

THE LEVELS AND CRITERIAS OF PRINT CONCEPT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to identify the level of print concepts and it's criteria among children aged 2, 3 and 4 years old. 155 children aged 2, 3 and 4 years old from the nursery around Perak and Selangor are chosen as respondent. The method being used in this research is survey method. Teachers fill up the questionnaire regarding mastery of print concept among the children. The finding indicated the level and criteria's of the print concepts. Result for print concepts of 2 years old children are low (mean=1.82) level, whereas the performance of 3 years old (mean=2.42) and 4 years old (mean=2.65) are at average levels. The findings of this study indicated that most 2 years old children in this study are able to hold book and have the ability to identify the cover page of book which are the earliest skills in print concept. 3 years old children in this study mastered the basic concept of a book includes function of book, how to hold book correctly and identifying the cover of a book. As for the children aged 4 years old, they had mastered the basic skills of the concept of a book, the procedures of reading book, but still weak in identifying sentences, words and alphabets. Overall, the achievement of print concept in Malaysia is at a average level but still left behind as compared to the Western. This research suggested teachers to implement print concepts assessment, increase reading activities with children, and also include the print concepts in parent's involvement programs.

Key Words: print concept, print concept skill, print concept characteristic

INTRODUCTION

Various developments have been done in early literacy as it is one of the very important components in early childhood education. It is stated by Mahzan Arshad (2012) children who have a good experience and skills in early literacy could read fluently. Clay (1989) the founder of emergent literacy theory proposed the role of print concepts as the basic of the children early literacy skills. Strickland and Shanahan (2004) also identified the speech language, alphabetic code and the knowledge of print concepts as the early literacy skills of children 0-5 years old. These skills are predictor of children reading ability in the future.

Clay (1989) explained the print concept is referring to the knowledge of the children on the functions of the print. These concepts include the understanding on reading book is starting from front to back and print is also a written speech language. Adams (1990) also explained the need of knowledge on words, sentences and stories as the criteria of print concepts. It is clear that print concepts started from the concept of verbal language can be printed and finally printed writing is readable in understanding the text. Therefore, it is important to ensure children are mastering the print concept at early age.

Problem Statement

The number of children who have not yet mastering reading skills in this country is declining. Report from Berita Harian (2009) Ministry of Education has identified 85,000 children are still not able to read and write. Reading problems always related to the weaknesses in mastering the children literacy. This issue is clearly indicating that children in Malaysia are not having strong base in their early literacy development.

According to Emergent Literacy Theory, reading skills started since newborn. It is started with print concepts until be able to read fluently. Clay (1989) stated that print concepts are referring to children understanding on the functions and usage of the printing. She had developed concepts of the print after her observations on children to identify how they use printing. As result, she concluded that students need to learn print concepts as pre-reading skills. She also suggested that print concept being taught to new readers since early age. Adam's study (1990) also supported Clay's view, and he also suggested not only to teach print concepts at early age, but also the concept of words, sentences and stories to ensure children grasp the basic knowledge of reading from early age.

In Malaysia, a PERMATA curriculum (2013) has targeting the language development and children literacy through language component, communication and early literacy. The focus of the module has been developed according age levels to ensure children be able to use correct language, and to express ideas and experiences through language. The speech language and alphabetic code also have been described well and covers every age level in the curriculum. However, for the print concepts, these skills are indirectly described through language skills, communication and early literacy component in the curriculum.

Besides, there are not many studies have been conducted to identify the levels of print concept among children in Malaysia. Due to the importance of print concept on children early literacy, researcher would like to investigate the level of print concepts among children of age 2, 3 and 4 years old in Malaysia. This knowledge is important as the mastering of the print concept at early age will enhance the children ability to attain other literacy skills in future.

Research Objective

The objectives of this study are as followed:

- a) To investigate the level of competency in print concepts for children of age 2, 3 and 4 years old in Malaysia.
- b) To identify the criteria of print concepts for children of age 2, 3 and years old in Malaysia.

