

The Effect of Pre-Class Assignment in Enhancing the Chinese National-Type School Pupils in Mastery Chinese Language
(Kesan Tugasan Pra Kelas dalam Meningkatkan Murid Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina dalam Penguasaan Bahasa Cina)

LING KE BING* & CHEW FONG PENG

ABSTRACT

The KSSR curriculum system introduced by Malaysia's ministry of education is demanding teachers to build pupils who will have the ability to carry out the learning process independently. To build pupils with the ability to learn independently, the pre-class assignment is an implementation needed to give the learning autonomy back to pupils. However, Wu (2017) stated that educators do not like students to do any pre-class assignment because they are afraid that students who have already obtained a certain level of understanding towards the learning materials would feel boring and show the signs of being not interested to listen during the in-class learning process. Thus, this study aims to study the effect of pre-class assignment in enhancing Chinese language reading comprehension mastery level of pupils from Chinese national-type schools in order to convince more educators to start practicing the use of pre-class assignment. A group of 260 pupils from eight different schools in Kuala Lumpur was involved in this study. A quantitative approach was used in this study and tests were developed and used in this study. The result of this study showed that the implementation of pre-class assignments was effective in helping pupils to master Chinese language reading comprehension. The finding of this research showed that the pupils' performance in Chinese language reading comprehension was not affected by the language used at home and prior exposure of pupils towards pre-class assignments.

Keywords: pre-class assignment; Chinese language reading comprehension; languages used at home; prior exposure to pre-class assignment

ABSTRAK

Sistem kurikulum KSSR yang diperkenalkan oleh kementerian pendidikan Malaysia menuntut para guru untuk membina murid yang akan mempunyai keupayaan untuk menjalankan proses pembelajaran secara bebas. Untuk membina murid dengan kemampuan untuk belajar secara bebas, tugasan pra-kelas adalah pelaksanaan yang diperlukan untuk memberikan autonomi pembelajaran kepada murid. Walau bagaimanapun, Wu (2017) menyatakan bahawa pendidik tidak suka pelajar melakukan tugas pra-kelas kerana mereka takut bahawa pelajar yang telah memperoleh tahap pemahaman tertentu terhadap bahan pembelajaran akan merasa membosankan dan menunjukkan tanda-tanda tidak berminat untuk mendengar semasa proses pembelajaran dalam kelas. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesan tugas pra-kelas dalam meningkatkan tahap penguasaan pemahaman membaca bahasa Cina murid-murid dari sekolah jenis kebangsaan Cina untuk meyakinkan lebih banyak pendidik untuk mula mempraktikkan penggunaan tugasan pra-kelas. Sekumpulan 260 murid dari lapan sekolah berbeza di Kuala Lumpur terlibat dalam kajian ini. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan dalam kajian ini dan ujian dikembangkan dan digunakan dalam kajian ini. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pelaksanaan tugasan pra kelas berkesan dalam membantu murid menguasai pemahaman membaca bahasa Cina. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa prestasi murid dalam pemahaman bacaan bahasa Cina tidak dipengaruhi oleh bahasa yang digunakan di rumah dan pendedahan murid sebelum membuat tugas di kelas.

Kata kunci: tugasan pra-kelas; Pemahaman bacaan bahasa Cina; bahasa yang digunakan di rumah; pendedahan awal mengenai tugasan pra kelas

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century which is a century that is filled with various kinds of information, the government of Malaysia is changing our curriculum system to ensure Malaysian students are not being left behind. In conjunction with the curriculum changes, our ministry of education had introduced the Standard Curriculum Primary School (KSSR) that listed all the characteristics of students that our new curriculum system aimed to implement in students. One of the characteristics that Malaysian students should have is the curiosity towards knowledge.

To produce learners with the ability to carry out the learning process with their effort, pre-class assignments should be given to students before their classes, giving them the chance to carry out the reading activities, subsequently generate thoughts about the reading materials, and relating the information obtained through those assignments with syllabuses taught before. Pre-class assignments promote pupils' before class preparations by designing activities that encourage the learners to watch videos, carry out thinking activities related to their learning materials and complete the exercises given by teachers independently (Huang, Liu, Yin & Chen, 2014). Critical thinking and self-learning are encouraged when learners are working to complete the pre-class assignments. Meanwhile, teachers' role and responsibilities in the teaching and learning process is reduced from being the source of knowledge to more of an advisor, who works in making sure learners are not thinking out of the syllabus.

However, there are still many teachers who are being resistant to changes as they are not being paid more or given any rewards even when they are committing their own time and money to work extra in the process of adapting the curriculum changes introduced by the country (Sulaiman, Ayub, & Sulaiman, 2015). Hence, the changes in the learning process by giving learners the chance to complete the pre-class assignments were not receiving a warm welcome from many of the teachers. According to Wu (2017), some of the teachers do not like students to do any pre-class assignment because they are afraid that students who have already obtained a certain level of understanding towards the learning materials would feel boring and show the signs of being not interested to listen during the in-class learning process. Thus, these teachers will always be trying their best to stop the implementation of pre-class assignments in their classroom without bothering the good impact that the pre-class assignments could bring.

Due to the unwillingness of the teachers in Malaysia to abandon the teacher-centered approach, the implementation of pre-class assignments to would

enable learners to learn independently is facing several problems and difficulties to take place in Malaysia. Research by Sulaiman, Ayub, and Sulaiman (2015) found that Malaysia educators who needs to cope with heavy workload are being resistant to changes as they are not being paid more or given any rewards even when they are committing their own time and money to work extra in the process of adapting the curriculum changes introduced by the country. Besides, Wang and Zhou (2018) even conducted study to prove that a student-centered approach is an approach that is too ideal logic without giving recognition to the importance of the role of teachers in the in-class learning process.

