

Online newspapers as an effective tool to generate interest in reading for students of Youth and Adult Education

Marli Camassola* and Daniel Luis Notari†

Abstract

One of the main challenges to improve the quality of Brazilian education is to promote reading and an understanding of what is read. This situation is more complex in Youth and Adult Education, which has focused on students who exhibited academic failure in mainstream classes or had not engaged in reading and writing for many years. In addition to adolescents, adults and elderly individuals have the same interests when they are in school; however, the identification of a way to engage these different audiences is a challenge. Thus, we propose reading newspapers online to generate an interest in reading, as well as determining how to select updated texts that are able to draw the attention of students. The findings indicated 100% of the students were satisfied with the activity. Nevertheless, when the times of reading performed in the Educational Computer Laboratory and classroom were compared, the evaluation that employed computer tools was far superior to the classroom. We conclude that although online newspaper reading is quite simple and easy to perform, it is an important tool capable of stimulating and developing the taste and habit of reading and is effective for different audiences.

Keywords

Online newspapers; reading; Youth and Adult Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Although Brazil is the world's seventh largest economy according to the International Monetary Fund (2013), the education position that Brazil occupies in world rankings is quite different. According to a report produced by the Pearson learning systems company (which is linked to the British journal *Financial Times*) and the British consultancy Economist Intelligence Unit, of 40 countries evaluated, Brazil occupied the 38th position (BBC, 2014).

In today's society, because reading is used in everything and at all times, this act is tremendously important. The acquisition of reading mechanisms appears similar to other needs inherent in the lives of citizens (Barthes and Compagnon, 1987).

According to Souza (2005), the ability to read is undoubtedly the most valuable gift you can give a child. As a result of this ability, humans are able to express thoughts, communicate more freely with other individuals and exhibit a more active role in the surrounding world. The best time for the individual to start their emancipation through words of withholding function is in childhood. A child reader will have more opportunities to succeed in school, whereas adults with a higher level of literacy will find it easier to succeed in the working world (Souza, 2005).

Zilberman (1991) reports that if the reading habit is not conquered in the family, which typically occurs in the students of Youth and Adult Education, it must be awakened

and strengthened in school and continued throughout life to produce a greater value in the reader's life.

From this perspective, the family and the school are synonymous with education and knowledge, and education is a challenge; thus, it depends on both factors. School is considered a local “privilege to develop the love of reading, as well as an important site for the exchange of literary culture” (Zilberman, 1991), and it should provide a broader reading space to extend beyond reading and writing education. Investment in books is necessary because for many children, school is the only opportunity to have contact with books and, consequently, reading (Mesquita, 2006). In addition, in the age of digital technologies, this tool should also be explored as an alternative means to induce interest in reading.

Although the need to read is extremely important for the quality of life in many situations because of cognitive impairment or a lack of interest in learning to read, this act has yet to be encouraged. Approaches and different ways to perform reading must be used to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning, especially in Brazil.

In Brazil, only 35% of schools have a library, and at the end of elementary school, most students rarely use these resources. This finding is from a study by the movement “All for Education” from the questionnaire Brazil Proof, which represents an assessment applied to all public schools in the country. This survey also indicated that the use of

* University of Caxias do Sul, Life Sciences and Health Center; † University of Caxias do Sul, Exact Sciences and Technology Center.

E-mails: dlnotari@ucs.br, mcamassola@gmail.com

Data de envio: 18/04/2017

Data de aceite: 09/06/2017

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18226/23185279.v5iss2p51>

these spaces in schools significantly decreases from the 5th to 9th grades.

However, the existence of a library does not guarantee that it is used. The research of “All for Education” indicated that at 5 years of elementary school, which includes children 10 years of age, if they have not repeated the year, 57% of student’s state they always or almost always attend these spaces. Four years later, in the 9th grade, the percentage decreases to 30%, with a serious aggravating factor: 35% of young individuals at this level report never attending their school libraries.

The decrease in the reading frequency of 5th to 9th year suggests a growing disinterest of the greatest students in reading. However, the data must also generate a reflection regarding how the few schools that have an existing library can best use these spaces to encourage early reading habits (Gois, 2014).

