



Citation for published version:

Sun, B, Loh, CE & Curdt-Christiansen, XL 2020, 'Leisure reading in multilingual Singapore: Reading enjoyment, habits and preferences of Singaporean children', *Journal of Multilingual Theories and Practices*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 313-339. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jmtp.17610>

DOI:

[10.1558/jmtp.17610](https://doi.org/10.1558/jmtp.17610)

Publication date:

2020

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

This is the author accepted manuscript of a paper published in final form in *Journal of Multilingual Theories and Practices* and available online via the publisher website at: <https://doi.org/10.1558/jmtp.17610>

University of Bath

Alternative formats

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:
openaccess@bath.ac.uk

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Article

Leisure reading in multilingual Singapore: Reading enjoyment, habits and preferences of Singaporean children

Sun Baoqi,^a Loh Chin Ee^b and Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen^c

Affiliations

^aCentre for Research in Child Development, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4650-3394>
email: baoqi.sun@nie.edu.sg (corresponding author)

^bEnglish Language and Literature Academic Group, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2997-9326>
email: chinee.loh@nie.edu.sg

^cEnglish Department of Education, University of Bath, UK
email: xlcc20@bath.ac.uk <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8973-5251>

Commented [SB(1)]: Not sure if JMTP needs ORCID number. I added ours.

doi 10.1558/jmtp.17610

Abstract

What are bilingual children reading? Do children who enjoy reading books in one language also enjoy reading books in the other language? Drawing on survey data from 1,312 children (aged 9–11) in two government primary schools in Singapore, this study examined reading enjoyment, habits and preferences of two groups of bilingual children – English-Chinese and English-Malay bilingual children. Results showed that children generally enjoyed reading in English more than reading [in Chinese/Malay books](#), and that they read English books more often and for longer duration. Within each language, reading enjoyment was significantly associated with reading frequency and reading duration. Crosslinguistically, children’s reading duration and frequency in their two languages were closely related, despite their different reasons for reading English and Chinese/Malay books. Even though [levels of](#) reading enjoyment in the two languages were not significantly correlated, results suggested that English reading enjoyment may facilitate Chinese/Malay reading. Results highlight the important role of language policy, the focus of language curriculum and language-specific features in shaping bi/multilingual children’s reading habits and preferences. Implications for classroom applications and the need to promote Chinese/Malay reading are discussed.

KEYWORDS: LEISURE READING; READING HABITS; BILINGUAL; READING PREFERENCES; READING ENJOYMENT.

1 Introduction

A city-state with 5.7 million people, Singapore is a multilingual and multicultural country with three main ethnic groups: 74.4% Chinese, 13.4% Malay and 9.0% Indian (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2019). Adopted in the 1970s, the English-knowing bilingual education has been a key component of the education system (Singapore Ministry of Education [MOE], 2010). Under this policy, all school subjects are taught in English and children learn English as their first language. At the same time, they are required to be literate in a second language. This second language refers to their official Mother Tongue and is based on ethnicity, i.e., Chinese for Chinese children, Malay for Malay children, and Tamil for Indian children. Hence, bilingualism in Singapore is pluralistic with different pairings of English and Mother Tongue languages (i.e., English-Mandarin, English-Malay and English-Tamil) within the same educational setting, and

each pair consists of highly contrasting writing systems (Curdt-Christiansen, 2014; Sun, Hu and Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). It should be noted that the definition of the official Mother Tongue used in the Singapore context is different from international bi/multilingual terms, as it is prescribed based on ethnicity rather than origin, and is often not the predominant language spoken at home. Singaporean children grow up in a multilingual society where they are exposed to English and Mother Tongue languages to various degrees depending on what language(s) is(are) dominant in their home environment. Even though these children may understand or even speak different languages, this article focuses on English and the respective Mother Tongue, officially designated to them.

Commented [Rp2]: please add this to ref list

Commented [SB(3R2)]: Thanks, added.

The Singaporean school system places a premium on language proficiency in English and Mother Tongue. The curricula for all languages seek to develop a love for reading (Singapore MOE, 2010, 2015). In addition, the Singapore government puts in considerable effort to provide a conducive reading environment in public libraries and nurturing reading habits among various civic groups, including children, young adults and adults. However, as English is seen to provide economic advantages for Singapore and remains the lingua franca across communities, it has become more dominant under current policy, and there is a visible decline in Mother Tongue proficiency. In the effort to engage children through meaningful literacy instruction, teachers and policymakers need more specific information about children's reading habits and preferences if they are to set appropriate goals and plan reading programmes and instruction more effectively (Guthrie, Taboada and Wigfield, 2011; Iyengar and Ball, 2007).

Drawing on data from a bilingual reading survey, we explored three interrelated components of leisure reading (reading enjoyment, habits and preference) of two groups of bilingual children in Singapore, English-Chinese and English-Malay bilingual children. Inevitably, this exploration will involve discussion of broader issues such as bi/multiliteracy acquisition, language policy and the language curriculum.

Research has consistently shown that leisure reading is closely related to a wide range of educational, social and personal benefits (Iyengar and Ball, 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2010). For instance, there is evidence that good reading habits promote better reading achievement (Manuel and Carter, 2015; Mullis et al., 2012) and support learning in other subject areas (Sullivan and Brown 2015). Leisure reading is also linked to greater empathy and social connection (Bal and Velkamp, 2013; Neuman and Celano, 2012), and better social-cognitive abilities (Mumper and Gerrig, 2017). As a result, language curricula in many educational systems, including Singapore, are devoting increasing attention to nurturing children's love of reading (e.g., Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2009; Singapore MOE, 2010 2015). Large-scale national surveys have been carried out to understand how children practise and perceive reading (e.g., Clark, 2012, 2019; Loh and Sun, 2019; Rutherford, Merga and Singleton, 2018). However, the bulk of extant research fails to account for the potential heterogeneity of participants' language backgrounds, focusing instead exclusively on English or on the schooling language of the research setting.

Commented [Rp4]: please check.

Commented [SB(5R4)]: Thanks, it should be 2011

Research has shown that more children worldwide grow up to become bi/multilingual rather than monolingual (Baker, 2011). Much of the bi/multilingual research was designed to address questions concerning curriculum development, classroom instruction, the social functions of various languages and children's cognitive and linguistic development (Bialystok, 2001; Cummins, 2000; Koda, 2005). Little research attention has been given to understand how children practice leisure reading in more than one language. Given the well-established benefits of leisure reading mentioned

earlier, this represents an important research oversight. It is thus of theoretical and practical interest to explore children's reading habits and preferences in multilingual context to better understand how to develop reading curricula, programmes and instructional methods to promote reading in different languages. In this respect, Singapore provides a unique research site as it is linguistically and culturally diverse, and the majority of children grow up with and receive formal schooling in at least two languages from kindergarten onwards.

