



Developing Taking Perspective Skills of Children Aged 5-8 Years Through Story Book Reading

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ABSTRACT

Perspective taking is used by a child to understand the feelings or conditions of others and show affective response that is similar to what is felt by others. Children aged 5-8 are in the peak of developing their ability to recognize and understand others. As an attempt to develop such ability, teachers can perform the activities of picture story book reading that contain moral values to students. The present study aims to find out the differences in children's perspective-taking skills before and after the activity of story book reading.

The research used experimental design. The subjects were the students of TK Al Islam 1 Surakarta. The instrument used in this study was developed by the researchers. Prior to its implementation, construct validation was done resulted to the value of Content Validity Index (CVI) = 1.00. It showed that the instrument had good value and fulfilled the expected elements.

The findings show the difference in the perspective-taking skills of children aged 5-8 years as indicated by the results of the pre- and post-experiment, with the mean $X.1 = 21.75 > X.0 = 19.28$. It implies that the activity of story book reading is effective in enhancing the perspective-taking skills of a child.

KEY WORDS

children aged 5-8 years, storytelling method, perspective-taking

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INTRODUCTION

Hoffman (1984) suggests the interaction between empathy and child's ability in distinguishing her/himself to others. When a child is able to distinguish her/his physical appearance to others, her/his empathy is augmented. Children aged 2-3 years begin to realize that other people may have dissimilar feeling with them. Such ability is continually constructed in line with their ability in

identifying the feeling of others. It is accompanied by their elevated appreciation to the feeling of others and the endeavour to carry out good deeds.

Feschback in Cress and Holm (2000) defines empathy as the starting point where a child is capable in understanding the feelings of others. The ability to mull over and give affectionate responses to others derived from the ability to distinguish her/his perspective



with others'. Cognitive element of empathy is human's unique quality that is developed after the infant stage. It includes perspective taking or the ability to imagine oneself to other's position (Baron, 2003).

Social psychologists identify three distinct forms of perspective taking (Batson, 1969). First, a person can imagine how another feels about an event and how to feel the consequences of it. Second, a person can imagine how to be in another's situation. Each of these types of perspective taking leads to an emotional response to people in need. A person who imagine how the other feels will have a genuine empathy that evokes altruistic motivation. In addition, those who imagine another's feeling will have empathy and also personal distress that evoke egoistic motivation, leading to altruism (self-enjoyment, feeling good when helping others). Third, perspective that involves fantasy and empathy for fictional characters. As a consequence, there is an emotional response to the joy, sorrow, and fear endured by another.

Sofia (2005) asserts that early childhood is at an egocentric moral development stage. As a result, they see the world from their own perspective instead of including other's perspective. Nevertheless, films and books can be useful to overcome child-centric barriers. Films present characters in an audio-visual manner, giving a powerful emotional impact on children (Pringle & Lamme, 2010). Kilpatrick, Wolfe & Wolfe in Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan (2004) affirm that story books provide role models of expected behaviours in life. Furthermore, Guroian in Sullivan, Cleary &

Sullivan (2004) reaffirms that stories stimulate children to have moral imagination since they can connect children's life experiences and moral values. Through the characters in the story books, children learn for role taking that encourages their abilities to see everything in balance rather than their egocentrism. However, several differences between the influences of films and story books are identified. Doyle and Bramwell (2006) suggest interactive story books kindle active interaction between teacher and students, leading to further question and answer activity.

In delivering a story, interactive dialogue should be constructed to raise the capabilities of children in learning new pattern of behaviour, standard of assessment, cognitive competence, and general rules for behaviours based on what they learn in the story. Appropriate method in story book reading is able to provide changes in human thoughts and behaviours by learning the association of particular behaviours through observation and actions as well as cognitive processes (Baginsky, 2005) It confirms Vygotsky's theory of knowledge in which it is affected by situation and is collaborative. It implies that knowledge is disseminated among people and the environment, including artefacts, tools, books and communities where people interact with others (Slavin, Hurley & Chamberlain, 2003).

The present study aims at examining the differences in children's perspective taking in the pre- and post-treatment of picture story book reading with moral and social contents.



RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quasi-experimental study to investigate the influence of treatment (independent variables) to another variable (dependent variable). Randomization was only carried out on the experimental group. Specifically, the design used in this study was one-group quasi-experimental design.

The variables examined in this study are described as follows:

1. Independent variable: the activity of picture story book reading.
2. Dependent variable: perspective taking skills.

This study was conducted in TK Al Islam Jamsaren, Surakarta. The subject was determined based on the condition of the field in which the students aged 5-8 years were grouped into four classes. Researchers selected a class with 20 students.

The activity of story book reading (the treatment) employed the reading dialogue method that was devised in scenarios carried out as many as six face-to-face meetings. Prior the treatment, assessment was done and would be done again after the treatment. The instrument used in the assessment activity was the assessment of empathy developed by Strayer (2004), namely the empathy continuum scoring system.

The validity of the instrument was tested using the construct validity through expert judgment. It was done to assess the empathy continuum scoring system as the instrument of this study. Four experts were involved in this process, including the experts in child literacy, educational psychology, early childhood education, and guidance and

counselling. The calculation of the total content validity of the instrument was done as derived from the experts, generating a content validity index (CVI) = 1.00. Based on this result, it can be claimed that empathy assessment fulfilled the expected elements for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data are described based on a one-group experimental research design. The mean value of children's perspective taking ability is seen from the difference between X.0 and X.1. The mean value of the perspective taking of children who received treatment (X.1) was 21.75. It was higher than the empathy of children before receiving treatment (X.0) of 19.28).