Despite the gap between the reality of many schools and technological development, especially in the area of digital technologies, we live in a time of cultural transformation, which is guided by the passage of the hegemony of printed books for audiovisual, the paper transition to television or computer screens, and the state of printed text to computer interactivity (Mesquita, 2006). Because this alternative form of reading must be explored and provides interactivity, in addition to providing updated information, it should also be used to increase interest regarding reading in individuals and therefore improve education.

The use of online reading has been used in several universities, especially with regard to learning a foreign language.

According to Boud (2001), the reflection regarding learning obtained through online newspaper reading is a tool to work with events and experiences to make sense of them. It is also a way to encourage students to build connections between the themes explored in the classroom and their personal experiences, values and beliefs, as well as to investigate how and what they learn. It is assumed that when used for reading, electronic journals help students develop the ability to become aware of their own process of knowledge construction; an opportunity to reflect on the present assumptions, beliefs and conceptualizations; a facilitation of cognitive growth; and an improvement in learning outcomes (Morrison, 1996).

Chang and Lin (2014) demonstrated that all pupils between 19 and 20 years of age in a public university in the southeast of Taiwan who used online newspapers had a better academic performance compared with individuals who did not use online newspapers to learn English. This finding corresponds with the results reported by Chen et al., (2011), who indicated that the reflection on reading can play an important role in improving learning performance. This finding may be because the reflective reading of online newspapers helps students develop the ability to become aware of their own knowledge construction process. Additionally, reflecting on assumptions, beliefs or concepts facilitates cognitive growth and leads to better academic results. Students also consider the learning conducted via an online newspaper as a very useful tool. Most students said that learning with online newspapers provided potential

opportunities to integrate concepts from their readings and organize the main ideas of the reading.

One of the main challenges to improve the quality of Brazilian education is to make students have an interest in reading and understand what they read. This situation becomes more challenging in Youth and Adult Education, which is focused on students who exhibited academic failure in mainstream classes or had no contact with reading and writing for many years. In addition to adolescents, adults and elderly individuals have the same interests when they are in school. A generation gap arises, and the identification of a way to engage these different audiences in the same environment is a substantial challenge.

The time spent reading that has traditionally been held with books, magazines and newspapers is not always effective, especially because this audience is interested in reading newspapers, but only the current newspaper. No one wants to read news from yesterday or the day before. Everyone wants to read the daily newspaper; however, it is not economically feasible for a school to have 30 newspaper copies every day. In the traditional time to read, what is often observed is that students are simply turning the pages without interest in reading what is written, and the time for reading appears to be an eternity.

Thus, the development of a love for reading for the public becomes a chore. In these situations, it is essential to identify what interests the public and to seek alternatives to make reading attractive and meaningful; however, it should simultaneously be simple, easy and feasible, yet effective to attract different audiences of Youth and Adult Education for reading.

The computer and Internet are tools that can significantly contribute to the generation of an interest in reading. These tools provide updated information and incorporate a highly interactive way with movement. Thus, the implementation of this work will comprise “hours of reading” online, and its efficiency will be assessed through survey and observation of achievement.

II. METHODOLOGY

All classes of the Youth and Adult Education of the Elementary School Engineer Dario Granja Sant’Anna, Caxias do Sul, RS, Brazil participated in the realization of online reading. Therefore, in individual classes for the Educational Computer Laboratory, the site of local newspapers were accessed, and the students had to read news.

To ensure that the reading was performed and effective, the reading was oriented with the intervention of a teacher who works in the Educational Computer Laboratory and a professor who works in the classroom. At the same time as the reading, the students completed the reading record. For this worksheet, the students answered the following questions:

- What is the title of the news?
- What news did you read?
- What is the source?
- During all readings, the students were observed to assess whether the activity was effective. After three months of reading completion, we applied a

questionnaire regarding the reading time in the Educational Computer Laboratory, which was composed of the following questions:

- In your opinion, is reading magazines and newspapers important? Why?
- What is your opinion on the reading classes in the Educational Computer Lab?
- Have you read more in the Educational Computer Laboratory or in the classroom?
- On a scale of zero to ten, what grade would you give to reading performed on the computer? And in the classroom?
- Has reading newspapers in the education Computer Lab increased your knowledge?