2 Current trends in children's leisure reading

Leisure reading refers to reading that students themselves choose to undertake as opposed to reading that is mandated for school or homework tasks (Mellon, 1990). Research on leisure reading has focused on three interrelated components, viz., reading enjoyment, reading habits (i.e., reading frequency and reading duration) and reading preferences (Clark, 2012, 2019; Iyengar and Ball, 2007; Loh and Sun, 2020; Scholastic, 2015, 2019). For the purpose of the present study, reading refers to the meaningful decoding and comprehension of text in both print and digital formats (Loh, Sun and Majid, 2020). Reading in print refers to paper-based material while reading in digital formats refers to online material accessed on a smartphone, tablet or computer. In exploring children's reading habits and preferences, the study will focus on continuous linear fiction or nonfiction texts, as these are known to be more consistently associated with academic benefits than other forms such as email or text messages (Loh and Sun, 2019; Rutherford, Merga and Singleton, 2018).

There is extensive evidence that children who enjoy reading are more likely to engage in reading and to develop sustainable reading habits (Loh, 2013; Merga, 2017; Rideout, 2014). Conversely, children who read less frequently may be less motivated to read, and their learning opportunities decrease significantly. By reading less, they will have fewer opportunities to learn and develop reading skills, creating a vicious circle in which poor readers remain poor readers (Clark, 2012; Krashen, 2004; Neuman and Celano, 2012). In a national survey in the UK, Clark (2012) found that more than half of those children who enjoyed reading were likely to read daily, while 40% of those who reported not enjoying reading rarely or never read. Similar trends have been found in Singapore as well. For example, Loh and Sun (2018) examined the English reading habits of 6,005 Singaporean secondary school students and found that those who enjoyed reading were more likely to read more frequently and for longer duration. However, it remains unknown whether and how primary school children differ from secondary students in Singapore.

In recent years, recurring evidence has suggested that the number of children who enjoy reading is declining (Dickenson, 2014; Scholastic, 2015, 2019). In the US, for example, the number of children who enjoy reading books for pleasure declined by almost 10% between 2010 and 2015 (Scholastic, 2015), and the number of children who read every day dropped from 37% in 2010 to 31% in 2018 (Scholastic, 2019). In a series of nationwide National Literacy Trust surveys in the UK, Clark and colleagues (2019) found that children's reading engagement (their enjoyment of reading, reading frequency and attitudes towards reading) has declined gradually from 2013 to 2018.

This complex picture, while no doubt under influence from a host of factors such as technological and societal changes, is also arguably shaped by the focus of the language curriculum. For instance, the recent national curriculum in UK places greater emphasis on skill teaching, especially on English grammar (e.g., the introduction of the statutory test in spelling, punctuation and grammar). This change of curriculum focus has received a mixed reaction from practitioners and researchers (Flynn and Curdt-

Commented [Rp6]: should this be 2014?
2017 is not listed in refs

Commented [SB(7R6)]: Yes, should be 2014

Commented [Rp8]: please add this to ref list

Christiansen, 2018), and one reason posited for the reading enjoyment decline in UK children is that with more emphasis on teaching to ~~tests~~, the curriculum makes reading a subject to learn, not something to do for fun (Egmont, 2019).

Commented [Rp9]: ?

Commented [SB(10R9)]: I meant "more emphasis on teaching according to what will be tested".

Within this complex context of declining reading and changing curriculum, it is vital for researchers and educators to understand what children prefer to read. Research has consistently shown that a diverse range of reading materials may encourage children to read (Iyengar and Ball, 2007; Manuel and Carter, 2015; Rideout, 2014), and children who read a wide variety of materials are more likely to perform particularly well in reading (OECD, 2010~~1~~). There is also evidence suggesting that children who enjoy reading prefer a wider range of reading materials and longer texts (both fiction and nonfiction), whereas their less engaged peers tend to favour shorter texts such as messages and social media items (Clark, 2019; Loh and Sun, 2019).

Commented [Rp11]: please chk

Commented [SB(12R11)]: changed

Furthermore, with rapid advances in science and technology, there is increasing research interest in how the easy access to electronic devices and the internet may impact leisure reading (Egmont, 2019; Manuel and Carter, 2015; Scholastic, 2015). Some studies show that children are more interested in web-surfing and online games than in reading books (Egmont, 2019; Manuel and Carter, 2015). Studies have also shown that children and adolescents still prefer ~~reading on~~ print to ~~using~~ digital formats for reading (Loh and Sun, 2019; Merga, 2014; Rideout, 2014; Scholastic, 2015). For instance, Rideout (2014) conducted a nationwide survey in the US and found that 62% of young children aged 2 to 10 have access to an e-reader device. Yet, on average, children spent only 5 minutes per day reading e-books as compared to 29 minutes per day reading print books. Interestingly, there is also evidence that students' online reading habits and preferences mirror their offline habits (Baron, 2017; Loh and Sun, 2019). Drawing on both survey and interview data, Loh and Sun (2019) found that adolescent avid readers tended to read more print materials as well as reading more on their mobile devices and computers, while reluctant readers read less across all devices and tended to spend more time on social media and/or games. In a survey of 440 Singapore children aged 6 to 12, Majid (2018) found that reading was listed as one of their top five leisure activities. Johnsson-Smargdi and Jonsson (2006), in their longitudinal study of long-term changes in Swedish children and teens reading, showed that despite the increase of access to various technological devices, some students were reading as much as ~~they were before~~ using new devices while others were reading less. As research lags behind technological change, more studies are needed to further our understanding of the patterns in children's reading habits and preferences in this context.

3 Leisure reading in two languages

Most of the above-mentioned studies, however, did not factor in the participants' language background. Although some studies involved bilingual children, they examined only their dominant language. Bilingual research has consistently shown that children's biliteracy development is under significant influence from the interaction of language exposure, language-specific features and formal schooling. It thus remains unclear to what extent conclusions drawn from previous research can be applied to bilingual children, and if and how bilingual leisure reading interacts with these factors. A striking difference between bilingual and monolingual children is that learning to read in two languages can promote the development of concepts and knowledge that underlie both languages or can be utilised from language to language (Bialystok, 2001; Cummins, 2000). As formulated in Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) and Developmental Interdependence Hypotheses (2000), the two languages in a bilingual learner do not exist independently as separate languages; rather, they are stored together

and operate through the same central processing system. In the same vein, meaning does not only exist in the language of the text, but also in the interaction of the reader and the text (Baker, 2011; Swaffer, 1988), as readers can use texts to learn both languages. Research examining crosslinguistic relationships has demonstrated strong correlations across languages for metalinguistic awareness and reading skills (Koda, 2005; Sun, Hu and Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). Little extant research, however, has explored whether, and if so how, bilingual children's reading enjoyment, habits and preferences in their two languages are related.

There is limited research on bilingual leisure reading among school-age children. In a study of the reading motivation and reading comprehension in Chinese and English among fifth grade bilingual students in Hong Kong, Lin, Wong and McBride-Change (2012) found that students were more motivated to read in their first language (in this case, Chinese) for leisure and in English as a foreign language for instrumental reasons such as getting good grades. Within Singapore, two studies of English-Malay bilingual primary school children found that the participants spent more time and preferred reading books in English than in Malay (Aman, 2009; Zulkifly, 2019). In a survey study of the linguistic practices of 109 10-year-old English-Malay bilingual students, Aman (2009) found that while the majority of students rated themselves proficient in reading in both English and Malay, they read English books more frequently. Zulkifly (2019) found in her study of English-Malay bilingual students that they read more English books and preferred reading English books, partly because of their perceived proficiency in English and access to a greater variety of appealing English books at home and in their school and public libraries. As both studies only included English-Malay bilingual children, it remains unclear whether and to what extent the results could be corroborated with other Singaporean bilingual children who are learning different language pairs, such as English and Chinese.