In addition, Han (2012) stated that the academic achievement of the bilingual learners will be higher than learners from the monolingual family. Etekal and Mahoney (2017) also acknowledge the effect of the ecological system theory in affecting an individual's academic achievement. As the good effect of the pre-class assignments could be due to the bilingual environments and effect of the ecological system theory, pre-class assignments are still not widely used in Malaysia even after being proved to be effective in improving learners' reading comprehension performance in other countries and contexts.

In the Malaysian context, little research and studies were being conducted on the pre-class assignments. Among the limited number of previous studies on the pre-class assignment in Malaysia (Jamaludin, Osman, Yusoff, & Jasni, 2016; Osman, Jamaludin, & Mokhtar, 2014; Woldemichael, 2018), all the studies took university or polytechnic pupils as their sample. Studies on the implementation of pre-class assignments at the primary school level were rare to be discovered. Hence, research on the importance of the pre-class assignment that includes all the background factors affecting the reading comprehension performance of the learners is very important to make Malaysian educators realize the essentiality of the pre-class assignments and even encourages further researchers about it. Therefore, this study answers the research questions below :

- i. 1. What is the pupils' mastery level in Chinese language comprehension?
- ii. 2. Is there any significant difference of mastery level in Chinese language comprehension between the pupils in Chinese national-type schools with prior exposure to pre-class assignments and without?
- iii. 3. Is there a significant difference of Chinese language comprehension test performance between the pupils of the different languages used at home?

METHODOLOGY

Population and Respondents of the Study

The research methodology applied in this study is a survey which involved test in the process of collecting information. The researcher used the quantitative to identify the effects of the pre-class assignments in helping the Chinese-medium school pupils in improving their mastery in the Chinese language.

The year four pupils are the group of pupils that just entered the upper primary and are facing problems in understanding the long text in the textbook. Hence, the year four pupils from Chinese national-type schools are being chosen as the respondents of the study by the researcher.

TABLE 1. Number of Chinese National-Type schools (SJKC) in each zone of Kuala Lumpur

Zone	Number of Schools
Bangsar	13
Pudu	8
Sentul	16
Keramat	5

(Source: <http://jpwpl.moe.gov.my/index.php/sekolah>)

Table 1 shows the numbers of schools in each area of Kuala Lumpur. Bangsar and Pudu were chosen because they are the zone with the greatest number of schools. Schools in the Bangsar zone have already implemented the pre-class assignments for years.

However, the pupils in the Pudu zone did not receive the implementation within their four years of primary school life. Hence, the researcher had analyzed the Chinese language reading comprehension mastery of the pupils using percentage, mean and standard deviation to answer the research question of identifying the difference between the pupils in Chinese national-type schools with the implementation of pre-class

assignment (schools in Bangsar zone) and without (schools in Pudu zone). The researcher chose four schools from the Bangsar and Pudu zone to be the sample of the research. All of the four schools chosen are a school with similar Primary School Assessment Report (PPSR) results, pupils' family background, and learning environment. After that, the researcher applied random sampling methods to choose respondents from each school.

Table 2 shows the population distribution of the study by listing out the number of pupils in each school.

TABLE 2. Population of the Study

Zone	School	Number of pupils in year four	Number of respondents
Bangsar	A1	150	26
	A2	210	36
	A3	340	43
	A4	150	25
Pudu	B1	210	30
	B2	240	33
	B3	340	33
	B4	360	34
Total		2000	260

Instruments of Study

The type of instrument used in the study was the test. In the research, a test was being conducted by the researcher after the pupils complete the in-class learning session for each of the chapters. The test was conducted to determine the mastery of the pupils toward the text in the textbook after having a pre-class assignment before learning. The test contained five objective questions and five subjective questions.

The instrument was sent to a lecturer in Teachers Training Institute (IPG) to check for face validity and content validity. The lecturer from IPG is a graduate master student from the Faculty of the Education University of Malaya and had been lecturing the KSSR Chinese language teaching techniques and knowledge for more than ten years in the Sarawak Teachers Training Institute (IPKS). Besides that, the KSSR's trainers Madam C and Mister T also helped to validate the instrument designed. Madam C and Mister T had been working as the KSSR trainers for more than five years and both of them had been working as the Chinese language comprehension marker in the UPSR for years. All experts helped the researcher check and validate the test questions. The experts had provided their professional comments toward the test questions to ensure the data collected have higher validity.

The mastery level of the pupils in the Chinese Language that were focused on the reading comprehension were being divided into five categories, which are "Targets", "Advanced", "Proficient", "Basic" and "Below Basic". The target of the researcher is for pupils to achieve all 7 objective questions and all 3 subjective questions correctly (9% – 10%). The "Advanced" mastery level referred to pupils that can achieve 5 to 6 objective questions and 2 subjective questions correctly (7% - 8%). Besides, the "Proficient" level is being referred to pupils that achieved 4 to 5

objective questions and 1 subjective question correctly (5% - 6%). "Basic" referred to pupils that answered 3 to 4 objective questions and 0 subjective questions correctly (3% - 4%). Lastly, "Below Basic" referred to pupils that answered 0 to 1 objective question and none of the subjective questions correctly (0% - 2%).

In this study, the researcher conducted a pilot test on a group of 40 pupils to examine the internal consistency of the instrument designed. Singh (2017) describes internal consistency as an aspect of reliability related to the consistency of the questions, which enables the researcher to gather similar feedback from similar questions. The answer of the pupils for each question was and also their final scores were collected to identify the test reliability coefficient using the SPSS. The purpose of analyzing the outcome was to increase the reliability of the instrument by making sure that the questions asked are easy to be understood, words used in the questions are appropriate and the questions were designed to be at the appropriate standard.

