Picture Book Interactive Read Aloud to Enhance Pre-Schoolers' Communication Skills in EFL Settings

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Abstract

English picture books reading originated in English speaking countries and has been studied by numerous researchers to be verified to improve children's cognitive development, language skills and even life skills. With the implementation of the Compulsory English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition) which emphasizes students language abilities such as understanding, reading and re-tell stories with the help of pictures, writing short descriptions based on hint of pictures, cultivating the understanding of foreign cultures and the interests in English learning, the craze for picture book reading reaches a new height by parents and some English training centers. There are very few researches on the application of picture books on preschoolers. At the same time, the strategy of reading aloud to Children are proved to be beneficial for literacy education. This study would be an empirical study on improving preschoolers' English listening and speaking by reading aloud pictures books and listening to the original audio script of the picture books. Qualitative research methods would be used in the data collecting process by observations. Findings reveals that students who receives picture book reading everyday surly outstrip those who haven't in listening, understanding and speaking. The second finding is that, during this time of language development, listening ability exceeds speaking.

Keywords

EFL, English Picture Books, Interactive Reading -Aloud, Think-Aloud.

1. Backround of This Study

In the year of 2018, the Chinese Education Ministry released a policy which forbade any forms of teaching activities, including the subject of English, Math, Chinese, in all the kindergartens in China (No.57[2018]). According to the policy, the kindergarten should not teach knowledge or leave any home assignment to kids. The purpose of this policy is to ensure those kids under 6 a happy life in kindergartens to promote their overall mental and physical healthy development based on "Learning & Development Guide for 3-6 year Old Kid" which has been published in the year of 2012.

According to this official guide, language development is emphasized. Communication skills and interpersonal skills should be developed. Picture books should be provided. Reading activities should be carried on often to foster children's interests in appreciating literature stories. Good reading habits should be fostered in order to develop their language skills. However, in China, the official language is mandarin Chinese, the language skills in this guide refers to children's mother language instead of a foreign language. In this case, most of the public kindergartens over interpreted this policy from Chinese Education Ministry and ceased all the English classes and enlightenment activities in kindergartens.

As far as the author surveyed, only a few private schools keep English activities instead of English class, but only one period a week, 20 minutes per period, by singing English songs and playing some physical activities in English. Even during this kind of activities, although the

teacher give out very simple instructions in English , the kids do not have to listen to the instructions in English, because the there is another teacher by side translating the instructions in Chinese and ask the kids to follow her movement.

Besides school time, kids have plenty of time at home, but according to a survey, 100% of the parents at home only speak Chinese to their kids, 83%of the parents do not carry on any English enlightenment at home, among which 31% of the parents think Chinese is more important than English ,83% of the parents never read or even do not know English picture books for kids at all. About 40% of the parents think English enlightenment should be carried by teachers in English training centers or teachers in kindergartens, it seems none of their business. If they send their kids to English training center to study English, one time one week, or two times per week. The students only exposed to English at most 3 hours per week. This is only the quality, not mention the teaching and learning quantity. However, 100% of the parents consider English should be learned and English is very important which should be started as earlier as possible.

So here comes the paradox: English is important, but teaching was prohibited, and parents do not know what to do except send kids to training centers. In such circumstance, since introducing picture books to children is recommended by the government and it is comparatively easy for teachers and parents to manipulate. This study, is trying to prove the effectiveness of improving preschoolers listening and speaking skills based on reading English picture books to toddlers as many as possible. Hoping to explore a feasible and practical English enlightenment mode for educators and parents for reference.

2. Literature Review

In this part, the author would like to do literature review on definitions, characteristics of the development of English picture books, theoretic basis for reading English picture books to preschoolers, as well as previous studies on reading picture books to children.

Picture book, as its name, according to the Webster Dictionary (2000), refers to "a book that consists of wholly or chiefly pictures. (2000). As the author can find out, the first definition of picture book was defined by Nodelman (1988) as "picture books are children's books that use a large number of pictures and less text to convey information." Also, Nodelman clarified that picture books intended for young children which communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with relatively slight texts or no texts at all (Nodelman 1988). Matsui (1997) put forward the standard that a group of pictures can deliver stories. And he also suggested the best way to read the story book is not to look at the article with eyes, but to listen with ears. There was a more precise definition from Smallwood(1988) the English picture book is mainly a picture-based narrative method supplemented by English words, which is a book form that gives life to the picture. Based on Smallwood's (1988)research, picture books possess six characteristics as follows: first, straightforward concise plots, proper topics to the young readers, the third, easy sentences to understand, the fourth, realistic materials with a little unfamiliar language, the fifth, rhyming plays an important role and the last, with well-illustrated pictures.

