

The Impact on Social Relationships of Shared Picture Book Reading in Early Learning Classrooms in South Korea: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how the reading of picture books aids in young children's understanding of social relationships. The interactions between children and teachers in eight kindergartens and six nurseries during and after the shared reading of a picture book were observed and qualitatively analyzed. A semi-structured interview with each participating teacher was conducted a week after the observed reading. In all but two cases, it was found that the teachers had chosen a picture book with a storyline ("story-type book"). Many books described the nature of friendship and ways to build and maintain those relationships. The children were engaged in guessing, remembering the story line, and empathizing with the protagonists in the books. However, verbal interactions between children and teachers were led mainly by the teachers. Post-reading activities that had been pre-planned by the teachers included art, drama, writing letters or poems, singing, games and campaigning for causes related to the books that had been read. This study discusses the role of the teacher in the context of reading picture books themed on social relationships and implications to children's character education.

Keywords: social relationships, picture book, young children, classroom

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This study aims to explore the interaction between the reading of picture books in early learning classrooms and children's understanding of social relationships. The Korean Government's National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, Nuri, fosters theme teaching. Set themes for these purposes include "My Kindergarten and Friends" and "My Family and Me" for Kindergarten and "My Friends and Me" and "Our Family" for nursery level classrooms. Themes are introduced at the beginning of the academic year and teaching usually focuses on each theme in turn for 4-6 weeks. Social relationship building is one of the main educational targets for young children, which was further emphasized by the introduction of the Character Education Promotion Act in July 2015 (Korea Ministry of Government Legislation, 2015). The goal of character education in South Korea is to cultivate humanism and capacity for sound self, as well as interactions with others, one's community and nature (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Through stories, children learn about ways people should or should not behave (Gadamar, 1975). Per Schickedanz (2014), children that read picture books not only comprehend story lines, but are also encouraged to exercise social-emotional understanding. Children engage in social-perspectives and respond to others with concern. Children not only observe, but indirectly feel, the agony or happiness of the protagonists in a story. In addition to knowledge and feelings, Lickona (1991) emphasizes a third factor in children's moral development, being behaviors. This line of thinking was supported by Ladd (2007), who pointed to cognition, emotion and behavior as three aspects of social competence. The positive effects of reading picture books and related activities on children's emotional intelligence, self-esteem and pro-social behaviors have also been found in previous studies (Kwan, 2013; Lee & Kim, 2015; Lee & Sung, 2013; Lim, Go, & Huhr, 2008; Song & Choi, 2013).

Shared book reading, an interaction whereby an adult reads and discusses a book with young children, has been studied from various aspects, such as literacy (van Kleeck, 2006; Ko & Lee, 2013), literature (Hyun & Byun, 2004; Lee & Jo, 2015; Sipe, 2008) or teaching models (Barnes & Dickenson, 2016; Barnes, Dickenson & Grifenhagen, 2016; Jung & Lee, 2015). Sipe (2008) distinguished five types of literary responses that young children had when listening to a reading of a picture book by their teacher: analytic, intertextual, personal, transparent and performative.

Analytic responses refer to dealing with the text as an object or cultural product. Children stay within the text and make comments that reflect an analytic stance. Intertextual responses are displayed when the text being read is related to other cultural products. The text is reviewed in relation to other texts, and functions as an element in a matrix of interrelated contexts.

Children express spontaneous emotion as evidence of their deep engagement in the story, such as talking back to the protagonists of the story by warning, evaluating, or cheering them on; or assuming the role of a protagonist, speaking as if they were the protagonist themselves. Personal type is connecting the text to one's own life, moving either from life to the text or from the text to one's life. The text acts as a stimulus for a personal connection. Transparent behaviors involve entering the world of the story and becoming one with it. The storyworld becomes momentarily identical with and transparent to the children's world. Performative activities suggest that the children are playfully manipulating the story for their own creative purposes. The text functions as a platform or playground for children's creativity.

In addition, the role of teachers in the context of the shared book reading was identified as readers, managers (and encouragers), clarifiers or probers, fellow wonderers or speculators, or extenders or refiners. Investigating the strategies of teachers in the context of the picture book reading, Barnes & Dickens (2016) found that teachers used informative comments that gave or explained information more frequently than comments responding to children's utterances. These informative comments contained more conceptually focused content than vocabulary or skill content. Teachers helped children with more than just simple vocabulary acquisition.

