

Article

Impact of Reading Positive Psychology-Themed Storybook on Reading Accuracy and Socio-Emotional Development: Online and Face-to-Face Read-Aloud

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Abstract: The impact of a positive psychology-themed storybook (PPTS) read aloud (read-aloud) in face-to-face (F2F) and online settings was examined in this study. It was explored how PPTS-themed read-aloud affects learners' emotions, reading accuracy, and socio-emotional development (SED). 450 F2F and 300 online participants aged 5 to 80 from 20 countries participated in this study. Using the differential emotion (DE) questionnaire, emoticon stamp placement, narrative interviews, and observations, the degree of SED and the effects of PPTS on reading and emotional development were investigated. Both online and F2F storytelling generated high enjoyment among learners. The results of the DE questionnaire indicated an absence of negative emotions, such as sadness or fear, creating a reassuring environment where making mistakes felt safe. F2F learners frequently re-read and retold stories with support from teachers and parents, which was less common online due to time constraints. Online SED assessment had challenges due to limited verbal communication, while narrative interviews were effective in F2F contexts. The results highlight the importance of parent-teacher engagement (PTE) and follow-up lessons to reduce cultural biases and enhance connections. The PPTS read aloud from the book 'Reading Across the Sky' significantly boosted learners' well-being and reading accuracy, despite time zone differences.

Keywords: Emotions, Read aloud, Positive psychology, Online, Face to Face

1. Introduction

The psychological benefits of reading aloud have been paid attention to during the global COVID-19 pandemic, when there was an increase in mental health problems in children and teenagers, such as depression, anxiety, and suicide (Lee, 2020). Early childhood reading habits were affected as the pandemic disrupted daily routines, impacting work, social interactions, and mental health. Sudden changes in delivery formats and requirements of schools made parents and children experience stress and anxiety. Recognizing the timely need and anticipating a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, the application of storybooks themed around positive psychology in education needs to be explored by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives from psychology and education. Differences in the modes of delivery, such as online, face-to-face, synchronous, asynchronous and with or without real-time parental interactions, must also be studied extensively.

Positive psychology is the scientific examination of human strengths and virtues (Seligman, 1998a; 1998b; 2002). It focuses on fostering flourishing and well-being, rather than merely addressing mental illness. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of cultivating positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievements (PERMA) to improve overall life satisfaction. In a positive psychology-themed storybook (PPTS), emotion-related vocabulary words that support empathy, gratitude, kindness, compassion, and connectedness are used to enhance learners' social emotional development (Ocampo, 2022a). PPTS can be read synchronously and asynchronously, to encourage and stimulate learners' intellectual capacity to imagine the meaning of new vocabulary. Recorded read-aloud using communications platforms, such as Zoom, are asynchronous and allow students, especially those whose first language is not English, to view a storybook repeatedly.

Reading aloud increases children's resilience at school (Henderson, 2022) and helps them reduce learning stress because it provides opportunities to ask questions, interact, and comment on the content during reading sessions by posing questions and answering them in the chat box. Moreover, reading supports learners' linguistic and socio-emotional development and helps establish a bond between the child and the reader (Blumberg and Griffin, 2013). At the same time, disadvantages also exist, including the tendency for students to feel less connected and the requirement to finish tasks within a limited timeframe. A need for

autonomous learning skills and responsibility to develop independent learning skills is also a challenge. These challenges require educators and psychologists to build human strength as the “psychology’s forgotten mission” (Seligman, 1998a).

Children benefit from parental interaction, including an increase in oral language skills, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation to read when reading aloud with parents (Wheeler, 2024). Reading to children enhances their social-emotional development. Mendelsohn et al. (2018) concluded that “promoting positive parenting activities such as reading, play, and conversation was found to promote the social-emotional development of children from low-income families.” When reading aloud, parents use intonation, emotional expressions, gestures, and eye contact, which children internalize and interpret. As a result, reading to children and relationship-building activities foster a bonding experience for parents and teachers, creating a natural dialogue that simultaneously impacts language acquisition. A higher level of real-time social connectedness facilitates higher well-being (Jose et al. 2012). With the rapid development of AI technology, the importance of connectedness while exploring the potential of online, mediated, and asynchronous communicative modes of education is crucial.

