

**Title of Project (Eng):** Enhancing Parent-Child Communications through Dialogic Reading

**Title of Project (Chi):** 親子溝通研究計劃

**Name of Organization:** Office of Vice-President (Research & Technology), City University of Hong Kong

**Project Time Frame:** 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 (12 months)

**Project Investigators:**

**Principal investigator:** \_\_\_\_\_, Director, Knowledge Enterprise and Analysis, Office of Vice-President (Research and Technology), City University of Hong Kong.

**Co-investigator:** \_\_\_\_\_, Research Fellow, Knowledge Enterprise and Analysis, Office of Vice-President (Research and Technology), City University of Hong Kong.

**Objectives of the Study:**

To identify improvement made on parent-child relationship through dialogic reading strategy.

**Abstract :**

Dialogic Reading (DR) has long been advocated as an effective and novel approach to developing child literacy ability. Compared with conventional story-telling, DR emphasises shifting the active role of story teller from caregivers to children. Even though this technique has been in use for 20 years, praise for DR has usually focused on the significant improvements in emergent literacy. However, given that storytelling is a sharing experience between adults and children, it seems likely that parent-child relationships might be enhanced through the use of dialogic reading strategies. To date, there is no research, locally or overseas, which has attempted to investigate this conjecture.

This study aims to bridge this omission by studying the relationship between adults and children before and after training and practice of the dialogic reading technique. 200 Cantonese speaking parent groups with children (studying primary 1 to primary 6) recruited from schools and community centres will be assessed prior to undergoing a 4-hour dialogic reading training programme with a 2-hour follow-up session to address individual problems in practicing the skills. Three months after completion of training, parents will be assessed again (repeated measures design) using the same sets of self-report questionnaire (PCRI and PSI/SF) to investigate whether the dialogic reading has had any measureable impact on their perceived relationship with their children.

**A. Background****A1. The need to improve parent-child communication in Hong Kong**

Parent-child communication is generally regarded as crucial to every parent in bringing up their children. Children learn early communication skills by watching their parents. If their parents communicate openly and effectively, children will gradually learn to take their share of the communication process. The development of good communication skills will benefit children for their entire lives because children begin to form ideas and beliefs about themselves based on their early interactions with parents and other significant adults. When parents communicate effectively with their children, taking turns listening as well as talking, children begin to feel that they are heard and understood by their parents, which is a boost to self-esteem. On the other hand, communication between parents and children that is ineffective or negative can lead children to believe that they are unimportant, unheard, or misunderstood. From the child's perspective, they may see their parents as unhelpful and untrustworthy. Therefore, the development of communication between parents and their children is at the core of the parenting process and contributes to the formation of good relationships and lays the foundations for functional families.

There is significant public interest in enhancing communication within families in Hong Kong. For example, the coverage of "Parents log on in bid to understand kids" reported in [redacted] in April urged parents to use social networks to get to know more about their children and their communication practices. Further coverage, the following month, in [redacted] reported that 70% of children talked to their father for less than 30 minutes each day, and amongst those 1/10 for less than 1 minute. One week later, [redacted] quoted results from another survey which showed that around 16% of over 6,000 young interviewees quarrel with their parents on a daily basis. The major reason for these conflicts was said to be a lack of parent-child communication. Ineffective parent-child communication is likely to be a contributing factor in a number of family problems including child abuse, teenage suicide, teenage pregnancy, drugs or alcohol abuse and juvenile delinquency.

**A2. Background to Dialogic Reading**

Dialogic Reading has long been documented as an effective approach to enhancing children's emergent literacy development. It was firstly advocated and developed based on the work of Grover Whitehurst and the Stony Brook Reading and Language Project in 1990s. Dialogic reading skills are scaffolded by 3 general principles; evocative techniques, adult feedback and progressive change which distinguish it from more conventional story telling techniques. These three principles are designed to encourage children to talk more and give descriptions of what they see. Dialogic reading can be used for children of all ages but is most effective when a child has at least 50 words of expressive vocabulary (usually from around age 2 years). Dialogic reading emphasises the interaction between caregivers and children and the shift of the active work of telling story from adults to children in order to build up their literacy. The concept was then further formulated and summarised as two core techniques: PEER and CROWD. The acronym PEER is used to help caregivers to remember the sequences that occur between adults and children while reading:

P – prompt the child to respond to the book,

E – evaluate the child's response,

E - expand the child's response by repeating and adding information to it,

R - repeat the expanded utterance.

