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To Read or Not To Read: Listening to Children Talk about Reading Motivation

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/0860-7435.24.04>

Abstract: Developing the will to read is an important, albeit sometimes neglected consideration in fostering literacy among children. Drawing from research on reading motivation by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), who talk about reading motivation as anchored upon self efficacy beliefs, purpose, and a social component, Rosenblatt's (1994) Transactional Theory of Reading which highlights the stances one takes while reading, Krashen's (2004 and 2009) research on the conditions that make Free Voluntary Reading optimal, and Miller's (2011) research on materiality and how objects have an agency that could either build or cripple the capacities of students influences this study as it examines the factors that contribute to reading motivation among middle graders. In order to answer my main research questions, I engaged eight students from grades 3 to 6 in informal interviews (*pakikipagkuwentuhan*) about reading. These students came from either public, private or state-funded laboratory schools. Depending on the flow of each conversation, the questions asked the students varied at times. Results indicate that both human and symbolic mediators work together to foster reading motivation among middle graders. These different mediators of reading motivation are the focus of this research. Implications for reading instruction may be gleaned from this study.

Keywords: reading motivation, human mediation, symbolic mediation, book agency

Introduction

The semester had just started when I asked one of our undergraduate practitioners how his class was. He was assigned to teach Communication Arts English to Grade 6 boys and girls in a school that had literature as its cornerstone from the early stages up to the latter ones. Our student's response was quite alarming. „They're okay, Teach[er]. There's only one problem – they do not like to read". Of course as a college teacher, working with both in-service and pre-service teachers who either teach or would eventually teach reading in basic education, that conversation stayed with me for some time and made me think. If a situation like that can occur in a place that prides itself for promoting a genuine love for reading among its students, a school where each lesson in Communication Arts is purported to start with the reading of a text and continue with engaging activities and in-depth discussions about the text that was read, I wonder how the situation could be for schools that do not have regular storytelling or story reading sessions with their students. How could we characterize the reading motivation of students whose only exposure to stories are textbooks that do not always contain authentic texts for students to enjoy reading? I ask these questions because I also get to go to a public school with college students who do reading intervention among second grade students with low reading abilities. In the case of these students, the question of reading motivation is part and parcel of the whole problem of learning reading skills. For if one does not know how to read, how can one be motivated to engage in the activity?

The problem of low motivation in reading and other literacy-related activities is not solely the burden of the reading teacher but of all content area teachers. For it cannot be denied that „literacy pervades most, if not all of the subjects taught from one's elementary through one's university years" (Salvador, 2012, p. 34). Rowe (1991, in Barnett & Irwin, 1994) believes that literacy is the key to lifelong learning, and as such, is an important educational goal. But how does one foster literacy? Developing the ability to read is certainly one of the major tasks that reading education specialists have to do in order to foster literacy. However, over and beyond teaching the skill, it is equally important to promote the will to read. Baker and Wigfield (1999) assert that since reading is „an effortful activity that children often can choose to do or not to do, it also requires motivation" (p. 452). In fact, it has been repeatedly seen in researches that a large number of students choose not to read even when they have already developed the ability to do so (Anderson et al., 1988; Campbell et al., 1997; Foertsch, 1992; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987, in Applegate & Applegate, 2004). It is evident then that more than just illiteracy, it is also alliteracy that reading educators and other content-area teachers have to con-

tend with. It is from this vantage point that I have chosen to undertake a study on reading motivation. I believe that this is a timely undertaking since as Unrau (2008) claims, reading motivation of middle and high school students is the „»dark hole« in research on reading” (p. 34).

Why is it important to do a research on reading motivation? Gambrell (2011) points out the exigency in focusing on motivation in order to support students to become „proficient, persistent, and passionate readers” (p. 177). In an earlier study, Gambrell (1996) makes the case for motivation as it is what makes the difference between „learning that is superficial and shallow and learning that is deep and internalized” (p. 15). What, then, is it that motivates young people to read? As a former preschool and elementary teacher and a graduate student taking up Reading Education, I have my own impressions of what makes children want to read. However, I feel that these ideas generated from years of working with children and more extensive studies on reading processes need to be backed up by actual children’s voices. In many instances, much of my understanding of what propels children to read is based on observations of their behavior during aloud reading, shared reading, and independent reading, their book choices during library period, as well as past interviews with children as to the books they choose to read. However, a lot of my understanding is inductive in nature. In this present study, I probed further into the different factors that contribute to the reading motivation of Filipino middle graders. It has to be noted, however, that the interviews were directed toward the reading of books. Alternative platforms for reading such as electronic texts were not included in this particular study since not all of my interviewees have access to such materials.