Picture books are popular for readers of all ages, but children tend to examine the images more closely and point out details adults often miss (Giorgis, 2019). When reading PPTS aloud to preschoolers, college students, or adult participants, they can share fascinating, unique, or interesting illustrations. Such visual richness connects PPTS information to their visual memories and imaginations. In this way, visual literacy improves by appreciating images inside: “The great thing about a successful picture book is that you can’t have great illustrations without a great text, and you can’t have a great text without great illustrations” (Henkes, 1992). Learners read stories in different forms, both illustrated and unillustrated, as storybooks or as comics, unaware of the cognitive and emotional benefits. Giorgis, writing about the American educator and author Jim Trelease, pointed out that Trelease admitted to having no idea what reading would do for learners’ vocabulary, attention span, or interest in books (Giorgis, 2019). In his earlier 1982 edition, he described reading for no reason at all, evoking the way he felt when his father read books to him when he was young. Decades ago, the benefits of instant messaging were touted, but there was no internet, email, cell phones, social media, video streaming, or e-books. The closest thing to an instant messaging was the facial expression an exasperated mother would give her child as a warning (Giorgis, 2019). At present, AI-augmented generations are familiar with such interactions. In Japan, for example, the government’s Global and Innovation Gateway for All (GIGA) program in 2019 was launched to ensure that students learn the needed skills and abilities to thrive in the context of the Society 5.0 (Super Smart Society) initiative, where information and communication technology (ICT) is inevitable in people’s daily lives. However, despite these initiatives, only 15 % of classes were online at the end of 2022 (Imai, 2024).

Reading aloud benefits, including phonemic awareness, improved comprehension and vocabulary, better listening skills, increased fluency, reduced stress, developed empathy, love and attitude of learning and sharpened focus. It also reaffirms to students, past and present, that the experience of reading creates a bond between them (Giorgis, 2019). When the audience applauds after a storybook reading, it provides an immeasurable boost to morale and confidence, sparks creative imagination, and enhances real-life skills, helping learners connect with others, navigate their emotions, and develop literacy. Albert Einstein said, “If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.” To support this notion, Siriboe shared an insight-provoking learning behavior that parents, educators, and concerned adults can apply within their lives as well as in the lives of children (TEDx Talks, 2018). Drawing from global education policy and her own research, she advocated for parent-child reading aloud to promote parent-child bonding as well as effective literacy development.

Parent-child reading together conveys important reading-related messages, such as enjoyment, attention, and positive emotions (Curry et al., 2016; Gottfried et al., 2015). Ocampo concluded that reading together reduced stress, promotes love, bonding, empathy, and compassion with a loved one and members of the community (Ocampo, 2022a). To address the challenges and promote the sustainable development of early childhood education (ECE) with AI and AI-powered tools (Vinuesa et al., 2020), it was proposed to explore the role of parents and families in supporting AI-based ECE. The positive effects of reading aloud extend beyond language, literacy, and vocabulary development, also enriching social-emotional growth and cognitive abilities. They also have lasting effects on academic achievement (Gottfried et al., 2015).

In contemporary society, learners engage in dialogues on synchronous online platforms, characterized by frequent mode-switching in which participants resist, revise, and renegotiate the dynamics of dialogue within digital coursework (Sherry et al., 2024). ChatGPT is expected to completely transform the world, and there will be no going back to the pre-ChatGPT era (Su and Yang, 2022). ChatGPT and other generative AI use algorithms to create new content, including voice, code, images, text, simulations, and videos, with the potential to dramatically change the way we live, learn, teach, and work, also affecting ECE. Today, young children are growing up with omnipresent AI (Chen and Lin, 2023). This new wave of generative AI has ignited hopes for the better and sparked fears about its uncertainties (Su and Yang, 2022). Optimists emphasize the benefits of AI to young children and their teachers, while pessimists emphasize its negative impacts and consequences. While acknowledging that educational and generative AI is a “double-edged sword” (Resnick, 2023), its adoption in ECE has the potential to promote the

sustainable development of education. Therefore, the accessibility, affordability, accountability, sustainability, and social justice (3A2S) framework has been widely employed to analyze ECE policies and practices (Luo et al., 2023).

According to Luo et al. (2023), “Accessibility refers to whether young children are allowed access to educative and generative AI and how to access it in different societies and contexts. Affordability means whether young children and their parents, and teachers, can afford the use of educative and generative AI and how to maintain affordable access to AI tools for educational institutions and users. Accountability means that leaders, teachers, and parents should responsibly guide, mediate, and monitor the use of AI tools in preschools and at home. There is a need to study how to enhance the accountability of educative and generative AI in the ECE sector. Sustainability concerns whether existing supercomputing capabilities could sustainably support all countries and regions to use educative and generative AI, and how to maintain young children’s sustainable development. Social justice will address the ‘AI divide’ between those who can access it and those who cannot, the ethical problems related to it, and the fairness for users in non-Western regions. AI might act as a social accelerator, exacerbating the existing gaps between individuals and communities and presenting serious challenges to the sustainable development of the next generation”.

