

OBSERVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PICTURE STORY BOOK TO DEVELOP EMPATHY WITHIN EARLY AGE CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Practically, empathy feeling is deemed as an individual ability to understand and take into account the feeling or condition of another individual by giving a response of affection which is identical to what others feel. Children in the age of 5 to 7 are regarded as a pertinent age period of children in developing empathy ability. In this age period, the children progress to feel what others' feel grows stronger. One attempt to develop children's empathy ability is to conduct picture storybook reading activity. In particular, the activity using dialog reading. Dialog reading encourages both the children and the teacher to be involved in a discussion and question-answer session. The activity deals with four picture story books comprise of four basic emotional which include anger, sadness, joy, and fear. This present study aims at discovering and observing the progress of children's empathy feeling development when they are being treated by using dialog reading method. Additionally, it also aims at looking at the difference which occurs between the dialog reading method and conventional reading method. This present study used experiment and control group design. The subject employed were the children of kindergarten in TK Al Islam 1 Surakarta. This study used Empathy Continuum Scoring system as a primary measurement instrument. The measurement instrument has been tested through Content Validity Index (CVI) by the researcher and it was obtained the score of 1.00. Generally, the score of CVI indicated that assessment used for empathy feeling of the children is categorized excellent and meet the expected criterion. Furthermore, the data obtained from the assessment was examined by employing General Linear Model (LM) univariate analysis of variance through computer program SPSS release 20. Upon the results of this study, it indicated that the difference between children who attained dialog reading method and conventional reading method regarding their empathy feeling occurred. It obtained $F=4.728$ ($P=0.22$) with $X1$ Mean = 21.75 > $X2$ = 19.28. in accordance with the results, this study confirmed that dialog reading is preferable and effective on the progress of children's ability of empathy feeling development.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Hoffman (1984), the development of empathy ability is related to a child's ability to distinguish between him or herself and others. When the child is able to physically distinguish between him or herself and others, his or her empathy ability increase. When a child reaches 2 to 3 years old, he or she begins to realize that other people can have different feelings about themselves.

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This ability continues to grow stronger as the ability of the child to differentiate the feelings of others. Empathy makes individual appreciates the feelings of others, and strive to do good for others. Feschback in Cress & Holm, (2000) defines the ability of empathy as a person's ability to reason and shows affection responses to others derived from his or her ability to distinguish between his or her own perspective and the perspective of others. The definition of empathy is almost identical to Hoffman's (1984) definition which states that empathy is the affection response shown by someone to others and the response is adjustable to the situation of others than the situation of him or herself.

Overall, in accordance with the definition of the experts above, this study deals with empathy as the ability of a person to understand the feelings or conditions of others and show an affection response in accordance with the feelings or conditions of others. Sofia, Hartati (2005) state that early childhood is in the stage of moral development of egocentric, thus they tend to see the world from their own perspective and have not been able to see other people's perspective. To prevent childhood egocentric obstacles within the children, movies and books are favorable to be utilized. Movies can present characters in an audio-visual manner, giving a strong emotional impact on the children (Pringle, RM, & Lamme, L. L, 2010). While from storybooks, children get the example of expected behavior in life, Kilpatrick, Wolfe & Wolfe in O'Sullivan, (2004) and stories can even foster moral imagination since stories help children to connect with life experiences and moral values. (Guroian in O'Sullivan, 2004). Through the characters in storybooks, children can learn role-taking which encourage the development of the capacity for empathy and ability to weigh better instead of the egocentric view. There are several things that show the difference between the impact of a movie and a story book. In an interactive storybook, there is an active interaction between teachers and students, they engage in question and answer activities (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). In storytelling activity, an interactive dialogue atmosphere is required to be established. The dialogue atmosphere within the activity will promote and activate child's understanding of new behavior patterns, personal assessment standards, cognitive competence, and general rules of behavior formation of what he or she learns. The appropriate method of reading the story could alter human thought and behavior by using association learning of a particular behavior through observation and action accompanied by cognitive processes experienced (Baginsky 2005) This is consistent with Vygotsky's theory which holds the view that knowledge is influenced by the situation and it is collaborative. It means that knowledge is distributed among people and the environment, which includes objects of artifacts, tools, books, and communities where people interact with others (Slavin, Hurley & Chamberlain, 2003).

