



Parent Behaviors During Storybook Reading: A Scale Development Study

Lütfiye Coşkun¹
Ümit Deniz²
Diyu Chen³
George S. Morrison⁴

Abstract

This study was designed to develop a valid and reliable instrument, The Parent Behaviors during Storybook Reading to Their Children Scale. Randomly selected 238 parents were included in the study. The scale development procedure included four steps: developing initial items, implementing purifying measures, data collection and assessing reliability and validity of the proposed measurement scale. Both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used to test validity of the scale. Reliability of the scale was analyzed by calculating the Cronbach alpha internal consistency. Development process suggested a reliable and valid scale for parent reading behavior should be comprised four dimensions: (1) Asking questions, (2) Forming routine, (3) Pointing to the print and (4) Pointing to the picture. As a result of the reliability and validity analysis, The Parent Behaviors during Storybook Reading to Their Children Scale was found to be a reliable and valid scale for implementation with parents. Given the scarcity of research on the parent reading scale in early childhood education, the scale developed in this study will serve as a foundation for future research. The findings of this study may help to stimulate further empirical research on the parent reading behavior.

Keywords: Reading book to children; Parent reading behavior; Scale development; Validity; Reliability; Early childhood.

¹ Assist. Prof. Dr., Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Kilis 7 Aralık University, Kilis, Turkey.

² Prof. Dr., Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey.

³ Lecturer, College of Education, University of North Texas, USA.

⁴ Prof. Dr., College of Education, University of North Texas, USA.

*Corresponding author E-mail adress: lutfiyeseven@gmail.com & lyurtseven@kilis.edu.tr

Introduction

Children's books have an important task in terms of morality and social emotional development of the child's cognition and personality. It is stated that the books help children to gain language skills, offer a variety of life experiences, develop imagination ability, feel the emotions of others, support the development of concepts, improve their literacy skills and introduce community and environment that children live in (Al Otaiba, 2004; Garner, Carlson, Gaddy, & Rennie, 1997). Reading to children allows creating new opinions, concepts, and language that can be innovative, different and more complicated than parent-child dialogues. This is an activity that must be encouraged, because it is a great sharing time (Senechal & Young, 2008).

Child-parent reading must be started before the child starts the kindergarten. Adults should start reading activities with appropriate books, even with children 14-15 months of age (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1997). Early experiences with books are contributing to the development of basic concepts in infancy and basing the foundation for the preschool child's adult life being a good reader (Morrow, 1989). Long time reading activities for children affect children's reading attitudes positively (Morrow, 1983).

In addition, studies about parent-child storybook reading revealed that reading is one of the most important activities for improving language skills of children that needed further reading acquisition (Aram & Aviram, 2009; Evans, Shaw & Bell, 2000; Kotaman, 2008; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). Also, book reading helps to gain knowledge for reading prerequisites, which are important for children, by learning about story structures, schemes, and literary conventions. It also introduces them to the written language and provides awareness of letter-sound relationships (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995).

Reported studies indicate the positive impact of print referencing style during storybook reading on the literacy skills of children (Edwards, 2014; Justice & Ezell, 2002; Justice, Weber, Ezell, & Bakeman, 2002; Horner, 2004; Justice, Kaderavak Fan, Sofka, & Hunt, 2009; Newland et al., 2011).

According to recent studies the parents and children's experience with joint storybook reading provides opportunities for children to improve emergent literacy skills which is essential for further reading achievement and also academic success (Aram, Most, & Mayafit, 2006; Brown, Byrnes, Watson, & Raban, 2013; Dynia, Lawton, Logan, & Justice, 2014; Horner, 2004; Justice, Weber, Ezell, & Bakeman, 2002; Lonigan, Bloomfield, & Anthony, 1999; Newland et al., 2011).

It is necessary for kids to listen to storybooks, but book reading is not an activity to be done at random. It is important for the parents to know how to present the book, for the child to enjoy the book reading. It is stated that books would be beneficial to the child if parents perform a correct reading (Jones, 1996; Skibbe, Moody, Justice, & McGinty, 2010). The association between mothers' and fathers' reading quality and improvement in children's literacy skill scores already demonstrated in recent studies (Bingham, 2007; Malin, Cabrera, & Rowe, 2014).

Some suggestions related to how to read the book to children are: (Al Otaiba, 2004; Heather, 2004; Jones, 1996; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994).