Why children's books are picture books? Nodelman (1988) considered the main purpose of the pictures to assist to tell the stories. A picture in a picture book confirms and makes more specific a story that is already implied by the context of previous and subsequent pictures. The picture in the picture books are literally" illustrations"-images that explain or clarify words and each other. In that sense, even in EFL settings, while the picture-books are read in English to preschoolers, with the aid and illustrations they will comprehend the stories are being read to them which is also in accordance with children's cognitive development and cognitive styles. At the same time, children who look at the picture while they listen to the words being read to them do experience visual information and verbal information both.

As for the theoretic basis of picture books reading to children, the first should be Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, during the language acquisition process, adequate comprehensible input should be provided. That means, before the language learner can produce the utterance, there must be adequate comprehensible language input beforehand. Here is a magic formula for understanding what "comprehensible language input" is: i+1. The letter "i" refers to the learner's current language level and i+1 refers to the next stage the learner is going to achieve. (Krashen, 1982) All the input could be comprehended based on the language context, such as pictures, speaker's body language, facial expressions, and other clues. Besides, Krashen (1982) also mentioned there is an critical period in second language learning, which VanPatten &Williams (2015), in the book of " Theories in Second Language Acquisition", went further to explain the critical period hypothesis is a testable hypothesis that is also can be considered as a theory in neurolinguistics that states at the early age the brain begins to specialize: specific brain functions become increasingly associate with specific areas of the brain. The direct consequence of this theory is the ability to attain the native-like proficiency in a language is related to the initial age of exposure. If language learning begins after a certain age, the learners will never reach a level of proficiency or competence comparable to a native speaker's. A corollary to this hypothesis is that language learning ability declines with age after this point. However, the "age" remains to be controversial. Together with language acquisition device (LAD) mechanism proposed by Chomsky (1972), the author of this study considers carrying on English enlightenment the earlier the better in EFL settings. The LAD is one of the innateness theories proposed by Noam Chomsky (2009). In this theory, children were born with a hard-wired language acquisition device in their brains. LAD is a set of language learning tools, intuitive at birth in all children (Pinker, 1994). The LAD is a postulated organ of the brain that is supported to function as a congenital device for learning symbolic language (Chomsky 2009). According to Stephen Crain &Diane Lillo Martin (1999), LAD explain the human language acquisition of the syntactic structure of language. It encodes the major principles of a language and its grammatical structures into the child's brain and enables the children to analyze the language and extract the basic rules of universal grammar or generative grammar because it is a system of rules that generate or produce sentences of the language. From input hypothesis and LAD theory, it can be concluded that comprehensible input and LAD device are the keys for language acquisition.

From cognitive development perspective, Piaget, a Swiss psychologist and biologist has been a dominating character in cognitive development psychology (Williams & Burden 2000). According to him, the cognitive development falls into four stages respectively: sensory motor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage and formal operation stage. When children are from 2-7 years old, they are just at preoperational stage, in which their egocentrism reaches its peak, and cannot tell the difference between their own opinions from others. Through playing, children understand concrete concepts as well as abstract ones. They cannot think logically yet. But they progress in language abilities rapidly with over generalized language. Their perception is dominated by symbolic thought. In other words, children at this period are quite sensitive to pictures and symbols. In that case, picture books match their cognitive development. At this stage, they have amazing understanding of the pictures. The pictures can effectively guide the students to intuitively understand the text. This also is in accordance with their field-dependent cognitive style which support the idea of reading English picture books. From cognitive style hypothesis, according to Brown (1987), that the children have a cognitive style over field-independent adults in SLA, because children tend to utilize strategies of acquisition to acquire language skills subconscious. Moreover, thanks to children's field-dependence, they are good at understand the language through context, pictures or the surroundings.