[Method

Interlocutors¹

In order to answer my main research questions, I engaged eight students from Grades 3 to 6 in informal interviews (*pakikipagkumentuhan*) about reading. These students came from one of the following types of learning institutions: public school, traditional private school, progressive private school or a state-funded laboratory school. Among the eight interviewees, there were two sets of siblings – two brothers and two sisters. Depending on the flow of each conversation, the questions I asked the students varied at times. It has to

¹ I have changed the names of my interlocutors for ethical purposes.

be noted that there were varying levels of familiarity between the student interviewees and me, their different personalities, as well as the apparent need of some of them to maintain social desirability, contributed to the variations in the conduct of the interviews. I believe however, that my almost two decades of teaching children has given me enough training in conversing with this age group and allowed me to probe further in order to elicit responses that accurately represented the interviewees' sentiments.

In addition to my interview with the students, I also got a chance to talk to two parents in order to help me clarify some of the information provided by the students during the interviews.

Research Locale

For purposes of convenience, I used various locations in the conduct of the study. I interviewed three of my eight child-interlocutors in the home of a friend and former colleague since she lived in the area where the children lived. The house was located in a community hidden from view by buildings that populated the place. In order to get to the locale, my former colleague – a one-time teacher aided in the school where I used to work in – met me at a nearby supermarket and walked around a kilometer stretch with me to her house. The community was one which was populated with people who were out in the streets even at night and it appears to be one where I could only go to with the presence of an insider. It was there were the three children, whose parents had earlier allowed to take part in the interview, waited for me. I conducted two other interviews in the college where I teach because of its proximity to the school of another two interviewees. Additionally, I met two children in a building that was likewise close to their respective schools. The last interview was done over the phone since the interviewee lived far from where I resided and where I held office.

Research Instruments

For my instruments, I used a self-constructed interview sheet that asked the following major questions to the students:

- 1) Do you like to read? Why or why not?,
- 2) What kinds of books do you like to read? Could you give me specific titles of books that you enjoyed?,
- 3) What about these books you did like?,
- 4) Who introduced you to these books?,
- 5) Do you like everything about reading? What, if any, don't you like about reading?,

- 6) Who encourages you to read?,
- 7) Are there ever moments when you get discouraged from reading?
What discourages you when reading?

While these were my basic interview questions, I interjected probing and clarificatory questions as the need arose. Such questions were made necessary if my interlocutor was too shy or too guarded to respond lengthily, was very much at ease and thus volunteered information that had not been asked but was likewise important in understanding the phenomenon under study or failed to comprehend the question when asked for the first time.

For the parents, I asked them if their children were avid readers or not and why they thought such was the case. I likewise inquired if they did something at home that might have encouraged their children to read. As with the children, I added probing and clarificatory questions as the need became apparent.

Procedure

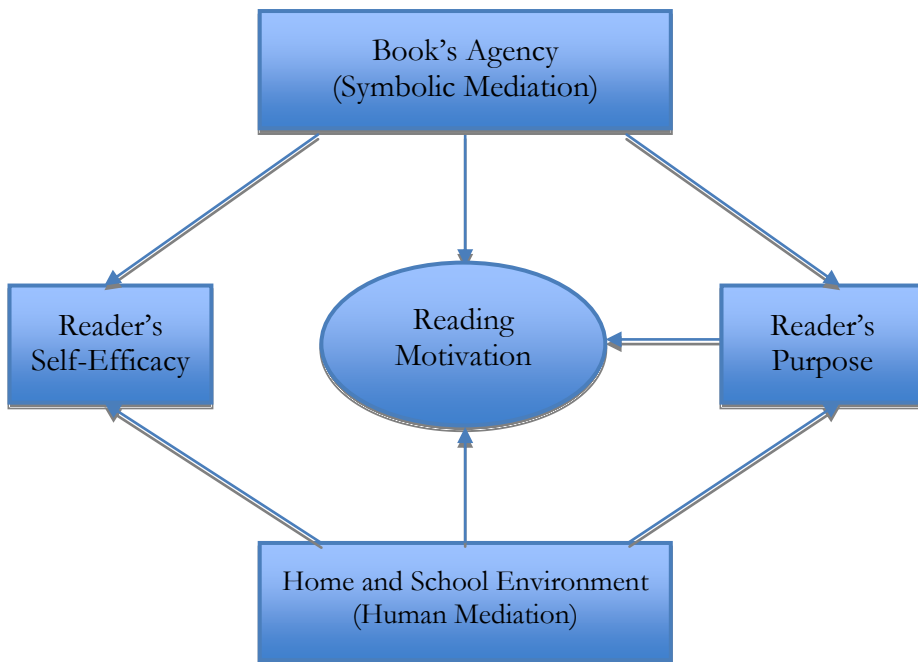
I started the study by securing permission from the parents of the students I intended to interview. Through either face-to-face communication or a text message, I was able to ask all of them in person except for two parents. For these two parents, it was a former colleague who lived in the same community as they who asked them if they were willing to have me interview their children for my study on reading. All the parents we asked consented. When I started talking to each of the students, I also made sure to secure the children's consent before asking any of my interview questions. I believed that it was not enough that their parents gave their „Yes” for their children. Because the children were my main respondents, I had to make sure that none of them was an unwilling participant. Thankfully, all of them agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted in a very casual, conversation-like manner, in what I believe was a friendly atmosphere. After having talked with all eight students, I asked to talk to two of the parents in order to clarify some of the information previously shared with me. Due to time constraints, the choice of these particular parents was done purely out of convenience.