Research Questions

For this study, the research questions are:

- a) What are the level of competency of print concept for children of age 2,3 and 4 years old in Malaysia?
- b) What are the criteria of print concept for children of age 2,3 and 4 years old in Malaysia?

Research Interest

The conducted study is related to the level of competency of print concept for children of age 2,3 and 4 years old. Hopefully, the findings of the research will give benefits and interest for involving parties in early childhood education.

Teachers also can identify the level of print concepts of children under their care through assessment. Teachers can observe and assess the children by using print concepts instrument and using this information as guide to assist the children.

Parents will also gain knowledge on the importance of print concepts through parenting workshop and be able to support the development of children's print concepts at home.

Research Limitation

This study involving children of age 2, 3 and 4 years old from several selected kindergarten. Therefore, this study cannot be generalized as level of the print concepts for all children in this country.

Literature Review

Clay (1991) has conducted research in the form of observation which indicated children are able to conduct main reading behaviour such as knowledge on alphabets and words, reading directions, self-rectify reading and matching the verbal reading with text printing. This study open a new perspective to early reading development which differ from the traditional understanding that reading started from alphabet and words recognition as it focus more on children's perspectives on books, printings and writing.

Knowledge and competency in print concepts is one of the main skills in early childhood education (Justice, 2006). This statement is supported by Pullen and Justice (2003) which stated that knowledge on print concept helps children in the process of learning to read in the preschool level and next levels. Thus, the ability and competency of children in print concepts is the predictor for their reading ability and this is the basic element in emergent literacy (Adam, 1990; Justice & Ezell, 2001).

The Print Concepts

Justice and Ezell (2004) stated that among of the specific aspects which involved in print concepts are children be able to differentiate between texts and pictures, understand the correct way of holding book and know how to flip book pages correctly. Goodman (1986) and Mason (1980) also agreed that the mastery of print concept refers to the children's ability in choosing and identifying the functions of reading materials and to know the relation of verbal language and text language. Print concepts also coaches' children in identifying part of the book such as the title, author, and correct place to start reading, pages and others. When children are giving chances listened to read aloud sessions and explore reading materials, their level of print concepts will increase. Thus, teachers should read more often and let the children expose and explore reading materials freely in their classroom.

In the beginning, children who started to have interest with books or reading materials, tend to focus on pictures rather than texts. Through reading activity, children are guided to explore print text in the story books (Justice and Ezell, 2004). The print concepts also can be develop among children through various print in their surroundings such as signage, favourite food logos, greetings cards, recipes and groceries lists. Other than that, children could also acquire print concepts through observations on the read aloud activities by adult (Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004; Clay, 1991).

The evaluation aspect of print concepts also can be done through reading. Gillet and Temple (1994) stated assessment of print concepts is the process of handling of a reading material such as, knowing the front and back page of the book, know the arrangements of the printing material; from left to right, know the differences between alphabets and words, and the usage of simple reading punctuation. Educator could inculcate all these skills while reading aloud by pointing to the alphabets, word and punctuation. They can also assess children's levels of print concepts by observing children reading a book. Therefore, reading activities should be encouraged as routine in the early childhood classroom.

Children Age and Print Concept

Goodman (1986) also stated that knowledge in print concept is one of the important aspect in the emergent of reading and writing ability which develops slowly throughout children early development. The earliest print concepts skill is children's book handling. This skill can be seen among children of the age 2-3 years who know how to hold book correctly (up-side down), flipping pages and play with the book in different way with other toys (Snow & Nino, 1986). This particular skill will develop to other print concepts skills through continuous book reading and opportunity for children to explore the reading materials.

As for 3 years old children, study conducted by Mason (1980) in Justice & Ezell (2001) found that these children are able to identify print concept. He firmly stated that children are attracted to prints and do self exploration without help from adults. These children use print to communicate, reading alphabets and identifying alphabets and words in mass media such as newspapers.