According to Hanafi (2016), the reliability of a test is the consistency of the marks obtained through the test and the test is being considered reliable if the same group of pupils sitting for the test is capable to obtain the same scores when given the same test under different circumstances. Based on Vegada, Karelia and Pillai (2014), tests' reliability coefficient (r) was categorized as: Magnificent ($r > 0.9$), Exceptional (0.8 - 0.9), Acceptable (0.7 – 0.8), Poor (0.6 – 0.7), Required amendment (0.5 – 0.6) and Problematic ($r \leq 0.5$). The researcher obtains a reliability coefficient of 0.82 through the pilot test and based on the reading stated by Vegada et al (2014), a reliability coefficient of 0.82 is within the exceptional range, proving the high reliability of the test.

TABLE 3. Respondents' Demographic Information

Respondents' Profile	Category	Bangsar Zone (%) n = 129	Pudu Zone (%) n = 155	Σ (%) N = 284
Gender	Male	65(25)	65(25)	130(50)
	Female	65(25)	65(25)	130(50)
Language Used at Home	Chinese	79 (30.4)	96 (36.9)	175 (67.3)
	English	42 (16.2)	32 (12.3)	74 (28.5)
	Other	9 (3.5)	2 (0.8)	11 (4.2)

Profile of Respondents

Table 3 showed the distribution of the respondents in the research based on gender and language used at home. The 260 pupils were built up from 130 male pupils and 130 female pupils. Based on table 3, there is more than half of the respondents (67.3%) use the Chinese language at home. The English language is the language with the second higher using rate for home language, occupied 28.5% of the respondents. The least language used by pupils was others that include Malay language and Chinese dialects, which only have 4.2% of the respondents. Since the research was conducted in the Chinese national-type school, it is reasonable

for the majority of the respondents to have the Chinese language as mother tongue at home.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What is the pupils' mastery level in Chinese language comprehension?

After every text comprehension class, the respondents were given one comprehension test. Hence, the respondents in this research had sat for a total of three tests. Table 4 showed the Chinese language mastery level of the respondents.

TABLE 4. Respondents' Chinese language Mastery Level

Zone	Level	Mark Range (%)	Test 1 Frequency (%)	Test 2 Frequency (%)	Test 3 Frequency (%)
Bangsar (%) n = 130	Target	9 – 10	2 (1.6)	11 (8.5)	49 (37.7)
	Advanced	7 – 8	28 (21.5)	41 (31.5)	43 (33.1)
	Proficient	5 – 6	45 (34.6)	39 (30.0)	22 (16.9)
	Basic	3 – 4	40 (30.8)	32 (24.6)	11 (8.5)
	Below Basic	0 – 2	15 (11.5)	7 (5.4)	5 (3.8)
Pudu (%) n = 130	Target	9 – 10	14 (10.8)	16 (12.3)	40 (30.8)
	Advanced	7 – 8	30 (23.0)	41 (31.5)	45 (34.6)
	Proficient	5 – 6	39 (30.0)	40 (30.8)	34 (26.2)
	Basic	3 – 4	27 (20.8)	22 (16.9)	9 (6.9)
	Below Basic	0 – 2	20(15.4)	11 (8.5)	2 (1.5)
Σ (%) N = 260	Target	9 – 10	16 (6.1)	27 (10.4)	89 (34.2)
	Advanced	7 – 8	58 (22.3)	82 (31.5)	88 (33.9)
	Proficient	5 – 6	84 (32.3)	79 (30.4)	56 (21.5)
	Basic	3 – 4	67 (25.8)	54 (20.8)	20 (7.7)
	Below Basic	0 – 2	35 (13.5)	18 (6.9)	7 (2.7)

Pupils in Bangsar zone are the pupils who had been very familiar with the pre-class assignment as pre-class assignments are the common assignment given to them before comprehension class in normal learning activities.

Based on Table 4, the frequency of the pupils who scored the "Target" level increased from only 2 (1.6%) pupils in Test 1 to 11 (8.5%) pupils in Test 2 and ended with a high frequency of 49 (37.7%)

pupils achieving "Target" level in Test 3. Besides, the number of pupils who achieved the Chinese language mastery level of "Advanced" has also experienced some increase since the first test. In Test 1, there were 30 (23.0%) pupils obtain "Advanced". The number of pupils who achieved the "Advanced" level increased to 41 (31.5%) in Test 2 and the number of pupils who obtained this level increased to 43 (33.1%) at the end of the research. These two highest mastery levels in

the Chinese language had both experienced increases throughout the research.

The pupils in the Pudu zone experienced the same situation. There were only 14 (10.8%) pupils achieved the "Target" level in the first test. However, there were 40 (30.8%) pupils managed to achieve the

"Target" level at the end of the research. "Advanced" level in the Pudu zone experienced the same increase too. In Test 1, there were only 30 (23.1%) pupils who achieved "Advanced". At the end of the research, the number of pupils achieved the "Advanced" level increased to 45 (34.6%) pupils.

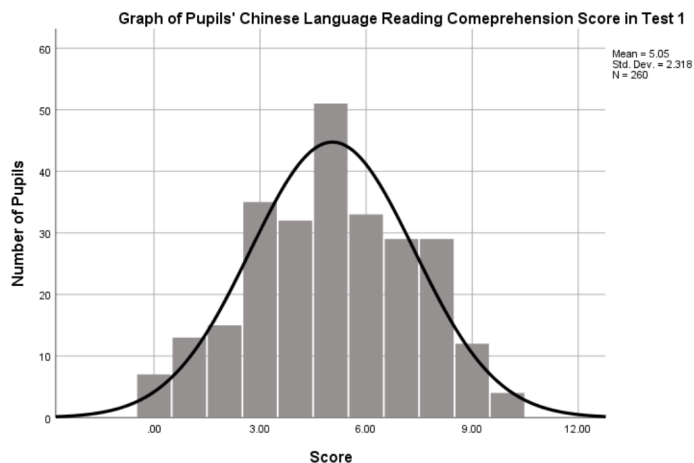


FIGURE 1. Histogram of Pupils' Reading Comprehension Performance in Test 1

A histogram was produced to indicate the mastery level of pupils' Chinese language comprehension. Based on the histogram, the distributions of the score of the 260 respondents are roughly symmetric. The scores with the most scorers in test 1 was 5 marks. Besides, most pupils score

around 5 marks making most scores fall in the middle of the distribution. Among the 260 respondents in the research, the highest score of the respondents was 10 marks and the lowest score of the respondents was 0 marks.