Since, English picture books are introduced to China recent years. Although not too many researches have been done, there are still some points of view towards English picture books and language learning. Sun,(2012) in her study pointed out exposing to authentic English undoubtedly an effective way to enhance children's English level. Fan (2014) summarized that reading English picture books can provide toddlers with English language environment and develop their interests in English study. Liao, (2019) has proved the effect of picture books in reading English. He concluded that applying Input Hypothesis to the English picture-book reading can stimulate students' interest in reading, expand students' English input, broaden English reading ideas and enrich reading teaching methods. Tang (2019), in her study concluded that English picture book reading can improve pupil's English language skills, especially expanding vocabularies and improving reading comprehension skills. Huang (2019 proved picture-book-assisted English vocabulary teaching can help pupils memorize target words better. Picture books can increase pupils' interest in learning English vocabulary. At last, pupils need more time and more training to transfer the vocabulary learning strategies acquired in the experimental lessons to their regular English learning.

Read aloud has been defined as "the single most important activity for building the knowledge for eventual success in reading"(Anderson et al. 1985)Reading aloud is an instructional approach which is integrated in whole language program in which children learn to reflect on literature by listening and responding to it(Hennings, 1992) This specific teaching strategy invites students to listen to stories and go beyond to think about what they are hearing. Reading aloud to children can involve four language arts, including listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as critical and creative thinking (Hennings 1992). From her statement, reading aloud seems essential in language learning. Even, Trelease (1989b) argued that teachers should read aloud to children from the first day of school in kindergarten to seventh grade. Jim considered read aloud to children can arouse curiosity, to inspire students. Also, he also reckoned reading aloud strengthens children's reading, writing and speaking skills, even can help students become better listeners and develop better verbal skills. Jim put across this point by saying if the child has never heard the word, the child will never say that word; and is you have neither heard it nor said it, it's pretty tough to read it and to write it. During read aloud process, teachers also may ask students to talk out their thoughts that comes to their mind (Hennings,1992), that means, think aloud can be applied during the process of read aloud. She also concluded while listening to the teachers' reading aloud, students could make connections between what they already know and what they are receiving. Linda, (1992) in her longitudinal study found four proposed benefits of reading aloud to children through the effects of storybook exposure on children's general language facility. The first indirect one is that the understanding of oral language will affect their reading skill. The second one is the improvement in children's knowledge of word meaning and complex grammatical forms. The third is to develop students' school-like language register and the last is to improve their recognition of the print. As it is known to all, during the repetition of reading, children may recognize some sight words by memory. Also, they are exposed to new word meanings and more complex grammatical forms. Nagy and Herman (1987) reported that the learning of words through listening to story books are more than the words they learn from reading, ranging between 5%-15% respectively depend on different individual. Chomsky (1972), Whitehurstet al, (1988) all proved in their studies that being reading aloud of storybooks could improve the development in syntactic understanding. Elley (1989) concluded that in those studies, the rates of language acquisition are relatively constant and seem to come through children's attempts to understand what they are listening to. This also reveals the importance of reading aloud the picture books to preschoolers. From the perspective of scaffolding theory, indeed, Snow (1983), confirmed that reading story books to children can provide a scaffold to aid the understanding by elaboration of the points or questioning of key incidents and so on. Snow and others also see this interaction