This study aims to investigate the reading enjoyment, habits and preferences of two groups of Singaporean children, English-Chinese bilingual children and English-Malay bilingual children, to add to this scant research on leisure reading in more than one language. Specifically, we aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the reading enjoyment of Singaporean bilingual children in English and in their respective Mother Tongue languages similar or different?
2. What are the reading preferences of Singaporean bilingual children in English and in their respective Mother Tongue languages?
3. What are the reading habits (frequency and duration) of Singaporean bilingual children in English and in their respective Mother Tongue languages?
4. Are there any crosslinguistic relationships between children's reading enjoyment, reading habits and reading preferences in English and in their respective Mother Tongue languages?

4 Method

4.1 Participants

The participants were 1,292 primary 3 to primary 5 children (aged 9–11) from two government schools in Singapore. Both schools had daily morning reading sessions lasting 15–20 minutes, during which children were encouraged to bring their own books to read. One weekday was allocated to Mother Tongue book reading, the remaining weekdays were up to children's choice. In total, 1,133 children completed the survey and the response rate was 88.2%. There were 7 children taking other languages as Mother

Tongue and only 22 English-Tamil children, therefore the present study ~~only~~ focuses on the other two main groups of bilingual children: 866 English-Chinese bilingual and 238 English-Malay bilingual children.

4.2 Survey

In order to understand children's reading habits and preferences in their two languages, a paper-and-pen survey was designed and piloted. The items selected for the survey were based on a review of relevant research and theories related to reading as well as an analysis of existing surveys designed for examining leisure reading in primary school children (e.g., Clark, 2019; Loh and Sun, 2020). In consideration of English being the common language for the participants, the survey was in English. Before we piloted the survey, we sought advice from teachers and children on either structuring the questions in two separate sections or presenting the same question twice, e.g., one on English reading and the other on Mother Tongue reading. Teachers and children overwhelmingly preferred two separate sections over answering the same questions twice, as it causes less confusion. Hence the survey consisted of two sets of parallel questions, with the first set focusing on their English reading habits and preferences and the second set on their respective Mother Tongue. The survey also contained a brief introduction to remind the children that the questions were about reading fiction and nonfiction books/materials in English and their Mother Tongue, both online and offline, but not about school textbooks or assessment books. To ascertain that the questions in the survey could be interpreted as intended, the initial survey was piloted with a small group of primary 3 children from another primary school. After they completed the initial survey, one-to-one interviews were conducted, during which the researchers asked the children to paraphrase the questions in the survey and interpret them. Survey items were then refined based on the results from the interviews. The finalised survey contained 55 questions and took approximately 25–30 minutes to finish.

For the purpose of the present article, 12 items were retrieved from the survey and grouped into four categories: (1) reading enjoyment and self-rated language proficiency, (2) reading habits (i.e., reading frequency for print books and e-books/online materials, reading duration for print books and e-books/online materials), (3) reasons for reading and what would make them read more and (4) reading preferences (i.e., preferred reading materials, preferred reading devices, preferred genres of fiction and nonfiction books).

To answer the research questions proposed earlier, data were submitted to three types of analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarise the general patterns in children's leisure reading. Inferential analyses were run to make comparison between children's two languages. To examine the relationship between reading enjoyment and reading habits, correlational analyses between reading enjoyment and (Pearson's r) were conducted.

4.3 Procedures

After obtaining ethics approval from the Institutional Review Board of the university, schools were contacted and located. The survey was administered to groups of children in their classrooms at the end of the first half of the academic year. The class teachers informed the children about the research. They clarified that participation was voluntary and that their participation would not affect their academic grades. The scheduling of the session was carefully discussed with the schools to avoid interference with school curriculum time.

5 Results

5.1 Bilingual children's reading enjoyment and proficiency

Reading enjoyment. The children were asked how much they enjoy reading English and Mother Tongue (Malay and Chinese) books on the scale of 'very much,' 'quite a lot,' 'a bit' and 'not at all,' with 1 being 'not at all' and 4 being 'very much.' Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations (SDs) of reading enjoyment for each language; to provide a more detailed understanding, the proportions of each option are also included.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for reading enjoyment by language

	English	Chinese	Malay
Very much	59.1%	16.4%	24.8%
Quite a lot	26.2%	19.9%	33.2%
A bit	13.1%	43.3%	36.6%
Not at all	1.6%	20.4%	5.5%
Mean	3.43	2.32	2.77
(SD)	(0.78)	(0.98)	(0.89)

Overall, the children enjoy reading English books significantly more than Chinese books ($t(865) = 27.34, p < .001, d = 0.93$) or Malay books ($t(237) = 7.50, p < .001; d = 0.49$). As shown, 85.3% of them reported they enjoyed reading English books very much or quite a lot, in contrast to 58.0% for Malay and 36.3% for Chinese. Moreover, a closer look at the two Mother Tongue languages reveals that reading enjoyment in Malay is significantly higher than reading enjoyment in Chinese ($t(1102) = 6.43, p < .001, d = 0.47$). Percentage-wise, more Malay children than Chinese children reported that they enjoyed reading Mother Tongue books very much (24.8% for Malay vs 16.4% for Chinese) or quite a lot (33.2% for Malay vs 19.9% for Chinese), and a much larger proportion of the Chinese children than the Malay children reported that they did not enjoy reading Mother Tongue books at all (20.4% vs 5.5%).

Self-rated language proficiency. We use self-rated language proficiency to reflect children's proficiency in each language, as standardised and psychometrically sound assessment tools to measure children's language proficiency in Chinese and Malay are not available. Previous research has demonstrated that self-reported language proficiency is highly correlated with children's performance on direct measurement (Powers and Powers, 2015; Smith, Briggs and Pothier, 2018). Moreover, self-reported data allow us to compare children's language proficiency crosslinguistically. The children were presented with the statement 'Reading English/Mother Tongue books is ...' and a four-point scale to choose from, with 4 being 'very easy for me,' 3 being 'kind of easy for me,' 2 being 'kind of difficult for me' and 1 being 'very difficult for me.' The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for self-rated language proficiency by language

	English	Chinese	Malay
Very easy for me	49.6%	14.3%	24.5%
Kind of easy for me	42.0%	28.6%	43.0%
Kind of difficult for me	7.1%	34.9%	27.8%
Very difficult for me	1.4%	22.2%	4.6%
Mean	3.40	2.35	2.87
(SD)	(0.68)	(0.98)	(0.83)

Similar to the patterns shown in reading enjoyment, the children reported significantly higher levels of English proficiency than Mother Tongue proficiency (Chinese: $t(863) = 26.26, p < .001; d = 0.94$; Malay: $t(236) = 5.85, p < .001, d = 0.38$). For English, difficulty in reading is apparently not a serious issue, as about half of the participants (49.6%) reported reading in English as very easy and 42.0% as kind of easy. In contrast, 24.5% and 43.0% of the children reported that reading in Malay was very easy or kind of easy, respectively, and only 14.3% and 28.6% of the children reported reading Chinese books as very easy or kind of easy, respectively. Moreover, between the two Mother Tongues, Chinese appears to be a more difficult language than Malay. The children's self-rated language proficiency in Chinese was significantly lower than that in Malay ($t(1100) = 7.51, p < .001; d = 0.55$). While 22.5% of the Chinese children reported that reading Chinese books was very difficult, only 4.6% of their Malay peers reported so.

