



The impact of choice reading on academic success in the new normal

Maristela Rose M Galia, Laurence M Abala, Geronimo S Obaob

Cebu Normal University, Faculty of Graduate Studies, College of Teacher Education, Cebu, Philippines

Abstract

This is a qualitative-quantitative research that descriptively discovered the impact of choice reading on the academic success in the new normal which was addressed by determining (1) The effects of choice-reading program in student's reading comprehension in terms of: attention span, satisfaction and output, (2) the benefits of implementing choice-reading program in the development of the students: cognitive and affective factor, (3) and students' perception in the use of choice reading as beneficial in improving their comprehension and retelling of texts in online learning. An interview questionnaire comprising 15 questions were utilized to gather information that will be interpreted to determine the factors which affects students' perspective on reading who are affiliated from one of the oldest universities in Cebu, the University of the Visayas. A strategic routine on reading zones was also conducted to calculate the attention span of the students as part of developing reading habits on them. The results of the interview and reading zone routine yielded the following impressions on the impact of choice reading to students: (a) students are more motivated to read when the materials are freely chosen by them, (b) readers interest towards reading materials are also reinforced by current trends, (c) students are invested in reading if they will be able to relate to their peers as a result. Upon the gathered data and results, this study concluded that choice reading can contribute more towards developing the skills of the students in reading since they like to navigate their own learning which will let them perform better to achieve academic success. The observed behavior implied that teachers must allow their students to manipulate learning materials in order for them to get involved and invested in their learning. Therefore, various perspectives were offered by the researchers to help future language teachers improve on their approach towards teaching reading to students.

Keywords: choice reading, language learning, reading attitude

Introduction

The new normal imposed a great shift in the education system relocating the language classroom in the online world. To language educators, one of the challenges in teaching the subject has been teaching reading. The current educational system in teaching reading to students was composed of bunches of reading materials fed to language learners to read. The numerous reading tasks assigned to students decreases motivation due to bombardment that creates tension with the students' readiness to read. According to Dickerson (2015), when we want the learners to be invested in their own learning, we have to change our strategies of teaching. This is one way for us educators to contribute in helping our community to be more literate, changing the way we approach reading. If we are to educate for character, growth and success, we have to look at our students in a perspective where they are not considered as standardized others in order for us to instill a certain kind of knowledge. Thus, educators play an important role in assisting our students through independent learning to help develop our students' necessity for their reading skill as we embrace the new normal.

To closely understand the study, a researcher has defined reading as a complex process which involves conceptual, linguistic and cognitive skills which are commonly not understood by language learners. As the learner is confronted with written codes, a competent reader recognizes appropriate starting points for scanning leading the eyes to fixation points as the letters, words, phrases,

sentences and paragraphs. Sensing syntactic and semantic boundaries in generating expectations outside a reader's immediate vision to obtain understanding of the texts (Venezky, 2019). It refers to the reader's response to materials presented and studied involving decoding symbols and representations that enables the readers to generate output while interacting with texts. Hence, reading has to be learned through a process wherein segments are gradually understood to form objects that manifest sense. In addition, each process has to be carefully implemented in order to develop a good foundation in language learning, especially in reading.

Within the comfort of everyone's homes, readers are facing challenges in learning how to read which alarms the educators to cater this issue to continue extending assistance to readers at home. Reading - aside from the reason that it is necessary to achieve academic success, it is also a beneficial skill not just in the learning classrooms but also for competent individuals who interact across different content areas. This is where choice reading becomes vital to readers because they are already learning the skill with a purpose that drives readers to perform more than expected in the process. As argued by Carey *et al.* (2013), intrinsic motivators in the reading process such as personal progress and understanding encourages better performance rather than extrinsic motivators such as grades, teacher praise or comparing themselves to other students. Furthermore, positive reinforcement with inculcated values such as becoming better as an individual contributes better impact to

the community because it eliminates discrimination and encourages collaboration instead of competition.

Basically, readers always learn better when they find pleasure in the material they use. According to Tucker *et al.* (2017) through exposing the students with a variety of available books when students have a say in the material they read, they are more

Likely to continue reading and finishing it because of enjoyment. In this way, the readers can manipulate the material more and also stimulate creativity among them. Readers always have the potential to acquire knowledge and in the case of choice reading development must be focused on honing a skill with proper prompting activities in relation to learning goals. By this, readers were also encouraged to be driven by the thought of enough interest that will make them provide time, effort, grit and will towards reading to achieve higher academic success.