from Vygotsky's notion of "zone of proximal development". In their analysis, the scaffolding of the story provides the support children need. As the children becomes competent, the support would be less. Besides, read-aloud has other benefits such as arouse students 'desire for reading. Mary, (2002) described in her book that the read-aloud time will cause children to want to read. Once the child has heard a good book read aloud, he or she can hardly wait to savor it again. Linda (2003) considered read-aloud to students by teachers is a useful strategy to increase literacy, which should include picture book reading. She also considered three purpose of read-aloud: share literature with children. With so many advantages, Halloran (1988) thought read aloud program should start on the first day of the school year and till the last day of school. The above researches are based on first language learners, however, Karen (2011) claimed the read-aloud also serve an important role in the literacy development of culturally and linguistically diverse children. Karen (2011) also concluded the benefits of read-aloud to students as exposing students to text beyond their independent reading level which provide a scaffold to latter independent reading. Because the "work" of decoding is done by the teacher, the child is able to use all the cognitive energy for understanding the text based on the context. Also, Karen pointed out read- aloud provide a model for students to fluent expressive reading and are useful in building motivations and provide opportunities for ELLs to acquire both basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. Additionally, Jim Trelease (2013) stated that reading aloud to all ESL or native born, beginning as early in their live as possible as continuing though the grades would expose them to a rich organized, and interesting language model as an alternative to the tongue-tied language of their peers. Hoes statements support the author's idea of applying read-aloud on EFL preschoolers. Just as Jim Trelease (2013) said, teachers pour enough words into the child's listening vocabulary though read- aloud, and the listening vocabulary will overflow and fill the speaking vocabulary pool- thus, the children began to speak the words he had heard. He said if you want to learn to speak Chinese that is also the right way which also strongly support the idea read-aloud is suitable for EFL settings. As Jim (2013) explained that as you read to a child, you were pouring into a child's brain all the sound, syllables, endings and blending that will make up the words he/she will someday be asked to read and understand. And through stories, you are filling in the background- like war or whales or locomotives. While reading to young children with picture books, interactive read-aloud is recommended. Fisher, Flood, Lapp, Frey, (2004) defined this strategy as modeling fluent oral reading while using an animated tone and expression and stopping periodically to thoughtfully question students to focus them on specifics of the text. Although, read-aloud to children has always been proved to be effective and supportive, however, new elements or new applications are always updated. In the year of 2015, Laura Leigh Mikul, did a research on applying interactive read aloud to promote engagement and oral language development in kindergarten, she supports during the reading aloud process, teachers stops to engage students in conversations about the text to help students to be aware of the elements in the story. As a result, interactive read aloud allowed students to be active involved in the given purpose by which students improve their understanding through listening and discussion. She also summarizes the benefits of interactive read aloud strategy, one of which is encouraging comprehension and oral language. At the same year Adeyemo (2015) differentiate interactive read-aloud from traditional read aloud strategy? The difference lies in here: A traditional read aloud strategy involves the teacher reading to the students while they listen and encourage students to discuss after reading is complete whereas interactive read aloud involve promotion dialogue throughout the reading process. Cunningham (2009) confirmed the positive effect of interactive read aloud strategy on listening comprehension. The author also searched the CNKI, no researches has been done on interactive read-aloud strategy in China.

Having reviewed the publications and studies in this domain of English picture book reading, including the theories of second language acquisitions, and cognitive development, it is evident that reading English picture books really has a positive influence on Chinese students' English Language development. With the detailed literature review on read-aloud strategy especially on interactive read aloud which has been confirmed to be beneficial to listening comprehension, however, no one has ever studied the effectiveness of reading aloud picture books for EFL toddlers in the source language environment to improve their listening and speaking abilities. That is the reason and purpose the author wants to carry out this study.

3.　The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of the picture book reading with the preschoolers in the EFL classroom. This study aims to:

(a) To identify the English picture books reading aloud can foster EFL preschoolers listening and speaking abilities

(b) To help teachers and parents know the importance of reading aloud English picture books in EFL toddlers' English enlightenment.

(c) To explore an applicable method for interactive read-aloud to preschoolers for reference

4.　Methodology

In order to test the effectiveness of reading aloud to preschoolers on improving their listening and speaking abilities, this study will employ a quasi-experimental design mode by which the researcher can change and manipulate what is happening is the classroom.

5.　Sampling

This study was carried on in one pre-school classroom in Mianyang City, Si Chuan Province, China. The participants are the researcher and three teachers in that class. Students' participants are selected based on their willingness to participate and parents' permission, altogether 12 students, 5 boys and 7 girls. Age 4-5. All of them are Chinese-speaking and had no English language training before except occasionally listening to English songs and knows the alphabet. While the comparison group contains 11students, among them 6 boys and 5 girls. Age 4-5, all of them are Chinese speaking and none of them received other English trainings.

6.　Research Design Process

6.1.　Experimental Group &Comparison Group

Group	Experimental	Comparison
Numbers of students	12	11
Mother Language	Chinese	Chinese
English Proficiency	Only recognize letters	Only recognize letters

6.2.　Research Hypothesis

The interactive reading-aloud strategy of picture book will improve preschooler's English communication skills, especially listening comprehension ability.

6.3.　The Experimental Group

The experimental groups have two assignments. Because they are preschoolers, aside from the classroom reading, their parents will also take part in this experiment. The experiment will last for two semesters, totally 32 weeks. During the 32 weeks, they will accept English picture book

reading to them every afternoon, from 4:00-4:40pm. The researcher will read aloud stories to them.