When reading to children, parents form a bond that simultaneously influences language acquisition due to the natural discourse that occurs. As Vygotsky proposed in the sociocultural theory, parents influence children’s social and cultural perspectives by interacting with children and engaging children in meaningful experiences. While parents and children partake in reading, a significant message is conveyed, including enjoyment, attention, and positive feelings (Curry et al., 2016). The positive outcomes of reading aloud extend beyond promoting language, literacy, vocabulary, social-emotional, and cognitive skills; the benefits yield enduring results on academic performance (Gottfried et al., 2015). Recognizing such benefits and integrating interdisciplinary perspectives from psychology and education, this study aims to explore the link between positive psychology and reading aloud through PPTS in various educational settings and various modes of delivery.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants of a wide age range and diverse multicultural backgrounds took part in face-to-face (F2F) or online read-aloud activities in this study. 450 learners joined F2F voluntarily, among whom 300 learners came from 20 different countries, including Brazil, Indonesia, India, Hong Kong, Italy, Myanmar, Philippines, Taiwan, Ukraine, and Vietnam. This online read-aloud took place on the Vietnam-based Reading Across the Sky (RATS) online platform. In Japan, F2F read-aloud were conducted for 18 months during 2023–2024 (one in spring and two in autumn in the community parks and public gymnasium with 100 learners), in five classroom read-aloud activities (in collaboration with the Share Love Charity NGO group, 50 participants), and one in an English communication classroom (30 participants). In Vietnam, read-aloud was conducted in a private kindergarten with 200 students and a private after-school with 60 students. Online PPTS read-aloud activities were conducted for six months at 12 meetings on Zoom. The participants’ ages ranged from 7–21 years old on the online platform, while 5–80 years old for the F2F read aloud activities. In F2F activities, 30% of the participants were male and 70% were female, whereas in online read-aloud activities, 40% were male and 60% were female. The assessment results of reading accuracy and emotional responses before, during, and after reading storybook interventions were collected. Reading assessment, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension were assumed to increase the chances of learners to read proficiently. In F2F, narrative inquiry was used to enhance reading accuracy and socio-emotional development. In online and F2F, interactivity, engagement, and content diversity were assessed. The demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

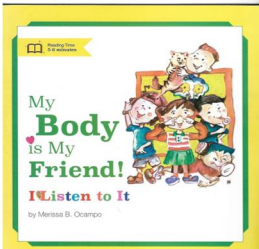
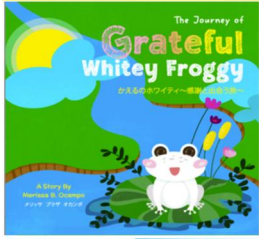
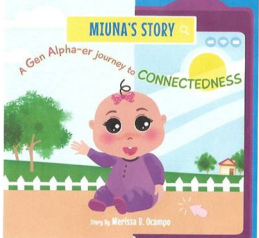
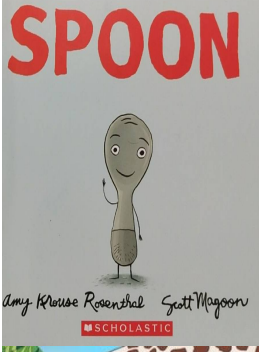
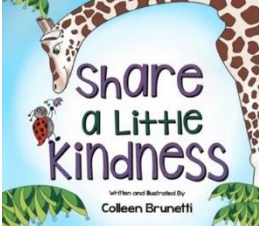
Table 1. Participant demographics.

Measure	F2F read-aloud (Japan and Vietnam)	Online read-aloud (Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Taiwan, Ukraine, and Vietnam)
Number of participants	450	300
Age (years old)	5–80	7–21
Gender	30 % male 70% female	40% male 60% female
F2F read-aloud in the park, public gymnasium, and non-government organization (NGO) venue (Japan)	2023–2024 (spring and autumn)	2024 summer and autumn

2.2. Materials

Five PPTS were selected in the study (Table 2): ‘My Body is my Friend’ (Ocampo, 2022c), which focuses on self-care, emotions and meditation; ‘The Journey of Grateful Whitey Froggy’ (Ocampo, 2022d), which focuses on gratitude and friendship; ‘Miuna’s story. A Gen Alpha-er journey to Connectedness’ (Ocampo, 2022b), which focuses on connectedness and empathy; ‘Spoon’ (Rosenthal, 2009), which focuses on self-acceptance and self-love, and Share a Little Kindness (Brunetti, 2020), which focuses on kindness and compassion.