5.2 Bilingual children's reasons for reading

Reasons for reading. To understand their reasons for leisure reading in each language, the children were given five reasons (reading for relaxing, for enjoyment, for learning new things, for better grades and for improving language) and asked to rank them from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most preferred reason and 5 being the least preferred reason. Table 3 presents the children's rankings of the five reasons for each language.

Table 3. Reasons for reading by language

Reason	English		Chinese		Malay	
	Reason	Average Ranking	Reason	Average Ranking	Reason	Average Ranking
1	For enjoyment	2.53	For better grades in tests and examinations	2.57	For better grades in tests and examinations	2.33

Commented [Rp13]: typesetter to please break the rule in two places below, between English Chinese and Malay

2	For learning new things	2.91	To improve my language	2.91	To improve my language	2.71
3	For relaxation	2.92	For enjoyment	3.00	For learning new things	2.85
4	For better grades in tests and examinations	3.05	For learning new things	3.00	For enjoyment	3.33
5	To improve my language	3.26	For relaxation	3.26	For relaxation	3.65

Consistent with the research presented by Majid, Jie and Ying (2017) on the bilingual reading habits of adolescent students in one secondary school in Singapore, the primary school children in this study read in English and their Mother Tongue language for different reasons. For English, the children generally read for enjoyment, to learn new things and for relaxation, whereas for both Mother Tongues, they read more for functional reasons than enjoyment (e.g., for better grades and to improve their language).

What would make them read more. The children were asked to choose what would motivate them read more from 13 options; the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. What would make children read more for each language

	English	Chinese	Malay
1	I had more time 73.4%	I enjoyed it more 57.0%	I had more time 64.8%
2	I enjoyed it more 57.7%	I had more time 56.4%	I enjoyed it more 58.1%
3	it was about interesting subjects 55.0%	I found reading easier 47.5%	it was about interesting subjects 51.2%
4	books were cheaper 43.4%	it was about interesting subjects 44.3%	I found reading easier 44.9%
5	I knew what to read 35.9%	I knew what to read 41.4%	books were cheaper 40.5%
6	my family encouraged me more 35.2%	books had more pictures 38.5%	my family encouraged me more 35.7%
7	I found reading easier 34.3%	stories were shorter 35.2%	I knew what to read 35.7%

Commented [Rp14]: typesetter to please align the first lines of each point

8	books had more pictures	30.7%	my family encouraged me more	34.1%	books had more pictures	31.3%
9	libraries were better	29.6%	books were cheaper	29.9%	my school encouraged me more	23.8%
10	my school encouraged me more	23.1%	someone read aloud to me	23.7%	stories were shorter	23.8%
11	stories were shorter	17.1%	libraries were better	23.0%	libraries were better	21.9%
12	someone read aloud to me	14.6%	my school encouraged me more	20.6%	my friends read more	16.3%
13	my friends read more	13.3%	my friends read more	14.6%	someone read aloud to me	14.1%

Examination of the most frequently chosen options for each language highlights that each language faces its own challenge in promoting reading. To read more English books, the top three choices the children opted for were more time (73.4%), more enjoyment (57.7%) and more interesting subjects (55.0%), followed by cheaper books (43.4%) and knowing what to read (35.9%). Reading difficulty was reported as a barrier by 34.3% of the children, and 30.7% would like to read books with more pictures. A different pattern emerged for Chinese reading: more enjoyment was the top choice (57.0%), followed by more time (56.4%). Almost half of the children reported reading difficulty as a barrier (47.5%). The results also suggest that the children would read more Chinese books if help was provided for the book selection, as 44.3% and 41.4% of them reported they would read more if it was about interesting subjects or if they knew what to read. To read more Malay books, similar barriers to English were reported: more time (64.8%), more enjoyment (58.1%), and more interesting subjects (51.2%). Compared to English, a higher proportion of children reported that they would read more if reading was easier (44.9%). 'Books were cheaper' ranked as the fifth reason (40.5%). Together, these results suggest that reading programmes should take these differences into consideration so to gauge the specific barriers pertaining to each language.

5.3 Bilingual children's reading preferences

Preferred reading devices. The children were provided five types of reading devices (print books, e-readers, smartphones, computers and tablets) and asked to indicate their device(s) of choice for leisure reading in each language. They were allowed to choose more than one device. Table 5 shows the percentages for the children's device choice for each language.

Commented [Rp15]: added as the percentages add up to more than 100 in the table below

Commented [SB(16R15)]: thanks. added one sentence to show children were allowed to choose more than one answer, hence the total may be more than 100%.

Table 5. Preferred reading devices by language

Reading device	English	Chinese	Malay
Printed book	70.4%	72.7%	65.5%
Computer	29.7%	30.6%	32.3%
Smartphone	27.7%	23.3%	29.7%
Tablet	27.4%	21.6%	27.1%
e-reader	15.6%	15.0%	10.5%

Compared to other types of reading devices, the children preferred print books across all languages (65.5–72.7%), followed by computers, smartphones, and tablets. E-readers were the least preferred reading device, perhaps because few of the children owned e-readers.

Preferred reading materials. The children were given six types of reading materials (storybooks, comics, magazines, internet, information books and newspapers) and asked to rank them from 1 to 6, with 1 being the most preferred and 6 being the least preferred material. Figure 1 shows the ranking of preferred reading materials for each language.

Figure 1. Preferred Reading Material by Language

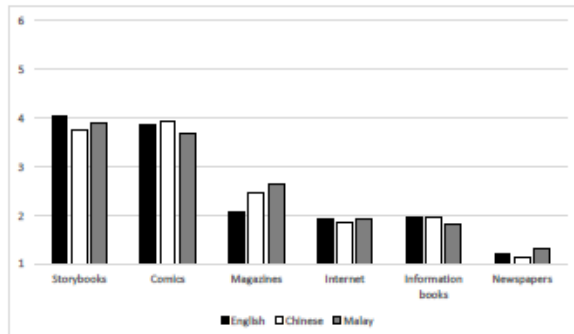


Figure 1. Preferred reading material by language

As shown in Figure 1, the children showed similar preferences for reading material across languages. Storybooks and comics are the two most popular choices, followed by magazines and the internet. Information books and newspapers are the two least preferred types of reading material. It is interesting that for Chinese reading, comics are the most preferred reading materials. This may be due to the variety of Chinese comics available.

Preferred genres of fiction books. To understand the children’s preferred genres for fictions books, they were presented a list of popular genres and asked to select the genre

Commented [Rp17]: typesetter please delete figure title at top

types they like to read. Table 6 shows the percentage for each genre in each language that the children chose.