The hypothesis testing explained in this study was the outcome of the method of story book reading in improving the perspective taking of children aged 5-7 years. The hypothesis was tested using statistical test analysis techniques. The acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis is based on a p-value or the significance level (sig.) for which it less than or equal to the alpha value (α) of .05. If the p-value is greater than α of .05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, and if the p-value is less than α of .05, the research hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. The acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis is the opposite of the acceptance or rejection of the research hypothesis. The results can be explained as follows.

H_0 : There is insignificant difference between the perspective taking of children



before and after the treatment of story book reading.

H1: There is difference between the perspective taking of children before and after the treatment of story book reading.

The p -value or significance level of treatment source was .035. The sig. value = $.035 < \alpha = .05$, thus H_0 was rejected. In addition to the p -value with the value of the treatment source where $F_{ratio} = 4.731$, compared with the value of $F_{table} = 3.97$. The result was the value of $F_{ratio} = 4.731 > F_{table} = 3.97$, thus H_0 was rejected. In overall, there is a difference in the perspective taking of children, before and after the treatment. Based on the result, the research hypothesis "there is a difference between the perspective taking of children aged 5-8 years, before and after the treatment of story book reading" is confirmed that after the process of story book reading to children, the perspective taking skills of the children is better. It also shows that the frequency of the activity will enhance such skills.

The present study also has its limitation. The experiment carried out in this study involved group instead of individuals. It is aimed that the findings can be generalized to the activity of picture story book reading in order to develop perspective taking skills. Nevertheless, it is realized that the findings will be insufficient to describe the changes in the perspective taking skills of each child in more detail.

The results of hypothesis testing using statistical test indicate the significant difference in children's perspective taking skills before and after the treatment. It

verifies that the treatment of the story book reading is effective in developing the perspective taking skills of children.

Furthermore, the sensitivity of the teacher in guiding the story reading process is substantial to monitor children's understanding of the content of the story. In addition to improving children's understanding of the content, reading stories to children will allow them to listen to others and express their opinions. Thus, such an activity encourages children to practice their pro-social skills in which it will evoke the development of empathy in children (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006).

Furthermore, direction and guidance from adults play significant role in bridging association built up by a child. Vygotsky suggests the knowledge of a child is situational and collaborative. It implies the knowledge is distributed among people and environments. It covers artefacts, tools, books, and communities where people interact with others. This interactive situation will allow children to understand themselves and their environment (Slavin, Hurley & Chamberlain, 2003).

The findings of this study indicated two factors allegedly increase the perspective taking skills of children, including the readiness of children and the management of the story book reading. Readiness of children in participating in the activity of story book reading implies the children's cognitive readiness to seize the content material of story book. Since the subjects of this study were children of 5–8 years, the findings also confirm Hoffman (1984) in which at the age of



5–8 years, children are able to notice the association between their own feelings with others'. They have been able to show their empathy if they are in another's situation. It is linked to the development of cognitive skills (Piaget in Papalia, 2009).

Picture story book reading can be an alternative to habituate children for discussing their feelings, causes and implications. Yet, the results of the assessment indicate the assorted responses of children. It may be motivated by the differences in their respective insights about understanding the feelings of others. Children who are accustomed to discussing about their feelings with parents or people around them tend to express their empathy. On the contrary, those who are not familiarized to talk about their feeling will have a difficulty in expressing their empathy. Cress and Holm (2000) claim children from families that regularly discuss their feelings will be more capable in recognizing the feelings than those who have no family time.

Several factors influence the activity of book reading to children in order to optimally develop their perspective taking skills. These factors include in the phase of reading dialogue, namely the selection of topic, the selection of method, the number of children as the listeners and the repetition in reading the story. Lane & Wright (2010) asserted the factors that affect the effectiveness of story book reading to children include the type of books and the reader, while Khatchadourian (2010) entails the method of reading. In the present study, these factors were explored, particularly the factor of the reader of the

book since previous studies had not examined the influence of the reader (teacher) toward the development of children's taking perspective skills.

During the assessment of children's perspective taking, some children claimed that their responses were triggered by specific characters and mentioned them clearly. It indicates that children have been able to express their feelings toward particular characters. It includes the ability to communicate feeling towards a character, to see the perspective of others and to improve language skills. The findings confirm Hoffman (1984) that story book reading will improve children's cognitive abilities as indicated by the better ability to understand the perspectives of others in addition to better language skills that assist children to response another's feeling.

CONCLUSION

Data analysis on the research hypothesis and discussion have been conducted and found the difference in the ability of the perspective taking of children aged 5-8 years before and after the treatment. Such ability develops after the treatment, which is the activity of story book reading. Developed perspective taking skills indicate the effectiveness of the activity to improve a child's perspective taking skills.

Based on the finding, it is recommended that the method of story book reading can be utilized by relevant parties concerning with:

- a. The assessment of a child's perspective taking skills and advanced activities that are integrated with the method of story



book reading to be applied in the daily activities of children, both at school and at home, are required.

- b. Further studies can develop activities to read story books with variations, for instance by involving parents in the activity with the focus on an individual instead of in groups.
- c. The collaboration between school and parents to stimulate, habituate and develop children's pro-social behaviours as well as to initiate discussion about children's feelings, particularly their perspective taking.

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