Table 2. PPTS selected to enhance socio-emotional development (SED) and awareness of anxiety, burnout, and stress (ABS).

Title	Cover	Reading Time	Genre	Themes and Ideas	Vocabulary Focus	Positive Psychology Focus
My Body is my Friend		5–8 min	Non-fiction	Self-care, emotions	Angry, hungry, sad, happy, five senses	Self-Care, Meditation
The Journey of Grateful Whitey Froggy		4–5 min	Non-fiction	Gratitude, friendship	Gratitude, happiness	Gratitude leads to happiness and joy.
Miuna’s Story A Gen Alpha-er journey to connectedness		10–15 min	Non-fiction	Connectedness, empathy	Generation Alpha, kindness, empathy, hope	Connectedness, empathy, family ties
Spoon		4–5 min	fiction	Individual differences, appreciation of one’s own special abilities, feeling down, feeling lucky, sadness	Encourage, identity, self-love, self-acceptance, unique, cultural awareness	Self-acceptance, proud of being different, self-identity
Share a little kindness		4–5 min	Fiction	Share, little, empathy, love, happy, sad	Compassion, kindness, friendship	Kindness, empathy, compassion

2.3. Method

To appraise PPTS in various educational settings, various modes of delivery, and interdisciplinary perspectives from psychology, the SED assessment was conducted. Through the assessment, learners' emotional expressions, social skills, and peer interactions during F2F and online reading activities were identified, understood, and managed. The differential emotions scale (DES), based on the differential emotions theory (Izard, 1977), was adopted in the assessment. This theory is used to assess the intensity of primary emotions to improve understanding of basic emotions and their corresponding facial expressions and linguistic labels (e.g. ethnic, cultural, and linguistic). In the assessment, the participants distinguished between different facial expressions among basic emotions (Adetoun *et al.*, 2010). DES is a multidimensional self-report tool consisting of 30 items on a 5-point Likert scale: three for each of the 10 basic emotions visualized by Izard (1977) (interest, joy, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame/shyness, and guilt).

To collect DES data, the participants placed small "emoticon stamps" or stickers in the relevant position on large sheets. Younger participants were encouraged to choose the positions, although it was necessary to help them peel and successfully attach the sticker. Using emoticons offered a visual and accessible means of expressing feelings of young learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. When vocabulary for emotions was limited, using stickers enhanced comprehension and engagement, particularly for younger learners who struggled with complex linguistic nuances. Furthermore, emoticons bridged the gap in non-verbal communication that often arises in online learning environments. The following benefits of using emoticons to assess emotions in young ESL learners were observed: (1) Visual aid for emotional understanding: emoticons provided clear visual cues that help learners capture intended feelings, even with limited vocabulary; (2) Bridging language gaps: emoticons assisted in overcoming communication barriers, particularly for those who had verbal expression challenging; (3) Enhancing engagement: the fun of using emoticons made learning enjoyable and encourages participation from young learners; (4) Instant feedback: teachers used emoticons for immediate reactions to students' responses, reinforcing positive sentiments and indicating areas for improvement; (5) Fostering emotional literacy: Incorporating emoticons allowed teachers to discuss emotions and visuals, promoting emotional vocabulary growth; (6) Facilitating non-verbal communication: emoticons conveyed emotional subtleties online in written interactions (OpenAI, 2025).

When using emoticons in DES, friendly questions and answers were exchanged with the learners to provide awareness of difficulties, such as "I do not know my feeling right now, and do not know where to stick the stamp." 95% percent of the participants indicated feelings of happiness, while only three percent were confused and two percent were sad. Cultural differences in emoticon interpretations and meanings and their appropriate use were observed in this study, which required ensuring the intended message resonated effectively (Figs. 1 and 2).



(a) Reading in the park in spring and autumn. Use of emoticon stamps to assess the impact of PPTS on learners' emotions.



(b) Reading in the gymnasium. Emoticon stamps and original storybooks to assess the impact of PPTS on learners' emotions.