Results and Discussion

The different responses given by my interlocutors lend credence to what Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) claim about reading motivation as being multifaceted. According to them, in any study of reading motivation, it is important to look into the following aspects of motivation: self-efficacy, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, reader's purpose, as well as social motivation. These different facets of motivation were seen in my interviews but more

than these factors existing in a vacuum, it is important to realize that they are mediated by structural forces that may either propel or constrain one towards the desired goal. One's motivation to read is mediated by factors that are both intrinsic and extrinsic to the child. In the interviews, it was seen that among the intrinsic factors that motivate one to read, self efficacy and the reader's purpose for reading seem to take center stage. However, it is important to remember that these intrinsic factors are likewise affected by extrinsic mediators which may either be human or symbolic (Kozulin, 2003). As Borgerson (2005) claim, „the agent initiates effects or causes things to happen in the world, often in interaction with other things and agents” (p. 442). In my study, it is worth noting that in addition to people who could either encourage or discourage one to pursue reading activities, inanimate objects such as the books that students either chose to or were required to read may also exercise agency in prompting children to read or demotivating them from pursuing the task. In this paper, I will pay particular attention to both the human and symbolic mediators that could affect children's reading motivation in the light of the different reader identities that I have seen in conversations with my eight child-interlocutors. A diagram of the factors that contribute to reading motivation and their interrelations may be seen below.

Figure 1. Diagram of the factors that contribute to reading motivation



Source: author's work

Home and School Environment: Human Mediation

Kozulin (2003) opines that in talking about human mediators to children's learning, it is important to ask what kind of involvement by the adult is effective in enhancing the child's performance (p. 19). In the case of my interlocutors, human mediation is also very much apparent in their reading motivation. Paeng, a Grade 5 boy studying in a state-funded laboratory school, mentioned receiving a book entitled *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* as a gift, although he did not consider this gesture as one which people do in order to encourage him to read books. However, his description of himself reading the book that was given to him and then reading the rest in the series („*May nagregalo sa akin... tapos tinuluy-tuloy ko na*”) seem to show that books given as gifts may motivate one to read the same such books. This is also substantiated by observations that the books mentioned by Mac, a Grade 5 boy studying in a traditional private school were books given to him as gifts.

Of course, it has to be said, that these books were carefully chosen by the people who gave them as gifts. In the case of Mac's mother, she would ask booksellers what their recommended titles were. Among the other books given to him were those that he might be able to relate to because of similar experiences with the characters, a book that was written in Cebuano – a local language that he was familiar with because his parents were both Cebuano speakers, and books that had a good storyline.

Siblings may also motivate one to read even though they do not explicitly tell each other to do so. Riel, a Grade 4 boy studying in a state-funded laboratory school and a brother to Paeng, mentioned wanting to read the longer version of Hardy Boys because his older brother was also reading it. So far, it is the Junior version of Hardy Boys with many pictures that Riel is able to read. He said that his older brother does not want him to read the thicker Hardy Boys just yet because he might forget what he has to do for school. Their mother confirmed that Riel indeed forgets to do his school work at times. She also concurred that the boys sometimes encourage each other to read especially if one of them is holding a book. However, it is mostly Paeng who chooses to get a book if he sees his brother holding a book more than the other way around.