Table 6. Children’s preferences for fiction book genres by language

Genre	English	Chinese	Malay
Adventure	74.6%	65.9%	62.6%
Comedy	37.2%	36.4%	41.3%
Horror/ghost	52.4%	38.8%	68.9%
Crime/detective	49.6%	39.8%	43.0%
War/spy-related	49.9%	39.5%	26.0%
Science/fantasy	38.3%	30.0%	35.3%
Sports-related fiction	30.3%	30.5%	24.7%
Animal-related fiction	19.4%	16.2%	22.3%
Poetry	17.0%	15.7%	15.5%
Romance/relationships	7.2%	8.8%	5.1%
I do not read fiction	3.1%	9.5%	3.4%

The children reported a diverse range of fiction books they prefer to read. Interestingly, though, their preferences for types of fiction are similar across all languages. For both English and the Mother Tongue languages, adventure, comedy, horror/ghost, and crime/detective stories were the most favourite types of fiction, whereas poetry and romance/relationships were the least frequently chosen types. While only 3.1% of the children reported that they did not read English fiction and 3.4% of the Malay children did not read Malay fiction books, 9.5% of the Chinese children indicated that they did not read Chinese fiction books.

Preferred genres of nonfiction books. Similarly, the children were asked to indicate their preferred types of nonfiction books, with the results presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Children’s preferences for nonfiction books by language

Genre	English	Chinese	Malay
Animals and plants	47.9%	39.2%	35.9%
History	41.0%	32.0%	42.6%
Sports	35.4%	27.4%	40.9%

Science	46.0%	36.0%	24.7%
Biography/autobiography	35.4%	29.1%	38.7%
Hobbies	28.6%	28.0%	30.6%
Geography	22.6%	16.2%	18.8%
Travel	18.4%	12.1%	10.2%
I do not read nonfiction	12.%	24.2%	13.6%

Even though the children reported a wide choice of nonfiction books, in general they are not as popular as fiction books. The most popular nonfiction books were about animals and plants, history and sports. However, the children showed lesser variation in their reading in nonfiction compared to fiction, particularly for hobbies. This may be due to the varied availability of each type of nonfiction book in each language.

5.4 Bilingual children's reading frequency and duration

Reading frequency. The children were also asked to indicate if they read print books or e-books/online materials 'almost daily,' 'every other day,' 'during weekends,' 'during school holidays only' or 'not at all.' The proportions of the children's reading frequency for each language and for both print books and e-books/online materials are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Reading frequency for printed books and e-books/online materials by language

	English		Chinese		Malay	
	Printed books	E-books/online materials	Printed books	E-books/online materials	Printed books	E-books/online materials
Almost daily	48.2%	12.2%	14.4%	6.6%	14.8%	10.2%
Every other day	21.7%	18.5%	27.4%	14.3%	30.8%	17.4%
During weekends	6.3%	11.2%	16.9%	12.6%	12.2%	9.3%
During school holidays only	10.9%	17.4%	17.7%	16.2%	19.8%	16.5%
Not at all	12.8%	40.6%	23.5%	50.2%	22.4%	46.6%

Commented [Rp18]: typesetter to please rule below between English Chinese Malay

Compared to e-books/online materials, children read print books more often across all languages. A large proportion of them do not read e-books/online materials at all (40.6% for English, 50.2% for Chinese, 46.6% for Malay), and fewer of them read e-books/online materials on a daily or every other day basis (12.2% and 18.5% for English, 6.6% and 14.3% for Chinese, 10.2% and 17.4% for Malay). By contrast, 48.2% of the children read English print books daily, and another one-fifth of them (21.76%) read every other day. For reading Mother Tongue print books, almost half of the children read on a daily or every other day basis (41.8% for Chinese, 45.6% for Malay), though less frequently than for English print books. A noteworthy finding is that more children reported that they do not read Mother Tongue print books at all (23.5% for Chinese, 22.4% for Malay) compared to English print books (12.8%).

Another interesting finding is that greater proportions of children only read Mother Tongue print books during school holidays (17.7% for Chinese and 19.8% for Malay vs 10.9% for English), which may be because students in Singapore tend to be given school-assigned holiday reading assignments.

Reading duration. Table 9 presents how much time the children spend on each reading session (15 minutes or less, 30 minutes or less, one hour or less, more than an hour) for each language and for both print books and e-books/online materials.

Table 9. Reading duration for printed books and e-books/online materials by Language

	English		Chinese		Malay	
	Printed books	E-books/online materials	Printed books	E-books/online materials	Printed books	E-books/online materials
< 15 mins	31.8%	59.6%	49.7%	64.0%	56.4%	71.5%
16–30 mins	27.6%	21.3%	27.6%	20.4%	26.3%	15.7%
31–60 mins	16.8%	11.4%	12.5%	9.4%	11.0%	7.7%
> 1 hour	23.8%	7.6%	10.2%	6.3%	6.4%	5.1%

Commented [Rp19]: break rule

Across all languages, the children read e-books/online materials for much shorter durations compared to print books. More than half of them read e-books/online materials for fewer than 15 minutes each session (59.6–71.5%). While about one-fourth of the children read print books for 16–30 minutes each session, fewer reported that amount of time reading e-books/online materials (15.7–21.3%).

The data revealed a general trend of children reading English print books for longer durations than they read Mother Tongue print books. About one-fourth of the children (23.8%) reported they read English print books for more than an hour, and another 16.8% read for 31 minutes to an hour, whereas a much lower proportion of children reported reading Mother Tongue print books for the same duration (10.2% and 12.5% for Chinese, 6.4% and 11.0% for Malay). Moreover, while 31.8% of the children read English print books for less than 15 minutes, 49.7% of the Chinese children read Chinese print books and more than half of the Malay children (56.4%) read Malay books for this same amount of time. More than half of the children read print books for less than 30 minutes (59.4% for English, 77.3% for Chinese, 82.7% for Malay), which is about the length of morning reading session.

5.5 Correlations between reading enjoyment and reading habits

To explore the crosslinguistic relationships between the children's reading enjoyment and reading habits in English and in their respective Mother Tongues, correlational analyses (Pearson's r) on reading enjoyment, reading frequency, and reading duration in English and Mother Tongue languages were carried out, as represented in Table 10. In consideration of earlier results showing children's preference for print books over e-books/online materials, the correlation analyses focus on print books only.

Table 10. Across-language correlations between reading enjoyment and reading habits

	Chinese reading enjoyment	Malay reading enjoyment	Chinese reading frequency	Chinese reading duration	Malay reading frequency	Malay reading duration
English reading enjoyment	n.s.	n.s.	.11**	.10*	.17**	.12*
English reading frequency	n.s.	n.s.	.32**	.13*	.40**	.13*
English reading duration	n.s.	n.s.	.17**	.28**	.22**	.48**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, n.s. not significant

The children's reading enjoyment for English was not significantly correlated with their Mother Tongue reading enjoyment ($r_s = .00-.04$, $p_s = .23-.44$). However, the children's reading enjoyment in English was significantly correlated with their Mother Tongue reading frequency and reading duration ($r_s = .08-.24$, $p_s < .05$), whereas similar patterns were not found between Chinese/Malay reading enjoyment and English reading frequency and duration. Moreover, reading frequency and reading duration in English and Mother Tongue were significantly correlated ($r_s = .08-.48$, $p_s < .05$) except for English reading duration and Chinese reading frequency.

Correlations among reading enjoyment, reading frequency and reading duration within each language were also examined, with the results summarised in Table 11.