The responses were subsequently tabulated and analyzed. The data are presented as percentages.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although reading is a skill of great importance to the quality of life, it remains difficult to make it attractive to the majority of young individuals and adults who live in socially vulnerable conditions or who have learning difficulties.

This situation becomes more challenging in Youth and Adult Education, which has focused on students who exhibited academic failure in mainstream classes or had no contact with reading and writing for many years. In addition to adolescents, adults and elderly individuals have the same interests when they are in school. A generation gap arises, and the identification of a way to engage these different audiences in the same environment is a substantial challenge.

In this sense, the reading activity oriented in the Computer Lab produced extremely positive returns. The biggest surprise of this activity occurred at the beginning. No student had read online newspapers prior to this exposure. The older students were somewhat suspicious. The students who were returning to studies that day were worried, apprehensive, afraid, and afraid of the novelty. A student, age 53, looked scared and said:

- How do I read the paper that is never shifted in a business like this? (which refers to the computer).

However, within seconds, she was dominating the mouse and reading the local newspaper circulation, which included news regarding the neighborhood and reports regarding health. The teenagers who used computer games were reading local newspapers. Some individuals began to seek international newspapers, such as The New York Times. The twenty minutes of “reading time” became effective for reading, and the best readers began to read very quickly. In addition to observing that reading was efficient, the questionnaire confirmed our observation. One hundred percent of the students were satisfied with the activity.

When the students were asked whether they read more in the Educational Computer Laboratory or the classroom, the result was again 100%. All students questioned stated they spent substantially more time reading in the Computer Laboratory than when the reading was performed in the classroom.

For the question that asked to assign grades for reading classes held in the classroom and the Computer Laboratory, it was apparent that the activity conducted with the

assistance of computer resources was substantially more interesting. In Figure 1A, it appears that all students assigned grades greater than or equal to 8, and 90% scored 10 for the hours reading in the Educational Computer Laboratory. However, when the activity was conducted in the classroom, the marks awarded by the students were lower (Figure 1B).

When the students were encouraged and answered questions regarding the knowledge gained when reading newspapers in the education Computer Lab, only positive descriptions were obtained. The following are some of the descriptions reported. The first description was provided by the 53-year-old student discussed at the beginning of this section.

“For me, it helped a lot because I never sat in front of a computer. Today helps me a lot in various tasks both at school and in day-to-day.”

The student MRS, age 15, reports that it is possible to approach reading, writing and knowledge. Find important reading online newspapers because he did not previously read the newspaper; however, he is now informed. For the student DM, age 15, reading in the Educational Computer Laboratory brought new knowledge because it provided complete news and poorly understood details of the acts occurred. “I can understand the news reading in the laboratory that has no noise. The computer has many good things that help in education. The time reading in the laboratory was very well planned, and everyone can understand well and concentrate better” complete DM.

