

The role of Philosophy for Children (p4c) Teaching Approach for Improving the Reading Comprehension Skills of Guidance School Female Students

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the current study was investigating the role of Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in increasing first grade female high school students reading comprehension in Tehran educational five zone. **Materials and method:** From all statistical population 60 students were selected through multi cluster sampling and were assigned to experimental (30) and control (30) groups randomly. Data collection was done through employing reading comprehensions section of preliminary English test (pet). Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach were performed in 10 sessions, 90 minutes every session. The research method was semi-experimental including pretest- post-test with control group following a follow up stage. Analysis of covariance and t test were employed for data analysis. **Findings:** The results show that there was a significant difference between experimental and control group in post-test stage. T-test results found a significant relationship between (p4c) approaches and improved post-test scores. **Discussion:** It means that those students who received Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach outperformed their peers in control group. So (p4c) approach can be considered as an effective method for improving students reading comprehension method.

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1. Introduction

Elementary school has the most fundamental and basic role in teaching and training process of education. The main and basic skills are taught in this level. Among all skills reading has got the most important role (Sa'adatee Shamir & Siavoshi, 2014). As Ann Pilgeren (2013) told there is not an area in the school curriculum that does not demand an ability to read. Reading skills are an important tool that pupils need to become academically successful. Good readers are better students than poor readers in every subject area.

Even when a pupil is studying practical or mathematical subjects he or she has to read instructions before starting to solve the task. When reading a text the goal is to understand its content. It is a process that exceeds decoding, and includes comprehension processes of the word, sentence, and text level. A child who does not learn to read and comprehend in the early school years has also severe difficulties in studying other school subjects (McGee & Johnson, 2003).

In this regard one of the main variables related to reading is comprehension. As Cain and Oakhill (2007) believe comprehension involves the interaction of a wide range of cognitive skills and processes. There are many occasions where difficulties arise that may lead to comprehension failure in reading comprehension (understanding, gaining meaning and interpreting the text). It depends on a variety of reader-related, text-related, and situational factors (DeCorte et al., 2001).

2. Research Background

Kintsch (1982) and Cain, Oakhill & Lemmon (2004) believe that individuals construct global or thematic understandings from lower conceptual levels, under the control of a schema. Thus, the reader's comprehension of the text will also be facilitated by the retrieval of information associated with a stored schema in long-term memory. Studies of children's reading and metacognition (planning and reviewing of strategies) suggest that skilled readers are dynamic readers who predict what is going to happen in the text. It is asserted that when readers predict before reading, they activate past memories and experiences and test themselves as to whether they have sufficient knowledge about the present topic in order to comprehend the text (Dougherty Stahl, 2004).

Although the noted developmental psychologist Jean Piaget was of the impression that children were not capable of critical thinking until age 11 or 12, the experiences of many philosophers and teachers with young children give reason to believe that children benefit from philosophical inquiry even in early primary school (Rosnani Hashmi, 2006). Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that teaching children reasoning skills early in life greatly improves other cognitive and academic skills and greatly assists learning in general (Movahedian, 2010).

Philosophy for Children PC, is a movement that aims to teach reasoning and argumentative skills to children. In recent decades in the world, many researchers have addressed philosophy and teaching the philosophy, as a way to foster thinking. Safai is pioneering the introduction of this program in the academic community and research areas by the publication of the article (Nation, 2006). Other studies on the implementation of the program of philosophy for children in Iran, Gaudi's study titled "Review of principles, ideas, methods of teaching philosophy to children" is the first challenge to the program's researcher; The two words, education philosophy for child together, are a mind surprises for listener or reader (Eezazi & Alishiri Talaghani, 2015). One of the most outstanding branches of Philosophy for