In early learning classrooms in South Korea, teachers organize various post-reading activities in accordance with the current theme. However, studies that investigate children's understanding of social relationships while carrying out the post-reading activities are uncommon. For a more rounded perspective on shared book reading, this study explores the verbal interaction and behavior of children both during and after the book reading. The following research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1: Which picture books do teachers of early learning classrooms read to children to promote social relationships?

Research Question 2: How do the children and teachers interact during the book reading?

Research Question 3: Which activities are children involved in after the reading?

Method

Participants

Participants of the study consisted of 14 teachers and 160 children from 8 kindergartens and 6 nurseries in Seoul and its suburban areas. The teachers were enrolled in vocational training at a college based in Seoul. As a part of the course, the teachers participated in field work, which consisted of shared book readings in their own classrooms from March to May. Data from the field work is applied in this study with the permission of the teachers. Their working experiences ranged from 2 years 3 months to 10 years and 2 months (mean = 6 years and 5 months). The children aged from 3 years 2 months to 5 years and 3 months (mean = 4 years and 9 months).

Procedures and Design

Each teacher chose a picture book for this experiment. The teacher then read the book to the children as a whole class or a small group. Recordings were made of the readings and the related activities from March to May in 2016. Tested occasions lasted from 40 minutes to three hours, depending on the post-reading activities that took place. Second or third recordings were needed in certain instances owing to unanticipated events. A week after the recording, the teachers were interviewed individually. Each interview took approximately 15 minutes.

Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected through video and audio-recording, semi-structured interviews with the teachers, children's output and observational field notes. The process of data collection was in accordance with the ethical standards of the Responsible Committee on Human Experimentation. First, the book readings and subsequent activities were

Table 1. *List of the Books*

Title of Book	Illustrator	Writer	Translator	Year of Publication of Translation in Korean
Happy Chair-Tree	Lang Schulin	Lang Schulin	Park, Ji-min	2002
I Have A New Neighbor	Takabatake Jun	Kisira Mayuko	Ryu, Hwa-sun	2014
Little Beaver and the Echo	Sarah Fox-Davies	Amy MacDonald	Lee, Myeong-hee	1996
Little Beauty	Anthony Browne	Anthony Browne	Jang, Mi-ran	2008
Mr. Brown's Fantastic Hat	Ayano Imai	Ayano Imai	Lee, Eun-ju	2014
My Mum	Anthony Browne	Anthony Browne	Huh, Eun-mee	2005
Oliver	Ian Falconer	Ian Falconer	Seo, Ae-kyeong	2013
Play with Me	Marie Hall Ets	Marie Hall Ets	Yang, Eun-young	1994
Rikki	Hido Van Henehten	Hido Van Henehten	Jang, Mi-ran	2006
Stickleback	Park, Ji-hoon	Park, Ji-hoon		2007
Thanks, but I...	Seoul-i	Seoul-i		2011
Unicorn Thinks He's Pretty Great	Bob Shea	Bob Shea	Park, Hye-soo	2015
We Are Friends	Wada Makoto	Tanigawa Syuntaro	Kim, Sook	2005
When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry...	Molly Bang	Molly Bang	Lee, Eun-hwa	2000

recorded in each classroom (approximately 840 minutes in total), focusing on the teacher's reading, their interactions with the children, discussions and the related activities. Field notes were taken during and after each observation (160 pages in total) to capture as much detail as possible.

Each teacher was also formally interviewed one week after the recorded activities took place. The 15 minute long interviews were audiotaped. The teachers focused on changes in the children's attitude towards others and their relationship building.

Data Analysis

For a qualitative analysis of the children's literary discussions and activities, the data was grouped based on activity. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (2011) preliminary coding was

employed to transcribe the children's conversations with their teacher and peers, and the teachers' interviews. Three early childhood educators and two picture book experts discussed and selected examples that were representative each protocol and seemed to best answer the research questions.

In addition, comparative methods such as the *triangulation* method of Patton (2015) were employed constantly to validate the data analysis. The researcher adopted the *methodological triangulation* method, compared several data sets, such as the classroom observations, interview transcripts, observational field notes and the children's oral/pictorial/written responses. By checking consistency of the data through triangulation, the researcher could increase the reliability of the data analysis.

Results

This study explored how picture books were used in the classrooms of kindergartens and nurseries to promote children's understanding of social relationships: the choice of books, story-sharing behavior, the related activities, and changes in the children's interactions with their peers.