Second, their parents will be prepared for this experiment: 1) Parents will be introduced the importance and the purpose of this experiment.2) Parents understand the importance of the English enlightenment through reading aloud.3) Parents received most of the English picture books copies which will be read to the children during the 32 weeks to help them understand what their children are being read to 4) Parents are required not to take their children to any of the English training centers or download any apps to learn English aside from the experiment. 5) Some parents would be interviewed at the end of the experiment to know their children's progress they have observed.

Those preparations are made to ensure the validity of the data collecting and ensure the children are exposed to English more than 1 hour per day which is essential to ensure enough input.

6.4. In-Classroom Reading Section

The experiment group started an picture book reading aloud session from 2018.3.5-6.23.& 2018.9.3-12.23. Altogether 2 semesters, 32 weeks. 5 days a week, except for some holidays, there are altogether 138 days in reading picture books in classroom. During the summer break, the experiment group every day, with their parents still keep on reading or listening to the audio while the comparison group still remain the same without any purposefully English reading or teaching or enlightenment. The author has calculated, altogether there are 316 books have been read to the children both by parents and teachers.

The feature of this reading aloud section, is the natural process of telling a story with pause to guide the preschoolers to do think aloud through her own self-question & answer in order to EFL provide the preschoolers the sentence patterns to mimic to do group think aloud. Through this way, preschoolers could understand what they are listening with teacher's explanations, pictures and at the same time, their critical thinking abilities, knowledges are in the process of being fostered. Another feather of this reading time is that the relaxation atmosphere in which preschoolers feels no pressures on "intentionally" learn something or feel pressured to answer the questions because story tellers skillfully integrate the reading goals into interactive read aloud and think aloud which greatly arouse their curiosities and interests to be engaged in this activity.

Basic Elements & Check List for Active Read Aloud Activities:

Greetings	Book Selection	Prediction of the story	Vocabulary Building	Think aloud	Encouragements	Mind map	No Translation
√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

The above elements or strategies should be applied in each reading class. Here are some explanations for above elements.

(1) Each class, teacher would take out some books for students to choose which one is to be read today to ensure their utmost interests and curiosities.

(2) Vocabulary building does not mean teacher teach vocabularies directly, instead, teacher would explain in simple English to make clear some of the vocabularies or key words by the illustrations in the picture books, facial expressions, body languages, or even some prepared props.

(3) Think aloud which is defined as express one's thoughts as soon as they occur, should be initialed by the teacher while necessary to propose a question and then answer it by the teacher herself first, then, ask students' opinions and scaffold the students to speak their thoughts aloud in the sentence structure, the teacher just has molded. For example: T: What color will the

chameleon turn into? I think pink! How do you think? He will turn into ....? T: Yes? Yellow? Green? Grey? Or Blue? (pointing to the pictures) The following are some usually question patterns or prompts & check list to arouse think aloud in the interactive read- aloud. (Based on based on activity in Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C. L., Cziko, C., Hurwitz, L. (2000). Reading for Understanding: A Guide to Improving Reading in Middle and High School Classrooms. San Francisco, CA:Jossey-Bass, 78.).

Because all the participants are language beginners in EFL settings, all the prompts would be answered with teachers scaffolding and most of the answers will be in the form of completion which means the preschoolers just fill in the blanks the teacher intentionally leave at the end of the sentence. If they were open ended questions, teacher would scaffold the sentence structure or simplify the sentence type.

Strategy Think aloud	Cue Words	Mark
Predicting	I predict… In the next part, I think… I think this is …	
Questioning	Why did… What did… How did… Where is… Should there…	
Visualizing	I see I picture	
Personal Respondse	I feel… My favorite part… I like/dislike…	
Clarifying	I got confused when… I am not sure of … I did not expect	
Summarizing	I think this is mainly about… The most important idea is …	
Reflecting	I think I will…next time May be I will need to … I realized that… I wonder if	
Making connections	This is like This reminds me of This is similar to If it were me…	

(4) Mind map, as Tony (2003) defined, a way of taking notes is not boring. In order to recall key information from the stories, mind map will be drawn by the teacher while the teacher and students sit and recall together what had happen logically in the story. In this process, teacher also scaffold to help the students to express. Not every story needs a mind map to make clear the clues at the end.