Justice & Ezell (2001) also conducted research on children of 4 years old to investigate the relation between the mastery of print concept with identification of specific words using the Pre-school Words Evaluation. This research indicated that children of age 4 years old are able to read words.

From the research, it can be concluded that, as children's age increase, their abilities in print concepts are also improve. Their skills develop from book handling to read words in the book.

Print Concept as Fundamental of Reading

The findings of Justice & Ezell (2001) suggested that children gain print concepts earlier before starting to read words for reasons. Firstly, the understanding of emergent literacy is different between children based on experiences and exposures given by parents and teachers (Mason, 1980; Goodman, 1986). More exposures gained by children, it is easier for them to master the print concept and next easier to read words. Secondly, there are continuances

between the increased of print concept awareness and the children's development in words (Lomax & McGee, 1987). There are several skills which need to be mastered first from other skills. In example, the ability of discriminating between simple and difficult words ('me' and 'flower') which indicating simple skills are mastered earlier before more complicated spellings.

Parallel findings also found in Lomax & McGee study (1987) which the execution of the study is to view the effectiveness of print concept in helping children indentifying words. This study involved 81 children of the age 3 – 7 years old. There were 18 types of evaluation used to measure the hypothesis. Among of it are journal writing evaluation, phonemic awareness checklist and print concept checklist used in pre and post evaluations. They tested teaching model which includes components such as print concept, alphabets awareness, phonemic awareness and alphabetic sounds awareness. The findings of the study indicated that there is a strong influence between print concepts and words recognition. This indicated that print concepts is a predictor for words reading.

Based on the studies, it is found that the importance of print concept as the fundamental to children's reading. Thus, it is important for teachers to ensure children are mastering these skills at early age in ensuring these children have a strong basic on literacy.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted in the form of survey. Information on print concepts of the children was collected by several trainee teachers in several selected kindergartens. The locations selected for the execution of this study were among several selected kindergarten in Perak and Selangor. The selection of nursery (KEMAS, PERMATA and PASTI) was done due to the numbers of respondents needed by researcher to represent certain populations. Thus, by conducting study in several selected locations fulfilled the needs of the study.

The populations of this study were children of the age 2, 3 and 4 years old in nursery in Malaysia. The research samples were 155 children of the age 2, 3 and 4 years old in nursery in Malaysia. Researcher chose these groups of children as they are the emergent readers. At this emergent level, children are taught and exposed on the functions of the books and print concepts.

Research Instrument

The instruments used in this study were checklist form related to print concepts which has been modified from print concepts checklist by Clay (1989). The modified questionnaires by researchers were based on information from literature review to fulfil the needs of this study.

Below are the items used in the questionnaires:

Section A: Children Background

- Name
- Gender
- Kindergarten name
- Kindergarten orientation:

Section B: Print Concept Skills

- Know the functions of book
- Know on holding book correctly
- Know the front/back page of the book
- Know the title
- Know to differentiate between text and pictures
- Know to read from left to right
- Know the beginning sentence and ending sentence
- Know that text writing based on story not pictures
- Know the numbers of sentences in several pages
- Know to differentiate alphabets and words.

Research Findings

Research Findings Analysis

Discussions done in this section are based on the research questions. Based on the answers from the questionnaires, researcher managed to gain data which are analysis presentable in the type of descriptive analysis for the score achieved. The data were answerable to the following questions:

What are the level of competency of print concept for children of age 2,3 and 4 years old in Malaysia?

What are the criteria of print concepts for children of age 2,3 and 4 years old in Malaysia?

