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## Effects of the Dialogic and Traditional Reading Techniques on Children's Language Development

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the efficacy of a 4-week dialogic reading intervention on the receptive and expressive language skills of 4-5 year old children from low-income families. Control group with pretest – posttest model in experimental design was used. Forty-six children attending a public kindergarten in Denizli were randomly placed in an experiment and a control group. Data were collected through “TEDİL-3” and “Personal Information Form.” In the experimental group, 8 picture books were read by the researcher two times a week for four weeks through dialogic reading techniques. In the control group, the same 8 picture books were read by the classroom teacher through traditional reading. The results showed advances in children's language development in favor of the experimental group. Suggestions related to literature were discussed.

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*Keywords:* Dialogic reading; traditional reading, language development

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### 1. Introduction

Language as a vital part of children's development provides opportunities for learning, for communicating and building relationships with others as well as for enabling children to make sense of the world around them (Brock & Rankin, 2008). It is well recognized that interaction with more skilled speakers, provide literacy rich home and school environment and engage in interactive book reading are important activities to support preschool age children's language development (Berk, 2013). Mainly, studies show that parent- child reading is related to outcome measures such as language growth, emergent literacy, and reading achievement (Bus, IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995).

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Reading books to children at early age has been found very useful for gaining vocabulary, communication and memory skills. (Powell, Diamond, Burchinal & Koehler, 2010; Sim & Berthelsen, 2014).

Research studies indicate that there is a relationship exists between the regularity of children's book reading experiences and their receptive vocabulary and early literacy skills. (Sutton, Sofka, Bojczyk, and Curenton, 2007). A long with regularity of book reading, a child's interaction level also linked to his or her learning. Researchers find that dialogical reading that requires higher level of children's interaction has a positive impact on the language skills of children from low-income families (Zevenbergen, Whitehurst & Zevenbergen, 2003).

Both at home and in school, shared book reading involves an adult reading aloud to a child or group of children (Hindman, Skibbe, & Foster, 2014; Gormley & Ruhl, 2005). Two main types of shared book reading "monologic (traditional)" and "dialogic" are evident in the literature. Gormley & Ruhl (2005) defined monologic reading as; "a verbatim reading of the text with no pausing for questions or verbal interaction between adult and child." On the contrary, dialogic reading involves shifting roles of adult and children while reading.

The concept of dialogic reading has emerged from the works of Whitehurst and his colleagues (Whitehurst et al., 1988). The main principle of dialogic reading is to teach children become a storyteller instead of passively listening to the story. In the process of dialogic reading the adult assumes the role of an active listener, asking questions, adding information, and prompting the child to increase the sophistication of her or his descriptions of the material in the picture book (Lonigan, & Whitehurst, 1998). To ensure interaction the PEER and CROWD sequences are used in dialogic reading (Whitehurst et al., 1994). PEER refers to the following: (a) Prompt the child to talk about the book, (b) Evaluate the child's responses, (c) Expand the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it and (d) Repeat the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion. CROWD refers to the five types of prompts (a) Completion prompts: fill-in-the blank questions, (b) Recall prompts: questions that require the child to remember aspects of the book, (c) Open-ended prompts: statements that encourage the child to respond to the book in his or her own words, (d) Wh-prompts: what, where, and why questions, and (e) Distancing prompts : questions that require the child to relate the content of the book to aspects of life outside the book (Zevenbergen et al., 2003).

The effects of dialogic reading have compared by several experimental studies. Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehurst, & Epstein, (1994) implemented a one month, home-based dialogic reading intervention. The results indicated larger effects on the language skills of children than a similar amount of typical picture book reading. Similarly, dialogic reading intervention both at home and school have produced positive gains for children from low income families (Whitehurst et al., 1994). In a recent study, Lonigan, Purpura, Wilson, Walker and Clancy-Menchetti (2013) have found that children who received the small group dialogic reading, phonological awareness, or letter knowledge interventions experienced more growth than the children who received only their classroom curriculum. The effects of dialogic reading intervention on other cultures and languages were also examined. Opel, Ameer and Aboud (2009) conducted a 4-week dialogic reading intervention with rural Bangladeshi preschoolers and found that dialogic program increased from 26% to 54% children's expressive vocabulary. In another dialogic reading intervention conducted in Egypt resulted in a higher level of phonological awareness (Elmonayer, 2013). In Turkey, Akoglu, Ergul & Duman (2013) conducted an experimental study with nine children living in an orphanage. After the four week dialogic reading intervention, they found that children's both receptive and expressive language skills were improved.