While CROWD represents the 5 five types of prompts used in dialogic reading. These are "Completion prompt", "Recall prompt", "Open-ended prompt", "Wh- prompt" and "Distancing prompts"

### **A3. Groundwork for Dialogic Reading**

Dialogic reading is based on the significant research work of Whitehurst (1992). More recent research in Hong Kong designed to improve preschool children's language ability both on their first and second languages, has been reported (Chow & Chang, 2003; Chan & Sylva, 2006; Chow et al, 2008 ). Chow & Chang (2003) demonstrated that dialogic reading positively contributed to language and literacy development in preschool children. Research into other aspects of dialogic reading including methods for delivering the skill to caregivers through the use of videotape, instead of human face-to-face interaction has also been explored by other researchers (Hoddman, Pirozzi & Cutting 2006).

The founder and advocate of dialogic reading, Whitehurst (1988), first suggested that the dialogic reading technique could also be used to enhance adult-child interaction as well as improve literacy skills. However, no study on the value of using dialogic reading as an instrument to improve parent-child relationship has yet emerged. This study is designed to fill this gap in knowledge and to formulate a prototype for taking advantage of this technique in the Hong Kong context.

### **B. Rationale and aim of study**

Good communication is a crucial parenting skill. It is the key to building self-esteem and mutual respect. Parenting can be more enjoyable when a positive parent-child relationship is established. Communication is the act of conveying information for the purpose of creating shared understanding. It is something that human beings undertake every day. The word "communication" comes from the Latin "communis," meaning "to share," and includes verbal, non-verbal and electronic means of human interaction. Using picture books and engaging children through dialogic reading is a skill designed to make these communications more effective by reinforcing/rewarding the child for keeping communication open, and parents can make use of this medium to praise or accept the child's thoughts or efforts. As there is no research published for the time being on the capacity of dialogic reading in terms of parent-child relationship building, the proposed study aims to contribute to and enrich this terrain by providing empirical evidence. It is hypothesised that this study will reveal a statistically significant difference in parents who participate the training programme on dialogic reading with improved parent-child relationships, happier families and an increased level of 'want to read' for children and adults before and after the training.

### C. Research Design

This is a longitudinal single cohort study to research the impact of training parents (with children studying in primary schools) how to engage in the dialogic reading of picture books with their children in order to facilitate meaningful dialogues. Pre and post measurement of the quality of the parent-child interactions/relationships will be taken and analysed comparatively. Parents are required to complete a set of questionnaires before the dialogic reading skill training workshops (pre-test). After the intervention, and having practiced the skill for 3 months, parents will have to complete the same set of questionnaires (post-test) to assess any improvements in parent-child interactions/relationships. (Figure 1)

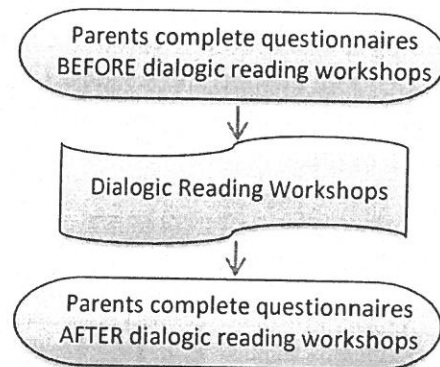


Figure 1. Research Design

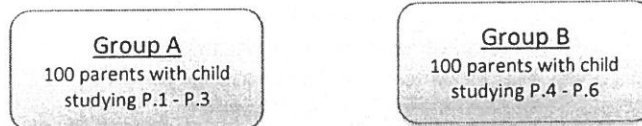
Through dialogic reading, adults and children talk about the theme of the stories and extend this to the living environment using picture books. Even though electronic books are easily available nowadays, both physically and economically, this study will stick to using picture books to uncontrolled variability over the use of picture books against their electronic counterparts. This is necessary because there are a number of studies which show that the use of electronic books remains contentious (Greenfield, 1996; Labbo & Renking, 1999; Smith 2001). Some argue that some visual effects such as the interactive animation of electronic books may distract children from comprehending the context of the stories. In the study by de Jong and Bus (2004), it was evident that children reading electronic books could not recall as much of the language and story structure as those reading more conventional print-based materials. Consequently, this study will solely use print-based picture books as the medium of sharing in order to avoid this potential variability.

Parents/caregivers will be required to complete two sets of questionnaire on their own (Parent-child Relationship Inventory and Parenting Stress Index – Short Form) before the training to measure the level of parent-child interactions/relationships and complete the same sets of questionnaire together with keeping a simple log of the number of hours spent on telling story per week using the dialogic reading technique for 3 months after training.