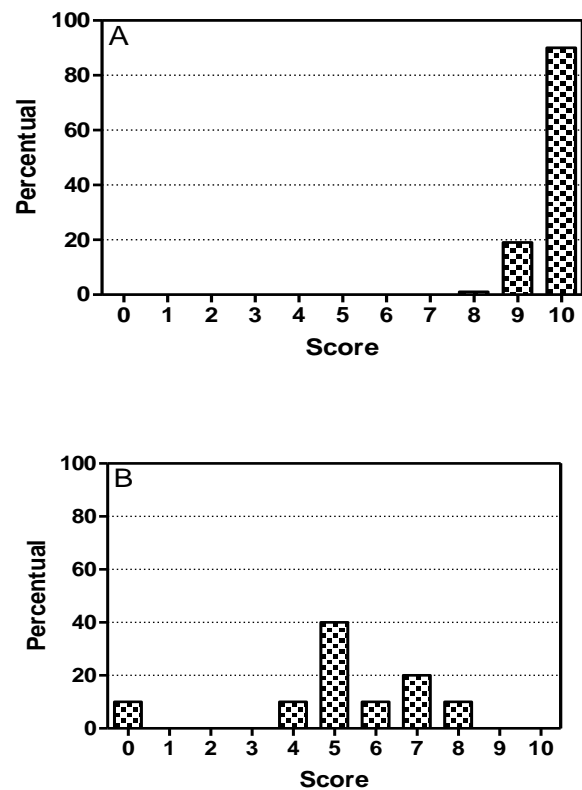


Fig. 1: Percentages of students and the marks awarded for hours reading in the Educational Computer Lab (A) and the classroom (B).

The statement “I particularly like the reading done on the computer, whereas at home, I do not have time to read or the

opportunity to use the computer and so are two learning while" refers to the knowledge gained from reading and the notions of basic computer, as described by the MRSM student, age 45.

For the FSG student, age 17, "we read the newspaper better in the computer room because we have more possibilities and numerous forms of knowledge. It is very good for us to be on top of things that occur; we warn us and we see what happens in our neighborhoods, our cities, our law, and several situations that occur in the city." As for the student AAR, age 21, "reading is very important to gain more knowledge because Brazil is going through a time of a revolution in politics or even simple things, like the weather, supermarket prices, or police action. So, it is very important to read daily."

IV. CONCLUSION

All students without exception agree that reading improved, is more interesting and provides the opportunity to expand their knowledge regarding computer use or to start using a computer.

Early in this reading activity on the computer, some students "slip and fall" on pages such as Facebook; however, over time, this type of attitude faded. Most importantly, when they performed other activities in the computer lab or the students completed their work before the other students, they immediately accessed the internet and read newspapers. They created the habit of reading, and most students forgot to want to join Facebook or play games.

While reading newspapers, novels and dictionaries in different ways, each text, location and purpose of reading requires a specific approach for reading: quick and superficial reading to identify a piece of information; held and depth to study a subject; and free and interested to reflect or enjoy. Thus, part of the reading proficiency includes the ability to develop ways of reading texts appropriate to the situations and in play; however, something extremely important is to develop a taste for reading, especially for an audience such as the students in Youth and Adult Education.

The findings indicated that the students enjoy the time reading newspapers and feel the need to read not only on the computer but also in the library and murals. It is amazing how such a simple activity has sparked interest in reading by students of the Youth and Adult Education of our school. This reading activity is enhanced by the wise words of the educator Paulo Freire, who suggested reading the world predates the written word reading. Thus, reading texts cannot give up reading the world, and language and reality are dynamically linked. The online reading newspapers join the reading of the world with language.

Based on this interest in reading, why not take advantage of improving interpretation and writing? It is not useful to only decode letters; you must read, interpret and learn to synthesize. Based on the will of the students to participate in the reading time in the educational Computer Laboratory, why not make the students write about the news they read? Would the exercise be too brief? No, many students are returning to school, and other students have been reproached numerous times; if they were asked to make a summary, it could demotivate them from reading. Thus, we suggest

JCG, age 17, wrote: "...to be honest, I was unconscious of the world after I started reading the newspaper on the internet, and I'm keeping myself updated. My reading on the computer has greatly improved; because of the computer, we have access to various newspapers and the news of many newspapers, even the New York Times." For the student BL, age 16, "in the lab, we learn and discover new things and new knowledge. There on the computer, we do not only learn but also teach because we discuss and debate the issues." For ESS, age 47, reading newspapers is important "because it opened my mind and is helping me to know and learn more interests in the knowledge of many things; everything you look for is very interesting. I'm really enjoying this new discovery.

simple questions, such as the following: What is the title of the news? What did you get from the news that you read? What is the importance of the news you read to society? What is the source? Thus, the questions are easy, and the brief is constructed with the words of each student without the issue of copying some parts of the text without substantial connection and call summary.