Table 11. Within-language correlations between reading enjoyment and reading habits

	English reading enjoyment	English reading frequency
English reading frequency	.35**	
English reading duration	.34**	.43**
	Chinese reading enjoyment	Chinese reading frequency
Chinese reading frequency	.52**	
Chinese reading duration	.39**	.45**
	Malay reading enjoyment	Malay reading frequency
Malay reading frequency	.32**	
Malay reading duration	.24**	.40**

** $p < .01$

Within each language, reading enjoyment was significantly correlated with reading frequency and reading duration ($r_s = .24-.52, p_s < .01$), and reading duration and reading frequency were significantly related as well ($r_s = .40-.45, p_s < .01$).

6 Discussion

Overall, the participating children enjoyed reading English books more than Mother Tongue books (Malay or Chinese). This finding echoes the findings of the Hong Kong study by Lin et al. (2012) that children tend to read for pleasure in their first language and for functional reasons in the second language. Nonetheless, our results highlight how bilingual policy in schools may be instrumental in children's reading preferences. In Singapore, where English is the medium of instruction for all subjects except for Mother Tongue, bilingual children receive more formal instruction in English than in their Mother Tongue. Moreover, this policy emphasis on English language has had significant impact on home language choices, with English now being the most common home language (Lee, 2019). The greater exposure to English oral and written language at home and in school thus leads to a higher English proficiency, as shown in the children's self-rated language proficiency. This higher English proficiency might in turn pave the way for these children to develop greater enjoyment toward reading, as shown in their responses to reasons for reading in each language. They read English books mainly for enjoyment, learning new things and relaxation, whereas their reasons for reading Mother Tongue books are functional – for better grades in examinations and to improve their Mother Tongue language.

Commented [Rp20]: please add this to ref list

Commented [SB(21R20)]: Revised the year and added the reference, thanks.

In addition, within the Singapore context, the focus of the curriculum may have a role to play in nurturing children's reading enjoyment in current contexts. As previously mentioned, enjoyment and relaxation are among the top reasons given by the participating children for reading English books. This differs from the findings of an earlier survey of 440 upper primary children from three schools in Singapore, which stated that 62% of the participants reported that most of the time, they read to get better grades on their tests and examinations (Majid and Tan, 2007). The disparity may be due to the different emphases of the language curricula when the surveys were conducted. Participants in the Majid and Tan (2007) study studied under the English language syllabus (Singapore MOE, 2001) based on Systemic Functional Linguistics and took a genre-based approach. Even though it claimed to follow a communicative approach, English language instruction emphasised the centrality of explicit language teaching, which focuses on forms (Lim, 2003). The current English language syllabus (Singapore MOE, 2010) incorporates both communicative and structural components and seeks *in particular* to develop a love for reading in children *in particular*. The Shared Book Approach is one of the major teaching strategies, and most schools allocate 15–20 minutes for morning reading. Hence, it is possible that the shift in syllabus impacted children's leisure reading practices in English. As the current Mother Tongue syllabus was *just* released in 2015 with a clear emphasis on enjoyable learning (Singapore MOE, 2015), it would be interesting to see if such a pattern could be observed for children's motivation for leisure reading in Mother Tongue languages as well.

Despite being the most connected nation in the world (~~'Singapore the Most Connected'~~ *Singapore Economic Development Board, 2020, 2016*), the participating children have been shown to prefer reading printed books over e-books/online materials, as the printed book was reported to be the most preferred form of reading device. Moreover, almost half of the children did not read online materials at all, and children read printed books more often and for longer duration across languages than e-books/online materials. Together with similar findings from recent research conducted in the UK (Scholastic, 2016), the US (Rideout, 2014) and on Singaporean adolescents (Loh and Sun, 2019), our results highlight the complexity of understanding reading habits and preferences in relation to technology and suggest the importance of providing print books to encourage children to read in this digital age. At least for the current cohort of participants, print books remain the most preferred reading device, and consequently, the discussion presented ~~below focuses~~ *focuses* on printed books. It does not, however, suggest that the impact of technology on reading can be neglected as results from elsewhere also showed a slow increasing trend in reading using mobile devices and reading online materials as children grow up (Clark, 2019; Loh and Sun, 2019). Given that children's online reading habits may reflect their offline reading habits (Loh and Sun, 2019), longitudinal studies are necessary to further examine this complex issue.

The reading preferences of bilingual children participating in the survey showed similarities across devices and languages. As mentioned earlier, whether reading in English or their Mother Tongue, the children prefer reading print books to e-books/online materials. The children in this study also showed convergence in their preferred reading materials across their two languages, as storybooks and comics were the two most selected choices. Additionally, their preferences for the fiction genres are similar across languages, suggesting that these bilingual children are likely to favour books from their favourite genres in either of their languages. This suggests that language teachers and librarians can work together to ensure congruence in the Mother Tongue and English fiction collections at school and in class libraries. However, the children's nonfiction

Commented [Rp22]: please add this ref list

Commented [SB(23R22)]: checked the references, revised the name, and added it into the list.

Commented [Rp24]: please add this to ref list

Commented [Rp25]: should this be 2015? 2016 is not listed in refs

Commented [SB(26R25)]: changed the reference list, should be 2016, thanks.

preferences vary greatly across languages; one possible reason may be that the books available for nonfiction in each language may vary.

Moreover, our results further underscore the importance of reading enjoyment in promoting and sustaining good reading habits across languages, as the participants' reading frequency and reading duration were shown to be universally correlated with their reading enjoyment within each language, a finding similar to those reported by previous studies (Clark, 2012, 2019; Kirby et al., 2011). A closer look, however, revealed that Singaporean bilingual children's English reading habits differ from their Mother Tongue reading habits, as they read English books more often and for longer durations in comparison to Mother Tongue books.

To engage children to read more in Mother Tongue, our results suggest that each Mother Tongue language (i.e., Chinese and Malay) faces its own challenges, which may be due to language-specific ~~reasons~~ factors. For a start, Malay has a shallow orthography characterised by highly regular grapheme-to-phoneme mappings (~~Liow & Lee, 2004; Katz and Frost, 1992; Mukhlis and Wee, in press~~); hence, difficulty in reading was not a serious issue for the Malay participants (though more ~~difficult so~~ than for reading in English). Instead, finding more time and choosing suitable books to read are the top barriers to reading more Malay books. By contrast, Chinese appears to be a more difficult language, as more than half of the Chinese children found reading Chinese very difficult or kind of difficult, and 51.5% of them reported that they would read more if they found reading easier. One possible reason for these results may be that reading Chinese independently requires a mastery of a certain number of Chinese characters, and ~~out of the 2,500 most commonly used Chinese characters~~. Primary 3 to 5 children only learn 800–1,600 out of the 2,500 most commonly used Chinese characters (Singapore MOE, 2015). Moreover, while graded readers and High/Low books are easily available in English, there is a lack of such equivalent Chinese reading materials that cater to the number of characters the children have learned. Therefore, more effort should be made to develop suitable reading materials to match children to the right books.