Research Demography

In this study, children involved were 155 students. 51 children (32.9%) were children of age 2 years old, 52 students (33.5%) were 3 years old and 52 students (33.5%) were 4 years old. The numbers and percentages of involved children were as in Table 1:

**Table 1:
The number and Percentage of Respondent Age**

Age	Total	Percentage (%)
2 Years	51	32.9
3 Years	52	33.5
4 Years	52	33.5
Total	155	100

This study considered the orientation of the kindergarten which comprises of KEMAS, PERMATA, PASTI and private to ensure the sample taken were from various types of nursery. Based on the study conducted, 40 students (25.8%) children were from KEMAS, 38 students (24.5%) from PERMATA, 38 students (24.5%) were from private nursery. The distribution of numbers and percentage according to the orientation of the nursery as in Table 2:

The Level of Print Concept for Children of 2 – 4 Years Old in Malaysia

The findings of this study indicated that the level of print concept on 155 children of the age 2, 3 and 4 years old which were selected from the first quarter of the year. The evaluation of print concept was evaluated based on 10 items, from basic skills to more complicated skills. The skills were evaluated using Likert scale, scale 1 to 4 which scale 1 is weak and 4 is excellent.

Level of Print Concept Children of 2 Years old

Table 3:
Mastery Level of Print Concept Children of 2 Years old

Print Concept Skills	Scale Mean				Score Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Know the function of book.	20	18	13	-	1.86
Know how to hold a book.	2	29	18	2	2.39
Know the cover/front page of book.	13	18	20	-	2.14
Know the title of book.	21	18	11	1	1.84
Know how to differentiate pictures and words.	18	20	12	1	1.92
Know to read from left to right.	10	35	6	-	1.92
Know the beginning and the end of sentence.	30	18	3	-	1.47
Know the texts writing tell stories not pictures.	26	19	6	-	1.61
Know the numbers of sentences in the page of book.	37	13	1	-	1.29
Know which words and alphabets	25	12	14	-	1.78
TOTAL MEAN					1.82

Based on the above table, it is found that the level of print concept for 2 years old were at low level which mean:1.82. The skills which was being mastered by these children was; know how to hold book correctly (mean:2.39) and know to read from left to right (mean: 1.92). In contrast, these children mostly were lacking of knowledge that texts tell the stories not pictures (mean:1.61), the knowledge about beginning and end of sentence (mean:1.47) and could not identify numbers of sentences in certain pages (mean: 1.29) which these items indicated the lowest average score.

Based on this findings research had concluded that children of the age 2 years old has mastered the skills of holding book correctly and know to read from left to right adequately. However, these children in this study still were not having good knowledge on the concept of alphabets, words and sentences of a book.

Level of Print Concept Children of 3 Years Old

Table 4:
Level of Print Concept Children of 3 Years Old

PrintConcept Skills	Scale Mean				Score Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Know the function of book.	-	10	30	12	3.04
Know how to hold a book.	1	9	28	14	3.06
Know the cover/front page of book.	2	11	24	15	3.00
Know the title of book.	3	9	22	18	2.40
Know how to differentiate pictures and words.	3	14	18	17	2.87
Know to read from left to right.	8	21	11	12	2.29
Know the beginning and the end of sentence.	3	13	22	14	2.13
Know the texts writing tell stories not pictures.	1	9	21	21	1.81
Know the numbers of sentences in the page of book.	3	7	22	20	1.73
Know which words and alphabets	1	6	23	22	1.87
TOTAL MEAN					2.42

Based on the above table, it was found that the level of print concept for children 3 years old was at average level (mean :2.42). The most mastered skill by these children was; know to hold book correctly (mean:3.06), know the function of book (mean:3.04) and know the cover or front page book (mean:3.00). Children at this age mastered the basic concept of a book includes function of book, how to hold book correctly and identifying the cover of a book.

In contrast, these children mostly lack of knowledge on which is alphabets and which is word (mean:1.87), know that texts tell stories not pictures (mean:1.81), and know the numbers of sentences in certain pages (mean:1.73).

Based on these findings, researcher had concluded that children of the age 3 years old have mastered the skills of holding book correctly and read a book from left to right adequately. However, children in this study were still not having a good knowledge on the concept of alphabets, words and sentences in a book.

