

Acceptability of Big Books as Mother Tongue-based Reading Materials in Bulusan Dialect

Asia Pacific Journal of
Multidisciplinary Research
Vol. 3 No. 4, 17-23
November 2015 Part IV
P-ISSN 2350-7756
E-ISSN 2350-8442
www.apjmr.com

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Date Received: September 26, 2015; Date Revised: October 27, 2015

Abstract - Several studies have proven the superiority of using mother tongue in improving the pupils' performance. Research results revealed that using a language familiar to the pupils facilitates reading, writing and learning new concepts. However, at present, teachers are confronted with the insufficiency of instructional materials written in the local dialect and accepted by the end-users as possessing the qualities that could produce the desired learning outcomes. This descriptive evaluative research was conducted to address this problem. It determined the level of acceptability of the six researcher-made big books as mother tongue-based reading materials in Bulusan dialect for Grade 1 pupils. The big books were utilized by 11 Grade 1 teachers of Bulusan District to their pupils and were evaluated along suitability and appropriateness of the materials, visual appeal and quality of the story using checklist and open-ended questionnaire. Same materials were assessed by eight expert jurors. Findings showed that the big books possessed the desired qualities that made them very much acceptable to the Grade 1 teachers and much acceptable to the expert jurors. The comments and suggestions of the respondents served as inputs in the enhancement and revision of the six big books.

Keywords: Education, acceptability level, big books, mother tongue, reading materials, Bulusan dialect, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Language is essential in any human undertaking more so in the teaching and learning process. People communicate their thoughts, feelings, and concepts via language. It is an integral component in the teaching learning process and in the cognitive development of children. Learners listen and participate actively using a familiar language. However, it was only recently when the issue on the medium of instruction used in school has caught the attention of educators, legislators, and government officials. It was only lately when people involved in the education and in the performance of the learners realize that language used is one of the reasons for the poor quality of education or teaching effectiveness [1].

Using the native language facilitates learning of new concepts including second language learning. It is easier for him to learn how to read and write as well as to learn concepts in academic subjects including

other languages. Thus, it is more advantageous if the familiar language is used in the early years of the child's educational programs. This enables them to acquire early reading skills faster than using a foreign language [1].

Language professionals claim that in the early years of development, learning is more facilitated when the language used is similar to that which is spoken by family members in their home. When students know the language, learning to read is most efficient. Learning to communicate through writing is facilitated as soon as they become familiar with the orthographic rules (or other written) system of language [2].

Tuy [3] also claims that pupils who learn to read and write in the mother tongue before learning another language are more successful second language learners and excel more quickly as compared to those who did not become literate in their first language. This is also supported by Benson [4] who asserts that

when students know the language, learning to read is most efficient. She also revealed the results of her study that there is positive correlation between the use of the native language in school and female participation and achievement in learning; that the used of vernacular in teaching has a strong pedagogical and social implication.

Furthermore, those children who were taught effectively using their mother tongue perform better in school; thus become literate to that language. On the other hand, children who used a second language find difficulty in their formative years of schooling. Learners who are exposed to two or more language during their primary years in school tend to be more proficient in the use of those languages [5].

Several other studies have proven the superiority in the use of the learners' mother tongue which paved the way for the country's initiative to change the elementary curriculum through DepEd Order No. 74 s. 2009 known as *Institutionalizing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MLE)*. [6] However, this move is confronted with some challenges. One of which is the negative attitude of Grades 1 to 3 teachers due to the unavailability of reading materials written in the learners' home language or first language of the immediate community.

Hence, because of this insufficiency of materials written in the native language, a collaborative research was conducted in 2013 by Ocbian [7], a professor of Sorsogon State College the School of Graduate Studies with her students (who are Grade 1 teachers of DepEd). They developed three big books written in Bulusan (Sorsogon) dialect as reading materials in teaching reading to Grade 1 pupils. These materials were also utilized by other teachers in their district and have noted that their pupils were interested in the lessons using the mother tongue-based reading materials. This has inspired the researchers to develop addition three books. However, after developing the said materials, there is a need to determine their acceptability to the end-users and to find ways to improve their quality.