(5) No translation-since this interactive reading aloud activity aims to do the English enlightenment in EFL settings and to testify whether reading aloud to preschoolers could improve their English listening comprehension and verbal expressions, no translation into Chinese is allowed. If translation is allowed, there would be two consequence, the first, the

preschoolers would always wait for you to translate rather than to understand relating context clues. The second, it would lead to the false result of this study.

7. Research Questions

(1) How will picture book reading aloud to preschoolers affect their English language skills?
(2) What are the essential procedures for interactive English picture book read aloud?

8. Hypothesis

Interactive Read-aloud strategy applied in reading picture books indeed is effective in improving EFL toddler's English communication skills

9. Data Analysis

In order to prove the effectiveness of picture-book read-aloud in improving students communication ability especially listening ability, the quantitative data are collected through pre-tests and post-tests. After the data collected, grouped, and analyzed by SPSS 25.0.

Before the data analyzing results, the author holds a hypothesis that among those EFL students, the experimental group surely would have better score statistically than the comparison group who have not experienced the picture book read-aloud instruction.

10. Results

Statistical Results from Pre and Post Tests
By applying Two-Samples T Test to compare the pretests score and posttest score of both experimental and controlled group, the data shows Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, and the final score have no any statistical significance (P>0.05). See Table 1

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic of Pre-test Score Comparison between Two Groups

Variable	controlled group	Experimental group	t	P
Q1	0.09±0.20	0.04±0.14	0.68	0.506
Q2	0.09±0.20	0.13±0.31	-0.31	0.761
Q3	0.36±0.50	0.33±0.49	0.15	0.886
Q4	0.09±0.20	0.04±0.14	0.68	0.506
Q5	0.09±0.20	0.04±0.14	0.68	0.506
Total	0.73±0.72	0.58±0.76	0.46	0.647

The results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that both experimental group and controlled group are at the same start line before the experimental group receive read-aloud.

Result 2: By means of Paired-Samples T Test, the scores of comparison groups both in pretest and posttest are analyzed. This result shows:

(1) In Comparison group, the differentiate of total score in pre and post -test has statistical significance (P<0.05),

(2) But on Q2, Q3, and Q4, there is no statistical significance (P>0.05). See Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Comparison Group at Pretest and Post-test

Variable	Pre-test	Pro-test	t	P
Q1	0.09±0.20	0.59±0.20	-7.416	<0.001
Q2	0.09±0.20	0.50±0.15	0.559	0.588
Q3	0.36±0.50	0.41±0.49	-0.232	0.821
Q4	0.09±0.20	0.27±0.41	-1.174	0.267
Q5	0.09±0.20	0.90±0.20	-8.05	<0.001
Total	0.73±0.72	2.23±0.96	-4.06	0.002

According to the data in the table1, what interesting in this data is in the post test, some of the students coincidentally got score because they get the meaning of teacher's body language and gestures, especially Q1and Q5. They did not speak anything, but they did the movement by guessing teachers' gestures. And in Q2, Q3, Q4, such questions related to the content of picture books, they surely could not understand what the teachers said or guessed by facial expressions or gestures.

Result 3: By means of Paired-Samples T Test, the scores of experimental groups both in pretest and posttest are analyzed. This result shows:

1) On the differentiate of total score of experimental group, the data has statistical significance (P<0.05)

2) On the differentiate of separate score of Q1-Q5, the data has statistical significance (P<0.05)

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for Experimental Group at Pretest and Post-test

Variable	Pre-test	Pro-test	t	P
Q1	0.04±0.14	0.96±0.14	-16.32	<0.001
Q2	0.13±0.31	0.96±0.14	-8.86	<0.001
Q3	0.33±0.49	0.96±0.14	-4.49	0.001
Q4	0.04±0.14	0.83±0.33	-8.20	<0.001
Q5	0.42±0.14	0.96±0.14	-16.32	<0.001
Total	0.58±0.76	4.67±0.49	-16.17	<0.001

According to data in the Table 3, it means the score in posttest for experimental group has improved than pretest which indicate that active-read aloud strategy is effective in improving preschooler's communication skills, especially listening skills.