A reading storybook activity method by using discussion or dialog between the children and the story teller is commonly known as dialogic reading. Doyle and Bramwell (2006) consider dialogic reading method as an appropriate and favorable method to enhance children's pro-social ability since this method allows the teacher or parents as a storyteller to introduce pro-social behavior and further it is discussed between the teacher or parents and the children. In addition, Dialogic reading also allows the children to be encouraged in giving question(s) and listening to other while the other is speaking, hence the children will possibly have the social ability (Doyle and Bramwell, 2006). Material contained in the storybook will be organized by concerning and prioritizing material related to basic emotional of the children which include joyful, sadness, anger, and fear. The four aforementioned basic emotions are apparent to the children. Reaching 3 years old, children are able to recognize joyful, sadness, anger, and fear as well as connecting all experience they encountered related to the four basic emotions (Harter in Hala, 1997). The objective of this present study is to examine and observe the difference which occurs regarding children's empathy ability between the children who obtain a dialogic reading method of picture story reading activity and the conventional method.

METHODS

This study used quasi-experiment design to observe the influence of the treatment (independent variable) towards the changing upon another related variable (dependent variable). Randomization was utilized to determine which class will be used as group one and group two. The quasi-experimental design of this study was experiment group and control group design.

The variables tested in this study are explained as follows:

- Independent variable in this study is a picture storybook reading method using dialog reading
- Dependent variable of this study was children's empathy feeling

This research was carried out in TK Al Islam Jamsaren, Surakarta. The selection of research subjects as the target of research trials was determined in accordance with field conditions, where there were 4 class groups with children aged 5-7 years. The researcher chose two classes amounting 20 children. Therefore, the total subject of this study amounted to 40 children. Both groups have different roles, namely group one as the experimental group while the second group as the control group. The implementation stage of picture story books reading with *dialog reading* method was designed in a scenario of the activities carried out as much as 6 meetings (face to face) for the provision of treatment. After the completion of treatment, measurements will be conducted. The instrument of measurement in this study was the measurement of empathy suggested by Strayer (2004) called *continuum empathy scoring system*.

The testing validity of the instrument was used construction test by the expert. To examine and test the assessment instrument used in this study, it was given to four experts. The four experts were expertise in children literature, educational psychology, early age children education, and guidance and counseling field. The results of-of the total validation of the contents of the empathy assessment instrument from four experts obtained 1.00 for Content Validity Index (CVI). In general, it can be concluded that empathy assessment is categorized as excellent assessment and met the expected elements. Analysis of the data in the study was analyzed by general linear models (GLM) In a univariate analysis of variance researchers analyzed the data using SPSS release 20 for Windows.

RESULTS

The data description of this study was in accordance with the research design comprising of experiment and control group design along with GLM Univariate ANOVA analysis. The result for this study regarding the average score of empathy ability from the children who attained a different treatment (X1 and X2) showed that the empathy ability of the children who attained X1 (mean=21.75) was higher than the children who attained X2 treatment (mean 19.28). The result is presented in the following figure 1. The result of hypothesis testing which was exposed in this study was a result of the implementation of dialog reading method testing to enhance the empathy feeling of the children. The hypotheses were tested by using General Linear Model (GLM) Univariate

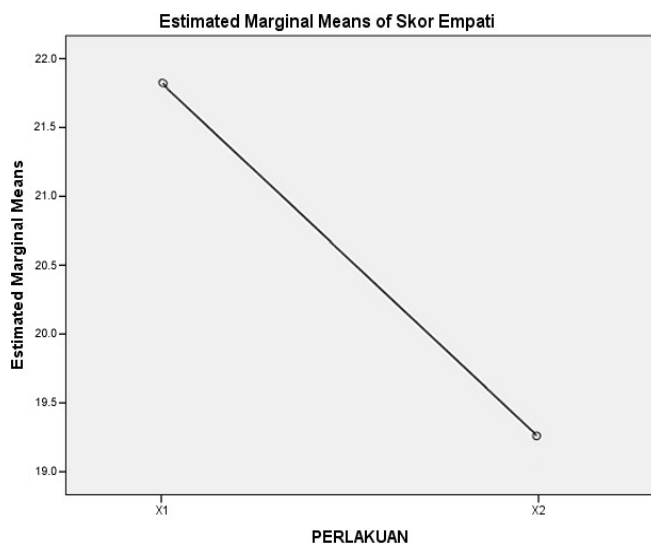


Figure 1. Mean of The Empathy Ability of The Children based on The Treatment Given