DepEd Order No. 90 series of 2011 [8] enumerates the types of learning materials that can be developed and these include story books in big and small book formats; Strickland and Morrow also discuss that a big book can be one of the learning materials to develop using pupils' native language. Because of their size, big books attract children to read due of the bigger prints and illustrations [9] and

enhances their interest in reading [10]. Makofsky also believes in the relevance of using books in the classroom and posits that big books are an excellent learning tool because they can feature type that is easy for beginning readers to follow and illustrations that are large or detailed [11].

Meanwhile along instructional material, Espinosa stressed that IM is an important tool in the process of learning. It does not only enhance knowledge, thinking and problem solving skills of learners but also enables them to achieve the learning objectives effectively and interestingly. Thus, wise and creative thinking of the teacher is advised to provide exciting ways to present visual that enhances learning [12].

In writing big books for children, illustrations play a very important role. The bright and colorful drawings attract children to read the printed materials and listen while the story is being read to them [13]. Thus, in making illustrations, it bright and happy colors that are appealing to children should be used [14]. To make illustrations simple, only very important scenes should be included since children have very limited attention span [15]. Hence, Mengel [16] asserts that certain considerations must be followed in designing IMS in order that they will become acceptable to the users and can be a potent means of achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Several studies on the acceptability of various Instructional materials were also reviewed. The study of Larawan on *Acceptability of Teacher-Made Modules in Production Management* was evaluated as very satisfactory by the expert jurors and student-users along certain indicators like physical aspects, objectives, learning activities and evaluation procedures. [17] Also, de Leon and Estrabo's study looked into the effectiveness and acceptability of HERO instructional flipchart with teachers handbook in science and health education for elementary and high school [18].

Similarly, Davidove and Reiser did a comparative study on the acceptability and effectiveness of teacher-revised and designer-revised instructional material. Results revealed that the former was as effective as latter and more effective than original version; however it was not more acceptable to teachers. It also showed that the designer revised material had higher level of effectiveness than the original version, yet the original materials were more acceptable to teachers [19].

This present study is quite similar with this one since it also determined the acceptability level of IMs to teachers and expert jurors and it came up with revised edition of the material. All these literatures and studies have given the researchers direction in the conduct of this present research undertaking.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the level of acceptability of the six teacher-made big books as mother tongue-based reading materials in Bulusan dialect for Grade 1 pupils as rated by Grade 1 teachers and expert jurors. Specifically, it aimed to determine the level of acceptability of the said IMs in terms of suitability or appropriateness of the materials to the pupils, physical aspect or visual appeal and quality of the story; and to solicit comments and suggestions from the respondents to serve as inputs for the improvement and revision of the big books

METHODS

The descriptive-evaluative method was used in this study since it assessed and described the acceptability level of the reading materials. The questionnaire was the main instrument used to determine the level of acceptability along: a) suitability/appropriateness of the materials to the pupils, b) physical aspect or visual appeal, and c) quality of the story.

Eleven Grade 1 teachers of Bulusan District and eight expert jurors were the respondent-evaluators who were selected purposively. The eight expert jurors are: the chairman of the Quality Assurance, Monitoring, Evaluation and Accreditation (QAMEA) team of Sorsogon City District, two elementary school principals, one master teacher, and an English teacher of Sorsogon City District. Another three experts are professors of SSC – two of whom are pursuing their doctoral degrees in Literature and in Language, and one is an expert in drawings or illustrations.

The respondents provided both the quantitative and qualitative ratings. These served as valuable inputs in the enhancement of the quality and acceptability level of the big books in the revision process. The qualitative inputs are the comments and suggestions given by the respondents in response to the open-ended questions found after giving their qualitative rating per variable of acceptability. On the other hand, the quantitative rating along the level of acceptability was described using the five-point

Likert scale: Very much acceptable (with superior quality); Much acceptable (with above average standard quality); Acceptable (with average standard and acceptability); Less Acceptable (with fair standard and minimum acceptability); and Not acceptable (with poor standard and unacceptable quality).