Fig. 1. Bilingual read-aloud of PPTS using emoticons to assess emotions of participants.



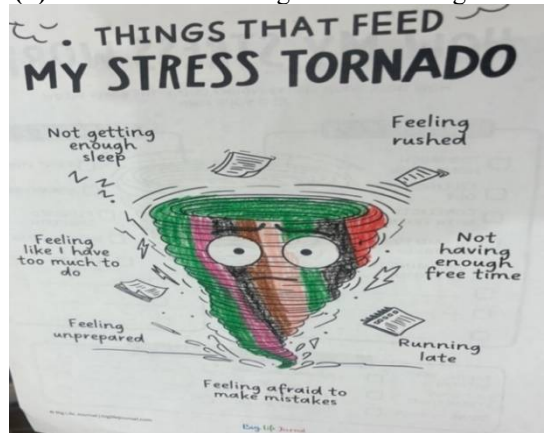
(a) F2F PPTS read aloud in Vietnam.



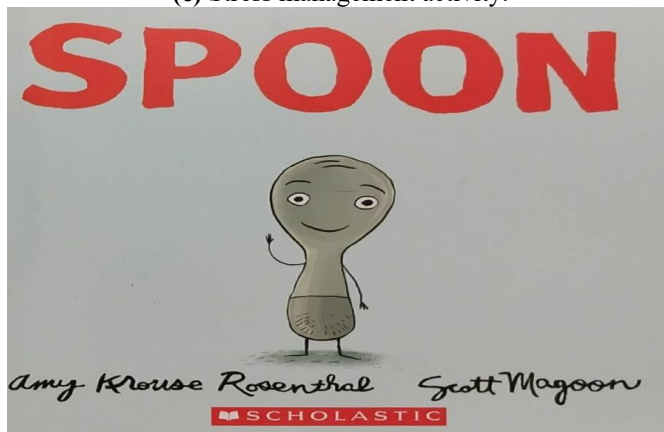
(b) Connectedness through PPTS coloring activities.



(c) Stress management activity.



(d) Things that feed stress tornado activity.



(e) "Spoon" storybook by Amy K. Rosenthal used to know the importance of self-love and identity.



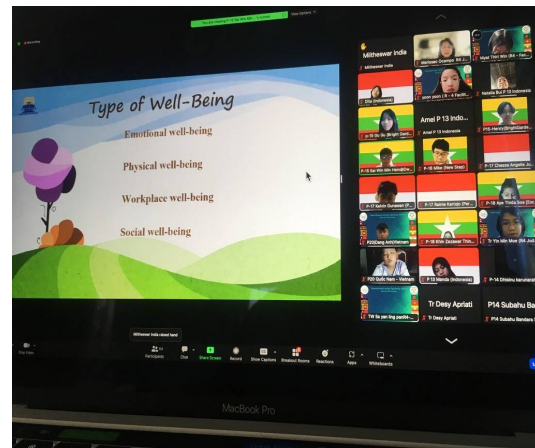
(f) "Spoon" storybook was read and explained by one of the guest educators.

Fig. 2. Bilingual read-aloud of PPTS using emoticons to assess emotions of participants in nursery and primary schools.

In online environments where body language was limited, emoticons, gestures, and sign language conveyed emotional nuances in storytelling (Fig. 3). 165 participants from 20 different countries attended the online lesson on mental health and well-being in March 2024 using 'Reading Across the Sky'. The online learning session provided learners and educators with the opportunity to meet twice a week to study English. In this session, the emotions of seriousness, contentment, and satisfaction were observed through facial expressions and the range of emotion emoticons shared on screen. Additionally, engaging images and simple vocabulary shared by the participants were crucial for effective online storytelling and lessons.



(a) Lesson online about good health and well-being.



(b) Types of well-being.



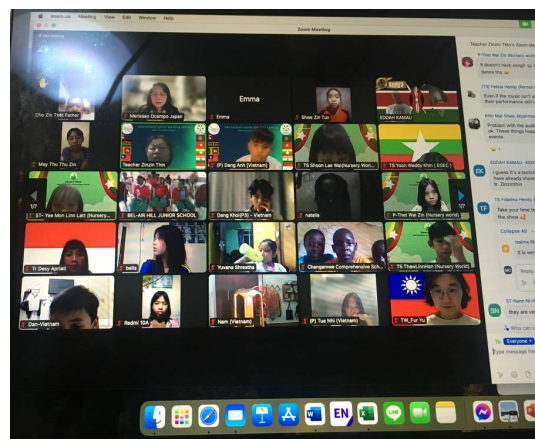
(c) Tips for improving our social well-being: sharing, cooperating, listening, following directions, respecting personal space, making eye contact and using manners were shared by the learners.