The Choice of Book

The nature of relationships and enhancing social skills were common themes between the books. All the books with the exception of two were story-type books. *Thanks, but I...* and *We Are Friends* did not contain a story. *Thanks, but I...* is structured as a dialogue where the protagonist rejects an offer and asserts their desire in various cases. *We Are Friends* documented the definition of friends such as "A friend is someone who says it's all right even after catching a cold from you". Two thirds of the books dealt with friendships, while the rest concerned events within a family or between neighbors. The books expressed feelings of loneliness without companions and the joy of building new relationships. They described troubles in relations and showed problem-solving undertaken actively by the protagonists or occurring by accident. *When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry...* encouraged self control and self-calming. The majority of the books featured only animal

protagonists, either in nature, a house or a zoo. Human protagonists appeared in very few books. All stories ended with happy and contented protagonists. In their interviews, the teachers often reported that the children read the same book more than once. After the teachers read the book to them, they would read the same book by themselves.

Table 2. *Summary of the Books*

Title of Book	Key Relationship	Main Character	Setting
Happy Chair-Tree	Friendship	A Tree, A Man	Forest
I Have A New Neighbor	Community	A Hen, An Owl	Around House
Little Beaver and the Echo	Friendship	A Beaver, Other Animals	Forest
Little Beauty	Friendship	A Gorilla, A Kitten	Zoo
Mr. Brown's Fantastic Hat	Friendship	A Bear, Birds	Forest
My Mum	Mother and Child	A Mum	At Home
Oliver	Mother and Child	A Piglet, A Pig	At Home, A Gallery
Play with Me	Friendship	A Girl, Other Animals	Forest
Rikki	Self/Friendship	A Rabbit	Forest
Stickleback	Father and Child	A Big Fish, A Small Fish	Sea
Thanks, but I...	Friendship	A Girl, A Boy	Blank
Unicorn Thinks He's Pretty Great	Friendship	An Unicorn	Forest
We Are Friends	Friendship	A Boy, Many People	Blank
When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry...	Self/Family	A Girl, Her Family	At Home and Around House

Story-Sharing Behavior

Verbal interactions between the teacher and children fell into four categories: guessing, remembering of the story line, emotions and actions.

Guessing. Picture books are structured to build on theme, contents and characters that are advertised at great effect and introduced at the outset of the book. Questions posed by

the teachers about the book helped the listeners comprehend the complexity of book. Presenting the front page of book, 9 out of 14 teachers made the listeners guess who would appear and what would happen in the subsequent pages. The questions were answered through both guesswork and inferential problem solving.

(The teacher presents a book covered with numbered stickers.)

Teacher: Who want to pull of a sticker?

Children: Me me me

Teacher: U-jung come out and take off one.

U-jung approaches and pulls away the sticker numbered “1” revealing a word underneath.

Teacher: What do you see?

Children: It says ‘Neighbor’

...

Children: Houses

Teacher: Which color are their roofs?

Children: Red. Blue.

Teacher: Yes. The left house has a red roof and the right one, a blue roof.

Who do you think lives in the house with the red roof?

(Before reading *We Have a New Neighbor*).

Teacher: Today, I’ve brought a book called *After All Mom...* What do you see on this front page?

Child 1: Mom

Teacher: Mom? Who is mom?

Child 2: The pig near her!

Teacher: What else do you see?

Child 3: That pig looks like a daughter.

(Before reading *Oliver*, retitled *After All Mom...* in the Korean translation version)

Remembering the story line. Every story has an incident involving the characters. Who did what? Who was the incident connected to? Understanding the process and progress of the incident requires a high level of script memory. Teachers sometimes asked questions aimed at allowing the children to acknowledge the storyline throughout the reading. After the reading of the book, two out of fourteen teachers asked the children to think about the story, turning pages without reading it loud. The remaining teachers asked

questions about the contents of book immediately following the reading. The first questions were to check the listeners' understanding of the storyline.

Teacher: What kind of hat did Mr. Brown have?

Child 1: White

Child 2: Fantastic

Teacher: Certainly, it was a fantastic hat. Which animal was Mr. Brown?

Child 3: A bear.

Teacher: Yes. Did he have a friend?

Child 3: No.

Teacher: Who picked up Mr. Brown's hat?

Child 3: The woodpecker.

