

Chapter 10

An Investigation of the Relationship Between Preschool Teachers' Picture Story Book Reading Activities and Children's Language Development

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the relationship between teachers' picture story book reading activities and 48- to 60-month-old children's language development and to identify the effect of different variables on this relationship. The study sample was composed of 208 children in classrooms for 48- to 60-month-old children and 10 teachers in five independent pre-schools in the province of Kırşehir. The data obtained in the study were analyzed by using appropriate statistical methods. Based on the study results, a significant relationship was identified between pre-school teachers' picture story book reading activities during their daily programs and language development of children. The result of the study presents the importance of picture story book reading activities for language development. Longitudinal studies that will investigate teachers' and parents' involvement in picture story book reading activities in detail and development of programs that will support children's language development are suggested in the chapter.

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INTRODUCTION

Children like and examine books starting in their infancy. Language development advances the most during early childhood and therefore new concepts and words are added to the sentence structure with language acquisition in this period. Picture story books are considered primarily in terms of supporting language development. Many studies have tested the correlation between language development and reading activities (Dickinson, McCabe, & Anatasopoulos, 2002; Justice, Mashburn, Hamre & Pianta, 2008; Zucker, Justice, Piasta & Kadaravek, 2010; Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, Petscher, Piasta & Kadaravek, 2012). These studies report that picture story book reading activities with children or time spent alone with books are significant for the acquisition of future reading habits (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Çakmak & Yılmaz, 2009).

Relationship Between Language Development and Abstract Thinking

Abstract thinking skills include sense-making, recall and hypothesis building (Bowerman and Lavinson, 2001; Öztan Ulusoy, 2012; Senemoğlu, 2012). Tsao (2002) states that children's thinking styles and their skills in adapting these styles to new situations and conditions are possible with abstract thinking skills. Tsao (2002) also presents that playing and classroom interactions highly support and develop this skill.

Since drama, picture story book reading and games create opportunities to explore past experiences, they have a significant place in developing children's abstract thinking skills. Children assign tasks to symbols in symbolic games and play abstract games; they talk to themselves and engage in monologues. They think during these monologues and generate ideas. They share what they have learned with their peers and continue learning from one another. Additionally, pinpointing their shortcomings, presenting similarities, problem solving through reasoning and explaining causes and results and how events operate are the activities frequently used by children during picture story book reading activities. Pictures and texts in picture story books are significant materials prepared for teachers to generate key questions. A creative adult can only support children's development by thinking in the abstract and in a versatile manner (Justice & Ezell, 1999; Menyuk & Brisk, 2005a; Demircan, 2006; Aydın, 2012; Adıgüzel, 2012; Hanbay, 2013; Öztürk, 2013).

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