Analysis of Variance technique. The acceptance or the rejection of the hypothesis was based on the p -value or the significance number (sig.) compared to an alpha score of 5% (0.05). If the result of p -value is higher than $\alpha = 0.05$, thus the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, and If the result of p -value is lower than $\alpha = 0.05$, thus the research hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. To determine whether the hypothesis is rejected, the score must indicate the reversed score of the accepted score of the hypothesis. The result of the hypothesis is explained in the following statements.

H_0 : No difference occur on children's empathy feeling between children who attained dialog reading and the conventional method.

H_1 : Difference occurs on children's empathy feeling between children who attained dialog reading and the conventional method.

The result of this study showed that the value of p -value or significance number of treatment source obtained 0.032. The score of the sig. = 0.032 < $\alpha = 0.05$, thus H_0 is rejected. Besides using the score of p -value by looking at the score of treatment source where $F_{count} = 4.728$, if it is compared to F_{table} score = 3.97, hence the result of F_{count} score = 4.728 > $F_{table} = 3.97$. Therefore H_0 is rejected. In other words, there is a difference on children's empathy feeling between children who attained dialog reading method and conventional reading method. Thus, within significance level of 5%, both X1 and X2 treatment have an influence on the increasing of children's empathy feeling differently and significantly. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis stating "Difference occur on children's empathy feeling between children who attained dialog reading and conventional method" is proven. Dialog reading method was significantly influenced by the empathy feeling or early age children compared to conventional method. Additionally, the moment the children have given a dialog reading method the empathy feeling within them will be more likely increased. In this present study, delimitation is also imposed. The experiment of this study used a group subject instead of the individual subject.

The aim of using the group as a subject is to ensure the generalization of the method using dialog reading. In addition, using group subject could significantly develop the empathy feeling of the children. Yet, the researcher admits that the subject's chances within this study could not be supervised and controlled individually the moment the children were being given both dialog reading method and conventional reading method. Another limitation is in the selection of subjects, the researchers do not control some individual differences in detail such as the age of the child, the child's gender, the child's motivation, the learning style of the child, the reading ability of the child, the different class situation, the cultural customs or values, the educational background of parents which are likely to influence the treatment provided in developing early childhood empathy skills.

DISCUSSION

The result of hypothesis testing through GLM Univariate Analysis of Variance showed that the different treatment using dialog reading method (X1) and conventional reading method (X2) provide a significant distinguished result upon the empathy feeling of the early age children. Thus, in other words, the dialog reading method is proven compelling to enhance the ability of empathy feeling within early age children. The result of this study is in line with the argument of Doyle and Bramwell (2006) opine that dialogic reading method is a particular method which is applicable to enhance the thinking ability of the children as well as children's understanding upon reading content. Teacher's sensitivity in giving guidance during the process of reading picture story book is paramount in overseeing the content of reading a story book. Additionally, dialogic reading also provides children with an opportunity to take a turn in addressing questions, listen to other people, and promote their own idea(s) freely. Dialog reading method could encourage the children to increase pro-social capability. The pro-social capability is considered as an initial sign of empathy feeling within early age children (Doyle and Bramwell, 2006).

Further, Baginsky (2005) opines that by reading a story with active dialogue will be able to give a change of mind and behavior of the child. Children learn Association through observation and actions accompanied by cognitive processes experienced in storytelling situations with dialogue. Adult guidance plays a major role to bridge the association built by a child. Vygotsky also expressed the view that a child's knowledge is influenced by a collaborative situation, meaning knowledge is distributed among people and the environment, which includes objects of artifacts, tools, books, and communities where people interact with others. From the interactive situation will appear the child's understanding of themselves and their environment. (Robert E Slavin, Hurley & Chamberlain, 2003). Empirical results of this study indicated that the ability of empathy on early age children who were treated by reading picture books with the method of *dialogue reading* (mean = 21.75) was higher than the independence of early age children who attained picture storybook reading treatment using conventional methods (mean = 19.28). Several aspects that are expected to be the factors driving the improvement of empathy ability of early age children in this study are children's readiness and management of book readings. The readiness of children in the experiment is considered as a child's cognitive readiness to capture the reading material of a storybook.

