
DIALOGIC READING AS A POTENTIAL ACTIVITY TO FACILITATE THE LEARNING OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Maria Teodora Ping
Mulawarman University

ABSTRACT

This paper will address the potentials of implementing a modified version of a particular shared book reading activity called 'Dialogic Reading' as an alternative activity to facilitate the learning of listening and speaking skills of EFL learners. Dialogic reading itself is defined as a form of shared book reading activity in the form of a dialogue between the readers (usually between or among adults and children, both in a one-on-one or a small group reading setting). To date, the existing studies have indicated that Dialogic Reading is an effective activity for young learners to learn basic reading skills, vocabulary, oral language and narrative skills (Whitehurst, 1992; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2002; Ping, 2014; Ping & Syamdianita, 2015). However, considering the highly interactive, input-rich, multimodal learning environment that Dialogic Reading brings, this activity can also possibly be adapted and modified to facilitate the learning of listening and speaking skills for learners of different age groups and levels. Therefore, in this talk, I will discuss firstly the conceptual framework and then report the recent empirical study on the implementation of Dialogic Reading to improve young adult EFL learners' receptive and productive skills I have been conducting starting early this year.

Keywords: dialogic reading, listening, speaking, input, multimodality

INTRODUCTION

Reading has been long considered as playing a key role in learning. Harmer (2007) states that reading is beneficial not only for careers, study, and pleasure, but also for language acquisition in terms of providing a good model for writing, providing opportunities to study vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation, as well as demonstrating the way to construct sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts. In a rather similar manner, Mikulecky (2008) also mentions that reading is the basis of instruction in all aspects of language learning: from the use of textbooks for language courses, as a writing model, to being an instrument for developing vocabulary and acquiring grammar. Moreover, while reading is mostly associated with writing due to their similar mode/ form, it is also connected with the development of the other two language skills, namely listening and speaking, as argued by Krashen and Terrel (1983) that reading makes a contribution to overall competence, to all four skills of the language.

A number of studies have been done in order to investigate the connection between reading and listening. The two skills belong to the 'receptive' skill group, which share to some extent a similar process namely 'comprehension' (Brown, 2011). One of the techniques combining these two skills is 'Listening-while-Reading' or 'Reading-while-Listening' (RWL), which has been introduced and researched in the current years. Reading-While-Listening (RWL) is defined originally as a practice used to develop fluency in listening by involving reading (McMahon, 1983 in Askildson, 2011). This activity is mostly done by

using prerecorded audio books played in conjunction with silent reading of the written text. The written texts are used to assist listening comprehension by giving learners more access to identify the letter-sound relationship. In addition, learners are introduced to the spoken rate, rhythm, and the natural flow of the language (Chang, 2009). However, the implementation of this technique has suggested different findings. While it was indeed indicated that learners enjoyed Reading-while-Listening activities and there were gains in comprehension (Brown et al, 2008; Chang, 2009, Chung, 2009 and Woodall, 2010), it was also found that there were no significant gains in vocabulary acquisition after learners did the RWL activities (Brown et al, 2008).

Meanwhile, concerning the interconnectedness of reading and speaking skills, it is argued that activities which integrate reading and speaking skills will “deepen learners’ understanding of the reading material, reveals any problem they have understanding a text, and, most importantly, lets them apply the information they have read into authentic speaking practice that improves their fluency (Zhang, 2009). It is further implied by some experts that for spoken English the best reading materials are dramas, plays and dialogues. Moreover, using authentic texts has a positive effect on learning the target language by developing communicative competence as it is real language created by native speakers of the target language in pursuit of communicative outcomes (Little et al, 1989; Lee, 1995, Peacock, 1997 cited in Mart, 2012). In this way, reading has been viewed as input or model for developing the two language elements which are also crucial for speaking skills, namely grammar and vocabulary. Hence, such a reading activity as Extensive Reading is also deemed as potential for supporting speaking skill development (Mart, 2012).