More importantly, this study extends the existing crosslinguistic research by showing that there is a significant interconnection between English leisure reading and Mother Tongue leisure reading. Despite their different reasons for reading English and Mother Tongue books, the children's reading frequency and duration in English and their Mother Tongue were significantly correlated, suggesting that children who read often and for longer durations in one language are likely to do the same in another language. Even though their reading enjoyment in the two languages was not significantly correlated, the children's English reading enjoyment was significantly associated with Mother Tongue reading frequency and duration. This may imply that leisure reading as an enjoyable activity is not a new experience for the participating bilingual children, given the clear emphasis on reading enjoyment set by their English syllabus. Hence, the children who enjoy reading English books are more likely to read Mother Tongue books and tend to read them for longer durations. However, the children's lower level of Mother Tongue language proficiency may restrict them from enjoying Mother Tongue reading as much as they enjoy English reading. These results lend support to the theories reviewed earlier about the interdependence of bilingual children's two languages (Cummins, 2000; Koda, 2005), that is, although bilingual children's two languages are outwardly distinct, proficiency in them is supported by shared concepts and knowledge derived from learning and experience of learners. Therefore, it is very likely that learners apply knowledge or conceptual skills gained from one language in learning another.

One important implication elucidated in Cummins' CUP Hypothesis is that knowledge/skills of the two languages can be developed through either of the languages,

Commented [Rp27]: please add this to ref list

Commented [SB(28R27)]: added.

Commented [Rp29]: please add this to ref list

Commented [SB(30R29)]: removed. Thanks.

as well as through both languages (Baker, 2006¹¹; Cummins, 2000). In consideration of the results concerning similar preferences for fiction and nonfiction books in English and Mother Tongues reported earlier, this implies that promoting reading in either language may help influence reading behaviours in the other language. Currently, the children's Mother Tongue reading frequency and duration seem to benefit from an emphasis on English reading, as similar patterns were not found between Chinese/Malay reading enjoyment and English reading frequency/duration.

Commented [Rp31]: should this be 2011?
2006 is not listed in refs

Commented [SB(32R31)]: Yes, it should be 2011.

7 Conclusions and points for further research

The results from the survey provide a general picture of Singaporean children's reading enjoyment, habits and preferences, contributing to the scant research on leisure reading in multilingual context. Singaporean children's leisure reading in their two languages are ~~under-influenced by~~ ~~from~~ the interaction of language exposure, language-specific features and bilingual education. Our study has extended the existing literature by showing that the positive relationships between reading duration, reading frequency and reading enjoyment can be observed in both the languages of bilingual children ~~'s both languages as well~~, even when children's language proficiencies in the two languages are uneven. Moreover, results from the study add to the current bi/multilingual research by demonstrating that children's leisure reading in their two languages are interrelated.

The design of reading programmes should take these factors into consideration. Firstly, in view of the present finding that reading enjoyment is closely correlated with reading habits in children's languages, reading enjoyment should remain as the central focus of reading programmes/instructions. Secondly, the results highlight the importance of providing a more balanced reading programme to include languages possessed by children. Under the current English and Mother Tongue curricula in Singapore, nurturing reading enjoyment in English is more emphasised and more explicitly supported than Mother Tongue languages. Consequently, reading programmes in school lean towards English, and as revealed in the present study, children thus showed uneven levels of reading enjoyment in their two languages. In order to nurture Mother Tongue reading enjoyment, reading programmes should strike a balance between English and Mother Tongue languages. Moreover, as shown in the present study, nurturing reading enjoyment in one language may not only help children to read more and read longer in that language, but also in the other language. Thirdly, the results showed that each Mother Tongue language faces its own challenges. Hence, schools need to develop strategies to specifically address issues in learning to read and developing a love for reading for each language. Additionally, school libraries should curate Mother Tongue books that especially cater for children's Mother Tongue language proficiencies within each school and for each language to ensure students have easy access to reading material. Finally, the present study has demonstrated that children share similar reading preferences for English and Mother Tongue languages. Hence, school libraries may consider stocking a wide variety of print books in both English and Mother Tongue to cater for their reading diet, and so to help children read widely in both languages.

Although the results of the present study substantiate our understanding of leisure reading among bilingual children, several limitations are to be noted and addressed in future research. One inherent limitation of the present study is its cross-sectional design, which does not allow the mapping of the developmental trajectories of reading habits and preferences in children's two languages. A longitudinal research design, thus, is necessary to follow specifically the development of bilingual children's leisure reading so as to better delineate whether and how their reading habits and preferences change and what impact such changes may have. Another limitation is that the present study did not

include qualitative data, which has been consistently shown to be valuable in further explaining and elaborating quantitative results (Loh and Sun, 2019, 2020; Merga, 2014). The patterns of children's reading revealed by survey data tell us very little about how and why children choose certain books in a certain language to read. Understanding children's perspectives will help teachers and researchers better evaluate and design reading instructions to connect bi/multilingual children's leisure reading and bi/multilingual education. While our study only raises these questions, we believe future studies should include children's voices by adopting mixed methods design to provide a more fine-tuned analysis and complete picture of bilingual children's reading habits and preferences in both languages.

About the authors

Baoqi Sun is a research scientist at the Centre for Research in Child Development at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her research interests are in bilingual education, biliteracy development, language acquisition and leisure reading. Email: baoqi.sun@nie.edu.sg

Chin Ee Loh is an Associate Professor in the English Language and Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her research focuses on literature and literacy education, particularly on reading and school libraries. Her recent books are *The Space and Practice of Reading: A Case Study of Reading and Social Class in Singapore* (2017, Routledge) and *Literature Education in the Asia-Pacific: Policies, Practices and Perspectives in Global Times* (2017, Routledge). Email: chineeloh@nie.edu.sg

Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen is Professor in Applied Linguistics at the Department of Education, University of Bath, UK. Her research interests encompass ideological, sociocultural-cognitive and policy perspectives on children's multilingual education and biliteracy development. As an active researcher, she has examined bi/multilingual community-home-school contexts in the UK, Canada, France and Singapore on topics of curriculum policy, language-in-educational policy and family language policy. Her most recent research project is entitled *Family Language Policy: A Multi-Level Investigation of Multilingual Practices in Transnational Families*, funded by *The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)*.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by an Office of Education Research grant (SUG 18/17 SBQ), funded by National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.

References

Commented [Rp33]: please add a couple of lines about each author

Commented [SB(34R33)]: sure, thanks. Added. Feel free to shorten if needed, thanks.