Subjects in this study were 6-7 years old. As Hoffman's arguments (1984), at the age of 6 to 7, the children have been able to see the relationship between his or her own feelings and the feelings of others. They have been able to show a feeling that is an empathetic response to the situation of others, this is related to its cognitive development (Piaget in Papalia, 2009). Using dialog reading method in picture storybook reading activity to the early age children could be served as a channel to habituate the children to deliberate and confer what they feel, how does the feeling occur, and what effect does come. On the other hand, the result of the assessment indicated that the children's response to the other's feeling were diverse. Children who are habituated to communicate and consider other's feeling by their parents or people surrounding them will be certainly easy to express their empathy feeling.

On the other hand, children who are not habituated to communicate and consider other's feeling will be definitely difficult to show their empathy. Pursuant to the Cress and Holm (2000), they argue that children who are accustomed to deliberate their feeling could be more understanding regarding other's feeling compared to the one who does not. During the implementation of dialog reading method, several factors are indicated having an influence in terms of early age children's empathy feeling development. According to the researcher, the factors influencing are stages during dialog reading method which include the preferred topic of the story, method use, and the limitation of children's participation number in particular group of reading. Additionally, picture storybook content which exposes the emotional feeling, its occurrence, and its effect during the occurrence encourage the activity of children which promotes empathy feeling. This is in line with the argument from Lane and Wright (2010) opine that several factors which contribute to the effectiveness of picture story reading activity are book type, the story teller (Khatchadourian, 2010), and its reading method. The influence of the aforementioned factors in this study need to take into account further, particularly regarding the storyteller as one of the factors. Inopportunately, this study has not yet proceeded further to the examination of the influence of the storyteller of reading activity, in this case, is the teacher, to the development of children's empathy feeling. Throughout the assessment process on the empathy feeling of the children to the subjects, several children have expressed their response regarding their feeling by mentioning the characters within the story clearly. It indicated that the children have been able to express their response by portraying the character. The ability of the children in communicating to whom their feeling (anger, fear, sadness, or joy) is addressed, portray the capability of the children in looking from the other's perspective. Supplementary, the children language ability is also exposed progressing compared to the other children. This is in regard to the finding suggested by Hoffman (1984) which promote that the progress of children cognitive ability is shown by having children's ability in understanding the other's perspective and the ability of children language in communicating the response, particular empathy as a response.

Conclusion

According to the data analysis towards hypothesis testing of the study and the discussion above, the research draws the conclusion that the difference on the empathy ability within early age children occur the moment they were being treated by using dialog reading method. In contrast, the conventional

reading method gives no significant influence on the empathy feeling within early age children. It also takes place on the progress of how the empathy feeling is developed within the children. The experiment conducted in this study verified that the children who attained dialog reading method are more likely possess high empathy feeling rather than children who only attained conventional method. Thus, it is confirmed that dialog reading method is effective on the progress of empathy feeling development within early age children. Supplementary, several practical suggestions are demonstrated for several related stakeholders regarding the issue studied. First, it is important to measure the ability of children regarding empathy in the daily life and further measurement which is integrated with the activity of picture storybook reading implemented in the daily life of the children both in home and school. Second, the future researcher(s) may develop the story reading activity method combined with various activity and method such as reading activity method with parents, or individual activity of reading activity instead of group activity. To widen and deepen the effectiveness of dialog reading method in enhancing the children ability in empathy feeling, the future research could develop the study by taking more subject as well as various time frame consideration. At last, but not least, the parents are expected to take an active collaboration with the school, teacher, to instill a stimulus to the children, habituate the children in developing pro-social behavior. Supplementary, it is important to establish children habit to communicate children's feeling, particularly feeling related to the empathy response on the other's condition and circumstance.

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