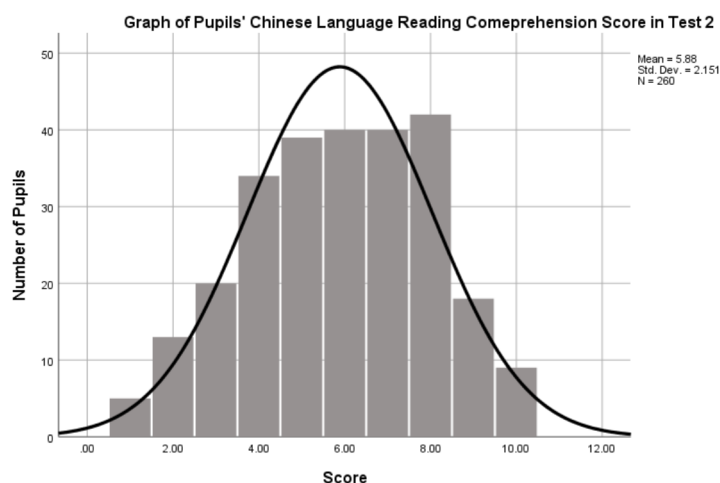


FIGURE 2. Histogram of Pupils' Reading Comprehension Performance in Test 2

According to Figure 2, the distribution of the score of the 260 respondents in test 2 was bell-shaped symmetric. In test 2, the score with the most scorers were 8. The average score of the 260 respondents

improved to 6 marks in test 2 but most of the scores still fall in the middle of the distribution. In test 2, the lowest score of the respondents improve to 1 and the maximum score of the respondents remain as 10.

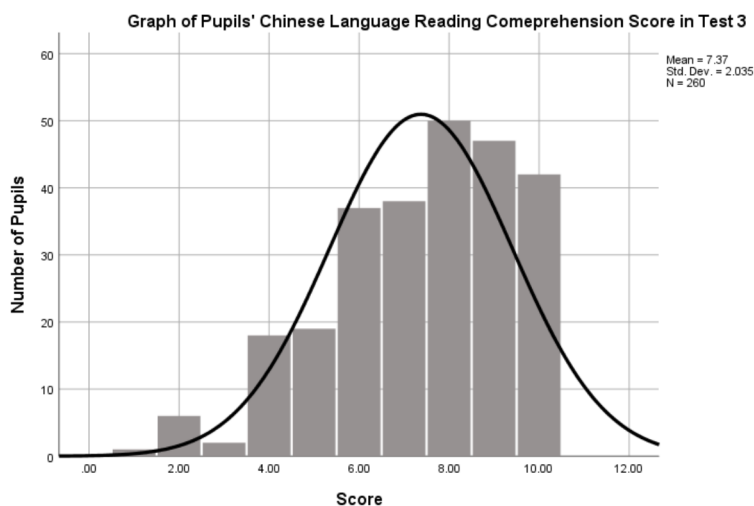


FIGURE 3. Histogram of Pupils' Reading Comprehension Performance in Test 3

Based on Figure 3, the distribution of the score of the 260 respondents in test 3 changed and became slightly skewed to the left or negatively skewed. The score with the most scorers in test 3 remains as 8. However, the average score of the respondents improves to 7 marks, making most of the scores fall at the right side of the distribution. In test 3, the lowest score of the respondents remains as 1 and the maximum score of the respondents remain as 10.

According to the mean score of the respondents

in the research, the mastery level of the pupils in Chinese language comprehension has improved from Proficient level in test 1 (5%) and test 2 (6%) to Advanced level (7%) in test 3. In conclusion, the mastery level of the pupils in Chinese language comprehension has improved throughout the research.

The researcher had produced Table 4 to compare the performance of the respondents from Bangsar and Pudu zone in the three tests that were carried out throughout the research.

TABLE 5. Chinese Language Reading Comprehension Mastery of the Pupils

	Test 1 (10%)		Test 2 (10%)		Test 3 (10%)	
	Bangsar	Pudu	Bangsar	Pudu	Bangsar	Pudu
Mean	4.87	5.22	5.80	5.97	7.45	7.29
Standard Deviation	2.05	2.55	2.09	2.22	2.14	1.93
Minimum	.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
Maximum	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

The mean, standard deviation, minimum value, and maximum value of the respondents' Chinese language reading comprehension mastery were presented in Table 5. In the first test, the pupils in the Pudu zone that were newly introduced to pre-

class assignments have better performance ($M=5.22$, $SD=2.55$) compare to pupils in the Bangsar zone ($M=4.87$, $SD=2.05$). The pupils in the Pudu zone continued to perform better ($M=5.97$, $SD=2.22$) than pupils in the Bangsar zone ($M=5.80$, $SD=2.09$) in the second test.

However, the pupils in the Bangsar zone managed to score better ($M=7.45$, $SD=2.14$) than pupils in the Pudu zone ($M=7.29$, $SD=1.93$) in the last test.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference mastery level in Chinese language comprehension between the pupils in Chinese

national-type schools with prior exposure to pre-class assignments and without?

To answer the research question 2, the researcher had conducted an independent-sample t-test at an alpha level of .05. The result of the independent-sample t-test is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Independent-Sample T-Test of Pupils' Chinese Language Mastery Level between Locations

	Area	N	M	SD	t-value	p
Test 1	Bangsar	130	4.9	2.1	-1.232	0.219
	Pudu	130	5.2	2.5		
Test 2	Bangsar	130	5.8	2.1	-0.634	0.527
	Pudu	130	6.0	2.2		
Test 3	Bangsar	130	7.5	2.1	0.639	0.523
	Pudu	130	7.3	1.9		

According to Table 6, the results of the independent-sample t-test performed showed that in test one ($t=-1.232$, $p=0.219$), test two ($t=-0.634$, $p=0.527$) and test three ($t=0.639$, $p=0.523$), $p > 0.001$ is greater than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ that was chosen by the researcher. Thus, the researcher accepts the null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference between the pupils in Chinese national-Type School with prior exposure of pre-class assignment and without".