Level of Print Concept of Children 4 Years Old

Table 5:
Level of Print Concept of Children 4 Years Old

Print Concept Skills	Scale Mean				Score Mean
	1	2	3	4	
Know the function of book.	-	3	20	29	3.50
Know how to hold a book.	-	3	21	28	3.48
Know the cover/front page of book.	4	9	22	17	3.00
Know the title of book.	2	11	24	15	3.00
Know how to differentiate pictures and words.	5	9	22	16	2.94
Know to read from left to right.	8	12	18	14	2.35

Know the beginning and the end of sentence.	5	14	20	13	2.21
Know the texts writing tell stories not pictures.	2	8	24	18	2.19
Know the numbers of sentences in the page of book.	3	14	25	10	1.88
Know which words and alphabets	3	23	9	17	1.96
TOTAL MEAN					2.65

Based on the above table, the level of print concept of 4 years old was at average level (mean:2.65). The skills being mastered by these children were; know the function of a book (mean:3.50), know to hold book correctly (mean:3.48) and know the cover or front page of a book (mean:3.00), know the title of book (mean:3.00), know to differentiate pictures and texts (mean:2.94), know to read from left to right (mean:2.35), know the texts tell stories not pictures (mean:2.19), know the beginning and end of sentences (mean:2.21). The weakest skills were identifying words and alphabets (mean: 1.96) and identifying numbers of sentences in certain pages (mean:1.88). Researcher had concluded that these children had mastered the basic skills of the concept of a book, the procedures of reading book, but still weak in identifying sentences, words and alphabets.

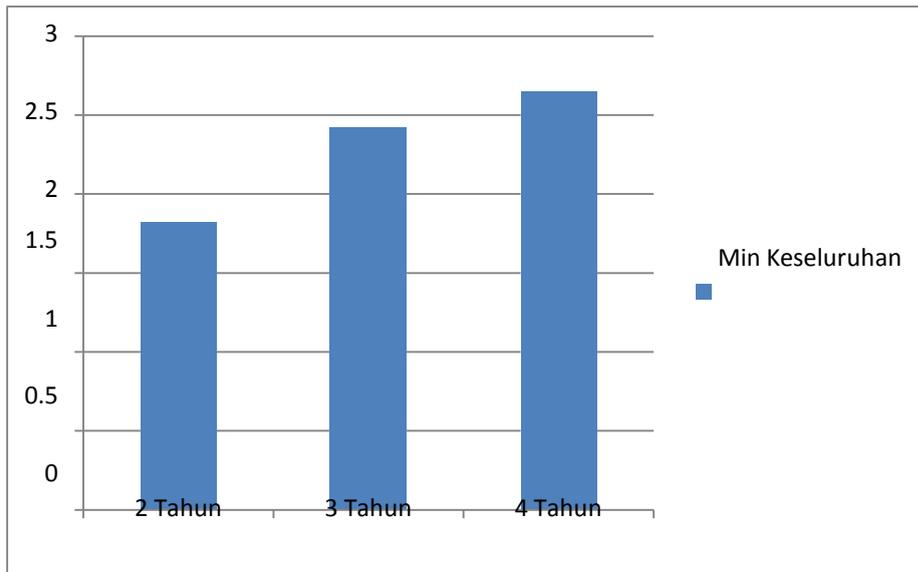
Level of Print Concepts of the overall Children

The analysis of this study in whole indicated that children of the age 2 years were weak in mastery of print concepts while children of the age 3 and 4 years old were average. From the print concept skills aspect, the skills that being mastered the most is the skills of holding book correctly and in contrast weak in mastering skills such as the concept of alphabets, words and sentences are about the same at all level of age of the children. The concept of alphabet, words and sentences was an important concept for reading skills. If a child is not mastering these skills adequately, this will affect their reading acquisition in the future.

The findings of this study indicated that there were differences on the level of mastery of print concept for children of the age 2, 3 and 4 years old. Table 6 showed the mastery level of print concept in whole for all children involved in this study according to age level.