Result 4

By applying Two-Samples-T -Test to compare the post-tests score between the experimental group and the controlled group, the data shows Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, except Q5 and the final score have significant statistical significance (P<0.05). See Table 4

Table 4. Descriptive Statistic of Post-test Score Comparison between Two Groups

Variable	Controlled Group	Experimental Group	t	P
Q1	0.59±0.20	0.96±0.14	-5.05	<0.001
Q2	0.05±0.15	0.96±0.14	-14.83	<0.001
Q3	0.41±0.49	0.96±0.14	-3.71	0.001
Q4	0.27±0.41	0.83±0.33	-3.65	0.002
Q5	0.91±0.20	0.96±0.14	-0.68	0.506
Total	2.23±096	4.67±0.49	-7.78	<0.001

This result is significant to prove the effectiveness of read-aloud experiment for the experimental group at the $P < 0.05$, which showed a positive correlation between active read aloud and preschoolers comprehension skills.

To sum up, the preschoolers in experimental group who have received the active read aloud treatment, performed much better than their peers in controlled group who have not received such treatment.

11. Discussion

Turning now to the experimental evidence on performance difference between experimental group and controlled group, the statistical analysis showed that the experimental group outperformed he controlled group on communication measures, especially on listening comprehension. Thus, the interactive read-aloud strategy had indeed contributed to the progress of EFL preschoolers in communication skills.

Although, surprisingly, one unanticipated finding was that in the controlled group, as showed in Table2, the preschoolers in this group made slightly little progress compared with the pre-test in Q1and Q5. There are several possible explanation for this. First, during the post-test procedure, the experimental groups were tested first that day, the controlled group may have observed the behavior of the experimental group to pick up the book and return it to certain person at the beginning and at the end of the test. So, when the teacher gave out the instruction to take and turn the book from a certain teacher, they did it or just followed the experimental groups' route which earned them some points. Another possible explanation for this is that they can guess from the teachers' body language and gestures to understand what they ought to do by taking or returning the book which Q1and Q5 required. The third explanation may lie in some of the them had knew the Chinese name of the book title by looking at the picture on the page cover which gained them alit bit more score than in the pretest.

Anyway, aside from the above unexpecting results which could be explained well, the findings of the current study do corroborate the ideas of read-aloud advocators and previous empirical studies such as Jim Trelease (1989b) (2013), Elley (1989), Hennings (1992) Cunningham (2009), Karen (2011), LauraLeighMikul(2015)'s. They all stated that read-aloud strategy exerts a positive and promising effect on listening comprehension and oral language, especially the latter two studies focus on interactive read aloud strategy. Besides, the findings also support the basic teaching techniques the author applied in the course of interactive read aloud which provide ample scaffolding for EFL preschoolers to think aloud and to express themselves in target language which is in agreement with the findings of Snow (1983), Hennings (1992), Fisher, Flood, Lapp&Frey (2004), Mary (2015)'s.Furthermore, current study, also suggest Interactive read aloud in class is effective. More important, from the above three interviews, it is apparently to support the previous studies result of Jim Trelease (1998) Hennings (1992), Adeyemo (2015), Jim Trelease (2013) which held the opinion that read aloud can arouse students' curiosity, to inspire them, to go beyond to think about what they are hearing and to cause them eager to read. By the way, this study also proved as long as there is plenty of comprehensible input, there must be output gradually which is proposed by Krashen (1982) in Input Hypothesis.

Furthermore, this empirical study, both from statistic and interview, provides a model for educator and parents to follow to continue the English enlightenment. As Linda (2003), Karen (2011), claimed, read aloud serves a key role in literacy development. With so many benefits mentioned and proved above, just as Halloran (1998) insists, read aloud program should start on the first day of the school year and till the last day of school.

12. Pedagogical Implications

From the above findings, some pedagogical implications can be drawn for active read aloud strategy in EFL settings for preschoolers to implement English enlightenment. The evidence from this study indicate that, the first, the picture book read aloud should be implemented from the first day of preschool till the end day of kindergarten. The longer the students are exposed to rich language environment, the more output would be.