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in Chinese language comprehension test performance between the pupils of the different languages used at home?

The researcher performed an independent t-test to answer research question 3. The result of the independent t-test was shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7. Independent-Sample T-Test of Pupils' Chinese Language Mastery Level between different Languages used at Home

	Language	N	M	SD	t-value	p
Test 1	Chinese	175	5.2	2.4	1.540	0.123
	English and other languages	85	4.7	2.2		
Test 2	Chinese	175	6.0	2.2	0.893	0.373
	English and other languages	85	5.7	2.1		
Test 3	Chinese	175	7.4	2.1	0.560	0.576
	English and other languages	85	7.3	2.1		

According to result shown in Table 7, the independent-sample t-test performed showed that in

test one ($t=1.540$, $p=0.123$), test two ($t=0.893$, $p=0.373$) and test three ($t=0.56$, $p=0.576$), $p > 0.001$ is greater

than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ that was chosen by the researcher. Thus, the researcher accepted null hypothesis two that "there was no significant difference in post-pre-class assignment test performance between the pupils of the different language used at home".

DISCUSSION

The pupils' Chinese language reading comprehension mastery level has experienced improvement throughout the process of the research. The improvement of the 260 respondents from Bangsar and Pudu zone can be seen clearly through the mean score scored by the pupils.

This research has proved that pre-class assignment has a positive effect in helping learners to have better mastery level in Chinese language reading comprehension. This finding of the research was consistent with the findings of various past studies (Azizifar, Roshani, Gowhary & Jamalinesari, 2014; Guoia & Gunn, 2016; Haque, 2010; Jensen, Holt, Sowards, Ogden & West, 2018; Kung, 2016; Kuo, 2016; Miller, Lukoff, King & Mazur, 2018; Stang, Barker, Perez, Ives & Roll, 2016) in proving pre-class assignment was a useful implementation that helped learners to get more out of the learning process.

According to Schema Theory (Carell, 1984), prior knowledge is very important in making text meaningful and making it possible for learners to have a deeper comprehension level towards the text. Michaelsen, Bauman, and Fink (2002) stated that when learners are completing the pre-class assignments, they were taking the responsibility to learn and develop a lower level of cognition. Hence by completing the pre-class assignment, learners will be able to comprehend a particular text better as they take their existing knowledge along during the comprehension process (Adam & Collin, 1977; Langer, 1984).

However, the reading comprehension mastery level of pupils in both Bangsar and Pudu zone in test one, test two and test three did not show a significant difference. This result indicates that the pupils' reading comprehension mastery level is not affected by the prior exposure of the learners towards pre-class assignments.

In conjunction with the result of the research, previous pre-class assignment researches that involved long term implementation (He, 2016; Kung, 2016; Kuo, 2016; Miller, Lukoff, King & Mazur, 2018; Stang, Barker, Perez, Ives & Roll, 2016) and short term implementation (Azizifar, Roshani, Gowhary & Jamalinesari, 2014; Guoia & Gunn, 2016; Haque, 2010; Leonard, Murphy, & Zaeem, 2012) of pre-class assignment on learners with no prior exposure to pre-

class assignment all showed a positive result. Hence, the pre-class assignment is strongly proven to have no relation with whether the learners have prior exposure to pre-class assignments or not.

Among the 260 respondents in this research, there was a different language used at home. However, the result of this study shows that there were no significant differences in Chinese language reading comprehension mastery level between pupils with different languages used at home.

The finding of this research is in line with the multicultural context in Malaysia. In 2015, China Press (November 17, 2015) reported a year six Malay pupil has achieved a good performance of 6A1B in UPSR. Besides, Oriental Daily (December 19, 2016) also reported about Malay twin sisters from Alor Star who also proved their high Chinese language mastery level by scoring A in their PT3 exam. These news reports have proved that language used at home is not the reason for pupils to be unable to have high Chinese language mastery level.

According to Suryantari (2018), it's commonly believed that children have a better performance when it comes to second language learning because these young learners can learn a second language easier and in a shorter time. Hence, as long as the Chinese reading comprehension mastery level of the pupils in Chinese national-type schools are given more attention, the pupils will be able to have a good mastery level without influence by the different language used at home.

According to Seman, Yusoff, and Embong (2017), the performance of Malaysian learners in higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) is very weak, which means many of the Malaysian learners are having difficulties to interpret and use the knowledge learned during the in-class learning process in their daily life. As reading comprehension is an activity that requires learners to have the critical thinking, reasoning, creative thinking, and innovation, educators need to start developing the learners' thinking skills through improving the learners' reading comprehension performance. Based on the finding of the research, the pre-class assignments are proven to be able to help in improving the learners' reading comprehension performance. Hence, the researcher strongly suggests the pre-class assignments to be implemented in all of the primary schools in Malaysia.

There were numbers of educators in Malaysia who were being resistant towards the implementation of the pre-class assignment as they were worried that learners would feel boring during the in-class learning process after they obtained a certain level of understanding towards the learning materials through

pre-class assignments (Wu, 2017). However, it was proven by the finding of the research that the pre-class assignments will not cause the pupils to feel bored about the learning materials. Oppositely, it was proved that pupils were able to have a better level of understanding of the passage after they completed the pre-class assignments. Hence, the result of the research conducted showed that there was no reason for the pre-class assignments to be not implemented in the reading class.