The present study attempted to contribute to this line of work on reading and language development by examining the benefits of dialogic reading in a Turkish preschool program. The purpose of this study is to examine the efficacy of a 4-week dialogic reading intervention on the receptive and expressive language skills of 4-5 year old children from low-income families. For this purpose this study also aimed to understand the following questions:

- 1) Is there a difference between the pre and posttest expressive and receptive language scores in the experiment group?
- 2) Is there a difference between the pre and posttest expressive and receptive language scores in the control group?
- 3) Is there a difference between the experiment and control groups' expressive and receptive language scores?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Design and procedure

An experimental study was designed to examine the effects of dialogic reading on children's language development. The design was a pre-post assessment of an experiment and control group. This design was intended to examine and to compare reading techniques on children's language development. For this purpose the present study included two groups. One is experimental group in which the dialogic reading (DR) was implemented and second is the control group in which dialogic traditional reading was implemented (TR).

The pre-tests were administered before implementing DR and TR activities. All the children in the two groups were tested individually and the assessment was administered in a quiet room at the school. Eight picture story books were selected for the reading activities and the same books were read both in the experiment and the control group. Books were 11–14 pages in length and had a quarter page of text with full page illustrations in the background.

For the experimental group, the dialogic reading activities were developed using PEER and CROWD techniques and the researcher visited to the classroom two times a week and implemented DR activities. DR activities lasted approximately 20 minutes and conducted in a small group of 7-9 children. For the control group, the classroom teacher received and used the same 8 books over the 4-week period during the regular language activities. The classroom teacher was asked to conduct her regular language activities with the children. After the 4 weeks of implementation, the post-tests were administered in both groups.

### 2.2. Participants

Children recruited for this study were from low-income families and attended a public kindergarten in central Denizli. The consent was obtained from MEB officials and the parents to assess children's language development and demographic information. The participants were 46 five-year-olds, enrolled in two different classrooms. Participant classrooms were randomly placed in the experiment and control group. The control group of this study included 23 children (% 44 female and %56 male). On average, the children were 65.69 months of age (SD= 3.03), with an age range from 60.00 to 71.00 months. The experimental group of this study included 22 children (% 41Female and %59 male). On average, the children were 66.75 months of age (SD = 3.29), with an age range from 60.00 to 73.00 months.

### 2.3. Measures

In order to determine the language development levels of the children "Test of Early Language Development-Third Edition" (TELD-3), developed by Hresko, Reid ve Hammill (1999) has been used. This test is a normative, valid and credible measure tool, developed in the United States of America in order to measure the receptive and expressive oral language skills of the children whose ages ranging from 2 years 0 month and 7 years 11 months. It is commonly used with the aim of diagnosing children who have language disorders in the early ages, showing weak and strong sides of their language developments, giving information about development process and researching. TELD-3, has been identified as Test of Early Language Development-Third Edition: TurkishVersion (TELD-3:T) in the international literature with the contributions of PRO-ED publishing (Topbas, 2010). TELD has been used twice as pre-tests and post tests.

### 2.4. Results

The aim of this study was to identify the effect of dialogic reading upon the receptive and expressive language developments of the preschool children in a group of 4-5 years. The results of pre-test and posttest about their receptive language were shown in the Table 1.