(d) This image demonstrates our shared equality in emotions and feelings; sad, happy, worried, shy, tired, shocked, proud, hurt, afraid, content, angry, and sleepy.



(e) Shared steps to transform being depressed to being super happy by online learners: "Step 1: wash your face, Step 2: meet nature, Step 3: spend time with family and friends, Step 4: read books, Step 5: watch funny movies".



(f) In online storytelling and learning, it is crucial to recognize learners' facial expressions. Regularly inquire about their emotions through emoticon tools, which can effectively assess their current feelings, as demonstrated on the right side of the image.



(g) Participants with a total of 165 learners from 20 different countries participated.



(h) The online storytelling and lessons were collaborated with Reading Across the Sky.

Fig. 3. Online read-aloud: identified emotions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. PPTS and F2F

The participants' feedback on read-aloud online and F2F indicated high enjoyment levels, while the online platform was preferred. The participants did not feel bored due to the engaging, time-limited drawing and coloring activities. They expressed motivation, discovered interesting concepts, and eagerly anticipated drawing tasks. Upon completion, though a bit surprised, they enjoyed, interested and felt pride in their outcomes. Both teachers and students demonstrated support and appreciation for all participants. They did not experience negative emotions, such as sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame, or guilt during their online interactions (Fig. 4). The positive feelings underscore that a proactive personality influences online engagement and fosters positive emotions (Fu et al., 2024). Additionally, the participants also felt comfortable making mistakes, although they were unfamiliar with the others in the groups. This was supported by the provision of a supportive, family-like atmosphere (Ocampo, 2016, 2021), which encouraged a positive approach to embracing errors.

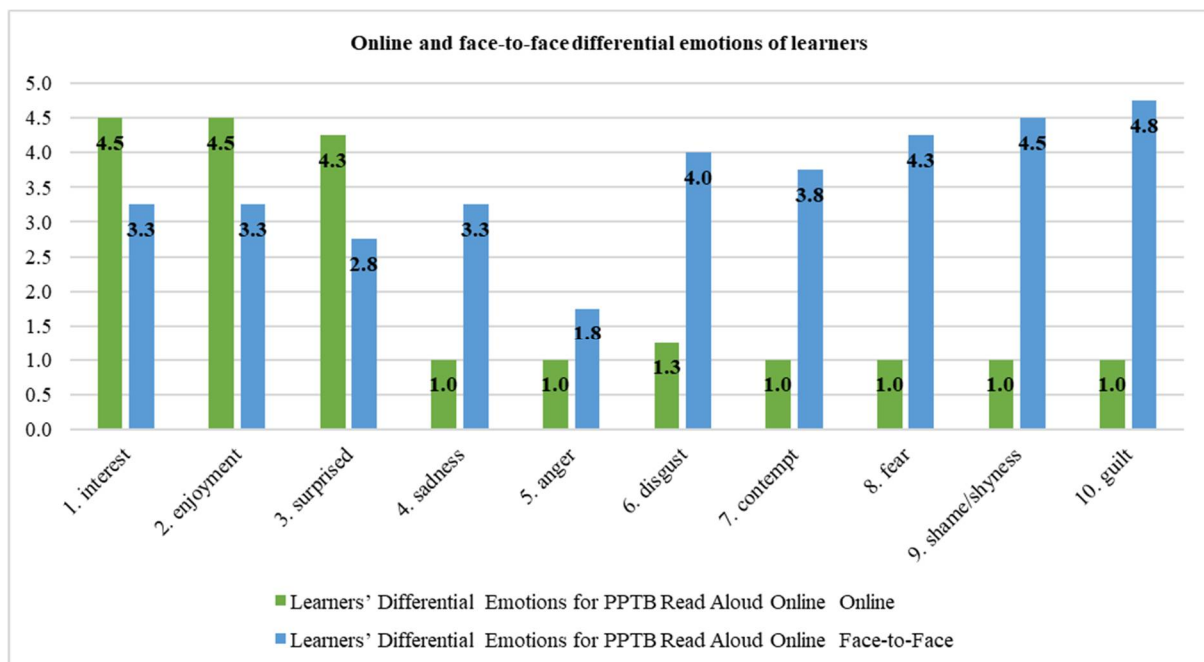


Fig. 4. Online and F2F differential emotions of learners.