One expected outcome is that parents and children will report greater satisfaction levels with the ritual of dialogic reading as a communication bridge to discuss daily events or school issues. Significant improvements in the reported parent-child relationship should also be an outcome of the study.

## C1. Participants

A group of 200 Cantonese speaking families with children aged 6 to 12 studying in Primary 1 to Primary 6 have been identified and will be recruited from schools and/or community centres. The first group will include 100 parents whose children are studying from primary 1 to 3 whilst the second group will consist of 100 parents whose children are studying from primary 4 to 6. In order to achieve a robust and unbiased conclusion, type of parents will be recruited from schools across primary school place allocation districts (i.e. Primary One Admission System) as it is believed that students are enrolled to primary schools according to the residential district. And every residential district is constructed by household with specific type of socio-economic feature. In 2011 Population Census - Thematic Report Household Income Distribution in Hong Kong (C&SD, 2011), it was revealed that the median monthly domestic household income in Central and Western district and Wan Chai district ranged from HKD47,000 – HKD55,000, while that of Kwun Tong district and Wong Tai Sin district were HKD13,000 and HKD17,000 respectively. Therefore, sampling schools by residential district can effectively recruit family from different backgrounds.



By the end of September 2012, a number of schools/community centres have already been approached and nine of them have indicated active interest in participating in the study. Approval letters from schools/community centres containing the written consent of the participants will be collected prior to the study commencing.

## C2. Intervention

Parents will attend three consecutive training workshops in the participating schools or community centres: The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop of 2 hours each will provide parents with a demonstration of how to tell stories to children using the dialogic reading method and is designed to heighten parents' awareness of the importance of parent/child communication. The third and final workshop of 2 hours duration is designed to foster and scaffold the knowledge and skills garnered from the first two workshops in order to consolidate dialogic reading skills and prepare the parents to practice daily reading activities with their children for 15-20 minutes. Parents are also required to compile a self-report (Appendix III) to log their dialogic reading experiences and share feedback during the second and third workshops to demonstrate their understanding of the learned skills and to re-visit the core of dialogic reading technique if and when required. Families are encouraged to borrow picture books from Hong Kong Public Libraries based on a suggested list of quality books and list of reputable children's picture book authors. In addition, an inventory of books is available for parents to borrow as a support to those parents who might have difficulty getting to a library or encounter unforeseen difficulties obtaining suitable texts. Parents and children will then engage in the home literacy activity stage involving children picture book reading (practicing the reading and storytelling skills received from training workshops).

### C3. Analysis

Conclusions will be drawn based on the discrepancy, if any, before and after training in the dialogic reading technique. Statistical tests including t-test and ANOVA will be applied for inferential analyses as appropriate. A standard experimental design with control and treatment groups being compared is not applicable to our study. Results will be derived from the outcome of the 200 parent-child groups by applying such as the paired-sampled t-test. Since any observed improvement in the parent-child relationship may deviate from the time spent on the dialogic reading activities, extra questions on the number of hours spent on this particular activity and other interactive activities will be collected to adjust for the effectiveness of the technique. These factors will be controlled in the models to be studied. Furthermore, the study will also be supported by triangulating research methods (method triangulation) with double checking on the emerging concerns of parents from the self-report and the post-training sharing sessions. This combination of approaches will help us be more confident of our findings should the data be consistent with the quantitative analyses.

### C4. Measuring tools

1. **Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI)** – This inventory was developed by Anthony B. Gerard in 1994 and is a 78-item parent self-report measure of parenting skill and attitudes toward parenting and parent attitudes towards their children. It is designed for parents with children between 3 to 15 years of age. The measure yields scores on 7 content scales, says 1) Parental Support, 2) Satisfaction with Parenting, 3) Involvement, 4) Communication, 5) Limit Setting, 6) Autonomy, and 7) Role Orientation using a 4-point Likert scale, with 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree, is used to come up with a total score of each parent. Therefore, positive parenting will be reflected by high total scores.

2. **Parent Stress Index - Short Form (PSI/SF)** – This index was developed by Abidin, R. R. (1995), the PSI Short Form (PSI/SF), available in 14 languages including Chinese, is an abridged version of the 120-item full-length test. All 36 items in the Short Form are contained in the Long Form covering subscales on “Parental Distress”, “Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction” and “Difficult Child”. It allows users to complete the form within a reasonable 15 minute time span without significant deviation from the full version. Although an even shorter version with only 15 items has been suggested (Yeh, C. H.; Chen, M. L.; Li, W. & Chuang, H. L., 2001), the more widely used and well-researched 36-item version (Hofecker et al., 2009; Reitman, Currier, & Stickle, 2002) will be used throughout the study. A 5-point Likert scale rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) is used as the scoring metric. The tool is suitable for parents with children between 0 to 12 years of age.