(In conversation after reading *Mr. Brown's Fantastic Hat*).

Emotions. Listening to a story allowed the children to step into the character's shoes. Teachers sometimes asked questions to the listeners about the feelings of characters, their own recollections of related experiences, and any changes in their position towards the character during the story. The children acknowledged the emotions of character.

Teacher: What if you were alone like the little beaver?

Child 1: I can play by myself.

Child 2: I don't know who my friends are.

Teacher: What did the beaver do because it did not have any friends?

Child 3: Cry

(In conversation while reading *Little Beaver and the Echo*)

Slow tempo of reading and questioning by the teachers often resulted in listeners becoming agitated. They simply looked away when they were bored.

Actions. Conflicts between protagonists of a story gave children the opportunity to imagine how they would have behave they had been in that same situation. The children were led to identify their own concerns.

Teacher: How would you feel if your friends said something bad about you?

Child: Sad.

Teacher: What do you do about it?

Child: I wouldn't say anything bad about my friends.

(In conversation after reading *We Are Friends*).

Teachers distinguished between what the child actually did and what he or she imagined.

Teacher: Have you ever asked your mom and dad whether they would have wanted to become anything?

Child: I think mom wanted to be a cook and dad a police car.

Teacher: Ah, you have not asked that question to your parents but that is what you think they would want to become.

(In conversation after reading *My Mom*).

There were, however, cases that the teacher were requested to be more sensitive to the children's responses. In the conversation below, the teacher came to know about an incident of domestic violence, which she clearly did not know how to respond to:

Teacher: Have you ever been angry like Sophie?

Child 1: Teacher, I came crying this morning.

Teacher: Why did you cry?

Child 1: (No answer. The child crouched and shook his body).

Teacher: You can tell me later.

Child 2: Daddy broke mom's lips.

Teacher: Shall we go outside to do painting?

(In conversation after reading *When Sophie Gets Angry, Really Really Angry...*).

The conversation identified that the teacher needed counseling skills. The change of subject in the teacher's questions above became a barrier to building a deeper relationship with the child. The interview with the teacher was held a week after the incident and facilitated a workshop on intervening in cases of domestic violence and counseling for the affected child.

The book related activities. Various post-reading activities were organized and carried out in the classrooms. Art was the most frequently observed activity; Painting faces of friends, decorating written work (such as letters or poems), cutting figures out of paper, drawing characters from the book, and preparing costumes and sets for dramatic productions of story. The most common costumes consisted of accessories to be worn around children's heads or necks, which would identify the actor's character. In preparation for the production of *Stickleback*, the children made a big painting for the set that required cooperation of the whole class. After painting the sea, the children jumped up and down on the painting, which was laid out on the ground, and pretended to swim in it. A new playground was created through the group's work. The play of the story happened organically.

For the 3 year-olds taking part in the play version of *Play with Me*, the teacher narrated the story and reminded the actors of their lines. Another group of 3 year-olds acted out *Little Beauty* in an abbreviated form. The teacher taught the children how to make the sign language for 'I Need Friend' based on the illustrations in the book, as well as the sign for 'I love you'. Children were then divided into pairs to take part in role-play. The child playing the role of gorilla made the sign for 'I Need Friend'. The other child (playing the chick) would then say "Thank you, you are my precious friend" and then make the sign for 'I love you'. For the dramatization of *Little Beaver and the Echo*, the role of grandma was taken by a boy and replaced with a grandpa. The boat for the play's set was made from paper bricks in the classroom. The 5-year-old children needed little help.

Sentences like "I have many friends" or "Let's play together" were repeated in the plays. Since the original writing of the picture books contained repetitions of these line, the actors said the lines over and over whenever a new friend, such as a rabbit, a snake, a frog, or a duck, appeared on stage. At first the actors repeating the same line would appear shy, but then would start to smile with confidence after a time. Imitating the gestures and sounds of the animals made both the actors and the audience laugh a lot.

Songs and games were organized after the reading of *Oliver*, which the mothers of the children were invited to take part in. After reading the book, the teacher asked what the children could do for their mothers. Their suggestions included helping, kissing, singing

and cleaning, which inspired the teacher to extend an invitation to their mothers. On the day of the invitation, the children sang a song called “Our Family Song” then played a game with the mothers wherein they had to remove stickers from each other’s faces and bodies without using their hands. The mothers and children giggled as they twisted their bodies. The body contact brought the participants much pleasure.