In the Indonesian EFL context, a number of conceptual frameworks and empirical studies have been published regarding reading instructions and reading skills of learners. Yet, to date, there have been only limited number of efforts addressing the use of reading to support the development of other language skills in particular. Among these few are Hadi (2006), Pardede (2011) and Manurung (2014). Hadi (2006) proposed the implementation of reading-based classroom activities to develop the communicative competence in English. He further argued that “reading-focused activities stimulate confidence for Indonesian learners to get involved in listening, speaking, and writing related-activities in ways that are similar to normal daily life communication”. However, he did not specify further yet which technique and procedure to be implemented. Pardede (2010) offered a more specific technique to combine reading and speaking skills; that is by using short stories. He argued that using short stories, among other literary genres, seemed to be the most suitable choice because this might help enhance learners’ four skills development more effectively due to the motivational benefit embedded in the stories. Furthermore, in a more recently conducted empirical study, Manurung (2014) applied a particular technique called ‘TIRS’ (*Teaching Integrated Reading- Speaking*) to solve speaking problems of learners in an EFL class using contextual internet-based instructional materials.

Responding to this current limited discussion on reading and its potentials for facilitating the learning of other skills, especially the oral and aural skills (listening and speaking), an alternative activity named ‘Dialogic Reading’ is proposed in this paper. Dialogic reading itself is defined as a form of shared book reading activity which involves a dialogue between the readers. So far, the body of literature has indicated that Dialogic Reading is beneficial especially for young learners to learn basic reading skills, vocabulary, oral language and narrative skills (Whitehurst, 1992; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2002; Ping, 2014; Ping & Syamdianita, 2015). However, considering the highly interactive, input-

rich, multimodal learning environment that Dialogic Reading brings, this activity can also possibly be adapted and modified to facilitate the learning of listening and speaking skills for learners of different age groups and levels. Therefore, in this paper, it will be explained further both the conceptual framework of modifying Dialogic Reading to enhance young adult learners' listening and speaking skills as well as the implementation of the technique in the real instructional context.

DIALOGIC READING

History of Dialogic Reading

Dialogic book reading was firstly developed by Whitehurst and his colleagues from the Stony Brook Reading and Language Project in 1988 (cf. Whitehurst, 1992; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). It took into account the underlying theories which argued that "practices in using language, feedback regarding language and appropriately scaffolded adult-child interaction in the context of picture book reading all facilitate young children's language development" (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). Dialogic book reading is formally defined as a reading situation in which adult and child switch roles so that the child learns to become the storyteller with the assistance of the adult who functions as an active listener and questioner (Trivette and Dunst, 2007).

In this specific type of reading activity, adult and child have a conversation about a book (Whitehurst, 1992). The adult's role is to help the child become the teller of the story. In other words, the adult becomes the listener, the questioner and the audience for the child. This is done due to the premise that "children learn most from books when they are actively involved" (Whitehurst, 1992).

Dialogic Reading Strategies: PEER and CROWD

The interaction between the participants in a dialogic reading activity includes the sequences in which: 1). The more capable participant prompts the less capable one to say something about the book; 2). evaluates the responses; 3). expands the responses by rephrasing and adding information to it, and 4). repeats the prompt to make sure the less capable participant has learned from the expansion. These strategies are referred to as "PEER", an acronym of the first letters of the four strategies (Whitehurst, 1992).

In addition to 'PEER', there are also some questioning techniques particular to dialogic book reading, namely the 'CROWD' strategies. The CROWD strategies or techniques comprise of different prompts. First, there is a "Completion prompt", in which there are fill-in-the-blank questions. The second one is a "Recall prompt", in which there are questions to recall aspects of the books or the stories being read. The third one is called an "Open-ended prompt", which includes statements that responses to the book in the participants' own words. Then, there is a "Wh-prompt", making use of what, where and why questions. The last one is called a "Distancing prompt", including the questions that require the participants to relate the content of the book to aspects of life (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). These techniques of dialogic book reading have been employed and researched in terms of the effectiveness and all findings indicated that dialogic book reading had positive effects on the oral language and emergent literacy skills (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003).

Dialogic Reading and Language Learning: Evidences from Existing Empirical Studies

There have been a number of studies done concerning the effectiveness of dialogic reading. Trivette & Dunst (2007) conducted a meta-analysis study comparing the three types of book reading practices in terms of their effectiveness. They collected relevant studies concerning the three types of book reading practices. There were thirteen studies examined in three syntheses. Out of the thirteen studies, six discussed dialogic book reading, four discussed interactive book reading and three discussed shared book reading. Their findings showed that types of reading interventions that more actively involved learners would likely brought about more positive benefits. Thus, the two interventions that were considered as the most effective were dialogic reading and interactive shared book reading. These two types of book reading made use of various techniques and strategies which stimulated learners to participate by asking questions, prompting descriptions, asking for elaboration and completing part of a story. Furthermore, between these two types, dialogic reading was found to be the more structured procedure (Trivette & Dunst, 2004).