Table 6
Overall Mean of Mastery Level of Children Print Concept

Print Concept Skills	Overall Mean
2 Years	1.82
3 Years	2.42
4 Years	2.65

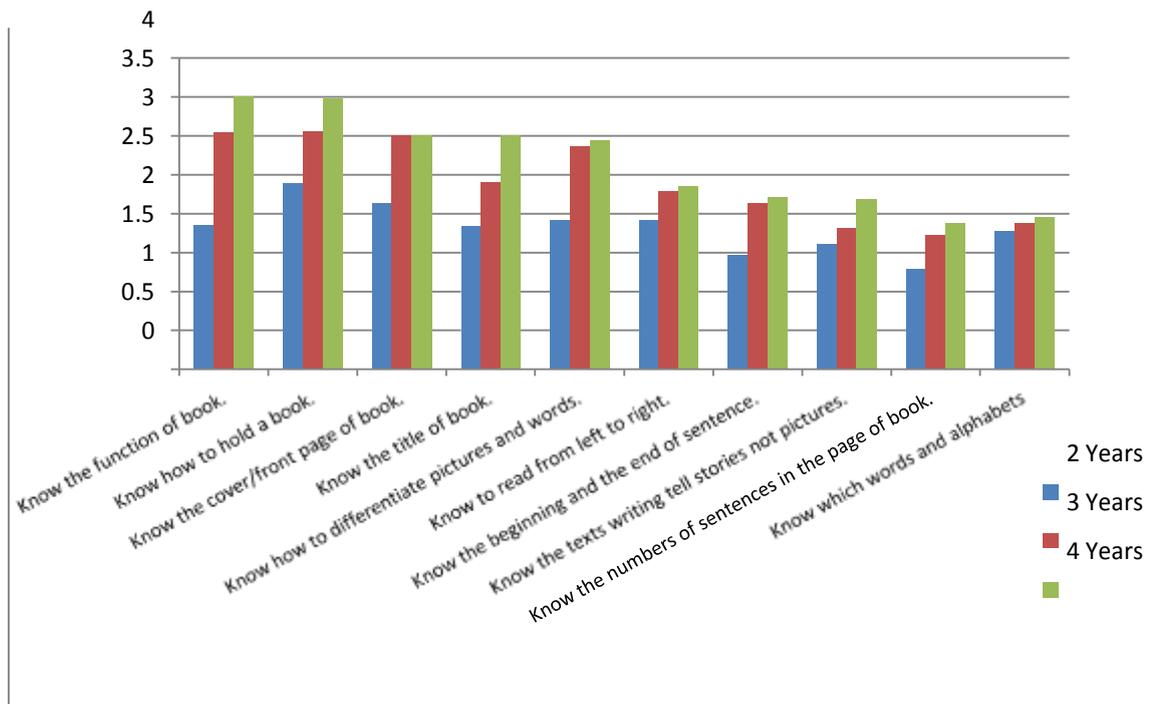


Graph 1:
Level of Print Concept Children of 2, 3 and 4 Years Old

The above graph showed the level of print concept for each age group. Children of 2 years old was lower (mean:1.82), while children of 3 years old was average (mean:2.42) and children of 4 years old was also average (mean:2.65). Based on this data, it is clearly stated that the knowledge of 2 years old was low while the knowledge of 3 and 4 years old were average.

The Criteria of Print Concept for Children of the Age 2, 3 and 4 Years Old in Malaysia

In order to answer the second question of this study, researcher had considered the mean of each item according to the age.



**Graph 2:
The Criteria of Print Concepts for Children 2, 3 and 4 Years Old**

The criteria for children of age 2 years old were know to hold book correctly had the highest mean (mean: 2.39) and know the cover of book (mean: 2.14). This analysis indicated that children in this research had mastered the concept of book.