After reading *Unicorn Thinks He’s Pretty Great*, the children were asked to write letters praising and complementing their friends. The children very readily identified their friends’ strengths; ‘Ju-ho, you look good and eat rice well’, ‘Seo-yoon, I like you because you are good at tidying up’, ‘Che-won, you seem to be good at singing’, ‘Ga-yeon, I like you because of your excellent origami skills. I want to learn’, etc.

In a class of 5 year-olds, poems about friends were written after reading *Mr. Brown’s Fantastic Hat*. They knew that a poem had a title and short sentences. Below was a poem with a title.

Good friendly friend

Good friendly friend, Ji-yeon
Liking my friend
Loving my friend
Always looking at my friend
Playtime we play together, my friend
Fun my friend
When I’m not around, lonely my friend

<Park, S. Y., 5 years and 3 months old>

Only after the emergence of the theory of mind, comes the expression that my friend is lonely when I am not around. The poet defines a friend as a person that I would always look at. The word ‘my friend’ also appears at the end of each sentence and the lines therefore rhyme. Another child wrote that ‘we fight sometimes. But, we say sorry’. He understood that conflicts could occur between friends, but it would be all right if they apologized. This demonstrates his social confidence. Some sentences could be understood metaphorically such as ‘Friend and I are very happy. Friend and I walked on the road. Really truly like

you'. The writer clearly grasped and used of the fact that poem is a word play.

When asked to write his own version of the book *Thanks, but I...*, one child drew on his own experiences. In his recreation of the book, a woman offers "Can I read to you?". On the opposite page, the response was 'Thank you. But, I will play with blocks.' The child had acquired an assertion skill: Refusal to an offer even by a teacher or a mom would be all right when it was said in a polite form.

An environmental campaign was organized by a class after reading *Happy Chair-tree*. 5 year-old children wrote boards with slogans such as "LOVE OF TREE", "PRESERVATION OF NATURE", or "SUSTAIN GROWTH" and shouted "Love trees", "Care for trees", "Keep trees", "Plant trees" and "Don't pick off a branch of trees". Following this, they performed the song *If There Were No Tree*. Some were playful while others looked rather serious. They seemed to have great time with the activity.

Even though all the book related activities were preplanned by the teachers, the children took real initiative in completing the tasks, such as suggesting different materials or methods of getting the job done. During these activities, the children interacted with each other more actively than with the teacher.

Changes in the Children's Interactions

10 out of 14 teachers reported that they had observed children voluntarily wanting the same book to be re-read. The children often brought the book to their teacher and asked for it to be read to them again. In one nursery, a four and half-year-old boy loved *We Are Friends* and his teacher reported the below:

Case 1

Byeong-yeon contemplated on it alone in silence after the nap. I observed it twice. One day he said to his friend, "He-min, I will make a doll for you." With some trouble with a pair of scissors, he cut a human shape out of paper and gave it to his friend He-min. He played with it, making it walk and jump. Byeong-yeon had remembered the book related activity we did the other day.

<Teacher working at B nursery on April 4th, 2016>

Another teacher reported the change in the interactions of two five-year-old boys after writing their own versions of *Thanks, but I...*:

Case 2

Jun-soo and Ji-hyeong often stayed late in the nursery. So they spent more time together. Jun-soo often interrupted Ji-hyeong while Ji-hyeong was in the middle of a solo activity. Whenever this happened, Ji-hyeong's face went red. But he did not complain much. But after recreating the book, there were changes in their interaction. Jun-soo whispered "play with me?" Ji-hyeong replied with a rather loud voice, "Thanks, but I will continue playing with blocks. After this, I'll go to you."

<Teacher working at M nursery in May 2nd, 2016>

Voluntary acts of offering an object or assertion were observed in the post-reading activities. The children expressed what they wanted without embarrassment. They acted to connect with others and to consolidate the relationship.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study observed children's understanding of social relationships in the context of both shared reading and in the related activities following the reading. Previous studies of story sharing have neglected the post-reading activities, despite of the fact that teachers in general organize activities related to the story in the classroom after the reading. The result of this study showed that all the children engaged in various book-related activities: art, drama, writing letters or poems, song, game, and campaigning. Drama performances followed after the reading of four books: *Little beaver and the Echo*, *Little Beauty*, *Play with Me*, and *Stickleback*. The children repeated sentences like "I have many friends" or "Let's play together" out loud. The scripts provided an opportunity to build social skills and confidence. It was surprising to find cognitive flexibility and competence in 4 and 5 year-old children, who adjusted roles according to the gender of the actor and used classroom materials to effect costumes and sets for the plays. For the *Little beaver and the Echo*, the role of grandma was replaced with that of a grandpa when a boy took the role. He used a stick as an accessory for the role, too. The children accommodated the imaginary circumstance of the book and adjusted it to real life. In the rewriting activity of *Thanks, but I...*, the child adapted his own responses to an offer by a teacher. He chose the more polite word "Thank you" instead of "Thanks" when refusing the offer. The children took part in