Table1. Comparisons of pre and posttest of children's receptive language scores

Group		N	X	SS	t	p
Control (TR)	Pretest	23	102,26	15,09	-1,10	,282
	Posttest	23	105,04	13,24		
Experiment (DR)	Pretest	22	98,77	14,82	-5,15	,000
	Posttest	22	111,40	9,60		

Table 1 showed that there was no significant difference between the pre-test and the post test receptive language scores on children's in the control group ( $t_{23} = .02$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This meant that there were no significant change children's language scores in traditional reading group. On the other hand; there was a significant difference between the pre-test and the posttest receptive scores of the children in the experiment group. ( $t_{23} = .000$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This result showed that the children's receptive language scores were significantly increased on the posttest. In order to compare pre and posttest expressive language scores of children, independent samples t-tests were performed. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, t statistics and significant levels for the control and experiment groups.

Table2. Comparisons of pre and post test of children's expressive language scores

Group		N	X	SS	t	p
Control (TR)	Pretest	23	107,73	14,07	,018	,985
	Posttest	23	107,67	8,08		
Experiment (DR)	Pretest	22	106,04	10,41	-5,75	,000
	Posttest	22	116,31	7,31		

Table 2 indicated that, the expressive language scores of children in the control group did not reflect a statistically significant differences between the pre-test and the post test scores ( $t_{23} = .098$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, the receptive language scores of the children did not change in the traditional reading group. On the contrary, the expressive language scores of children in the experiment group reflected a statistically significant increase in the posttest ( $t_{23} = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This result indicated that children in the dialogical reading group increased their expressive language scores after 4 week intervention. The comparisons of the pre and posttest of children's total language scores are presented in the Table 3.

Table3. Comparisons of the pre and post test of children's total language scores

Group		N	X	SS	t	p
Control (TR)	Pretest	23	106,43	15,67	-	,520
	Posttest	23	108,04	11,01		
Experiment (DR)	Pretest	22	103,59	13,56	-	,000
	Posttest	22	117,13	8,13		

The traditional reading group's total language scores indicated that the means of pre- and posttest scores were nonsignificant ( $t_{23} = .520$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). On the other hand, the dialogical reading group's total language scores indicated that pre- and posttest scores produces a statistically significant difference ( $t_{23} = .000$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This result showed that total language scores of children increased after four week dialogic reading intervention.

### 3. Results and Implications

This study has reported the results of a four week reading intervention on children's language development. The quantitative analyses indicated that participation in the dialogic reading intervention had significantly changed children's' receptive, expressive and total language scores. First, the findings suggested that the dialogic reading facilitated a change in participant children' both expressive and receptive language. This result was supported by several researches. According to these researches, dialogic reading intervention had positive contributions to children's vocabulary and early literacy skills (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Whitehurst, et al. 1988). Dialogic reading supports all fields of language development as well as developing especially the expressive language development in comparison to traditional reading. This may be due to the interactive nature of the dialogic reading. In the traditional reading, a child just listens to the story and has limited opportunity to express himself/herself. On

the other hand, dialogic reading gives many opportunities to the child to make much more sentences than the adult reading the book, to involve in and to freely express his/her opinions. Such interactions may result in improvements in expressive and receptive language development. In a similar experimental research, the effects of traditional reading and interactive reading have been compared and concluded that children in the interactive reading groups have more language and early literacy skills (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000). Similar studies have found that interactive reading interventions both at home (LeRoux, 2013) and in schools (Lever & Senechal, 2011) contributed to the narrative and expressive language skills of the 4-5 year old children.

Mainly, this study suggests that the dialogical reading is an important factor in supporting language development of children. The dialogic reading is a highly effective reading technique in order to enhance the language development of preschool age children. Therefore, both parents and early childhood teachers are urgently needed to inform about the dialogic reading techniques. These techniques could be disseminated through the interactive seminars or the Internet for both parents and teachers.

Even though this research pointed out many important findings and implications, it has some limitations. Our study had a limited number of participants that did not allow us to generalize across all children at various ages. Future research needs to be conducted with a bigger sample from various age groups and should attempt to replicate the findings of this study in other samples to guarantee the generalisability of the findings.

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