Other than siblings, Jose, a boy who studies in a traditional private school, mentioned that seeing his friends read K-Zone – an activity magazine for children, enticed him to ask his parents to buy him the magazine. Clearly, in the case of Jose, Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) social motivation is a determinant in his choice to read particular texts. However, it is not purely the influence of friends that could propel one to read. Jose also mentioned the book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* as being one of his favorite books. According to him,

he saw the book in their school library, thought it looked funny and then borrowed it. It seems then, that beyond the influence of friends, there is something about the reading materials themselves that could entice children to read. In a latter section of this paper, I will be discussing what my interlocutors mentioned to be the defining properties of books that seem to motivate young readers to read them.

Aside from indirect encouragement like giving books as presents, modeling good reading behavior, and having a print-rich home or school environment there were also direct ways by which the people around them motivated children to read. Among my interlocutors, it was first and foremost that their parents who encouraged them to read through verbal enticements. The reasons their parents gave for encouraging them to read is quite varied, though. Renzo, a Grade 5 boy who studies in a public school mentioned that his mother tells him to read so that he will become a good reader when he grows up („*Magbasa ka palagi para paglaki mo marunong ka nang magbasa*”). The same is true for Jan-Jan, a Grade 3 girl studying in a public school, who said that her parents tell her to read so she will learn how to read („*Magbasa ka... para matutong magbasa*”). Ru-Ann who is a Grade 5 student studying in a public school mentioned that her mother tells her to read well. When asked why she thinks her mother tells her to read well, she said that her mother tells her that if she does not know how to read well, she will not be able to speak well („...*pag hindi ka marunong magbasa, hindi ka makakasalita nang maayos*”). In addition to that, Ru-Ann also mentioned being instructed by both her mother and her older brother to read out loud to her younger sister, Jan-Jan. This is for her to be able to pass on to her younger sister what she has learned from her older brother when he used to read to her.

Just like the three children Mac also mentioned his mother as one of the people who directly motivates him to read. She does this by telling him to read in order to pass an upcoming test or to learn something new. For Jose, it was his parents who tell him to read because reading is good („*Maganda yung reading*”). When asked further why his parents say that reading is good, he said that it gives one „extra knowledge”. Riel, on the other hand, said that it is only school-related reading materials that his mother encourages him to read because he might forget to do what he was supposed to do for school.

Aside from their parents, teachers could also be quite explicit in telling children to read. Mac, for instance, talked about his teacher who tells the class to read in English so that they will learn something. He added that she also reminds him to read in English so he will not have much difficulty in the spoken language. Mac admitted to having a difficult time in comprehending English texts and to speaking in Taglish (a mixture of Tagalog and English)

in the classroom. Renzo said that their teacher tells them to read books whenever they bring these to school. He said that this helps his teacher not lose her voice („...*magbasa na lang daw kami kasi nauubos ang boses niya*”). Tessa, a Grade 6 student who studies in a progressive elementary school also named her teachers, both in the lower elementary and the upper elementary, as encouraging her to „Read, read, read!”. She did not mention any particular reason why her teachers tell her to read. However, for Tessa, she does not really need to be told particular reasons why one must read. Among my eight interlocutors, Tessa showed the most motivation for reading even as she said that she was not as voracious as she was in her early grades anymore.

It is noteworthy that for the parents and teachers who explicitly tell their wards to read, the instrumental purpose of reading is given primacy compared to the fun and enjoyment one might derive from it. These directives certainly affect their purpose for reading. While these adults might be on to something when they coax children to read as those who do more recreational reading „show better development in reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary” (Krashen, 2004, p. 1), it has to be noted that conditions have to be right for direct encouragement to work (Krashen, 2009). By this it is meant that adults „use zero or minimum accountability..., there is compelling reading material available, and enough reading competence” (p. 3). Except for Tessa whose teachers did not state a specific reason for enticing her to read. The other interlocutors mentioned that reading was being advocated by the adults around them for a range of academic benefits that it might serve them. This seems to coincide with Rosenblatt’s (1985, in Unrau, 2008) observation that teachers (which may include the children’s parents as their first teachers) overemphasize the information that the reader would take away from the reading situation while relegating the enjoyment that one might experience from it into the background. While this may help develop the skill to read and comprehend it may reduce the pleasure that is derived from reading.