The findings of the study by Trivette & Dunst (2004) confirmed those of previous studies which were conducted by such researchers as Whitehurst (1992); Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998); Hargrave & Sénéchal (2000), and Cutspec, (2006). De Temple & Snow (2003) agreed with this by stating that interactive and dialogic book reading provided richer semantic contexts for novel words which tended to last longer than straight reading.

Previous studies have indicated that book reading activities are related to young learners' vocabulary development and grammar learning. De Temple & Snow (2003) stated that book reading activities can provide a context where rare and complicated words can be introduced and explained to young learners with the support of pictures and texts. In addition, Zevenbergen & Whitehurst (2003) and Ping (2014) argued from their studies that dialogic book reading contributed to young learners' vocabulary gain and learning. This could be found in this study as well, where some examples of potential vocabulary learning were observed. Furthermore, concerning grammar learning, dialogic book reading activity could also bring a potential context. Valdez- Menchaca & Whitehurst (1992) in their study indicated that children involved in dialogic reading programmes excelled in terms of sentence complexity and variety in their use of nouns and verbs. Similarly, Ping (2012) found some similar situations in which grammatical aspects were introduced by the teachers to the young learners during dialogic reading activities that she observed. To sum up, all these studies imply that the strategies and interaction during dialogic reading could provide potential learning contexts for young learners, both for vocabulary and grammar.

EFL ORAL AND AURAL SKILLS

Listening Skills and Teaching Listening

Listening or aural skill is one of the earliest language skills acquired by normally developed learners of any languages. According to Richards (2008), listening was firstly viewed as "the mastery of discrete skills or microskills, such as recognizing reduced forms of words, recognizing cohesive devices in texts, and identifying key words in a text" and hence the focus of teaching listening should have been formed based on these skills.

As views on this particular language skill were developed further, some notions related to the field of cognitive psychology such as the bottom-up and top-down processing as well as the role of prior knowledge and schema in comprehension were taken into consideration. Current views of listening hence emphasize the role of the listener, who is

seen an active participant in listening, employing strategies to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate his or her listening.

In connection with the views on listening as discussed above, Richards (2008) divided the teaching of listening into two perspectives, namely 'listening as comprehension' and 'listening as acquisition'. 'Listening as comprehension' is the classic view of the main function of listening, which is to promote the understanding of spoken discourse. In other words, the role of learning listening is to enable learners to understand things they listen to. While, 'listening as acquisition' takes into account the importance of listening to facilitate the process of language learning itself. As Schmidt (1990) stated that nothing could be learned from the input one hears and understands if one does not notice anything about the input itself. He further differentiated between *input* (what learners hear) and *intake* (the part of input that the learners notice), arguing only the latter contributes as the basis of language development.

Therefore, according to Richards (2008), the teaching of listening should also consider these two standpoints. The teaching of 'listening as comprehension' might require in the first place the understanding of the top-down and bottom-up processing as well as metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Some specific activities that can be implemented in the teaching of listening which focus on developing comprehension are sequencing tasks, true- false comprehension tasks, picture identification tasks, summary tasks etc. Whereas for 'listening as acquisition', learners should be engaged in such activities that enable them to make use of the newly noticed language forms so that those new forms can be integrated in their linguistic repertoire, such as noticing activities and restructuring activities (Richards, 2008).

Speaking Skills and Teaching Speaking

As an essential skill to acquire in learning any languages, speaking is formally defined as "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998). Some notable experts have also tried to designate the functions of speaking; for instance, Brown and Yule (1993), who assigned the functions of speaking into two, namely 'interactional' (talk as interaction) and 'transactional' (talk as transaction). Richards (2008) added another function to these already existing divisions, namely 'talk as performance'. Interactional function or the 'talk-as-interaction' function is mainly what is referred to as a 'conversation', which, quoting Richards (2008) 'serves primarily a social function'. Transactional function or 'talk-as-transaction' is defined as the type of talks in the situations where the focus is on what is said or done. In other words, the emphasis is made on delivering the message as understandably and accurately as possible rather than interacting socially. Meanwhile, Richards' additional function of speaking i.e. 'talk as performance' refers to public talk, the type of talk which delivers information to the audience e.g. morning talks, public announcements, and speeches (2008).