According to Derakhshan and Karimi (2015), different languages used at home by learners did harm second language learning. However, the finding in this research had proved that the languages used at home by pupils did not affect their Chinese language reading comprehension performance when the pre-class assignments were implemented. This result proved that learners with different languages used at home will have the ability to have a higher Chinese language reading comprehension mastery level as long as the pre-class assignments are implemented.

Thus, having different languages used at home should not be the reason for pupils to not learn the Chinese language or even not studying in a Chinese national-type school. As Malaysia is a country with multiethnic, the home language should not become a boundary stopping Malaysia from learning different languages. The result of this research has brightened up the learning of Chinese language for pupils with different home languages as it was proven through this research that the pupils will be able to master Chinese language reading comprehension well as long as they were learning with the help of the pre-class assignments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Skinner's (1953) theory of behaviorism, positive reinforcement is relying on the rule that the rapidity of a certain response or actions rises as it was given stimulus with positive rewards. In conjunction, the desired behavior will then increase because of the positive reward followed by it (Budiman, 2017). Generally, pupils love having a special status as the person who is having the best performance in the class with a special reward that all the other pupils do not have the chance to enjoy. Hence, verbal compliments, special homework exception, little gifts were used as stimulus in this research has shown good effect as all the 260 respondents completed all the pre-class assignments given.

Skinner's theory of behaviorism (1953)

emphasizes the use of positive reinforcement that would enable the pupils to complete the task given. Based on the result of this research, even when some of the pupils responded that their perception towards pre-class assignment was not all positive, they still completed all the pre-class assignments assigned by the researcher as positive reinforcement will be given if they do so. Hence, the blending of Skinner's theory of behaviorism (1953) with pre-class assignment in Malaysia Chinese national-type school context was proven to be effective through this research.

Besides Skinner's theory of behaviorism (1953), the implementation of the pre-class assignment was conducted using Carrell's schema theory (1984) as a guideline. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) had stated that a text will not bring any meaning by itself but the readers will have to carry forward their previous schemata from their memory to make sense out of the text. Hence, the schema theory is a theory that highlights that prior knowledge is very important in making the text meaningful and making it possible for the readers to have a deeper comprehension of the text read.

In this research, the pre-class assignment acted as the instrument that helped the 260 pupils in Chinese national-type schools to build their prior knowledge. Pre-class assignments including pre-class video, pre-class reading, and pre-class reading guides were assigned to pupils. According to Carrell (1984), there are three type of schema: (1) the linguistic schema is the previously built language knowledge that an individual carried, which includes phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary knowledge, (2) content schema refers to the background knowledge that is related to the text, which includes various aspects such as the topic familiarity, cultural knowledge, conventions, and previous experience of the particular individual and (3) formal schema was defined as the knowledge an individual has towards various types of text and the different structural organizations, language structures, vocabulary, and grammar.

Thus, pre-class assignments helped the pupils to build the linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema that acted as the connecting bridge to enable pupils to comprehend the text better in the learning process. Based on the finding of the research, the pre-class assignments have a positive effect on helping pupils in Chinese national-type schools to build useful schema and caused them to have higher Chinese language reading comprehension mastery levels. Hence, pre-class assignment as an instrument to build schema based on the schema theory (Carrell, 1984) was proven to be effective in the Chinese national-type

school in the Malaysian context.

There were a lot of studies in Malaysia (Jamaludin, Osman, Yusoff, & Jasni, 2016; Lin, 2017; Osman, Jamaludin, & Mokhtar, 2014; Woldemichael, 2018) about the practiced of pre-class assignment in the university context. Most of these studies proved that the pre-class assignments were effective in helping learners to master the learning content. However, the study about practicing the pre-class assignment in the primary school context was hardly seen. Hence, the finding of this study is important in proving the need for practicing pre-class assignments in the primary school context especially in helping pupils to master the Chinese language reading comprehension. The result of this research has proved the positive effects of the pre-class assignment in helping learners to have better mastery levels in Chinese language reading comprehension. Based on Malaysian Children's Literature Association in *Malaysiakini* (May 8, 2019), the 2013 - 2025 Educational Blueprint shows that Malaysia learners' reading competency is struggling to meet the international level.

Thus, referring to the positive result of the pre-class assignments in helping pupils to master Chinese language reading comprehension, the Ministry of Education Malaysia could consider about enforcing this implementation in all Chinese National-Type schools or even National-Type schools in Malaysia to help all the Chinese language learners to be able to master Chinese language reading comprehension better. This might be able to bring forwards a Chinese language PPSR result with a higher passing rate or even increasing the grade A achiever's rate in the future.

Based on the finding of the research, different languages used at home has no relationship with the pupils' mastery level in Chinese language reading comprehension could be very useful in encouraging more non-Chinese parents to allow their children to learn the Chinese language. As stated by Wang (2016), there has been a rising trend of learning the Chinese language all around the world. In countries like the United States of America, South Korea, Japan, France, and Germany, the Chinese language has become the most popular second language learning by the countries' citizens.

As a country that has a fully developed Chinese language learning a teaching curriculum and system, Malaysian should be able to feel more motivated to learn the Chinese language without concerning the language used at home. As stated in the finding of the research, the pre-class assignment can give a positive effect on pupils' Chinese language reading comprehension mastery level

without concerning the different languages used at home by the pupils. According to Tee, Samuel, and Hutkemri (2018), Malaysian educators will only change when the school environment and education ministry started to change. Thus, if the Ministry of Education Malaysia implements the pre-class assignment in all Chinese national-type schools in Malaysia, teachers in Chinese national-type schools might accept the implementation as Chinese language educators are all practicing it. Due to the effort of the Ministry of Education, the learning of the Chinese language could become easier for all the pupils in Chinese national-type schools in Malaysia.

Lastly, the finding of the research has proved that the Chinese language reading comprehension mastery level of the pupils will not be affected by the advanced exposure of the learners to the pre-class assignment implementation. Hence, the finding of this research has the capability to encourage the educators to believe that it is never too late for them to implement the pre-class assignments in their reading comprehension teaching and learning session.