Notwithstanding the fact that most of the parents of the interviewees are quite direct when telling their children to read, Paeng mentioned that no one explicitly instructs him to read. However, his choice to read Hardy Boys was indirectly influenced by his mother and father who talked about reading Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys as children. My interview with their mother lends support to Paeng’s words. She also said that when she used to teach in kindergarten, she brought her children with her to the classroom. They borrowed the books she read in school afterwards. According to her, her second son, Riel, used to become interested in the books that he knew she taught in her kindergarten classroom. She likewise said that they had family days when they „dropped everything and read”. This shows that in their particular situation,

it was not directives from her and her husband that got her children to choose to read. It was actually her modeling the reading behavior that enticed them to read. This should remind adults that sometimes it is in doing more than the telling that one motivates children to read. However, it is worth noting that one's way of motivating children to read would still vary as each child is different. For instance, while Paeng and Riel's mother does not need to tell her older son to read, she needs to be more explicit with her younger son and „identify what would motivate him (so that I can) link it to something he likes to do”.

Book Agency: Symbolic Mediation

Kozulin believed that in addition to human mediators, it is also important to ask if changes in the child's performance can be brought about by the introduction of symbolic tools – mediators (2003). In fact, Miller (2011) talked about how we can often gain a more profound understanding of people if we take the vicarious route of paying attention to the way the rich and diverse world of objects expresses, frames and socializes relationships' (p. 1). Books may be seen as inanimate objects but my interviews with my eight child-interlocutors made me affirm my belief that books are nonetheless powerful. A single book has the capacity to either motivate children to pick it up and start the reading process or discourage them from even browsing through its pages. As such, books are very instrumental in creating reader's identity. That is probably why publishers like Adarna House make sure that their kids test both the text and the illustrations before rendering a story in book form. This means that they read the texts and show possible illustrations of the texts to children in different schools – both private and public – in order to observe children's reactions and note down their feedback (Almario, 2014). These reactions are very crucial to the final outcome of the book.

In my interview with the mother of Paeng and Riel, she mentioned that Riel once expressed hope that they get assigned a good book for their home reading requirement when he said „*Sana yung HRR yung magandang libro naman*” („I hope our next Home Reading Requirement will be a good book this time”). This seemingly safe comment seems to indicate that they are not always assigned good books to read. This seems consonant with Riel's and Paeng's responses on separate interviews where they mentioned two specific books that they both did not like. Further probing during those interviews revealed that the books they mentioned were both part of their home reading requirement. It shows that book agency is also mediated by human actors, from those who produce the books to those who purchase the books for consumption. For a lot of children especially in traditional school set-ups, it is the adults around them who usually choose the books that they are to read.

However, as Nilsen, Peterson and Searfoss (1980, in Galda, Ash, and Cullinan, 2000) had found, there was „a definite negative correlation between books that received critical acclaim by adults and books that were popular with children” (p. 368). This exploratory study into the types of books that either encourage or discourage children to read should provide valuable information to adults regarding their choice of books for home or classroom use. In the next subsections, I will talk about the defining properties of books that animate their agency as informed by my conversations with child-interlocutors. I have divided these properties into five subcategories namely: illustrations, font styles, language, words, and content.

Illustrations

Illustrations seem to figure prominently in the choice of reading materials by two of my child-interlocutors. Riel mentioned that he only liked reading when his reading material had pictures. This was because pictures help him visualize the story and thus make him understand what he was reading. Coincidentally, Riel is a very good artist. He draws and paints better than most children his age. The books he identified as forming part of his favorite books are Big Nate and the Junior version of Hardy Boys. Both book series are replete with pictures that help him make sense of what he reads. Mac also talked about liking books with illustrations as they allowed him to easily imagine the characters. In particular, he liked characters who were portrayed as always smiling. He said that such illustrations made him happy whenever he was sad („...*nakakasaya rin kapag malungkot ka... parang natutuwa ka rin...*”). In addition to this, he only preferred illustrations with color. Without color he felt that reading becomes boring. In particular, he talked about a book which his classmate lent him where the black and white illustrations show characters who were frowning. According to him, this usually elicits a frown from the reader and diminishes the happiness that one might get from reading („*nakasimangot lang, walang kulay tapos parang... nasisimangot ka na rin... parang hindi ka na masyadong masayang magbasa*”). Mac really appeared to like books with pictures and he goes as far as drawing on a book without pictures so that it is not only words that he sees („...*Para hindi lang puro salita ang nakikita ko*”). Jose mentioned that he liked books with illustrations on every page as this helps him understand the humor in what he reads. He mentioned an experience of reading Geronimo Stilton and not really understanding everything because it does not have pictures in every page. Paeng, for his part mentioned that he liked book covers that made him wonder what the book was all about. He wanted to see more covers that stoked one’s curiosity. All these seem to indicate that contrary to what some adults think that colorful

picture books are only for a younger audience, even children in the middle grades still appreciate illustrations because of both cognitive and affective benefits such books may afford them.