Since the first instrument is not available in Chinese, it will be translated to Chinese (and peer blind back-translated) to facilitate the self-reporting procedure. Both questionnaires can be completed with 15 minutes.

### D. Deliverables

1. One publication in a high impact SCOPUS-listed journal (e.g. Educational Studies).
2. Reports to the schools/community centres participating in the study.
3. Media coverage of the main findings and their implications.
4. A set of prototype will be constructed to ensure the sustainability of the project, for example, training video will be produced and deliver to the participating schools/community centres can replicate the training on their own and as a results more parents can be benefited.

**E. Study Schedule**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Expected Output</b>
<b>May/Jun 2013</b>	Recruit parents through primary schools or community centres	Develop training schedule
<b>May/Jun 2013</b>	Finalise measurement tools	Prepare survey questionnaires, observations record reading record
<b>May/Jun 2013</b>	Finalise list of children's picture books and quality authors. Also arrange the purchase of children's picture books	Books ready for the workshop – to serve as the communication tool
<b>May/Jun 2013</b>	Finalise list of children's books as reference list for parents	Book list ready for the workshop – to serve as reference for parents if they would like to borrow books from library
<b>Jun – Sep 2013</b>	Complete pre-training self-report PCRI and PSI/SF to collect benchmark score of parent-child relationship.  Training workshops for parents (total 3 sessions).  During 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> sessions, facilitator to log parental feedback and progress.	Total: 200 parents (20 participants for each workshop). 10 workshops will be conducted. 1 <sup>st</sup> session – 2 hrs. ; 2 <sup>nd</sup> session – 2 hrs. ; 3 <sup>rd</sup> session – 2 hrs. Total training hours: 10 x 6 hrs. = 60 hrs.
<b>Jul – Dec 2013</b>	Parents practice dialogic reading for 3 months duration and complete the Reading Record.	
<b>Dec 2013</b>	Complete self-report PCRI and PSI/SF after 3 months practice by parents	
<b>Jan 2014 - Apr 2014</b>	Analyse data and compile the study report Submit finalised report by end of July 2014	Generate final report

## F. Budget and Justification

Type of Expense	Personnel	Description		Total Amount	
Staff Cost	Project Officer (1 pax) (at the rank of Research Assistant)	program co-ordination, literature review, data input, analyze data, report writing		HK\$14,200 (+ 5%MPF) x 12 months = HK\$178,920	
Service Cost	Workshop Trainer (1 pax) 50% will be subsidised by the project	Provide training in the workshop (10 workshops x 6 hrs)	Extra workshops (2 workshops) to cover no-show participants and data inconsistency (2 workshops x 6 hrs)	HK\$600 x 60 hrs. = 36,000  QEF subsidize 50% = 18,000	HK\$600 x 12 hrs. = 7,200  QEF subsidize 50% = 3,600
				HK\$21,600	
	Student Helper (1 pax) ; 50% will be subsidised by the project	Assist training workshops and feedbacks sessions. (10 workshops x 6 hrs)	Extra workshops (2 workshops) to cover no-show participants and data inconsistency (2 workshops x 6 hrs)	HK\$50x 60 hrs = HK\$3,000  QEF subsidize 50% = \$ 1,500	HK\$50 x 12 hrs = HK\$600  QEF subsidize 50% = \$ 300
				HK\$1,800	
Equipment	Quality Children Picture Books – an inventory to support the reading practice	Communication tool - Parents practicum		HK\$140 x 200 sets = HK\$28,000	
General Expense	General Expense	Eg. Production of Training Video, Stationeries (Advertisement for the recruitment of the staff, stationery, poster printing), Transportation (90% trainings would be conducted in schools for the convenience sake of parents) & etc.		HK\$6,080	
	Audit fee			HK\$5,000	
	<b>Total:</b>			<b>HK\$241,400</b>	

Remarks: The 200 picture books will be donated to schools/community centres participating the project after the study.



**G. Assets Usage Plan**

Not applicable for the time being

**H. Report Submission Schedule**

My institution commits to submit proper reports in strict accordance with the following schedule :

<b>Project Management</b>		<b>Financial Management</b>	
<b>Type of Report and covering period</b>	<b>Report due day</b>	<b>Type of Report and covering period</b>	<b>Report due day</b>
Final Report 1/5/2013 - 30/4/2014	31/7/2014	Final Financial Report 1/5/2013 - 30/4/2014	31/7/2014