The criteria for children of the age 3 years old were know to hold book correctly (mean: 3.06), know the function of book (mean: 3.04), know the cover of book (mean: 3.00), know to differentiate pictures and words (mean: 2.87), know the title of book (mean: 2.40), know to read from left to right (mean: 2.29) and know the beginning and end of sentences (mean: 2.13). Based on this analysis, it was indicated that these children had mastered the book concept and print concepts related to reading procedures.

As for the children of age 4 years old, the criteria were know the function of book (mean: 3.50), know to hold book correctly (mean: 3.48), know the cover of book (mean: 3.00), know to differentiate pictures and words (mean: 2.94), know the title (mean: 3.00), know to read from left to right (mean: 2.35), know the beginning and end of sentences (mean: 2.21) and know texts tell stories not pictures (mean: 2.19). Based on the findings, it was concluded that children of 4 years old had mastered most of the print concepts the skills, specifically skills know that texts tell stories not pictures which was the main criterion in print concept skills.

Based on the findings, the suggested criteria are as followed:

**Table 7:
Criteria of Print Concept of Children 2, 3 and 4 Years**

Kemahiran Konsep Cetak	Tahap Umur		
	2	3	4
Know the function of book.		✓	✓
Know how to hold a book.	✓	✓	✓
Know the cover/front page of book.	✓	✓	✓
Know the title of book.		✓	✓
Know how to differentiate pictures and words.		✓	✓
Know to read from left to right.		✓	✓
Know the beginning and the end of sentence.		✓	✓
Know the texts writing tell stories not pictures.			✓
Know the numbers of sentences in the page of book.			
Know which words and alphabets			

DISCUSSION, SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion in this study was to evaluate the achievement level of print concept of children in Malaysia and compared it with the level of achievement of children abroad.

The Level of Print Concept of Children 2, 3 and 4 Years Old

According to the age, it indicated that there were significant differences on the level of print concepts for children of 2 years old with 3 and 4 years old. The findings found that the print concept of 2 years old was low yet average for 3 and 4 years old. Though there were no significance differences between 3 and 4 years old on the level, children of 4 years old had better mastery level as compared to others.

These findings indicated that the children understanding on the print concepts was increasing according to their age as stated in Evans, Williamson & Pursoo (2008). Their study indicated the level of mastery of the children in print concept is increasing according to their age which children of 5 years old showed highest achievement followed by 4 years and 3 years. This support the statement of Clay (1989) which stated that the development of emergent literacy happen gradually.

From the aspect of mastery print concept skills, this study found that the easiest skills to be mastered is holding book correctly and the least mastered skills are alphabets, words and sentences concept. The skills of holding book correctly is one of the lowest skills, while identifying words, sentences and alphabets are the highest skills in print concept as suggested by Justice and Ezell (2004), Goodman (1986), Mason (1980), Hiebert (1981) and van Kleeck (1998). On the other hand Goodman (1986), Mason (1980) and Hiebert (1981) also agreed that the mastery of the print concepts refer to the ability of children in identifying the function of reading materials and the connection between verbal language and written language. This indicated that the mastery of print concept started from the knowledge on how book is functioning and later developed into higher skills which is how the print of texts functioning.

The book concept skills should be mastered by children as early as 2 years old depends on the exposure to reading activities. According to Ezell & Justice (2000), the more activities of storybook reading with children, the higher their mastery level of the print concepts.

Therefore, it is important to inculcate reading as a daily routine in early childhood classroom to ensure the mastery of print concepts. Furthermore, print concepts are the predictor of reading skills in future (Adam, 1990; Stuart, 1995 in Justice & Ezell, 2001). Goodman (1986) and Van Kleeck (1998) also stated that knowledge of print concept is one of the important aspects of the emergent reading and writing which will develop throughout the early childhood development.