Font Type

Among my eight child-interlocutors, it was only Mac who mentioned something very significant about font type. He said he did not like it when the book he had to read only had words because there are some parts which he is unable to read. He also mentioned that some of the letters are too close to each other („*dikit-diki*”), some are slanted („*nakatabingi*”), while others are straight. He said that when words are slanted, he does not understand them as much. He also said that such slanted words make you feel like a robot that is being controlled because you would have to move your head sideways in order to read them. When he said this, he could have been talking about words in italics or words written in script. It could likewise be poor eyesight which merits further testing. Also, Mac mentioned that these slanted words are often English words that are placed in the context of a Filipino text. A question then arises then is whether it is the type of the letters or the language used with certain words that causes the difficulty in comprehension.

Language

The choice of the language in which texts are written figured prominently in the responses of the child interlocutors living in an economically disadvantaged area. Jan-Jan, for instance, said that she reads Filipino texts because these are easy to read („...*kasi madaling basabin*”). While she also affirmed that she was a good reader, she said that she read well in Filipino. She said that Filipino was easier to utter („...*madaling bigkasin ng bibig*”) compared to English. Aside from the fact that Filipino has a transparent orthography that allows one to easily sound out the letters in order to decode words, meanings are also more readily uncovered in a language that is familiar to the reader. This was supported by Mac’s anecdote of him readily raising his hand whenever it was time for their Filipino subject because it is easier to understand texts in that language. He likewise mentioned wanting to garner as many recitation points as he could in the subject where he felt more able.

Alternatively, Ru-Ann mentioned that she liked reading in English because once you are already working, when people speak to you in English, you will readily be able to respond. When asked how she knew this, she said her mother told her. Mac talked about a book which he did not like not only because it was „boring”, but because it had English words that he could not

understand. Mac, however, is not averse to learning a new language. He especially liked reading picture storybooks written in Cebuano – a major Philippine language spoken by some people from the Visayan regions because it made him feel good that he learned a new language („*Parang ang sarap kasi may natututunan kang ibang lengguwahe*”). It has to be noted, however, that even though Cebuano was „ibang lengguwahe” to him, it is not really that foreign because it is the language of his parents. In fact, Mac mentioned that whenever he did not understand what he read in those particular books written in the spoken Visayan language he asked for help from his parents and they were able to provide him with answers. In an interview with his mother, she manifested happiness that Mac was able to appreciate the Visayan language. I believe that for this mother who readily admitted that her Grade 5 son’s reading comprehension was better than hers, this experience was also quite empowering. Providing the meaning of Visayan words may have been liberating for parents like her, who, though they are not too familiar with English, can still answer literature-related questions posed by their children. These findings about a more positive response among children towards books that were written in a language that was familiar to them lends support to the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) that is a key feature of the K-12 reforms instituted in the Philippine public school systems.

Words

It is not only the language of the text which animates the book’s agency. Even the words used in a book may either make a child want to read it or not. As Mac attested, he liked texts that he easily understood irrespective of the language used. But he gets discouraged when he finds texts too difficult to understand. He said that when he does not understand a text, it is like his brain expands and he really fails to understand no matter how many times he reads it. Then he mentioned that when he is unable to comprehend, he does not get a grade from his teacher („*Kasi sabi ng teacher intindihin mo daw yun... pero hindi ko talaga... parang lumalaki na yung utak ko... tapos hindi ko talaga maisip kahit ilang beses ko na basahin... tapos wala na akong grade*”).

In separate interviews, both Riel and Paeng mentioned *The Time Machine* as figuring in their list of least liked books. Paeng said that the information in the story was difficult to understand and that at a certain point he could not remember the story anymore. Riel’s response affirmed his brother’s observation when he said that there were many words in the book which he did not understand. According to him, some of these words were from the future – sort of like make-believe words which he needed to remember for a quiz. Tessa, for her part, mentioned having chosen to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* for her book

report. She said she wanted to challenge herself to do a book report on a classic but got discouraged at first when reading that book most probably because it was a book report and she did not find the main theme easily.

From the aforementioned, it therefore seems very important for teachers to remember that while books in themselves may already cause children to want to read or not, this is something that is sometimes compounded by what they do or do not do in the classroom. Giving quizzes in order to test if children retained information may not always work to endear certain books to children. An efferent stance in reading may not be the best stance to take if one's purpose is to develop children who love to read. This is even made more taxing if the words children are expected to remember are very unfamiliar words and the teacher does nothing to help them figure out these words. Another example of what teachers do in the classroom that could demotivate children to read is when they ask the latter to read out loud, especially when the text was written in a language that is foreign to them. When asked how this made him feel, Mac said that he gets embarrassed at first, and then irritated because his classmates laugh at him whenever he makes mistakes in reading („*Nabibiya, tapos naiinis kasi yung classmates ko kapag nagkamali ako ng basa, pagtatawanan ako*”). In effect the interaction between the book's agency and that of human mediators may cause one to feel less self-efficacious in reading a text. Such a lowering of one's feeling of self-efficacy may disincentivize a student from reading.