These three main functions of speaking bring forth some implications for teaching speaking. Richards (2008) argues that there are basically two important issues to consider when planning for teaching speaking activities, namely speaking skills to focus on and teaching strategies to use. Richards further mentions some techniques that can be implemented to teach speaking according to each function. For instance, to teach 'talk-as-interaction', activities which involve naturalistic dialogues (dialogues with daily life related themes), the use of conversation starters and personal recounts are encouraged. While

teaching talks as interaction might be deemed as rather difficult due to the complexity of interaction itself, teaching talks for transaction is slightly easier to plan. Richards (2008) suggests some activities which are typically good for this type of talks, which include ranking activities, values clarification activities, brainstorming, and simulations; all of which make use of communicative materials as a source for practicing to use talk for sharing and obtaining information as well as for carrying out real-world transactions. Furthermore, teaching talks as performance might be in forms of providing examples or models of speeches, oral presentations, and stories delivered through video or audio recordings or written examples (Richards, 2008).

MODIFYING DIALOGIC READING TO ENHANCE EFL LEARNERS' ORAL AND AURAL SKILLS

Conceptual Framework

As noted earlier in this paper, in the Indonesian EFL context, there have been ample evidences of empirical studies done concerning reading instructions and reading skills of learners. However, not so many have particularly addressed the use of reading to support the development of other language skills. For this reason, this paper would aim at filling in this gap: trying to contextualize some concepts as well as offering an alternative of potential reading activity named 'Dialogic Reading' to enhance EFL learners' listening and speaking skills.

Dialogic reading, with its particular sets of strategies called the 'PEER' strategies and 'CROWD' strategies, is highly interactive, structured and multimodal as it makes use of dialogues, structured instructions and different modalities (texts, sounds, and pictures). Consequently, it can be used as a model and comprehensible input as well as intake (c.f. Schmidt, 1990 and Richards, 2008) for both teaching EFL listening and speaking. During the reading aloud session, teachers can make use of the reading materials as listening materials to develop learners' acquisition and comprehension. Moreover, texts or reading materials selected and used in the Dialogic Reading activity can be a handy set of resources to be used to teach the three different types of talk functions, i.e. 'talk-as-interaction', 'talk-as-transaction' and 'talk-as-performance'. This conceptual frameworks illustrated by the following figure or path diagram.

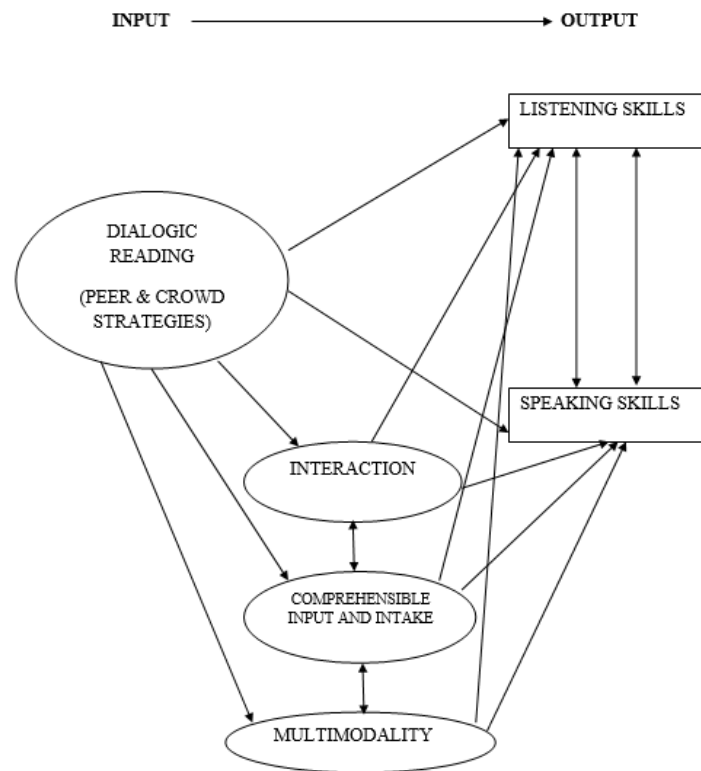


Figure: Modifying Dialogic Reading to Enhance Listening and Speaking Skills Conceptual Framework Model