pro-social behaviors, such as writing letters in praise of their friends or poems about friendship, drawing their friends' faces, singing for their mothers, telling friends how important they are or other facilitating behaviors in day-to-day interactions with each other. The children's social behaviors are supported by the findings of previous studies, which reported the effects of role play based on picture books on pro-social behaviors of children (Kwan, 2013; Lee & Sung, 2013) and the strength of storytelling and building relationships on character education (Lee, Seo, Kim & Park, 2015), especially in early childhood educational settings (Lee, 2016).

Most teachers chose story picture books, which described relationships between friends, members of a family, between neighbors, and showed ways to build and maintain those relationships. The children listened to the story of the chick telling a white lie for a friend. They sympathized with the lonely beaver that did not have any friends. They observed that it would be alright after fighting with a sibling. They read the book many times over after the teacher had read it to them. They healed themselves and gained self-reliance through reading the picture book. Picture books that were more informational or that contain poetry would be welcome. It is a shame that only two of the books read by the teachers were Korean in origin, while the rests were translated. The proportion of foreign picture books translated to Korean versus those that are of Korean origin was estimated at 3 to 1 (Ko, 2014).

Teacher held an active role throughout the reading and related activities, mentioning texts, managing the course of discussions, adding and expanding on children's responses, exploring questions with children, finding unexpected explanations and finding of-moment lessons during the shared book reading. However, it was sad that conversations while reading were mainly initiated by teachers, who charged themselves with questioning the children. When a child brought a new topic into conversation, the teacher did not make efforts to prioritize this as an agenda item for group discussion. This could be partly attributed to the Korean culture of filial piety, which originates from the country's Confusion tradition (Kim, 2005). The needs and wants of elders in the family and community are held in priority to those of the young. As the elders are always wiser than the young, a mother will always warn a child to listen to and obey their teacher. According to Cochran-Smith (1984), the teacher is a cultural and hermeneutic mediator. While

carrying a hermeneutic role in relation to stories, a teacher should take a cultural mediator role of setting hierarchical order to a conversation. Teachers' should reconsider taking control of dialogue with children, especially for the benefit of creativity (Fumoto, 2012; Glaveanu; 2010). Story sharing between teachers and children can take place on more balanced terms. The quality of the interaction between the participants determines how they develop literacy and sustained-shared thinking (Meyer, Wardrop, Stahl, & Linn, 1994; Siraj-Blatchford, 2007).

Teachers need to be sensitive and open to diverse the responses of children. They should be aware of a child's meaning making and reality construction in relation to literature. It was reported that students frequently respond to the teacher rather than to the text, despite the teacher's efforts to value the students' responses (Knobel, 1993). For a productive conversation, teachers should not only add interpretative comments but also ask an interpretative question that plays an important role in the conversations, eliciting a higher percentage of interpretive responses as well as more focus on sustained inquiry about a common idea (McGee, 1992 a & b).

Developmental changes between 3 and 5 year-olds seemed overlooked in the study. There must be differences in the choice of books, interactions between the children and teacher, and the related activities. It was, however, still safe to say that picture book reading broadened the children's social understanding and behaviors. Furthermore, many studies stress the importance of learning at home. The next study will include parent interview whether there are changes in the children's relational behaviors at home. It would be helpful to make a complete picture of the consequences of those learnings on the child.

The components of teacher competence for character education in early years have also been touched upon. It is important for the early childhood teachers to take children's daily lives as an opportunity for character education, provide young children with pro-social activities, and have them think about its meaning (Goh & Jeon, 2016). This study has shown that shared picture book reading transmits values of care, communication, and cooperation in early learning classrooms. Picture book reading and related activities could multiply teachers' competence of character education and be a helpful medium to enhance children's understanding of social relationships.

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