Children was presented by Lipman (2008). Lipman's alchemical project with characteristic of fruitfulness led to four related directions: the practice of philosophy for children, which he invented, and which spontaneously presented a challenge as startling as was Rousseau's two hundred years ago. The second field was philosophy of education. Third, it led to a realm of theory called philosophy of childhood, upon which the practice of P4C was created. It was a kind of action-meditation that prompted adults to reflect on children's differences and their similarities to adults at the same time and in the same discursive space. Although philosophy of childhood had long been present in the literary criticism, and in certain themes in phenomenology (Lipman & Matthew, 2008), Lipman's philosophy of education forced an encounter with philosophy of childhood that skirted those disciplines—cognitive and developmental psychology and sociology—that have long held it in their positivist thrall. Finally, his praxis also implicitly challenged those accounts of children's philosophies, paradigmatically represented by Piaget's *The Child's Conception of the World*, which represent childhood epistemology as an evidence for various genetic and epigenetic stage-based theories of cognitive development, the most notoriously global of which is Recapitulation Theory (Kennedy, 2011).

One of the salient differences between proponents of philosophy for children is their choice of stimuli - starting points for discussions (Lipman & Matthew, 2008; Rosnani, 2006.) That helped young students to develop philosophical thinking. The one presented by Matthews, is credited with starting the Philosophy for Children movement in the 1970s. After that Lipmann realized that philosophical and critical thinking should be encouraged much earlier in the academic setting. Lipman, M. (2003) also believes that his method involves reading philosophically, stimulating narrative to children and encouraging them to come up with philosophical questions in response. The questions set the agenda for a collaborative inquiry where the teacher acts as both facilitator and co-inquirer. The lessons are dialogue-based with students usually sitting in a circle and taking turns at suggesting solutions, expressing opinions, putting forth arguments and counter arguments, providing examples, constructing criteria and building on each other's ideas with the aim of coming to a settlement regarding the initial philosophical questions that stimulated the dialogue.

Bleazy (2007) believes that some others have built on Lipmann's ideas and developed further teaching resources and learning activities that compliment his original Philosophy for Children novels and pedagogical approach, such as Phil Cam's popular teaching resources. Lipmann wrote the world's first systematic pre-college philosophy curriculum and created both masters and doctoral programs in the field of Philosophy for Children. So according to the mentioned area the aim of the present study is to find the role of Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in increasing reading comprehension in female elementary students.

3.Method

The research method was semi-experimental including pretest-posttest with control group following a follow up stage. As the aim of the current study was investigating the role of Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in increasing reading comprehension in the first grade female elementary students of five zones of Tehran cities, from all statistical population 60 students were selected through multi-cluster sampling and they were assigned to experimental (30) and control (30) groups randomly.

1.3. Measurement tools

Reading component: The Reading component consists of 35 questions and five parts. Together, these parts are designed to test a broad range of reading skills. Texts are drawn wherever possible from the real world and are adapted as necessary to the level of the Cambridge English Preliminary for Schools examination. To this end, item writers work with a grammatical syllabus and a vocabulary list, which was updated annually to reflect the common usage. The topics of the texts fell within the list of topics given on page 6. Every effort was made to ensure that all texts were similar to Cambridge English Preliminary for Schools accessible worldwide and of general interest to the 11–14 age group. Each exam task was pretested on large numbers of students before going live, to monitor its suitability and level.

To prepare for the Reading component, students should be exposed to a variety of authentic texts, drawn from newsletters and magazines, non-fiction books, and other sources of factual material, such as leaflets, brochures and websites. It is also recommended that students practice reading (and writing) short communicative messages, including notes, cards and emails. As the Reading component placed some emphasis on skimming and scanning skills, it was important for the students to be given practice in these skills and work with texts of different lengths. It should be stressed to the students that they do not need to process every word of the text. They might read an article on history purely to find particular dates or a brochure to check on different locations. It was essential that students familiarize themselves with the instructions on the front page of the question paper and read the instructions for each part very carefully. Where an example was given, it was advisable to study it before embarking on the task. Students should also know how to mark their answers on the separate answer sheets so that they could do this quickly and accurately in the examination. No extra time was allowed for the transfer of answers on paper 1.