1. Reading activities for routine programs should be established and specific time frames should be arranged (Such as at bedtime or after a bath.)
 2. A special place should be set to increase the reading efficiency. A variety of discussions should be created for the children to maintain an actively participate to the stories. Stories should be associated with the life experiences of the children.
 3. Reading should be carried out considering the language development level of the child and structure of the book. Age of child and interest time must be considered for reading activity.
 4. Books should be read when the child is willing to listen.
 5. Books must be held as children can see.
 6. The child should be allowed to turn the page and help the reader.
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7. The pages of the book should be turned slowly, giving the opportunity for viewing the child.
8. It should be provided to point out and identify pictures in the books by children.
9. A willing and lively tone should be used during reading.
10. Confusing, surprising and other emotional expressions in the story should not be emphasized with an exaggerated tone.
11. Parents should be sensitive and must respond to the reactions of infants and children.
12. During reading fluent and understandable language must be used, unnecessary extensions should be avoided.
13. After reading, a talk should be made with children about the book. In this talk, questions about the subject and hero of the book must be asked to children.

Recent studies indicated teaching parents to apply effective storybook reading has a great contribution to children's language development (Roberts, 2008). These studies showed book reading education for parents is effective on both parent attitude and improvement in literacy, language and interaction of children (Gordon, Ian, Ross, & Kate, 2006; Hockenberger, Goldstein, & Haas, 1999; Justice, Skibbe, McGinty, Piasta, & Petrill, 2011; Rosa-Lugo & Walsh, 2008; Smetana, 2005)

There have been many studies reported about book reading to children. In these studies: the effects of reading on the children's language, cognitive and literacy development were examined (Bass, 2007; Crawford, 2006; Justice, Pullen, & Pence, 2008; Kotaman, 2007; Lo, 1995; Moody, 2007; Orlando 2005; van Kleeck, 2008); parents beliefs and attitudes about book reading were determined (Orlando, 2005; Pellegrini, Brody, & Sigel, 1985; Senechal, Cornell, & Broda, 1995; Wheeler, 1983; Wu & Honig, 2010); and an education program about reading to children was developed for adults (Bass, 2007; Crawford, 2006; Kotaman, 2008; Vogler-Elias, 2009).

Additionally, there have been many reports about observational studies to determine behaviors that occurred during the reading, which provided some help to authors during determining the context of the scale (Aram, Most, & Mayafit, 2006; Bus & van Ijzendor, 1997; Price, van Kleeck, & Huberty, 2009; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Vandermaas-Peeler, Sassine, Price, & Brillhart, 2011).

According to the literature survey some studies on the development of measurement tools for book reading have reported. Some of these studies are briefly introduced below; The Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI) developed by DeBruin-Parecki (2006) assessed the interactive book reading behaviors between parent and child. ACIRI evaluates qualities of the dyadic parent-child shared reading with rating scales, but it is not suitable for classroom use due to aspects that it contains. The priority of the scale is to provide teachers working with adult child dyads a means of evaluation to help them in deciding where to focus their future teaching. The Systematic Assessment of Book Reading (SABR) developed by Justice, Zucker, Sofka (2010) focused on shared book reading behavior to provide a systematic observational tool that examines characteristics of shared book reading related to early childhood classroom settings. The parent as reader scale (PARS) developed by Guinagh and Jester (1972) to investigate mother/child interaction and the mother's teaching ability for book reading. Resnick et al. (1987) created another evaluation tool for observing behaviors during maternal reading to children.

The examination of these measurement tools suggested that the developed measurement tools have different sub-dimensions. For the generalizability of these dimensions, more studies should be performed to develop new scales. It is essential to increase studies in this field, due to the lack of that kind of measurement tools for parent reading behavior. These measurement tools can be used to evaluate parent reading behaviors and also creating a basis for other studies to support this behavior.

Therefore, there is a need for a scale with a special content, to help us better measure and understand parental reading behavior. So, in this study development process of a measurement tool for the examination of parent behavior for reading to children was described. A scale was developed to determine parent reading behavior. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis

(CFA) were used to measure the validity of the scale. Reliability of the scale was checked by Cronbach alpha internal consistencies analyze.

Material and Methods

Study design

Research was conducted in the selected preschools at North Texas and Child Development Laboratory (CDL) of the University of North Texas (UNT). Permission for use of humans in the research was taken from Institutional Review Board management (IRB) of the UNT. Selected schools were visited with IRB permission, to inform school authorities about the study. Necessary documents required to be filled to join research, such as “Scale of parent behaviors during storybook reading to their 3-6 years old children”, “informed consent notice” and “letter to parents” were sent by school authorities to the parents.

Participants

Research was evaluated on voluntarily joined 238 parents who have 3-6 years old children attending these preschools. Participants consisted of 142 (60%) mothers and 96 (40%) fathers. The majority of the parents (48%) was college educated. According to the results fathers’ education level was slightly higher than mothers’ education level. Overall the sample group, 32% of the mothers’ education level are high-school and below, 45% is college and 23% is grad school. Fathers’ education was high-school and below 23%, college 51% and 26% is grad school. Children’s age distribution was 36-48 months old 32%, 48-60 months old 29% and 60-72 months old 40%. In the sample group, 52% of the children is female.