©Ping (2016)

Notes:

- One way causality/ covariance relationships
- ↔ Reciprocal relationships
- PEER Strategies Prompting, Evaluating, Expanding, Recalling
- CROWD Strategies Completion Prompts, Recall Prompts, Open- Ended Prompts, Wh- Prompts, Distancing Prompts

Implementation of the Modified Dialogic Reading for Young Adult EFL Learners

A currently on-going research has been conducted at Mulawarman University to investigate the implementation of the modified Dialogic Reading and its potential benefits for undergraduate EFL learners' language skills development. The study employs an explanatory mixed-method design. It begins quantitatively in the form of a pre-posttest quasi- experiment involving three groups of learners enrolled at Mulawarman University English Departments, in which two groups are being given a treatment by using dialogic reading with a differentiation in the group formation (i.e. assigned by the teacher and formed by the learners themselves) and types of reading materials given (i.e. texts and texts accompanied by audio files) while the other one remains as the control group. Other than two different aspects, the procedures of the reading session are the same.

Each week, the learners in the two experimental groups are assigned to read selected texts at home and then a small group dialogic reading session is performed with the assistance of the teachers. The reading session is videotaped to enrich the understanding of both the reading process and learners' improvement. After six weeks of

treatment, the quantitative part will be concluded and the learners are given a post-test to measure their language skills development. In addition to this, the qualitative part is conducted to investigate the learners' perceived skills development before and after the treatment is given. The qualitative data will be collected from learners' reading journals and focus group interviews.

Moreover, the current videotaped data in this current study have already revealed that the implementation of Dialogic Reading in the young adult learners' context shows a similar pattern with its counterpart of the young learners' context. The instances below illustrate the strategies used by both the teachers and the learners during the implementation of modified Dialogic Reading in this study.

1. Doing a cloze test (the use of 'Completion' prompt strategy)
2. Taking turns spontaneously in telling the stories or texts being read (the use of 'Recall' prompt strategy)
3. Asking and answering Yes/No Questions, e.g.: Was the sun hidden by a yellow blanket? Were Bill and Bob hands are in their pocket? etc. (the use of 'Recall' prompt strategy)
3. Continuing the statement "When the rain comes, I will..." (the use of 'Open ended' prompt strategy)
4. Asking and answering Wh-questions, e.g: Who are the characters in the story? (the use of 'Wh-question' prompt strategy)
5. Discussing some aspects in the texts and relating those aspects with the learners' daily lives/ own experiences (the use of 'Distancing' prompt strategy)

Moreover, the reading sequence itself follows the classic reading sequence, namely '*pre-reading*', '*whilst-reading*' and '*post-reading*', with each sequence filled with interaction in the forms of dialogues about the texts being read.

As after the group dialogic reading session is done, the learners filled in a self-perceived rating scale in which they evaluate their language skills development, some early results have been found. Apparently, based on their self-perceived ratings, most of the EFL learners at Mulawarman University participating in this current study thought that the skills they mostly developed after 'Dialogic Reading' sessions were listening and speaking, followed by reading and writing. However, this finding will be confirmed further later when the post-test results have been collected.

CONCLUSIONS

As an activity which is remarkably interactive, structured and multimodal, Dialogic Reading is potentially beneficial for promoting aural and oral language skills. Previous studies have noted its positive contribution to young learners' language development while this current study tries to expand the possibility of using the activity for young adult EFL learners. The on-going research has shown some early indications of learners' perceived gain regarding listening and speaking skills development after experiencing Dialogic Reading activities. This implies that the implementation of dialogic reading is possible to be done in a small group context not only for young learners/ children but also for young adult learners and it could be a facilitating context for their learning of language skills other than reading itself.