In this paper, the researchers will present and evaluate the impact of choice reading on achieving the academic success of the students in the new normal which will also serve as an evidence to encourage implementation of choice reading in breaking the culture of standardization in schools. This will also serve as a basis to observe the formation of new teaching strategies in reading as the transition to new normal in schools strives to cope-up with the demand of nature and education. A great challenge thus awaits the field of education to maintain promoting literacy amidst different challenges that come along with changes. Nonetheless, on the brighter side of the current status quo this is an opportunity for growth and to generate new knowledge across the ages.

Research Problem

The current pandemic has slowly changed our lives most especially in the education system. Online learning has been one of the primary changes on our education set-up recently. The way students learn and comprehend is undeniably affected. Thus, being involved in online learning somehow affects the comprehension of the learners. This leads to research about it. Furthermore, this study aims to find out how Choice Reading affects the English Proficiency among the elementary students. In addition, this study explains why Choice Reading is a great factor in the Reading Comprehension of Language learners.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. The effects of choice-reading program in student's reading comprehension in terms of:
 - a. Attention span
 - b. Satisfaction
 - c. Output
2. The benefits of implementing choice-reading program in the development of the students:
 - a. cognitive factor
 - b. affective factor
3. Students' perception in the use of choice reading as beneficial in improving their comprehension and retelling of texts in online learning.

Materials and Methods (Methodology)

For these reasons, the researchers have been on a one-year journey to incorporate more independent reading and more choice reading into my classroom. Over the years, the

researchers have collected data in a variety of ways. For the sake of simplicity, this paper will explain about this data chronologically.

This study will make use of a qualitative-quantitative research method which will employ a descriptive survey method. This will analyze how Choice Reading affects the students' reading comprehension. It will show the Reading Comprehension level of the Grade 12 students at University of the Visayas using questionnaires for reading comprehension. It will also need a statistical treatment that will help in determining percentages and to statistically delineate data. The students will take the English Comprehension Test through Choice Reading before the second semester of the school year 2020-2021 ends. The survey questionnaires will be given before they take the tests. The responses will be statistically treated, analyzed, and interpreted.

The English Reading Comprehension test will be conducted among Grade 12 students at the University of the Visayas. The researchers will submit letter of requests to the principal of UV-SHS before administering the instruments to the target respondents. The students will be asked to answer a google form questionnaire which consists of 15 questions. They will be given enough time not to rush for their answers. Their responses will be analyzed accordingly.

Students read independently in the Reading Zone, the start of class is dedicated to independent choice reading. They are given the freedom to choose books from my class library or bring a novel from home. For the 2020-2021 school year, the students had ten minutes of Reading Zone every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. As they read, students track their progress (*date, minutes read, and number of pages read*) with reading trackers. For each book that they finished, students were given the opportunity to write an extra credit paper about something they learned from their book; this was not mandatory, however, and though I gathered some data in this manner, many students chose not to do this, and so that data is limited.

Two instruments will be used in this study. A modified Reading Comprehension Test and a survey questionnaire in assessing the emotional factors as an effect of Choice Reading on the reading comprehension level of the respondents. The reading test will be an Inventory Reading Instruction. It contains two parts; I. Reading Zone and II. Comprehension Test. The Comprehension Test will be a ten-item test. The survey questionnaire contained questions for the respondents to provide answers on how choice reading shaped Reading Comprehension and motivation. The results of these data will be interpreted into percentages.

To compute for the weighted mean of the respondents of Choice Reading Survey will be the formula as follow:

$$WM = \frac{\sum (f(x))}{n} \text{ Where:}$$

WM: weighted mean

\sum = Summation

F = Frequency/number of responses N = number of respondents

Results

Reading Levels

At the end of the school year 2020-2021, students showed varying levels of improvement, an increase of between one and three grades levels. However, this cannot be linked

directly to independent reading in the Reading Zone since the students read a variety of other texts both in my class and in other classes. I also administered an anonymous Reading Zone Survey at the end of the school year. This survey (See Appendix A) had both factual questions (regarding the quantity and quality of books read) and opinion questions (focused on their feelings and attitudes toward reading, Reading Zone, and themselves as readers).