When doing final preparation for the examination, it was helpful to discuss the timing with students and to get them to consider how to divide up the time between the various parts of the paper. Broadly speaking, it was envisaged that candidates would spend approximately 50 minutes on the reading component and 40 minutes on the writing component. Validity and reliability of the current study was confirmed by experts in English language. For reliability test, 30 people from other state schools were selected and the test were performed and kornbakh alpha was 0 /85.

4. Findings

The highest frequency related to male managers (F=58) with the age 31-40 and the lowest frequency was related to female managers (F=45) with the age range of higher than 51. In the educational level the highest frequency related to bachelor group. The significance level was lower than 0/05 the distribution rate of data seemed to be normal.

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of experimental and control group in pretest and posttest stage

variable	Reading comprehension			
	experimental		control	
	mean	Standard deviation	mean	Standard deviation
pretest	1.90	0.88	2.10	0.80
posttest	3.93	0.64	2.00	0.83

As the table 1 shows it seems that there is no significant difference between Mean and Standard deviation of experimental and control groups in pretest stage. As the table reveals the mean of experimental and control group are (1/90) and (2/10) in turn. Furthermore, it seems that there is a significant difference between Mean and Standard deviation of the experimental and control groups in the posttest stage. In this regard the mean of experimental and control groups is (3/93) and (2) in turn. It means that the mean score of experimental group changed greatly but no high difference is observed between mean score of control group in pretest and posttest stage. The finding conveys that Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach was more effective for experimental rather than control group.

Table 2: Analysis of covariance for investigating the effect of Philosophy for Children teaching in students reading comprehension

Change resource	ss	df	MS	f	p	eta	t
Reading comprehension skill	.189	1	.189	10.841	0/001	639	1.795
group	56.042	1	56.042				
error	31.677	57	.556				
Total	616	60					

According to the results of analysis of covariance in table 2 and according to f value (10.841) and significance level (0/001) the effect of Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in improving students reading comprehension was significant. So it shows that that Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach was effective in improving experimental groups mean score. And also eta coefficient shows that 0/639 of the changes of experimental groups score was related to the Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching. The result of t test (1.795) for follow up test stage shows that the difference between the second and first pretest in experimental group was not significant because t value in second posttest was lower than (1/96). So the results of follow-up test show that the effect of Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach was consent.

5. Discussion

As the result reveals, the effect of Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in improving students reading comprehension was significant. So Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach was effective in improving female elementary students reading comprehension (Lipman, 2008). One of the main reasons for the effectiveness of the Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in Iranian students was that their beliefs and way of life in the most critical period of life was based on the presuppositions of the Islamic community, ethnics and local customs. Another important reason for this effectiveness is related to teacher's new position which is against the custom and old role of the teacher which was not attractive in some cases for the student (Movahedian, 2010). Preparing the parents for playing a more important role in their students educational life was another justification for the effectiveness of the Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in Iranian students.

Some suggestions can be derived from content of the current study. 1- promoting cooperation and partnership skills in classrooms in everyday life, 2- publishing books of fiction with philosophical and scientific-philosophical approach in schools and letting students and their parent to benefit from them, 3- providing the necessary assumptions concerning the different subjects and reproducing them through philosophical tales in order to encourages learner to gain the thinking and principles to understand the phenomenon or solve a problem, 4- encouraging students through selecting the topic of discussion in

teaching philosophy to children taken from the same concepts which philosophers involved with, and 5- providing useful models of life and understanding and philosophy toward education and thought through fiction and philosophical tales.

Some research suggestions can be made through the results of this study for the researcher: 1- researcher can try the effectiveness of the Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in different elementary school classes and differentiate between them to see if different elementary grades are different in this area. 2- trying the effectiveness of the Philosophy for Children (p4c) teaching approach in other age groups to see the differences, and 3- distinguish the effectiveness of the different philosophical tales in students reading comprehension in order to see which kind of tales can be more effective in which part of reading.

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