The first set of data gathering was done from January to March 2014 with the utilization of the six books by the Grade 1 teachers to their pupils as reading materials. After every use, the teacher respondents evaluated the big books and passed them on to the next until all the 11 teachers have finished using the six books. Since there is only one set of materials, the evaluation by the expert jurors was conducted last April to May, 2014 after all the Grade 1 teachers are done with their utilization and evaluation. Frequency count and mean were used to analyze the qualitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Level of acceptability of big books along suitability or appropriateness

Big books	Teachers		Expert Jurors	
	WM	VI	WM	VI
<i>Si Mam Mara</i>	4.86	VMA	4.35	MA
<i>An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde</i>	4.78	VMA	4.25	MA
<i>Si Benyang nan an Basura</i>	4.71	VMA	4.12	MA
<i>Si Kikay-Kiyaw</i>	4.78	VMA	4.17	MA
<i>Si Pot-Pukot nan si Piwe Pusiw</i>	4.67	VMA	3.82	MA
<i>An Palaka na si Kokak-Pokak</i>	4.53	VMA	4.05	MA
Mean Rating	4.72	VMA	4.12	MA

WM-Weighted Mean; VI-Verbal Interpretation; VMA – Very Much Acceptable; MA – Much Acceptable;

The acceptability level of the six big books was determined using indicators along suitability or appropriateness, physical aspect or visual appeal, and quality of the story. Suitability or appropriateness was rated along appeal to pupils' interest, suitability to pupils' level of mental ability, appropriateness of length to sustain pupils' interest and attention, vocabulary and sentence structure to pupils' level of linguistic and communicative competence, and appropriateness of the central idea or theme to the pupils' level of experience and understanding.

Presented in table 1 are the ratings on the six big books by the two groups of respondents along suitability or appropriateness. It shows that the mean rating of teachers is 4.72 described as very much acceptable, and 4.12 by the expert jurors interpreted as much acceptable.

This implies that as reading materials, the teachers find the big books written in Bulusan dialect as very much appropriate to the level of the pupils' interest, experience and understanding, and mental ability. Teachers' ratings of the IMs ranged from 4.53 to 4.86 wherein the books entitled, *Si Mam Mara*, *An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde*, and *Si Kikay Kiyaw* got the first and second highest ratings, respectively.

The high ratings may be attributed to the fact that most of the authors of the said materials are themselves Grade 1 teachers. Besides, the stories are easier understood since they are written in the mother tongue. Benson [4] claimed that the use of a familiar language is an important factor that contributes to the pupils' level of understanding. She further stated that using first language encourages active participation and natural interaction between the learners and the teacher which is necessary for a learner's cognitive and linguistic development.

Having taught Grade 1 pupils for a number of years, the 11 teacher respondents are knowledgeable enough on the type of reading materials that are appropriate and appealing to their pupils. On the other hand, a mean rating of 4.12 by the expert jurors denotes that these materials are highly acceptable. The ratings ranged from 3.82 to 4.35 wherein the books, *Si Mam Mara* and *An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde* still got the two highest ratings of 4.35 and 4.25, respectively. Although the ratings given by the expert jurors were a little bit lower than those of the Grade 1 teachers, yet this is still considered very high. This implies that the vocabulary and sentence structures are appropriate to the pupils' level of linguistic and communicative competence and the themes of the stories are appropriate to the pupils' level of experience and understanding.

A study on Personality Development and Public Relations of Lanuza [22] was considered as much effective by teachers and students since the subject matters are appealing. It was further stressed that IMs whose topics are of interest to the learners greatly contribute to their performance and make learning easier and permanent.

Table 2. Level of acceptability of big books along visual appeal

Big books	Teachers		Expert Jurors	
	WM	VI	WM	VI
<i>Si Mam Mara</i>	4.89	VMA	4.28	MA
<i>An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde</i>	4.90	VMA	4.14	MA
<i>Si Benyang nan an Basura</i>	4.86	VMA	4.27	MA
<i>Si Kikay-Kiyaw</i>	4.83	VMA	4.02	MA
<i>Si Pot-Pukot nan si Piwe Pusiw</i>	4.84	VMA	4.25	MA
<i>An Palaka na si Kokak-Pokak</i>	4.83	VMA	4.25	MA
Mean Rating	4.86	VMA	4.23	MA

This variable was rated in terms of the illustrations in the cover and in the inside pages. Shown in Table 2 is the summary of ratings. Teacher respondents gave the big books a very remarkable mean rating of 4.86 interpreted as very much acceptable. Five big books were given a perfect rating of 5.0 on some indicators by respondents. Likewise, appeal to pupils' interest got the highest mean rating of 4.97 among the indicators.

