



Press Release

Sharing Session cum Prize Presentation Ceremony of “Reading Battle” Helping students to excel as 21st century learners: Excel in reading, writing, digital skills and creativity

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 and levels) into the design of an e-quiz platform called “Reading Battle (RB)”, Dr Samuel Chu, the principal investigator of the project, and his team in the Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong (HKU), 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. Among the participated students, 14 students who have performed well in RB attended a series of young author workshop to learn about writing stories appropriate for kindergarteners and primary school students. They also learned about designing e-books on StoryJumper. Two of the students shared about their e-books at the seminar held at HKU on June 29, 2018.

This award-winning gamification project RB was released in February 2014. More than 5,000 students in over 50 schools/libraries in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China and US 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 even also improved in other subjects including General Studies and Mathematics.

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

A study done by the project team 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 RB 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 RB. Books in the RB are harder, so usually I would not be interested in reading them. But when I saw the ranking list, I realized that if I can complete the harder tasks with correct answers, my average score will be increased, which motivates me to read more.”

Innovations of RB

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 and 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 in.

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 RB

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 regional/overseas achievements 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 three students from about 15 participants in the US increased their reading abilities from 10-60% in just two months.

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

For media enquiries, please contact Ms Emily Cheung, Senior Manager (Development and Communications), Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong (Tel: 3917 4270 / email: emchy@hku.hk). Please visit <http://web.edu.hku.hk/press> to view the e-version of the press release.

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