3.2. Reading Accuracy, Cultural Awareness in F2F Read-Aloud

Reading F2F provided the ideas, concepts, and functions of written language. Such activity improves the precision of recall as a result of repeatedly uttering the target vocabulary words (Ocampo, 2022a), as well as sequencing ability and ease in writing (Reed, 1987). A simplified dialogic question guide, using ‘Wh’ questions and ‘How’, was provided as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Dialogic questions guide.

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
What will this book be about?	I want to know...	What did you learn?
What do you already know about the topic?	What would happen if...?	What new words did you learn?
What do you want to learn?	How would the characters feel?	What is the message of the story?
What does the title tell me?	What will happen next?	Why did the author write the book?
	What have I learned so far?	What emotion did you have after listening to the story?
	Is it interesting?	What is your opinion of _____?
	Who is the main character of the story?	Will you share the story with your friends?

In the reading accuracy assessment, the participant’s ability to read a passage of text without making mistakes was evaluated. The participants’ decoding techniques in the F2F read-aloud were assessed by providing illustrations and stickers of target vocabulary words. The success rate of the participants’ reading accuracy was 60%. 40% of the participants improved after the intervention. The participants retold the story using the target vocabulary words. However, disruptive environmental factors, such as noise from other booths, hindered their concentration when reading books in open spaces, parks, and gymnasiums. In 90% of the sessions, the participants read books and enjoyed drawing activities, while in 10%, the participants read only a few pages of the book. Time limits and differences between participating countries led to this problem.

Considering the current situation regarding reading and literacy, the spread of social media has a strong influence on reading behavior. Exchanging short text messages is common, and opportunities to read and write long sentences become rare. To counteract this, an environment must be created in which children can focus on the printed books. To increase the rate of book reading, PPTS must be developed to increase reading opportunities within the community. In the Philippines, a modular approach was implemented. Mothers and children strengthened their bonding, and foreign visitors helped the participants to boost their confidence and understand the cultural differences. In Japan, experts have repeatedly pointed out children’s reading comprehension and writing skills. There is an urgency to improve reading comprehension and writing skills through instruction in reading books and writing compositions. Many schools have reported that children spend more time watching social media and videos, and little or no time reading books. They have become accustomed to communicating through short text messages and emojis, and reading and writing long texts is stressful (The Japan Times, 2024).

3.3. SED Assessment

In online read-aloud sessions, it was not easy to capture the participants’ true emotions, as the participants could not express their emotions related to the story due to the limited time (50 minutes) and the excessive number of participants. Although the chat box was used to write comments and respond, it was difficult to answer all the questions. 80% of the questions remained unanswered, as shown in Fig. 5. However, random questions helped to find out the participants’ emotions. On the recorded sessions, only 5% of the participants shared their emotions online. Participants from Indonesia, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Ukraine, Myanmar, Vietnam, Brazil, and Taiwan showed strong interest in the drawing and coloring activities. The activities enhanced the appreciation and enjoyment of PPTS reading time. On the other hand, interpersonal relationships between the participants were not effective online due to time limits. At the same time, having readers start these sessions with a five-minute introduction of background information positively influenced participant engagement.

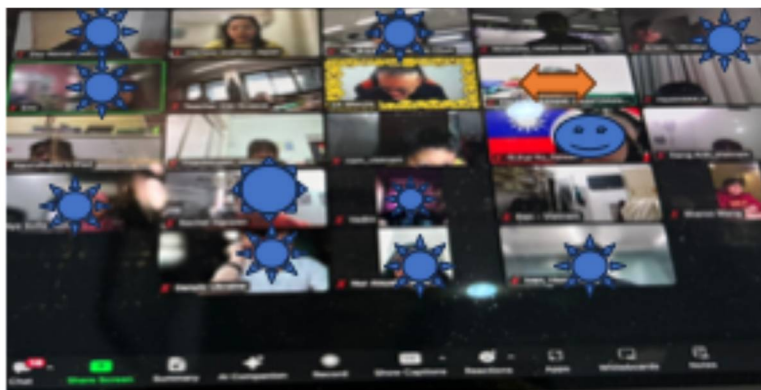
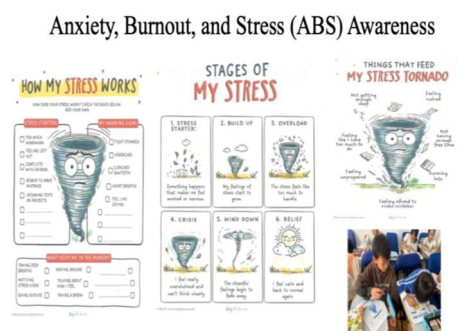


Fig. 5. Socio-Emotional Development (SED) Assessment in an online platform.