This data means that the illustrator is skillful enough to interpret and draw pictures which appeal and capture the pupils' interest to read the story. Although he barely had a couple of weeks to write the text and draw the illustrations of the six big books, yet he was able to perform his task well.

On the other hand, the expert jurors' rating along physical aspect is lower than that of the teachers' rating. It is reflected in the same table that the big books are much acceptable along the indicators as shown by their mean rating of 4.23 which implies that the illustrations are simple, clear, and easy to understand. Three indicators got the same rating of 4.27 on: the concepts presented, appeal to pupils' interest, and aid in pupils' understanding of the story.

The lowest rating on visual appeal was on balance and harmony (4.02) since drawings are not spread on the entire illustration pages as per comment of some respondents. Wright [15] asserts that drawings in big books are necessary since they attract the child's attention, even if he is not yet ready to read the words. He said that bright colors, appealing characters and expressions serve as motivators for the young and the adult to discuss the meaning of the story.

Acceptability level along quality of the story is presented in Table 3. Similarly, the teachers gave the big books a very high mean rating of 4.87 which was interpreted as very much acceptable in terms of

quality of the story while the jurors gave 4.27 mean rating or much acceptable. The books got very high ratings of 4.97 each on two indicators: *it inculcates values* and *Filipino culture and awareness of the environment* with the four big books getting perfect ratings of 5.0 each. Likewise, three got perfect ratings on *it relate to and reflect real-life situation*.

Table 3. Ratings on the level of acceptability of big books along quality of the story

Big books	Teachers		Expert Jurors	
	WM	VI	WM	VI
<i>Si Mam Mara</i>	4.88	VMA	4.42	MA
<i>An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde</i>	4.90	VMA	4.31	MA
<i>Si Benyang nan an Basura</i>	4.86	VMA	4.27	MA
<i>Si Kikay-Kiyaw</i>	4.80	VMA	4.14	MA
<i>Si Pot-Pukot nan si Piwe Pusiw</i>	4.86	VMA	4.25	MA
<i>An Pakla na si Kokak-Pokak</i>	4.90	VMA	4.27	MA
Mean Rating	4.87	VMA	4.27	MA

This very high level of acceptability may be attributed to the Filipino values and culture which were reflected in the stories. Values like respect for elders manifested by kissing the hands are reflected in the stories of *An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde*, *May Kuwarta sa Basura*. Concern for the welfare of others are shown in *Si Mam Mara* and in *Si Pot Pukot*; *humility is manifested in An Balos kan Kikay Kiyaw*; and *obedience and helpfulness in An Talapang na si Kokak Pokak*.

The stories also manifested awareness of the environment particularly the stories of *May Kuwarta sa Basura*, *An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde*, and *Si Pot Pukot nan si Piwe Pusiw*, where the authors intentionally chose awareness and love of the environment as the central theme. The authors have seen the urgency of making the children aware of the adverse effects of man's abuses to the environment.

In addition, though some of the characters in the stories are animals, yet the children could relate the experiences in the stories to their real life situations. According to the comment of one juror (Dio), "animals that are within pupils' knowledge will give them unending appeal to read the materials". She also commented that the elements of the story are present and the readers' interests have been sustained.

Thus, the big books in the mother tongue serve several purposes: an effective way to develop love for reading at an earlier age, a strategy to develop reading skills, and an avenue to inculcate values. Article 29 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child declares, "education of the child shall be

directed to the development of the child's cultural identity, language and value" [3]

Comments and suggestions on the six big books as inputs in the revision

The researchers conducted a series of focus group discussions to come up with the revised copy of the big books. The qualitative comments by the respondents along the three variables serve as valuable inputs.

For **suitability or appropriateness of the materials**, most respondents said that the books were appropriate to the pupils. However, a few noted that the stories were quite long for grade 1 pupils. Hence, the suggestion is to shorten long sentences and to include some dialogs to make the story shorter. To consider these suggestions, the stories were revised using shorter sentences and dialogs. Some details which are quite unnecessary were deleted.

For **visual appeal**, general comments were along maximization of illustration area. Thus, the illustrator was advised that no space of the illustration page should be left uncolored. The official size for big books which is A3 was used and all the stories were printed in a hard paper (Velum no. 120) as per suggestion of the jurors. To improve the quality of prints/letters, margining, spacing, indention and to avoid errors in capitalization, syllabication, and attain uniformity in letter size, the stories were no longer handwritten by the illustrator but were encoded and printed by the researches.