Content

In my study, the content of the reading material was highlighted by my child-interlocutors as either motivating them to read or not. It is worth noting, however, that among the children I interviewed, there seemed to be a division between the content chosen by those coming from the public schools and those from the private schools. When the child-interlocutors who studied in public schools were asked about the kinds of books they liked to read, they immediately mentioned subject matters like Filipino, English, Science, and Hekasi (i.e., Heograpiya, Kasaysayan, Sibika or Geography, History, Civics), or topics under the said content areas such as electricity, respiratory system, and presidents. This seems to point to the likelihood that aside from textbooks, they have a dearth of reading materials at home. They also talked about themes and moral lessons that could be derived from stories that they read from their textbooks. For instance, Renzo said that he liked a book he read from his reading textbook because the older characters always helped each other („*...nagtutulungan po sila palagi...*”) while the younger characters were respectful. He also mentioned liking a story where a punishment was

inflicted on a character who did not obey what was commanded to him. Ru-Ann also mentioned a particular story where the burning of leaves led to the blackening of the clouds. When asked why she liked the story, however, she seemed to have arrived at the wrong conclusion because she said it taught her not to burn leaves first so that it will not rain („*Kasi po natuto ako na buwag munang sunugin yung dahon para hindi umulan*”). She indicated that she read the story in English. At this point it should likewise be mentioned that when asked for particular titles of either books which they liked or did not like, these children were mostly unable to mention any, save for *Toy Story* and *Aladin*, which Renzo mentioned as having watched.

In contrast to the child-interlocutors from the public schools, those from the private schools readily stated titles of books that they liked. Book, comic, and magazine titles that were mentioned include *Hardy Boys*, *Big Nate*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *When Zero Left Numberland*, *Si Kaliwa*, *Si Kanan*, *Si Kindat*, *Si Kurap*, *at si Pikit*, *When Color Came to Town*, *Emma*, *Harry Potter*, *Percy Jackson*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Little Women*, *Little Men*, *The Almanac*, *Ben Ten*, and *K-Zone*. Those that they did not like include *The Time Machine*, *Rabbit Hill*, and *Huckleberry Finn*. These children were likewise easily able to pinpoint the properties of texts they preferred, as well as texts they did not show any preference for. Jose, Paeng, and Riel all enjoyed books that were funny, action-laden, and those that contained challenges, adventure, mystery, and magic. On the other hand, they did not like boring, sleep-inducing books where nothing much happens. Tessa talked about her changing genre preferences as she grew older. She also mentioned how finding a book in a particular genre interesting propelled her to read books in the same genre. Alternately, starting uninteresting books in a particular genre may demotivate one from picking up another book in the same genre or by the same author. Paeng stated how much he liked books where there was fighting but where the good always triumphed and the protagonist was empowered to correct misfortunes dealt to her by the antagonist. He also liked titles that evoked wonder and curiosity. Jose and Riel also showed preference for books that contained facts and trivia. Mac mentioned liking a particular book before but constant exposure to it either through re-readings or watching it being played on the television made him lose interest in it. From his description, it seemed that there were books that we actually outgrow.

The child-interlocutors from private schools talked about themes in the books they liked to read. These include helping even those who are not your friends, being united in order to thwart the evil plans of antagonists, the good teaming up to battle evil forces, and justice reigning triumphant. Some of them, like Mac and Tessa, also gave text-to-self connections. Texts that in-

volved the reader by mirroring their experiences and eliciting emotions may either encourage or discourage students from reading them. For instance, when Mac mentioned the book *When Zero Left Numberland*, he was on the verge of tears because he recalled a time in his life when he felt like the main character, Zero, who was ostracized by his friends because he was nothing. Relating to the book *Si Kalina, Si Kanan*, he talked about how losing something very important can make one feel very weak if he cannot find it („...*kapag nawalan ka ng importanteng bagay... nanghahina ka... kapag hindi mo mahanap*”). He said this insight was based on observations of other people who have lost something so precious. Tessa, on the other hand, talked about how being able to relate too much to the stories she reads was a problem for her. She said she gets embarrassed at how some characters behave and that sometimes she „would like to run away because I don’t want to be that way”. She mentioned how much she disliked stereotypes of males and females that are portrayed in the books that she gets to read. That is also why she preferred reading classic romances where she felt the characterization was more balanced. She also talked about liking books with very good descriptions of the setting. She said this in relation to her lament that she was not too good at describing the worlds she creates in the stories that she writes. In relation to this, Tessa felt that her reading of particular books helps her hone her writing skills.