Formatted: Line spacing: single

Formatted: Line spacing: single

- Aman, N. (2009) The linguistic practices of bilingual Singapore Malay students: A tale of language maintenance. *Jurnal e-Utama* 2: 47–68.
- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (2009) *National English Curriculum: Initial Advice*. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority.
- Baker, C. (2011) *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Vol. 79). Multilingual Matters.
- Bal, P. M. and Velkamp, M. (2013) How does fiction reading influence empathy? An experimental investigation on the role of emotional transportation. *PloSone* 8.1: 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0055341>
- Baron, N. S. (2017) Reading in a digital age. *Phi Delta Kappan* 99.2: 15–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721717734184>
- Bialystok, E. (2001) *Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy and Cognition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, C. (2012) *Children's and Young People's Reading Today: Findings from the 2011 National Literacy Trust's Annual Survey*. London: National Literacy Trust.
- Clark, C. (2019) *Children and Young People's Reading in 2017/18*. London: National Literacy Trust.
- Cummins, J. (2000) *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853596773>
- Curd-Christian, X. L. (2014). Planning for development or decline? Education policy for Chinese language in Singapore. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 11.1: 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2014.871621>
- Dickenson, D. (2014) *Children and Reading: Literature Review*. Surry Hills, NSW: Australia Council for the Arts.
- Egmont (2019) *Children's Reading for Pleasure: Trends and Challenges*. London: Egmont Books.
- Flynn, N. and Curdt-Christian, X. L. (2018) Intentions versus enactment: Making sense of policy and practice for teaching English as an additional language. *Language and Education* 32.5: 410–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2018.1475484>
- Guthrie, J. T., Taboada, A. and Wigfield, A. (2011). Alignment of cognitive processes in reading with motivations for reading. In D. Lapp and D Fisher (eds) *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*, 3rd edition 125–31. New York: Routledge.
- Iyengar, S. and Ball, D. (2007) *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.
- Johnsson-Smaragdi, U. and Jonsson, A. (2006) Book reading in leisure time: long-term changes in young peoples' book reading habits. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 50.5: 519–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830600953600>
- Kirby, J. R., Ball, A., Geier, B. K., Parrila, R. and Wade-Woolley, L. (2011) The development of reading interest and its relation to reading ability. *Journal of Research in Reading* 34.3: 263–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9817.2010.01439.x>
- Koda, K. (2005) *Insights into Second Language Reading: A Cross-linguistic Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524841>

Krashen, S. D. (2004). The power of reading: Insights from the research: Insights from the research. ABC-CLIO.

Lin, D., Wong, K. K. and McBride-Chang, C. (2012) Reading motivation and reading comprehension in Chinese and English among bilingual Students. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 25(-3): 717–37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-011-9297-8>

Formatted: Font: Italic

Lim, S. C. (2002). Developments in the English language syllabuses in Singapore. Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 22(2), 81-95.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Liow, S. J. R., & Lee, L. C. (2004). Metalinguistic awareness and semi-syllabic scripts: Children's spelling errors in Malay. Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 17(1-2), 7-26.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic

Loh, C. E. (2013) Singaporean boys constructing global literate selves through their reading practices in and out of school. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 44.1: 38–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2012.01177.x>

Loh, C. E. and Sun, B. (2018). *Report on the Reading Habits of Singapore Teenagers 2017*. Singapore: NIE.

Commented [Rp35]: add publisher

Loh, C. E. and Sun, B. (2019) 'I'd still prefer to read the hard copy': Adolescents' print and digital reading habits. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 62.6: 663–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.904>

Loh, C. E., and Sun, B. (2020) Cultural capital, habitus and reading futures: middle-class adolescent students' cultivation of reading dispositions in Singapore. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 41.2: 234–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1690426>

Loh, C. E., Sun, B. and Majid, S. (2020) Do girls read differently from boys? Adolescents and their gendered reading habits and preferences. *English in Education* 54.2: 174–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2019.1610328>

Majid, S. (2018) Leisure reading behaviour of young children in Singapore. *Reading Horizons* 57.2: 56–81.

Majid, S. and Tan, V. (2007) Understanding the reading habits of children in Singapore. *Journal of Educational Media & Library Sciences* 45.2: 187–98.

Majid, S., Jie, H. N. K. and Ying, S. (2017) Leisure reading preferences of bilingual female students in Singapore. *Library and Information Science Research* 27.1: 1–12.

Manuel, J. and Carter, D. (2015) Current and historical perspectives on Australian teenagers' reading practices and preferences. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 38.2: 115–30.

Mellon, C. A. (1990) Leisure reading choices of rural teens. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 18: 223–28.

Merga, M. K. (2014) Western Australian adolescents' reasons for infrequent engagement in recreational book reading. *Literacy Learning: the Middle Years* 22.2: 60–66.

Mullis, I. V., Martin, M. O., Foy, P. and Drucker, K. T. (2012) *PIRLS 2011 International Results in Reading*. Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

Mumper, M. L. and Gerrig, R. J. (2017) Leisure reading and social cognition: A meta-analysis. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 11.1: 109. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000089>

Neuman, S. B. and Celano, D. (2012) *Giving Our Children a Fighting Chance: Poverty, Literacy, and the Development of Information Capital*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2011) *Are Students who Enjoy Reading Better Readers?* Washington DC: ~~Author~~OECD.
- Powers, D. E. and Powers, A. (2015) The incremental contribution of TOEIC® Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing Tests to predicting performance on real-life English language tasks. *Language Testing* 32.2: 151–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532214551855>
- Rideout, V. (2014) *Learning at Home: Families' Educational Media Use in America*. New York: Joan Ganz Cooney Center.
- Rutherford, L., Merga, M. K. and Singleton, A. (2018) Influences on Australian adolescents' recreational reading. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 41.1: 44–56.
- Sainsbury, M. and Clarkson, R. (2008) *Attitudes to reading at ages nine and eleven: Full report*. Slough, UK: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Scholastic (2016~~5~~) *Kids and Family Reading Report*. Retrieved from www.scholastic.com/readingreport/
- Scholastic (2019) *Kids and Family Reading Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/>
- Singapore Department of Statistics (2019) *Population Trends*. Retrieved from <http://www.singstat.gov.sg>
- Singapore Ministry of Education (2001) *English Language Syllabus for Primary and Secondary Schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/languages-and-literature>
- Singapore Ministry of Education (2010) *English Language Syllabus for Primary and Secondary Schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/languages-and-literature>
- Singapore Ministry of Education (2015) *Chinese Language Primary Syllabus*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/languages-and-literature>
- Singapore Economic Development Board (2020) *Singapore, Sweden Top the Global Inclusive Internet Index*. Retrieved from <https://www.edb.gov.sg/en/news-and-events/insights/innovation/singapore--sweden-top-the-global-inclusive-internet-index.html#:~:text=Singapore%20and%20Sweden%20lead%20the,the%20benefits%20derived%20from%20it>.
- Smith, S. A., Briggs, J. G. and Pothier, H. (2018) Exploring variation in reading comprehension among young adult Spanish–English bilinguals: The role of environmental language contact and attitudes toward reading. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 22.6: 695–716. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006917690913>
- Sullivan, A. and Brown, M. (2015) Reading for pleasure and progress in vocabulary and mathematics. *British Educational Research Journal* 41.6: 971–91. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3180>
- Sun, B., Hu, G., & Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (2018). *Metalinguistic Contribution to Writing Competence: A Study of Monolingual Children in China and Bilingual Children in Singapore*. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 31(7), 1499–1523.
- Swaffler, J. K. (1988) Readers, texts, and second languages: The interactive process. *The Modern Language Journal* 72: 123–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1988.tb04175.x>
- Lee, H.L. (2019, October). *Speak Mandarin Campaign marks 40 years: Singapore must guard against losing bilingual edge, says PM Lee Hsien Loong*. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/speak-mandarin-campaign-marks-40-years-with-local-lexicon-pm-lee-hsien-loong-says>

Commented [Rp36]: this is given as 2010 at two places in text. pl chk

Commented [SB(37R36)]: Thanks, changed both to 2011.

Commented [Rp38]: this is not cited in text, delete here?

Commented [SB(39R38)]: Yes, please. thanks.

Commented [Rp40]: add Retrieved from as below?

Commented [SB(41R40)]: thanks, added.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic

Zulkifly, M. (2019) I always need a translation to read: Malay-English bilingual children's reading preferences. *International Association of School Librarianship Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.29173/iasl7387>