To make the drawings realistic, clear and vivid to the pupils, the illustration of the faces of the characters in the cover page should be the same with the inside pages and real colors of objects/animals should be used and pictures/ illustrations for each age should describe exactly what is happening in that page. Cover should be presented with interesting colors and design. All these suggestions were considered in making the illustrations for the revised copy.

In general, the respondents' comments along **quality of the story** were very positive. The stories have good quality; they are simple and inspiring and suited to Grade-I pupils.

The general comments and suggestions for the six big books were considered. However, there were other suggestions specific for each book. There were very few suggestions to improve the appropriateness and quality of the story of *Si Mam Mara*. One

comment was to integrate the letter that was written by the pupils to Mam Mara to make the ending natural. Hence, said letter was placed at the last page. Other suggestions were more on improving the visual appeal like using real colors of the object, and improving the cover design to make the book more attractive.

The plot of *An Bakasyon sa Baryo Berde* (*The Vacation at Barangay Berde*) was revised per suggestions of two jurors who said that the plot should revolve on activities during vacation in a barangay as the title suggests. Thus, the activities of the two boys were revised to focus on those done while spending the vacation in *Baryo Berde* such as catching fish and swimming in the river, eating fresh buko, guava and other fruits and enjoying the fresh air and natural beauty of the surroundings. Also, the two boys were illustrated as if they were of the same age when, in fact, Berto is the elder brother and Biboy is the younger one. In the revised copy, the age difference of the two boys was clearly shown.

The title of the story, "*An Balos Kan Kikay Kiyaw*" was shortened to *Si Kikay Kiyaw* to remove the use of negative term *balos*. Further, the story seemed to end abruptly, without hope for a change of attitude which is what Filipino children love to read. To improve the plot, the author added another scene to show the change in the attitude of Kikay Kiyaw or in giving back old friends who were ill-treated.

An Palaka na si Kokak Pokak (The Frog named Kokak Pokak) was also shortened to *Si Kokak Pokak*. The major comment was to show an event that triggered the change in the character of Kokak Pokak who was described as a lazy and naughty frog. The original cause of change in the character was the danger posed by the snake. In the revised copy, the authors added the occurrence of a natural calamity which was the *ipo-ipo* (hurricane). Comments on the visual appeal include improvements on the expressions of the frog which do not clearly manifest the feelings conveyed in the story.

The respondents liked the story *Si Benyang nan an Basura* particularly because several values are evident, like awareness or concern for the environment. One juror also likes the part where several adults have been involved in Benyang's activities which show that everyone cares what happens. The parents' role as guardian and protector inquiring on the child's activities have been very appealing. Yet, most respondents suggested to

shorten the plot to sustain the interest and attention of the pupils. Thus, some details were removed and included only those events done which made the girl realized that indeed, garbage have other uses and that they can still be turned to cash. With this, the title was also revised to *May Kuwarta sa Basura* (*There is Cash in Trash*).

Similarly, the story of *Si Pot Pukot Nan Si Piwe-Pusiw* (*Pot, the Shrimp and Piwe. the Bird*) was quite lengthy for Grade 1 pupils. The story was revised by retaining the same ideas and using short dialogues. As to plot, the respondents claimed that the readers' interest has been sustained; that the story is commendable for it brings care for the environment, but it has to be shortened to the level of grade 1 pupils. As to illustration, the suggestion is to use real colors of some objects like the shrimps which were colored orange when it is the color of cooked shrimps.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The six big books possessed the desired qualities that made them very much acceptable to the Grade 1 teachers and much acceptable to the expert jurors along suitability or appropriateness of the materials, visual aspect, and quality of the story. The comments and suggestions of the respondents particularly in terms of length of the story, plot, illustrations and others serve as valuable inputs in coming up with the revised copies of the mother tongue-based reading materials for Grade 1 pupils.

It is recommended that these materials be utilized to a wider population by other Grade 1 teachers in Bulusan district and in other nearby districts whose native dialects are similar to Bulusan. To determine their effectiveness in developing reading skills and in enhancing values and awareness of the environment, these books may be used in Aralin Panlipunan subject. If found effective, they can be mass produced and be translated to other dialects in the Bicol Region or other dialects in the country. The researchers can also apply for copyright of the said materials.

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