Moderate Engagement

As for the results of the survey questionnaires, here are significant results I have gathered. The first small hurdle for

me came with the language I used to talk about reading. Labels are loaded with connotations, and naming is incredibly important.

Though I briefly contemplated using the term SSR, I decided the students would be less reluctant to accept the term Reading Zone. Though students were practicing sustained silent reading, it helped to manipulate the wording I used to talk about this practice. This approach helped the researchers identify the attitude of students towards reading. It will be discussed through the following graphs we can see on the charts which were taken from the conducted google forms survey questionnaire.

Table 1: This table shows the summary of responses gathered through the survey questionnaire.

Survey Question #	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
1	28.6%	68.6%	2.8%	100%
2	62.9%	37.1%	-	100%
3	14.3%	82.9%	2.8%	100%
4	60%	37.1%	2.9%	100%
7	22.9%	48.6%	28.6%	100%
8	34.3%	60%	5.7%	100%
9	25.7%	65.7%	8.6%	100%
10	80%	20%	-	100%
11	82.9%	17.1%	-	100%
12	17.1%	71.4%	11.4%	100%
13	2.9%	65.7%	31.4%	100%
15	51.4%	48.6%	-	100%

Question #1. This shows the percentage of students as to how many students from the respondents do like reading. This will help the researchers to identify if there would be a change in the reading attitude of the students after reinforced by reader-centered factors. Whereas; 28.6% answered “always”, 68.6% of the respondents answered “sometimes” and 2.8% answered never.

Question #2. This will help the researchers identify as to how much the students wanted to be involved in the selection process of reading. Whereas; 62.9% of the respondents answered “always” and 37.1% of respondents answered “sometimes”.

Question #3. In this section, the researchers gathered the percentage of the respondents that read the materials where they are not involved in the selection process. Whereas; 14.3% answered “always”, 82.9% of respondents answered “sometimes” and 2.8% answered “never”.

Question #4. This indicates the percentage of respondents who considered the content creators as their basis of interest in reading. Whereas; 60% answered “always”, 37.1% of the respondents answered “sometimes” and 2.9% of the respondents answered “never”. For questions 5 & 6, a separate illustration was used since this is based on the daily tabulation student’s reading zone activity. Refer to figure 1.

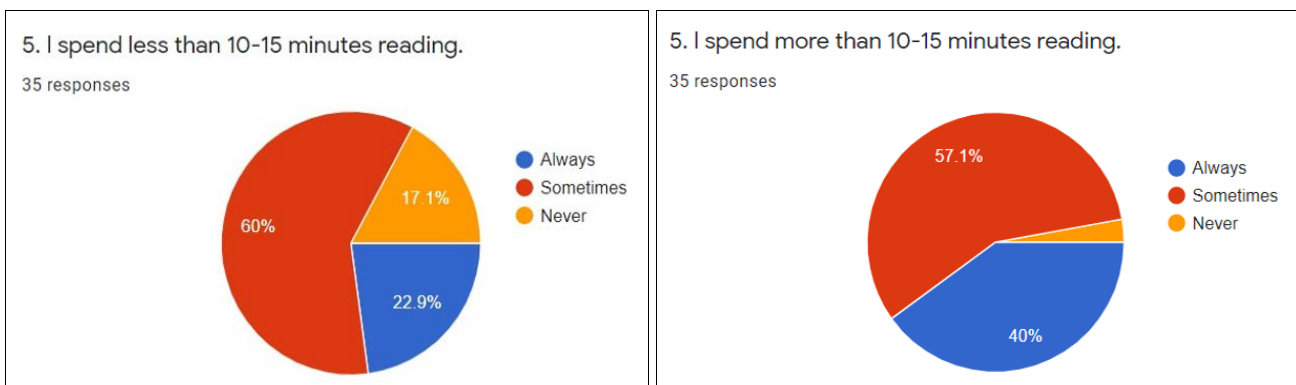


Fig 1: This graph shows the percentage of respondents who read materials in more/less than 10-15 minutes. It is based on the recorded times the students spent in the reading zone.

The illustrations represent the amount of time the students spent reading during the Reading Zone. Whereas; 22.9% answered “always”, 60% answered “sometimes” and 17.1% answered “never for reading in less than 10-15 minutes. In addition, 40% answered “always”, 57.1% answered “sometimes” and 2.9% answered “never” for reading more than 10-15 minutes.