Summary and Conclusion

Reading motivation is indeed a multi-faceted phenomenon which is negotiated by both human and symbolic mediators. Among the people who were found to affect middle school children’s disposition to engage in reading activities are one’s parents, siblings, friends, and teachers. These people may motivate children to read through explicit means like when they tell them to read for the different cognitive benefits that such a behavior would bring about. There are instances, however, when modeling the desired behavior, either by engaging in reading tasks with their children, personally reading a book as in the case of an older brother, or talking about books that they liked as children, is enough to encourage young people to read. However, it is notable in the interviews I conducted with middle graders, that more explicit means of motivating children to read was done by parents coming from an economically disadvantaged community. These parents also focused on a more instrumental view of reading in that they tell their children to read in order to learn particular skills or to gain knowledge. Such directives from adults affect the purpose that children set when reading texts. It is unfortunate that a more aesthetic stance in reading where readers are allowed to ex-

perience the piece through the language used, the emotions evoked, and the enjoyment engendered by particular reading materials is sometimes set aside for a more efferent, information-driven reading of texts.

It is striking to see that among the interlocutors, the most motivated reader did not mention anything about her parents pushing her to read. In fact, from the interactions I have had with their family I have seen that it is the child who pushes herself to go the extra mile in her reading and her studies. There were even times when her own parents tell her to take it easy in her studies. This might be a worthwhile area of future investigation since it would be interesting to find out how children are reared to be intrinsically motivated readers. Many parents and teachers will certainly learn something from a study of self-motivated readers.

In addition to human mediation, reading motivation is likewise symbolically mediated by the agency of the book or the reading material that children encounter. Book agency can either build or cripple the capacities of child-readers. The different book properties that animate its agency may be subcategorized into the following: 1) illustrations, 2) font type, 3) words, 4) language, and 5) content. These book properties work together to bring about either a pleasurable or a painful reading experience in the way they mediate or muddle comprehension and enjoyment whenever children read. This is an important finding in that it could inform groups of people who are involved in the production and purchase of reading materials for children and those who use these with children as to what book/text properties will work together in motivating middle graders to read. At the same time, it might be worth looking into the other kinds of reading materials that could either motivate or demotivate children to pursue the reading task.

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Czytać albo nie czytać: dzieci mówią o swojej motywacji do czytania

ABSTRAKT: Rozwój chęci czytania jest ważną, choć czasami zaniedbywaną kwestią w rozwijaniu umiejętności czytania wśród dzieci. Na podstawie badań nad motywacją do czytania przeprowadzonych przez Wigfielda i Guthrie (1997) można stwierdzić, że motywacja do czytania zakorzeniona jest w przekonaniach, celach i składnikach społecznych oraz teorii czytelnictwa zaproponowanej przez Rosenblatt (1994), która wyróżnia postawy, jakie czytelnik przyjmuje podczas procesu czytania. Badania Krashena (2004 i 2009) nad warunkami optymalnego dobrowolnego czytania oraz badania Millera (2011) nad istotno-

To Read Or Not To Read...

ścią obiektów, które mogłyby budować lub paraliżować zdolności uczniów, wpływają na poniższą analizę, gdyż bada ona czynniki, które oddziałują na motywację do czytania wśród uczniów szkół średnich. Chcąc odpowiedzieć na postawione przeze mnie pytania badawcze zaprosiłam ośmiu uczniów w wieku 8–12 lat na nieformalne wywiady na temat czytania. Wybrani uczniowie pochodzili z publicznych, prywatnych lub finansowanych przez region szkół. W zależności od toku każdej z rozmów pytania zadawane uczniom były zróżnicowane. Przedmiotem moich badań są różni pośrednicy motywacji czytelniczych, zarówno symboliczni, jak i ludzie, ponieważ wyniki pokazały, że wspierają oni motywację do czytania wśród uczniów w wieku 8–12 lat. Przedstawiona analiza może być źródłem instrukcji jak czytać.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: motywacja czytelnicza, ludzkie pośrednictwo, symboliczne pośrednictwo, agencja książkowa