The second is, interactive read aloud is not simply read aloud the words from the book aloud, on the contrary, the book should be read aloud in an interactive way which would possess at least vocabulary building and think aloud process with great encouragement and not a word of translation. To do it better, there are some details needs to be paid attention to. It is better for the students to select the book as they wish if possible because interests would be the best to engage them in this activity. In order to keep their attentions and curiosities, readers can stop occasionally and ask what listeners thinks about what would happen the next and answer the question by reader himself to show the listeners how to answer such questions in a suspenseful and slowed down voice. While reading, do keep the students keep the picture books insight to help them understand and get clues from pictures, in classroom setting, a slide projector will do. Abundant facial expressions, body languages and gestures along with different tones should be applied when telling the story to help EFL students to understand more. When questions raised by kids, do answer them and lead them to explore the answers.

The third implication is about the reading materials. Always supply plenty of picture books in the classroom for students to pick up for teachers to read aloud. Preview the books before class. For beginners, use nursery rhymes with finger ballads to arouse their interests. Then start with picture books which has fewer words on one page then gradually move on to longer ones. If the book, students hand to the readers contains too many details or too elaborate, teachers can explain or illustrate in her own words just as Caroline (2006) suggested.

The last but not the least, since read-aloud strategy is not only to read the words out aloud, as mentioned in the second point, there are some techniques or tips to be applied. Necessities for training the preschool teachers or parents stand out in EFL settings. As far as the author surveyed, most of the preschool teachers graduated from pre-school education major instead of English major. Most of them are not good at English themselves, let alone reading English books to toddlers. Even some English major graduates do not know how to read aloud to toddlers. In China. Not everyone can read or speak English, once, the author carried out a survey among 128 parents, only18% of the parents read aloud English books to their children more than 6 months, setting aside the reading quality. That means 82% of the parents never do that, among whom38% of them do not know English at all. Even the rest of the parents can read English, they do not know how to read aloud picture books to children. However, Trelease(2013) did a simple arithmetic: the child spends 900 hours a year in school and 7800 hours outside school, the answer is clear, if parents can read aloud to students at home, their kids can stand a better chance in future English reading and writing based on listening comprehension. As the researches show that the seeds of reading and school success or failure are sown in the home, long before child ever arrives at school, reading is the same. Thus, the last implication is the urgent need for teachers and parents training in read aloud strategy.

13. Limitations

As findings were obtained which showed a positive relationship between read-aloud and preschoolers communication abilities. In retrospect, the methodology the author applied in this study is quasi-experiment and interview which seems currently the most appropriate one.

However, just like there is no perfect man in the world, there is no perfect study without any limitations. The author is very clear, there are three limitations for this study.

The first limitation is the numbers of the sample are too small due to the original kindergarten class size and the characteristics of the children. It is impossible for the author to read to more than 100 hundred children at the same time. Just as Lowen& Phip(2012) mentioned in the book of Research Methods in SLA, the disadvantage of interventionist research include the fact the research conditions may impose some level of artificiality on the classroom. Surely, in EFL settings, the language environment is artificial. And the classroom are messy places and it may be difficult for the researcher to control all the potentially interfering variables.(Lowen& Phip, 2012). Certainly, especially in the preschool class, that is one of the reason, the sample is only twelve students.

The second limitations is found in the post-test. It is the researchers fault of not to avoid the controlled group to guess what the teacher say or to imitate experimental groups behavior. It is thoughtless the researcher to provide some English books which already had Chinese version for the controlled group to say the name of the book which may lead to the controlled group gained some more points in the post-tests although did not affect the results and findings.

The third limitation is that the researcher herself carried out the read-aloud activity to the experimental group by which the researcher subconsciously avoid some of the potential limitations of this study. The reason, why the researcher carried out such activity by herself is that the director hopes the researcher to provide model class for other teachers to learn and set an example. At that time, no other teachers were capable of doing so, which indicate the urgent of providing on-the-job training for other teachers.

14. Conclusion&Future Study

This study applied quasi-experiment and interview to verify the effectiveness of interactive read aloud the picture books to preschoolers. The gathered statistic shows the positive relation between the two and answered the research questions. The research hypothesis was proved to be true and the purpose of this study has achieved. However, there are indeed obvious limitations for this study which indicates that the findings and results should be considered critically and cautiously. Discussions are welcomed to go deeper and further. Thus, the further and follow-up studies may be carried on by observing other teachers to implement such strategies to more experimental classes after on the job training or to do research on parents-child interactive read aloud study after training the parents to collect more data to support the hypothesis that interactive read aloud is indeed effective in EFL setting for all and worthy of being popularized.

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