Data Collection Tool

According to the scale development procedures recommended by Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma (2003), the design of the scale development study includes four major steps: (1) developing initial items; (2) implementing purifying measures; (3) collecting data and (4) assessing the validity and reliability of the measurement scale proposed.

Some previous studies in the field of child reading books were used during determining the items of the scale (Al Otaiba, 2004; Bus, 1993; Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Garner, Carlson, Gaddy & Rennie, 1997; Heather, 2004; Jones, 1996; Lo, 1995; O’ Sullivan, 2004; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Senechal, Cornell, & Broda, 1995). According to Flood (1977), questions prior to reading, verbal interactions between parents and children during reading, questions presented after reading that elicit evaluative responses and positive reinforcement of the children’s responses are the essential elements of the parent-child story reading activities. Based on the elements introduced by Flood and also by literature review as indicated above, 23 items were determined relating to reading behavior of parents.

Families completed the items using a four-point scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = always). About 1500 parents were asked to join the research. Totally 238 parents attended. The scale with final items is presented in the Appendix.

Results and Discussion

Exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analyze was performed for a validity study of the scale. The results of exploratory factor analysis have demonstrated that the items loaded on four factors as presented in Table 1. The amount of total variance explained by four factors was nearly 67.35%. According to the factor analyze, first factor explained 36.63%, second factor explained 11.89%, third factor explained 10.24% and fourth factor explained 8.59% of the total variance. After the factor rotation, the first factor of the scale included six items (8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13), second factor included two items (1 and 2), third factor included three items (5, 6 and 7) and fourth factor included two items (3 and 4). Factor loadings ranges are, for asking questions (factor 1) from 0.59 to 0.79, for forming routine (factor 2) from 0.91 to 0.92, for pointing to the print (factor 3) from 0.51 to 0.90 and finally for pointing to the picture

(factor 4) subscales from 0.65 to 0.86. All factor loadings were above 0.5 (see Table 1). According to Tabachnick & Fidel (2001), the factor load values equal or higher than 0.40 could be considered as "very good"; the values equal to or higher than 0.70 could be considered as "excellent". Factor loading values of the scale indicated that most of the factors can be considered as "excellent" and other factors are in a range to be considered as "very good".

Table 1. Items and loadings calculated from exploratory factor analysis

No	Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
1	I ask my child the meaning of the words in the story which he/she doesn't know	.91			
2	I ask questions about how the characters in story feel	.92			
3	I ask questions to let my child to connect the stories in the book with his/her experiences from daily life	.86			
4	I want my child to predict the end of the story	.65			
5	I ask my child whether he/she liked the story	.89			
6	I ask my child to summarize the story	.90			
7	I have certain times to read books to my child (e.g. before sleep, after naps and bath)		.51		
8	I have certain places to read books to my child (e.g. bed, family room)		.59		
9	I point my finger to the words while reading (left to right, top to bottom)			.74	
10	I point out sentences, words and letters on the pages to my child			.65	
11	I point out the punctuation on the page			.79	
12	During reading I let my child touch pictures and illustrations				.65
13	I discuss the pictures in the pages				.67
	Variance contribution	36.63	11.89	10.24	8.59

Factor names were given according to included items in the factor. The "13 items" were factor-analyzed and four dimensions were identified after a series of EFA. The four dimensions were labelled as: (1) Asking questions; (2) Forming routine; (3) Pointing to the print and (4) Pointing to the picture. According to the studies about identifying parent behavior reading to children, behaviors were combined in similar dimensions. In these studies parent reading behaviors were mostly composed of pointing to print, pointing to picture and asking questions (Altwerger, Diehl-Faxon, & Dockstader-Anderson, 1985; Crowe, 2000; Light, Binger, & Smith, 1994; Morgan, 2005; Pellegrini, Perlmutter, Galda, & Brody, 1990; Senechal, Cornell, & Broda, 1995; White & Low, 2002). Items related to scale and subscales are given in the Appendix. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.82, indicating that the patterns of correlations were relatively compact and that factor analysis should generate distinct and reliable factors (Field, 2005).

The construct validity of the "parent behaviors during storybook reading to their children scale" has been examined item-total correlations. The findings demonstrated that item-total correlations ranged from 0.33 to 0.66. Item-total correlations for each sub-factor of the scale varied for the first factor from 0.53 to 0.66, for the second factor from 0.34 to 0.35, for the third factor from 0.49 to 0.59 and for the fourth factor from 0.33 to 0.42. The value of the item discrimination index, which is higher than 0.30 is considered to be "good" so, the items belonging to the four factors of the created scale were considered to have high item discrimination.