Criteria of the Print Concepts for Children of age 2, 3 and 4 Years Old in Malaysia

The findings of this study indicating that most 2 years old children in this study are able to hold book and have the ability to identify the cover page of book which are the earliest skills in print concept. These findings are similar to study conducted by Snow & Nino (1986) who had observed these skills among children of age 2 and 3 years old in their study. These children hold book correctly (up-side down), flipping pages and playing with the books differently from the other toys. Thus, these findings found that children are able to master the skills of holding book and identifying the cover page is a good start. Goodman (1986), Mason (1980) and Hiebert (1981) also agreed that early mastery of print concept refer to the ability of children in choosing and identifying the functions of reading material and later knowing

the relation of verbal and written language. It is hoped that base on current skills will drive the children's ability in identifying sections of a book such as title, correct section or places to start their reading, pages of book and others. The mastery level on print concept will develop when children are able to listen to book reading and exploring a reading material using their own uniqueness,

As for children of 3 years old, the skills which have been mastered by most children in Malaysia are holding book correctly, know the function of book, know the cover page, manage to differentiate between pictures and words, know the title, read a book from left to right, and know the beginning and end of sentences. These skills mastered by the children in this study are quite left behind as compared to children in Mason study (1980). The study by Mason had found that children are attracted on printings and explore by themselves without the help from adult. They use printings to communicate, read alphabets and identifying words and alphabets in mass media such as newspapers. This may due to the Western culture which involved reading as daily routine especially before bedtime. This has made reading to children is not merely happening in schools, it also happen at home. This is different with our culture in Malaysia which reading at home is not a routine (Zainiah, 2005).

However, children of 4 years old in this study are more advanced in the knowledge of print concept as they are able to master the function of book, holding book correctly, know the cover page of a book, able to identify the beginning and end of sentences and know that texts tell the story and not pictures. However, children of this age in this study are still weak in identifying sentences, alphabets and words as compared to children in study conducted by Justice & Ezell (2001) who are able to identify specific words. The findings of the study also indicated on the importance of mastering the print concepts as there is relation between print concepts with words reading as stated by Lomax & McGee (1987).

Overall, the achievement of print concept in Malaysia is at a average level but still left behind as compared to the Western. However, this mastering skills can be improved if the current early education curriculum is strengthened by including print concepts as one of the early literacy component for young children as early as 2 years old.

Research Implication

Based on the findings of the conducted study, it is hoped that it will be the starting point for the early childhood education stakeholder to get to know and understand the importance of print concepts. These findings provide actual view to the nursery teachers on the current situations related to the mastery level of print concepts among nursery children which is left behind as compared to the Western countries.

These findings provide the criteria of print concepts for children in Malaysia who aged 2, 3 and 4 years old. Through these criteria, a module of teaching and learning of print concepts can be developed to help in improving early literacy among early childhood children.

This study is hoped to be able to bring forward improvement in the teaching and learning of early childhood children. Teaching and learning using print concepts can be conducted indirectly during reading activities. Since the mastery level of print concept among children in this study is average, various efforts of conducting teaching and learning process based on print concept skills should be done immediately. This is due to several findings of

literature review indicated that mastering print concept carry positive effects in children literacy development.

Suggestions

These are several suggestions on the usage of print concepts in teaching and learning process of early childhood education in our country. One of the suggestions is nursery teachers should evaluate the children print concepts level by using the Print Concept Evaluation Form. This is to ensure teachers are able to construct teaching and learning according to the children's need.

Other than that, researcher suggests the execution of reading together using big books should begin as early as possible. Through this activity, teachers could model print concepts skills to the children while reading big book and at the same time children are able to enjoy the stories.

Parents may also involve in inculcating this skill at home. Trainings for the parents can be given so they are able to practice the skills at home. Parenting workshops should be incorporate reading together and print concept practices to parents.

Conclusion

As conclusion, this study has portrayed the level and criteria of print concept for children of the age 2, 3 and 4 years old in Malaysia. Since print concepts play a very important role in early literacy and reading, this skill should be given more focus in developing children early literacy curriculum. All parties especially teachers and parents have to play role in inculcating these skills among the children. It is hoped that this effort will help in improving children literacy skills in future.

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