In this study, the researcher researched Chinese national-type schools that were located in Bangsar and Pudu zone in Kuala Lumpur. Besides, only eight Chinese national-type schools were included in the research conducted. However, there were altogether three zones (Bangsar and Pudu zone, Keramat zone, Sentul zone) with a total of 42 Chinese national-type schools. Hence, future research was suggested to expand the research to include all 42 Chinese national-type schools in Kuala Lumpur. This will enable the effect of the pre-class assignments towards pupils' Chinese language reading comprehension mastery level in the whole Kuala Lumpur area to be observed and analyzed. Besides, the researcher also suggests future research to be carried out in other states in Malaysia to provide a more holistic result of the effect of pre-class assignments on pupils' Chinese language reading comprehension performance.

Besides, future researchers are also suggested to research pupils in different standards in Chinese national-type schools. This research was only conducted on pupils in standard four. However, the effect of pre-class assignments on pupils from the other standards could be different according to their age. Thus, the future researcher can perform this research on pupils from Level 1 (standard 1, 2, and 3) and also Level 2 (standard 4, 5, and 6) to more information about the effect of pre-class assignments in helping pupils in different standard to master Chinese language reading comprehension.

In conclusion, all the findings of this research

shows that pre-class assignments will be helpful in improving learners' Chinese language reading comprehension as long as the educators are willing to try and implementing it in their teaching besides taking the affecting factors in consideration while planning for their reading comprehension lesson. As educators, continuous implementations should be taken seriously in order to give the learners the best learning process that they deserved. Therefore, the pre-class assignment should be implemented to help pupils in mastering Chinese language reading comprehension.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Chew Fong Peng for her guidance, encouragement, and support. Besides, I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards my family members, friends, and colleagues who never fail to show me their assistance, support, and love whenever I needed them.

REFERENCE

- Adams, M. J., & Collins, A. (1977). *A Schema-Theoretic View of Reading*. Technical Report No. 32. (32), 49.
- Azizifar, A., Roshani, S., Gowhary, H., & Jamalinesari, A. (2015). The Effect of Pre-reading Activities on the Reading Comprehension Performance of Ilami High School Students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192(June 2015), 188–194. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.027>
- Budiman, A. (2017). Behaviorism in Foreign Language Teaching. *English Franca*, 1(02), 101–114.
- Carrell, P. L. (1984). Schema Theory and esl Reading: Classroom Implications and Applications. *The Modern Language Journal*, 68(4), 332–343. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1984.tb02509.x>
- Carrell, P. L., & Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema Theory and ESL Reading Pedagogy. *Tesol Quarterly*, 17(4), 553–573. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/3586613>
- Chen, Y., Liu, C., Yu, M.-H., Chang, S., Lu, Y., & Chan, T. (2005). Elementary Science Classroom Learning with Wireless Response Devices — Implementing Active and Experiential Learning. *Proceedings of the 5th {IEEE} International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies*, 844–845. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1109/WMTE.2005.22>
- Dad, H., Ali, R., Janjua, M. Z. Q., Shahzad, S., & Khan, M. S. (2010). Comparison Of The Frequency And Effectiveness Of Positive And Negative Reinforcement Practices In Schools. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 3(1), 127-136. <https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v3i1.169>
- Derakhshan, A., & Karimi, E. (2015). The Interference of First Language and Second Language Acquisition. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(10), 2112-2117. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0510.19>
- Ettekal, A., & Mahoney, J. (2017). Ecological Systems Theory. In K. Peppler (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Out-of-School Learning* (pp. 239–241). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385198.n94>
- Gouia, R., & Gunn, C. (2016). Making mathematics meaningful for freshmen students: investigating students' preferences of pre-class videos. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-015-0026-9>
- Guraya, S. Y. (2016). The pedagogy of teaching and assessing clinical reasoning for enhancing the professional competence: A systematic review. *Biosciences Biotechnology Research Asia*, 13(3), 1859–1866. <https://doi.org/10.13005/bbra/2340>
- Hadijah, S. (2016). Teaching by using video: Ways to make it more meaningful in EFL classrooms. *Proceedings of the Fourth International Seminar on English Language and Teaching ISELT-4*, 2(May), 307–315. <https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.tpj.6500393>
- Hanafi. (2016). Developing Reading Comprehension Test for The First Semester Students of English Department. *Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 01(1), 57–74. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2fc3/a5411ce16407d9d3ea2499a5e2755274aa3a.pdf>
- Hansen, E. J. (2016). Reading comprehension (Østfold University College). Retrieved from https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2396307/16-00400-21_Masteravhandling_-_Reading_comprehension%2CElin_Jorde_Hansen.docx_267995_1_1.pdf?sequence=1
- Han, W.-J. (2012). Bilingualism and Academic Achievement. *Child Development*, 83(1), 300–321. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01686.x>
- Haque, M. M. (2010). *Do Pre-reading Activities Help Learners Comprehend a Text Better?* BRAC University.
- Hartley, J. D. (2013). B. F. Skinner: A pioneer of research and instructional technology. In Hefling, K., & Yost, P. (2014, January 8). *Obama administration recommends ending zero tolerance policies in schools*. The Rundown. PBS News Hour.
- He, W. (2016). *Investigation of the Effects of Flipped Instruction on Student Exam Performance, Motivation and Perceptions* (University of California, Irvine). <https://doi.org/10.2337/diacare.22.5.762>
- Huang, Y., Liu, J., Yin, P., & Chen, L. (2014). “翻转课堂”教学模式设计的几点思考*. [Trans. Reflections on the Design of the Teaching Mode of "Flipped Classroom"]. *现代教育技术*, 24(12),