Confirmatory factor analysis

After EFA, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with LISREL 8.7 using maximum likelihood estimation to check the hypothesized four-factor structure of the scale proposed for the items.

The results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the model was well fitted and Chi-Square value ($\chi^2 = 779.01$; $N = 238$; $df = 78$; $p = .00$) which was calculated for the adaptation of the model was found to be significant. The goodness of fit index values of the model were RMSEA = .074, NFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.96, RFI = 0.91, GFI = 0.92. Figure 1 presents standardized factor loading estimates from the final four-factor model.

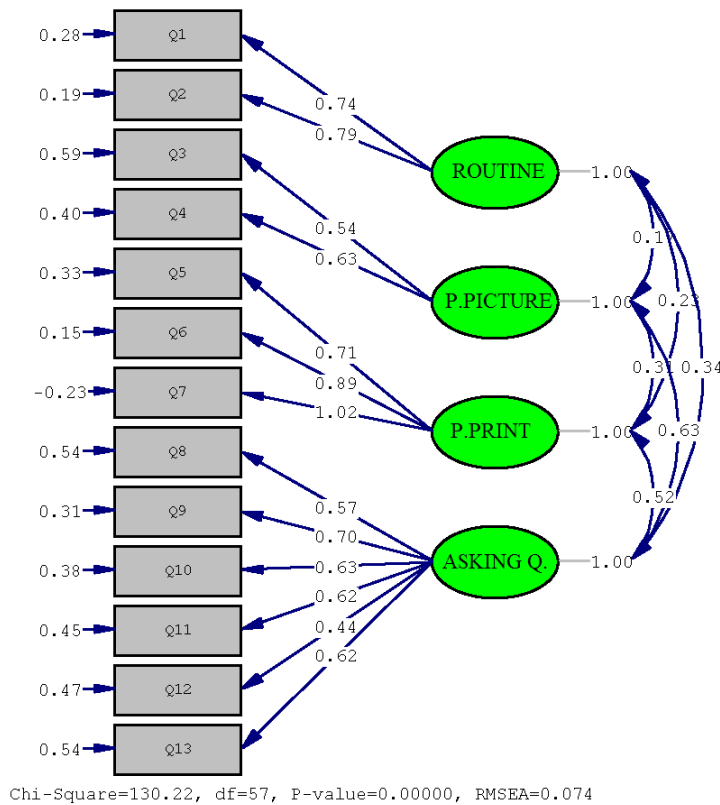


Figure 1. Path diagram of the scale.

Reliability studies

After validity analyzes, to determine the reliability of the scale, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was computed. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found as 0.84 for four subscales. The scale has demonstrated a high internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.84. The reliability measure meets the criteria of psychometric, which confirms the scale is both reliable and credible.

Conclusions

In this study a scale for parent reading behavior called “parent behaviors during storybook reading to their children scale” was developed. The first scale consisted of 23 items was applied to 238 parents and the data were studied to ascertain the reliability and validity. As a result of CFA, the last form of the scale was consisted of 13 items (see the Appendix for the final version). Analyzes confirmed the reliability and validity of the scale. According to analyze results the created scale is reliable and valid, and could be used to measure the parent reading behavior. The created scale is coincided with the conceptual framework as it consists of four dimensions, (1) asking questions (2) forming routine (3) pointing to the print and (4) pointing to the picture. Asking questions dimension consists of six items, forming routine consist of two items, pointing to the print consist of three items and finally pointing to the picture consist of two items.

It is known parent–child storybook reading has been described as one of the most important activities for facilitating young children’s language and literacy skills. Therefore, it is important to explore the function of parent reading behavior. This study provides an important contribution to the field for

further studies to be conducted in the early childhood field. Hence, the clearly defined construct and resulting scale in this study will provide useful reference for future researchers' investigations of this important reading behavior.

The results of the study provide some theoretical and practical implications:

- a) Practically, the findings of this study provide information to parents and decision makers on reading behavior. For parents in particular, an application of the scale can provide them detailed information on reading behavior. A valid and reliable tool on parent reading can assist both parents and the other adults to better understand the aim of the reading behavior and to develop an effective reading style which attracts and retains qualified talents.
- b) Development of that kind scale will help to understand parent reading behavior in early childhood. Moreover, researchers will benefit from this study in possessing a practical, reliable and valid measure of parent reading to conduct empirical research in the field.
- c) A validity and reliability study for adults other than parents may be performed. Norm study of the scale for different age groups may also be performed.
- d) Such a scale can be used to identify deficiencies of the parents. Various training programs can be created in line with these deficiencies.
- e) This study was based on a Texas, USA sample. However, the findings indicated that 13 items of the scale are general items about parent reading. So, the scale may be suitable to use in other national samples.

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