Refer back to Table 1.

Question #7. The chart illustrates that 22.9% of the respondents are “always” affected by noisy environments, 48.6% answered “sometimes” and 28.6% answered “never”. Question #8. When they are asked about the reading in reference to relevance of their reading materials 34.3% answered “always”, 60% answered “sometimes” and 5.7% answered “never”.

Question #9. The respondents also revealed that 25.7% of them like to read books which are read by their peers, 65.7% of respondents answered “sometimes” and 8.6% of respondents answered “never”.

Question #10. In this Illustration, the respondents also indicated that 80% of them are “always” interested in new information about topics related to their interests and 20% of respondents answered “sometimes”

Question #11. The graph presents 82.2% of respondents “always” like sharing what they read and 17.1% of respondents answered “sometimes” for this question.

Question #12 & #13. Both of these illustrations show how critical the students are in comprehending texts. Whereas; in regards to making revisions 2.9% answered “always”, 65.7% answered “sometimes” and 31.4% of respondents answered “never”. On the other hand, with regards to taking notes 17.1% of respondents said “always”, 71.4% of respondents answered “sometimes” and 11.4% of respondents answered “never”.

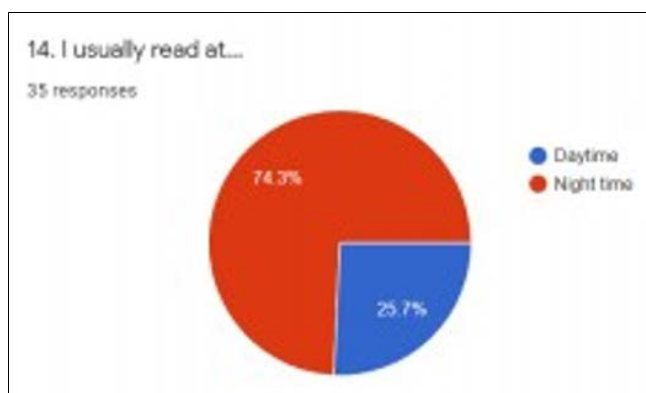


Fig 2: This graph shows the percentage of respondents who read for a specific period of time. (Question #14)

Question #14. In this section, the respondents showed that 25.7% of them like to read during the daytime and 74.3% of them like to read at night time.

Refer back to Table 1.

Question #15. Lastly, this illustration shows that 51.4% of the respondents like to see illustrations “always” and 48.6% of the respondents decide “sometimes”.

Upon presenting these data gathered during the conduction of this research the researchers have gathered relevant information that are interpreted to extract insights and contribute to the dynamic growth of knowledge in finding the best classroom strategies in teaching reading to students in the new normal. Thus, collaboration from the researchers, community, respondents and also the counselors in pursuing this activity are highly appreciated.

Discussion

The current pandemic has slowly changed our lives most especially in the education system. Online learning has been one of the primary changes on our education set-up recently. The way students learn and comprehend is undeniably affected. Thus, being involved in online learning somehow affects the comprehension of the learners.

Gathering all the information from the implementation of Reading Zone and from the survey questionnaires the researchers found answers to the problem statements mentioned beforehand. This study is anchored on the idea that choice reading contributes to academic success of

students. This is supported by various theories of learning and instruction by various advocates, namely: Krashen’s Second Language Acquisition theory, Vygotsky’s theory, Rosenblatt, and Piaget. These language experts, behaviorists and educators believe that reading proficiency starts with the learners and that greatly contributes to the academic success of students. Other valuable ideas and concepts are also presented to strengthen its standpoint and give a clearer picture on the significance of choice reading in the academic field of the English language learning.

Effects of choice-reading program

Thus, upon extracting the information above the researchers found out that choice-reading program in student’s reading comprehension greatly affects the students’ attention span in reading as it was shown in figures 4 and 5 in which students were able to read more than 10-15 minutes which is the average attention span of learners in doing an activity. Their satisfaction was measured through how much they extended their time spent on the material as well. The performance output was also relevant from figure 10 wherein the students are more likely to share their reading to peers which will also encourage their peers to read as well. Choice reading will be both beneficial to the teachers who would like to encourage their students more to participate/perform in class and for the students to improve comprehension skills as they are more motivated to read materials within their interests.