- 100–106. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1009-8097.2014.12.0015>
- Ibrahim, R., Muslim, N., & Buang, A. H. (2011). Multiculturalism and higher education in Malaysia. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 1003–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.03.229>
- Jamaludin, R., Osman, S. Z. M., Yusoff, W. M. W., & Jasni, N. F. A. (2016). FLIPPED: A Case Study in Fundamental of Accounting in Malaysian Polytechnic. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 3(1), 23–31. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509/2016.3.1/509.1.23.31>
- Jensen, J. L., Holt, E. A., Sowards, J. B., Ogden, T. H., & West, R. E. (2018). Investigating Strategies for Pre-Class Content Learning in a Flipped Classroom. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 27(6), 523–535. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-018-9740-6>
- 吉华巫裔双胞胎11A包括华文. [Trans. Malay twin Scored 11 A included Chinese Language in Keat Hwa National Secondary School]. (2016, December 19). *Oriental Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.orientaldaily.com.my/news/nation/2016/12/19/176575>
- Kim, Y. (2016). 关于课前阅读法的尝试. [Trans. An Attempt on Pre-Class Reading]. *Editorial E-Mail*, 11, 29.
- Kung, L.-C. (2016). 以预习阅读提升学生数学学习成效之行动研究. [Trans. Action Research on Improving Students' Mathematics Learning Effectiveness through Pre-class Reading]. University of Taipei.
- Kuo, F.-H. (2016). *The effects on the "Reading Comprehension Strategies Preview- worksheet" for Fourth graders' reading ability and attitude*. National Tsing Hua University Nanda Campus.
- Langer, J. A. (1984). Examining Background Knowledge and Text Comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 19(4), 468–481. <https://doi.org/10.2307/747918>
- Leonard, S. N., Murphy, K., Zaeem, M., & DiVall, M. V. (2012). An introductory review module for an anti-infectives therapeutics course. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 76(7), 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe767135>
- Michaelsen, L. K., Knight, A. B., & Fink, L. D. (2002). *Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher.
- Miller, K., Lukoff, B., King, G., & Mazur, E. (2018). Use of a Social Annotation Platform for Pre-Class Reading Assignments in a Flipped Introductory Physics Class. *Frontiers in Education*, 3(March), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00008>
- Ministry of Education. (2015). *Dokumen Standard Kurikulum Pentaksiran Bahasa Cina*. Putrajaya: Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1980). Schemata: The Building Blocks of Cognition. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce & W. F. Brewer (ed.). *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension*, 33–58.
- Seman, S. C., Yusoff, W. M. W., & Embong, R. (2017). Teachers Challenges in Teaching and Learning for Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Primary School. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 7(7), 534–545. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.1.2017.77.534.545>
- Skinner, B. F. (1948). 'Superstition' in the pigeon. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 38(2), 168–172. <https://doi.org/https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/h0055873>
- Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and Human Behavior*. United States of America: The Free Press, A Division of Simon & Schuster Inc.
- Skinner, B. F. (1958). Reinforcement today. *American Psychologist*, 13(3), 94–99. <https://doi.org/https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/h0049039>
- Stang, J. B., Barker, M., Perez, S., Ives, J., & Roll, I. (2016). Active learning in pre-class assignments: Exploring the use of interactive simulations to enhance reading assignments. *Physic Education Research Conference 2016*, (July), 332–335. <https://doi.org/10.1119/perc.2016.pr.078>
- Sulaiman, T., Ayub, A. F. M., & Sulaiman, S. (2015). Curriculum change in English language curriculum advocates higher order thinking skills and standards-based assessments in Malaysian primary schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 494–500. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n2p494>
- Suryantari, H. (2018). Children and Adults in Second-Language Learning. *Tell: Teaching of English Language and Literature Journal*, 6(1), 30. <https://doi.org/10.30651/tell.v6i1.2081>
- Tee, M. Y., Samuel, M., Mohd Nor, N. bin, & Hutkemri, V. A. S. (2018). Classroom Practice and the Quality of Teaching: Where a Nation is Going? *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, 7(1), 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.14425/jice.2018.7.1.17>
- Ting, M. H. H. (2013). Language, Identity and Mobility: Perspective of Malaysian Chinese Youth. *Malaysian Journal of Chinese Studies*, 2(1), 83–102.
- Vegada, B. N., Karelia, B. N., & Pillai, A. (2014). Reliability of four-response type multiple choice questions of pharmacology summative tests of II M.B.B.S students. *International Journal of Mathematics and Statistics Invention (IJMSI)*, 2(1), 6–10.
- Vollmann, R., & Tek, W. S. (2018). Chinese identities in multilingual Malaysia. *Grazer Linguistische Studien*, 89, 35–61. <https://doi.org/10.25364/04.45:2018.89.3>
- Wang, C. (2013). 小学记叙课堂教学设问的研究. [Trans. A Study of Questions in the Narrative Classroom Teaching in Primary School]. Shandong Normal University.
- Wu, C. H. (2017). 论小学语文学习中生预习的重要性. [Trans. On the Importance of Pre-Class Reading in Primary School Chinese Language Learning]. *Education Modernization*, 8(35), 325–327. <https://doi.org/10.16541/j.cnki.2095-8420.2017.35.133>

巫裔华小生考获6A1B 父亲：欣喜、欣慰。 [Trans. Malay Primary School Pupil Scored 6A1B Father: Delighted]. (2015, November 17). *China Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.chinapress.com.my/20151117/巫裔華小生考獲6a1b-父親：欣喜、欣慰/?variant=zh-hans>

Yunus, M. M., & Arshad, N. D. M. (2015). ESL teachers' perceptions toward the practices and prospects of autonomous language learning. *Asian Social Science, 11*(2), 41–51. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n2p41>

Ling Ke Bing*

13A, Lorong Kampung Nangka 4,
96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia

Chew Fong Peng

Jabatan Pendidikan Bahasa & Literasi,
Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Malaya,
50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

*Pengarang untuk surat menyurat; e-mel: kebing0212@gmail.com

Diserahkan: 23 Mac 2021

Diterima: 24 Mac 2021