REFERENCES

- Askildson, L. R. (2011). Theory and Pedagogy of Reading While Listening: Phonological Recoding for L2 Reading Development. *Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching* 2. <http://sites.google.com/site/linguisticsandlanguagegeteaching/home-1/volume-2-2011-issue-2/volume-2-2011-issue-2---article-askildson> (Retrieved on March 2016).
- Brown, S. (2011). Listening myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching. Michigan ELT <http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=2132445>.
- Brown, R., Waring, R., Donkaewbua, S., (2008). Incidental vocabulary acquisition from reading, reading-while-listening, and listening to stories. *Reading in a Foreign Language* 20, 136–163.
- Brown, Gillian and George Yule (1983). *Teaching the spoken language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chang, C. S., (2008). Enhancing second language listening competence through extensive listening activities: Its effectiveness. Taipei, Taiwan: Bookman Books, Difficulties, and Solutions.
- Chaney, A.L., and T.L. Burk. (1998). *Teaching Oral Communication in Grades K-8*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Chung, J. M. (1999). The effects of using video texts supported with advance organizers and captions on Chinese college students' listening comprehension: An empirical study. *Foreign Language Annals*, 32 (3): 296–308
- Cutspec, P. A. (2006). Effects of Dialogic Reading on the Language Development of 4- and 5 Year-Old Children. *Bridges*, 4(3), 1-15.
- Hadi, A. (2006). Reading Based-Classroom Activities: An Effort toward the Integration of Language Skills in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia. *TEFLIN Journal, Volume XVII, Number1*.
- De Temple, J. M., & Snow, C. E. (2003). Learning Words from Books. In A. Van Kleeck, S. A. Stahl, & E. B. Bauer (Eds.), *On Reading to Children: Parents and Teachers* (pp. 16-33). New York: Routledge.
- Hargrave, A. C., & Senechal, M. (2000). A book reading intervention with preschool children who have limited vocabularies: the benefits of regular reading and dialogic reading. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15(1), 75-90.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. USA: Longman ELT.
- Krashen, S. D. and Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.
- Lonigan, C., & Whitehurst, G. J. (1998). Relative efficacy of parent and teacher involvement in a shared-reading intervention for preschool children from low-income backgrounds. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(2), 263-290.
- Manurung, K. (2014). Improving the Speaking Skill Using Reading Contextual Internet-based Instructional Materials in an EFL Class in Indonesia. *Procedia- Social and*

Behavioral Science. Volume 176, 20 February 2015, 44 – 51.

- Mart, Ç. T. (2012). Developing Speaking Skills through Reading. *International Journal of English Linguistics*; Vol. 2, (6), 2012
- Mikulecky, B. S. (2008). *Teaching Reading in a Second Language*. Pearson Education Inc.
- Pardede, P. (2011). Using Short Stories to Teach Language Skills. *Journal of English Teaching*. Vol 1(1), February 2011.
- Ping, M. T. (2014). Group interactions in dialogic book reading activities as a language learning context in preschool. *Journal of Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, Volume 3, Issue 2, June 2014, Pages 146–158
- Ping, M. T. and Syamdianita. (2015). Dialogic book reading practices for primary school EFL learners. Paper presented at the 2015 TEFLIN International Conference, Sanur, Bali, Indonesia.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). *Teaching Listening and Speaking*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11, 2, 129-159.
- Trivette, C. M., &Dunst, C. J. (2007). Relative Effectiveness of Dialogic, Interactive, and Shared Reading Interventions. *Learning*, 1(2), 1-12.
- Valdez- Menchaca, M.C. & Whitehurst, G.J. (1992).Accelerating Language Development through Picture-Book Reading: A Systematic Extension to Mexican Day Care.*Developmental Psychology*, 28, 1106- 1114.
- Whitehurst, G. J. (1992). *Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read to Preschoolers*. Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/400>. (16 July 2009)
- Woodall, B. (2010). Simultaneous listening and reading in ESL: Helping second language Learners read (and enjoy reading) more efficiently. *TESOL Journal*, 1(2), 186- 205.
- Zevenbergen, A. A., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2003). Dialogic Reading: A Shared Picture Book Reading Intervention for Preschoolers. In van Kleeck, A., Stahl, S. A., Bauer, A. B. (Eds.), *On Reading to Children: Parents and Teachers* (pp. 177-200). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Zhang, Y. (2009). Reading to Speak: Integrating Oral Communication Skills. *English Teaching Forum*, 2009 (1), 32-34. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1061/41052\(346\)25](http://dx.doi.org/10.1061/41052(346)25).