Benefits of implementing choice-reading program

One of the good things about the Reading Zone, as illustrated by the aforementioned anecdotes, is the connections that it allows the teachers to build with students. These connections have eradicated many of the classroom management issues language teachers struggled with in their teaching career. Though teachers have always recognized the importance of routines, never before had anyone done such a stable routine as the Reading Zone: The students begin every class, every day, with between ten and fifteen minutes of reading. The students seem to have enjoyed the routine and it partially created a habit for them. Furthermore, my students are extremely engaged in the Reading Zone, which is not surprising as they choose their own books. This engagement limits common classroom disruptions like talking. However, the most important classroom management tool that has come out of independent choice reading is the genuine relationships the teachers build with students around the books we read. The reader tells the class about what he/she is reading and why they chose it; the students can tell the teacher about what interests them, and the researchers recommend titles based on their preferences. Students often share quick conversations about novels in the hallways or at lunch—an interesting trivias from a book, a plot twist that shocked a student, a character who resonated with them. These simple exchanges lead to strong bonds: Rather than seeing me as a teacher who gives mandates, the students see the teacher as a fellow reader with whom they can talk about books. The researchers also see my students differently: Through these conversations, they see the students’ natural analytical strengths, remember their passion for learning, and better understand their lives and their personalities.

Students' perception in the use of choice reading

The students could now realize how much they must be involved in the selection process in order to create better outcomes. Having the teacher around just to facilitate students' learning is the more suitable way of teaching the students in the new normal and encouraging themselves to read more by igniting their curiosity as well as to start where the students are leveled in their reading development.

Conclusion

The challenges that our students are facing today are getting more complicated and urgent. Outside of school they are plagued by family and community problems, bullying, and violence; they work jobs in the evenings and on weekends; they are tempted by all the vices our culture offers. Gone are those days where the students have to deal with standardized curriculum and the burden of time and effort wherein they sit on their chairs for hours and couldn't be more conscious on how they should behave not to be scolded, stealing their attention towards learning. Unfortunately, we often ignore the student's interests and individuality which might get them more attentive and active in the class; we forget that students, like teachers, are also individuals who try to take unique paths. If we want to encourage students to be more motivated in their own learning, we need to change the way we deliver knowledge and impart learning. If we want to contribute to the evolution and growth of knowledge in society, we have to explore other ways on how to approach reading. If we want to educate for character, growth and success, we need to stop seeing our students as a standardized other, wherein they are less involved in the process of learning.

References

1. Breanna Z. Reengaging Readers: How Choice Reading Promotes Lifelong Literacy, 2019, 10-12.
2. Katie D. Reimagining Reading: Creating a Classroom Culture that Embraces Independent Choice Reading: Retrieved from Reimagining Reading: Creating a Classroom Culture that Embraces Independent Choice Reading, 2015, 7-9.
3. Irina A. Student choice and reading in the EFL classroom: Retrieved from Learner autonomy and reading in the EFL classroom, 2012, 111-112.
4. Istri M. Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory and Its Implementation in the Teaching of Integrated Reading: Retrieved from Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory and Its Implementation in the Teaching of Integrated Reading, 1998, 207-208.
5. Koni E, Leka L. Error Correction in Second Language Learning, 2015, 177.
6. Hashemi M. Language stress and anxiety among the English language learners. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2011;30:1811-1816.
7. Julie FM. The Effects of Choice on Reading Engagement and Comprehension for Second- and Third-Grade Students: An Action Research Report, 2017, 20-21.
8. Linda G. Reading Motivation: What the Research Says, 2009, 1.
9. Massri RA. Teachers' Attitudes towards English as a Foreign Language and Their Influence on Students' Attitudes and English Learning: A Qualitative Study.

10. Christy W. The impact of Pleasure Reading on Academic Success, 2016, 156.
11. Linda F. Synthesis of Research / Reading Comprehension: What Works, 1994, 17-19.
12. Mike A. Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn, 2016, 149.
13. Sam S. The impact of Pleasure Reading on Academic Success, 2016, 11-16.
14. Kathleen A *et al.* Children's Choices for Recreational Reading: A Three-Part Investigation of Selection Preferences, Rationales, and Processes, 2016, 98-100.