The organization of this summary using unpretentious questions makes it easier to obtain essential information in the selection process, which links them to each other and respects the nature of the genre that is read. The reader indicates he or she is in the midst of the reading comprehension process, which occurs after the reading has taken possession of the theme that runs through the story, i.e., what comprises the plot.

In general, although it is quite simple and easy to perform, the online newspaper reading experience constitutes an important tool capable of stimulating and developing an interest and habit of reading and can be used for the public with different ages and interests.

V. REFERENCES

- [1] Barthes, R., Compagnon, A. (1987) *Leitura*. In: Enciclopédia Einaudi, vol.11. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 1987.
- [2] BBC (2014). Disponível online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/05/1405>
- [3] Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. In L. M. English, & M. A. Gillen (Eds.), *Promoting journal writing in adult education* (pp. 9–18). San Francisco: Josey Bass.
- [4] Chang, M.-M.; Lin, M.-C. (2014). The effect of reflective learning e-journals on reading comprehension and communication in language learning. *Computers & Education*, 71, 124-132.
- [5] Chen, N. S., Kinshuk, Wei, C. W., & Liu, C. C. (2011). Effects of matching teaching strategy to thinking style on learner's quality of reflection in an online learning environment. *Computers & Education*, 56, 53-64.
- [6] Fundo Monetário Internacional (2013). Disponível online: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/02/weodata/index.aspx>
- Gois, A. (2014). Disponível online: <http://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/sem-incentivo-leitura-13245456>
- [7] Mesquita, A. (2006). Como formar novos leitores? *Nuances: estudos sobre Educação*. 13, 15-30.
- [8] Morrison, K. (1996). Developing reflective practice in higher degree students through a learning journal. *Studies in Higher Education*, 21, 317-332.
- [9] Souza, R.J.; Sousa, A.C. (Org.). (2005). *Nas teias do saber*. São Paulo: Editora Produções.
- [10] Zilberman, R. (1991). *A leitura e o ensino da literatura*. São Paulo: Editora Contexto.

VI. BIOGRAPHY

Marli Camassola possui graduação em Ciências Biológicas pela Universidade de Caxias do Sul (1999), mestrado (2002) e doutorado (2007) em Biotecnologia pela Universidade de Caxias do Sul. Realizou pós-doutorado no Imperial College London (2008-2009), onde participou do desenvolvimento de processos de pré-tratamentos de biomassa lignocelulósica com líquidos iônicos e enzimas. Atualmente é pesquisadora do Laboratório de Enzimas e Biomassa da Universidade de Caxias do Sul (UCS), membro do quadro de professores permanentes do programa em pós-graduação em Biotecnologia e Engenharia de Processos e Tecnologias. Professora de Microbiologia, Biotecnologia e Citogenética do curso de Ciências Biológicas da UCS. Tem experiência nas áreas de Fisiologia de micro-organismos, Bioquímica, com ênfase em processos bioquímicos, atuando principalmente nos seguintes temas: produção e caracterização de enzimas hidrolíticas e fenol oxidases, hidrólise de lignocelulósicos e fermentações, além de experiência Microbiologia industrial, Processos bioquímicos e Micologia. Possui 9 depósitos de patentes no INPI e um PCT (EUA). É revisora de mais de 60 periódicos nacionais e internacionais, além de editora de 4 periódicos internacionais.

Daniel Luis Notari é professor assistente da Área do Conhecimento de Ciências Exatas e Engenharias da Universidade de Caxias do Sul (UCS). Atualmente ministro disciplinas das áreas de Engenharia de Software e Banco de Dados para os cursos de Ciência da Computação, Sistemas de Informação e Tecnologias Digitais. Além disto, trabalho com pesquisas relacionadas as áreas de Banco de Dados e Bioinformática. Possui formação de graduação (UCS, 1998) e mestrado (UFRGS, 2000) em ciência da computação. Completei a minha formação no doutorado em Biotecnologia (UCS, 2012) com ênfase em Bioinformática. Sou coordenador do Curso de Ciência da Computação das ofertas de Caxias do Sul e de Bento Gonçalves da Universidade de Caxias do Sul.