3.4. Stress, Anxiety, and SED in Foreign Language

The following connectedness and mindfulness activities were incorporated to promote friendship among classmates: being aware and taming your stress tornado, connecting the dots, yoga for kids exercises, listening to their body, happiness tree, jar gratitude, and breathing exercise (Fig. 6).



(a) Anxiety, burnout, and stress (ABS) awareness



(b) Connectedness and mindfulness activities

Fig. 6. ABS awareness, connectedness, and mindfulness activities.

3.5. Cultural Literacy and Identity

The participants who were exposed to bilingual storybooks showed more interest and curiosity to learn about the books, regardless of whether read-aloud by someone with the same nationality and cultural background or not. In both cases, interesting expressions were observed (Fig. 7), and interactions, such as questions, answers, and quizzes, were active. However, when participants from diverse backgrounds shared intimate or personal narratives, sensitive and vigilant observations had to be conducted to avoid any potential cultural bias, for example, using country names with adjectives such as 'poor' or 'superior'. To address these risks and foster inclusivity, mentorship was needed to promote cultural literacy, positive identity, self-confidence, and motivation.



Fig. 7. Importance of mentorship in learning second language for cultural literacy and identity.

4. Limitations and Future Research

This study had the following limitations. First, while the online platform used in this study allowed for participation across a wide age range and from diverse multicultural backgrounds to enhance the generalizability of the findings, challenges remained in tracking and controlling variables. 12 Zoom reading sessions relied on the voluntary participation of students and teachers, resulting in fluctuating attendance that made consistent data collection difficult. It is recommended to assess the impact on reading accuracy, cultural awareness, and emotional development by establishing regular participant involvement. Second, a large number of participants in F2F reading sessions influenced the evaluation of language and reading comprehension skills. Third, although emojis and emoticon stamps were effective tools for gauging emotions before and after sessions, F2F participants in parks and gymnasiums were distracted by surrounding activities. Therefore, the relationship between reading and emotional well-being, including gratitude, kindness, and compassion, needs to be researched under effective control over time, setting, and participant engagement. Then, mother–child interactions, satisfaction, and emotional responses can be understood in a more nuanced way.

5. Conclusions

By introducing PPTS readings through international collaboration spanning over twenty countries, the benefits of read-aloud were determined in this study. The integration of PPTS and read-aloud methods enhanced emotional well-being, strengthened interpersonal relationships, and deepened the participants' understanding of complex emotions, thereby cultivating a nurturing space for personal growth and meaningful connection. These positive outcomes were evident in the promotion of socio-emotional development and overall well-being. Reading aloud is beneficial for both the participants and the readers. When a teacher, parent, or guardian reads aloud, the reader develops expressive skills by embodying the characters and refines observational abilities by noting cognitive cues of the participants, such as their responsiveness during Q&A, reading comprehension during recitations, and socio-emotional expressions before, during, and after each reading session. In this study, the online format provided opportunities to connect across time zones, enriching cultural understanding through discussions of diverse backgrounds and local festivals. Despite these benefits, potential bias rooted in cultural and social hierarchies was observed. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid portraying places, characters, or countries negatively, such as labeling them 'poor' or 'superior'. While online read-aloud sessions fostered connection, they often lacked in-person interactions. The participants expressed that the bonds formed during the 12 sessions were superficial, only grazing the "outer layer of the onion" rather than reaching the emotional core of true friendship. Factors such as time constraints, unstable internet connections, turned-off cameras, and uncertainty about participant engagement (e.g., multitasking or passive attendance) contributed to this challenge. In several regions, bandwidth restrictions further necessitated cameras being off, complicating interpersonal rapport. Third, digital inequity remained a significant obstacle. Not all participants could access a computer, limiting participation and reinforcing existing social disparities. Finally, while global reading holds immense promise, time zone differences presented barriers to synchronous communication for some participants. To address these challenges, further research and the development of targeted protocols are required to harness the educational and emotional benefits of PPTS reading.

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