I realize that if I could complete the harder tasks with correct answers, my average score will increase, which motivates me to read more.”

Innovations of Reading Battle

1. Gamification of reading experience and assessment to make the process enjoyable

In general, students dislike tests, but the competition elements in RB have turned reading comprehension test into a gaming process. Through applying various game mechanics (points, e-badges, levels) into the design, RB has motivated many students to read a lot, including those who do not like reading in the past.

2. *Relieves teachers' workload*

RB turns the paper-based reading comprehension worksheet into an interesting interactive quizzing system with hint and immediate feedback. It also replaces the former tedious task of having teachers/librarians to grade the paper-based reading worksheet with a detailed reading profile in RB for each child. Teachers, librarians and parents can use it to monitor students' progress effectively and help them develop in areas they are weak at.

3. *Caters for learning diversity*

Students can read books and answer questions on RB at their own pace. Top performers can get into the Life or Term Score Ranking, while weaker students can still be excited by the chance to be listed on the Improvement Score Ranking. Students of all levels can be encouraged to read and to do reading comprehension tests a lot more (and have their reading ability improved) by using RB.

Impacts of Reading Battle

In Hong Kong, many students, parents and teachers have reported that RB has significant impacts on enhancing students reading ability and developed their interest in reading. 94% of the students agreed that RB was effective in improving their reading comprehension skills. This was the most obvious among top performers, followed by students who improved the most. Also, 84% of students thought that RB enhanced their interest in reading.

Although RB is based in Hong Kong, its achievements in foreign countries are also remarkable. In Taiwan, students' English language skills have improved in both reading and writing. Some said they used to be afraid of English books, but RB has changed them from becoming not afraid of English books to eventually enjoy reading English books! Moreover, in the US, RB participants did not experience a 'Summer Loss', a phenomenon that students forget 10-30% of what they have learned from the school terms during the summer. Besides, the top 3 students from about 15 participants in the US increased their reading abilities from 10-60% in just 2 months.

For more details of the project and the findings, please visit the project website: <http://battle.cite.hku.hk/>.

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